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Birkbeck, University of London

Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural*: Theoretical debates and politico-aesthetic explorations in Chile (1970-2015)

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2016

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Declaration

I, Tomás Peters Núñez, declare that this thesis is all my own work.

Date 25/January/2016

ABSTRACT

This thesis describes and analyses the intellectual trajectory of the Franco-Chilean cultural critic Nelly Richard between 1970 and 2015. Using a transdisciplinary approach, this investigation not only analyses Richard's series of theoretical, political, and essayistic experimentations, it also explores Chile's artistic production (particularly in the visual arts) and political-cultural processes over the past 45 years. In this sense, it is an examination, on the one hand, of how her critical work and thought emerged in a social context characterized by historical breaks and transformations and, on the other, of how these biographical experiences and critical-theoretical experiments derived from a specific intellectual practice that has marked her professional profile: *crítica cultural*. The first chapter proposes an exploration of Nelly Richard's arrival in Chile as well as of her first critical texts on the artistic production of the 1970s. The second chapter analyses the process of institutionalization of Nelly Richard's critical art writing during the 1980s, as well as her analytical turn towards new areas of critical thinking (such as Kristeva's theory of signification, post-modern theory and feminism). Chapter 3 deals with Chile's democratic transition between 1990 and 2000, as well as an in-depth analysis of the specific methodological, conceptual, and political aspects of Richard's *crítica cultural*. The fourth chapter explores the way Richard has discussed and developed the question of memory in Chile from 2000 to the present. This thesis concludes that the challenge of Richard's *crítica cultural* is to insist upon the search for cultural texts that are not only resistant to the culturally homogenizing policies of global capitalism and their impact on the local cultural landscape, but which also unveil and de-centre strategies of symbolic legitimization that institutionalize domination in all its forms. In this light, *crítica cultural* is a process of permanent refoundation.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis describes and analyses the intellectual trajectory of the Franco-Chilean cultural critic Nelly Richard between 1970 and 2015. Using a transdisciplinary approach¹, this investigation not only analyses Richard's series of theoretical, political, and essayistic experimentations, it also explores Chile's artistic production (particularly in the visual arts) and political-cultural processes over the past 45 years. In this sense, the thesis is not a mere intellectual biography of Nelly Richard. Rather, it is an examination, on the one hand, of how her critical work and thought emerged in a social context characterized by historical breaks and transformations and, on the other, of how these biographical experiences and critical-theoretical experiments derived from a specific intellectual practice that has marked her professional profile - *crítica cultural*. This thesis provides an intellectual portrait of Richard and her times, as well as an analysis and commentary on her work and its impact upon the field of Chilean and Latin American criticism.

Nelly Richard is a key figure in Latin America's recent intellectual history. She has not only played a fundamental role in the transformation of the panorama of Chilean intellectual activity from 1970 onwards, but she has also been a protagonist of Latin America's critical-theoretical scene over the past few decades. In fact, the work of Nelly Richard has been widely acknowledged by Latin American, North American, and European critics and intellectuals. The Argentinean investigator Ana Longoni (2009: 53), for example, has pointed out that she is: 'sin duda una de las más lúcidas e incisivas voces críticas de

¹ The methodology of this thesis is based mainly on a sui generis form of the cultural history of ideas (The cultural history of ideas has a long tradition. Even today the term is used not only in a number of forms and styles, but also there is a series of discussions on its methodology and definition. See Skinner (1969) and Burke (2012).) However, this thesis is characterized by the use of a *transdisciplinary* approach to the problem at hand. In fact, throughout the work elements of the sociology of art and culture, cultural studies, the cultural history of ideas, philosophy, history, cultural analysis, journalism, art history, aesthetic theory, etc. have been used.

América Latina”. Also, according to the Cuban essayist Alberto Abreu (2009): ‘dentro del mapa de producción de conocimiento sobre y desde América Latina, la voz de Nelly Richard es, desde hace tiempo, una referencia ineludible’. For Brazilian thinker Wander Melo (2002: 7-8), she is: ‘uma das mais brilhantes intelectuais da América Latina.’ For her part, the U.S. academic Francine Massiello acknowledges Richard not only as a ‘leading figure in the theatre of Latin American critical debate’, but also defines her as: ‘A cultural critic of cutting-edge vitality who has achieved something of a celebrity status among postmodern thinkers [and] a bridge figure among U.S., European and Latin American critics although she has remained committed to specific debates originating in Chile.’ (Massiello 2001: 12). The U.S.-based Spanish cultural critic Alberto Moreiras (2004) has called her: ‘one of the foremost critical voices of the age [and] an essential reference for intellectual work in Latin America and beyond.’ Holding a similar view, the British theoretician Jean Franco (2004: xv) has argued that: ‘The value of Richard’s critique extends beyond the Chile of the transition to our own realities’. Finally, the U.S researcher Michael Lazzara (2012: 59) has acknowledged that: ‘Nelly Richard stands out currently as one of the most important public intellectuals and as the founder of a critical practice that, by contrast with cultural studies calls itself “cultural critique” (*crítica cultural*).’

Nelly Richard’s notion of *crítica cultural* plays a key role in this thesis. As will be seen in the four chapters that comprise this thesis, Richard sees aesthetic materiality as a critical-poetic device to unsettle and transform the social. This is the basic tenet of her *crítica cultural* and is reflected in her own definition:

La crítica cultural –tal como la entiendo- trataría no sólo de levantar la sospecha del lector contra el falso supuesto de la inocencia de las formas y de la transparencia del lenguaje que oculta los pactos de fuerza y los convenios de intereses que, tácitamente, amarran entre

sí valores, significaciones y poderes. Trataría además de excitar la imaginación crítica en torno a las fisuras de lo real y sus otros que el arte mantiene sugerentemente abiertas, para que el lector se anime a romper el molde del sentido prefabricado con el deshacer y rehacerse de una subjetividad libre de dejarse atraer por lo desconocido de categorías y palabras vagabundas. (Richard, 2001b: 22-23)

Indeed, *crítica cultural* is not a theory of society nor can it be reduced to a simple critique of art. It is a critical practice that de-centres hegemonic cultural configurations that have crystallized, or which are in the process of crystallizing in a given social, political, and cultural scenario. This critical practice, influenced among other traditions by critical theory (Adorno, Benjamin), post-structuralism (Foucault, Kristeva, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari) and cultural studies (Williams, Hall), encountered fertile territory in the Chilean context, both during the military dictatorship and during the years of democratic transition and especially today. Certainly, Richard's specific form of *crítica cultural* tracks the fragments, the vagabond, the disjointed, and the residual aspects to produce experimental and dissident interpretations. But Richard also favours the Latin American critical traditions, and insists upon 'destabilizing the scientific word' through the form of the critical essay. In light of this, for Richard, the Latin American essayistic tradition is a key landmark to foster present-day criticism, as it does not renounce theory as an intellectual demand (*vis-à-vis* present day anti-theoreticism) and rather strengthens it and puts it into practice through writing.

Consequently, Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural* implies a cutting and tailoring of various theoretical traditions and streams of thought from both Europe and Latin America, but in her case, put into practice from the perspective of Latin America and in critical coordination with a series of intellectuals from the late

20th century.² Whilst all of them have been part of a generation emerging from the second half of the 20th century, Richard has always maintained a critical position with regards to labels or classifications. It is not by chance, for example, that she has been included in *The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader* (Ana del Sarto, Alicia Rios, & Abril Trigo, 2004) in the section on 'Positions and Polemics'. In fact, according to the editors, Richard has always maintained a polygraphic practice that evades classification or identification from a disciplinary point of view. And this is one of her main critical characteristics.

But what distinguishes Richard from all of the above European and Latin American intellectuals? Perhaps the fact that her writing and intellectual project emerges from the precariousness of editorial and institutional structures and is developed at a distance from both political power and academic prestige. In Chile during the 1970s and 1980s, Richard published her work in the form of photocopies, exhibition catalogues, self-published documents, pamphlets, short-lived magazines, occasional lectures, etc. Even when she had the support of private art galleries and the cultural representatives of institutions such as the French embassy, she never had institutional support from universities or the government. Also, she never did postgraduate studies. In addition, unlike many theoreticians of culture in Latin America who engaged in the production of art from the perspective of critical theory, Richard's intellectual trajectory was the opposite. She went from the critique of art and aesthetics to a preoccupation with post-dictatorship Chile (and Latin America), combining aesthetics, politics, culture, and memory. This

² Just to name a few: Willy Thayer, Ronald Kay, Beatriz Sarlo, Néstor García Canclini, Jean Franco, Jesús Martín Barbero, Nicolás Casullo, Leonor Arfuch, Josefina Ludmer, Julio Ortega, Alberto Moreiras, Bruno Bosteels, Jon Beasley-Murray, Federico Galende, John Beverley, Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, Ernesto Laclau, Carlos Ossa, Idelber Avelar, Gareth Williams, John Kraniuskas, Francine Maciello, Walter Mignolo, Andrea Giunta, Ticio Escobar, Antonio Cornejo Polar etc.

intellectual trajectory has made Richard's work a unique case in Latin American intellectual circles.

Although the work of Richard has achieved broad recognition in Chilean and regional intellectual circles, her essays, books, and theoretical contributions circulating widely in intellectual circles, only parts or fragments of her work are known. And, even though there are articles and essays devoted to her work³, until now there has not been a study offering a systematic (however incomplete) review of her work. This thesis aims to reverse this situation. Its purpose is to provide a chronological review of the main problems and discussions that Richard has taken on since her arrival in Chile in 1970. However, this thesis does not ignore critical readings of her work. On the contrary, each chapter includes questions and interpretations concerning her critical programme. Although it does not undertake an in-depth exploration of the tradition of Latin American cultural critique, and does not deal with the modern history of European cultural critique, its purpose is to contribute another chapter to both histories. An examination of the life and work of Nelly Richard elucidates elements that make it possible to complement the existing literature with new themes, problems, and dimensions. Hence this thesis contributes to an understanding of one aspect of critical thinking in the late 20th century and early 21st century in Chile and Latin America.

Throughout this thesis, I shall use the Spanish term 'crítica cultural' and not its English or German versions: 'cultural criticism' or 'Kulturkritik'. I maintain the position that Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural* is a specific form of the tradition of cultural criticism and not merely its equivalent. The same goes for other idioms and categories of cultural criticism in Latin America. Moreover, this

³ I have found especially useful the important essay of Ana del Sarto (2010) *Sospecha y goce: una genealogía de la crítica cultural en Chile*. Indeed, she has offered the most credible work on Richard to date.

thesis assumes that this particular form of cultural criticism began with the earliest collaborations between Richard and artists and other intellectuals in 1970, and was developed and re-thought until its operational definition in the late 1990s. Richard's *crítica cultural* is, therefore, a critical practice that is built gradually through intellectual collaborations, that is, chains of critical thought, new theoretical combinations and essayist experiments.

Based on the above, this thesis aims to answer the following questions: What has been Nelly Richard's intellectual, theoretical, and political-cultural trajectory from 1970 to the present? What have been the main issues that have emerged from the times of the *Unidad Popular* to now? What historical, theoretical, political, and aesthetic elements converged in Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural*? How are these theoretical notions deployed in Chile's political-aesthetic-cultural scene over the past four decades? Which Chilean and Latin American commentators discussed, nuanced, and/or contributed to these debates emerging from Nelly Richard's theoretical-critical provocations? Finally, how and from what standpoint can one contribute to cultural criticism in Latin America today?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to understand Nelly Richard's intellectual trajectory on the basis of a history characterized by breaks and continuities, experimentation, and aesthetico-political preoccupations. In fact, her *crítica cultural* programme emerged from a series of collaborations, disputes, and intellectual differences (with artists, writers, sociological perspectives, the militant left, Latin American Cultural Studies, members of *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, etc.), as well as from the social and political context of the dictatorship and the democratic transition in Chile. But it must also be understood on the basis of Richard's unique personal intellectual characteristics.

Nelly Richard is part of a generation of intellectuals that emerged in the second half of the 20th century and whose main characteristic was to burst into the public sphere as a woman, a dissident intellectual who has been committed to *the political*.⁴ In fact, Richard not only witnessed the French riots of May 1968, she was also a protagonist. Thanks to these revolutionary experiences, the figure of the public intellectual would emerge strongly in the modern city. In the article 'A new type of intellectual: the dissident' published in 1977, Julia Kristeva (1986) established that in the late 1970s a new type of female dissident intellectual emerged. As a foreigner, exile, and a woman in Paris herself, for Kristeva the figure of the experimental writer achieved a subversive strategy *in* and *through* writing. Thanks to their particular 'management' of the symbolic language, the 'analytical passion and incessant analysis' of the dissident woman subverted political space and de-stabilized bourgeois society. As a woman, essayist, and migrant in Chile, Richard broadly shared this characteristic.

But in order to subvert the socio-symbolic space through writing, it was first necessary to live it, observe it, and interpret it. The new public intellectual needed to move through the modern city like the *flâneur*⁵ in the 19th century, that is, like a wanderer who blends into the urban crowd. By doing this, in her writing, Richard achieves an acute and critical gaze on her surroundings, history and political evolution. And it is precisely such a figure to which Richard adapts: both her biography and her historical context have turned her

⁴ As Elizabeth Wilson has pointed out, during the second half of the 20th century: 'women have become an irruption in the city, a symptom of disorder, and a problem.' (Wilson, 1991: 9).

⁵ In this investigation I have privileged the figure of the *flâneur*—much like Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*—over the *flâneuse* because I consider that the latter category does not cover the complexity of elements that characterize the former. However, it is a necessary and ongoing debate. See Wolff (1985) and D'Souza and McDonough (2006). On the figure of the *flâneur*, see Benjamin ([1938] 2006). Also, Frisby (1994), Gluck (2003, 2005), Tester (1994) and Coverley (2006).

into a contemporary *flâneur* of present day Chile. In this thesis I argue that her *crítica cultural* cannot be understood without understanding this.

However, her work as an observer and analyst of Chile over the past 45 years has not been easy. From early on, Richard also had to resist her adversaries among the local intellectuals. As Pierre Bourdieu (1988) has observed, it is not possible to describe and understand the trajectory of the *homo academicus* without acknowledging that the entire intellectual field is structured as a system of relationships between groups and intellectual agents competing in conflict with each other. These intellectuals not only struggle to attain a position of power and prestige, but also to offer a critical voice that is capable of generating a new order of meaning within the intellectual field. And this is what Richard has done. Her voice has always played an uncomfortable role both in the academic-intellectual and in the political spheres, giving rise to complex conflicts among members of her intellectual circle. However, with her readings and writings on present-day Chile, Richard has rendered the intellectual field dynamic and increasingly complex. In this sense, her *crítica cultural* is a product of this condition of resistance and perseverance.

Finally, Richard has always maintained a position that is suspicious of social institutions. For this reason, she has always stated her position on the borders or in a position of 'relative marginality' combined with a confidence in trans-disciplinary practice.⁶ In fact, since the 1970s, Richard has taken refuge in the folds that lie within dominant currents of thought and from there she has struggled against cultural discipline and homogenization. In the words of

⁶ As will be seen throughout this investigation, transdisciplinarity is a methodological characteristic adopted by Nelly Richard (a characteristic that is certainly not exclusive to her). Indeed, as Peter Osborne (2015:2) has pointed out: 'Very few of the most important works in the area of 'theory, culture and society', for example, over the last 50 years, are 'disciplinary' in character, or representative of the disciplinary training of their authors.'

Deleuze and Guattari (1986, 2011) her critical actions could be characterized as a 'becoming minor'. That is, Richard draws theoretical, aesthetic, and political elements from the 'majority languages' in order to de-territorialize them and turn them, from the margins, into difference. This does not mean, having oneself to be 'marginal' or belong to a minority. On the contrary, it means using the elements that are available from theory, art and politics to oppose dominant systems and to transform them from within into a 'minority' logic on the basis of a de-constructive practice. Well-versed in the work of philosophers such as Jacques Derrida (1998), Richard is and has been aware that all cultural contexts are the source of analytical plasticity, therefore they are open to interpretation. The suspicion about inalienable truth is the starting point of her critical programme.

These, among others, are characteristics present throughout this thesis. All of them appear explicitly or implicitly in the references, thoughts, and quotes. In other words, and paraphrasing convolute N [7a, 7] of Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*,⁷ these characteristics are present in Richard's writing like the ink that spreads over a blotting pad such that nothing written on it remains clear. These are characteristics that, even though now illegible, are nevertheless present on the paper and in every new piece of writing. These are characteristics that, in short, have accompanied Richard's work over the past 45 years of her intellectual trajectory.

This thesis consists of four chapters.⁸ They are chronologically arranged

⁷ Walter Benjamin uses this metaphor to refer to his theological Messianism. The quote in English is: "My thinking is related to theology as a blotting pad is related to ink. It is saturated with it. Were one to go by the blotter, however, nothing of what is written would remain." (Benjamin, 1999c: 417).

⁸ This investigation involved a bibliographical collection of texts by Nelly Richard on the visual arts, cultural theory, critical writing, etc. published in Chile and abroad between 1970 and 2015. These materials included exhibition catalogues, magazines, booklets, photocopies, magazine articles, books, periodicals, and press cuttings. Although many of these documents were available in Chilean, English, and German libraries, an important

according to the main themes and issues that emerge in Richard's work in each decade. I thought it necessary to organize this thesis in this way as it makes it possible not only to show the trajectory and/or evolution of a particular thought, but also to contextualize them. This is especially important for the Chilean context. At the beginning of each decade there was a noteworthy historical landmark that marked a certain identity. For example, in 1970, Salvador Allende was elected president with the support of the *Unidad Popular*, and in 1973, following a military coup, a civic-military regime was established based upon violence and social control. In 1980 Pinochet consolidated his regime by promulgating the Constitution of the same year and after a decade he relinquished power after a plebiscite ('el Sí y el No'). In 1990 Chile regained its democracy in a period known as 'the democratic transition'. The year 2000 began with the presidency of Ricardo Lagos (the first socialist president after Allende) and with Pinochet's return to Chile after being detained in 1998 in London, ending, according to some, the so-called Chilean 'democratic transition' whose consequences are still in process. As will become evident throughout this thesis, these more recent facts or events called into question Richard's focus and critical interests as well as certain artistic practices associated with her intellectual circle. In this sense, the chronological organization of this thesis serves not only to understand the links and crossovers between theory, art, politics, and criticism in Chile, but also so as to make the argument easier to follow for those new to Chilean political and cultural history.

The first chapter proposes an exploration of Nelly Richard's first steps in Chile

number of documents remain uncatalogued or there are no physical copies of them available in libraries. Thanks to Centro de Documentación de las Artes del Centro Cultural Palacio de La Moneda de Chile's campaign to collect documents during 2012, it was possible to recover, catalogue, scan, and publish online a series of documents about the visual arts in Chile. A considerable number of these documents are analysed and illustrated in this thesis.

as well as of her first critical texts on the artistic production of the 1970s. In this chapter I highlight, on the one hand, the collaborative genesis, which included photography, the body, and visual experimentation in works of art and, on the other hand, the analytical demands that they make upon writing about art. I am especially interested in describing how this relationship gave way not only to a new form of conceiving the political role of the work of art in Chile (as a critical-reflexive *dispositif*⁹), but also to the emergence of theoretical, critical, and poetic writing as a tool that is indivisible from the work of art itself. Thus the first section of this chapter describes Nelly Richard's political and intellectual experience in Paris in the mid 1960s and her first years in the *Unidad Popular* in Chile. At the same time, it presents her first intellectual collaborations with the local intellectual circle and the main consequences of the military coup of September 1973. Next I discuss the influence of the Departamento de Estudios Humanísticos of the Universidad de Chile and its members (Ronald Kay) on the art writing Nelly Richard began to develop in those years. Finally, the first chapter focuses on Richard's analyses in the late 1970s of the work of Chilean artists such as Carlos Altamirano, Francisco Smythe, and Carlos Leppe. Through her writing, Richard not only began to develop her own readings and theoretical propositions about these works (elements that would serve to develop her future *crítica cultural*), but also began to establish differences and breaks with the artistic and theoretical traditions of the past.

The second chapter analyses the process of institutionalization of Nelly

⁹ This is a term that is notoriously difficult to translate. In English, it is normally translated as 'apparatus', but what I am referring to here is closer to Agamben's definition of *dispositif*: 'a. It is a heterogeneous set that includes virtually anything, linguistic and non linguistic, under the same heading: discourses, institutions, buildings, laws, police measures, philosophical propositions, and so on. The apparatus itself is the network that is established between these elements. b. The apparatus always has a concrete strategic function and is always located in a power relation. c. As such, it appears at the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge.' (Agamben, 2009: 2-3)

Richard's critical art writing during the 1980s, as well as her analytical turn towards new areas of critical thinking (such as Kristeva's theory of signification, post-modern theory and feminism). This chapter mainly analyses Richard's writing in terms of how it made a transition from a focus on the materiality of the works of art towards a broadening of political-cultural subject matter demanded by the historical transformations of the Chilean and international contexts. The first part consists of a detailed analysis of the book catalogue —*Cuerpo Correccional*— that Richard published in November 1980. This book can be considered one of the first formal works in the field of art criticism that nuances the relationship between culture and society in the history of art in Chile. Indeed, a number of political-theoretical aspects of Richard's *crítica cultural* can already be observed here. This section also provides a brief analysis of Ronald Kay's 1980 book *Del espacio de acá*. Its purpose is to establish both similarities and differences between both authors. The second part consists of a historical and analytical examination of a series of critical essays written by Richard about art in Chile and abroad between 1981 and 1985. These will give rise to the establishment of the notion of the *Escena de Avanzada*. Based upon a revision of texts and catalogues, this section discusses the emergence of this avant-gardist 'scene', as well as its interrogations and critique. The third part consists of an analysis of the book *Margins and Institutions. Art in Chile since 1973* by Nelly Richard. Published in a bilingual English/Spanish edition in Australia in 1986, this book may be considered a true break in the history of Chilean visual arts. Its publication not only contained a description of artistic production in Chile during those years but led to the recognition and inscription of the *Escena de Avanzada* in global art history. This section ends with an analysis of two contemporary readings by Willy Thayer and Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott of the *Avanzada*, and its consequences for post-dictatorship Chilean criticism. The final part of this chapter deals with the late 1980s. It describes how the reinstatement of

democracy in Chile in 1989, as well as the fall of socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (and the loss of faith in 'meta-narratives') generated a change in the direction of Richard's thought towards (neo) feminism, post-modernism and identity in Latin America. These developments may be considered the first steps towards the definition of *crítica cultural*.

From a historical perspective, Chapter 3 deals with Chile's democratic transition between 1990 and 2000. This chapter describes how, in this new context, Richard not only delimited and defined her critical-cultural programme but also had increasingly to defend her position against her critics. At the same time, it describes how her marginal position in the 1970s and 1980s would be transformed in the democratic era into a more relative marginal one. This chapter explains that Richard was not only a witness to and an observer of a political transition in 1990 but, above all, that she was the protagonist of a theoretical transition. The first section of this chapter presents the main editorial and intellectual dynamics behind the foundation of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*. Heir to a series of failed publications, the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* proposed to outline not only the main critical debates that emerged in the new post-dictatorship period, but served as an intellectual platform for the discussion of the new transitional period with the proponents of this process themselves, both the sociologists of the transition (particularly José Joaquín Brunner) and other militant voices from the historical left (such as Hernán Vidal). The second section of this chapter focuses on the relationship Richard established with other Latin American intellectuals and especially with US Cultural Studies. This section presents a brief overview of the ideas that Richard proposed in conceiving of Cultural Studies *about* and *from* Latin America. The third section is an in-depth analysis of the specific methodological, conceptual, and political aspects of Richard's *crítica cultural*. Based on an analysis of her book *Residuos y*

Metáforas (Ensayos de crítica cultural sobre el Chile de la Transición), published in 1998, I describe the systematization of her thought as well as an analysis of examples of its application that will help understand the scope and complexities of Richard's 'crítica cultural'. Finally, the third chapter briefly examines some critical readings of Richard's *crítica cultural* as well as her answers to them.

The fourth chapter explores the way Richard has discussed and developed the question of memory in Chile from 2000 to the present. Specifically, this chapter seeks to describe how *crítica cultural* experienced a theoretical and, especially, a political shift towards historical memory. Indeed, in these years Richard maintained the analytical schema of the *crítica cultural* deployed in the previous decade, but broadened the model towards a new idea: *crítica de la memoria*. If the critiques of *crítica cultural* focused on its lack of concrete social significance and historical commitment, with the *crítica de la memoria* Richard endows *crítica cultural* with a political core. This would be characterized, however, by finding in aesthetic experience elements that interrupt or disturb the institutional parameters of 'official memory'. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the main characteristics of the *crítica de la memoria*. At the same time, it introduces the debate between Richard's *crítica cultural* and the philosophical thought close to post-dictatorship discourses of melancholy. The second part of this chapter describes Richard's analysis and critique of the communications media, of works of art, spaces of memory and of other publications dedicated to memory in the 2000s. The last section of this chapter focuses on a description of the challenges faced by *crítica cultural* and memory today. In a context characterized by capitalist globalization and the diversification of global power networks, critical practice has had not only to face new theoretical, cultural, and political challenges, but has also had to reassess its mechanisms and devices for action. In this

context, the last section discusses the future of *crítica cultural*, both in Chile and Latin America.

In the conclusion of this thesis I discuss the main elements of Richard's intellectual trajectory in light of a new era of increasing politicization in Chile. Thanks to the student mobilizations of 2011, as well as the social demands for a society with rights (free, public and quality education, social equality, etc.) Chile has not only had to re-think itself politically. New demands have also emerged with respect to the way *crítica cultural* and a *crítica de la memoria* are conceived and practised. My thesis concludes that the challenge of Richard's *crítica cultural* is to insist upon the search for cultural texts that are not only resistant to the culturally homogenizing policies of global capitalism and their impact on the local cultural landscape, but which also unveil and de-centre strategies of symbolic legitimization that institutionalize domination in all its forms. In the light of this, *crítica cultural* is a process of permanent refoundation.

The title of this thesis is Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural: Theoretical debates and politico-aesthetic explorations in Chile (1970-2015)*. Whilst Richard would oppose an investigation of her work, as for her reflexive frame this would imply an 'unnecessary monumentalizing' of her intellectual trajectory, its purpose is to highlight the importance of critical thinking in contemporary societies. This thesis gathers together theoretical, aesthetic, political, and cultural debates that are still in progress. They are, in this sense, explorations of a never-ending problem. As Willy Thayer (2010:11) has pointed out in *Tecnologías de la crítica*: 'Cuando se ejerce regularmente la crítica, sea cual fuere el asunto al que inmediatamente se aplique, se la ejerce, advertidamente o no, en relación a la vida.' Life is constantly in movement and is infinite, and criticism plays a key role in it. In fact, criticism, like

revolution, teaches the virtues of the negative force of utopia. Through it, it is possible to activate the emergency brakes of the train of humankind in the hope of stopping or hindering a possibly fatal destination: the abyss. This idea, drawn from Walter Benjamin,¹⁰ reinforces the importance not only of highlighting, understanding, and promoting criticism in society, but also of acknowledging that it is an ongoing practice—that is, a *critical behaviour* – which is strengthened by its collaboration with writing, art, and imagination.

At the end of the day, Richard's criticism has been characterized by the unveiling of what others wish to hide. And she does it *from* writing and *with* aesthetic materiality. That is the axis of her crítica cultural. In *What is the Contemporary?* Giorgio Agamben points out that:

The contemporary is he who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light, but rather its darkness. All eras, for those who experience contemporariness, are obscure. The contemporary is precisely the person who knows how to see this obscurity, who is able to write by dipping his pen in the obscurity of the present. (Agamben, 2009: 44).

And that is precisely the role Richard has played in almost half a century of critical practice. And it is precisely what this thesis offers: elements for the understanding of a critical-cultural project.

¹⁰ Michael Löwy has developed the idea in greater depth. In his words 'A non-religious image, in Benjamin's preparatory notes, sums up this idea and, in doing so, runs counter to the commonplace assumptions of the 'progressive' Left: 'Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps it is quite otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train – namely, the human race – to activate the emergency brake.' The image suggests that if humanity were to allow the train to follow its course – already mapped out by the steel structure of the rails – and if nothing halted its headlong dash, we would be heading straight for disaster, for a clash or a plunge into the abyss. (Löwy, 2005: 66-67).

CHAPTER 1

The scaffolding of Nelly Richard's thought: Aesthetic explorations at the beginning of the Chilean dictatorship (1970-1979)

Introduction

The 1970s in Chile was the result of a series of processes, reforms, and internal conflicts that emerged from the 1950s (Jocelyn-Holt, 2001). It is also the result of a series of global processes that emerged following World War II (the Cold War, the Cuban revolution, Alliance for Progress). Indeed, not only did demands for social justice and modernization appear in Chile in the mid 20th century¹¹, but the country was also pushed to define its international geopolitical position.

By 1970, this accumulation of social and political energy had paved an institutional pathway for the emergence of the *Unidad Popular*, and more specifically the figure of Salvador Allende (Steenland, 1973). This year marked the beginning of the *Chilean road to socialism*. However, it was also the genesis of one of the most dramatic and painful experiences in Chilean history - the *coup d'état* of September 11 1973. The coup saw the establishment of a regime that routinely utilized torture, disappearances, and human rights violations, forever staining the history of Chile. As a result of the state of emergency established in Chile by the military regime, Chilean history would take a turn towards capitalist modernization and the birth of the neoliberal model *a la chilena*. In less than a decade, and as David Harvey

¹¹ For example, between 1950 and 1960, women were granted the right to vote in presidential elections, the first political coalitions with socialist and communist tendencies emerged (Popular Action Front), the initial steps of the agrarian reform process were taken, national workers' organizations were created (Central Union of Chilean Workers), nationwide protests occurred, and other social and labour reforms were implemented, etc.

(2007) has observed, Chile led the way to two different models of society, each of which was entirely unique; on the one hand, that is rapid capitalist modernization and an attempt at establishing democratic socialism, on the other.

The 1970s were defined by social aspirations and frustrated dreams, popular struggles and violent defeats, political changes and economic transformations. Overall, it was a decade that not only transformed the socio-political basis of an entire society, but also that of thousands of biographical experiences and intellectual projects. One of these was the life and work of Nelly Richard.

As a student of modern literature at the Sorbonne in the mid-1960s, Richard experienced a series of revolutionary political, intellectual, and theoretical processes. She was not only witness to the upheavals of May 1968 in Paris, but also an explosion of theoretical models and intellectual practices, such as Situationism, Post-Structuralism, Deconstructionism etc. Paris in those years was the ideal space to develop an academic or intellectual career. Armed with all her experiences, however, Richard left Paris to travel to another ongoing revolution - the *Unidad Popular* in Chile.

Upon arriving in Allende's Chile in 1970, Richard began to establish contacts with artists, philosophers, writers, poets, and others. Indeed, until the fall of the Allende administration, Richard worked in one of Chile's most important artistic spaces: the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. After the coup, the entire artistic field collapsed into a 'cultural blackout'. With the closing of universities, museums, cultural centres, newspapers, etc., the Chilean critical-intellectual landscape was profoundly affected. Between 1970 and 1973, Richard experienced both euphoria and the catastrophe that characterized those

years.

After some years of absence as a result of political repression, Richard would remake her intellectual networks and give shape to a new history of art criticism in Chile. In the mid 1970s, she was part of a group of intellectuals who, in resisting the censorship and persecution of the military regime, were able to create a precarious but meaningful circle of reflection on art, writing, theory, and politics. It was in those years that the conceptual and aesthetic scaffolding that would pave the way for the creation of a new way of thinking about and conceiving art in Chile was erected.

The purpose of this first chapter is to describe and analyse this turn. Specifically, it will explore Richard's first steps in Chile, as well as her first critical essays on art that emerged during the 1970s. In doing so, it will not only reflect upon her first intellectual collaborations with artists (Carlos Leppe, Carlos Altamirano, Eugenio Dittborn), philosophers (Ronald Kay), and poets (Raúl Zurita), but also on her writing itself, and her first curatorial strategies (catalogues, magazines, pamphlets, etc.). In other words, this chapter highlights, on the one hand, Richard's collaboration with artists working on photography, the body, and visual experimentation in artistic materiality or artwork, and on the other, the demand for analysis of this production through writing about art. Of special interest is a reflection upon how this relationship gave way not only to a new way of conceiving the political role of artwork in Chile, but also the emergence of theoretical, critical, and poetic writing as an integral means of analysing artwork.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The opening section describes Richard's political and intellectual experiences in Paris in the mid 1960s, and her initial years in Chile under the government of the *Unidad Popular*.

Richard's first experiences with the local artistic-intellectual scene took place during these years. However, following the coup d'état in September 1973, her plans were radically disrupted. The second section examines Richard's initial collaborations with Chilean intellectuals and artists after the military coup. In addition to describing particular art exhibitions of interest to the research, the case of the Departamento de Estudios Humanísticos of the Universidad de Chile is presented, highlighting the influence of its members (specifically Ronald Kay) on the particular style of art writing that Richard began to develop. At this time, efforts to intertwine the relationship between works of art, poetry, and theory were made in exhibition catalogues and other publications.

The third section focuses upon Richard's analysis of the works of Carlos Altamirano, Francisco Smythe, and Carlos Leppe at the end of the 1970s. Through their work, Richard not only began to create her own writing style and theoretical explorations, but also began to break with the artistic and theoretical experiences of the past by establishing clear differences in her own approach.

This chapter sees Richard begin an intellectual journey that has lasted almost 50 years. In order to arrive at the theoretical edifice of current *crítica cultural*, Richard had to outline her project and define the practical and theoretical scaffolding that would allow her to achieve this objective. These initial steps came in the form of her first texts and collaborations with particular artists and their work. In this way, and following the tradition initiated by Charles Baudelaire in *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, Richard saw in writing about art a way of initiating a new cultural-critical project in Chile.

I. From May of 1968 in France to the Unidad Popular: Nelly Richard's initial years in Chile

Nelly Richard was born in Paris in 1948 and grew up in an environment characterized by the effects of World War II and a series of political, social, and educational reforms that occurred throughout Europe at this time. During the second half of the 1960s, she began to study modern literature at the Université Paris-Sorbonne – Paris IV, and witnessed the student movements of May 1968. As a student of literature, Richard was deeply affected by this experience. In effect, the student and workers' movement proposed a series of social and economic transformations of the political landscape dominated by Charles de Gaulle, as well as modifications to the moral and cultural patterns of French society. The May 68, as it has been called, proposed a social revolution that attempted to shake up the traditional components of bourgeois French society, and to resist the one-dimensional logic of global capitalism (Reynolds, 2011).

Whilst this explosion of political action pointed in a revolutionary direction, the forces of capitalism and tradition resisted and defeated the movement. Owing to the electoral defeats of the Left and the repressive policies put in place by de Gaulle, social movements in France lost traction and gave way to a regime of social reform administered by government elites without the participation of workers or students. After 1969, all that was left were names and memories of the revolutionary days of May 1968 (Reader & Wadia, 1993). In the years that followed, there was an explosion of analysis, interpretation, and unprecedented theoretical-reflexive models that emerged to make sense of this phenomenon.

Both before and after the May 1968 events, the French intelligentsia played a

central role both in academic institutions and the public sphere. Authors and intellectuals such as Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Guy Debord, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Régis Debray, Raymond Aron, Felix Guattari, and Gilles Deleuze, among others, emerged as public intellectuals, establishing new political and theoretical challenges (Bourg, 2007). In the years following the revolts of May 1968, a plethora of theories, interpretative frameworks, and theoretical action models emerged in France, all of which were new to European academia. Systems such as structuralism, post-Structuralism, post-Modern philosophy, existentialism, situationism, deconstructionism, and others became interpretive frameworks available for new generations of students and intellectuals (Asensi, 2006). Indeed, the effects of this renewed intellectual fervour can still be felt (Cusset, 2008).

These theoretical, intellectual, poetic, urban, revolutionary, and political experiments constituted the backdrop for Nelly Richard's early academic experiences. Undoubtedly, these authors and their theories were part of her daily reading and discussions. This research will demonstrate that these early experiences would directly affect her *crítica cultural*.

The close connection that these intellectual currents would come to establish (especially post-structuralism, post-modernism and deconstruction) with artistic expression¹² would have a major impact on Richard's future work. Collaboration between the French intellectuals and a series of artists, film directors, playwrights, writers, visual artists, and others would mark a new stage in critical thought. While it is true that the relationship between art and philosophy is not exclusive to the 20th century, during that century an

¹² See volumes five and six of the collection *The History of Continental Philosophy*, edited by Alan D. Schrift (2010).

unprecedented relationship emerged, characterized by the philosophical resolve to identify the political and transformative potential of art.

This relationship also occurred between intellectuals, urban space, and symbolic production. For certain philosophical practices, and especially those related to situationsim and the work of Guy Debord ([1956] 2006), in the maze of the city one finds both new forms of aesthetic and social knowledge and spaces for political intervention. Debord's ideas in the context of international situationism would demarcate a significant reflexive path for the young intellectuals of the French revolts of May 1968. For them, the urban experience enabled them to experience multiple sensations and find cultural fragments or signs of cultural resistance. In a context characterized by the capitalist homogenization of cities, the path towards a new interpretative model implied a concrete methodology for understanding the emotions and behaviours of individuals, and the steps necessary for critical and political interventions in the city.

The revolution in poetic language also had a direct influence upon Richard during these years. Thanks to magazines such as *Tel Quel*, *Langages et Critique*, and figures such as Barthes, Kristeva, Derrida and Michel Foucault, among others, it was possible to undertake a true re-evaluation of literature and art criticism. In these publications, writing became a political problem and not just a literary exercise. Language was thus conceived as a disruptive and subversive force in search of the 'other meaning', the heightened desire (Marx-Scouras, 1996). This was a theoretical revolution both in writing and in the post-modern avant-garde.

This intellectual atmosphere, full of ruptures and new theoretical and political explorations, provided fertile ground for Richard's theoretical development.

However, her intellectual project did not come to fruition in the context of French academia, nor did her theoretical development play out on the streets of Paris. On the contrary, her intellectual experience was established in a peripheral society - Chile.

As in the case of Paris in May 1968, Chile was witnessing one of the most revolutionary social and political projects in history - the *Unidad Popular* government. In 1970 the first democratically elected socialist president in history, Salvador Allende, became the President of Chile. From 1970 to 1973, Chile would experience a series of transformations known as the 'Chilean road to socialism'. These changes implied a real revolution in the daily lives of Chileans.

Under the *Unidad Popular* government, a series of political, social, economic, and cultural reforms were democratically established in order to reduce the country's extreme social inequality and poverty. Persisting from colonial times through independence and the formation of the republic, the social differences between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat had become a class conflict in the most purely Marxist fashion¹³. The Chilean way to socialism not only proposed to undo the historic privileges of the wealthy class, but also to transform the productive matrix into a state and solidarity-based activity. For example, copper and other minerals were nationalized, there were regular increases in social spending, several income redistribution policies (salary increases) were enacted, plans for universal access to education were implemented, the agrarian reform process was accelerated, unions were

¹³ A large portion of the theoretical-political thought that fed into this process came from Marxism and its various currents. In effect, an important number of those who followed and collaborated with the Popular Unity government were advanced adherents of Marxist theoretical models, and such fellow Marxist travellers as Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Herbert Marcuse, Lucien Goldman, Jean-Paul Sartre, Mao Tse Tsung, André Gorz, Jose Carlos Mariategui. It is impossible to understand the *Unidad Popular* without considering this historic characteristic. See Moulian (1983), Hite (2000), and Munck (2007).

strengthened, social welfare benefits expanded, improvements were made in basic housing, among other policies. In sum, a series of reforms were implemented that led to a series of conflicts between the dominant and the dominated (Whitehead, 1974; O'Brien, 1976; Garcés, 1976; De Vylder, 1976; Gil et al, 1979; Davis, 1985; Kaufman, 1988; Falcoff, 1989).

The *Unidad Popular* project not only supported social and workers' movements, but also developed one of the most ambitious plans in the history of Chile to encourage and support culture and the arts. A series of plans and programmes were developed in order to create closer links between artistic expression (music, literature, audiovisual, pictorial, etc.) and the poorest populations and municipalities in the country (Trumper, 2005; Gazmuri et al., 2006). Many artists and creators, or 'culture workers' as they came to be known, established an unprecedented commitment to Allende. Thousands of painters, musicians, actors and actresses, poets, film-makers, cultural producers, etc., joined the revolutionary and socialist projects of the *Unidad Popular* government, with the proposed goal of changing the cultural landscape of Chile.

As American historians Simon Collier and William F. Sater observe:

From the beginning, the new government strove hard to fulfill its program. It greatly increased social spending, and made a determined effort to redistribute wealth to the lower-paid and the poor. As a consequence of higher wages and new initiatives in health and nutrition, many poorer Chileans, perhaps for the first time in their lives, ate well and clothed themselves somewhat better than before. Nor did the state simply attempt to improve their physical well-being: it funded a great variety of cultural endeavors, in a real effort to take the arts (serious as well as popular) to the mass of the people. (Collier & Sater, 2004: 330).

As a result, the Allende government established a high degree of collaboration between artists, workers and politicians in order to develop a political, social, and cultural revolution. The idea was to generate politicized art committed to the Marxist principles of the socialist revolution. In this context, the figure of the ‘militant artist’, and the ‘new man’¹⁴ emerged within the Chilean cultural sphere¹⁵. This is especially evident in two books published in 1971. The Communist Party of Chile published *La revolución chilena y los problemas de la cultura*, which includes a series of fragments and ideas vital to the ‘cultural revolution that Chile needs’. Throughout this book, representatives of the arts (folk music, ballet, literature, etc.) and culture workers’ unions throughout the country take the steps necessary to achieve the *Unidad Popular* socialist revolution. The other book, *La cultura en la vía al socialismo* adopts a similar line. With contributions from authors such as Enrique Lihn, Hernán Valdés, Cristián Huneeus, Carlos Ossa, and Mauricio Wacquez, this book seeks to expose the weaknesses of the cultural plan developed by the Allende government, as well as to espouse specific concepts of cultural action in the context of the Chilean way to socialism. Both books argue not only what true art should deal with (such as class contradictions and illustrations of revolutionary process) in the Allende government, but also deficiencies in infrastructure, education, marginality, and injustice that the *Unidad Popular* had to face.

¹⁴ In the sense of Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara.

¹⁵ As Richard would note several decades later: ‘El “arte del compromiso”, que responde al mundo ideológico de los 60 en América Latina, le solicita al artista poner su creatividad al servicio del pueblo y la revolución. El artista no sólo debe luchar contra las formas de alienación burguesas del arte y la mercantilización de la obra. Debe, además, ayudar al proceso de transformación social “representando” (hablando *por y en lugar de*) los intereses de clase del sujeto privilegiado de la revolución: el pueblo. Así ocurría en las exposiciones de los 70 que tuvieron carácter de acontecimiento político-cultural en Chile, tales como *El pueblo tiene arte con Allende* y *Las 40 medidas de la Unidad Popular*. En ambas exposiciones, se conjuga el deseo de acercar el arte al pueblo, de extender los circuitos de recepción de las obras hacia lo masivo para que el arte penetre en todo el cuerpo social gracias al desarrollo de nuevas tecnologías de reproducción serial como la serigrafía. Esas técnicas de reproducción serial estaban contenidas para desmentir el fetichismo burgués de la obra única al multiplicar su distribución y al democratizar así el consumo de los bienes culturales. En esos años, los años de la Unidad Popular, el artista pasa a ser “un trabajador de la cultura” en su afán por crear un “arte para el pueblo” y un “arte del pueblo”. (Richard, 2010b). [Emphasis in the original]

This situation inspired many intellectuals, sociologists, artists, politicians, and social leaders from all over the world to learn more about the socialist experience in Chile, and above all to participate in the ongoing revolutionary process. Richard was one of these intellectuals. As is traditional in revolutionary movements in which intellectuals are exiled to new territories and locations (Kaplan, 1996), Richard arrived in Chile in 1970 equipped with theories, memories, experiences and dreams.

In leaving the failed student and workers' movement of May 1968 behind, Richard saw in the 'Chilean way to socialism' an opportunity to experience transformations within the national intellectual field, as well as to share within this transformative space the knowledge and lessons learned from French cultural and post-structuralist theories.

Thanks to an invitation by the artist Nemesio Antúnez, Richard arrived as a collaborator in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in 1971. Antúnez was Director of the museum at this time and his project consisted of transforming it into a platform for artistic and cultural dynamization. Richard was to be in charge of publications, editions, exhibitions, and above all, a collaborator with the 'Ojo con el arte' radio programme transmitted every week by Radio Universidad de Chile¹⁶. In this work environment, Richard established a series of contacts and connections with artists such as Carlos Altamirano, Juan Domingo Dávila, and Eugenio Dittborn, among others. Above all, she established a professional relationship and friendship with the artist Carlos Leppe which would be long-standing In Richard's words:

¹⁶ See interview with Nelly Richard in Galende (2007: 184-206).

Carlos Leppe fue el tipo que me enseñó a pensar la visualidad o, mejor dicho, a pensar cómo se materializa el pensamiento visual en una estructura de obra. Y esto se debe a que Leppe combinaba ya por entonces el desborde barroco y la exuberancia de los sentidos con un sorprendente rigor conceptual. No sé, te diría que Leppe era un tipo que ponía día a día en ejercicio una fascinante inteligencia de los signos...Y eso lo experimentábamos diariamente al recorrer la ciudad, al descifrar las fachadas, al revisar los cuerpos, la moda, mirando revistas de arte, investigando en lo popular, en fin. (Richard, 2007d: 185-186).

As a result of this relationship based upon artistic and intellectual exchange with Leppe, Richard began to develop collaborative work in which the body, the city, the *dérive* (drift), and experimentation were key.

During her initial years in Chile, Richard began to participate in academic seminars organized by a series of literary critics and philosophers such as Martín Cerda, Federico Schopf, and Adriana Valdés, among others. At these seminars, she generated a critical dialogue between her own French theoretical influences and other European theoretical sources, as well as Latin American intellectual traditions. These initial experiences represented the beginning of a series of intellectual collaborations and exchanges between 'local' thinkers and Richard's Parisian theoretical references and ideas.

Whilst these initial intellectual contacts began to bear their first fruit in mid 1973, in September of that year their meetings and their professional posts at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes would be violently interrupted¹⁷.

In mid 1973, the government of Salvador Allende was immersed in a complex

¹⁷ For more information on the attack on the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes on September 11, 1973, see the documentary *Impactos. El otro golpe de la dictadura* (2014) by Manuel Tello.

political situation. With support and funding by the US Nixon administration (Qureshi, 2009; Haslam, 2005), coordinated actions were undertaken by extreme right-wing movements, media groups (*El Mercurio*), businessmen, rural land owners, centre-right political parties (Christian Democracy, National Party), among other groups, triggering a series of events with the purpose of destabilizing the Allende government. Between 1970 and 1973 (the 1,000 days of Allende), the *Unidad Popular* government had had to face a series of attacks by these social groups. Among these disputes, the rationing of basic services (petrol, food, flour, etc.) as well as a generalized climate of violence were especially difficult problems for the socialist government to resolve.

In addition to all this, during August and September of 1973 there were a series of changes to the upper echelons of military command, as well as within the ministries of defence, foreign relations, and the interior. At the same time, protests both in favour of and against the Allende government, in addition to high inflation, low productivity, and devaluation of the markets, etc., led to a growing sense of instability that precipitated one of the most dramatic episodes in Chilean history (Oppenheim, 2007; Palacios, 2009; Guardiola-Rivera, 2013).

Under the command of Augusto Pinochet, the recently appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and with the support of the Chilean right-wing and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), plans were drawn up for a *coup d'état* against the Allende government. Even though Pinochet was the last of the conspirators to agree to the plan, he led the attack on September 11, 1973 (Spooner, 1994).

That day Chilean society changed radically. The American historian Steve J. Stern has summed up those hours:

It was a dramatic moment in a morning of dramatic moments. Shortly after 8:30 A.M. on Radio Agricultura and within minutes on other stations, General Augusto Pinochet, Admiral José Toribio Merino, General Gustavo Leigh, and General César Mendoza – the commanders of the army, navy, air force, and *carabineros* (police), respectively- issued a proclamation to the nation. In view of Chile's economic, social, and moral crisis; the incapacity of the government to stop chaos; and the civil war would result from the “constant growth of armed paramilitary groups organized and trained by the political parties of the Unidad Popular”, the armed forces and *carabineros* demanded the surrender of President Salvador Allende. They had agreed, “to commence the historic mission of struggling for the liberation of the fatherland from Marxist yoke, the restoration of order and institutionalism”. (Stern, 2006: 11).

What followed in the hours, days, and months after that morning has been widely documented both in Spanish (González, 1988; Politzer, 1989; Verdugo, 1989; Cavallo et al., 2008; González, 2012), and in English (Constable & Valenzuela, 1991; O'Shaughnessy, 2000; Ensalaco, 2000; Kornbluh, 2003; Adams, 2012).

As historians Collier and Sater write:

September 11, 1973 - *el once*, “the eleventh”, as Chilean simply called it for years afterwards - represented the worst political breakdown in the history of the republic. Perhaps because the level of national desperation had reached such heights in 1973, the aftermath was far more prolonged than anyone would have believed possible. [...] The iron heel of ruthless repression was stamped down from the first moments of the new regime. (Collier & Sater, 2004: 359).

Indeed, the initial months after Pinochet's coup were characterized by heavy-handed repression of the general population and politicians (including the closing of the National Congress), and reiterated human rights violations

against people connected to the *Unidad Popular* government¹⁸. Repressive policies were coordinated by a series of state apparatuses, such as the 'Caravana de la Muerte' (Verdugo, 2001) and 'Operacion Condor' (Dinges, 2005), with the objective of eliminating or disappearing both 'subversive agents' that had supposedly joined forces to defend the legacy of Allende, as well as social, political, and cultural leaders of the *Unidad Popular*. Within the cultural field, a series of artists were assassinated. Hence the example of actor, musician, and academic Víctor Jara (Jara, 1998).

Now under the control of a military junta, the military group that assumed power following the coup¹⁹, aided by the work of secret repressive organisms such as the Board of National Intelligence, the entire country became a space of terror, fear, and persecution.

In June 1974, Pinochet became the most important political and symbolic figure of the military regime. Law decree 527 stipulated that the 'executive power' of the government was to be controlled by the President of the military junta. In this way, during a public ceremony in Santiago de Chile, Augusto Pinochet was designated as the 'Jefe Supremo de la Nación' (Ensalaco, 2000). This implied taking on totalitarian power. As a result, Pinochet not only controlled all social and political proceedings in the country, but all subjectivities, fears, and the movements of Chileans as well.

¹⁸ According to Stern: 'The repression in Pinochet's Chile was large in scale and layered in its implementation. In a country of only 10 million people in 1973, individually proved cases of death or disappearance by state agents (or persons in their hire) amount to about 3,000; torture victims run in the dozens of thousands; documented political arrest exceed 82,000; the exile flow amounts to about 200,000. These are lower-end figures, suitable for a rock-bottom baseline. Even using a conservative methodology, a reasonable estimated toll for deaths and disappearances by state agents is 3,500-4,500, for political detentions 150,000-200,000. Some credible torture estimates surpass the 100,000 threshold; some credible exile estimates reach 400,000.' (Stern, 2010: xxiii-xxiv).

¹⁹ The members were: General Gustavo Leigh (Air Force), General Augusto Pinochet (Army), Admiral José Toribio Merino (Navy), and General César Mendoza (Carabineros, Chilean police).

In this scenario, Nelly Richard was forced to stay away from any and all public and cultural activities. During the initial years of the military regime, daily life was characterized by constant police control, states of siege, rumours and suspicions among neighbours and friends. This implied the end of cultural life, as well as the practically total disappearance of government support for artistic initiatives (Agosín, 1990). Between 1973 and 1975, Richard did not participate in any art-related activities. However, during those years, and despite constant control and censorship by the military regime, some artistic exhibitions and activities were held in cultural institutions such as the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, as well as in small private art galleries²⁰.

II. Words, visualities, and theorizations: Richard's initial collaborations

Despite the cultural wasteland that followed the military coup, characterized by thousands of people forced into exile, disappearances, and the assassinations of artists committed to the Allende government, little by little the artistic-cultural circuit began to experience a certain degree of reactivation.

This revived cultural circuit was totally different from that which had existed during the Allende years. In effect, during the 1970s artistic production was characterized by an almost complete 'cultural blackout'. From the beginning of the military regime, all forms of artistic creation denominated as "panfletaria" (propagandistic) were quickly persecuted and censored. Artistic

²⁰ It is important to mention that the public that visited these galleries belonged mainly to upper income groups with high levels of cultural and socio-economic capital. In addition, according to interviews, the public at these galleries never exceeded 20-30 people per inauguration.

endeavours such as music, theatre, visual arts and writing, among others were heavily censored. However, as Thorrington (2013) observes, during these same years a small but substantial cultural scene resisted the oppressive measures of the military regime. Owing to private initiatives and some specific public organisms such as the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, some spaces remained open to certain creative expressions. This was especially true in the case of the visual arts. Several exhibitions were held between 1974 and 1979 featuring artists who would come to influence Richard's future work.

One of the first exhibitions to be inaugurated in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes following the coup was *Dittborn, 20 Acontecimientos para Goya, Pintor*, featuring the artist Eugenio Dittborn²¹. Inaugurated in December 1974 by the new Museum Director, sculptor Lily Garafulic²², this exhibition consisted of a series of drawings mixing pop elements with Latin American references (the faces of comic book characters, toothless smiles, scenes from Mexican soap operas, animals, etc.). This work, completed during the months following the coup, represented an initial approach to certain elements that Dittborn would elaborate with increasing complexity in the future. For example, the use of human faces and bodies in movement as well as elements of popular Chilean and Latin American culture would be key to his future work. Together with the integration of photography and other material in his paintings, Dittborn would become a key input for Richard's thinking, and for other theoreticians.

²¹ Eugenio Dittborn (b. 1943) was a student at the Universidad de Chile (1961-1965), and for several years divided his time between Spain and Germany, perfecting techniques such as silk-screen printing, lithography, and painting. Upon his return to Chile, he became politically connected to the Unitary Popular Action Movement (Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario, MAPU), the radical wing of the Christian Democratic Party of Chile. However, he did not maintain any direct connection to the Chilean artistic scene under the Popular Unity government. This meant he would not be branded by the military authorities, thus he was able to work as a professor of painting during much of the military dictatorship. See the interview with Dittborn in Galende (2007).

²² Garafulic took over as director of the MNBA from 1974-1977 after the renunciation and self-exile of Nemesio Antúnez. Garafulic had no political rationale nor was he considered a danger to the military regime. However, he did respect the plans of Antúnez regarding available artists.

Some months before the Dittborn exhibition, the visual artist Carlos Leppe (b. 1952) inaugurated the exhibition *Happening de las Gallinas* in the Carmen Waugh Gallery²³. In the main room of the gallery, Leppe sat in a black cubicle wearing a wreath of silver leaves used in Chile for funerals or historic commemorations. On the floor of the gallery were a series of plaster chickens that could be moved or redistributed at will by the audience. During the performance-exhibition, Leppe began to stuff his mouth with boiled eggs in front of the audience as if he were starving. The 'Happening de las Gallinas' performance is one of the first works in which Leppe utilized his body as a means of political expression.

The use of the body as an aid to analyse power relations would be a constant in Leppe's work²⁴. This idea would emerge again at an exhibition in the *Módulo y Forma* gallery in Santiago at the beginning of 1975. At this exhibition, the artist presented the piece *El Perchero*. Considered to be experimental sculpture as it combined photography, performance art, installation, etc., this was one of Leppe's first works to deal with the issue of bodily pain, binary sexualities, and torture and its physical consequences²⁵. In this work, Leppe appears dressed in women's clothes, with a false bust and white patches that hid his masculine genitalia and other parts of his body. In

²³ Carmen Waugh (1932-2013) has been considered to be the first art gallery director in Chile, and played an important role in the Universidad de Chile as coordinator of the Institute of Latin American Art, as well as curator of the artwork donated by artists from all over the world to the Allende government.

²⁴ Richard considered this corporeal and political dimension to be central to her own intellectual work. In effect, although in those years Richard did not participate as curator or theoretician for those performances and exhibitions, she did act as an attentive witness. In the following pages, this idea will be analysed in more detail.

²⁵ As part of the recent inclusion in the collection of the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, Concha Calvo (2013) has written about this work: 'The body used as a support for artistic expression was seen to be a powerful medium for political condemnation. In 1975 he created 'El perchero' (The Clothes Rack), the original mounting of which consisted of three folded life-size photographs hung on a structure with three coat-hangers. The photographs depicted the artist's body dressed in women's clothing, exposing and concealing symbolically loaded body parts. The piece as a whole dared to confront the question of the representation of living flesh, in a clear reference to torture used by the Chilean military regime.'

the photography, bodies are shown in various poses and forms that demonstrate discomfort, unconformity, unease, and rage.

Both *El perchero* and *Happening de las gallinas* demonstrate the tense relationship that existed within art between power and resistance, between pre-defined forms and desires towards the Other. What these works began to show was the transformation of subjectivities and bodies into their historic context: the dictatorship. In other words, how the repressive policies of the military regime began to be absorbed by the bodies and subjectivities of the Chilean people.

Indeed, the period between 1974 and 1976 is considered to be the most repressive of the military regime, including extreme vigilance and persecution against the final vestiges of resistance to military rule (O'Shaughnessy, 2000; Dinges, 2005; Stern, 2006: 108-110; Policzer, 2009). During September 1973, the closest agents to the Allende government were executed or disappeared, while from 1974 to 1975 the regime concentrated on the civilian population. Cases of torture, interrogation, jailing and intimidation became a fact of life in cities and towns throughout Chile. Obviously, such events were never reported in the news. On the contrary, this repression was experienced on a daily basis in the city, specifically in the neighborhoods, populations, and streets of the most marginalized segments of society. This is how such methods gained their strength. Everyday, however indirectly, a *habitus* of submission, pattern-formation, values and dispositions was established, which the dictatorship sought to reproduce within the subjectivities and bodies of the Chilean people (Jofré, 1989).

Such conditions of terror and persecution were not only experienced by the working class, poor, and marginalized sectors of the civilian population. In

addition, intellectuals, artists, and university professionals also went through similar processes. During the initial years of the military dictatorship, academic freedom was curtailed and the regime intervened in public universities, with military officials appointed as rectors. In addition, freedom of assembly was outlawed, certain academics were dismissed, and books that were considered dangerous were destroyed or burnt. As has been detailed by several researchers (Constable & Valenzuela, 1993; Puryear, 1994; Garretón, 2005), the social sciences and humanities suffered the worst consequences. Altogether, there was a generalized decay of political and theoretical thought, especially that linked to Marxism.

However, and in spite of policies designed to dismantle the arts, social sciences, and humanities in Chile, spaces continued to exist that resisted such actions. Such spaces would play a key role in the reformulation of critical thought in the context of the dictatorship.

Founded in 1972 in the Faculty of Engineering of the Universidad de Chile, the Departamento de Estudios Humanísticos played a key role in the maintenance of philosophical, literary, and critical-theoretical thought in Chile. Its first director was the essayist Cristián Hunneus, and among the list of professors was the academic Jorge Guzmán, the philosophers Juan de Dios Vidal and Patricio Marchant, the poets Enrique Lihn and Nicanor Parra, and the poet-philosopher Ronald Kay (the latter has been recognized as one of the first translators of Walter Benjamin in Chile). This academic department offered courses on pedagogy, philosophy, and literature to students of the Universidad de Chile. Among these were the poet Raúl Zurita, the visual artist Catalina Parra, the philosopher Pablo Oyarzún, the writer Diamela Eltit, the essayist Adriana Valdés, and the writer-economist Arturo Fontaine, among others.

The Departamento de Estudios Humanísticos became the only space where it was possible for students and academics to share a variety of literature on philosophy, history, sociology, literature, physics, and politics. In addition, the first translations of Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and others were read within these classrooms, almost at the same time as they were in German, French, and English universities. However, the most interesting development that emerged from this academic department was not the group of professors and students²⁶, but its policy of experimentation with literature, art, visuality, and history. The latter was expressed specifically through a publication which was key to defining a new regime of writing and visual arts in Chile - *Manuscritos*.

It is difficult to determine whether *Manuscritos* is a book or a magazine. Perhaps it could best be described as a semi-academic magazine. However, it is generally unclassifiable. In effect, the word 'manuscript' implies a work in progress, or a document that is in the process of being formulated, including the collection of ideas, arguments, images, etc. In order to create a form of poetic-visual experimentation, the poet and philosopher Ronald Kay was responsible for the first and only issue of *Manuscritos*. The initial objective of the magazine was to bring together both veteran and younger poets, as well as writers, philosophers and visual artists. It was here, for example, that Raúl Zurita first published his poems, sharing a space with Nicanor Parra. The same occurred regarding design under Catalina Parra.

Hence *Manuscritos* can be considered a book-object, in which photographs, maps, drawings, essays, poems, and other elements are juxtaposed. The

²⁶ All of which would play a key role in the reconfiguration of the Chilean intellectual field both during and after the dictatorship.

magazine is a sum of reflections, landscapes, cartographies, sensory experiments, and poetic observations characteristic of the *dérive* (drift). It is as if it were a product of the psycho-geography of Guy Debord.²⁷ Elements of psychology are intertwined with geography, or more precisely, these elements are explored through words and images of human behaviour in urban landscapes. The interesting thing about *Manuscritos* is expressed through its critical capacity to deal with the cultural transformations that were occurring in the city and social life under the military dictatorship.

The notion that *Manuscritos* incorporates surrealist elements of the *dérive* along with certain situationist experiments is based upon its effort to transform the experience of daily life and encourage perturbation, subversion, and challenges to daily perception. In this way it is possible to point out, as other researchers have done (Cucurella, 2014), the unquestionable relationship between *Manuscritos* and the magazine *El quebrantahuesos* of 1952. Created by the poets Nicanor Parra, Enrique Lihn, and Alejandro Jodorowsky, *El quebrantahuesos* combined irony and satire with poetry and the visual arts. Through newspaper cuttings and headlines, images, photocopies, photographs, etc., the editors created political-poetic poems or sentences critical of Chilean society. In addition, not only did they create a magazine, but they also included amongst its pages a series of public spaces, analogous to shop windows and walls.

The work of Nicanor Parra, Enrique Lihn, and Alejandro Jodorowsky had a strong influence on Ronald Kay. In fact, *Manuscritos* could be considered a ready-made version of *El quebrantahuesos*. Undoubtedly, it was a ready-made in a completely different context, characterized by the censorship,

²⁷ See Coverley (2006).

persecution, and threats of a dictatorial regime.

Manuscritos was a visual exercise that combined diagrams, photographs, poetic texts, critical analysis, and urban landscapes, marking a new path in the visual arts, writing, and politics in Chile. As Idelber Avelar observes:

An inaugural moment in this process was the publication of *Manuscritos*, a one-issue magazine edited by Ronald Kay and designed by Catalina Parra, where the intertwining image and text gave testimony to the decisive entrance of the urban space as a major interlocutor for the poetic text. [...] Kay's juxtaposition of text and grayish photos of Santiago offers an image of the break-punctuated urban experience under dictatorship, an experience the poetic voice could only perceive as unspeakable. (Avelar, 1999a: 165).

Avelar is correct to recognize the poetic voice that Kay embodies, as well as the visuality that accompanies the publication itself. Altogether, the magazine played an important part in establishing a break with traditional academic notions, and took a step towards poetic-visual experimentation in the context of an institutional space under constant vigilance. Perhaps it is for this reason that *Manuscritos* was censored, and its circulation prohibited by university authorities (Honorato & Muñoz, 2005). After the publication of its only issue, Hunneus was forced to resign as Director of the department, and Ronald Kay lost his support within the institution. However, and in spite of its closing, *Manuscritos* became the inaugural document of a series of publications using the catalogue format, in which Richard would play a fundamental role.

By the mid1970s, Richard had already established professional and intellectual relationships with a significant number of students and academics of the Departamento de Estudios Humanísticos. As we shall see, her relationships with Diamela Eltit and Raúl Zurita would be of vital importance.

However, one of the first intellectual collaborations that Richard developed during these years was with Ronald Kay and Eugenio Dittborn. Whilst Richard had briefly collaborated in other exhibitions with artists such as Juan Domingo Dávila²⁸ and Carlos Leppe, her first big theoretical effort was reflected in a text associated with Dittborn's exhibition *Delachilenapintura, historia*.

In May 1976, Dittborn inaugurated the exhibition *Delachilenapintura, historia*, in the Epoca Gallery in Santiago. Dittborn presented a series of drawings in which body, face, and physical force play a key role, as well as the relationship between the history of Chilean art and popular bodies and faces. In effect, through the use of visual, conceptual, and formal references, the artist problematized the gestures of the faces and the physical movements of the bodies of athletes, artists, and anonymous bodies. Overall, 'Delachilenapintura, historia' sought out an incursion into representations of the collective popular body, and an interruption in the history of Chilean art.

After Dittborn's exhibition ended, Ronald Kay invited Richard to participate as a literary critic in his graphic-editorial project 'V.I.S.U.A.L'. The objective of the invitation was to reflect, from their respective theoretical 'trenches', the work Dittborn presented at the Epoca Gallery. The collaboration materialized two months later with the publication, in catalogue format, of the text *V.I.S.U.A.L: Dos textos de Nelly Richard y Ronald Kay sobre 9 dibujos de Dittborn*.

In the catalogue, created manually with materials such as cardboard and photocopies, visual and textual remnants of *Manuscritos* can clearly be observed. Nevertheless, at the time it represented a document that was entirely new. As Editor-in-Chief of 'V.I.S.U.A.L', Kay proposed to analyse

²⁸ See Richard's book *The Mechanism of illusion in Davila* (1977e).

Dittborn's work based on his readings and translations of Walter Benjamin. For her part, Richard would do the same using her own conceptual background and initial theoretical, historical, and cultural explorations of Chilean aesthetic and political territory.

V.I.S.U.A.L.: Dos textos de... is considered one of the first catalogue-documents in Chile to offer an analysis of work based upon *ad hoc* theoretical-philosophical premises²⁹. This document includes theoretical and philosophical discussions of the body, history, photography, urban movement, and popular culture. At the same time, graphics and visuals from Dittborn's work constantly 'interrupt' the text.

The cover of *V.I.S.U.A.L.: Dos textos de...* includes some of Dittborn's recurring themes: bodies exposed to physical tests, anonymous faces in the forefront, and high-contrast photographs (Figure 1). It is also clear that it is a photograph cut from a sports publication or sports section of a newspaper. In the centre of the image is a boxer surrounded by various bodies. There is the referee to his right, the opponent to his left. Behind him is the audience watching the fight. It is not known whether the photograph was taken before or after the bout. What is known is that everyone in the photograph wanted to be a historic record of the moment, as well as a protagonist of such a moment. Everyone will see the punches or have already seen the punches. Everyone will be, or have been, witnesses to the violence that is taking place. As a metaphor for Chile, this work exhibits the experience of the coup on the human body and face.

²⁹ Obviously, the relation between word and image (or writing and visibility) has a long tradition in the history of global art. See Dixon et al. (2010) and Morley (2003). In the case of Chile, although it is possible to find evidence of writing on artwork, such texts are mainly relegated to general philosophical issues, newspaper reviews, university texts (Miguel Rojas Mix) or collaborations between poets (Juan Emar, Enrique Lihn) and visual artists. See, for example, Luis Oyarzún (1981).

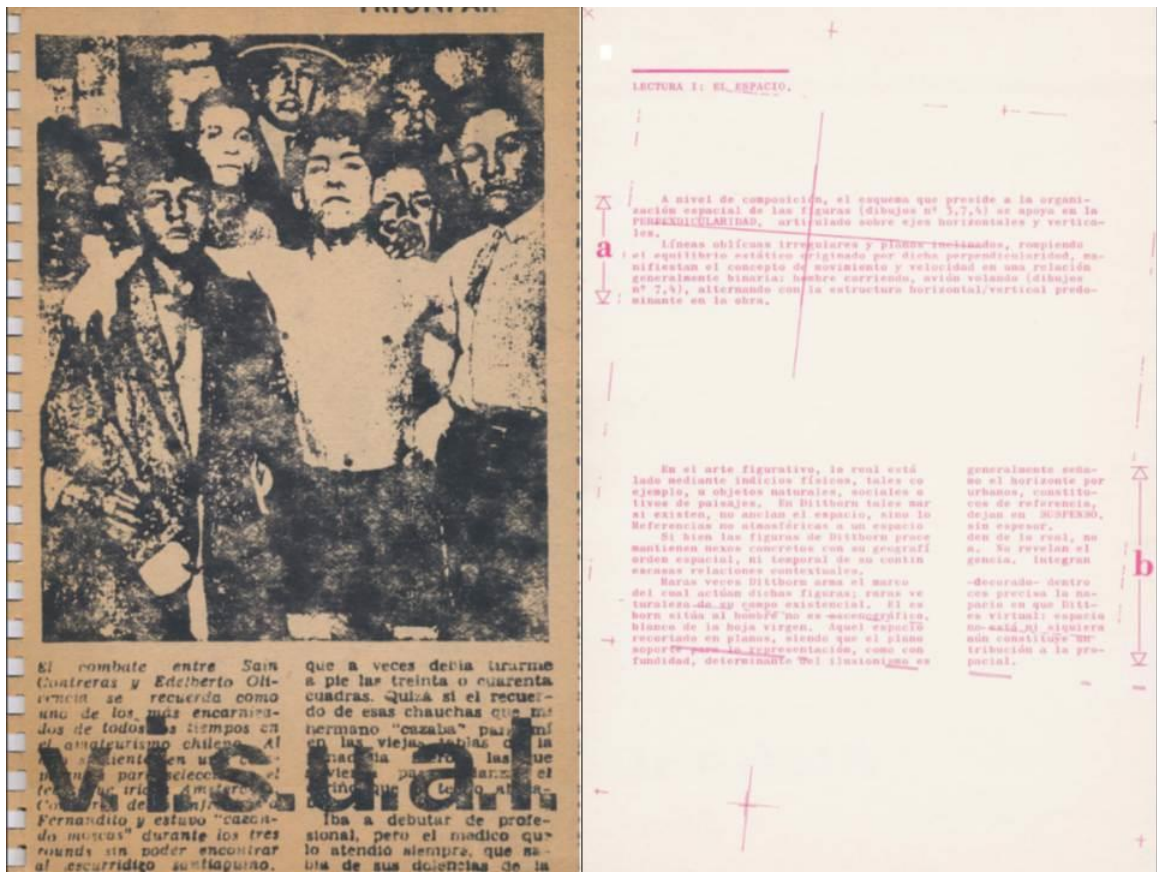


Figure 1. Cover and inner page of 'V.I.S.U.A.L.: Dos textos de Nelly Richard y Ronald Kay sobre 9 dibujos de Dittborn' Santiago, Chile (1976)

Inside the catalogue are more drawings, photographs, news references, faces, maps, cuttings, and bodies framed by Dittborn. However, these visualities are accompanied by the theoretical texts mentioned above.

The first of these texts is Richard's 'delachilenapintura, historia, recorrido.'. This text is considered to be a pioneering document regarding the collaborative activities that Richard would develop with other artists in Chile (Honorato, 2012). Although she had already collaborated with other artists (Dávila), this is a landmark text in her initial work. This is due not only to the

editorial format utilized (a catalogue designed as an *object of art and writing*, not just as a publicity document for an exhibition), but also to the fact that it shares a writing space with an 'academic' figure' in the form of Ronald Kay. This is a substantial difference, marking a before and after in writing about art in Chile.

As observed by Justo Pastor Mellado³⁰ (2005), in 'delachilenapintura, historia, recorrido.' Richard took a radical turn regarding writing about art. She did this mainly for two reasons. First, she clearly distanced herself from the dominant tradition in Chile by homogenizing text and artwork. In other words, Richard rejected the style of writing that had, until 1973, been dedicated to describing or explaining the artistic operations that had been developed. Richard's contribution is to recognize that both the text and the art deserve their own declaratory space. The text and the artwork share a common space, a catalogue, but both represent a critical exercise in and of themselves. On the other hand, Richard draws a distinction between the materiality of the objects (the artwork itself) and the issue or problem *behind* the artwork. However, this distinction is only possible when a unity has been achieved. This is to say, when the problem being supported is effectively problematized as a result of the nature of the support³¹.

From this point of view, both the artwork and the text are self-reflective. In effect, Richard did not want to explain Dittborn's drawings in a pedagogical way. On the contrary, she sought to utilize her text in order to problematize

³⁰ Justo Pastor Mellado (Talca, 1949) is an art critic, independent curator, and art historian. He studied philosophy at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, and at the Université de Provence, France. Currently, he lives and works between Santiago de Chile and Valparaíso.

³¹ Mellado insists: 'No se trata, pues, de una simple exposición de dibujos que tuviera por tema la historia de la pintura, sino la reconstrucción de una plataforma gráfica mediante la cual, la condición de representación de la propia historia era puesta en juego, primero, a partir del soporte, para continuar estableciendo el problema: la historia como problema; la posibilidad de trabajar una crítica histórica desde las propuestas de la obra gráfica misma.' (Mellado, 2005).

the materiality of the artwork. Based on this, the historic problem behind each work of art is dealt with.

Richard begins her analysis by problematizing the empty space present in the artwork. All artwork begins with an interruption of blank space, the quality of which is always being altered by a design (an unstable movement). This is especially obvious in Dittborn's work. In Richard's words:

En cada una de sus propiedades y manifestaciones, el espacio está sujeto a la eventualidad de un conflicto, procedente de algún fenómeno de ruptura, ya sea del equilibrio, del blanco o de la línea. La instancia de aquella RUPTURA define el carácter alternativo – activo/pasivo-, de la función que cumple el blanco en la obra de Eugenio Dittborn. (Richard, 1976: 7 [Emphasis in the original]).

By highlighting the term 'ruptura' ('rupture'), Richard proposes a critical practice. If a design interrupts an empty or blank space, it has done so precisely as a result of the drawings of unknown faces, bodies and identities. According to Richard, these have fractured the history of Chilean art:

Mientras la pintura chilena, estática, fija su expresión oficial en los retratos de álbumes, la "chilenapintura", surge dinámica en la cotidianidad de cuerpos, gestos y acontecimientos colectivos. Recursos gráficos o textuales, recursos narrativos (historieta) o descriptivos (retrato) contribuyen a la evocación de un pasado archivado en revistas populares o consignado en álbumes oficiales, de una historia en marcha o detenida. "delachilenapintura, historia" desvía la historia de la pintura chilena a partir de sus antecedentes; historia parodiada, INTERFERIDA. (Richard, 1976: 11 [Emphasis in the original]).

'Sustitución' (substitution), 'interrupción' (interruption), 'extraviado' (misplaced), 'no-coincidencia' (incoincidence) and 'interferencia' (interference) are other words and concepts that Richard constantly highlights

in 'delachilenapintura, historia, recorrido.' The idea is that, if there is a force field that dominates historic meanings and interpretations (in art history, for example), it must be interrupted or displaced. This is what occurs with Dittborn's drawings and the history of Chilean art. The cultural stereotypes and the inhabitants of popular culture incorporated into Dittborn's work are responsible for developing a historic task: interrupting the history of the triumphant. Just as in the case of the anonymous boxer, the unknown athlete, and the unrecognized native indian, the artist also has a historic duty to demand a new place for them in art history. In Richard's words:

La pintura chilena se vuelve objeto de conquista, anexada por figuras desconocidas u olvidadas, "traspapeladas". Paleta y pinceles, apropiados por prototipos populares, funcionan como indicios desplazados, EXTRAVIADOS en vías locales y en vidas anónimas. (Richard, 1976: 8 [Emphasis in the original]).

In this way, Richard's text sought to delineate certain basic points of her critical project. Moving away from the traditional outlook that conceives art as an illustrative-propagandistic support for political struggle (a criticism levelled against the 'militant art' of the *Unidad Popular*), Richard instead highlights how Dittborn's selection and management of the images, drawings, and paintings is crucial to understanding the role that art will play in this new historic stage. In addition, if before the image had to contain a message or communicate something with a specific goal or objective (revolution, for example), now it deals with bringing about an entirely new kind of struggle – the symbolic rupture of cultural frameworks.

In this historic context Chilean art could no longer follow a plan based on *the* Chilean way to socialism. On the contrary, a new theoretical path was

needed.

In the context of a dictatorship characterized by torture, surveillance, and repression, it was practically impossible to exercise any kind of critical action. Artistic self-censorship, then, had to become a working tool that would balance critical thinking with misleading the regime. By using the unknown faces of swimmers, boxers, and athletes, Dittborn knew that he could create non-traditional narrations of national history. It was no longer through concepts such as 'the new man' or 'the unionized worker' that such narrations would take place but rather through simple, anonymous faces. These have been hit by the punches, as it were, following the traumatic history of September 1973. As historical leftovers, these anonymous faces inhabit Chilean cities under military rule. These are the faces that Richard sought to bring to light in her text. However, they are also faces that enter (art) history indirectly, as comic strips, faces in popular magazines. They cannot enter as political actors in a history that is dominated by terror.

As a traveller wandering through Santiago, and as an observer of these faces, Richard came to understand the need for a new criticism. She recognized that artistic action must not only create strategies to mislead the censoring authorities, but also create mechanisms for symbolic resistance. In this way, to criticize the codifications of power, the arts could become tools of resistance.

While Richard concentrated upon analysing the aesthetic and political components of Dittborn's work, Kay focused mainly upon aesthetic and theoretical components. In his text 'De la chilena pintura, historia, proyecciones', Kay elaborates an interpretation based upon his own translations of Benjamin, Freud, Derrida, Adorno, and Merleau-Ponty. Unlike

Richard, who did not cite any theoretical sources in her text, Kay referenced many. As a poet, philosopher, and professor at the Departamento de Estudios Humanísticos, Kay introduced new concepts in the way of doing and thinking about art criticism in Chile at the time. It could be said, in fact, that the form of writing that Richard would take on in the future was greatly influenced by Kay. This will be explored further below. Here I will look close at Kay's text on Dittborn.

In 'De la chilena pintura, historia, proyecciones', Kay develops a series of theoretical and poetic elements that would define his own writing strategy. In addition, Kay inscribes his own authorship within the artistic space, as well as circulating a series of concepts, authors, and poetic elements that serve as a reference not only for Richard, but for other intellectuals such as Justo Mellado, Pablo Oyarzún, Diamela Eltit, etc. First was the importance of integrating photography into Dittborn's paintings. Second, the relation between body and society. And third, the Latin American element and its colonial heritage³².

'De la chilena pintura, historia, proyecciones' is made up of a series of sections separated by headings. There is no order or any traditional academic articulation. On the contrary, it seems to be a sum of notes, memos, poetic prose, and quotes, all surrounded by Dittborn's drawings, marks, lines, and graphic interventions. However, there is a common component in each of the sections: the combination of theory, history, and poetic prose. The latter is an important for the argument I am making here.

In the INCESTO VISUAL section, Kay analyses the tension between

³² Kay would delve deeper into these three issues in a 1980 text (*Del espacio de acá. Señales para una mirada americana*), which will be analysed in detail in Chapter 2.

photography and painting present in Dittborn's work. Based on his own translation of the text 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' by Walter Benjamin, Kay explores the notion of formulating revolutionary demands in the politics of art, as well as how the camera introduces an unconscious optic to the observer (Benjamin, [1936] 1999a: 211-244). In doing so, Kay seeks to highlight the introduction of photography into the realm of painting. For Kay, the fact that Dittborn introduced photographs of anonymous individuals into his paintings is a totally revolutionary occurrence in the history of Chilean art. Unlike paintings of the past, in which the manual gesture is differentiated from the technical gesture of the photograph, in Dittborn's work these elements are united through a new visual strategy. In the words of Kay: 'Trasponer la exposición fotográfica al escenario de la pintura (cohabitar un ojo en el otro), significa movilizar lo retenido para estructurar una mirada otra.' (Kay, 1976: 33). In this way, recovering photographs of faces that have been forgotten and erased from social history, and including them in the painting (this unique and unrepeatable object), represents a very political gesture for Kay.

Dittborn's work, then, was able to establish a new kind of visual and political problem in dictatorial Chile. Thanks to the mechanical reproduction of photography and its combination with painting, a true visual 'incest' was produced in Chilean art history. No longer pushed to the background, the photograph entered victoriously into artistic production. With the juxtaposition of photography, painting, and history, a certain resistance to obscurity was also established. By including these forgotten (photographed) faces in the painting, there is also an indirect reference to those who would be disappeared at that exact moment in history (in 1976). In this way the unconscious optic operates. Dittborn focuses on that which has gone unnoticed, or that which had been hidden. For this reason, Dittborn's visual

gesture is political. It strategically includes the photographed past as something trivial, but in its gesture there is a will to keep a collective memory alive in the present. By incorporating photography, a reflexive design is left for the future. As Kay notes:

Dittborn, al copiar a su sistema gráfico el cuerpo fotogénico –“de ánimas en pena”, de “sombras dañadas”- lo inscribe en él, precisamente con el código de notación –la tramática- que traduce la foto a su lectura colectiva, legitimándola en ella. (Kay, 1976: 35).

Secondly, in his text Kay includes the relationship between body and society. In the section LA CRIPTOGRAFIA DEL CUERPO HISTORICO, Kay analyses social structures and how they intervene in the subjective and physical order of individuals. Without directly mentioning the historic context in question³³, Kay looks at how bodies are forged or moulded by regimes in power (Figure 2). Making an obvious allusion to the context in question while mentioning Dittborn's work, Kay points out:

Son las leyes y fuerzas sociales grabadas en vivo en el organismo, son las minuciosas plastificaciones del cutis, son los esquemas de las incisiones de los sueños, son los ornamentos de la potencia eruptiva de las energías traumáticas del sujeto, las descifradas en su valencia ideográfica, por la mirada Dittborn, como las literalmente históricas:

(el cuerpo se construye como monumento de las presiones de las circunstancias que lo desposeyeron y, por lo mismo, descalificaron. Como mausoleo que contiene su denso coeficiente social.) (Kay, 1976: 39).

³³ During these years, human rights violations were an everyday practice. Under the Pinochet regime, kidnappings, disappearances, interrogations, torture, and assassinations were actions performed by the Chilean state. Owing to the lack of impartial courts of law, the upholding of human rights became a complicated task. However, on January 1, 1976 the Vicaría de la Solidaridad del Arzobispado de Santiago was created in order to provide legal support to family members of political prisoners. See Lowden (1996).



Figure 2. Inner pages of 'V.I.S.U.A.L.: Dos textos de Nelly Richard y Ronald Kay sobre 9 dibujos de Dittborn' Santiago, Chile (1976).

What is of interest is not how Kay explores this relationship, but rather how Dittborn approaches the problem. Here it is important to go back to photography. How to present the tortured bodies? Where to find photographs that bear witness to these traumas? To answer these questions, Kay refers to the photographs of the boxers, swimmers, and other bodies in question. In these photographs, the faces are visibly marked by pain, sacrifice, and agony. Thus the photographs denote faces that are exhausted, disfigured, and in pain. These are, for Kay, images that simulate the experience of torture and fear in Chilean society. As photographs, they demonstrate the destruction and death of what has been, echoing Barthes in *Camera Lucida*

([1980] 2000). In Kay's words:

FACIES HIPOCRATICA. La historia en todo lo que tiene de extemporáneo, de padecimiento, de fallido, desde un comienzo, se sella en el cadáver fotográfico, que sustituye la calavera. Todo lo que hay de enigmático, de derruido, en la existencia humana, en su travesía biográfica, irrumpe significativamente en los inmobilizados jeroglíficos fotográficos, como expresión mundana de la pasión de la historia, de lo que en ella sucumbe como muerte y destrucción. (Kay, 1976: 39).

These photographs are used rather than images that denounce the atrocities of the regime. However, this was not possible at the time. Under the military dictatorship, Dittborn and Kay had to expose the tensions between the body and society in another way, that is, by collecting photographs that did not make any explicit revelations. Their methodology was to collect images from magazines, old newspapers, files, and books that could be 'reproduced' and exhibited. In this way, Dittborn and Kay were able to overcome the censorship and repression of the dictatorial apparatus. Dittborn's visual exercise was based upon exposing that which Foucault ([1975] 1995) wrote as a parallel history, that of the disciplinary process and the creation of 'docile bodies'.

While discussing the incursion of photography into Dittborn's paintings and the relationship between body and disciplinary society, Kay also explored the history of Latin America and the colonization of its landscapes by foreign powers. In the section **ESCENA PRIMERA**, Kay insisted on the importance of thinking about Latin American history and its impact on the present. He did not simply seek to analyse the Spanish conquest and its cultural and political consequences³⁴, but to problematize the tension between the representation

³⁴ Kay writes: 'La escena hispanoamericana se uniformó mediante la desarticulación, la obliteración, el

of landscapes in colonial paintings and the introduction of photography into Latin America during the 19th century.

Again:

La gráfica iniciativa del dominio hispano, desde sus comienzos, evacúa la naturaleza (en cuanto domicilio de los nativos, de los nacidos en ella, en cuanto míticamente franqueada por ellos), erradica la visión de su inmediatez, arma el lugar por sus ausencias, tacha lo directamente visible. Dittborn, al levantar topográficamente la zona que circunscribe y posibilita las figuras, se reinstala abruptamente en lo que traumáticamente fue constituyente en la grafía hispanoamericana, y luego, sintomáticamente reprimido por la posteridad pictórica. El aparato gráfico Dittborn edita el recuerdo del olvido. Traza su CUADRO CLINICO. (Kay, 1976: 44 [Emphasis in the original])

ESCENA PRIMERA illustrates once again how photography and its unlimited mechanical reproduction represented a concrete problem for artistic representation. In doing so, Kay returns to the independence era of Latin American history (around 1818), and reminds us that painting at that time focused upon representing natural landscapes without humans, and portraits of the dominant elite class. For Kay, this meant the exclusion and marginalization of both historic native populations, as well as of mixed-race and lower class segments of society. During the discovery of the Americas and up until the arrival of photography in Chile in 1860, the faces of indigenous and lower class people were excluded from the legitimate pictorial framework. However, thanks to the technical reproducibility of the photograph, it was possible to capture such human landscapes that had been discarded by history and do them justice.

aniquilamiento, la usurpación y la suplantación del espacio agitado, heterogéneo y divergente de las rituales culturas precolombinas beligerantes entre sí; por el décollage y collage que con ellas se practicó'. (Kay, 1976: 43).

Kay writes that this subject, which has been so marginalized by painting, receives new and historic recognition through Dittborn's work:

En su identidad espaciada, vuelta práctica reflexiva, des describe los patrones mnemónicos de las mediaciones, para en su cuerpo, comparecer por vez primera, los objetos/sujetos estancados en el stock de imágenes, liberados al fin de su inercia noticiosa, en el tiempo de su figuración, retardo que es su historia, el recorrido preciso, el perígrafo de sí (sic) definitiva aparición. (Kay, 1976: 45 [Emphasis in the original])

In this light, and like Kay, Dittborn utilized photography and painting in order to problematize the collective and popular body, which had been previously marginalized by history, in a present context characterized by terror. In doing so, those faces that had been left obscure were brought back to bear upon the present. At the same time, he makes a gesture, without any kind of illustrative and obvious aim, by calling attention to those who are absent, or disappeared. Therein lies the political and aesthetic character of Dittborn's work that Kay sought to highlight. This figure would serve as an analytical input for the future, when the issue of historical memory in Chile would be discussed.

What is interesting is that both Kay and Richard paved the way for a new form of critical writing that discusses not only the art itself (Dittborn's work), but by offering a combined theoretical, political, and poetic outlook in coordination with the art. This is perhaps the primary importance and contribution of *Manuscritos*. The experimental combination of visuality, poetry, prose, and theoretical text achieved by *Manuscritos* became a novel and attractive model in those years. In fact, as it was not possible to publish a second issue, *Manuscritos* gave way to a new editorial project in the form of *V.I.S.U.A.L: Dos textos de....* Coordinated and designed by Ronald Kay in collaboration

with Dittborn, this catalogue-object-book served to contrast two ongoing authorships. In other words, it provided the possibility to present not only two forms of writing inherited from different schools of thought (Kay influenced by the German tradition, Richard by the French tradition), but also of creating two complementary critical-political concepts of art. In effect, based upon the 'position-taking' that made *V.I.S.U.A.L. Dos textos de...* possible, a theoretical and aesthetic discussion was established between both artists that would have a profound impact upon Chilean artistic space during the coming decades. Although this discussion will be revisited in detail in the second chapter, some points that define Richard's position in terms of the critical politics of art will now follow.

III. Art, body, and urban movement in dictatorial Chile: Richard on Carlos Altamirano, Francisco Smythe, and Carlos Leppe

In 1977 Ronald Kay, Eugenio Dittborn, and Catalina Parra began to manage the Epoca Gallery, where they would continue to publish artist catalogues under the V.I.S.U.A.L. editorial brand³⁵. The same year, Nelly Richard began to manage the Cromo Gallery, also in Santiago de Chile. As its first director, Richard had total freedom to choose the artists to be exhibited and included in the yearly programme, as well as explore new theoretical and aesthetic approaches. This implied the opportunity to establish a clear position within the local art world, while laying the ground for her first differences from the V.I.S.U.A.L. group. Through seminars, meetings, catalogue inaugurations, exhibitions, etc., a high-level intellectual and cultural rivalry was established between both groups. In addition, a certain intellectual complicity was generated between them, resulting in a 'chain of thought'. Among those

³⁵ For example, that same year a new catalogue would be published, edited by V.I.S.U.A.L., on the work of Eugenio Dittborn: *Final de Pista. 11 pinturas y 13 gratificaciones*.

involved (artists, theoreticians, writers), there was a generalized feeling that at that historic moment a real artistic and theoretical rupture with the past was taking place³⁶.

Richard organized a hectic agenda of exhibitions, catalogue editing, and theoretical writing during 1977. Located in a basement on Ahumada street in central Santiago, the Cromo Gallery operated as an exhibition space where Richard acted as curator and general editor, while promoting a style of art that would help her to establish her own critical-intellectual project.

This is especially clear in the four exhibitions that the Cromo Gallery organized that year: *Cuatro Grabadores Chilenos* (May); Francisco Smythe's *Fotografía: sn. Diego esp. tarapaca vista norte – sur 23 de agosto 1977 12.30 hrs'* (September); Carlos Altamirano's *Santiago de Chile* (October), and Carlos Leppe's *Reconstitución de Escena* (December). Each of these included an especially designed catalogue (very similar in style and physical format to the works of V.I.S.U.A.L.), as well as a theoretical-analytical text written by Richard. It is possible to discern a common thread between these exhibitions and catalogues, related to experiences of the movement and transformation of bodies through the urban landscapes of the military dictatorship. I will now review the primary aesthetic, political, and theoretical discussions proposed by Smythe, Altamirano, and Leppe for inclusion in Richard's programme.

Between May and June of 1977, the Cromo Gallery set up the exhibition *Cuatro Grabadores Chilenos*, with a catalogue developed by Carlos Leppe. The document included prints of the artists Carlos Altamirano, Luz Donoso,

³⁶ See the interview with Richard in Galende (2007: 188-191).

Pedro Millar, and Eduardo Vilches, as well as specific texts on each artist (with the exception of Donoso, who wrote her own text). In this way, Richard wrote a text for the work of Altamirano, Enrique Lihn for the work of Pedro Millar, and Emilio Ellena for Eduardo Vilches.³⁷

Richard wrote the introduction to the catalogue, which includes a clear declaration of principles:

Nuestra preocupación responde a la necesidad de elaborar un circuito de difusión, en torno a las obras de arte, que sustente la comprensión de ellas. Dicha preocupación consiste en plantear una visión coherente de la expresión plástica nacional, basada en el reconocimiento de las obras de acuerdo a la trascendencia de los fenómenos que determinan, a la amplitud de los recorridos que integran. De acuerdo a su vigencia.

No sólo se pretende definir el significado de la obra, sino el modo de su lectura o modo de apertura de sus sucesivas lecturas. Definir también su condición (reglas que presiden su funcionamiento), y situación (relaciones sostenidas por ella frente a lo contextual). Definir, finalmente, el campo de sus interferencias. (Richard, 1977a: 2).

Based upon this affirmation, it is possible to establish Richard's particular way of acting in the face of art. There is a series of elements at play in Richard's words: the need to form a circuit of visual arts; the understanding of art as a form of internal complexity; the relation between artistic materiality and social context, and above all, the valuation of writing (and its subsequent interpretation) as a fundamental element of art.

For Richard, in this sense, art cannot be understood as a mirror of society,³⁸

³⁷ Curiously, the initial pages of the catalogue include a text by Waldemar Sommer, who wrote for the right-wing newspaper *El Mercurio* and was one of the most conservative art critics and columnists of the period.

³⁸ This statement is a criticism directed at Marxist notions that understand artwork as a 'reflection of society'. Today there is a consensus among art sociologists that this methodology for understanding artwork lacks

as an artefact that reflects socio-historical occurrences in a transparent and/or pedagogical way. Rather, it must be understood according to its own internal complexity, as proposed through its materiality and discursive argumentation, creating interferences or interruptions in the social fabric. Richard sought to distance herself from the notion of the ‘art of commitment’ (the militant culture of the *Unidad Popular*)³⁹, and to generate an artistic notion that would understand the pathways of history, while intervening in and/or perverting history. This is the shift that Richard proposed through this event. However, in order to elaborate such a theoretical-aesthetic proposal with a higher degree of complexity, it was first necessary to problematize certain issues.

One such issue was the relation between art, urban landscape, and experience in the dictatorial context. An artist who worked on this relation in *Cuatro Grabadores Chilenos* was Carlos Altamirano. In his xylography, he exhibits urban landscapes and configurations of a deconstructed Santiago (Figure 3). For example, in his work *Elevación / Escape*, he combines vanishing lines, walkways, cross-walks, traffic signals, and stairways as if they were outlines or maps of an urban plan. However, in this combination of urban elements there are no inhabitants or human figures, only places for transit and movement. In Richard's words:

En su calidad de armables y desarmables, de convertibles, los paisajes de Altamirano no configuran un escenario permanente ni definitivo, sino transitorio. La eventualidad de su súbito

analytical substance. See, for example, the current version of the manual of art sociology by Rothenber (2014).

³⁹ As Richard would note decades afterward: ‘Para la sociología del arte de esa época, una sociología de inspiración marxista, la obra debía ser *reflejo de la sociedad*, vehículo del mensaje del artista que explicita su compromiso social a través del arte concebido como un instrumento de agitación cultural que debe serle funcional a la militancia política. La tradición teórica del marxismo que informa el pensamiento sobre arte y sociedad de los años 60 se caracteriza por una aproximación más bien “contenidista” a la obra: una obra cuyas figuras—temáticas—debían subordinarse a una visión de mundo alineada con el pueblo y la revolución como significados trascendentales. Para la retórica del arte comprometido, la ideología—contenido y representación—precede a la obra como el *dato* que ésta debe *ilustrar*: poner en imágenes.’ (Richard, 2010b) Author’s emphasis.

desplazamiento, impide la radicación del hombre dentro del área temporalmente ocupada. (Richard, 1977a: 7).

As a witness and wanderer in the city under the military dictatorship, Altamirano perceives a new urban atmosphere characterized by silent, almost imperceptible, human movement. In his xylography, Altamirano juxtaposes impossible landscapes with unrecognizable pedestrians. He combines new urban forms with new human conglomerations that almost disappear from the landscape owing to the velocity of their movement. This is especially important for Richard, and she affirms that:

Lo urbano, en Altamirano, no pasa por el color pop del objeto industrial, ni por el brillo hyper-realista de las vitrinas y las mecánicas. Pasa por la evocación de la ciudad laboriosa (agitación a la entrada y salida de las oficinas, trámites administrativos, organización de los trabajos en la vías públicas), la ciudad transitada (vías, señalizaciones), la ciudad accidentada (escenario donde acontece el "fait divers"). (Richard, 1977a: 7).

The urban inhabitant is represented in Altamirano's xylography as an ephemeral and fugitive being. Effectively, people are integrated into the multitude by diluting their own individuality. In a context dominated by terror, the urban inhabitant begins to dress and walk in a uniform way, based upon a standardized form of behaviour. However, within these mass uniform movements, there is always a wanderer who is aware of these flows and this urban unrest. And, like a *flâneur*, this observer must not be perceived or identified. On the contrary, they must perceive what the others do not see, and then exhibit that which is hidden through writing or visuality. Therein lies its danger.

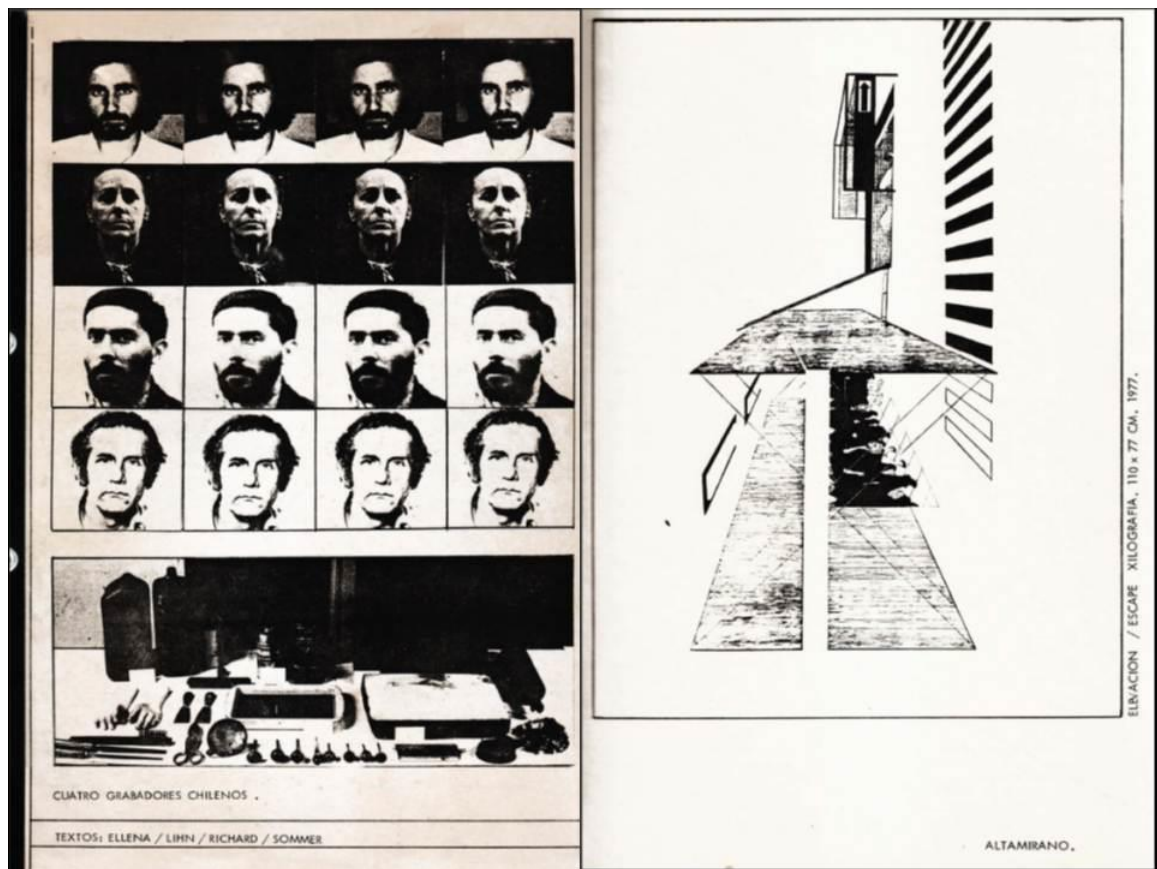


Figure 3. Cover and inner page of 'Cuatro Grabadores Chilenos' Cromo Gallery, Santiago, Chile (1977).

As Benjamin observes: 'The harder a man is to find, the more suspicious he becomes.' ([1938] 2006: 79). This is precisely the role that Richard seeks to play in this context. She wants to be part of a circuit as a witness/wanderer, but mostly to be a critic/reader of the movements and productions of that circuit. What really matters is the writing in relation to art, and how in mutual coordination both come to question hegemonic scenarios. Her intention is to discover art that enables a confrontation with, and provocation of, the *status quo* in dictatorial Chile. In doing so, she also falls under suspicion within the circuit in which she was immersed. As will be explored in the following chapters, the confrontation between Richard's project and the rest of the

artistic circle in Chile would grow over time. However, for now, her vision remained focused upon the environs of urban space and its representation.

In September 1977, a new exhibition was inaugurated in the Cromo Gallery: *Fotografía: sn. Diego esp. tarapaca vista norte – sur 23 de agosto 1977 12.30 hrs.*, produced by Francisco Smythe (Figure 4). As in the previous exhibition, a catalogue was published for the inauguration. The catalogue affirms that Smythe's art descends from a line of work that seeks to understand the relationship between man and environment, the inside and the outside. Specifically, Smythe works on dehumanization and the gradual disappearance of humanity in our relations with our fellows. Smythe presents a series of photographs taken on a commercial street in Santiago de Chile: San Diego Avenue. He attempts to highlight the loneliness, selfishness, and indifference that had come to characterize the inhabitants of Santiago since the birth of Chilean neoliberalism. As noted by Richard in the catalogue, in this way his work represents a photographic record of the commercial atmospheres, transactional routines, and mechanized practices of the time. In her words:

En cada una de sus manifestaciones, la fotografía entrega un primer recuento de lo urbano: de sus calles y perspectivas, de sus edificios, de sus personajes y situaciones. Lo urbano está aludido por los elementos (vitrinas, monumentos) y los colores (colores de afiches, de letreros, de neones) que habitualmente lo designan en el arte pop. En Smythe, existe la fascinación del pop ejercida a través del rosado sintético, de los maniqués, de los brillos plásticos, de los personajes públicos, del escenario callejero. (Richard, 1977b: 17).

In his photographs, Smythe offers graphic records (garbage cans, mannequins, street dogs, faded wall posters, advertisements, etc.) that provide concrete evidence of urban decadence in Chile during the 1970s.

Unlike the Parisian landscapes analysed by Benjamin, the landscapes of San Diego Avenue lack luxury and aesthetic expression. Rather, they reflect almost complete precariousness. Even when the merchandise is on display and desired by the passers-by, the surroundings are completely void of phantasmagoria. The harshness of the landscape at the corner of San Diego Avenue and Tarapaca is quite evident.



Figure 4. Cover and inner page of 'Smythe. Fotografía: sn. Diego esq. tarapacá vista norte - sur 23 de agosto 1977 12.30hrs.' Cromo Gallery, Santiago, Chile (1977).

Through his work, Smythe has a direct encounter with neoliberal Chile, under construction at the time. His photographs are important because they record a Chile that is about to disappear. In effect, such decaying commercial

landscapes would be displaced by the new arcades of Chilean neoliberalism - shopping centres⁴⁰. With the emergence of shopping centres at the beginning of the 1980s came an urban and social revolution (Martinez & Diaz, 1996). As a consequence, Smythe's records serve as material for the comprehension of history.

However, Smythe's photographs are not just historic documents of unused landscapes. Smythe also intervenes in the materiality of the photographs themselves (the photographic paper). For Richard, one of Smythe's most significant expressions is represented by the stains that he paints over the photographs. The stain stresses the frame of the photograph and, as a metaphor, destabilizes the static order of the social space displayed in the photographs. In Richard's words:

La mancha obedece a un gesto de EMANCIPACION de la mente y el cuerpo, llevada a través de la forma y del color, de la materia. El cuadriculado obedece, en cambio, a un acto de REPRESION del espacio mediante las limitaciones impuestas a su ocupación. La mancha descontrola lo que controla la trama. (Richard, 1976b: 18 [Emphasis in the original]).

It is important to point out how notions such as frame, grid, or border are understood by Richard as repression, subjection, and control, respectively. On the other hand, the notions of stain, out-of-focus, and movement are connected to resistance, emancipation, and rebellion, respectively. This tension, as we shall see, ends up being an important component in the formation of Richard's socio-critical thought in future decades. Interestingly, in the mid-1970s, she uses certain works of art to configure these ideas.

⁴⁰ For a current analysis of Shopping Centers in Chile, see Stillerman and Salcedo (2012).

In this case, Smythe's work contributes directly to these ends. Richard sees the random stains on the photographs as an expression of the destabilization of social reality. If the stain breaks with the order of (social) subjection, it would be possible to consider a political alternative to such an order. To destabilize hegemonic meanings, it is important to create representational maladjustments, through which it is possible to make a symbolic break with predefined categories. For Richard, art and its materiality play a key role in the construction of dissonant symbolizations in Chilean cultural landscapes. For her, Smythe's art can be understood as a criminal act, as it purposefully results in implied political and social destabilization. In her words:

Tal como lo criminal transgrede el orden social, lo manchado transgrede el orden de la representación fotográfica. **AMBAS MANIFESTACIONES INFRINGEN UN ORDEN, social o formal. AMBAS MANIFESTACIONES SON DELICTUALES, PUESTO QUE REVIENTAN LA UNIDAD DE UN SISTEMA.** (Richard, 1976b: 19 [Emphasis in the original]).

In fact, for Richard art can be understood as an obscene apparatus that attempts to destabilize pre-defined symbolic and cultural formations. Therefore, any work that simply seeks to capture a representation becomes for her a reactionary piece. As she points out again in capital letters (as if she were shouting these ideas):

EL FENOMENO DE REPRESENTACION TIENDE HABITUALMENTE A LA FABRICACION DE UN OBJETO SUSTITUTIVO DEL MODELO ORIGINAL. TODA OBRA QUE DIFICULTA EL CUMPLIMIENTO DE AQUEL PROCESO DE SUSTITUCION, QUE SUSPENDE SU DESARROLLO, ATENTA CONSEQUENTEMENTE EN CONTRA DEL FENOMENO DE REPRESENTACION. Cuestiona, tan radicalmente como en Smythe, la naturaleza y función del objeto estético. (Richard, 1976b: 19 [Emphasis in the original]).

For Richard, the function of art is the destabilization of the cultural apparatuses of domination. Thus the opposite is to promote existing stabilizations. Such ideas point towards the increasing complexity of Richard's own critical thought on art, and this notion of the function of true art would continue to be an integral aspect of her critiques of both 'reactionary art' and the 'art of commitment'. Her notion of art, like her notion of criticism, is characterized by constant concern and awareness of social crystallizations and naturalizations, with a particular aversion to simple imitations (or representations) of reality.

It is important to reinforce the idea that, for Richard, the materiality of art and theoretical writing are understood as a single unit of work. In this way, the initial collaboration between Dittborn, Kay, and Richard can be interpreted as having established this principle. Whilst collaboration between writing and art is certainly nothing new, it is possible to observe a significant change in the landscape of Chilean art criticism in the mid-1970s. Through the inclusion of theoretical, poetic, and political elements in writing about art (along the lines of Kay and Richard), all past visuality and textuality was completely displaced. If during the 1950s and 1960s writing was a mechanism of support for visuality (an illustrative accompaniment), starting in 1973 this relation became insoluble⁴¹.

In October 1977, Carlos Altamirano once again put on an exhibition in the Cromo Gallery. This time, his work was not xylography, but rather photography of Santiago de Chile. The title of the exhibition was simply *Santiago de Chile* (Figure 5).

⁴¹ It is interesting to refer to the importance that Justo Pastor Mellado (2009) attributes to the relation between art and writing in recent decades: 'Una de las paradojas que define el campo cultural chileno de los últimos cincuenta años es que el mayor momento de infracción del espacio plástico provino desde el espacio editorial.' (No page numbers). This thesis is also defended by D. González (2010).

Altamirano presented a series of photographs taken in Santiago: escalators; rails and tunnels of the metro; crowds of people; bodies in movement, and unrecognizable faces etc. His work concentrated upon underground landscapes of Santiago. In fact, most of them are fragments or frames of the Santiago metro system (inaugurated by Pinochet on September 15, 1975), along with the users of this novel system of mass transportation.



Figure 5. Cover and inner page of 'Altamirano. Santiago de Chile' Cromo Gallery, Santiago, Chile (1977).

Unlike previous catalogues, in this version Richard collectively discusses the work of Altamirano together with a series of theoreticians and artists (Felipe

Casat, Gaspar Galaz, Mario Irarrazabal, Carlos Leppe, and Eduardo Vilches). Through each question and answer, it is evident that Richard is trying to highlight a series of ideas about Altamirano's work, some of which are repeated from the previous exhibition (*Cuatro grabadores...*), but adding a more in-depth discussion of new elements. Here it is important to highlight a significant idea. Throughout the conversation, it is possible to detect Richard's interest in dealing with the incursion that certain Chilean artists made into photography. In referring⁴² to the basic notions of the classic essay by Benjamin on art, as well as Kay's previous interpretation of Dittborn's work, Richard again directs the debate towards the importance of Benjamin's text for analysing local art. As has been demonstrated up to this point, the use of photography (as a record, archive, or experiment) becomes a key input needed to understand artistic production during the 1970s. In following Kay's thesis, it would seem that the introduction of photography into Chilean artistic production displaced pictorial tradition⁴³. Richard also seems to highlight this point.

In sum, both the work of Smythe and that of Altamirano develop a direct connection to urban spaces, anonymous faces, fleeting bodies, vanishing lines, fragments of the city. At the same time, as can be seen in Richard's texts, their work also generates an aesthetic exercise questioning the norms, social frameworks, and methods of domination. Altogether, their work reflects the desire to record the city and the strategies of indoctrination operating within it, as well as the formation of new inhabitants (subjectivities) in the

⁴² 'La introducción de la fotografía en sí es una nueva agresión al fenómeno de la representación en el Arte. Me importa la realidad fotografiada en relación con la realidad figurada; me importa que la fotografía sea un modo de producción mecánica en relación con el modo manual de representación.' (Richard, 1977c: 15).

⁴³ Certainly, during the 1960s photography was an important input for pictorial production (for example, in the work of Alberto Pérez). However, and as pointed out by Galaz and Ivelic (1988: 197-198), starting in the mid-1970s photography would take on a special status (total autonomy as a supporting role) in the visual arts in Chile. See in particular quote N° 36.

context of the Chilean dictatorship.

As such, how should the body be discussed visually, theoretically, and poetically in this context? How should the body, damaged by history, be represented? How can a critical-visual strategy be deployed *from* the body?

In order to answer these questions, the work of Carlos Leppe is key. His performances and art have represented some of the most significant artistic-reflexive inputs shaping the first phase of Richard's thinking. In the 1970s, Leppe became an unavoidable point of reference in the artistic circuit through his corporeal and visual experimentation. With Richard as an accomplice (in writing, as a curator, and as a friend), Leppe was able to connect a series of artistic-theoretical problems through his art, such as artistic materiality, frame, photography, corporeality, sexuality, transgression, resistance etc. To a certain degree, all of these were problematized based upon Leppe's own body.

In December 1977, the exhibition *Reconstitución de Escena* by Carlos Leppe was inaugurated in the Cromo Gallery (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Cover and inner page of 'Carlos Leppe: Reconstitución de Escena' Cromo Gallery, Santiago, Chile (1977).

Unlike the projects of Altamirano and Smythe, in this exhibition Leppe did not work on urban scenes or underground landscapes. Rather, he presented a series of photographs of his prior performances, as well as new work based on these. The catalogue provided to visitors at the inauguration included both photographs of the exhibition in a common format (papier maché covers, bound, full-page photographs), and texts by Richard, Adriana Valdés, and Cristián Hunneus, the latter two from the Departamento de Estudios Humanísticos. As in previous catalogues, Richard's interest in establishing consistent collaboration between intellectuals involved in these issues is clear. In addition, it is important to see how what has been referred to in this

work as a chain of thought between artists, theoreticians, poets, and philosophers, has remained relevant to this day⁴⁴.

Reconstitución de Escena is a set of photographs, reproduced in different sizes, of Carlos Leppe's previous performances. These photographs had been modified on the surface with a series of materials (some used in the same performances, such as bite marks, patches, scissors) as well as the inclusion of words and phrases. In this way, the photographs included in *Reconstitución de Escena* have become works of art in their own right (Figure 7).

⁴⁴ One of Richard's characteristics that is evident to this day is her trust in conversation and discussion. As will be seen in the following chapters, it is impossible to define her intellectual work without this dimension.

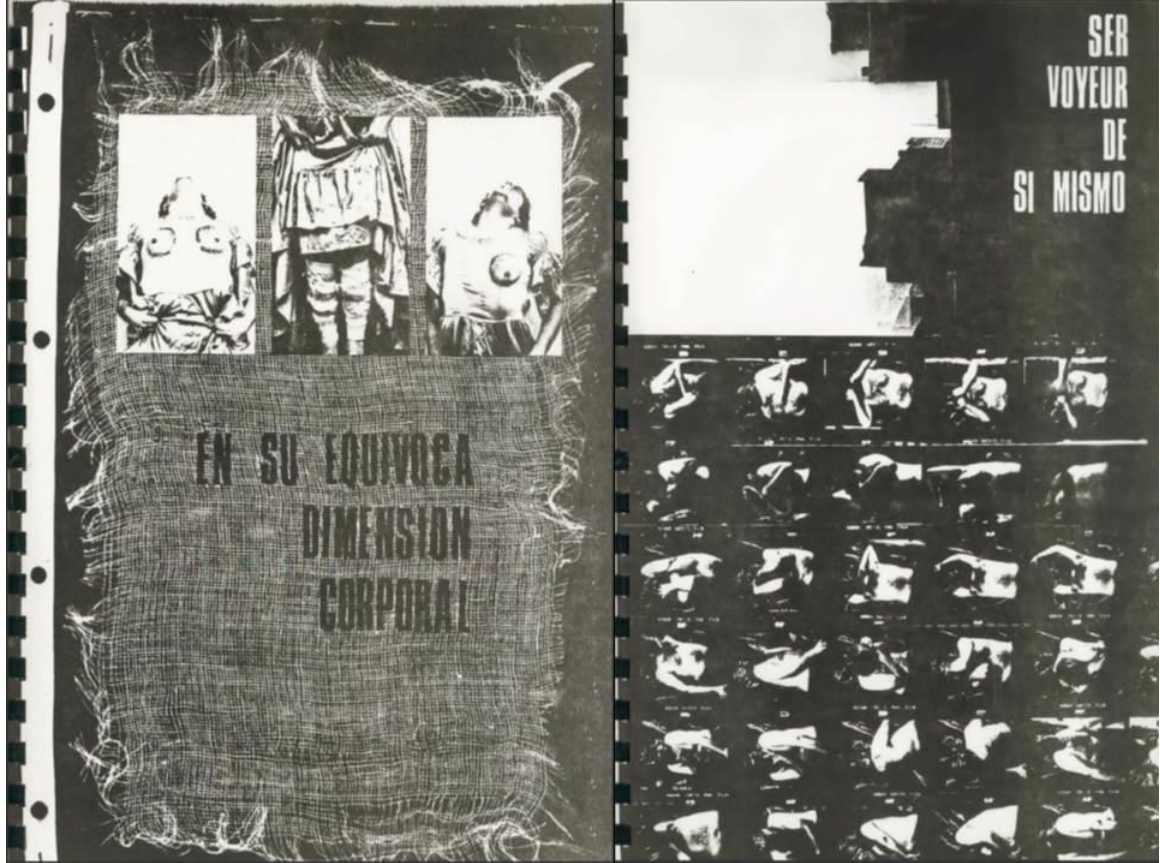


Figure 7. Inner pages of 'Carlos Leppe: Reconstitución de Escena' Cromo Gallery, Santiago, Chile (1977).

In the catalogue of *Reconstitución de Escena*, a series of phrases have been printed over Leppe's photography: 'recortar es reprimir'; 'regular lo irregular'; 'controlar lo descontrolado'; 'alterar lo inalterable', and 'mover lo inamovible' etc. These phrases point to a thought pattern that is recognizable through Richard's terminology. As we have seen, for Richard the function of art is to fracture the social order. Based upon this, and using prose that combines poetry with theory, Richard states:

-el cuadriculado, es de sujeción: sujeción del espacio a las líneas que lo contienen y a las intersecciones que lo calzan. El orden que instauro el cuadriculado remite a fenómenos de implicancia social;

desde el pavimento de las calles hasta las rejas y jaulas, todo un orden carcelario articulado a partir de horizontales y verticales. Desde la alternancia de los azulejos en los muros y de las baldosas en los suelos; todo un orden público, que regula la perspectiva y el tránsito de los pasos. (Richard, 1977d: 7-8).

Conscious of the deconstructive role of art, Leppe works both on the mechanisms of social control and their implications for the body, as well as on apparatuses of resistance and disarray. The objective is to propose, through the use of his body, a form of resistance to control. In other words, his work insists upon dismantling patterns of order through the use of the body. By proposing this in the context of art, Leppe utilizes photography as a metaphor for order and control. In photographing reality, the camera crystallizes an objective, selecting a piece of reality and fixing it forever in time. Leppe seeks to stress this principle. In concrete terms, he makes a photographic record of his body, in performance-based movement, in order to fool the photographic frame. In Richard's words:

Las desviaciones, transferencias o sustituciones practicadas por Leppe, en el curso de su obra, afectan, cuando no un objeto real, un objeto siempre fotografiado. Si, es suicida la intervención del artista dirigida, en una fotografía, a alterar lo inalterable, a mover lo inamovible de ella. Intervención radical del artista que marca su insatisfacción frente a la realidad no fabricada por él, y por lo tanto no directamente asimilable. Que marca su necesidad de vencerla. La fotografía rompe la complicidad del hombre frente a la realidad, cuidadosamente consolidada durante siglos por la pintura; rompe aquel trato solitario. La intervención de un artista como Leppe frente a la realidad fotografiada, ya no compromete su eventual habilidad expresiva. (Richard, 1977d: 11).

To alter and pervert condensed cultural meanings, Leppe manipulates his body through a series of corporeal insubordinations. He resists conforming to norms by producing a series based upon sexual disobedience (cross-

dressing, sexual ambiguity) and self-inflicted bodily harm (injuries, cuts, deformations).

By contrast, through the landscapes or objects that are clearly the focus of the images, Leppe's body remains out-of-focus. As Richard notes, Leppe resists the photographic flash that seeks to fixate clearly on his silhouette, preferring instead to writhe before the camera. In Richard's words:

Moverse frente a la cámara, es esquivar el lente que atrapa la imagen. Es escaparse de su dirección que suspende la orientación del gesto. Es fugarse de su objetivo que paraliza el movimiento. Es evadir el encuentro definitivo de una mirada que juzga, desde el frente. (Richard, 1977d: 19).

To lose focus (or to lose clarity) - this is the objective of *Reconstitución de Escena*. As a true act of insubordination, Leppe attempts to aesthetically problematize resistance to processes of socialization in a repressive context. In Richard's writing and Dittborn, Altamirano, Smythe, and Leppe's work, art and writing act not only as accomplices, but also as a political vocation. Both writing and visuality are part of a single unit of meaning, which did not previously exist in Chile. However, it became a necessity in the historic context in which it emerged.

During the late 1970s, Chile was immersed in a severe economic, political, and social state of shock, as well as a cultural one. Based upon a series of social behaviour-based policies (states of emergency, censorship, curfews), Chile was put on track towards a new social pact dominated by neoliberal logic and the privatization of daily life. At the same time, human rights abuses continued throughout the country (Aguilar, 2004; Nelson, 2002).

In those years, it seemed that there was no way out of the Pinochet dictatorship. After the 'National Consultation of 1978' (a plebiscite implemented in order to legitimize the military regime and carried out with absolutely no democratic guarantees⁴⁵), Pinochet was able to maintain renewed control over the government completely at his own will. In this situation, the possibility of a return to democracy seemed increasingly distant. This did not go unnoticed by the artistic circuit of the time. During the final years of the decade and the first few years of the 1980s, the artistic world would experience unforeseen proliferation. In the following section, the late 1970s are described, along with the emergence and formation of a new scene for art and critical writing.

IV. Towards the *new scene* of writing and arts of the late 1970s

For a number of reasons (small budget, few clients), at the end of the 1970s the Cromo Gallery closed its doors. Over the years, artists such as Carlos Leppe, Carlos Altamirano, Juan Domingo Dávila, and Roser Bru, among others, had the chance to exhibit their work and receive Nelly Richard's support (as well as that of other writers), both through writing and dissemination through gallery catalogues. The closing of the Gallery, to be sure, caused significant despondence for Richard. However, soon the opportunity emerged to work with a new exhibition space under the direction of Luz Pereira at the CAL Gallery in 1979 (Coordinación Artística Latinoamericana). Located in central Santiago, the gallery enjoyed a brief but intense year of existence.⁴⁶ In effect, Richard worked as a consultant and

⁴⁵ As Rickard has pointed out: 'The vote was held in a climate of extreme brutality and fear, under a state of siege in which civil liberties were radically restricted.' (Rickard, 1988: 17).

⁴⁶ It closed the following year (1980), only to open some months later in a commercial sector of the eastern,

assistant, and together with Altamirano and Leppe, collaborated in the publication of four issues of a magazine edited by the CAL Gallery, simply called *Revista CAL*. In all four issues, Richard played a fundamental role in the selection of the themes, discussions, and formats⁴⁷. She also had significant influence over the catalogues for the exhibitions.

In January 1979, the CAL Gallery was inaugurated with the exhibition *Altamirano/Dittborn/Leppe/ Visualizan: "Purgatorio" de R. Zurita*. On that occasion, the artists Carlos Altamirano, Eugenio Dittborn, and Carlos Leppe created a series inspired by the poems of Raúl Zurita, published in his first book, *Purgatorio* (1979). Together with the exhibition, a catalogue of the same name was produced, including texts by Diamela Eltit, Nelly Richard, and Raúl Zurita. Within this catalogue, Richard wrote a text based upon the exhibition, in which she problematizes the relation between language (words) and image (visuality). According to Richard, images have generally been subject to political-intellectual subordination by words (prose, poetry). In effect, images have been assigned a pedagogical role (immediate understanding), while writing has been allowed more space for experimentation and reflexive autonomy. In order to reverse this historic practice, Richard proposes a transmutation of poetic language within visual materiality. In other words, Richard proposes the need to achieve a mutual strengthening between writing and visuality, which she inscribes as the concept of *visualization*. In her words:

el concepto de visualización (ejemplarizado por Altamirano/Dittborn/Leppe en relación a Zurita) autonomiza su espacio como espacio signifiante –espacio generativo de un

upper-class part of the city.

⁴⁷ The *Revista CAL*, together with other efforts of the day (such as *La Separata*), can be considered as the background for the *Revista de Critica Cultural*. As will be seen in Chapter 3, the magazine's efforts were always based upon Richard's intellectual programme.

significado no confirmado en el libro mediante procedimientos aditivos de ilustración sino disputando al libro mediante procedimientos multiplicativos de visualización-. La disociación de las superficies trabajadas (las páginas del libro, los muros de la sala), la recíproca interceptación de lo discursivo en lo figural mediante la superposición de índices verbales y visuales en la extensión de dichas superficies, define el concepto de visualización como transformación crítica de un campo semántico compartido mediante actos de desplazamiento de los materiales significantes – actos de transgresión del código escritural mediante la energización de un campo vivo de experiencia visual-. (Richard, 1979a: 4).

For Richard, when discursive space and visual materiality work together, not only is there an activation of thought, but also (and more importantly) the formation of a poetic totality.⁴⁸ The same can be said of Richard's texts on Dittborn, Leppe, and Altamirano. These examples are characterized by combining theoretical and aesthetic reflection with poetic and experimental writing. However, in her initial texts there are no academic quotes or clear references to other authors. It is more like writing in germination that can be found in the connections between aesthetics, theory, and poetics.

Thus, Richard began to realize the importance of defining a “radical separation” with both official cultural institutionality (Avalos & Quezada, 2014), and with the heirs of the militant-artistic tradition of the left. In doing so, she had to define what was new and what was 'other', based upon that which had already been done.

Between June and October 1977, four issues of the *Revista CAL* were published. Established as a publication supporting the art gallery of the same name, *Revista CAL* focused upon debating general issues of art, society, and culture, and despite its brief existence became a platform for discussion of the

⁴⁸ For example, it is clear that Zurita's poetry is combined with visual exercises (see page 71 of *Manuscritos*).

present and future of criticism and the visual arts in Chile.

In the first issue, Richard (1979b) wrote an article entitled 'Dos enfoques de la plástica', in which she presents two interesting ideas. Her criticism is directed at certain artistic expressions that did not adopt her critical-transformative vision for art, but rather proposed to perpetuate an illustrative or illusionist tradition of art, such as the paintings or drawings of certain 'official' artists (who defended painting for the pleasure of painting, or for the love of art). In her words:

Al perpetuar una tradición ilusionista del arte, controvierten, entre otras, la intención crítica que defiende el arte contemporáneo, intención de intervenir críticamente una situación-vida en base a la unidad espacio/tiempo (real y no ficticia) que la estructura...(...) señalamos un progresivo enjuiciamiento de la pintura como sistema de re/presentación sustentador de una experiencia artística basada en un proceso de contemplación y no de comprensión, y enjuiciamiento del objeto-cuadro como objeto ideológico culpable de alimentar una concepción tradicional del arte ligada al carácter de unicidad de su producto. (Richard, 1979b: 11).

As is possible to infer from this quote, Richard again picks up on the ideas in Benjamin's 1936 essay on art. As is well known, Benjamin questioned the auratic status of modern art, and its quality of uniqueness and dependence upon ritual. According to him, the revolutionary potential that art achieves with the invention of technical reproducibility is a unique achievement in history. In effect, technique is at art's disposal to generate a revolutionary force that transforms the base of the means of production. However, this does not mean losing the complexity (both aesthetic and material) of the work itself. It is here that Richard's idea comes into play. For her, the work of artists such as Leppe, Altamirano, Dittborn, Zurita, etc. represent a tendency that is not only artistically correct (revolutionary), but also prioritizes the technical quality

of their work. This idea, taken from a prior text by Benjamin ('The author as producer', ([1934] 1970)) is important to Richard's project. Benjamin distances himself from the intellectual Left, which maintained a humanist attitude of solidarity with the proletariat, and from the forces of fascism and their use of art as propaganda. In doing so, Benjamin was convinced of the need for an art that could achieve, as in the case of Brecht, an effective artistic practice far from these two positions⁴⁹.

Seen in this light, Richard needed to differentiate herself from the rest of the 'effective artists'. This meant making a total break with the history of local art, or starting from scratch. In the second issue of *Revista CAL*, Richard (1979c) published the text 'El arte en Chile: una historia que se recita, otra que se construye'. In this text, she expresses the need to draw a line regarding the history of Chilean art, and to welcome a *new* form of Chilean art. In her words:

El arte en Chile debe hoy socorrer el curso de su propia historia, supliendo la carencia en ella de antecedentes críticos, ASUMIENDO RESPONSABLEMENTE LA EMERGENCIA DE SU CONFLICTO EN LA HISTORIA COMO CORTE, RUPTURA, DE LA CONTINUIDAD DE TAL HISTORIA. El conjunto de indicios recopilable a nivel artístico señala la intención de tratar el problema del arte como verdad, TRATANDO TAL VERDAD COMO MATERIAL INCIDENTAL DE LAS PROPOSICIONES ARTISTICAS EN VIA DE ENUNCIACION. El problema hoy mencionado no puede, sin embargo, constituirse en una verdad sino PROVISORIA, puesto que TIENDE A RESOLVERSE COMO MOTIVO DE PRODUCCION ARTISTICA (TENDIENTE COMO TAL A LA TRANSFORMACION DE UNA (SU) SITUACION EN OTRA) que compromete la conciencia histórica de un sujeto activo del arte. (1979c: 13 [Emphasis in the original]).

⁴⁹ These ideas are explored in more depth in Eiland and Jennings (2014: 439-442).

In this way, Richard proposes taking on the rupture/cut with prior artistic tradition *responsibly*. She does this by accepting that it is a provisional project, still under construction. It is more like a wager. At the same time, by highlighting her ideas through the use of capital letters —almost like screaming—, she underscores a concrete writing plan, one that is decided and resolute. This is one of the strengths of her proposal regarding a break with the past.

Indeed, critical writing on art plays a key role in this process. In the third issue of the magazine, Richard (1979d) highlights this strategy as a historic *brand*. In her text 'La critica de arte en Chile', she recognizes that there are no innocent discourses or naturally given symbolic constructions. On the contrary, everything is culturally constructed. For this reason, in a dictatorial context such as Chile in the mid1970s, new artistic practices had to develop new aesthetic and political programmes by joining theory and poetic writing in such a way as would enable the creation of a new critical interpretation of the times.

On this matter, Richard comments on a distinction that Althusser makes based on his analysis of Marx's *Das Capital* regarding innocent interpretations and guilty interpretations. For Althusser: "But as there is no such thing as an innocent reading, we must say what reading we are guilty of." In his text 'From *Capital* to Marx's Philosophy', Althusser points to the importance of analysing discourses as philosophies. That is to say, on an epistemological basis, and not assuming innocence. Unlike historians, economists, and philologists who focus upon 'technical' issues, philosophy deals with discourse and its object. In the words of Althusser, in the case of Marx's famous book:

To read *Capital* as philosophers is precisely to question the specific

object of a specific discourse, and the specific relationship between this discourse and its object; it is therefore to put to the *discourse-object* unity the question of the epistemological status which distinguishes this particular unity from other forms of discourse-object unity. (Althusser & Balibar, 1970: 15 [Italics in the original]).

In this way, Althusser recognized that there is no such thing as an innocent interpretation. All interpretation and all forms of knowledge are determined by a political-ideological perspective, or by class and power interests. In sum, everything depends upon the political-cultural conditionings both of the interpreter and the producer. Hence it is important to recognize the existence of guilty interpretation. This implies recognizing when a discourse is taking a position. And this is precisely what Richard does in this historic moment. In order to develop a guilty interpretation, a 'justified crime', Richard proclaims her discursive project as a foundational moment, as a new epistemological status for the arts and criticism in Chile that displaces that which came before.

As the Chilean philosopher Pablo Oyarzún has pointed out ([1988] 1999), this shift in the way of thinking about art criticism and art itself was another step in the series of (inorganic) modernizations that Chilean art history experienced during the second half of the 20th century⁵⁰. For him, the history of Chilean art has been characterized by a series of breaks and discontinuations. In other words, and as we shall see, the shift that occurred in art and art criticism in Chile starting in the mid-1970s was not just a process of 'renewal' with regards to the metropolis. Overall, it must be understood as a local need to establish, from within a cultural wasteland deprived of any historic 'reference', a new ground-breaking point of reference⁵¹. And this ground-

⁵⁰ His hypothesis is: 'La evolución del arte en Chile, desde finales de los 50, puede ser descrita como una serie de modernizaciones. Si se las toma por separado, si se les conoce la individualidad absoluta con que a menudo se han presentado ellas mismas, es posible que desfilen, unas respecto de otras, como antinomias, hiatos o saltos, que difícilmente podrían ser contados a título de etapas de un proceso orgánico.' (Oyarzún, [1988] 1999: 194).

⁵¹ In the words of Oyarzún: 'La constitución de un circuito de espacios de exhibición –ciertamente restringido,

breaking point of reference emerged with a vengeance thanks to this series of guilty interpretations identified by Richard.

Between October and December of 1979 a series of performances was mounted that would further trigger the upsurge of a new chapter in Chilean art criticism. In all of these performances, it is possible to observe a desire to break with the past and to establish a new cycle.

On October 16, 1979, the CAL Gallery presented a new performance by Carlos Leppe: *La acción de la estrella*. Through a series of moments or acts, Leppe attempted to problematize both the canons of Chilean history and modern art. The performance began in a room in the wall of which was written (Figure 8):

En 1919, en Paris, Duchamp tonsura una estrella en su cabeza como acción de arte. En 1979, en Stgo de Chile, Leppe tonsura otra estrella, coincidente con la estrella solitaria de Chile. Superposicion de dos referentes: uno cultural, otro nacional, en el cuerpo vivo del artista.

Hanging from a thread was a transparent Chilean flag, made of black lines that marked its contours and separations. The flag also lacked its customary star in the upper left-hand corner. After a few minutes, Leppe appeared and,

aunque mayor, en el ámbito de la iniciativa privada, que cualquier otro de etapas precedentes- y de un *corpus* teórico y crítico que se ocupa de elucidar, legitimar y proyectar a estas producciones, contribuirán a que se determine claramente –sobre todo a partir de 1977, aunque ya sus primicias son identificables en 1975- un campo vívido de propuestas artísticas que tienen entre sí numerosos puntos de contacto. Marcas comunes y sobresalientes de su propio ejercicio, que sitúa a las prácticas en una tensa lógica de confrontación entre su *status* (y su voluntad) de marginalidad y las distintas instancias institucionalizadas, y que a veces pareciera abismarse en lo autorreferencial; y, por cierto, ligado a lo primero, el carácter experimental, aguzado hasta la conciencia explícita de vanguardia.’ (Oyarzún, [1988] 1999: 220).

under the watchful eye of Richard, began to shave his head. Little by little, the shape began to emerge: that of a star. When finished, Leppe walked up to the flag and fitted his shaved head in the form of a star into the place where the star should be located on the flag. In this way, the Chilean flag was completed with Leppe's star. However, afterwards, Leppe took a bag with white paint and threw it over his head, staining the flag in the process. Using some medical tools such as gauze, bandages, and plaster, Leppe then began to bandage his own head. At the same time, a Chilean flag was projected over Leppe's body. Finally, Leppe got rid of his bandages and began to paint the wall where the text referencing Duchamp had been written, until it was unintelligible. With this, the performance ended.

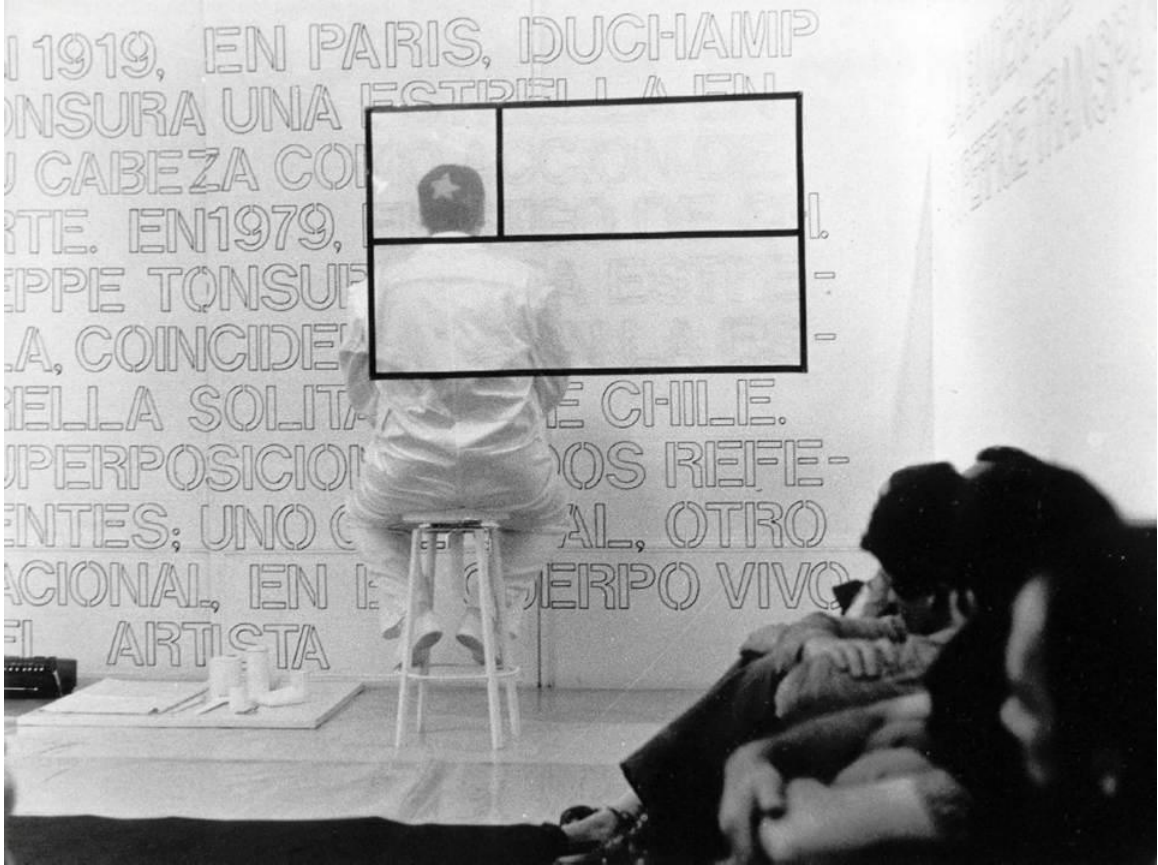


Figure 8. Carlos Leppe. 'La acción de la estrella' CAL Gallery, Santiago, Chile (1979).

By citing the 1919 performance of Marcel Duchamp, who also shaved his head into the form of a star, Leppe sought to stress the history of universal art through local art history. Through his expression, Leppe recognized Duchamp as a canonical artistic and historic figure. In fact, he referred to him directly on the wall that served as the stage for his performance. However, at the same time, and in the context of a historic displacement 60 years and thousands of miles removed from the original performance, Leppe installed his own star on the Chilean flag, and then erased the text that refers to Duchamp. In doing so, he makes a gesture of creating a clean slate for the history of Chilean art. As Mellado points out:

El hecho es que Leppe, al realizar la cita de la tonsura estrellada de Duchamp, mediante este gesto, invierte las condiciones de exclusión de la escena chilena para pasar al estrellato, para convertirse en “la nueva estrella” del arte chileno. (Mellado, 2006: 589).

Through *La acción de la estrella*, it is possible to demonstrate the historic desire that characterizes this particular art scene in Chile. However, the work of Leppe, Altamirano, Dittborn, and Smythe was not the only art to emerge in the 1970s. Simultaneously, and with the same level of intensity, a group of artists emerged that would take art out of the galleries and traditional artistic spaces. Its stage was the city.

At the end of 1979, a group of artists, poets, writers, and other professionals began a series of artistic interventions in various urban landscapes of Santiago de Chile. For them, the city was a social body damaged by the political and dictatorial transformations of the military regime. They called themselves the ‘Colectivo de Acciones de Arte’, and the group was made up of the writer Diamela Eltit, the poet Raúl Zurita, the sociologist Fernando Balcells, and the visual artists Lotty Rosenfeld and Juan Castillo.

During October and December of 1979 the group performed a pair of urban interventions which, over the years would have a huge impact upon art history in Chile: *Para no morir de hambre en el arte*, and *Inversión de escena*, which took place on October 3 and 17, respectively. In late 1979, Lotty Rosenfeld made a performance, along with its corresponding graphic representation, entitled *Una milla de cruces en el pavimento*. These urban interventions were the first to be prosecuted in opposition to Pinochet’s military dictatorship. With the support and coordination of opposition magazines and newspapers (such as *Revista Análisis*, *Revista Hoy*), these

works sought to dilute the distance between art and the general public, as well as to resist the oppressive policies in place at the time. As highlighted by the researcher Robert Neustadt:

The group CADA (Colectivo de Acciones de Arte) denounced General Pinochet's authoritarian regime through radical performance actions and interventions. CADA's manifesto aspired to marshal real political resistance and to mobilize popular unity while performing culturally—redefining the exclusionary parameters separating artistic creation from public interpretation and the corresponding production of meaning. (Neustadt, 1999: 29).

Unlike the work that has been reviewed up to this point, the urban interruptions carried out by the CADA group resonated beyond the conceptual boundaries of traditional artistic space. Its proposal was not only to distance itself from the radical differences between 'cult art' and 'popular art', but most of all to produce artwork that would subvert military authority and its cultural hegemony.⁵²

As we shall see in the following chapter, CADA made an uncomfortable entrance into the artistic circuit of the time. It represented a problematic interruption both for the specific project developed by Richard, as well as (but to a lesser degree) for the V.I.S.U.A.L. group (Kay, Dittborn, and Parra). On the one hand, the CADA group did not work with a structured or defined theoretical or written framework, but through pamphlets, poems, and provocative statements included as inserts, blank pages, etc. in a series of magazines and news publications. In doing this, and by taking on the risks inherent in such activity, unlike the catalogues and writings of Richard and

⁵² As pointed out by Neustadt: 'For CADA, art "works" as a political tool, inspiring dialogue in the praxis of public life. In radical interventions, artists were to collaborate with their participating public to produce re-coded meaning in alternative paradigms. By dismantling the hierarchies implicit in both "high art" and the military dictatorship, CADA attempted to simultaneously subvert military authority and cultural hegemony.' (Neustadt, 1999: 29-30).

Kay, the project proposed to confront censorship in Chile directly⁵³.

On the other hand, CADA's artistic practices were high-impact urban interventions. Even when CADA developed performances in art galleries, the primary interventions were mainly carried out in highly transited neighbourhoods, streets, and other places in Santiago. Its proposal was not only to question the privileged place of the museum tradition, but also to eliminate the distance between art and daily life.

This certainly implied a new interruption in the Chilean artistic scene. As a new group of young intellectuals and provocateurs, many of whom were students or graduates of the Departamento de Estudios Humanísticos, CADA developed a form of performance that enabled it to establish a totally new relation between artistic experience and public witnessing. This certainly did not go unnoticed by Richard. Whilst she knew the members of CADA very well and witnessed several of their performances, its presence implied for her a new 'block of forces' within the artistic scene (sharing space with Richard and Kay's group). Even though she at first maintained a certain distance and suspicion of CADA's practices, her outlook changed substantially by the end of the 1980s. As shown in the next chapter, Richard would come to recognize that the CADA group, together with the work of the artists analysed in this chapter, marked a key step forward in the formulation of a new form of art and criticism. Richard's writing, as well as that of Kay and others, also played a key role.

⁵³ Not an insignificant risk in those years, both for them and for independent journalistic projects.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed Richard's first years in Chile. The focus has been on her initial work on artistic production in Chile during the 1970s and the tensions that emerged within the national cultural sphere at the time. These first years were characterized by a series of intellectual collaborations, or a chain of thoughts, that were established with artists, philosophers, writers, and art critics based upon the artwork that emerged during the 1970s. Due to the cultural blackout that followed the military coup, the intellectual circuit had to carry out a series of creative and reflexive strategies in order to overcome the censorship and constant surveillance by the military regime. Indeed, the density and complexity of visual and written (theoretical-poetical) work at the time demanded a new way of reading and interpretation that was unknown in Chilean critical-intellectual space.

During the 1970s, three groups emerged that forged artistic, intellectual, and political affinities. The first was Kay/Dittborn/Parra, the second was Richard/Leppe/Altamirano/Smythe; and the third was the CADA group. In spite of their differences, the three groups shared common characteristics. Their poetic and political operations advocated not only displacing the canonic narratives of Chilean art history, but most of all dismantling and perverting the order and discipline imposed by the military regime.

Through photographic incursions, new explorations of the body, new forms of political and intellectual ensembles, various theoretical and poetic experimentations, etc., the national cultural and artistic circuit was poised to create a new historical epoch, different from that which had existed before and in opposition to its historical context. This break with the past and the present was achieved thanks to the work and persistence of Kay and

Richard. Their confidence in writing and visuality in all of their materiality are vital to understanding this process. Both writers, in their mutual collaboration and differentiation, expressed a new pathway for action. One did so through institutional-academic support, and the other through individual efforts.

Unlike Kay, Richard's initial work was developed based upon precarious documents and voluntary collaborations with artists. Unlike other Latin American intellectuals, who depended upon the institutional support of universities and governments (García Canclini, Beatriz Sarlo, Jesús Martín-Barbero), Richard began her theoretical and political work at a complete disadvantage. Beginning in those years, ideas such as 'marginality', 'difference', 'gap' and 'border' would become part of a common lexicon.

If during the 1970s the first steps towards a new way of aesthetic exploration and art criticism were established, the same process would be radicalized during the following decade. It is not possible to understand the 1980s without reviewing the elements (artists, exhibitions, catalogues, texts, etc.) presented in this chapter. During the following decade the political and social history of Chile would pose an even more important question to art, and this would simultaneously require new interpretations and analyses. What is interesting is that the names that appeared in the 1970s would multiply and come to represent a true art and writing scene (the *Escena de Avanzada*). At the same time, Richard would make her interpretations even more complex, and widen her interests into new areas, such as feminism and post-modernity in Latin America.

In this chapter I have presented certain ideas and concepts that, in the future, would come to represent a complex and high-impact theoretical framework for Latin American academic-intellectual space. There is still much time and

many more issues to rehearse in order to more fully understand the emergence and development of this framework. The 1980s are key to this progress.

In sum, the conceptual scaffolding of Richard's thought was made up not only of a series of intellectual collaborations (a chain of thoughts among artists, philosophers, and critics), but also of the works of art themselves. As we have seen, the work of Dittborn, Altamirano, Smythe, Raúl Zurita, and, especially, Carlos Leppe, required a complex and demanding interpretation. Because of this, Richard had to build her cultural-critical project much like a bricklayer would, brick by brick, concept by concept, text by text, catalogue by catalogue.

CHAPTER 2

The *Escena de Avanzada* and beyond: Nelly Richard in the 1980s

Introduction

A significant and discernable change occurred in Chilean society between the 1970s and the 1980s as the country went from being a repressive and violent military regime to embark upon the gradual process in which a neoliberal logical framework became the natural economic and social order (Stepan, 1999; Drake and Jaksic, 1991). During the consolidation of the Pinochet regime, the civic-military authorities not only implemented new political and economic regulations through a silent revolution combined with the constant threat of surveillance and repression, but also and, most importantly, introduced, in the words of Raymond Williams ([1958] 1990), a new 'structure of feeling' within the social habitus.

Despite the fact that at the beginning of the 1980s Chile experienced a severe economic crisis resulting in a series of strikes, acts of urban violence, and general discontent⁵⁴, the country's neoliberalization was not deterred in the least. On the contrary, political and economic authorities carried on reforms influenced by the 'Chicago School' and the figure of Milton Friedman. However, the successful consolidation of a neoliberal economic model was also achieved through specific political reforms.

⁵⁴ According to Simon Collier and William F. Sater (2004): 'In August 1980 Labour minister José Piñera declared: "Chile in 1990 will be a developed country". Two years later, the Chilean economy simply imploded, in a recession even worse than that of 1975-76. First came another steep rise in the price of oil (the "Second oil Shock" of 1979"). [...] Bankruptcies rose to more than 800 in 1982 (having run at around one-third that figure between 1977 and 1981). GDP fell by one-seventh; the industrial workforce shrank by one-fifth; and unemployment rose even higher than in 1975-76.' (pp. 370-371).

Seven years after the military coup of 1973, on September 11, 1980, Augusto Pinochet implemented a constitutional referendum that would result in the so-called 'Constitución del Ochenta'. The signing of this fundamental charter allowed Pinochet to extend his institutional range by proclaiming himself 'Presidente de la República', as well as granting him new kinds of legal powers (Barros, 2002).

The Constitution of 1980 attempted not only to establish political and institutional control, but also set the foundations for the future of Chile as a 'consensual democracy' under a neoliberal economic system. Based on this concept, entrenched authoritarian clauses (*enclaves autoritarios*) were established which, to this day, continue to determine the country's political, economic, cultural, and social principles (Garretón, 2003). All of this was achieved through a process of cultural socialization based upon the subtle but invisible use of fear.⁵⁵ During the 1980s, new lifestyles, values, dispositions, and expectations emerged that solidified into what Chile is today.

In this context, how did critical thought develop in Chile in the 1980s? What roles did artists and critics adopt in these years? What forms of cultural resistance emerged during the 1980s? Finally, what signs of Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural* become visible at the time?

⁵⁵ The Chilean philosopher Manuel Alcides Jofré observes: 'It is evident to anyone who lived in Chile before 1973 that drastic social changes have occurred during the last 15 years. For many, life has become restricted to the intimate world of family and home. The evident fragmentation of Chilean society has led to permanent disruption. Self-repression, disciplinary hierarchies, traumas, torture, and death have certainly taken their toll. Chileans have changed their public behaviour. Today in the streets, few groups can be seen; there is almost no loud conversation on buses; the volume of discourse in public places has been lowered; and body language has become more restricted. What really has been reduced is everybody's social aura, that psychological space within which one travels wherever one goes. Chileans project themselves differently now. Everything is kept inside. They walk with their heads down, arms held closely to the body, self-centred, looking furtively around them, or simply looking out. Fixed patterns of social behaviour have been imposed. Appearance becomes more important than reality. The only truth is defined by the one-way vertical and official monologue of coercive power.' (Jofré, 1989: 73).

As we saw in Chapter 1, at the end of the 1970s, Chile witnessed the emergence of new kinds of artistic practices as well as a particular new form of writing and critical composition developed by Nelly Richard. In those years, Richard produced her first examples of criticism based upon artworks by Dittborn, Altamirano, Leppe, and others, which at that time required an original form of interpretation. These works led to a different grammar of criticism, nurtured not only by new intellectual and philosophical sources — both local and international—, but also by a socio-cultural context that demanded action-based, theoretical and visual practices based on eluding the censorship of the military regime.

Indeed, during those years there was a clear sense of impatience regarding the need to distinguish these new artistic practices both from the militant art of the *Unidad Popular* as well as from the official art of the military regime. This ‘cutting and tailoring (*corte y confección*)’ —in Richard’s words— of Chilean art history meant for Richard, as well as for other leading intellectuals of the time, a change of direction. That is to say, the installation of a plan for the production, interpretation, and writing about art that would have a powerful influence upon the Chilean art circle of that time and into the future.

During the 1980s, the writing and visual production of this group of artists and critics became even more complex than it had been in the 1970s. As never before in the history of Chile, a large number of catalogues were published for exhibitions, as were art pamphlets, and articles on the local, national, and international production of art. A series of international biennials and exhibitions were held at this time too (Paris, Buenos Aires, Sydney, Madrid), providing the opportunity to exhibit the artwork produced by those artists who participated in the international circuit.

These years would also witness the emergence, decline, and fall of what Richard would come to call *Escena de Avanzada*⁵⁶. As we shall see below, Richard coined this term by matching it with a series of visual, critical, and political practices that emerged between 1977 and 1985. These also served as the background for the construction of her intellectual project in general. Akin to an urban explorer, Richard became a compiler and researcher of the artistic fragments that came out of the Santiago cultural circle. Following the model of the late modern *flâneur*, Richard sought to understand, define, classify, and interpret the artistic and aesthetic changes occurring in Chile during those years. In addition, her working methodology was internalized by the artists of the time, while still maintaining its nature as an attentive and suspicious mode of observation of their experiments.

Thus the 1980s had a real impact not only upon Richard's intellectual development and the future discursive basis of her *crítica cultural*, but also on her way of thinking about the relationship between art, culture, and politics in years to come. If during the 1970s Richard established the initial plans and basic scaffolding of her intellectual project, during the 1980s this project was under construction. This chapter describes the increasing complexity and institutionalization of Richard's critical project during the 1980s, as well as her analytical shift towards new areas of critical thought (Julia Kristeva's theory of meaning, postmodern theory, feminism, among others). Above all, this chapter seeks to analyse how Richard's writing on art evolved from a focus upon the materiality of the artwork towards wider political and cultural themes based upon changes in the Chilean and international contexts. Fundamentally, both based upon and in conjunction with the production of works of art, Richard sought a theoretical and reflexive path towards new

⁵⁶ Literally, "the advanced scene"; figuratively, the "front lines" or forefront of art, art's cutting edge. See Richard (2004d: 106, footnote 3).

issues that in the following decade would lead to a more concrete definition of her intellectual practice as *crítica cultural*.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first consists of a detailed analysis of the book-catalogue published by Richard in November 1980 entitled *Cuerpo Correccional*. This book can be considered one of the first formal works in the field of art criticism that makes the relation between culture and society in Chilean art history a complex one. Indeed, a series of poetic and theoretical characteristics of Richard's *crítica cultural* can be found in it, especially as they emerge from an encounter with the performance art of Carlos Leppe. In addition, I compare *Cuerpo Correccional* with Ronald Kay's *Del espacio de acá* (1980) to establish the similarities and differences between both authors.

The second part consists of a historical and analytical examination of a series of essays written by Richard on art both in Chile and abroad between 1981 and 1985. After the implementation of the 'Constitution of 1980', there were a series of political, economic, and cultural transformations in Chile such as the privatization of higher education, the implementation of neoliberal economic policies —the so-called *shock doctrine* (Klein, 2008)—, and the emergence of the 'periodo de las protestas'. In this sociocultural context, and in order to systematize and conceive of the art scene that had emerged in Chile since 1975 as an 'identifiable set', Richard established the notion of *Escena de Avanzada*.

The third part consists of an analysis of Richard's *Margins and Institutions. Art in Chile since 1973*. Published as a bilingual edition in both English and Spanish in Australia in 1986, this book can be considered a true break with existing histories of the Chilean visual arts. Its publication implied not only the

description of artistic production in Chile at the time but, more importantly, the inscription of the *Escena de Avanzada* into art history. Defined by Richard, this concept/group of artists implied a profound change in Chilean art history. From then on, the *Escena de Avanzada* would become a key object of intellectual and artistic reference for the future development of Richard's intellectual project. Certainly, its emergence was met with a degree of suspicion in intellectual circles. Its impact upon the national artistic sphere however is unquestionable. This section concludes with two contemporary readings of the *Escena de Avanzada* —as well as Richard's interpretation of it— by Willy Thayer and Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott.

The last part of the chapter deals with the final years of the 1980s. Focussing on how the return to democracy in Chile in 1989, as well as the fall of 'real socialisms' (and 'the fall of metanarratives'), produced a shift in Richard's reflexive foci. With declining interest in the *Escena de Avanzada*, Richard made an incursion into the role of criticism in the context of the return to democracy in Chile as well as touching on the themes of post-modernism and identity in Latin America and (neo)feminism.

Owing to international condemnation and pressure on the Pinochet regime, another national plebiscite was held on October 5, 1988. This time, the results put an end to a 16-year military dictatorship. Under the slogan, 'La alegría ya viene', this vote implied the first step in the transition to democracy, as well as the emergence of another series of dilemmas and questions within Chilean political, artistic, and cultural spheres. This chapter seeks not only to illustrate the historical and visual elements of Richard's thinking in 1980, but also to show how during those years she would begin to give new form to the theoretical relationship between aesthetics (art, visuality, literature), culture (as a space of symbolic dispute and power), and politics (as a logic for the

valuation of difference). All are elements of Richard's future *crítica cultural*.

I. *Cuerpo Correccional*, among others

The first months of 1980 served as preparation for two key publications in the Chilean artistic circuit: Richard's *Cuerpo Correccional* and *Del Espacio de Aquí* by Ronald Kay. Both book-objects compiled the main works of Carlos Leppe, in the first, and Eugenio Dittborn, in the second, from 1973-1980, in addition to a series of texts and essays written by both critics on the work of the artists. Each book may be considered a summary of the artistic production, on the one hand, and criticism, on the other, of the two pairs (Richard-Leppe and Kay-Dittborn), as well as a result of how the relation between visuality and writing began to become institutionalized within the local cultural sphere⁵⁷.

It is not a coincidence that both books were launched on November 30, 1980 in a new art gallery, *Galería Sur*. For the occasion, the philosopher Patricio Marchant presented both books and read the text 'Discurso contra los ingleses'⁵⁸, in which he explicitly mentions the emergence of a new discursive body (of theory and visuality). It is through these 'paisajes editoriales' that the difference between an art critic centring on aesthetic traits (Kay) and a critic with cultural-critical pretensions (Richard) is established. The key elements of both works will now be explored.

If, as we saw in Chapter 1, *Reconstitución de escena* represented Richard's

⁵⁷ The art historian Francisco Godoy (2012) has systematized and analysed the relevance that both book-objects had for Chilean art history. I share his general thesis, which points out that they marked both a political and aesthetic break with the Chilean artistic scene.

⁵⁸ The text was published 10 years later in the second number of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* (November of 1990).

first effort to describe and analyse the visual and performance work of Carlos Leppe, her new book-catalogue *Cuerpo Correccional* can be seen as its increasingly complex continuation.

Cuerpo Correccional includes Carlos Leppe's performances developed between 1973 and 1980: *Happening de las gallinas* (1974); *El Perchero* (1975); *Gertrude Stein* (1976); *Reconstitucion de escena* (1977); *Accion de la estrella* (1979), and *Sala de espera* (1980). Unlike previous catalogues, characterized by their simplistic and manual editing, this book-object was published by a professional publisher (Francisco Zegers Editor⁵⁹), and to this day is considered a historical reference and collectors item (Honorato & Muñoz, 2005; Mellado, 2004).

Beginning with the very title, the book-object plays with complex references. What is a *Cuerpo Correccional*? Is it a *dispositif* of control or of resistance? Is it a biological body or an authoritarian body? From the start, Richard intended to play with two notions (control or resistance) which, when combined, are pertinent to Carlos Leppe's work. Indeed, for him the body is pure ambiguity. It is capable of resisting a fixed social framework (disassociating itself), but despite this resistance it picks up on cultural influences. In other words, the body is indiscipline, insubordination, and rebellion, but at the same time it experiments with social space, pedagogy, authority, subjugation, conformity, and correction.

⁵⁹ Francisco Zegers (1953-2012) was a Chilean publicist, editor, collector, and businessman who supported the editing and funding of many artists mentioned up to this point. His role as a collector and publisher was key for the creation of a new kind of publishing of art and theory. In addition, for Richard his editorial trust in 'Cuerpo Correccional' was important for the configuration of the *Escena de Avanzada*. In her words: 'Sin la generosidad, el talento editorial, la creatividad y la osadía de Pancho Zegers, mi vida de autora no habría sido lo que fue y tampoco –quizás- la Escena de Avanzada. Todo comenzó con este –nuestro- primer libro.' (Richard, 2015c).

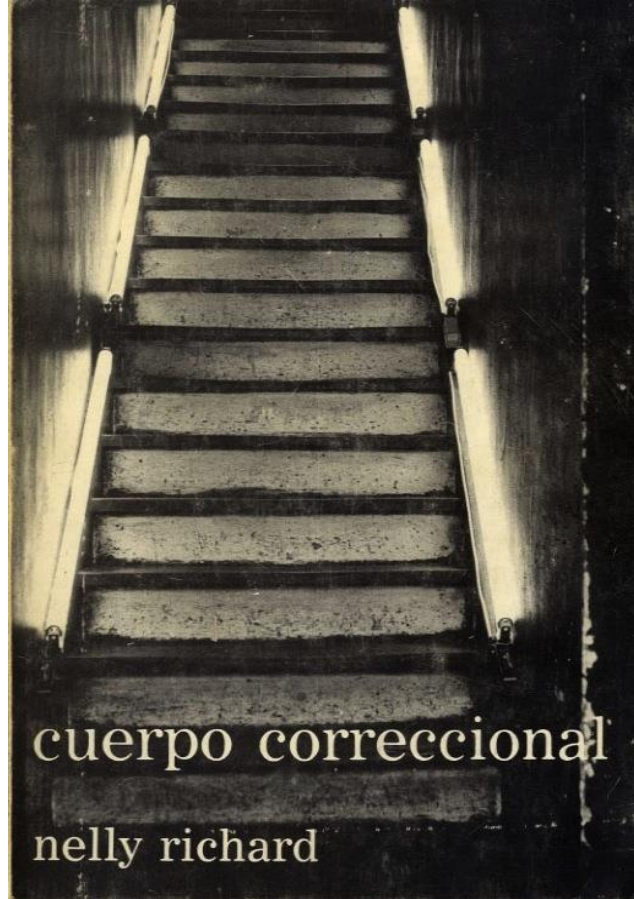


Figure 9. Book cover of *'Cuerpo Correccional'* (1980).

Something similar occurs with the cover of *Cuerpo Correccional*, which includes Leppe's photographs of the stairway in the building where his mother lived (Figure 9). The lines of the stairway, projected in the image through fluorescent tubes, converge on a vanishing point that is left out of sight owing to the framing of the image. This is the point of entry into the house,⁶⁰ a place that is not accessible through the image and is deliberately left concealed. There are no bodies or physical presence; only a one-way path to the maternal home.

⁶⁰ In the book, it states: 'El documento fotográfico de la portada de este libro corresponde a una intervención realizada en el domicilio de Catalina Arroyo, madre del artista: seminario 960, Santiago de Chile, consistente en haber iluminado la escalera de acceso del edificio durante 24 horas'.

These references to body, correction, femininity, maternity, etc. appear as scattered concepts or ideas without any coherent logic. However, they are elements that make up and integrate the general objective of this book-object. Throughout its pages, a work plan is established that is structured into three parts. In the first, Richard sets out a theoretical approach in which the foundations of her critical analysis of Leppe's work is established. Then she develops a critical-poetic writing experiment written in the third person. Finally, there is a self-reflexive and semi-biographical narrative on Leppe's mother, plus a brief story told by Leppe regarding his mother's fictitious death. In these three parts, *Cuerpo Correccional* identifies elements that serve to delineate the characteristics of the future *crítica cultural* project.

Part one: a theoretical approach to Cuerpo Correccional

The first part of 'Cuerpo Correccional' begins as follows: 'El texto presentado a continuación incluye o subentiende ciertas opciones de trabajo crítico que tal vez requieren de una introducción o argumentación previa a la lectura'. Unlike her previous texts, reviewed in the first chapter, in this text Richard produces what can be classified as an essay, close to an academic format. Throughout the text, Richard deploys her own theoretical framework that is supported by a series of quotes from Julia Kristeva, Félix Guattari, Jacques Lacan, Emile Benveniste, Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, and Claude Levi-Strauss. These, however, are not actually integrated into the text itself, they are rather included as quotes at the end of the work, serving as reflexive supports or theoretical validations.

Evidently, these quotes enable Richard to propose a series of theoretical problems. The quotes assist Richard to both establish the theoretical and

aesthetic principles observed in Leppe's performances, and to broaden the debate to include more wide-ranging political and theoretical principles. Indeed, through a series of statements or brief phrases located on the left side of the initial pages of the essay (as in Figure 10), the fundamental points of her project can be noted:

objetivar un criterio de validación teórica/ el cuerpo humano como material de producción cultural/ escenario realista de gestualidad masiva/ correlatos sociales y nacionales de la experiencia corporal/ sentencia castradora o cisura simbólica/ contradicción maternal/ trazo de unión y motivo persecutorio/ dialéctica sexual de la identidad/ modelos alternativos de producción de signos/ vía correccional o reformatoria de cultura/ cuerpo productivo y margen (americano) de contradicción/ datos semióticos y psicoanalíticos de aproximaciones a las prácticas corporales/ transformaciones del estatuto discursivo/ emergencia pulsional del sujeto en la escritura.



objetivar un criterio de validación teórica

El texto presentado a continuación, incluye o subentiende ciertas opciones de trabajo crítico que tal vez requieren de una introducción o argumentación previa a la lectura.

Situar el presente texto en relación a su objeto reflexivo –la obra artística de Leppe– y modalidad externa e interna de pensamiento y escritura, sirve de tentativa para formular un criterio común de lectura o apreciación teórica, no gratuito sino basado en el conocimiento compartido de los supuestos o referencias que operan en la especificidad del texto; un criterio de validación del material escrito, objetivable desde una perspectiva crítica vigente.

el cuerpo humano como material de producción cultural

El objeto sobre el cual reflexiona el texto está constituido por la obra artística de Carlos Leppe extendida en su trayectoria (1973-80). Si bien el texto recoge el total cronológico de la obra de Leppe, opera en él un corte reflexivo que tiende a privilegiar ciertos aspectos de la obra aquí ordenados según una opción teórica cuya formulación general permite –sin embargo– anclar los demás aspectos no explicitados en la primera instancia de lectura.

Algunas otras consideraciones relativas –por ejemplo– a últimas resoluciones escenográficas de la “Sala de Espera” debieron ser postergadas por razones prácticas de tiempos de producción de la obra y del texto.

La utilidad cumplida por la introducción no es sino parcial, habiendo aplazado –entre otras– la tarea sin embargo urgente de situar la obra de Leppe en el contexto productivo nacional.

La referencia mayor que organiza tanto la continuidad de la obra de Leppe como la extensión crítica del texto es la referencia corporal: referencia al cuerpo humano captado en sus instancias genéticas, biográficas, sociales y culturales (históricas). Referencia cuya generalidad teórica está aquí individualizada, materializada y productivizada (vuelta productiva como factor de transformación) en y por la experiencia artística.

Referencia al cuerpo del artista no únicamente tratado como motivo iconográfico (“Reconstitución de Escena”, 1977) sino modelado como soporte vivo de actuación (acción de la estrella, 1979), sino escenificado como material vivo de grabación video (“Sala de Espera”, 1980).

El cuerpo en Leppe está ubicado en tres tipos de relaciones (colectividad, biografía y cultura) cuya convergencia completa la unidad referencial de la obra y trayectoria del texto:

1) El cuerpo y los exteriores sociales/ el cuerpo humano en relación espacial a zonas de comparecencia pública.

Las zonas exteriores –documentadas o nominadas en la obra de Leppe– son principalmente zonas de promiscuidad física (torneos), zonas de confiscación corporal (hospitales) o de tránsito público (salas de espera); establecimientos cuyo significado humano es marginal –de censura física–, privativo –de apartamiento social por internamiento– o suspensivo –de interrupción o retracción del transcurso biográfico–.

escenario realista de gestualidad masiva

Las zonas exteriores mencionadas en la obra –inclusive aquellas mencionadas indiciariamente mediante datos materiales parciales (azulejos, por ejemplo)– sitúan la presencia corporal en un espacio vital externo, comúnmente identificable. Actúan en función de decorados públicos cuyas normas visuales –convencionando nuestra apreciación cotidiana de la modernidad– espacializan la actuación corporal de Leppe en un paisaje ordinario, en un escenario realista de participación física y gestualidad masiva.

A defecto de los decorados públicos propiamente tales, Leppe

Figure 10. Inner pages of 'Cuerpo Correccional' (1980).

In emphasizing the key concepts or ideas on the left of the page, Richard seeks to guide the reader (as a pedagogical model), as to what should be memorized in order to understand the political-cultural and aesthetic potential of Leppe’s work.

In this way, Richard points out from the beginning that:

La referencia mayor que organiza tanto la continuidad de la obra de Leppe como la extensión crítica del texto es la referencia corporal: referencia al cuerpo humano captado en sus instancias genéticas, biográficas, sociales y culturales (históricas). Referencia cuya generalidad teórica está aquí individualizada, materializada y productivizada (vuelta productiva como factor de transformación) en

y por la experiencia artística. (Richard, 1980: 8).

Based on this proposal, Richard seeks not only to define the importance of the 'referencia corporal' regarding the aesthetic dimension of Leppe's work, but also and most importantly to establish a broader sociocultural analysis that includes social collectivity, biography, and culture as dimensions.

Richard soon comes to focus on biological and bio-genetic issues (sexuality, identity), and their relation to the symbolic becoming of the subject (structure, society, culture). As seen in Chapter 1, specifically in the analysis of the text-catalogue *Reconstitución de escena* and the performance *El perchero*, the discussion between social constitution (discourse, language, culture, society) and biological constitution (sexuality, anatomy, physiognomy) constitute the central axis of the analysis of the theoretical problem. As Richard points out:

así como la demostración visual del cumplimiento anatómico de la castración en Leppe aparece generalmente tramada por una referencia cultural de actuación corporal, la cultura –cuya vigencia actúa en Leppe bajo modos correctores (maquillaje) o represores (yeso)- se erige en principal factor de castración en cuanto su dominio exige –en el sujeto así amputado- una constante renuncia corporal o retractación física de todo rasgo primario –fisonómico o anatómico- de expresión natural, de toda dinámica gestual. (Richard, 1980: 10).

Richard introduces a series of psychoanalytical elements into her essay in order to proclaim the maternal function as a destabilizing (transgressive) power for the masculine subject (one which regulates the social exchanges of cultural reproduction). In quoting Jacques Lacan's work in *Ecrits* ([1966] 2006), Richard sustains that he who possesses 'the word' (the father) *fixes the law*. This person decides what is culturally dominant. In this way, in order to change this dominant pattern, Richard seeks to recognize the maternal

function for its role in enjoying and resisting the masculine word. Richard reinforces the idea that this sexual dialectic of identity allows the establishment of an alternative model of sign production. As such, the 'somático-pulsional' that *Cuerpo Correccional* calls into question, recognizes the maternal as an uncontrollable flow of enjoyment, rhythm, and transgression.

Richard states that:

La función insistentemente inhibitoria y coercitiva de la institución cultural somete el sujeto en estado de renuncia y de sacrificio corporal, corroborando en Leppe la dimensión eminentemente traumática (de choque) de la convención cultural victimando la autoctonía corporal y gestual.

Habiendo tramado la referencia corporal en una textura comunitaria (social y nacional) y biográfica (sexual y simbólica), la incipiente formulación de un modelo de arte corporal nos permite –en primer grado- medirnos dialécticamente en un espacio humano de contradicciones –biológicas e ideológicas, subjetivas e intersubjetivas- cuya crucial dimensión (naturaleza/cultura) nos divide y articula a la sociedad en condición de cuerpo productivo. (Richard, 1980: 11).

Just as in the text *Reconstitucion de escena*, Richard again reinforces the tension between subjectivity and structure based upon Leppe's work, as well as how the body is understood as a depository for rules and procedures (the paternal voice) on the one hand, and as a *dispositif* for resistance to such impositions (the feminine voice) on the other.

Based upon this tension between the paternal and maternal voice, Richard tests a new theoretical dimension of analysis in *Cuerpo Correccional*. In her text, she explores the semiotic and/or psychoanalytic references utilized by

Julia Kristeva in her theory of meaning.

Proclaiming a new dynamic and style of experimentation in language, in 1970 Kristeva introduced antiformalism into the French debate on language analysis (played out in the pages of *Tel Quel*), which combined both semiotic and psychoanalytic analysis. Kristeva pointed out that language was a 'process of meaning' divided between institutions, norms, and repressive *dispositifs* (the 'symbolic') on the one hand, and enjoyment, drive ('pulsión'), and difference (the 'semiotic', *significance*) on the other. The latter represents the force of language that becomes an unbridled force of negativity in the unconscious. In the words of Kristeva:

What we call, *significance*, then, is precisely this unlimited and unbounded generating process, this unceasing operation of the drives toward, in, and through language; toward, in, and through the exchange system and its protagonists –the subject and his institutions. This heterogeneous process, neither anarchic, fragmented foundation nor schizophrenic blockage, is a structuring and de-structuring *practice*, a passage to the outer *boundaries* of subject and society. Then – and only then – can it be *jouissance* and revolution. (Kristeva, 1984: 17).

In *Cuerpo Correccional*, Richard uses Kristeva's hypothesis as an additional reinforcement for the relationship between the paternal/symbolic/masculine word/culture/society law (which is at the same time a structuring structure), and the maternity/semiotic/pre-discourse/feminine (of the disruptive, destructuring, rebellious, resistant potential). Kristeva's influence goes beyond her theory of meaning, however, as another new element is also integrated into the discussion - the potentiality of *poetic language* as a critical practice. The key point of *Cuerpo Correccional* resides here.

Richard proposes that the body language of a new political subject is

established in so far as it formulates a new discursive practice, that is, a new grammar, a discursive break with the past. This leads to the emergence of a new practice of poetic writing, which is distinguished from scientific-academic writing. This contribution, regarding the poeticizing of a critical space dominated by certain and uniform knowledge (so-called 'instrumental knowledge') becomes one of the keys to Richard's future theoretical edifice. In her words:

La virtualidad poética de una función crítica de escritura violenta, hoy el rigor lineal del proceso reflexivo, introduciendo en él –por desviaciones lexicales o sintácticas- un factor dinámico (vital) de seducción textual. Un coeficiente humano de solidarización, emotiva o pasional. (Richard, 1980: 14).

As such, what is important to Richard is the demand that Kristeva makes regarding the use of language as dissonance in social space⁶¹. This implies recognizing the emergence of poetic language as a *dispositif*, a poetic interruption⁶², which creates tension in the order dominated by discourses that are regulated and delineated by the socio-masculine structure (for example, censorship, prohibition, decrees and consensuses of the military regime). What is interesting is how Richard's analysis is not established based upon an analytical-theoretical framework that is imposed on Leppe's work. Rather, it is possible to observe that a critical-poetic writing is produced through a mutual interrogation based upon Leppe's visual/performance-based work.

⁶¹ Based upon Richard's theoretical-programmatic recognition, the Argentinean researcher Ana del Sarto has affirmed that: 'Es evidente que el subtexto programático de *Cuerpo Correccional* es *Revolution in Poetic Language*' (Del Sarto, 2010: 50). In addition, she also states that: 'según nuestro análisis la semiótica-psicoanalítica practicada por Kristeva constituye el basamento subyacente de la emergente crítica cultural' (Del Sarto, 2010: 42). This thesis will be dealt with later in the present work.

⁶² 'Art – this semiotization of the symbolic – thus represents the flow of *jouissance* into language. Whereas sacrifice assigns *jouissance* its productive limit in the social and symbolic order, art specifies the means – the only means – that *jouissance* harbors for infiltrating that order. In cracking the socio-symbolic order, splitting it open, changing vocabulary, syntax, the word itself, and releasing from beneath them the drives borne by vocalic or kinetic differences, *jouissance* works its way into the social and symbolic.' (Kristeva, 1984: 79-80).

While for Richard this critical-poetic writing was the result of Leppe's visual and performance-based experimentation, the local suspicion aroused by this foreign theoretical exercise —of local sociologist, for example (as we shall see below)— demanded a certain defensive attitude by Richard. In fact, Richard faced this problem by recognizing that:

*Cualquier referencia de lectura o cita teórica extranjera a nuestro contexto productivo se carga como tal de un valor de frustración, de conflicto o agresión: valor de provocación, también positivizable como otro valor nuestro. Como valor de entrelínea; oblicuo y convulsivo. (Richard, 1980: 15).

It is interesting to recall that, at the beginning of the 1980s, Richard dealt with the role of Continental European theory in local Latin American visual production and practice and recognized possible local resistance to this. Indeed, the apparently cryptic language that this implied generated confusion and surprise within the local artistic sphere, as well as a certain degree of suspicion of Richard. This condition of being constantly on the defensive would be, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, a permanent fixture within her intellectual experience.

While the theoretical approach taken in *Cuerpo Correccional* was founded mainly upon hypotheses developed by Kristeva, the question that emerges is how the revolution of critical-poetic language can be seen in Leppe's work itself. In the second part of 'Cuerpo Correccional', Richard works on this element.

Part two: Leppe and the revolution of poetic language

In the beginning of the second part of *Cuerpo Correccional* Richard performs an analysis of Leppe's work/body based upon the scheme that Kristeva had developed in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. In the words of Richard, in referencing this second part of the book-object:

La modalidad de escritura probada en el texto siguiente tiende a excentrar⁶³ la unidad estrictamente conceptual o intelectual de análisis de la obra para energizarse como modalidad poética de sensibilización y afectivización de la experiencia significativa. (Richard, 1980: 14).

In the second part of the book, Richard begins to question Leppe's work/body, and establishes a dialogue between an 'I-Richard' (who analyses Leppe's work and recognizes *her* distance), and a 'you-Leppe' (who through his performances introduces tension into biology/language, I/feminine, I/masculine dichotomies).

Certainly, the grammatical, political, and poetic effort that Richard makes in the second part of *Cuerpo Correccional* represents a completely divergent and unfamiliar proposal in the historic context in which it emerged. In nine poetic-textual sections, the previously mentioned performances are reconstructed based upon subtitles such as:

PRIMERA DIMENSION PANICA DE LA FIGURA MATERNA/PROGRAMA SEXUADO DE IDENTIDAD/LA POSE DISIDENTE/EXPECTATIVA DE IDENTIDAD/FUNCION DE MIMESIS/EDICIÓN DE UN SIGNO CUTÁNEO/VIA COSMÉTICA Y ORTOPÉDICA DE CORRECCION

⁶³ The term '*excentrar*' is a verb that was 'invented' by Julio Cortázar (1994), relating to 'excentrar el centro', or leaving the habitual box in order to seek out another beyond, further, behind, on the other side.

CORPORAL/EL INCESTO VOCALICO/ORATORIAS

As shown by Del Sarto (2010: 73-107), in the sections of the second part of the book Richard proposes an analysis in which the masculine (the symbolic) represents the dominant-repressive-military, while the feminine (semiotic) is a source of liberation-emancipation-outburst. As such, the tension that is exposed denotes an *alternate corporeality*, which is to say a body that settles between culture and subjectivity. Here Richard explores Leppe's works, based on the poetic and critical power of writing.

How is this theoretical deployment reflected in Leppe's work?

In focusing in particular upon the artist's work between 1973 and 1980, Richard develops a simulated conversation between the critic and the artist. It is possible to observe some of these critical-poetic ideas recur throughout the second half of the book. Richard writes (to Leppe):

"0.3 te contactas con la cultura mediante un trato somático
convenido en el marco de tu complejión/
en tus idiosincrasias.

editas la cultura desde la modélica corporeidad de sus
representantes físicos todos contraídos en tu figura,
inicialmente doméstica/
ofertas la cultura no en los soportes objetuales ni letrados
sino en tu área corporal/
en el relieve de tu facha. En tu pinta/" p.63

"11. problematizas la cultura o actuación cultural en virtud

de un método reformativo, ejercido sobre el cuerpo:

por ejemplo, los yesos/

cuyo tratamiento de fuerza interrumpe el desarrollo motor
infligiendo el castigo de la rigidez en el cuerpo interpretativo
de la cultura (...)

el efecto coercitivo de los yesos sancionando tu interpretación
cultural actúa en contra de tu dinámica corporal o
sexual/de tu autonomía expresiva.

moldeando la gestualidad en el formato inflexible del yeso
cuyo imperativo oprime toda fuerza instintual.” P.69

“accedes a la institución de la cultura por vía correccional
de instrucción fisonómica o postural/
por adulteración de tu estatuto físico original así desvirtuado
en el laborioso trámite de obtención técnica de tu
semblante cultural.

en tu dialéctica corporal/

en el proceso de dialectización de tu relación de cuerpo a
los signos de la cultura.

te defines contrariado en tu tesis (cultural) o antítesis (corporal)

- sin nunca sintetizarte en tu antagonismo ni conciliarte en
tus contrarios, sino permaneciendo contradictorio
en la vigencia sexuada de tu negatividad/” p.71

In these poetic paragraphs it is possible to discern certain components of
Revolution in Poetic Language, as well as Richard's own experimentation.

This includes not only poetic games and references to Leppe's work, but also a political-cultural will. The prose combines various elements. Indeed, the single most significant influence of *Cuerpo Correccional* is its dispersed use of a series of references that constitute a problem, based upon complex relations, that is, semiotic-psychoanalytic theory, critical practice, poetic language, body/biography/sexuality, history/context, visuality/materiality etc. This 'total platform' included in *Cuerpo Correccional* lends it consideration as a meaningful landmark in the history of Chilean art.

Part three: maternal dialogues, feminine rebelliousness

On the last page of *Cuerpo Correccional*, Richard includes one final dimension - the role of the feminine as a practice of resistance to patriarchal language. Through a first person biographical transcription by Leppe's mother, Richard expresses the pain of the maternal and the sacrifice of the maternal gesture as textual form. In the words of Leppe's mother:

Yo estaba perdiendo sangre y él no nacía. Si yo hubiera sabido todo lo que iba a sufrir no me hubiera casado por ningún motivo. Pero yo quiero lo único. Me comía todo el calcio. Se me iban cayendo los dientes de a uno. Total lo mío, aparte del cariño que le tengo, lo llego a mirar como un accidente biológico no más. Toda la sangre que tenía en el cuerpo yo la perdí y la perdí dos veces. (Richard, 1980: 106).

As a narration of affection and abandonment, this section manifests Richard and Leppe's interest in postulating a political discourse of the feminine. Leppe's mother becomes an active agent and enters *Cuerpo Correccional* as a sensitive interruption, a maternal influence seeking to hold onto the son, but threatened by the symbolic-cultural-repressive space.

Finally, in 'Epilogo: La cordillera de los Andes', this book-art reaches a conclusion through the poetic and funerary voice of Carlos Leppe. Still at his mother's deathbed, Leppe attempts to establish pulsional and fluvial ties with the feminine both cinematographically and without clear definition: the transgressive word, the heterogeneous space. In his words:

Yo cubriré de azulejos las cuatro paredes, el techo y el suelo de la pieza de mi madre, y encenderé rectas de neón blanco en cada arista. Yo montaré diez y seis urinarios murales donde orinarán esos pagados, dando la espalda al cuerpo desnudo y difunto de mi madre envuelta en paños de gasa y tendida en una camilla central. Yo sintonizaré un aparato video en cada ángulo de la pieza, exhibiéndome ahí como diva, como lo que soy, como "La Muñeca del Continente". Yo tiraré mi beso cinematográfico grabado en la cinta sin fin, sobre su boca de Bella Durmiente.

Cuerpo Correccional may thus be conceived as a performance-based experiment that has been mapped or systematized through Richard's poetic textuality. Through the dispersed collaboration of summaries, names, and pulsions, this art-book has been inscribed into art history in Chile as an

inaugural example of critical writing that, as shall be seen, would come to be 'productivizado' (to use Richard's term) and transformed in the years to come, not only in Richard's writing itself, but also by a number of other cultural productions.

Del Espacio de Acá: Kay's farewell to Chile and the rise of Nelly Richard

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, *Cuerpo Correccional* was presented on November 30, 1980 at the Galería Sur together with the book *Del Espacio de acá. Señales para una Mirada americana* by Ronald Kay. This was certainly no coincidence. On the contrary, it is key to understanding the local artistic scene at the beginning of the 1980s.

*Del Espacio de Acá. Señales para una mirada americana*⁶⁴ is a collection of Ronald Kay's writings, notes, and reflections on the role of photography in Latin American (and metropolitan) history, and the work and thought of the visual artist Eugenio Dittborn. It is, in effect, a continuation of the ideas and arguments that Kay formulated in *V.I.S.U.A.L: Dos textos de Nelly Richard y Ronald Kay sobre 9 dibujos de Dittborn*.

In the centre of the book's cover is a photograph, seemingly banal, trivial, and anonymous, an image that recalls any given moment, unremembered, hidden from history (Figure 11). However, owing to its anonymity, it is an image to which names, ages, dates, places, and histories can be attributed. In sum, it is an 'any kind of image whatsoever', which is reproduced dozens of times, an

⁶⁴According to the translator and researcher Osvaldo De la Torre, '*Del espacio de acá* is notoriously difficult to translate, in large part because of the inherent ambiguity of *Del* ('concerning', 'about', 'apropos', 'on', 'regarding' etc.) and *acá* (technically, 'here', but a 'here' that is not necessarily deictic, but rather, a 'here' that reflexively utters its own distance with respect to another space or 'there'. *Acá* is, therefore, closer to 'over here'). Other options for rendering this title in English include: 'about this space', 'regarding this space', and 'on/regarding/about/apropos this space over here.' (De la Torre, 2013: 115).

image created through a technical *dispositif* (the photographic camera) that captures a fleeting instant, a time that is no more.

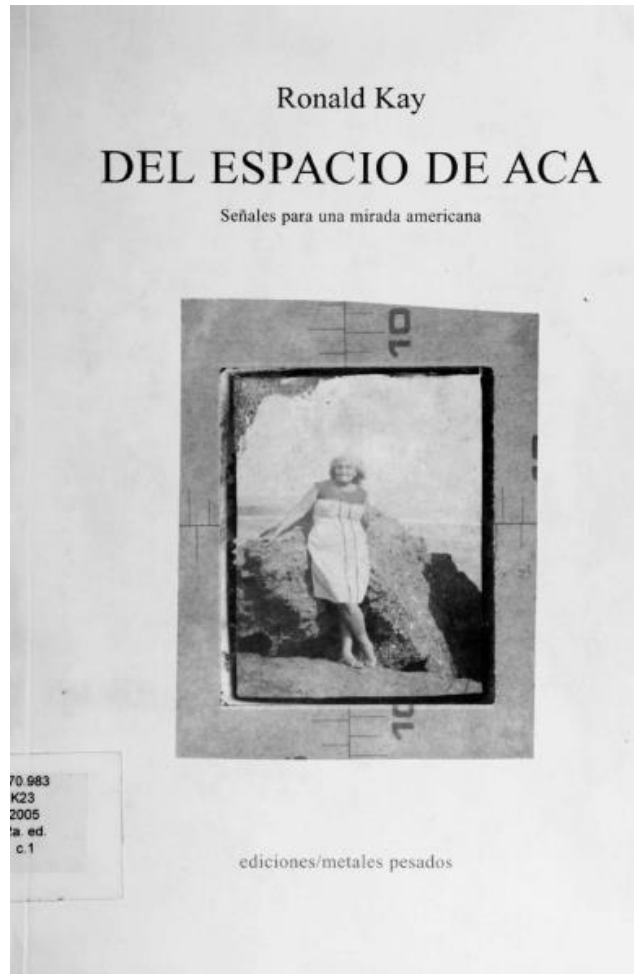


Figure 11. Cover of 'Del Espacio de Acá', Ronald Kay, 1980 (Portada Edición 2005, Metales Pesados).

Del Espacio de Acá is made up of a series of texts written by Kay up until 1980 for various catalogues, exhibitions, presentations, and translations. However, despite its fragmented character, the book possesses the characteristics of a formal piece of work, or in other words, it is a work that

might be labelled 'poetic-aesthetic essayism'. The book is divided into three parts. The first, entitled 'Materiales de Construcción. Documentos fotográficos usados por Eugenio Dittborn', presents a series of photographs of athletes, indigenous peoples, mug shots, celebratory episodes, both known and unknown faces (for example, that of Gabriela Mistral). Unlike *Cuerpo Correccional*, which analyses Leppe's work through an exchange between text and image, Kay decided to make his cache/archive of images available to the reader from the very beginning⁶⁵. Like a detective, he puts before the reader the evidence that enables him to generate both a description and an analysis.

Once the images have been identified, all of which are connected to the visual work of Eugenio Dittborn, Kay concentrates on deploying his own theoretical reading of the work. Throughout the eight notes of *Del Espacio de Aquí*, Kay establishes a wide-ranging analytical framework regarding the role of photography in modernity as well as delineating an interpretive framework for Dittborn's work. However, it is possible to visualize a central reflection that goes beyond Dittborn's specific work and that places Kay as a key actor on the intellectual battlefield of the time. In the note 'La reproducción del Nuevo Mundo', Kay insists that photography is first installed as a tradition in America, before painting, and that it is the fragmented vision that photography offers which provides the dispersed images of the Latin American space/landscape, rather than the historic vision provided by painting: the assimilation of the technical means of production of images represents the most efficient way of producing visuality in the region.

⁶⁵ In this regard, Osvaldo De la Torre has stated: 'Yet Kay's interest in photography is not only philosophical, but also personal (he is an avid collector of photographs) and politically grounded. As was the case for other artists and poets working in the dictatorial context of post-1970s Chile, photography became a medium particularly suited to embody, evoke, and deploy a number of politically pertinent concepts, such as memory, testimony, nostalgia, surveillance, and disappearance. Photography, for Kay, implies a certain violence, a kind of catastrophic tear or rupture in the continuum of time.' (De la Torre, 2013: 120-121).

Kay's thesis is thus related to the historic discrepancy that Chile had experienced regarding metropolitan painting. According to him, the Chilean elites, being unaware of the modern European vanguard, had favoured landscape and portrait paintings, rejecting the inclusion of the popular classes in visual history. In a process that is almost parallel to that of the massification and commercialization of the photographic camera in Europe, the arrival of photography in Chile in 1840 saw the historic function of painting completely disrupted. Kay sees a revolutionary process in this mechanical visual mediation:

El procedimiento documental choca violentamente con la gran tradición cultural de la pintura, la que es convertida en pasado ahora revelado en sus fundamentos, por mostrar la fotografía cómo piensa la pintura a diferencia de ella. Desautoriza a la pintura por su multiplicabilidad mecánica en varios aspectos decisivos como p.ej., la originalidad, la autenticidad, el aquí y ahora, revolucionando la espacialidad y temporalidad colectivas. Pintura y fotografía empiezan a definir(se) un campo resueltamente diverso en la articulación de lo visual. (Kay, [1980] 2005: 26).

Based on this idea, Kay incorporates the hypotheses that Walter Benjamin presents in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. As one of the first translators of Benjamin and Heidegger in Chile, Kay adopts their primary hypotheses based not only upon pure theoretical praxis, but essentially on the 'application' of these ideas to the work produced by Dittborn⁶⁶. For example, in the notes 'Cuadros de Honor', Kay analyses criminal faces – photographs of confused, sad faces that are perpetually condemned by their crimes – that Dittborn compiled over years and presented

⁶⁶ On this point, it is important to note that in those years several national authors had already read Walter Benjamin. For a historic and philosophical analysis of the uses of Benjamin and photography in the local scene, and based upon a bio-political and vanguard matrix (art-life relation), read Federico Galende (2012).

under the criterion of artistic validity. These unknown faces, without history, damaged, criminalized etc., are reproduced mechanically and inscribed into the dictatorial history that defined the times. With photography, then, painting (unique and unrepeatable, auratic) is displaced as a historic reference in favour of the emergence of a new American space - dispersed and unknown faces, the faces of indigenous peoples and criminals, rebellious and varied factions, a visual grammar of the New World.

In sum, and in the words of Kay:

La fotografía en el Nuevo Mundo le roba a la pintura desde ya, e inexorablemente, la posibilidad de constituirse en tradición, por imponer con fuerza social masiva dimensiones espacio-temporales propias de ella, como la fugacidad y la repetición, (las que condicionan prácticas antagónicas y desconstructoras de la noción misma de tradición), en oposición a las de singularidad y perduración de la pintura, que son precisamente los cimientos de la tradición. (...) La fotografía se instala antes que la pintura en América. Retrospectivamente la pintura pierde su virtualidad de desarrollarse independientemente del handicap de los mecanismos de reproducción mecánica. Por ello se puede afirmar que no hay un solo cuadro en el Nuevo Mundo que haya orientado y determinado de un modo socialmente vigente y comprometedor un “paisaje” “americano” o un “rostro americano”. Sabemos en forma colectiva del espacio americano por una cantidad sucesiva, dispersa y diseminada de fotos. (Kay, [1980] 2005: 28).

For Kay, through the assimilation of technical production (photoserigraphy, offset, etc.), Dittborn not only distances himself from the cultural value of the painting tradition itself, but turns the artist's work into that of a producer (technician, observer, composer), no longer that of an inspired creator or an author dislodged from history.

These ideas, also present in *V.I.S.U.A.L: Dos textos de Nelly Richard y*

Ronald Kay sobre 9 dibujos de Dittborn, represent some of Kay's most significant contributions to photographic theory and the representation of historic Latin American space. They are contributions that will also be clearly present in Richard's future writing and thinking.

Like Richard in *Cuerpo Correccional*, Kay in *Del Espacio de Acá* establishes his own authorship. In this way, whilst *Del Espacio de Acá* approaches relations between body/geography, centre/periphery, complicity between author/artist etc. in a tangential way, it is important to highlight that the authorship of Richard and Kay are still irretrievably distant from one another. Although it is possible to identify a common poetic, political, and critical-theoretical project, it is also clear that Richard maintains a political-cultural will that is not observed in the work of Kay. While Richard weaves a theoretical-poetic-cultural framework *with* Leppe's body, Kay exemplifies his hypotheses *in* Dittborn's works. While Richard integrates the historical-cultural context of the military dictatorship in an underground and metaphorical manner, Kay establishes a prior theoretical-poetic problem that runs throughout the history of Chilean modernization. In the same way, while Kay establishes a plan of analysis that is specific to the artwork, thus working within the theories of autonomous art, Richard deals with both artwork and the theory of art and culture, psychoanalysis, and similar disciplines. While Kay was shielded by institutional protection (Universidad de Chile), Richard wrote without any academic or institutional support. In sum, it is also clear that the writings, movements, organizations, and ways of confronting artwork of both writers are quite different.

Despite the differences between their respective work, it is also worth recognizing that both *Cuerpo Correccional* and *Del Espacio de Acá* came to be considered to represent an 'inaugural moment' in Chilean artistic and

intellectual space during the following decades (Godoy, 2012). On the one hand, both publications are inscribed in the history of art as an *operation of erasure* regarding publications on art prior to the coup of 1973, and on the other as an *operation of blockage* of other emergent forms of analysis in the years following the coup. As both integrated new analytical registers borrowed especially from France and Germany, local critical platforms (such as those of Enrique Lihn⁶⁷) were left in the shadows or simply buried by the sheer force of analysis generated by Kay and Richard⁶⁸. In this way, both imposed their discourses on the remaking of the Chilean artistic field of the 1980s, including not only new ways of writing, but also new techniques for printing, design, and binding (*ad hoc* to the new technological and commercial era of Pinochet's neoliberal project). As such, this new editorial/author-based support meant the beginning of a new form of working with the politics of the image and the poetics of writing.

Nonetheless, at the end of 1980 an important shift occurred. In 1981 Kay left for Germany⁶⁹, leaving the path clear for Richard to develop her intellectual plan, based upon what both had already learned and done. This would have significant effects on the Chilean artistic circuit.

⁶⁷ On the life and work of Enrique Lihn, see Valdés and Risco (2008).

⁶⁸ In a conference held in June 2015, Richard pointed out the following regarding both books and the historical context: 'El efecto de conjunto -Leppe / Dittborn / Kay / Richard- tuvo carácter de "acontecimiento", es decir, dejó la marca de excepción de un corte difícil de ser reabsorbido en el trazado regular de una línea de continuidad por cómo irrumpe y disrumpe. Ambos libros sacudían por completo el corpus bibliográfico de las referencias teóricas de las escrituras chilenas sobre arte que circulaban en esos años: "Del espacio de acá" de Ronald Kay ofrecía una decisiva lectura –inspirada en Walter Benjamin- de los sistemas de reproducción visual que operaban la imagen fotográfica; "Cuerpo Correccional" evocaba heterodoxamente las teorías del inconsciente y del lenguaje (Julia Kristeva) y los dispositivos pulsionales (Lyotard, Deleuze-Guattari)' (Richard, 2015c).

⁶⁹ He returned to Chile in 2008.

II. The making of the *Escena de Avanzada*

Unlike the 1970s, the 1980s were characterized by the daily naturalization of the military regime. While before, the dictatorship had operated under a state of total terror, during the 1980s the regime began to adopt a civic-military profile, which is to say that it integrated a cast of techno-professionals whose role was to implement what Raymond Williams has called a new 'structure of feeling'. In this way, both the military and pro-regime civilian groups divided up the primary social orders of interest, that is, the political and the economic. All other areas, such as science, education, health, etc., were coordinated systematically under the economic and political logic of the dictatorship.

As we saw in the first chapter, a large portion of the economic and political reforms had begun to be implemented during the initial months following the military coup. However, during the 1980s the impacts would be felt directly. Thanks to a team of economists known as the 'Chicago Boys'⁷⁰, as well as a group of lawyers known as 'Los gremialistas', these reforms became the new social model (Cristi & Ruiz, 1990). This group of economists and lawyers⁷¹, influenced by the economic hypotheses of thinkers such as Arnold Harberger and Milton Friedman,⁷² would implement a series of legal-economic policies

⁷⁰ Stepan has pointed out that: 'Pinochet's Santiago was not going to Washington, London, or Chicago. Reagan's Washington, Thatcher's London, and the University of Chicago economists were going to Santiago to see the future.' (Stepan, 1999: 323).

⁷¹ Carlos Huneeus holds that Jaime Guzmán and his 'Gremialista' movements were the intellectual authors of the primary economic and political pillars of dictatorial Chile, as well as its future political, economic, and social consequences. In his words the 'Gremialist Movement' and the 'Chicago Boys' 'were not, in fact, two separate groups, working independently. Rather, they shared a long-term power strategy, which was basically defined by the 'Gremialists'. A large number of the economists were either supporters, or active members, of the Gremialist Movement founded by Guzmán in the Catholic University after the electoral failure of the right in the 1965 elections. Thus the coherence of the economic model inherent in the implementation of its policies is not to be found, as is usually asserted, in the rigid [adhesion] to a recipe of neoliberal measures, but rather in the integration of the economic policies with a political project, articulated by young men belonging to the same political movement. This cohesion was driven principally by politics, and to a lesser degree by economics.' (Huneeus, 2000: 462).

⁷² Luís Carcamo-Huechante has written a valuable analysis, which mixes literary, cultural, poetic, economic, and social analysis on Milton Friedman's presence in Chile and his impact on Chile's current socio-cultural map. In

that would shift Chile's socio-economic landscape towards neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005).

However, these economists and lawyers could not act without a solid legal framework. For this reason, at the beginning of the decade the 'Constitution of 1980'⁷³ was proclaimed, the essence of which encoded the political, cultural, and economic aspirations of the military regime⁷⁴. In addition, through this constitution, the complete set of foundations of the Pinochet regime were put into place, as were the foundations for a future 'democracia protegida' or 'democracia de los acuerdos' Richard would make these an object of her resistance during the following decade.

This new constitution would not only delineate the principles of a free market economy, but also (and based on this model) give way to a series of reforms,

his words: 'The lecture in Santiago by the prominent University of Chicago economist heralded the symbolic dislocation of categories that were critical to state culture, such as the notion of a national economy, the concept of a welfare state, and the idea of the university. His speech, as both discourse and performance, re-framed these iconic images within new configurations of knowledge and culture. Friedman's presentation not only described (and endorsed) the structural adjustment purportedly entailed by the transition to a free-market society, it staged what I will refer to as a cultural adjustment within the symbolic universe of Chilean society. Simply put, economic discourse, in this scenario, functioned as a cultural discourse in which economists played the role of active producers and disseminators of meaning.' (Cárcamo-Huechante, 2006: 415). See also Cárcamo-Huechante (2007).

⁷³ In the words of Manuel Antonio Garretón: 'The constitution imposed by the regime in a 1980 plebiscite meant the end of the regime's institutionalization process. The constitution consecrated maintaining a military regime until 1989 and subsequently its transformation into an authoritarian regime, civilian in nature, with restricted political involvement and tutelary power for the armed forces. The regime attempted to have this transition from military dictatorship to permanent authoritarian regime confirmed by keeping Pinochet in power through the 1988 plebiscite.' (Garretón, 2003: 123).

⁷⁴ Jaime Guzmán, considered the intellectual author of the 1980 Constitution, held that the principle of the Constitution of 1980 would be to establish both a historic plan for national reformulation on an economic and a social level, and to fix the necessary procedures for maintaining this legal-political-economic model until this day (2015). In a document written to justify the writing of the Constitution, Guzmán stated that: 'We connect the best traditions of the Chilean Republic with our creative resolve in order to meet the challenges we face in terms of global realities and the Chilean experience, which allows us to speak of this as a new Constitution for a new democracy. This does not mean we have the absurd pretension of inventing a wholly new political system, but rather the desire to efficiently imbue our future democracy with the values of freedom, security, progress, and justice, thus abandoning the basic neutrality toward these values that characterized the Chilean institutional regime until September of 1973. It was precisely this neutrality that allowed our democracy to serve its enemies as a useful instrument, which they used to advance their opposing "values": totalitarianism and statism, which infringe and curtail freedom; terrorism and subversive violence, which threaten security; and demagoguery, which undermines economic progress and social justice.' (Guzmán, [1980] 2014: 469).

such as the privatization of education (in which the Universidad de Chile would be the most highly affected university),⁷⁵ the elimination of the role of the state as a provider of retirement pensions, the reduction of basic services such as health, the privatization of public services etc. At the same time, the new Constitution established certain constitutional proceedings, known as 'authoritarian enclaves' (Uggla, 2005), which are still in effect to this day and have been key to understanding the social struggles of more recent decades.

Despite the surge of the first social protests during the dictatorship (Garretón, 2003), the military regime maintained heavy support for its economic and, most emphatically, legal decisions. Based upon multiple repressive policies, the military government did not back down, and maintained its policy of persecution, disappearances, torture, surveillance of political leaders etc. The regime had now entered the second half of its existence.

What was the effect of this process upon national visual production? Could visual production decipher the political and economic transformations being developed during the 1980s? Was the emergence of the *Escena de Avanzada* an answer to this new sociocultural context?

From an artistic scene to an 'Advanced' scene

During the first half of the 1980s, local artistic production saw changes as well

⁷⁵ Especially regarding education, the reforms implemented in the 1980s had a heavy impact. The new rules allowed for the establishment of totally private schools, institutes and universities, regardless of their religious, intellectual, or commercial orientation. For example, on May 31, 1982 the Higher Institute of Human Sciences, Communication, and Design, was founded, the primary objective of which was to offer technical degrees connected to the arts, social sciences, and humanities. By the end of the military dictatorship, this Institute was recognized by the Ministry of Education in Chile as the Universidad de Arte y Ciencias Sociales (Arcis). One of the first analyses of the process of privatization of education in Chile was made by Brunner (1993b).

as continuities.⁷⁶ Owing to a certain degree of flexibility on the part of the military authorities, the national artistic scene was able to count upon a wider variety of spaces for exhibitions, and to garner higher levels of international participation (Varas, 2007). At the same time, new editorial possibilities opened up, as well as access to new creative devices such as video recording and editing etc. This widening of opportunities would be beneficial not only to the general artistic circuit, but especially to the artists in Richard's circle (Altamirano, Dittborn, Rosenfeld, Eltit, Zurita). At the time, this circle was quite small. As a result, Richard was once again able to put her analytical skills to work as a spectator, observer, and participant in the Santiago artistic circuit at the beginning of 1980. In fact, as an observer on the sidelines, she would see in her friends' artistic production a true opportunity to record their work and, later, to develop a critical analysis based upon these experiences and sensations. The artwork, as well as the complex configuration of the Santiago urban landscape of the 1980s, became for Richard aspects of her learning and discovering which became vital to her writing and critical practice.

For example, Carlos Altamirano would continue to explore the city of Santiago in *Version residual de la historia de la pintura chilena* (1980), *Panorama de Santiago* (1981), and *Tránsito suspendido* (1981). These three interconnected works deal once again with urbanism and its photographic and audiovisual record. Based upon the concepts of 'tránsito', 'panorama', 'ruta', 'registro', and 'historia', in these works Altamirano looks at problems related to the circulation of artworks, both within the media (as agents of distribution and decision-making) and in the exhibition spaces such as the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes and the art-historical distinction it represents.

⁷⁶ For a discussion of Chilean theatre during the dictatorship, see Boyle (1992).

By combining video art, photography, performance, and painting, Altamirano developed a succession of artworks in which he critically revises the history of Chilean art and its residual, out-of-date condition, as inherited from the local historic tradition.

For his part, Eugenio Dittborn also began to explore new imagery devices, such as publicity printing and video. In 1981 he made the video *Cambio de Aceite*, in which he spilled over 350 litres of burnt lubricant over the surface of the Tarapaca Desert in Chile. This work conceived the Chilean desert as a geographical and pictorial support, or as a space in which the stain is distributed without any co-action or limits. Understood as a significant spill, the work puts the relations between nature and culture; body and language; pulsionality and symbolic laws, into tension. The stain infringes on the symbolic (socio-cultural) *dispositif* represented by the desert as a sterile space, and exposes the necessary flow and overflow of the pulsional *dispositif*. Something similar is presented in his video art of 1982-1983, *Historia de la Física*. In this video, Dittborn explores the limits of corporeal practices through a series of sequences and shorts. Through videos of births and musical performances, as well as sequences of his video developed in the Atacama Desert, he looks in depth on the relationship between body and discipline, society and nature.

Also in these years, Dittborn would venture into one of his more internationally renowned aesthetic proposals: 'pinturas aeropostales'⁷⁷ (airmail paintings). In 1985 Richard published an essay dedicated to these initial works, entitled simply *Pinturas postales de Eugenio Dittborn*. In it, Richard explains the challenges implicit in the analysis of this kind of work:

⁷⁷ Currently, Eugenio Dittborn is considered to be one of the most important artists in the world. See the analysis of Dittborn by Thornton (2014).

Abriendo el sobre y desplegando lo plegado, el destinatario de la obra rehace en sentido inverso el mismo gesto ejecutado por el remitente al destinarle su pintura. Esa inversión del movimiento doble ejecutado en torno al sobre ilustra la reversibilidad de la distancia internacional que recorre la pintura. El *ir y venir de su mensaje corregido por la simetría del gesto invertido del otro* es la expectativa de lectura contenida en la materialidad del pliegue. (Richard, 1985: 15).

As many others have recently pointed out (de los Ríos, 2006; Risco, 2012; Thayer, 2012), Dittborn's 'pinturas aeropostales' left a poetic-visual trace around the world, through the use of a logic that combines displacement, history, time, and criticism. In this way, both the images of faces without history and the gesture of folding/unfolding, displacement/exhibition present in the 'pinturas aeropostales' imply an itinerant policy of the *other* face, the marginalized Chilean face (Figure 12).

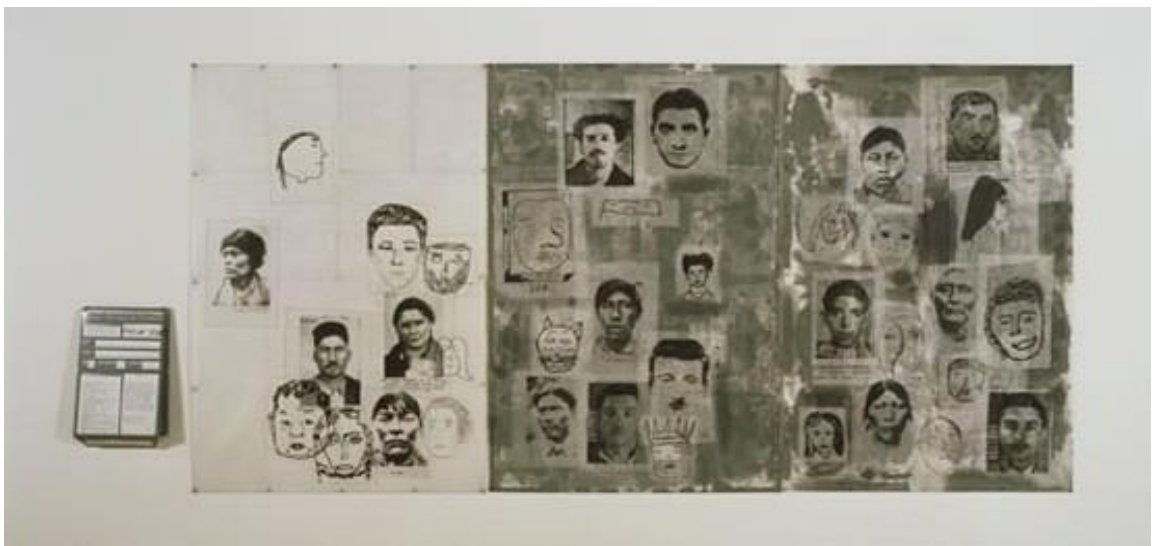


Figure 12. Eugenio Dittborn. 'Decimosegunda historia del rostro humano (Hueso Muerto)', Aeropostal, 1991, Mixed technique.

Another of the artists present in those years was Lotty Rosenfeld. Belonging to the Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (CADA), Rosenfeld began to experiment with photographic records and visual performance in urban space. In her 1979-1980 work, *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento*, she used traffic signs painted on pavements to deal with the tension between established codes and her symbolic destabilization (Figure 13). In this way, on the discontinuous lines that separate the lanes in roads, Rosenfeld traced a series of perpendicular lines that generate a + sign on pavements. Inverting the valuation of the – sign and replacing it with a +, the artist created a dramatic tension regarding the institutional gestures of order and the coordination of traffic. This gesture would come to be repeated again and again in a series of places with high levels of symbolic value, such as in front of the La Moneda Palace in Santiago de Chile, the White House in Washington DC, and Berlin.



Figure 13. 'Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento', Lotty Rosenfeld, 1979 - 1980.

These records were published in 1986 in the catalogue *Desacato: sobre la obra de Lotty Rosenfeld*. Along with describing and analysing Rosenfeld's work, Richard again utilizes several dimensions of her analysis. In Richard's words:

El trabajo de las cruces que desvía el código poniendo en duda sus bases de señalización, *tuerce la mirada sobre sus ideales de rectitud y obediencia*; en esa torsión anticipatoria de una nueva práctica de la ciudad, la obra incita al sujeto a repensar su dependencia al código y la invisibilidad del mismo como resquicio de poder interpretar el síntoma de su propia rebeldía o sumisión, a sorprenderse a sí mismo en el lapsus sea de obedecer las reglas (cautivo de los llamados al orden) sea de desobedecerlas, haciéndose entonces solitario de la queja y amante de ese gesto de mujer que desde el arte vulnera el código apegada a la materialidad de su signo. (Richard, 1986a: 21).

As such, *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento* is recognized as a work of art that not only traverses territories, cultural landscapes, and times, but also demands a poetic reading and establishes a critical-social work plan.

Together with the work of Dittborn, Altamirano, and Rosenfeld, a certain displacement of performance practices also emerged based upon literature. In this context, two members of the CADA group, Raúl Zurita and Diamela Eltit, added new elements to the discussion. At the end of the 1970s, Zurita inserted notions of sacrifice, body, and identity (in a dictatorial context) into the discussion (Polgovsky, 2014). Through a subjective, review of subjective experience, Zurita explores the relations between suffering and pain, connected through a Catholic sacrificial act: producing a self-inflicted wound on his cheek, denoting the damage to the skin as an ultimate experience. The records of this action would serve as a cover to his 1979 book *Purgatorio*. For her part, in her action-video *Zona de dolor* (1980) Eltit generated a formula similar to that of Zurita. In her performance, Eltit defines her body as a space for remaking political, social, and cultural meaning, and self-inflicts wounds (cuts) and burns on her body and arms while reading part of her then-unpublished novel *Lumpérica* (1983) in front of a Santiago brothel. In doing so, Eltit sought to expose her body as a social print, a communitarian, collective territory. That is to say, to establish herself as a national body that puts the relations between individuality/collectivity; private/public; biology/society into tension. Taken together, both writers explore elements pertaining to disciplining the body, self-sacrifice, subjectivity, and identity.

At the same time, CADA also developed another performance in Santiago de Chile: *Ay Sudamerica* (1981). On July 12, 1981, six aircraft flew over Santiago and dropped some 400,000 pamphlets over four different municipalities in the city. Using the poetic tone of a manifesto, these

pamphlets proposed a discussion of the relation between art, life and society. Although it is possible to see this action as a traumatic return to a previous bombing (a reference to the aerial bombing of La Moneda on September 11, 1973), *Ay Sudamerica* proposed a discussion of the role of artistic production within a complex sociocultural environment.

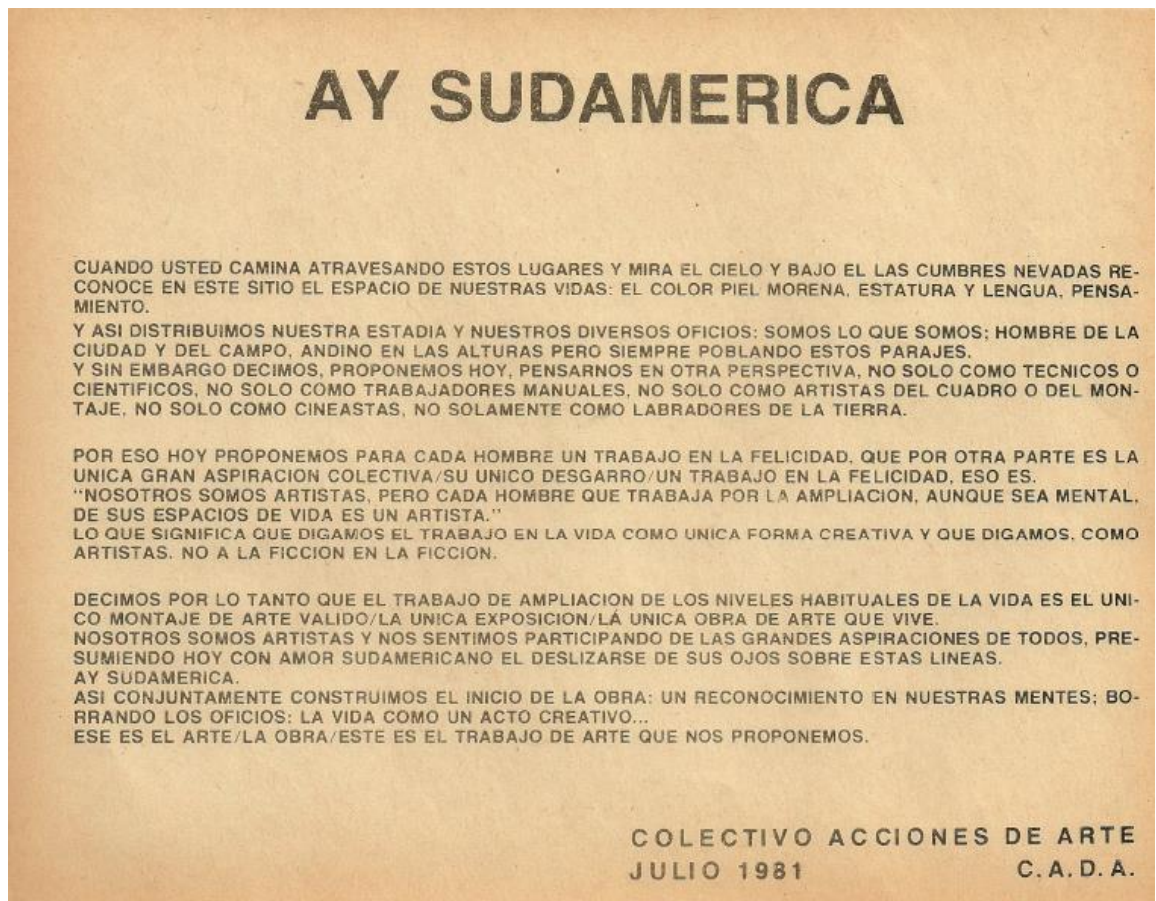


Figure 14. Pamphlet for 'Ay Sudamérica', CADA, July 1981.

In *Ay Sudamerica*, CADA proposed an intervention into daily life, an interruption of the normalizing routines of the citizens that inhabit various national territories. In this way, not only were 400,000 pamphlets dropped

from the sky (Figure 14), but also interventions through publicity (photographs, pamphlets, prose and poetry, etc.) were included in opposition magazines such as *Apsi* and *Hoy*. In doing so, CADA was able to circulate their performance among a mass audience and left a historic record of the performance and their political motivations.

Were these artistic practices, developed between 1977 and the beginning of 1980, recognizable as a group activity or a unity of political-aesthetic forces? This question can be partially answered by two books published between June and October 1981 by Nelly Richard - *Postulación de un margen de escritura crítica*, and the draft-book *Una Mirada sobre el arte en Chile*.

Presented on June 30, 1981 in Galería Sur, *Postulación de un margen de escritura crítica* represented a new step in Richard's intellectual project. This text has not only gone unnoticed by scholars who have studied Richard's work, but also within the critical history of art in Chile. Nevertheless, it is a very important document. In it, Richard mentions for the first time in Chile the notion of *Escena de Avanzada*⁷⁸. For Richard, the works of Dittborn, Altamirano, CADA, and Carlos Leppe that emerged between 1975 and 1981 can be understood as sharing certain common elements, such as the incorporation of new technological media (photography, video, audio, etc.), the use of the performance body as a surface or a reflection of institutional space, and the use of urban space as places for political action, among other elements. However, above all, Richard affirms that these works demanded a

⁷⁸ Historiographically, the first time Richard mentioned the term 'Escena de Avanzada' was not in Chile, but in Italy, in the journal *Domus* (n° 616, April of 1981). In order to achieve international recognition of the artistic practices developed in Chile during the military dictatorship, Richard shared *Cuerpo Correccional* with Alessandro Mendini (Editor of the journal at that time). The journal not only published Richard's texts (among them some letters to the director) and an editorial by Mendini on *Cuerpo Correccional*, but also used a photograph of Richard with the Andes mountain range in the background as the cover image for that issue. See Richard (2015c) and Varas (2007).

new regime of writing about art. This, as a whole, has generated a critical-political impulse that is clearly recognizable. In her words:

estas obras y la escritura crítica han servido como instancia de deconstrucción/reconstrucción de los modelos operantes de formación social y política. Como instancia de desmontaje de los dispositivos de representación ideológica. (Richard, 1981a: 2).

Through the aesthetic and textual creativity of these artists' work, it was possible to question the mechanisms of social control of the dictatorship. In addition, Richard underscores creativity as the integral perversion of normality, and for this reason makes reference to Félix Guattari in *La révolution moleculaire*, which proposes: 'a politics of experimentation that takes hold of existing intensities of desire and forms itself into a desiring mechanism in touch with historical social reality.' (Guattari, [1977] 1984: 87). In this way, Richard notes that:

es hoy necesario rebasar los comentarios sobre arte en una nueva práctica textual susceptible de responsabilizarse por modos corporales y sociales de conducta humana que interroguen y objeten los modos regulares de comunicación ideológica presentificados en el dispositivo especular (de proyección identificante) de la "representación", mediante la incisión otra –material- de los significantes artísticos en el cuerpo hoy puntuado/tatuado de lo real. (Richard, 1981a: 4).

Hence it is possible to present Richard's critique as an intellectual shift, not only in the way of interpreting artwork, but also in the way of thinking (a new grammar) about the relations between art, politics, and culture. In other words, through the pages of *Postulación de un margen de escritura crítica*, the reader is witness to how Richard seeks to establish a new kind of political commitment regarding the role of art in the social sphere. However, this is not the traditional leftist 'commitment', but on the contrary, an 'aesthetic' one

characterized by suspicion of any political strategy of normativization.

At the end of the document Richard mentions for the first time the notion that would summarize this totalizing proposal for art, writing, politics and society:

Pronunciarnos sobre un arte que postulamos “de avanzada” implica tanto fundar el valor de criticidad que asignamos a sus manifestaciones en función de un determinado programa ideológico, como proyectar su vía de inserción productiva en la totalidad social. (Richard, 1981a: 17).

Through this statement, Richard does not simply seek to highlight and describe a group of artists and/or critics, but rather to install a reflexive programme of critical-cultural thought.

Indeed, this set of ‘advanced’ writing and visual scenes occurred in the margins of the institutions and the dominant social body. In addition, both the critical offensive developed by Richard and the ‘advanced’ visual production were, according to her, born from difference. The fact that she positions herself in this way ends up being key to understanding Richard’s future theoretical project. To be *in* the margins and speak *from* difference was a work plan recognized by Richard from this early stage:

Toda ofensiva crítica se construye así por la tensión –inherente a su fuerza de criticidad- entre un adentro (el discurso mayoritario estructurado en/por la representación ideológica) y un afuera (la probabilidad de todo otro discurso crítico subvertidor de la unidad ideológica de base), entre una totalidad (el cuerpo social) y sus fracciones minoritarias (sus partículas enunciativas diseminadoras de la identidad del sujeto en el código: pluralizadoras), entre una identidad (dispositivo de identificación del sujeto en la proyección esencialista de una unidad de reconocimiento moral, religiosa o política) y su diferencia (refracteriedad de todo otro material: cuerpo, signos). (Richard, 1981a: 17).

In this way, to manage a historic programme of critical thought, it was not sufficient merely to have a series of artworks, performances, and writing. It was also necessary to establish a theoretical writing plan that would cut through aesthetics and infiltrate cultural and/or social theories. It was not possible to establish a critical action plan without recognizing the tensions expressed through society. As such, Richard would establish a work plan sustained on the outside (the margin), the fragments (the plural), and on difference (the other).

To continue developing this work plan, Richard kept close to the 'advanced' scene. Only a few months later, she would publish another of the key documents needed to understand this process of critical thinking.

Disseminated by hand in October 1981, *Una Mirada sobre el arte en Chile* specifically analysed the most important work of Dittborn, Altamirano, Leppe, Zurita, Eltit, Serrano, Rosenfeld, and CADA. However, the book is more a photocopied compilation of notes, memos, and ideas that Richard had developed up to that point (Figure 15). Unlike *Postulación de un margen de escritura crítica*, its precariousness as a document is quite evident. Erasures, crossing out, underlining, and personal notes can be seen in the paragraphs and on the margins. At the same time, it is interspersed with photographs, typewritten words, and handwritten notes. The fact that it is a photocopy further accentuates its connotation of being circulated in a limited fashion, and denotes a concern that focuses upon the content rather than on a state that could be considered editorially finished.



nelly richard:
una mirada sobre el arte en chile/
octubre de 1981.

una mirada sobre el arte en Chile
 octubre de 1981
 N. RICHARD

13.

NOTA 2 : REDISTRIBUCION DE LAS
COORDENADAS VISUALES EN
EL ARTE CHILENO

El año 1977 marca la convergencia (expositiva, editorial) de hechos que favorecen la conformación de una nueva visualidad en Chile, debido a la intervención de la imagen fotográfica en los soportes de arte; habiendo sido ya introducida por manifestaciones antecedentes (Salmer, Barrios, Brugnoli, Errasurriz, etc.), la reformulación de la imagen logra sistematizar la aparición de nuevas proposiciones visuales (Dittborn, Bru, Snythe, Parra, Leppa, Altamirano) que cobran autónoma vigencia polémica -logra efectivizarse como interrupción formal (como corte).

El recurso fotográfico interrumpe bruscamente el historial académico nacional: marca la discontinuación de la tradición de la pintura chilena y apertura de su campo referencial. Emancipa la imagen respecto a su pasado iconográfico transformando sus coordenadas representativas/
al reformar el estatuto técnico de la imagen en el arte, la fotografía rebasa un campo social de apreciación estética según nuevos esquemas perceptivos de montaje de una realidad ahora sancionada -en su cotidianeidad- por aparatos de comunicación masiva.

El uso generalizado de la imagen fotográfica en el medio artístico chileno, responde entonces a motivaciones si bien heterogéneas, no azarosas: la formulación nacional de una mirada otra (conceptual, reproductiva) sobre el arte, responde,

Figure 15. Cover and inner page of 'Una mirada sobre el arte en Chile' October, 1981.

In its pages, *Una Mirada sobre el arte en Chile* provides a sequential description and analysis (in the form of comments) of many works developed by the artists. It is possible to observe that the most significant contributions of the text are located in the first and the final notes. At the beginning of the book Richard specifically mentions the notion of *Escena de Avanzada*, recognizing it as a: 'escena de transformación de las mecánicas de producción y subversión de los códigos de comunicación cultural' (Richard, 1981b: 3). Who is involved in this *Escena de Avanzada*? It is made up of the set of works developed by the artists, writers, and philosophers named within *Una mirada sobre el arte en Chile*.

Whilst at this point Richard still saw the *Escena de Avanzada* as in a process of gestation, she already recognized the visual and textual proposals of the *Escena* as a true interruption of the codes of social and cultural

communication in dictatorial Chile. What is interesting is that Richard recognizes visual, written, and performance-based production as dispersed and multiple operations of 'critical misdirection', a practice close to what in the future she would come to call *crítica cultural*. In her words:

La contestación de los discursos oficiales (de los discursos dominantes) no pasa por la exterminación del objeto en un gesto cuyo error sería entonces equivalente al que reprime nuestros discursos; pasa, más bien, por operaciones dispersas y multiplicativas de despistaje crítico = por operaciones de deslocalización, de desconcentración de la mirada, de desarme, de trampeamiento de la autoridad en un espacio de juego cuyas reglas no deben (des)conocerse sino (re)conocerse como valor de infracción.... la tarea crítica es de descomposición de diferentes unidades de sentido desde su interior –pervirtiéndolas como unidad. (Richard, 1981b: 33-35).

In addition to the above, Richard mentions thesis XV of the 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' by Walter Benjamin, specifically that regarding revolutionary transformation as a break in the continuum of history. As noted by Benjamin in thesis XV:

The awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode is characteristic of the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action. The great revolution introduced a new calendar. The initial day of a calendar serves as a historical time-lapse camera. (Benjamin, [1950] 1999b: 253).

Just as the rules of the game of social space must not be (un)known, but rather recognized in order to be transformed, all revolutionary action must recognize its past and present if it wishes to interrupt history (install a new calendar, a new historic beginning, a future). It is possible to understand Richard's gesture as an interruption, that is to say a revolutionary moment that provokes a break with the present, but which will also be meaningful to

history in the future.

In sum, the relation that Richard forms between the *Escena de Avanzada* and Benjamin's essay is to be understood as an attempt not only to generate a new visual history within Chilean artistic space (*la Avanzada*), but also to recognize that all critical practice is an incessant activity, not consumed in time but in a process of constant questioning of itself and its own history. In *Postulación de un margen de escritura crítica* and *Una Mirada sobre el arte en Chile*, Richard thus makes an incursion into the works produced by what she calls the 'advanced' scene and embarks, based upon these works of art, on a new kind of analytic-theoretical-critical writing that overcomes mere aesthetic and history-based logics, paving the way for an analytical framework characterized by its conjunctural political, cultural, and artistic interest.

Certainly, the proposals developed by Richard up to this point did not go unnoticed by the artistic-intellectual scene in Chile. During 1981 and 1983, a series of debates, discussions, and counter-discourses occurred which helped to make the cultural space more dynamic. In addition, and considering that the historic context was dominated by the initial privatizing and neoliberalizing effects of the Constitution of 1980 and the consequent surge in neighborhood social protests in the main Chilean cities, there was exponential growth in national and international exhibitions and festivals saw exponential growth, a development which also had a significant impact on Richard's thought. These debates were carried out within the pages of another experimental magazine - *La Separata*.

La Separata: *the birth of a 'deseo de revista'*

In 1981 Richard founded the magazine *La Separata* (Figure 16) with Leppe and Fernando Balcells. This magazine, which could be considered a direct precursor of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, published many of the significant artistic, visual, and theoretical debates of that time until 1983.

In alluding to the margin, to that which has been overlooked or annexed, *La Separata* was a magazine that combined images, texts, photographic cutouts, poems⁷⁹, quotes, translations,⁸⁰ and collages, amongst other texts, in a total of six issues. In each one, Chilean socio-cultural issues were discussed and certain political-intellectual paths were defined among the various artists and writers connected to the *Escena de Avanzada*. Given the objectives of this chapter, it is pertinent to mention one specific episode within the magazine that complements the history of the *Escena de Avanzada*.

⁷⁹ The poets invited to participate were Enrique Lihn, Diego Maqueira, Antonio Gil, Gonzalo Muñoz etc.

⁸⁰ *La Separata* included translations of Walter Benjamin ('A Short History of Photography'), Susan Sontag ('On Photography'), Roland Barthes (*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*), and Marshall McLuhan (*Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*), among others. For Richard, the incorporation of these translations into the local context represented a response to certain questions: '¿cómo introducir referencias de lectura a textos aún desconocidos, volúmenes ignorados, a publicaciones demoradas o postergadas, a materiales no habidos, a teorías aún inabordadas? ¿Cómo introducir buenamente (volviéndolas operantes, productivizándolas más allá de la frustración que despierta su desconocimiento) menciones teóricas cuyo manejo es sin embargo necesario para cumplir aquí con determinadas operaciones de lectura; cómo introducir esas menciones pese al idioma como frontera, pese al no acceso a libros cuya circulación es así privativa, pese a la descontextualización de los referentes entre el texto de origen y los desplazamientos que sufre en sus sucesivos trámites de adaptación social, pese a la precariedad de un estatuto cultural basado en un retardo histórico –en una falta de lectura, antecedente a cada texto por leer porque heredada de sus dejamientos anteriores?' (Richard, 1982: 4). This meant an indirect discussion of certain post-colonial or de-colonial theories. This discussion is tangentially dealt with in the following chapter.

LA SEPARATA

"Con Textos" en Galería Sur: un marco de desalentamiento

1) una primera forma de reposo crítico de la exposición "Con Textos" (Galería Sur, Abril - Mayo 1982) consistiría en detenerse separadamente en cada obra, en surgir aisladamente cada obra en su estricto orden de dependencia interna -vale decir, fuera de sus conexiones con las demás obras que especializan su mostrar dentro de la sala de exposición; esa primera forma deslignaría cada obra del conjunto de lecturas que la significa su puesta en contextualidad dentro de una serie de otras plásticas, apartaría cada obra de sus múltiples puntos de referencia, substraería cada obra de su contingencia expositiva negándole así el aporte o despoje de las demás obras que la circundan diversificando sus vías de acceso/intercediendo dialógicamente en su campo individual de experiencia, variando sus niveles de

diferenciación o multiplicando sus tangencias/idades/

una segunda forma de reposo crítico consistiría en cunear la suma de las obras que conforman esa exposición como campo de situaciones, en seriarla como totalidad figurada por las tensiones o distorsiones que genera la interparticipación de las obras en una situación conjunta de lecturas; una exposición no es nunca una simple disposición de montaje que solo afecta la distribución material de las obras, es ya un secuestramiento crítico que permite deducir reglas, conexiones, de legibilidad, que permite puntualizar cada obra desde la combinación material de esas reglas, que permite circunstanciar cada obra desde su modo de intercomponerismo espacial y temporal en un total expositivo.

Niegan total expositivo equívoco integralmente a la suma individualizada de sus partes: cada obra infunde los demás modificando así su primera aceptación de lectura, las obras se tensionan entre sí en direcciones de sentido cuya multifuncionalidad es producto de sus respectivas convergencias o divergencias/

2) si se tratara de enlazar la exposición de Galería Sur desde el cumplimiento de su intención primera (desde la (re)puesta en referencia de las intervenciones escritas en trabajos recientes de arte chileno), resistiéndose entonces a la opresión -inspecifica o esa intención- de obras cuyos criterios se constituyen (siempre, por ejemplo) en un orden de visualidad independiente de su relación al texto, y por lo tanto, independiente de su relación a los términos de la exposición, sería fácil admitir que la mayoría de las obras presentadas solo muestran fragmentos de veracidad en una relación más bien secundaria respecto a sus determinaciones gráficas o que la mayoría de las obras obedece al texto, un lugar más bien necesario en una constitución objetiva que demuestra prescindiendo de su actuación.

Podríamos, por ejemplo, detenernos en mostrar como la materialidad del texto en algunas obras mostradas en Galería Sur responde a distintos rasgos de incorporación que lo valorizan sea como presentación (Smythie, por ejemplo), sea como función testimonial de su propia materialización (Brau, por ejemplo), sea como implemento de distanciamiento cultural respecto a lo narrado que recupera la letra (Sarvedra, Durlon), pero más allá de ciertos presupuestos materiales, la presencia del texto en la mayoría de las obras no es generalmente más allá de la simple titulación, de las indicaciones verbales, de la ilustración de palabras o sinagramas que documentan o reiteran la obra según reglas convencionales de subalternidad de la lectura.

Fuera de aquellas obras que se estructuran en la materialidad de una red de intervenciones propiamente letradas (Dittborn), fuera de aquellas obras que esencializan un plano de comunicación escrita (Caldoco, por ejemplo) o exponen un material ya escrito (Dávila, por ejemplo), la mayoría de las obras incorpora el texto en una relación externa respecto al total o la vista, en una relación externa respecto al cumplimiento básico de su significación.

Puesto que -para la mayoría de las obras- la articulación textual no es definitiva de su relación en el marco de la exposición, la participación de esas obras en "Con Textos" se evidencia en su simple contextualidad, en la demarcación restringida porque simplemente coyuntural de una exposición que define su representatividad más allá de sus límites -en los lugares culturales que conjugan sus autores. Esa representatividad se doblea, en la perspectiva que tiene oportuna respecto a la incorporación de lugares por ejemplo pictóricos (Díaz, Brau) en una escena para muchos declaradamente situada en el afuera del cuadro, pero a la vez terminante o constituyente de esa escena primero (la vanguardia chilena) en cuanto trata de evidenciar la secuencia que conforma completándose en el reagrupamiento de sus obras más solistas/

3) precisamente porque la atención al texto no está autenticamente sostenida por las obras, porque la presencia de las obras no cobra necesidad en/ por su contribución a la exposición, esa exposición se lee desde el desalentamiento de sus efectos, desde la gratuidad de sus participaciones, desde el relajamiento o aflojamiento de



Figure 16. The cover of La Separata Nº2, May, 1982

The last edition of *La Separata* (July, 1983) discussed the polemical, and problematic, participation of Chilean artists in the *Escena de Avanzada* during the XII Biennial in Paris. Held from October 2 to November 14 1982 at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris the Biennial saw the participation of a series of artists from around the world. Among the special guests was the Chilean delegation, curated by Richard (1983a). At that time the Chilean delegation, considered to be unofficial by the Chilean State, but not censured by the military government, had the opportunity to demonstrate the representational transformations that had occurred in Chile since the coup

on an international platform. Expectations were high on the part of the French and the international audience. It was the first Chilean exhibition following the failed socialist project of Salvador Allende. However, critiques of Chilean participation were not very flattering. It was clear that expectations focused upon artwork that would illustrate the practices of resistance against the dictatorship. On the contrary, the artwork selected by Richard (Leppe⁸¹, Dittborn etc.) were viewed by metropolitan European critics as a *passé* copy of European vanguards that had emerged during the second half of the 20th century. In other words, the primary characteristic of the selected artwork was seen to be anachronistic, marked by a perceived effort to imitate the European canon.

Faced with these negative impressions, Richard developed a series of interpretations and reflections on this experience. Recognizing the historic condition of political segregation in Chile (due to the political isolation into which the country had fallen during the Pinochet dictatorship), Richard began to establish a clear distance from official artistic production. She pointed out that the selected work should be understood for its mobile truths and plural meanings and for its fragmented readings of a national experience divided by a traumatic relation with history. In light of this, Richard proposed the need to problematize the marginal/peripheral condition of Chilean art, as well as of Latin American art in general, in the face of the institutional European/North American norm. In her analysis developed in the last issue of the magazine *La Separata* Richard stated:

A diferencia de las prácticas europeas que se autoabastecen de su propia tradición, que establecen con la cultura una relación de autocomplacencia, de pacto y consentimiento, las prácticas, por

⁸¹ One of the more polemical pieces was performed by Leppe. Entitled *Oeuvre d'artiste*, this performance consisted of singing the *Marseillaise* and vomiting in the bathroom of the Musée d'Art Moderne.

ejemplo chilenas, se inscriben respecto a su historia en la marca de un defecto, de una carencialidad. Se inscriben en lo traumático de la relación que sostienen con esa historia, en lo conflictual de su inscripción. Mientras las culturas europeas defienden recelosamente el beneficio de un pasado que capitalizan como Tradición, las prácticas latinoamericanas –no arrastrando nada de su historia que no signifique en sí misma la historia de su impostura- se formulan como apuesta: lo tienen todo por ganar, no teniendo nada que perder de un pasado que se resume a la memoria de su sola confiscación. (Richard, 1983b: 8).

Certainly, the Paris Biennial was a moment of disaccord between Richard and the *Escena de Avanzada*, and the artistic expectations of the metropolis. However, this experience served to establish a new margin of critical possibilities, which would come to be reflected in a text prepared for the international catalogue of the Biennial of Sydney in 1984: 'Latin American cultures: mimicry or difference?'

In the text Richard proposes that art from the margins such as that of the *Escena de Avanzada* is forced to sacrifice part of the legibility of its historic-cultural contexts of meaning. In effect, making an appearance before the metropolitan scene has its costs, but also certain benefits. In other words, recognizing the complexity of becoming connected to the centre of the art world also implies opening up to the other, to that which is different, to a new meshing of experiences that reactivates all meaning. However, this also represents a problem, as it begs the question of whether to replicate a foreign model, or to maintain an essentialist model of one's own identity, based upon that which is indigenous, original, and primitive. Faced with this dilemma, Richard goes beyond the specific notion of artwork and opens the discussion up with an epistemological question - how must we think about the contemporary?

Throughout the text, Richard proposes the problem as a political, intellectual, and cultural challenge. In recognizing herself within the same marginal-peripheral Latin American space, her hypotheses were directed at thinking of culture as a space of dispute and struggle. It is in her *production of forms of conflict* that the value of critical-aesthetic thought emerges for Richard. In her words:

Even though we have to struggle against international mechanisms of empowerment operating over a consciousness whose evolution has been denied and to oppose the hegemonic pressures of Europe and the USA against our cultures, we cannot stop the fighting. We need to take advantage of every bit of information originated in those countries that we can gather, as well as to reprocess this information for our own purposes. (Richard, [1983] 2012b: 938).

In sum, and based upon the debate in the pages of *La Separata*, Richard attempted to confront both the metropolitan critiques of the *passé* character of artistic practices in the third world, as well as the local rejection (and complaints) regarding her use of foreign intellectual sources such as post-structuralism, post-modernism, and psychoanalysis. In this light, 'Latin American cultures: mimicry or difference' can be read as a text that seeks to widen political, aesthetic, and cultural debates that were already underway. In fact, based upon the experience of the Biennial of Paris, Richard began to understand the need to both recapitulate that which had been done, and to assess what was happening in the local context, as well as seek out new areas of critical-theoretical work.

Decline of the Escena de Avanzada and the emergence of a myth

In issue 5 of *La Separata*, Richard performed a critical assessment of the resurgence of painting in Chile during those years, and the theoretical hollowing of certain discourses tied to this art form. She focused particularly upon young artists (Samy Benmayor, Jorge Tacla, Carlos Maturana) who saw the artistic production of the *Escena de Avanzada* as something dense and conceptually over-saturated. For them, painting was an exercise in free expression that was not regulated or ruled according to critical-theoretical writing.

This is made clear in document written by Richard in 1983: *Cuadernos de/para el analisis*. Published in December 1983 with Justo Pastor Mellado, these documents, which were read at seminars and public debates held mostly in Galería Sur, can be considered as further recapitulation of what would come to be the artistic scenario in post-dictatorship Chile. Indeed, in *Cuadernos de/para el analisis* there is clear recognition of the ‘deflación’ of the *Escena de Avanzada*.

According to Richard, in the local cultural circle there had been a return to pictorial tradition since 1982⁸². This return to painting meant the valuation of creative freedom, individuality, and artistic genius. For her, this was a sign of the times, that is to say an expected sign of the political-cultural process underway at the time in Chile. On the one hand, this process implied the

⁸² During the 1980s, visual artists began to return to Chile en masse. At the same time, new generations of artists who had been trained in the context of the military dictatorship began to graduate from universities. As such, many considered the work of the *Escena de Avanzada* to be visually antiquated, seeking instead new international references such as North American (abstract expressionist) painting, with no major aspirations to political commitments

emergence of a new generation of artists that was suspicious of the excessive theorizing of the local artistic field. On the other hand, the deflation of the *Escena de Avanzada* was a consequence of the general sociopolitical conditions in the dictatorship in the mid1980s.

In the case of the former, Richard stated that:

En materia de cultura, cualquier manifestación que tiende a fundarse como estatutaria o canónica genera, a consecuencia, su propia contramanifestación cuyo objetivo es entonces rebatir lo anteriormente afirmado por ella como autoridad; existe una determinada lógica de procesos según la cual cualquier manifestación una vez instituida suscita, a modo de respuesta, una manifestación contraria que pretende contestarla desde un lugar invertido de significación. (Richard, 1983c: 47).

In presenting this argument, Richard recognizes the emergence of a new front in the generational battle within the Chilean cultural circle. If before, the work of the *Escena de Avanzada* had stripped any pre-1973 visual production of its historicity, the new pictorial visuality of the mid1980s was doing the same to the work of the *Escena de Avanzada*. Indeed, during the first half of the 1980s a series of university graduates had been trained under a totally new artistic paradigm (globalized, de-politicized, open to North American influences etc.). To them, the vision of art proposed by the *Escena de Avanzada* seemed obsolete and lacking in “creative freedom”⁸³. This is evident when Richard affirms that:

De una escena a otra, se sustituyen las reglas de operación; mientras anteriormente (pienso en Dittborn, en el CADA) se validaban las instancias de verbalidad o **textualidad** incorporadas o anexadas a la obra, se valida aquí una **visualidad** pura: es decir,

⁸³ See this process in Machuca (2006).

libre de intromisiones verbales, exenta de requisitos discursivos (libre finalmente de cualquier exigencia extrapictórica) y reacia a toda muestra de conceptualización. El anterior **efecto de discursividad** que las obras ponían en escena (su trabajo de mediatización discursiva) cede ahora frente a una especie de espontaneidad creativa; de **impulsividad del gesto**. (Richard, 1983d: 53. [Emphasis in the original]).

While in the mid1980s the Escena de Avanzada was concerned with the socialization of its references, the material problematization and the complex theorization of the artwork, the pictorial scene sought individual subjectivity, indifference to social conflict, and rejection of any and all theoretical textuality. This is clearly observed in Richard's concern for this new process:

Temo, por mi parte, que la reivindicación de un arte vivido como pura **interioridad subjetiva** en ausencia de correlatos sociales que pongan de manifiesto –en el interior de la obra- la historicidad de sus condiciones de producción, que la formulación de un imaginario no **sociabilizado** y la postulación de una visualidad cuyas imágenes escapen al control de todo dispositivo social de producción de signos; temo que el aflojamiento de **toda tensión discursiva susceptible** (sic) **de articular la obra de una dinámica de pensamiento social**, satisfagan el propósito de otorgarle a la creatividad un valor simplemente ornamental y contribuyan a desactivar el arte en cuanto instrumento crítico de transformación de nuestro campo de conciencia social e histórica. (Richard, 1983d: 55. [Emphasis in the original]).

Even when Richard is aware of the generational 'change' that she was witnessing, she also recognizes that there were signs that were influencing this scene in a significant way. This is very clearly observed in the text 'Desde el anden', included in the book *Cuadernos de/para el analysis*. This text, written explicitly for an exhibition by Francisco Brugnoli and Virginia Errázuriz, focuses both upon questioning the emergent local painting scene and on the (re)appearance of older personalities and discourses in Chilean cultural

space at the time. Indeed, this document represents Richard's explicit critique of the return to artists from the 1960s, and the effort to recover both their old positions of power and to connect with the new democratizing powers such as the fight for a return to democracy and social protest which had been on the rise during the mid1980s.

For Richard, if before art had been a critical platform for the material deconstruction of codes of political, social, and ideological representation, by the mid1980s art was moving between expressive painting on the one hand, and connection to populist regimes of political illustration on the other.

Both of these practices were being captured by certain though seemingly contradictory political and logical frameworks. In the first instance, the recent influx of individualist paintings was perceived as an additional result (among many others) of the process of neoliberalization, thus it was indoctrinated with apolitical and individualistic logic. On the other hand, there were certain works associated with the 'return' or the 'periodo de las protestas' of the 1980s that looked at a return to democracy based upon a consensus among civilians and the military regime.

Faced with this scenario, Richard decided not to associate herself with either of these fields. On the contrary, she positioned herself rather as a *flâneur*. On the one hand, she mixed with the political-intellectual scene in Chile at the end of the 1980s, but on the other, she also remained an astute observer of the process. In other words, she was able to remain both inside and separate from this historical-political decision-making space at the same time.

It is at this point that she decides to develop her own work along the lines of a divergent form of critical thought. For Richard, critical thought and artistic

practice represent a space of consciousness, as well as a project that questions all forms of institutionalization and re-territorialization. In her words:

Lo más urgente –para algunos de nosotros- no es insertarnos decorosamente en el relato de aquellos que, de ahora en adelante, van a dictaminar otras reglas de inteligibilidad de los hechos de acuerdo a una nueva moral política, van **a reformular una nueva discursividad histórica**; consideramos que nos incumbe seguir cuestionando el estatuto de discursividad puesto que el arte no es sino ese espacio de permanente recuestionamiento del discurso social y de sus modos de asentamiento ideológico, el arte no es sino ese espacio de deconcentración permanente de la práctica del poder. (Richard, 1983e: 65 [Emphasis in the original]).

With this critical programme, it is easy to observe that Richard sought to focus on exposing the techniques that impose discourses and the reorganization of forms of power. With a certain degree of foresight, already in 1983 Richard proposed the need to seriously doubt the agreements or consensual practices that had been forged between the political agents of the dictatorship and the social democratic actors. In the same way, as we shall see, this aspect is essential to the foundation of a form of thought such as that of *crítica cultural*.

Over a period of almost five years, Richard developed a series of ideas based upon the artists who belonged to the *Escena de Avanzada*. These ideas were not restricted to merely aesthetic categories. Rather, they involved a wide array of new margins of analysis, both theoretical and politico-cultural. Certainly, changes in historic circumstances demanded not only new forms of interpretive logic, but also new practices of critical-cultural intervention. As can be observed during these years, the artistic production of the *Escena de Avanzada* began to lose its disruptive strength, and a new scene, both artistic and political, began to take shape.

Indeed, 1985 marked a new stage in the history of Chile. The year began with one of the most devastating earthquakes in recent history, causing significant damage both to the country's infrastructure, and to popular support for the Pinochet government. In the same way, and owing to the economic crisis that hit Chile early in the decade, a series of street protests required the military regime to implement new mechanisms for control, censorship, and political persecution (Collier & Sater, 2004). The generalized crisis of the military regime gave way to ever-increasing formal political resistance, and the possibility of regaining democracy seemed closer to becoming a reality.

The same year, Leppe left Chile and moved to Perú and Spain⁸⁴, and a series of artists returned to Chile following the passage of a series of repatriation policies and a general openness towards the exiled community. The artistic scene would soon be re-inhabited by a variety of visual artists, writers, filmmakers, and intellectuals, and this implied a challenge for Richard regarding the historic recognition of her legacy. The following section turns to this development, and its analytical-theoretical consequences.

III. 'Margins and Institutions' and the institutionalization of the *Escena de Avanzada*: from historic positioning to theoretical questioning

In its May and June 1986 editions, the Australian magazine *Art & Text* published a special bilingual issue on artistic and discourse production in Chile during the military dictatorship. As the result of direct negotiation

⁸⁴ He returned to Chile in 1998. During the 2000s and 2010s, Leppe worked as creative advertising, political advisor and television art director in Chile. In those years, he showed his works at the Galería Tomás Andreu (*Cegado por el Oro*, 1998), Galería Animal (*Fatiga de Material*, 2001) and D21 Galería de Arte (*Leppe, pinturas*) in 2004. During Piñera's administration, he worked as director of the Centro Cultural MATTA de la Embajada de Chile en Argentina. Over the years, he maintained a distant relationship with Nelly Richard. Carlos Leppe passed away on October 16, 2015.

between the artist Juan Domingo Dávila and the editors Paul Taylor and Paul Foss, this thematic issue would be written by Richard and entitled *Margins and Institutions. Art in Chile since 1973* (Figure 17).

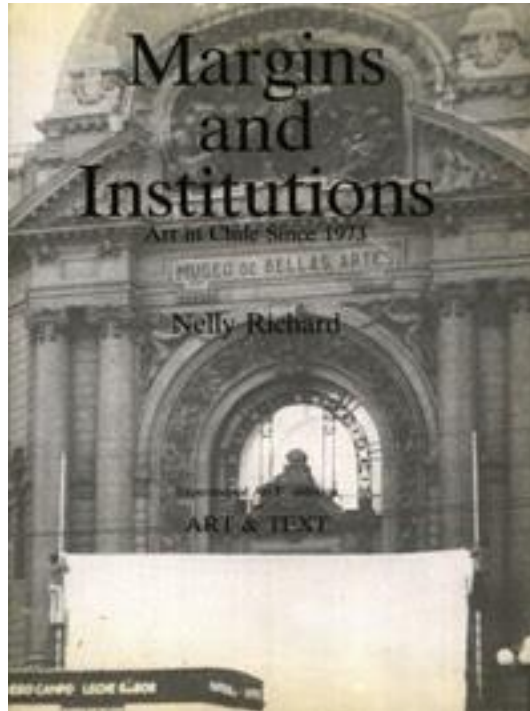


Figure 17. Cover of 'Margins and Institutions. Art in Chile since 1973', *Art & Text*, Australia, 1986.

This special edition is substantially different from those texts, catalogues, and publications by Richard's reviewed so far. First of all, the publication was written in English, including a Spanish translation relegated to a small space at the end of the book, and was developed mainly for an English-speaking audience. In effect, the initial idea of the issue was to expose the recent history of Chile, in particular what occurred after the fall of Allende, and the visual and written production that emerged under the military regime. Secondly, the book distances itself from any form of editorial precariousness.

It is a high quality graphic edition, the international distribution of which made it possible to launch it not only in Australia, but in the UK and the United States as well. Thirdly, this special edition included the largest collection of images, analysis, and artist groupings to date. In other words, this book compiled a large portion of the artwork, performances,⁸⁵ images, records, names, and discourses developed in Chile between September 11, 1973 and 1986. This entire collection was categorized as part of the *Escena de Avanzada*.

In Richard's words:

The Chilean art movement referred to in this text is the field of unofficial works produced under the military regime. However, only one of the many dimensions of this field will be discussed: that of the so-called “avanzada”⁸⁶, which took the practice of art in a highly repressive society to the very limit of its meaning and conditions of production. The *avanzada* artists dared to gamble on a form of creativity able to disrupt the order imposed on language by the figures of authority and their grammar of power. The relationship they forged between art and politics went far beyond any mechanical correspondence or illustrative function, and the categorical subordination of language to ideology, but tried to counteract the privileged and idealistic separation between the aesthetic sphere and the repressive social sphere, a separation which absolves the former from any critique of its own effects of dominance. (Richard, 1986b: 17).

As a summary of the catalogues, texts, and documents analysed until now, in the Introduction Richard presents the primary characteristics of the *Escena de*

⁸⁵ The cover of the book is a photograph of the 1980 CADA performance, *Para no morir de hambre en el arte*. For more on this piece, see Neustadt (2001).

⁸⁶ In the second edition, from 2007, the author specifically mentions certain names and areas of work that were not mentioned in the first edition: ‘Surgida desde las artes visuales (Carlos Leppe, Eugenio Dittborn, Catalina Parra, Carlos Altamirano, el grupo CADA, Lotty Rosenfeld, Juan Castillo, Juan Dávila, Víctor Hugo Codocedo, Elías Adarme, etc.) y en interacción con las textualidades poéticas y literarias de Raúl Zurita y Diamela Eltit, la escena de “avanzada” armó una constelación de voces críticas de la que participaron filósofos y escritores como Ronald Kay, Adriana Valdés, Gonzalo Muñoz, Patricio Marchant, Rodrigo Cánovas, Pablo Oyarzún y otros.’

Avanzada. She describes the conditions that made such a scene possible, paradoxically, in times of catastrophe. Richard highlights that this dramatic moment is not only characterized by the failure of a specific political project ('The Chilean road to Socialism'), but also by the violent implementation of a neoliberal economic model by the military regime.

The *Escena de Avanzada* emerged as a response to these political-cultural transformations. It both transformed the traditional notion of commitment-based art and conservative institutions of art, and incorporated theoretical text as a key means of overcoming the censorship and control of the military regime:

Also vital to the *avanzada* were the tools of deconstruction which they took from poststructuralism (quotation, cut-ups, montage, collage, etc.), allowing a combinatory and redistributive use of the text of culture. Only by fragmentation and assemblage, only by re-conjugating the heterogeneous sources of information and the discontinuous frameworks of reference, only by dis-articulating the dominant system of knowledge, only by interstitial practices could the *avanzada* rebel against the extreme censorship of utterances of the "other", or indeed every bearer of difference. (Richard, 1986b: 21).

Throughout the various chapters of *Margins and Institutions*, Richard reviews the primary artwork of the artists that she had analysed in her writings since 1977. For example, in 'The photographic condition' Richard analyses the use of photography in the work of Dittborn, Smyth, Parra, and Altamirano. The same occurs in 'The dimension of social exteriority in the production of art', in which she focuses upon the work of CADA and Rosenfeld, among others. In the case of 'The rhetoric of the body', there is a special analysis of the performance-poetry-based work of Zurita, Leppe, and Eltit. 'The displacement of supports and the eradication of the boundaries between genres' focuses upon work in which the use of new technologies enabled new forms of

expression, such as in the case of video art, photocopies, stenciling etc. At the same time, she analysed the use of new surfaces such as the sky (Zurita) or the desert (Dittborn). In the case of 'Return to the pleasurable', Richard presents the case for the painting of Juan Domingo Dávila and the return to painting in the artistic scene midway through the 1980s (Gonzalo Díaz, Samy Benmayor, Arturo Duclos, etc.). For its part, 'History and memories' concentrates on old practices of political-illustrative commitment-based art that emerged both as a result of the return of previously exiled artists (Roser Bru, José Balmes, etc.) and the emergence of new groups of popularly committed artists (Young Artist Association, Nos/otras, etc.).

However, the chapters 'Ellipsis and metaphor' and 'The scene of writing' deserve special attention. In both of these sections it is possible to observe the historic-political conditions that resulted from the coup (censorship, political reconstitution, etc.), as well as the emergence of writing/textuality as a condition of critical possibility in the historic context at the time. Specifically, in 'The scene of writing', it is possible to observe how Richard summarizes a large part of that which has been analysed in chapters 1 and 2 of this work.

In taking this into account, *Margins and Institutions* not only represents a foundational landmark for creating a record of who was who (*Escena de Avanzada*) in Chile under the dictatorship, but it also 'editorially institutionalized' the artistic production and critical thought developed up to that point. In fact, through this act, Richard both presented a draft strategy for her critical-aesthetic project and circulated a notion which, to this day, remains openly debated among intellectuals.

In fact, the notion and/or concept of the *Escena de Avanzada* has been problematic in several ways. Since the publication of *Margins and Institutions*,

there have been a series of interpretations, critiques, and analyses on the impact that this notion has had on Chilean artistic-cultural space⁸⁷. José Joaquín Brunner⁸⁸, for example, pointed out some months after the launch of the book⁸⁹ that the *Escena de Avanzada* had not been able to insert itself socially into the Chilean cultural realm during the military dictatorship (Brunner, [1986] 2007). The literary critic Adriana Valdés reached a similar conclusion. For her, the circulation of the writing and artwork of the *Escena de Avanzada* reached only a very small portion of the population (Valdés, [1986] 2007). However, Pablo Oyarzún⁹⁰ that, despite the social “disconnection” of the artwork associated with the *Escena de Avanzada*, the publication of *Margins and Institutions* initiated a new historic period of art criticism in Chile (Oyarzún, [1986] 2007). As it turns out, history would prove Oyarzún was right.

Currently, the *Escena de Avanzada* and the figure of Richard have achieved unquestioned academic recognition. Today there are a series of research projects on Richard that deal with various historic-philosophical discussions regarding the emergence and impact of the movement on a national and

⁸⁷ Elsewhere, I have presented the historical evolution of the concept of ‘Escena de Avanzada’ in detail, including the primary discussions that were generated based upon this concept (Peters, 2010). Owing to the objectives of this research, it is not possible to present these ideas in great detail.

⁸⁸ Brunner wondered: ‘¿Qué ocurre, en cambio, con el campo del arte o, particularmente, con lo que se ha llamado la escena de “avanzada”? Mi hipótesis es que, a diferencia de las ciencias sociales “disidentes” o independientes, la escena “de avanzada” no logra reinsertarse socialmente en el campo cultural; permanece allí como una manifestación de vanguardia, estrictamente sujeta a un público “orgánico”, minoritario y con patrones de consumo altamente resonantes con aquellos que priman entre los propios productores de la escena de “avanzada”. Extremando las cosas podría decirse que la escena de “avanzada” es exclusivamente un circuito de producción.’ (Brunner, [1986] 2007: 174-175).

⁸⁹ On August 22-23 1986, the seminar ‘Arte en Chile desde 1973’ was held. Organized jointly by FLACSO, Francisco Zegers and Galería Visuala, the seminar utilized the publication of *Margins and Institutions* in order to gather the artists considered to be part of the Escena de Avanzada, together with certain social scientists, in order to discuss the visual operations that had emerged in Chile since the military coup of 1973.

⁹⁰ According to Oyarzún: ‘Este hecho me parece decisivo al punto de inferir de él la estructura general de la obra e, incluso, como recién insinuaba, no poco de su disposición material, pero ante todo el conjunto del gesto que Nelly Richard cumple en él: ese gesto complejo por el cual ella rescata la producción de la escena de “Avanzada” (y se rescata a sí misma como su testigo más fiel, y como algo más que un simple testigo, ya lo decíamos), que viene a historizar indefectiblemente a esta “escena”, a sancionarla, como pretérito, a convertirla en testimonio de sí misma, con el efecto monumental que de ello, quiéraselo o no, se sigue.’ (Oyarzún, [1986] 2007: 162).

international level (Ortúzar, 2007; Valderrama, 2008; Villalobos-Ruminott, 2013a; Polgovsky, 2014; Mosquera, 2005; Avelar, 2006; Castillo y Varas, 2010; Macchiavello, 2011; Vodanovic, 2014). Some researchers have even compared the *Escena de Avanzada* to similar artistic movements in Brazil (Calirman, 2012) and Romania (Preda, 2013).

What is clear is that each year new research and reflections on the *Escena de Avanzada* emerge. Whilst some of this research enriches and widens discussions on art and politics, my objective here is to seek to go into more depth regarding how the *Escena de Avanzada* led to a form of critical practice that came to be called *crítica cultural*. Before moving on, it is important to present a contemporary discussion of the *Escena de Avanzada*. Indeed, this is an interesting debate because it occurs during the years when *crítica cultural* emerged historically as an intellectual practice.

Discussing the Escena de Avanzada: Willy Thayer's critique

Some 17 years after the publication of *Margins and Institutions*, and on the eve of the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of Pinochet's military coup, one of the most significant discussions of the *Escena de Avanzada* and its legacy was held. In those years, discussions of the political, social, and cultural effects of the dictatorship were increasingly common. In this scenario, the discussion of artistic production in Chile under the dictatorship and its effects on democracy could not be ignored.

In his text, 'Vanguardia, Dictadura, Globalización (La serie de las artes

visuales en Chile, 1957-2000)⁹¹, Willy Thayer questioned the origin of the *Escena de Avanzada*:

Escena de avanzada nombra, antes que nada, la producción textual de N. Richard sobre artes visuales en Chile desde finales de los 70 hasta 1983, aproximadamente. Sus textos, en esos años, constituyeron la acumulación originaria y la posterior acuñación de tal nombre. Citarlo es citar la signatura de una serie de ensayos que, en su conjunto, constituyen el proceso de elaboración vacilante de tal concepto, el cual circula hoy en día entre nosotros como moneda corriente. (Thayer, 2001: 250).

In this way, Thayer deals with an element that is important to this research - the recognition that the concept emerged from Richard's own writing. In light of this, it is important to clarify that Thayer recognizes the concept as a 'cuerpo textual', rather than a collection of works of art by artists connected through its analysis.

Later in the text, Thayer presents his own thesis of the concept of *Escena de Avanzada*. In simple terms, he points to the idea that the potential of the *Avanzada* as an avant-garde was a simulation, as during its emergence in the context of the dictatorship everything was dismantled by military power. In Thayer's words:

Las operaciones de la avanzada no podrían ser consideradas bajo la resonancia del vanguardismo en términos de desmantelamiento de la institución representacional histórica, porque en 1979, cuando la avanzada emerge, no sólo los aparatos de producción y distribución de arte; sino toda forma institucional ha sido suspendida en una seguidilla de golpes. Seis años de golpe (1973/79), de políticas de shock y decretos de la Junta Militar. (Thayer, 2001: 252).

⁹¹ Both the title and content of this text would vary over the years. For example, in 2003 a text with similar content and lines of argumentation appeared, with the title 'El Golpe como consumación de la Vanguardia' (Thayer, 2003).

In addition, for Thayer:

La avanzada emerge, pues, “en plena zona de catástrofe”, cuando ha naufragado el sentido, debido al quiebre de todo el sistema de referencias sociales y culturales que hasta 1973 articulaba para el sujeto social chileno el manejo de sus claves de realidad y pensamiento (...) Para 1979 la institución representacional moderna –sostenida en la oposición representación/presencia- es siniestramente abolida, neutralizando la posibilidad de cualquier práctica contrainstitucional. La posibilidad de toda práctica contrainstitucional fue siniestramente realizada por el golpe como consumación ominosa de la voluntad de acontecimiento y anti-representacionalidad de la vanguardia. La avanzada emerge, lo proponemos así, en las inmediaciones de la realización siniestra del sublime revolucionario de la vanguardia, contigua a la irrupción de lo impresentable –el Golpe de Estado- que opera la suspensión (*epokhé*) de la representacionalidad y la soberanía estatal-nacional moderna en curso hasta 1973, representacionalidad en, con y contra la que se debatió la vanguardia local en su afán por retornar lo reprimido –el hombre esencial-, en el contexto del humanismo de los 60 y de comienzos de los 70. (*Ibíd.*)

As there was no possibility for “ruptura o suspensión de la representacionalidad” in the context of the dictatorship, for Thayer the *Escena de Avanzada* had no historic value. Its historicization is thus discredited. The coup is the consummation of the avant-garde. Its work of disciplining and disseminating orders would make any vanguard hypothesis impossible. Certainly, in this regard, the discourses that included the concept of the *Escena de Avanzada* would likewise succumb to this condition.

Although Thayer’s polemical thesis undermines an important part of the concept of the *Escena de Avanzada*, it is important to recognize that, rather than radicalize his suspicions and questions, Thayer’s provocative text increases the need to rethink and reflect upon the recent history of visual arts

in Chile. This is to say that, rather than bury the concept, the text feeds into the discussion. The discussion is brought to the fore, especially through the very person who originated the concept itself - Nelly Richard.

In 2003, 30 years after the coup, a Coloquio Internacional de Arte y Política was held. This event was co-organized by the Universidad Arcis, the Faculty of Arts of the Universidad de Chile, and the National Council of Culture and the Arts. Based upon debates that emerged from this colloquium, a compilation was published as the book, *Arte y Política*. The editors of the book were Pablo Oyarzún, Richard, and Claudia Zaldívar. Through text and debate, in this book Richard responds to Thayer's hypotheses.

In her text 'Lo político y lo crítico en el arte: ¿quién teme a la neovanguardia?', Richard recognizes Thayer's provocation⁹² and questions the fact that he seems to situate all efforts to generate a vanguard under the military dictatorship as failures. This would imply that, since the coup, nothing that utilizes the vanguard emblem is possible. This, for Richard, seems to beg the following reflection:

No creo que la mejor forma de ayudar a esta tarea aún pendiente –la tarea de recuperar zonas eludidas de “La memoria perdida: a treinta años del Golpe”- sea la de condenar al sin sentido (a la ineffectividad) las luchas por el sentido que motivaron este arte insurgente bajo el

⁹² In her words: 'Lo más denso de las reflexiones abiertas con motivo de los treinta años del Golpe Militar en Chile (septiembre 2003), concierne un “manejo de preguntas” sobre “catástrofe” y “posibilidad”: sobre cómo el arte y pensamiento –pese a todo- buscaron trasladar las marcas de la destrucción histórica a constelaciones de sentido capaces de suscitar nuevos montajes (estéticos, políticos, críticos) de la experiencia y subjetividad. Este es el contexto en el que quisiera situar esta discusión con un texto provocativo de Willy Thayer (“El Golpe como consumación de la vanguardia”), que pone en relaciones de contigüidad y equivalencia el Golpe Militar del 11 de septiembre de 1973 (el Golpe como Vanguardia) y la neovanguardia artística chilena (la Escena de Avanzada) como golpe y reiteración. Agradezco la provocación de este texto que, al incitarme a expresar mis desacuerdos con su postulado general – un postulado según el cual el Golpe Militar habría anticipado y cancelado a la vez el significado crítico de los quiebres de la representación que trabajó la Escena de Avanzada-, me ha dado la oportunidad de revisitar la escena neovanguardista chilena de los ochenta y sus tensiones entre el arte y política.' (Richard, 2005c: 33-34).

decreto –aniquilante, exterminador- de la muerte crítica que hoy sentencia W. Thayer. Al obliterar las prácticas de transformación artística de los ochenta en Chile (aquellas prácticas que interrogaron más audazmente la secuencia: historia-golpe-destrucción-totalidad-fracturas-deconstrucción), W. Thayer desposee a la Escena de Avanzada de su pasado pero, también, de su futuro. [Esto] Cancela incluso la alternativa de que nuevas fuerzas de lectura reubiquen estas prácticas en una secuencia viva de debate sobre lo crítico y lo político en el arte, cuyas energías el texto da por definitivamente sepultadas. Ese definitivo remate del fin –con el que W. Thayer agota las virtualidades de lo inconcluso- no busca sino impedir que el pasado de la Escena de la Avanzada esté disponible para ser reconjugado en futuro anterior. (Richard, 2005c: 35-36).

In this way, Richard accuses Thayer of not recognizing the analytic, reflective, and critical potential of the *Escena de Avanzada* at that time, and what is worse, does not consider the analytical potential that it generated for the future. This is, without doubt, the single most important critique that Richard has of Thayer, that is, he did not allow the concept to remain available for reflexivity within the art world or in the political-cultural space.

For this reason, at the end of her response to Thayer, Richard insists upon the need to rethink the concept of *Escena de Avanzada*, and the relation between art and politics during the dictatorship. For her, to limit this possibility, as Thayer would do by devaluating the *Escena de Avanzada's* condition as an avant-garde, leads to undeserved closure regarding the effort employed by the critical thought of the *Escena de Avanzada*. However, Richard recognizes that Thayer's text (or rather his provocation) was useful for her own cause of highlighting the history of the concept. For Richard, in the context of globalization, even the *Escena de Avanzada* has something to offer:

Menos mal que es posible leer el texto de W. Thayer no desde la

finitud del cierre que sentencia el nihilismo de su *post*, sino como un texto inacabado y de final abierto, un texto sin verdad consumada, que no termina de escribirse (al igual que las narrativas del Golpe Militar y de la Avanzada) y que, por lo mismo, se abre al futuro de la diferencia. (...) Que W. Thayer deje finalmente entre-abierta la posibilidad de que la Escena de Avanzada sea no sólo un pasado sino también un porvenir al cual puede optar la crítica, que la Escena de Avanzada sea finalmente un *devenir*, le da la razón a Hal Foster: “nada queda nunca establecido de una vez por todas [...] Toda primera vez es teóricamente *infinita*. Por lo mismo, necesitamos nuevas genealogías de la vanguardia que, en lugar de cancelarla, *compliquen su pasado y den apoyo a su futuro*” mediante una crítica creativa interminable. (Richard, 2005c: 46)

What is interesting about this debate is the tension that emerges from the recognition or questioning that results from the generation of a productive and polemical concept. How is it possible to construct an epochal narrative (the *Escena de Avanzada*) in a context in which there is little more than fear, catastrophe, and simulation? The answer is clearly quite complex. What is true is that, on this discussion of the past, present, and future of a concept, rely the initial traces of a larger debate.

As previously noted, the focus of interest should not be concentrated merely upon the potentiality or eruption of a concept such as *Escena de Avanzada*. The interest must also be on how this compilation of names, artwork, and discourses gave way to a discussion that went beyond aesthetics and enabled the emergence of a new interpretive force and critical mobilization in the form of *crítica cultural*.

In his recent book *Soberanías en suspenso: Imaginación y violencia en América Latina*, Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott (2013b) reflected further on this discussion concerning the significance —political and cultural— of the *Escena de Avanzada*. The question he poses is: what should be emphasized,

recovered, forgotten, or displaced when speaking of art in Chile during the past 20 or 30 years?

Villalobos-Ruminott recognizes that, even though it is necessary to question the constitution of the process by which the *Escena de Avanzada* emerged, it is also pertinent to recognize how these interpretive forces that Richard developed were able to maintain a critical outlook on the future programmatic consensus of democratization in post-dictatorship Chile. In other words, the consequences of this movement would be to trigger a critical thinking that became uncomfortably present during the following decade. Indeed, in the words of Villalobos-Ruminott:

Más allá de las lecturas desarrolladas por las ciencias sociales sobre el golpe, la dictadura, el proceso transicional chileno y sobre las relaciones entre memoria histórica, cultura y modernización, es posible concebir el debate en torno a “la escena de avanzada” como un lugar preciso de articulación de posiciones que difieren y cuestionan, a la vez, los límites y los énfasis del pensamiento post-dictatorial chileno. (Villalobos-Ruminott, 2013b: 72).

Villalobos-Ruminott thus affirms that Richard’s strategy did not consist, nor has it consisted of, 'making theory':

sino en una práctica inscrita en la configuración de trazos e identidades contingentes y antagónicas, aún a costa de juegos adjetivales maniqueos. Hay ciertamente un *maniqueísmo politizante* en su escritura, una pulsión conflictiva y deseante que denuncia los órdenes categoriales disciplinarios desde una auto conferida marginalidad. (Villalobos-Ruminott, 2013b: 78).

For Villalobos-Ruminott, it is of utmost importance to recognize the critical thinking that emerged from the *Escena de Avanzada*. At the same time, it is fundamental to recognize its history and the conditions that made it possible,

as this movement was made viable precisely by the irregular historic conditions of the dictatorship.

Based on this critical formulation, together with Richard's protection of the concept of *Escena de Avanzada*, Villalobos-Ruminott seeks to reposition the need for critical thought, so that it is not sustained by unchanging origins or by the idea of the end of history (or of the arts, history, ideologies, etc.) (Villalobos-Ruminott, 2013a and 2013b).

The question that emerges is not so concerned with the nature of the *Escena de Avanzada*, but rather how its history from 1975 was transformed into a form of thought that in the 1990s would come to be categorized as *crítica cultural*, and which would offer new forms of critical analysis of history and its complexities.

In this sense, it is possible to say that *Margins and Institutions* closes one chapter in the history of creative, visual, and experimental practice. At the same time, it opens a new margin of critical maneuvering, giving way to a new state of reflection on what it means to think in the margin, based on the distorted, the fragmented, on resistance, during a period defined by the return to democracy. *Margins and Institutions* was, without doubt, an important landmark in Chilean visual history during the dictatorship. This is because a large part (if not all) of what was written in this context had already been described in a series of catalogues, articles, documents, and pamphlets since the end of the 1970s. In this way, *Margins and Institutions* was a moment in a continuing history, and the critical challenges of the future demanded a new turn in critical discourse.

IV. New explorations *ad portas* in the return to democracy: Postmodernity, identity, and (neo)feminism in Latin America

After the publication of *Margins and Institutions* in 1986, the discussion of the *Escena de Avanzada* would diminish over the years. At the end of the 1980s, years characterized by the imminent return to democracy, the Chilean cultural sphere had to face a paradoxical scenario. On the one hand, it had to connect to plans for the return to democracy, that is, joining the democratic opposition and the regimes that would become the *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia*, and on the other, to maintain a critical, marginal, democratic, and questioning posture before these new political forces. This scenario demanded the adoption of a new way of thinking about the future of critical, poetic, and visual thought (Richard, 1988c). In those years, Richard was intensely interested in the process of Chilean democratization, as well as in exploring new issues being discussed, such as postmodernity identity, and (neo)feminism in Latin America.

As we have seen, Richard became suspicious of the processes of political democratization from the very start.

During 1987 and 1989, in a series of catalogues, magazines, and academic journals⁹³, Richard wrote about the imminent critical-political challenge for artists of the *Escena de Avanzada*, as well as for critical thought in general, as a result of the return to democracy in Chile. In these texts, Richard asks: what is to be done in this emerging political context?

⁹³ At the end of 1980, Richard had already participated in a series of conferences, seminars, and academic exchanges at international universities. As a result of her participation in such events, her presentations were published in academic journals printed in English, enabling her to move about comfortably both in Latin American and North American academic circles.

In an article published by Richard in the journal *Third Text*, after having presented the characteristics and operations of the *Escena de Avanzada*, her focus turned to dealing with the sociocultural and political future of Chile at the end of the 1980s. In this way, she explains that:

Without doubt, the present diversification of the artistic and cultural field is as much a product of the changes of emphasis within the domain of art as it is of changing relations between conflicting forces in society. Although Chile continues to be ruled by the same dictatorship, the relationship between official and dissident culture has become more flexible. Several circumstances have prompted a greater heterogeneity in the articulation of cultural debate. (Richard, 1987b: 24).

Indeed, Richard claims that on a sociocultural level, there are many opportunities for a return to democracy, due in part to the crisis of legitimacy of the dictatorship, as well as the mass protests that had occurred at the end of the 1980s. In this context, she would state that:

rather than disarticulating critically under the (anything goes) law of the market place, it is perhaps possible to say that the potential of contrast and opposition as well as processes of active differentiation, best guarantee a commitment to the re-democratization of a society that must re-invent itself through dissent as much as by consensus. (*Íbidem*)

It is possible to observe a new stage in Richard's political and cultural thought: maintaining a dissident posture in the context of democratic consensus.

This is increasingly clear in her text 'Poéticas del descalce y marco democrático' from May 1987. Requested as a text in the catalogue for the exhibition 'Hegemonía y visualidad' of the Instituto de Ciencias Alejandro

Lipschuz in Santiago de Chile, this text begins by clearly illustrating a shift in interest from the problematization of the *Escena de Avanzada* to a search for a new interpretive framework and critical practice. In the text Richard does not dedicate any time to the artwork exhibited. Rather, the supporting catalogue was used to problematize a series of problems in the context of the negotiations and processes for the return to democracy being developed by the opposition and the military government. Faced with this scenario, Richard asks:

¿No será entonces dicho consenso –en las versiones más resignadas de su programación de eficacias- lo que tendremos que aprender a desestabilizar mediante nuevos “juegos de lenguaje” que, por muy intersticial que se defina su práctica, suponen acceso y participación a los medios que administran los arreglos y beneficios de esta nueva pragmática de la consensualidad? (Richard, 1987c: 14).

Richard already recognized in those years that in Chile much negotiation would be required to achieve democratic accommodation, which in the future would come to be called the 'democratic transition'⁹⁴. However, Richard recognized the need to strengthen creativity as interference; which is to say, to encourage an artistic practice that is suspicious of the process but not outside of the process. In her words:

Imagino sí, que deberá sortear la dificultad de encontrar cómo vincular esas preguntas a la red institucionalizada de la cultura para salir de su aislamiento y tornarse participante, cruzándose con los ejes de significación que tensionan el campo de la operatividad social; pero sin que deba renunciar por ello a ser disidente del orden, ni abandonar su condición de *vector de conflictualidad*. (Richard, 1987c: 15).

⁹⁴ For cultural and political analysis of the concept, see Lazzara (2006).

In the Plebiscito Nacional de Chile (Chilean National Plebiscite) on October 5 1988, things changed (Angell & Pollack, 1990; Boas, 2015). In this plebiscite, the results of which would determine whether or not Pinochet was to continue in power, it was already possible to visualize Richard's worst suspicions in the triumph of the return to democracy. Without having participated in the 'Campaña del No', Richard maintained an attitude that was both distant and committed to the return to democracy in Chile (Richard, 1988a). However, soon she began to question the paths set out by the groups who participated in the drafting of slogans such as '*la alegría ya viene*'.

Even when Richard displayed a business-like attitude towards the return to democracy, she later developed a more suspicious and distant posture with regard to the process⁹⁵. Overall, she developed a critical attitude not only towards the artists and creators closest to the movement for democracy, but also and most especially towards the 'renovated' social scientists and cultural sociologists (such as José Joaquín Brunner). For Richard, it was they who, owing to their integration into the state-governmental apparatus, would come to betray the possibility of thinking of the democratic transition as a platform for justice, memory, and the destabilization of the dictatorship-era consensus. This aspect, which will be specifically dealt with in the following chapter, is of vital importance for understanding the formation of *crítica cultural*, as well as *crítica de la memoria*.

⁹⁵ In her words: 'El desafío más arduo que plantea el escenario post-plebiscitario a producciones hasta ahora marcadas por su activismo del "no lugar", consiste sin duda en responder a este tipo de interrogantes: ¿Cómo lograr preservar la inconclusividad del fragmento sin verse condenado por ello a la aprocesualidad de una suma completamente inconexa? ¿Cómo reconvertir la pulsionalidad rebelde de los flujos excedentarios en microestrategias resistentes y combatientes que logren oponerse a los desequilibrios de poder y autoridad?' (Richard, 1988a: 35).

The debate on Postmodernity and Identity in Latin America

Whilst in the past Richard had focused upon the case of Chilean culture, during the late 1980s she made an incursion into the most significant theoretical and geopolitical debates. Indeed, at the end of this decade she began to think in more depth about a second order of problems - the debate on postmodernity and Latin America as periphery.

In a series of conferences and articles written between 1987 and 1988, Richard analysed the condition of emancipatory possibility facing Latin America at the end of the 20th century (Richard, 1989). In her analysis, Richard questions the dominant models of 'truth and progress' that defended a centralized modernity, and which meant a hegemonic and expansionist vision of the historic western subject. However, whilst modern practices were felt to be foreign and artificial in Latin America, they all conditioned the cultural, social, and political mechanisms of the region's history. Both the elites and the Latin American states joined up with modernity and modernization in a sort of 'copy and paste' fashion, resulting in the imposition of these foreign feelings on the local culture (Richard, 1989).

Certainly, according to Richard, there were dissident voices in regard to this process in Latin American history. These came primarily from certain theologies and sociologies that were considered to be essentialist (the Catholic substratum⁹⁶) on the one hand, and certain metaphysical notions connected with a more primitive identity (indigenous or nationalist versions⁹⁷) on the other. For Richard, these notions favoured a fixed idea of identity, which, beyond promoting a culture of resistance, promoted a static culture of

⁹⁶ Richard refers to the Chilean sociologist Pedro Morande (1984).

⁹⁷ See Chapter 2 in Jorge Larraín (2001), the versions of 'indigenism' in Latin America.

origin, of mythical return, of authenticity.

Faced with this scenario, Richard asked herself what the notion of postmodernity offered at the end of the 20th century⁹⁸. If before, modernity had been connected to the truth and the definitive regulatory word, for Richard postmodernity sought to undo the fixed, totalizing, and unique content of canonical texts. In other words, the dominant positions that defined interpretative hierarchies would have been canceled out. At the same time, she did not trust any unquestioned structure. Indeed, in a context characterized by the fall of the Berlin Wall and 'real socialisms', the power of capitalism was established as a hegemonic world order that, over time, came to be characterized by its mobility and multipolarity⁹⁹. These years were marked by a historic moment that encouraged the destabilization of meta-narratives (Richard, 1987e).

In this way, the 'cultures of the periphery', such as Latin America, might find liberation (resistance, transformation) through the hegemonic cultures that had historically colonized them. In Richard's words:

At first sight, it might appear as if postmodernism reformulates the old dependencies (centre/periphery, progress/backwardness) in a way which creates a new hierarchy. For almost the first time, Latin America finds itself in a privileged position, in the vanguard or what is seen as novel. Even though it only finds itself in this position within a theoretical framework formulated elsewhere, Latin American cultural practices are deemed to have pre-figured the model now approved and legitimized by the term 'postmodernism'. The very heterogeneity of the experiences which have created a Latin American space out of its multiple and hybrid pasts create, at least on the surface, the very qualities of fragmentation and dispersion associated with the

⁹⁸ In her texts, Richard mentions primarily the texts of Jacques Derrida (1998), Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984), and Fredric Jameson (1991).

⁹⁹ For a contemporary analysis of this phenomenon in Latin America, see Marc Zimmerman (2006).

semantic erosion characteristic of the crisis of modernity and modernism as its cultural dominant. (Richard, 1987d: 10).

Certainly, Richard is not naïve in her thinking. She recognizes that Latin America has been characterized as having a number of shortcomings. However, because these characteristics are a legacy of international modernity it is possible to rid the region of such precarious forms.

Richard proposes a fundamental distinction regarding the notion of postmodernism. On the one hand, there is a postmodernism that seeks to reinstall the idealism of the great humanist-bourgeois tradition. On the other, a postmodernism that seeks to deconstruct the modernist project in order to provide a new critical configuration. Richard bases this distinction upon that proposed by Hal Foster (2002), as forming a distinction between a 'postmodernism of reaction' and a 'postmodernism of resistance'.

Regarding the former, the primary characteristics are related to a reactionary attitude towards any sign of social, emancipatory, or collective reactivation, which would encourage a weakening of social support for neoliberal conformism. On the other hand, a 'postmodernism of resistance' is characterized by being challenging and combative with regard to social norms. The latter is a postmodernism that is able to generate critical experimentation concerning that which is unsolvable¹⁰⁰.

Based upon the notion of the postmodernism of resistance, Richard proposes an analysis of this debate in Latin America.

¹⁰⁰ In Richard's words: 'El postmodernismo rompe con ese ideal de pureza desviando su atención hacia los cruces y las mezclas, las interferencias; ubicándose bajo el sello contaminante de la desconstrucción. Término pedido en préstamo a Derrida que designa –en la cultura postmodernista- el trabajo de desmontaje de los códigos de representación social y de su entramado mediático.' (Richard, 1987e: 311).

Postmodernism, then, is a new cultural text that helps Latin America, those subjects within the periphery, to read, spell out, internalize, and generate a new critical force. The minority fractions of the social body and regional micro-politics are called upon to feed from this new critical plan. For Richard, it was necessary to allow herself to question the postmodern current. In other words:

Perhaps our Latin American identity, seen from the perspective of the postmodernist 'collage', is no more than a rhetorical exacerbation of the strategies of decentralization and re-adaptation. The periphery has always made its own mark on the series of statements emitted by the dominant culture and has recycled them in different contexts in such a way that the original systemizations are subverted, and their claim to universality is undermined. (Richard, 1987d: 12).

Specifically in the case of Chile, Richard recognizes that in post-coup Chilean society it is also true that the disintegration of community-based references and the dissolution of the emblems of identity that had been forged in such communities, makes a case not only for the theories of fragmentation that emerged out of postmodernism, but also aids in rethinking the dissolution of the social nexus in the context of crisis. In sum, whilst Richard recognizes that in this debate it is not possible to understand the notion of postmodernity as a mirror of Latin American reality, it is possible *to productivize* these issues in order to question the new logical frameworks of authority and administration that were being formed during the final years of the military dictatorships and the initial years of the democratic governments, both in Chile and throughout the region.

(Neo)feminism as a critical practice in history

If, according to Richard's assessment, postmodernity in Latin America has led to the establishment of a new regime of political-cultural meaning, then feminism can also benefit from this scenario. In fact, for Richard (and in accordance with her work at the end of *Cuerpo Correccional*) it was necessary to re-problematize feminist theory as a critique of representation. In this way, notions of woman and difference played a central role in making up her critical programme at the end of the 1980s, as they still do.

For Richard, the discussion of feminism is closely connected to the postmodern debate¹⁰¹. As postmodernism questions dominant and fixed forms of knowing, the post-feminist discourse operates as a destabilizing programme with regard to the *dispositifs* of masculine-dominant authority. For Richard, in those years there was a transformation from a 'feminism of equality' (which sought to repair mistakes and compensate for disadvantages) towards a 'neofeminism', which learned to deconstruct the border that masculine ideology has drawn between the public (production, society, open space) and the private (reproduction and family).¹⁰²

Faced with this problem, neofeminism had to concentrate on dismantling the hegemonic representations of masculine society and to establish a critical plan for these representations:

¹⁰¹ Richard recognizes the work of Craig Owens (2002) as key to understanding the intersections between feminist, patriarchal, and postmodern critiques.

¹⁰² Concentrated on questioning the discursive mechanisms that maintained roles and participation, as well as social hierarchies based on sexual judgments, 'neofeminism' was nurtured by Foucault (disciplining and micro-politics of resistance), Derrida (deconstruction and questioning western phallus-logo-phono centrism), Lacan (regarding his unconscious theory), Irigaray (sexually differentiated unconscious), and Kristeva (transemiotic dynamic).

Una teoría feminista empeñada en cuestionar el entramado ideológico-cultural de las representaciones patriarcales, no puede sino detenerse en analizar el detalle de *cómo* el discurso de la cultura dominante va codificando los lugares y funciones reservados en su interior para un sujeto funcional a su dominio. Cualquier pregunta referida al rol de la mujer en el universo de la producción socio-simbólica debe necesariamente pasar por una reflexión sobre (sic) la red *situacional y posicional* de los efectos de subjetividad que distribuyen y controlan las ideologías sexuales a lo largo y a lo ancho de su red de mensajes y comunicaciones. (Richard, 1987f: 65).

This new phase of problems thus had to focus upon social and cultural exteriority. However, in the postmodern context, exteriority is both a simulation (Baudrillard) and a struggle between differences and recognitions. Just as in the case of Latin America, postmodernity proclaims both a multiplication of 'others' as well as pointing out that all difference (sexual, racial etc.) can dissipate into the market of cultural diversity. Faced with this danger, Richard affirms that:

la voz del neofeminismo no puede dejarse regionalizar en la expresión circunscrita de un simple particularismo que compite con otros: su reclamo es *transversal* a toda problemática de la identidad, ya que el eje de la diferencia sexual recorre el campo de todo lo que ejemplarmente se reparte como razones y derechos para normar culturalmente la subjetividad social. (Richard, 1987f: 67).

In this perspective, both neofeminism and Latin America represented a central concern to Richard: it is necessary to provoke differences (woman/periphery) in order to keep their forces of provocation alive and stop their dissidence from being re-territorialized. In this way, a direct way of maintaining this force of nonconformity comes through artistic practices, and even more so if these are practiced by women:

El arte y la literatura como excedentes metafóricos y críticos frente al

lenguaje instrumental del discurso mayoritario supeditado a la funcionalidad social dominante, invitan (a) la femineidad a ser parte de su juego de descalces. Es así como mujer, creatividad y disidencia conjugan la extranjería de sus voces triplemente renuentes al adoctrinamiento para celebrar –en el plurilingüismo de esta explosiva rotura de códigos- tanto el reventamiento del dogma oficial como el desgaste de los credos ideologizantes. (Richard, 1988b: 77).

The (neo)feminism that Richard pushes for is intertwined with public space, writing, language, theory, art, transvestism, and postmodernity, among many other cultural contexts. In the book *Masculino/Femenino. Prácticas de la diferencia y cultura democrática*, published in 1993, Richard not only unifies and summarizes the theoretical-political proposals she had developed during the late 1980s, but also analyses the artistic work of Diamela Eltit and Lotty Rosenfeld, and the theoretical proposals of other women intellectuals such as Beatriz Sarlo, Eugenia Brito, Raquel Olea, Olga Grau, Julieta Kirkwood, Adriana Valdés, and Jean Franco. In this book, Richard includes and highlights the feminine dimension as a critical force in her intellectual project. However, she does the same thing at the same time with postmodernism and its historico-critical potential.

The question and logics of difference thus moved to the centre of Richard's work in those years; that is to say, it became the active principle involved in questioning identity (or homogeneity) as a hegemonic representation. Difference accents the multiple and the diverse, and tends to understand the fragment as an opportunity for both the understanding of social complexity and cultural *decentring*. In this way, it is a mobile, uncontrollable form of thought, with a potential for rebellion and nonconformity that emerged at the end of the 1980s. These elements would also come to make up Richard's *crítica cultural* during the following decade.

V. Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, Richard's critical discourse at the end of the 1980s can be characterized as transient, *flâneur*-like. In fact, at the beginning of the decade a critical space for visual and written thought was initiated both in Richard's *Cuerpo Correccional* and Ronald Kay's *Del Espacio de Acá*. Through a review of the work of Leppe, Dittborn, Rosenfeld, and CADA it was observed that art itself as a political-discursive force that would destabilize the cultural and historical fabric of Chilean society.¹⁰³ At the same time, this chapter looked at the birth, growth, and fall of the *Escena de Avanzada*, and the discussions that this movement generated (for example, between Thayer and Richard). Beyond presenting the tactical and technical qualities of the *Escena de Avanzada*, I have attempted to explore how the works associated with this movement enabled the creation of a new critical writing practice. In this way, we could argue that the displacements of force and intensity that occurred during the 17 years of dictatorship produced, at the end of the 1980s, a change in the content of art criticism. From a focus upon the visual, material, and critical-poetic (*Escena de Avanzada*), there was a shift towards a redistribution of energies, conflicts, and interests focused upon politics, culture, and art to be analysed now through a new theoretical and political framework.

If in the 1970s and mid-1980s Richard was pre-occupied with projecting an analysis centred upon the materiality of the artwork and its aesthetic-political projection, by the end of the 1980s it was possible to observe a shift and

¹⁰³ As Richard has pointed out: 'En ese sentido me resulta insuficiente una estética restringida a las componentes expresivo-formales de la obra sin considerar la inter-actuación de los diferentes códigos de significación y de producción artística. Sobre todo en un medio como el chileno donde la violencia histórica, la desarticulación del cuerpo social y el quiebre del marco de referencias de identidad, los condicionamientos de la censura y de la autocensura, la marginalidad latinoamericana, configuran una situación-límite que sobreimprimen sus marcas de enunciación en cualquier obra o texto; marcas que la obra a veces oculta o exhibe, a veces disfraza, pero que siempre contiene a modo de claves socio-semióticas de su articulación a la coyuntura histórica.' (1988c: 29).

widening of the margins of critical, theoretical, and cultural writing. In this context, texts emerged that dealt with the tensions of postmodernity/modernity, centre-periphery, processes of democratization, (neo)feminism, etc. Certainly, these discussions had emerged long before. As has been shown throughout these first two chapters, in several of Richard's texts it is possible to observe arguments that re-emerged at the end of the 1980s. What is interesting in this regard is to understand that the emergence of these new dimensions of the critical project materialize both on account of Richard's own work and due to the social and cultural circumstances.

During the 1980s there was significant sociocultural and political change in Chile. With the Constitution of 1980, the privatization of higher education, the implementation of a markedly neoliberal economic model etc., Chile was not the same as it had been a decade before. Rather their effect produced a deep-seated change in the *structures of feeling* of the country. If at the beginning of the 1980s a plebiscite was held to determine the political legitimization of the Pinochet dictatorship, by the end of the decade another plebiscite was held which resulted in the return to democracy. Through the 'Campaña del No' and the entire democratization process, Chile experienced a process of social, political, economic, and cultural reconfiguration that saturated all possible reflexive logical frameworks. The visual arts or any other form of creation had to share a political stage characterized by political democratization. Faced with this scenario, Richard had to manage a new horizon of critical possibilities. As an observer and critical *flâneur*, she had to sharpen her outlook and critical perception in order to interpret the amorphous cultural changes that occurred during those years.

Even though at the end of the 1980s Richard had not as yet even mentioned the term '*crítica cultural*' in her written work, it is clear that the project had

already begun to emerge in the mid 1970s, and took on force most especially during the 1980s. With the return to democracy in 1990 and the beginning of a new political-cultural cycle in Chile, it was not easy for Richard to remain alone in the field of art criticism. Effectively, both artwork and the sociopolitical context would see the flourishing of a critical form of thought strengthened by a new analytical platform – the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*. Here a number of new critics appeared who influenced Richard's work. If before the institutional and intellectual wasteland had been *in extremis*, during the 1990s the situation changed. Whilst it was not a radical change, it was at least institutional.¹⁰⁴

As we shall see in the following chapter, the 1990s would see both the birth of *crítica cultural* and of a new Chilean society. This transition was not just political, but theoretical, critical and cultural.

¹⁰⁴ For example, in 1989 the Ministry of Education officially recognized the Universidad de Artes y Ciencias Sociales (Arcis) where Richard would develop a significant portion of her future critical endeavours between 1990 and 2010.

CHAPTER 3

Definitions, positions, and debates around Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural* in transitional Chile (1990-2000)

Introduction

The 1990s was characterized by both ruptures and continuities. Under the presidency of the Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, the first few months of 1990 initiated what was officially known as the *democratic transition* (Durán, 2006; Kaltwasser, 2007). This meant the recovery of a series of democratic principles that had previously been prohibited by the military dictatorship (free elections, freedom of assembly and the press, reopening the national congress, etc.) as well as a reconfiguration of the new expectations and imaginaries of a democratic project based upon justice, truth, and reconciliation. On the other hand, this process was mired in multiple legacies inherited from the military regime, such as the permanence of Augusto Pinochet in the Chilean Army (thus Pinochet was a constant presence in Chilean society) as well as the continuity of the 1980 Constitution, a neoliberal economic model, the legal figure of 'designated senators', and the Amnesty Law, among other elements (Moulián, 1997).

This decade was also characterized by the 'política de los acuerdos' between the outgoing military command and the incoming civilian administration (Garretón, 1996; Jocelyn-Holt, 2001; Silva, 2002). Indeed, the *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia*, the governing coalition that ruled without interruption from 1990 until 2009 (Migliardi, 2009), had to deal with a paradoxical situation, that is, reconstructing a democratic project based upon principles of redistribution and social justice, while maintaining and prolonging

the fundamental economic and political basis set out by the military regime. In this way, the intellectual project developed by Jaime Guzmán became a reality. Guzmán imagined a 'democracia protegida', the objective of which was to both prioritize political and economic stability based upon neoliberal and authoritarian principles, and to create legal obstacles to any mechanism for meaningful change or reformulation of the social model.

The implementation of the neoliberal model during the 1980s came to fruition and experienced unexpected consequences during the 1990s (Olavarría, 2003; Taylor, 2006; De la Barra, 2011). With the fall of the Berlin Wall and existing socialisms in Eastern Europe, the free market economic model emerged as an unparalleled force. At the beginning of the 1990s, Chile was experiencing a true economic 'miracle', and enjoyed international recognition for its astounding economic growth. Large investments in infrastructure and public works (highways, housing, airports, etc.) and expanded access to goods and services previously unavailable owing to restricted credits and loans, gave way to a social model based upon credit and consumption. As Tomás Moulián would observe in his book *Chile: Anatomía de un mito*:

The everyday culture of Chile today is penetrated by the symbolism of consumption. At a subjective level this means that in great measure the identity of Me is constructed through objects, and that the distinction between "image" and being has been lost. (Moulián, [1997] 2014: 550).

In order to generate a citizenry moulded out of the credit-based logic of the new neoliberal regime, overcoming material poverty and reducing inflation (among other issues) was a primary political concern. The democratic government's plan was to establish a form of neoliberalism 'with a human face', despite high levels of inequality in the country that remain to this day

(Solimano, 2012).

In this scenario, the new political and economic authorities faced a growing social demand for modernization. This meant prioritizing the present (assuring jobs, mobilizing investment resources, demonstrating a capacity for micro and macroeconomic management up to international standards etc.), and ignoring the issue of an uncomfortable past. The new administration did not need direct accusations or in-depth explanations, rather concrete solutions and lasting investments. However, and whilst the armed forces (constantly supported by the political right-wing) maintained an uncomfortable presence within the civilian power structure, during the 1990s efforts to bring to light information regarding human rights abuses during the dictatorship were made¹⁰⁵. Nevertheless, these first instances in the search for justice would progress, in the words of Aylwin, “en la medida de lo posible”.

The first half of the 1990s saw a series of civilian-military negotiations (often tense, discreet, and held behind closed doors), intended to develop a plan for the destabilization of any internal opposition to the new democratic government (Garretón, 1990, 1991). The *Concertación* turned social protest and political dissidence into undesirable practices to be avoided. In those years, the authorities' fear of another military coup, as well as public resentment at the lack of political and economic management, generated an

¹⁰⁵ On March 4, 1991, President Aylwin presented the official results of the *Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación* on national television. This commission was created in order to compile and exhibit to the entire nation the most important cases of human rights violations that occurred in Chile during the 17 years of the military dictatorship. It also enabled the presentation of material evidence that would be used as initial background in order to initiate legal procedures against members of the military who had been involved in crimes against humanity. In the end, the report took significant but insufficient steps towards dealing with the recent Chilean past. Not only did it leave out of its overall objectives cases of torture, exile, and/or political persecution (it only included cases of deaths and disappearances, not torture or kidnapping), but it also did not publish any specific names or individuals responsible for such crimes. In addition, the social impact of the ‘Informe Rettig’ (as it came to be known) would be tarnished only a few weeks later by the assassination of Senator Jaime Guzmán at the hands of the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez*.

environment marked by waiting and watching. Chilean democracy became a sort of monitored democracy. In fact, the public was perplexed at how the country had gone from a military government to a civilian one which, in short, had taken responsibility for democratizing certain basic freedoms but unquestionably promoted a sociocultural model forged under the fist of the military dictatorship.

Nelly Richard's intellectual development during the previous 17 years did not simply dissipate with the return to democracy. On the contrary, during this new decade her writing, her projects and intellectual proposals were questioned by a sociocultural context open to multiple reflexive and political possibilities. If in previous decades her writing had made a certain portion of the Chilean intellectual landscape uncomfortable, this new period would bear witness to a new intellectual displacement, characterized by the multiplication of issues and foci of attention. Indeed, it could be said that Richard was both witness to a *political* transition in 1990, but more importantly that she also led a new *theoretical* transition.

As we shall see, in this new context Richard not only delimited and defined her critical-cultural programme, but she also had to defend it and develop a constant defensive position with regards to her critics. At the same time, it will become clear that her marginalized position during the 1970s and 1980s would, during the democratic period, become more relative. It was no longer possible to sustain the same discourse as in the past. During this new decade, her critical edifice not only opened the doors to a new stage in critical thinking in Chile, but also generated a variety of formal academic and institutional spheres.

In 1990 she founded the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, and was its chief editor

for 18 years. In each of its 36 issues, the most significant intellectual debates regarding left-wing *crítica cultural* took place, as did a series of unprecedented academic debates. During this decade, in addition to becoming an academic at the recently founded (in 1989) *Universidad de Artes y Ciencias Sociales* (Arcis), she also published a series of books that became central to the comprehension and discussion of the post-dictatorship process in Chile. One of these publications, *Residuos y Metáforas* (2001b), included, for the first time, a theoretical and analytical systematization of *crítica cultural*. In sum, this decade was characterized by the emergence of a new stage in Richard's thought. The Chilean post-dictatorship era both demanded the establishment of a new pattern of socio-cultural analysis of the process, and made it possible to develop various intellectual projects. Richard's writing, and that of the group that had historically accompanied her during the dictatorship, became a 'voz autorizada' questioning both the principles and the cultural and political plans of the new Concertación governments. Her critique of the sociology of transition, as well as of the militant left wing, would serve as a fundamental basis for discussion in this period.

This chapter focuses upon four moments in Richard's intellectual experience during the post-dictatorship era of 1990-2000. It seeks to demonstrate how in the 1990s Richard put what Stuart Hall (1980) has referred to as the 'politics of intellectual work' to the test. That is to say, to reveal how Richard connected the theoretical postulations of her critical practice to the discontented voices that emerged in Chile during the post-dictatorship era. Beyond finding refuge in academic or intellectual spaces, Richard sought to penetrate the social and cultural dimensions of this emergent democratic Chile, but from the sidelines. This approach prioritized critical reflection *from* the perspective of 'aesthetic residues' and the symbolic-cultural tensions of

the present. If during the military dictatorship Richard's critical practice had been established within art circles, in the 1990s her writing and fame would spread towards the public sphere as well as debates both in Chile and Latin America and in the USA. Despite the mistrust of some towards *crítica cultural*, her intellectual project would maintain its primary thrust centred on discord and critical discrepancy with the hegemonic regulations of repressive order. In other words, she maintained the points of rupture, the *lines of flights*¹⁰⁶ and disorderly practices that she had identified in the works of Leppe, Dittborn, and Altamirano; but this time based upon a new theoretical history and wager: *crítica cultural*.

In the first section of this chapter the primary editorial and intellectual characteristics behind the foundation of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* are presented. Heir to a series of attempted journals such as *Revista CAL*, *La Separata* etc., the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* proposed to present both the primary critical debates that emerged during the new post-dictatorial period, as well as bring up to date (or re-project) the theoretical, aesthetic, and political-cultural problems developed among members of the *Escena de Avanzada* during the dictatorship. In addition, the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* served as an intellectual platform to discuss the new transitional period with the same agents as had brought this process to fruition, that is, the sociologists of the transition (especially José Joaquín Brunner), and other militant voices of the historic left-wing (such as Hernán Vidal).

¹⁰⁶ Here I use the term coined by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. According to Adrian Parr: 'In the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari the politics of art exposes the very proposition put forward in *A Thousand Plateaus*: 'Lines of flight are realities; they are very dangerous for societies, although they can get by without them, and sometimes manage to keep them to a minimum'. From this viewpoint, art functions as a line of flight, traversing individual and collective subjectivities and pushing centralised organisations to the limit; it combines a variety of affects and percepts in ways that conjugate one another. In many respects the connective, expansive and deterritorialising character of lines of flight, when considered in terms of art, draws our attention to the ethical dimension of art. Here the question of ethics in relation to art is primarily taken to be a problem of organisation. Art makes possible, it enables us to broaden our horizons and understanding, sensitising us to our own affective dimension in relation to the world as a whole.' (Parr, 2010: 150).

The second section concentrates upon the relationship Richard established with Latin American intellectuals and US academic circles through her work on Cultural Studies. Based upon a series of contacts between Richard and intellectuals connected to Latin American Cultural Studies, she established connections and an intellectual exchange which had significant repercussions for the national intellectual sphere, as well as within the field of Cultural Studies in Latin America. In this section, the discussions that Richard proposed for thinking and doing Cultural Studies *on* and *from* Latin America will be briefly reviewed.

The third section consists of an in-depth analysis of the methodological, conceptual, and political delimitation of the specific form of Richard's *crítica cultural*. Based upon an analysis of the book *Residuos y Metáforas (Ensayos de crítica cultural sobre el Chile de la Transición)* published in 1998, an explanation of this model will be presented, along with an analysis of five examples of its application that will enable an understanding of the reach and complexity of Richard's *crítica cultural*.

Finally, critical revisions by Hermann Herlinghaus and Jon Beasley-Murray of Richard's *crítica cultural* will be briefly discussed, along with her response to their criticism.

The 1990s was a time of 'acuerdos y desacuerdos' in Chilean intellectual and cultural circles. In those years, *la práctica crítica* was conceived of, and represented as, a real option for intervention in the sociocultural space that emerged after the return to democracy. However, this modernizing promise had to neutralize such practices early on in order to avoid any form of ideological and political-intellectual confrontation. In this context, the line of

thought generated by Richard up to that point had to face a dual scenario between, on the one hand, joining an intellectual majority connected to the 'acuerdo pluralista' and, on the other, maintaining a divisional line or margin of constant critical tension with the new hegemonic forms that emerged with the civilian-military consensus. As we shall see, Richard's *crítica cultural*, along with the collaborators in her intellectual project, opted for non-complacent confrontation with the plans and programmes developed by the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia. By maintaining her space of difference and critical tension, Richard would emerge not only as one of the few voices of opposition to the process that emerged out of the 'Campaña del No', but would also keep the aesthetic, political, and cultural dimensions of her intellectual proposal the main foci of her critical practice.

I. The *Revista de Crítica Cultural*: between the politics of agreement and critical practice

The desire to produce journals was always part of Richard's efforts. She made several attempts over previous decades – *V.I.S.U.A.L.*, *Revista CAL*, *Cuadernos de/para el Análisis*, *La Separata* etc. Most of these published only between one and four numbers, and circulation was primarily among close collaborators and contacts only. During the 1980s the circulation of cultural and literary magazines was doubly at risk in Chile. On the one hand, state censorship made it almost impossible to generate a space favourable to freedom of expression and thought. On the other, the market for such publications was relatively small, and the people committed to acquiring them also ran the risk of political persecution.

Unlike the publication of books, cultural magazines in Latin America played a

key role in the formation of the public sphere and critical practice (Sosnowski, 1999). Owing to their fleeting contingency, and to the fact that they were generally written by multiple authors, their value was mainly based upon generating debates over processes related to the decline in the relative importance of books. The 'deseo de revista' also played a key role in the biography of other intellectuals and thinkers, such as Walter Benjamin¹⁰⁷. Indeed, for Benjamin the journal form met a critical need in contexts of crisis. Through leaflets, brochures, articles, and placards, it was possible to generate a movement of critical bodies/machines based upon brief thoughts: 'Opinions are to the vast apparatus of social existence what oil is to the machines'. (Benjamin, 1979: 45).

Something similar occurred with Richard's editorial projects in the 1970s and 1980s. The possibility of founding and maintaining a magazine with such characteristics during the dictatorship was practically unviable. With the end of the military dictatorship in Chile and the emergence of new post-dictatorship (and postmodern) historic and cultural times, the conditions for generating a journal-based editorial project became evident. In a brief article published in 1989 in the journal *Número Quebrado*, Richard states:

Quizá la reciente aparición de revistas nos permita ir considerando más auspiciosamente la posibilidad de que canales de intercambio comunicativo ofrezcan tribunas más variadas para que las especificidades (saberes-discursos-referencias) dialoguen con su medio social y cultural en un juego interactante de lecturas y

¹⁰⁷ Together with Bertolt Brecht, during early 1930 Benjamin established the general guidelines for a journal: *Krise und Kritik*. The editorial project formulated by Brecht consisted mainly of establishing a conscious perspective on the critical situation of society at the time, as well as to lay the groundwork for dialectic materialism and an 'interventionist thinking' or an experimental, artistic practice that would be capable of generating socially effective criticism (Wizisla, 2009). However, the work received by the journal was not sufficiently different from that published in existing editorial platforms, and Benjamin decided to halt the project (Gilloch, 2002: 141-142). Something similar occurred with his individual journal project, *Angelus Novus*. As noted by Eiland and Jennings: 'Benjamin hoped that his own new angel, like Klee's vivid herald, would proclaim nothing less than "the spirit of its age".' (Eiland & Jennings, 2014).

sentidos cruzados y múltiples. (Richard, 1989b: 11).

The paths and horizons that opened up within the new sociopolitical landscape represented, for Richard, a concrete opportunity to observe the details, faces, feelings, and corporeal forms of the new national habitat. If previously her wandering through the dictatorial city was an anonymous, silent, and foreign activity, with the return to democracy her name and writings became widely recognized in the cultural sphere.

A more public position in the post-dictatorial period demanded of Richard a new editorial, political, and intellectual disposition. However, this new chapter also led to a confrontation between intellectual and political positions, even between those close to her group. On the one hand, there was a line of critical thinking from the era of the *Escena de Avanzada* which was characterized by remaining within the margins and foregrounding difference and which was suspicious of the post-dictatorship period. According to this view, the new era meant little more than a change of names and political roles. On the other hand, the new political regime offered a momentous opportunity to influence political and cultural decision-making in Chile. For this group, entering into institutional networks meant real participation in the political sphere. Both positions came into conflict, but a different, intermediate position would finally gain predominance.

In the final months of 1989 and the beginning of 1990, Richard held a series of meetings with her closest colleagues - Juan Domingo Dávila, Eugenio Dittborn, Diamela Eltit, Carlos Pérez Villalobos, Carlos Altamirano, and Adriana Valdés. At these meetings Richard proposed the idea of creating a magazine adequate to the new period, which would serve to support continuity of the critical efforts of the previous decade. Richard had already

chosen the name of the new editorial project - *Revista de Crítica Cultural*. Her colleagues would make up its editorial board.¹⁰⁸

Some months later Pinochet handed over the presidency to the Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, the first issue of *Revista de Crítica Cultural* was launched. This event re-affirmed the decision originally taken by the *Escena de Avanzada* to remain on the margins, but this time with an active political commitment. That is to say, it maintained a relative marginality. According to Andrea Pagni: “La Revista de Crítica Cultural asume en 1990 esa localización: aceptar las reglas del juego de la transición incipiente sin renunciar sin embargo al disenso, a formular sus incómodas preguntas, a cuestionar los límites y desordenar las disciplinas” (Pagni, 2002: 135). In a context of historical-political disagreement, it was difficult to take on clear and coherent positions. In the intellectual field, it was believed that the new administrative order would enable a dialogue which, if not constant, would at least be open to dissident voices such as Richard’s. This was perceived to represent a real possibility for sociocultural intervention. Looking back, it can be said that, within the new government’s action plan, it was necessary and useful to include a dissident voice or transgressive position. In other words, the emergent hegemonic order required such dissidence in order to legitimize the pluralistic nature of the post-dictatorial political agreement, and to neutralize or mould any and all conflicts that might become an uncontrollable problem.¹⁰⁹ In this scenario, the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, as well as many other publications that emerged in those years, would be welcomed into the

¹⁰⁸ To date, there are two PhD theses, by Marcela Pizarro (2004) and César Zamorano (2014a), dedicated to presenting the history, experience, and political and cultural impact of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*.

¹⁰⁹ During the initial years of the Concertación, the government developed a series of plans for dismantling subversive groups such as the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez* and the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*, among others. After the assassination of Senator Jaime Guzmán in April 1991, these policies become increasingly radical.

national cultural landscape¹¹⁰.

The *Revista de Crítica Cultural* is, according to some researchers (Ramírez, 2003, 2008; Silva, 2014), a natural continuation, or transference, of the *Escena de Avanzada*. Undoubtedly, the magazine inherited a project and a historical period of time populated by individuals tied to the *Escena de Avanzada*. However, it is possible to conceive of the emergence of the magazine as a different sort of effort. Whilst the editorial committee of the magazine, as well as its design, were reviewed by individuals involved with the *Escena de Avanzada* (Dávila, Dittborn, Valdés, etc.), it is also true that these individuals played mainly a secondary rather than a leading role in it. The *Revista de Crítica Cultural* was a project developed by Richard and supported by those close to her previous group. As such, it is not a collective project, unified and/or defined by the agents of the *Escena de Avanzada*. On the contrary, the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* can be considered *other*, different from the *Escena de Avanzada*. In it, the axis of reflection is given by forms of thinking about new aesthetic forms, as well as by discussing the new historic period from an independent critical and theoretical position, and not exclusively through the aesthetic practices themselves.

¹¹⁰ On this issue, it is important to note the presentation that the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* made of itself (Nº8, Mayo, 1994):

'La REVISTA DE CRÍTICA CULTURAL es la primera revista chilena de reflexión crítica y de debate intelectual.

La REVISTA DE CRÍTICA CULTURAL es una revista interdisciplinaria que cruza la literatura, el arte, la filosofía, las ciencias sociales, el feminismo, la política, etc. para analizar y discutir los grandes temas de la sociedad y de la cultura de hoy.

La REVISTA DE CRÍTICA CULTURAL cuenta con una red de prestigiosos colaboradores internacionales que incluye a las grandes figuras del pensamiento cultural latinoamericano.

La REVISTA DE CRÍTICA CULTURAL es una revista de colección, diseñada y visualizada por los más destacados artistas chilenos.

La REVISTA DE CRÍTICA CULTURAL es una revista independiente sin patrocinio institucional ni académico. Son sus avisadores y suscriptores los que la hacen posible. Contribuya usted a fortalecer este proyecto cultural, suscribiéndose.'

As pointed out by Andrea Pagni, this 'utopía crítica' also became influential, both through a series of political alliances and through open debates with regards to local and 'relevant' knowledge. Indeed, the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* would not be content with simply becoming entrenched against the post-dictatorial regime, but would also be a space in which theoretical frameworks and critical epistemologies were discussed. In this way, transdisciplinarity and post-dictatorship became essential for the magazine, but accompanied by a series of dimensions that would come to both complement and complicate them.

The first page of the very first issue, published in May 1, 1990, includes an image from the work of Lotty Rosenfeld taken from a video, and a brief text by Richard (See Figure 18):

‘La fotografía del “viajero de la libertad” Mathias Rust aterrizando en la Plaza Roja de Moscú (1987) es parte de la obra video de la artista Lotty Rosenfeld mostrada en la exposición chilena de Berlín (NGBK / 1989) durante los meses de la caída del muro y de las elecciones en Chile.

Esta imagen de un trabajo de arte que convierte las mutaciones ideológicas y los cambios políticos (Chile, Alemania, Unión Soviética) en material a editar mediante junturas y cruzamientos de citas en tránsito; esta imagen de un trabajo de arte que interviene líneas divisorias y rayas separativas, le imprime a este primer número la marca inquieta de su referencia a trastocamientos de fronteras entre identidades sociales, culturales y nacionales.’

As can be observed in this introductory text, Richard wished to highlight both the ideological and political changes and mutations on a local and international level that emerged at the end of the 20th century, as well as how art reflects upon and intervenes in them. With this 'statement (or declaration)' Richard opened up a new order of critical thinking in the Chilean post-dictatorship era. Indeed, starting with this first issue, it was already possible to

observe the themes, problems, and theoretical interests that subsequent issues would reflect upon.

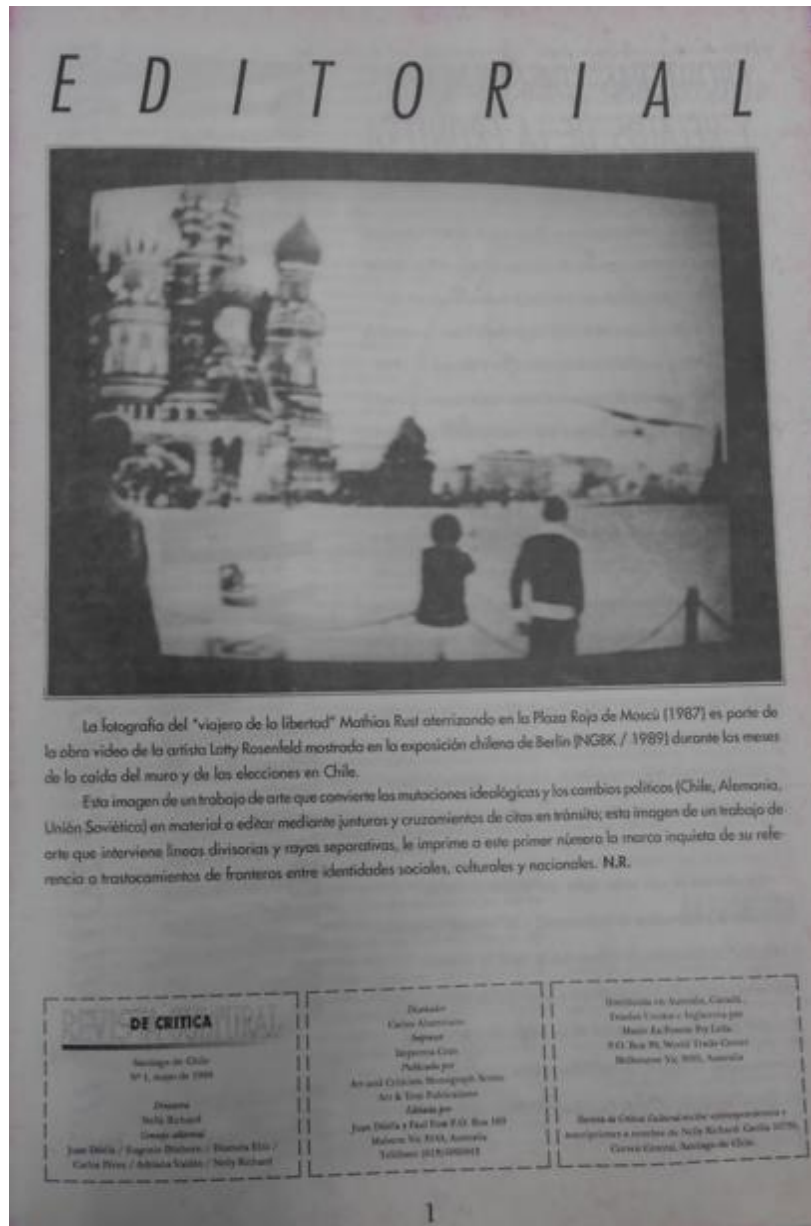


Figure 18. Inner page of the Revista de Crítica Cultural, N°1, May, 1990.

Three major concerns can be identified over the years: a) political culture, transition and democracy; b) transdisciplinarity, critical thinking, and Latin American Cultural Studies, and c) art, memory, and politics. These three dimensions crosscut, intersect, and interact with each other throughout the 36 numbers published over 18 years. Certainly, there were also many other issues dealt with, some unclassifiable and others more general. However, these three are of particular interest.

In the following pages, I will discuss the first of these lines of inquiry concerning political culture, transition, and democracy at the beginning of 1990s. The second will then be dealt with towards the end of this chapter. The third will receive special attention in the fourth and final one.

Politic critique and the social sciences during the democratic transition

At the beginning of the 1990s, there was a *sui generis* relationship between 'transitional sociology' and Richard's critical-intellectual project (Richard, 1991a). At the start of the democratic period many social scientists, who during the military dictatorship had belonged to the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* (for instance, Enrique Correa, José Joaquín Brunner, Manuel Antonio Garretón) and other research centres such as the *Centro de Indagación y Expresión Cultural y Artística* (for instance, Carlos Catalán and Guillermo Sunkel), began to work for the fledgling government. Such professionals began to exercise the intellectual and communicative power of the new Concertación governments, generating a state-led narrative sustained both by economic development and social inclusion (following the principles of economic neoliberalism with a 'human face'), along with the politics of agreement between the civilian and military authorities. Unlike these, the new 'escena' (of a 'naturaleza heterodoxa': Richard, 1991a) stuck

to its marginal political-intellectual principles of contempt and suspicion of the political and cultural hegemony that these social scientists were proposing as a model for Chilean society.

In the first number of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, Richard (1990a) published the article 'Estéticas de la oblicuidad'. In it, she urges the arts and literature not to bow their critical spirit to the new democratic regime. Her objective is to stimulate an aesthetics that was to remain experimental, on the fringes, in the minority, fragmented, nomadic and itinerant, or in a state that can be defined as an 'estética de la oblicuidad'.

In her words:

Apostemos a que la palabra desencajada del arte o de la literatura en rotura de códigos siga estremeciendo la racionalidad programática de la ciencia, la política, la ideología. (Y conflictuando hoy los supuestos funcionalistas de linealidad y transparencia reclamados por la pragmática socio-comunicativa del mensaje democrático). (Richard, 1990a: 8).

This call, to be sure, was directed at the artistic space that she had carved out in previous decades, especially in the *Escena de Avanzada*. However, it is also possible to see her intervention as a way of attracting the attention of the new administrators of democratic power, specifically the social scientists and sociologists who had previously been intellectuals and were now administrators of the post-dictatorship agreements. In an article published in the second issue of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* entitled 'De la rebeldía anarquizante al desmontaje ideológico', Richard makes her position clear. In this article, she poses the question of what is to be done with the artistic and cultural practices of the avant-garde in a context dominated by civilian-military negotiation. In order to answer this question, Richard recognizes that it is

impossible to remain in the margins or 'out of power', as now every voice and word is, or can be, taken account of in society. In other words, this is a game of positions between dominant culture and a certain rebelliousness that remains between the lines. The only path of resistance that remains is through 'deconstructive' action, that is to say, questioning the mechanisms of the dominant system from within. In her words:

Esta práctica deconstructiva elige conspirar contra el poder espiando –desde dentro- las reglas de funcionamiento de su maquinaria de signos, para luego contrariar sus (sic) disciplina organizativa llamando a la desobediencia. Tal operatoria supone un juego de contra alianzas (denunciar los pactos de autoridad), pero también de negociaciones (hay que gestionar condiciones de inserción en el marco de referencias prefijado por el adversario para que la denuncia lo comprometa activamente como destinatario). (Richard, 1990b: 8).

In this regard, we should note that in those years Richard perceived that among her ex-colleagues and those close to the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* there was a collaborative space for the 'negociación de sentidos'.¹¹¹ For example, in the first issue Richard poses six questions to the sociologist José Joaquín Brunner.¹¹² These deal with issues such as the role of artistic practices in the democratic period, the concept of popular nationalism, the instrumentalization of culture by politics, the role of the social sciences, the relationship between sociology and postmodernity, and the discussion of postmodernity in Latin America. Throughout the exchange, there is a cooperative tone between the authors, characterized by shared intellectual

¹¹¹ Ana del Sarto (2010) notes that the relation between the social sciences and the agents connected to the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* as a dialogue that is at once complicit and constantly confrontational. I agree with del Sarto regarding the idea that this "intermezzo dialogico" between both spheres would play a key role in Richard's formulation of *crítica cultural*.

¹¹² During the initial years of the *Concertación*, Brunner held a series of government positions. The most important of these was during the government of Eduardo Frei (1994-2000), in which he served as Minister of the General Secretariat of the Government of Chile.

and experiential influences. Brunner even recommends a possible path for artistic practices of 'oblicuidad':

Tal vez, el paso que corresponda dar ahora sea abandonar esa pretensión en el caso de movimientos de neovanguardia que, más bien, necesitan para sí mismos una identidad postgramsciana. Ya no como movimientos alternativos o contrahegemónicos sino, estrictamente, como movimientos especializados que en (o desde) el campo del arte buscan crear un mundo de significantes para mover los límites de la percepción establecida, cambiar las pautas de estructuración del imaginario o alterar los lenguajes en uso. (Brunner, 1990: 24).

The implication of Brunner's comment is clear. In order to continue the political debate, the artistic practices of 'oblicuidad' have to follow a path of professionalization or insertion into the formal circuits of the artistic and/or academic field. In doing so, according to Brunner, such critical practices enter into the public realm through a formal, institutionally channeled strategy, but not from the margins or the periphery as proposed by Richard. The response to this 'offer' would come in the following issues of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*.

In 1992 the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* published a special edition¹¹³ dedicated to debating notions of culture, politics, and democracy in post-dictatorial Chile (Figure 19). Individuals from the intellectual, academic, and artistic communities contributed, as did social scientists working in the state apparatus.

¹¹³ This edition was designed by the artist Gonzalo Díaz, and was based on work he developed for the 1982 exhibition 'Historia sentimental de la Pintura Chilena'.

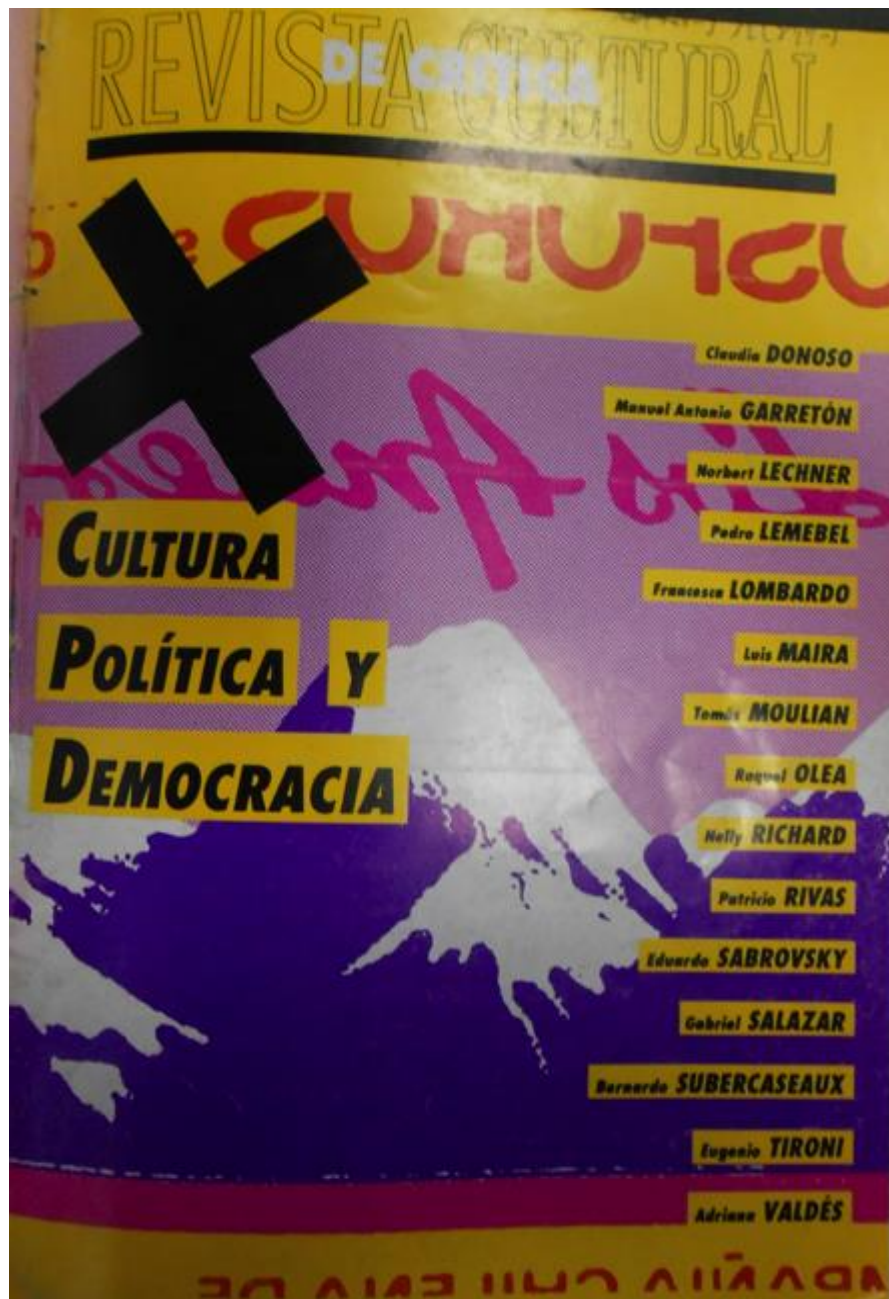


Figure 19. Cover of the Revista de Crítica Cultural, N°5, July 1992.

In the introduction Richard (1992b) defines the general framework for the debate. In her view, during the initial years of the *Concertación* culture, politics, and democracy in Chile had been enshrouded in a fog of technicality

and instrumental rationality. On the contrary, the 'democracia de los acuerdos' limited the possibility of developing a true democracy.

Based upon this assessment, in her introductory text entitled 'Cultura, política y democracia', Richard presents two general problems. First, how the post-dictatorial political imaginary had established certain instrumental control over culture; and on the other hand, how democratic conformism in the post-dictatorship context had negated dissent and difference. In both cases, Richard sought to highlight the fact that the policies and actions of the post-dictatorship government had established hegemony over the meanings and definitions of the political and cultural spheres, constricting any form of resistance or re-definition. Based upon this idea, Richard sought to call attention to the fact that:

Estos márgenes –zonas en que el sistema se descoordina bajo presiones contrarias a la linealidad de los acomodados burocrático-institucionales- corren ahora peligro de ser recuperados por un pluralismo contemplativo que llama a las “diferencias” a coexistir pasivamente bajo un régimen neutral, alineadas todas por igual bajo la moral reconciliadora –y conciliadora- de la suma. (Richard, 1992b: 7).

At that time, Richard sought to generate a space for intellectual debate that would enable a confrontation between what is 'official' and a pluralistic (multiple) standpoint. Her target audience consisted of those intellectuals that she knew from the 1980s - José Joaquín Brunner, Norbert Lechner, Eugenio Tironi, Manuel Antonio Garretón etc. According to her assessment, these intellectuals had signed up to a framework characterized by a functionalist, legitimizing consensus and a partial rejection of any ideological position that would put the established order at risk. According to Richard:

Hoy estos productores de conocimiento con valor de mercado se han incorporado al Estado que los legaliza como expertos. Garantizados por la máquina político-institucional del gobierno a la que prestan sus servicios, ni el economista ni el sociólogo gozan hoy de márgenes sobrantes para desplegar en ellos temas no funcionales (sic) a la administratividad del orden democrático. (Richard, 1992b, 7).

Although these social scientists had indeed opted to join the 'politics of agreement', Richard was confident that her critical position had its place and was generally accepted by them. In her view, the work of the intellectual at that time in history played a fundamental part in establishing a margin of influence in the political and cultural spheres. The energy of these social scientists was clearly focused in this direction. In Richard's words:

Pero si aún confiamos en que el rol del intelectual es no sólo interpretar sino también cuestionar la trama social y cultural, abrir puntos de fuga que transgredan la ordenanza de los saberes, ese rol debería confrontar polémicamente el imperativo normalizador de las transiciones democráticas (recuperación-consolidación del orden) a imágenes de la cultura que sigan actuando como *vectores de conflicto*: es decir, como figuras capaces de disturbar y perturbar la lógica moderativa y adaptativa de la institución y del mercado. (Richard, 1992b: 7).

However, even while this special edition of the *Revista* would serve as a privileged space of meeting and dialogue,¹¹⁴ in the following issues the conversation began to lose steam. Beginning in 1993, there are very few examples of dialogue in the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* that include the 'political-intellectual operators' of the democratic transition. This is especially

¹¹⁴ In this edition, for example, it is possible to find several 'official' intellectual texts: the academic and sociologist Manuel Antonio Garretón ('Consenso democrático y representación de los conflictos'); the General Secretary of the Socialist Party in those years, Luis Maira ('Los cambios del hacer política'); the sociologist and Sub-secretary of Communications for the fledgling democratic government, Eugenio Tironi ('La cuestión del orden'), and the political scientist and academic Norbert Lechner ('La democratización en el contexto de una cultura postmoderna'), etc.

evident in the publication of Richard's book *La insubordinación de los signos*, published in 1994 (Richard, 1994a, 2004d). In it, Richard revisits certain issues from previous decades, as well as her political and cultural assessment of the first half of the 1990s.

La insubordinación de los signos is a book that collects previously published essays but adds a number of modifications, additions, and rewritings. In this collection, Richard decides to distance herself definitively from the intellectuals of the *Concertación*, and to establish herself in intellectual opposition to them. As is clear from the book's subtitle (*Cambio político, transformaciones culturales y poéticas de la crisis*), the book proposes to describe the primary political, cultural, and artistic problems attendant upon the political process underway at that time. In this regard, Richard states that:

La consigna de recuperación-consolidación del orden en la fase de transición democrática ha priorizado metas de estabilidad que tendieron a postergar los contrapuntos diferenciadores. Una cierta ritualización del consenso ha cumplido con eliminar las señas rememoradoras de cualquier enfrentamiento de posiciones que amenazaran con romper la voluntad general de apaciguamiento de los conflictos. Trasladada al campo de la cultura, esa consigna de moderación oficial ha favorecido las prácticas más acordes con el nuevo formato de distensión nacional que llama a *aquietar* en lugar de *inquietar* el orden de sentido, y ha desfavorecido aquellas otras prácticas que siguen concibiendo el lenguaje como zona de disturbios. (Richard, [1994] 2000a: 99-100).

Like *Masculino/Femenino: Prácticas de la diferencia y cultura democrática*, *La insubordinación de los signos* is a book that is able to summarize recent history with renewed critical force, rather than utilizing a neutral or established perspective. This renewed critical force reinforces the position of resistance and marginality that is characteristic of Richard's intellectual project.

On the day when *La insubordinación de los signos* was launched, Brunner (1994) once again defended his intellectual position (and that of his 'group'), reviewing the pros and cons of Richard's work.¹¹⁵ In his text, entitled 'Las tribus rebeldes y los modernos', Brunner both comments upon the tortuous relationship between the 'new scene' and the social scientists of the new governmental institutionality, and makes an interesting gesture - he refers to Richard's writing and intellectual practices as the politics of postmodern cultural critique (or postmodernism). In his words:

Entiendo la política crítica-cultural del posmodernismo como comprendiendo dos líneas básicas de acción: como una estrategia que procura desmontar la función social de la razón (moderna), señalando que ella ha terminado por identificarse con las burocracias, el mercado, los medios tecnológicos y las ideologías o relatos que le dan expresión; y, segundo, como un abandono de cualquier pretensión de ordenar significativamente el mundo a favor de la ilimitada expresión de las diferencias, en particular aquellas que –como dice Nelly- mantienen un valor de rompimiento crítico, aunque sólo sea en el terreno de las prácticas contra-simbólicas. (Brunner, 1994: 266).

For Brunner, this debate between the social scientists of the *Concertación* and the 'new scene' led by Richard, was nothing more than a debate between 'moderns'¹¹⁶ (those who by means of institutional logic sought to implement the undeveloped project of modernity), and the postmodern rebels (who are alienated by hegemonic games and reject any notion of order and progress). For Brunner, there was a practically incompatible and irreconcilable relation between them. The distance was necessary, and their paths had to be separate ones. However, he also recognized that it was possible to negotiate with some people and accept the *lines of flight* of others.

¹¹⁵ A similar action was taken in issue 15 of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* in 1997 through the publication of his text, 'Sobre el crepúsculo de la sociología y el comienzo de otras narrativas'.

¹¹⁶ A group which in coming years would experience a new schism between the integrated 'moderns' (complacent) and the apocalyptic 'moderns' (self-flagellating). See Hoppenhayn (2001).

Richard opted to encourage such new *lines of flight*. She distanced herself from the debate with the 'moderns' and joined forces with the postmodern rebels. If at the beginning of the democratic transition Richard thought that her critical proposal would be well-received by the new political forces, over time she realized that this would be impossible. In fact, by the mid 1990s, Richard had already decided on the path she would take by focusing upon her intellectual project, and gambling upon its critical-aesthetic force. However, she still had to defend herself from other critical interpretations of her work.

Hernán Vidal's criticism of the Revista de Crítica Cultural

While, like Brunner, Richard had established a relationship based upon collaboration and difference, this would not be the case with one of the most noteworthy leftist militants of the beginning of the 1990s. In 1993 one of the most significant critiques, both of the editorial project of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* as well as of the postmodern thought developed by Richard, emerged from within Chile (Richard, 1993c). In an article published in the journal *boundary 2*, Hernán Vidal (1993), a Chilean intellectual residing at the time in the United States, published a series of critiques of the role played by the *Revista*. In his text, Vidal questions the postmodern sensitivity of Richard's project on the one hand, and the overvaluation of aesthetic practices regarding militant politics (that is, neo-vanguardism over party politics), on the other. In the first case, Vidal states that the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* belonged to the category of 'international postmodernism'. In this regard, he writes:

from the perspective of my own historical materialism, I suspect that

to discuss the profile of the forms of subjectivity generated within the unequal and combined development of dependent societies under the label of “postmodern sensibility” is a theoretical diversion, an ideological trap, and a waste of time. (Vidal, 1993: 203).

Vidal sought to understand why the neo-vanguard that banded together in the *Revista* had taken ownership of postmodernist ideas (expressed in artistic form), and not only introduced them into Chilean culture but also made them part of a Latin American identity. In his view, Richard’s ‘postmodernist’ purpose was to configure this Latin American identity as something like a ‘monster’ with no creative capacity of its own, but would rather opt for a never-ending game of copying, modifying, and distorting original material.

In the second case Vidal suggests that, unlike the artistic practices of resistance and political commitment that had emerged during the military dictatorship (the art of protest and testimonial literature):

the postmodernist neo-avant-garde that would come to be represented by the *Revista* distanced itself from direct political activity and, retreating to the “margins”, sought to intensify the break with the past, to accept and refunction the psychosocial fragmentation and trauma instituted and administered by the repression in order to systematically reveal and deconstruct the symbolic codes that supported it. (Vidal, 1993: 211).

Vidal goes on, however, to accuse Richard of not demonstrating any concrete political commitment, and of not encouraging any new forms of grassroots social movement. As we shall see, through the criticism of other intellectuals, this would be one of the most pointed criticisms of Richard’s work.

Richard’s response was published in the same issue of *boundary 2*. In her ‘Reply to Vidal (from Chile)’, she reinforces the theoretical, political, and

aesthetic proposals presented in the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, and responds to Vidal in the following way. On the one hand, Richard rejects Vidal's condescending perspective regarding her application of the term 'postmodernism' in Latin America. For her, postmodernism has many faces as well as referring to various practices of resistance to neoliberalism. Its strength is determined by how it is used. In her words: "Postmodernism signifies for us, instead, a horizon of problems in relation to which we can discuss local significations that are (unevenly) affected by the political, social, and cultural mutations of the contemporary world." (Richard, 1993c: 229).

On the other hand, Richard responds to critiques of her lack of political affiliation and commitment. Here, in her view, this responds rather to Vidal's own life story (his exile) and, specifically, to his own traumatic phantasmagoria of loss and suffering, his own obsession with stigma. Richard points out that:

the *Revista* takes seriously a function that Vidal seems to consider excessively modest on our part: that of being an agent of the dynamic reactivation of cultural discussion and critique. Modestly, the *Revista* directs itself primarily and specifically to the *cultural sphere*, with its highly particular networks of discourses, practices, and institutions. (Richard, 1993c: 231).

Richard offers a simple and sincere response. Her critical project had been developed not only to inconvenience the cultural and intellectual sphere, but also the political realm. Her efforts focused upon intellectual and editorial work, not upon neighborhood political bases. For her, while such efforts are important and respectable, her own sphere was that of writing and intellectual non-conformity. Richard's efforts can be understood as an attempt to offer a critical, dissonant, and uncomfortable perspective from the 'margins' within the political-cultural space of Chile during the democratic transition. During

the second half of the 1990s, these kind of discussions and debates waned. Tired of her arguments falling on the deaf ears of transitional sociologists (leaders of the instrumentalizing discourse of political representation), and certain traditional leftist intellectuals (those close to the culture of resistance and leftist militant culture), Richard began to revisit her most critical and radical line of work. She did this by returning to that which had borne so much fruit in the past: aesthetic experience.

Certainly, for Richard's new project in the post-dictatorship era, it was necessary to overcome the 'others' within the opposition, or those who were openly opposed to or rejected her group. If in the 1970s and 1980s the *other* that had to be opposed was the military government, in the 1990s this role was played by the social scientists tied to the transitional government, as well as intellectuals of the 'committed left', such as Vidal. These were now the others from which the new scene had to disassociate itself and oppose. It is because of these 'others' that Richard developed a new and different discursive form of writing, characterized by the politics of difference (Richard, 1993f).

The distance created between the theoretical-political lines of those who supported the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* and the communications experts of the *Concertación* governments should not be considered a failure. On the contrary, it constituted the condition to the dialogue and discussion established between the two sides, establishing a new (though still precarious) cultural battlefield (Richard, 1994b). It is at this point that a radicalization of these various postures occurred, Richard taking on a non-condescending position within the official political-cultural sphere. Beginning in the second half of the 1990s, in both the editorials and the content of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* there emerged, on the one hand, a theoretical-

critical position explicitly referred to as *crítica cultural* and, on the other, a discussion of Latin American Cultural Studies.

II. Nelly Richard and Cultural Studies *from* and *on* Latin America

If the *other* of the opposition was represented by the social sciences tied to the new political institutions, as well as the militant left-wing, the '*others of meaning*', or those considered to be relevant and meaningful agents for Richard, were involved in Latin American studies *from* Latin America and those developed in the United States *on* Latin America. This collaboration with Latin American Cultural Studies would provide Richard with a new analytical spark in the mid 1990s.

Latin American critical thought has a long history (Martínez, 1991; Kraniuskas, 1991; Rama, 1985, 1996; D'Allemand, 2000, 2003; Ramos, 2001; Franco, 2002; Krauze, 2011; Fenoglio et. al, 2013). Authors and intellectuals such as José Martí, Francisco Bilbao, and Andrés Bello, as well as José Carlos Mariátegui, Ángel Rama, Cornejo Polar, and many others, can all be considered the founding fathers of a practice known as Latin American Cultural Studies. As some researchers have recently pointed out (Trigo, 2012; Irwin & Szurmuk, 2012; Richard, 2010c; Matos, 2003; Mignolo, 2003), long before Cultural Studies arrived in Latin America, Latin American intellectuals were already reflecting on culture and its connection with politics, the state and society, through essays, literature, and journalism. The contemporary forms of such critical practices in Latin America can be traced back to these traditions, as well as to a series of schools of thought that emerged from the first half of the 20th century onwards, all of which share the same root -

Marxism¹¹⁷. In this way, Cultural Studies developed *in* and *on* Latin America at the end of the 20th century cannot be understood as a copy of British or North American experiences, but rather as a result of already existing intersections, differences, and amalgamations between these traditions and Latin America's own history of experience with this field.¹¹⁸

In what follows I will not attempt to describe the extensive and complex historical, theoretical, and political relationship between these traditions - a wide-ranging task in itself. Rather, I will attempt to track what is of interest in the discussions that were relevant to Richard's own reflexive experience and development.

As we have seen in previous chapters, during the military dictatorship in Chile there was no institutional support or permanent academic accommodation for such work (Galende, 2014). On the contrary, the precariousness of cultural spaces, as well as the slow process of modernization of universities in Chile, made it difficult to understand a complex academic field. At an international level, however, during those years there emerged a series of collaborative opportunities between Latin American intellectuals and North American and European ones. With the end of the military dictatorships in the region at the end of the 1980s, the intellectual collaboration between them quickly began to

¹¹⁷ On the influence of European thought, such as Marxism, on the political and cultural dimensions (Gramsci, Lukács, etc) and the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin etc.), Psychoanalysis (Freud, Lacan etc.), structuralism (Foucault, Barthes, Kristeva etc.), British Cultural Studies (Williams, Hoggart, Hall), and, above all, French post-structuralism (Derrida, Deleuze, and Guattari etc.), among many other theoretical frameworks, see Keucheyan (2014).

¹¹⁸ Trigo (2012), for example, speaks of four moments or cognitive constellations in Latin American cultural studies. If during the 1960s and 1970s the key issues were based upon geocultural anthropology, transculturation, and social critique (foundational), during the 1980s the main issues became colonial studies, the modernity/post-modernity debate, cultural hybridity, research on means and mediations, and gender studies. This period, considered by Trigo as 'foundational', was followed in the 1990s by a third moment, denominated as 'expansion or implosion'. Dominated by North American academia, the issues were post-colonialism, transnational studies and globalization, neo-colonial studies, and finally, Richard's *crítica cultural*. The fourth and final stage is currently under way, and is characterized by thematic dispersion (a series of sub-specialties) and institutional growth both in North American and Latin American academia.

grow and expand.

Richard was certainly not left out of these international experiences. Discussions between her and her international colleagues grew in complexity upon the return to democracy in Chile. Richard participated in a number of seminars, and conferences (organized, for example, by the *Latin American Studies Association* and the *Inter-American Cultural Studies Network*), dedicated to reflecting on theoretical, aesthetic, and political problems in Latin America. As a result, Richard accumulated social networks, intellectual contacts, and new theoretical and conceptual references. Out of such experiences, concepts such as 'subalternity', 'post-colonialism', 'critical theory', '(post)memory', 'melancholy', 'post-dictatorship', etc. became common notions, all used in a variety of ways. One of these discussions revolved around the relation between the centre (the metropolis) and the periphery (the other) in the postmodern context.

If before, the centre had defined both models of thought (western rationality) and forms of control and decision-making (an unequal exchange of power and value), in the 1980s and 1990s both began to come into closer proximity. If between the 1950s and 1970s 'dependence theory' proposed that economics and power were unequally distributed to the detriment of peripheral countries, during the 1980s and 1990s a new logic emerged centreing upon economic, political, theoretical, and intellectual exchange between the centre and the periphery (Beverley et al., 1995; Volek et al., 2002).

The metropolis in the postmodern context began to consider the notion of otherness as a space of interest, study, and recognition within its own thinking. Thanks to postmodern theories (Casullo et al., 2004), meta-

narrative-based theories would lose their strength, leading to the weakening of hierarchies, imbalances of power, and the fragmentation of discourses¹¹⁹. In concrete terms, the concept of the relation between the centre and the peripheral or marginal was conceived of as both an interesting and valuable reflexive text for metropolitan critical thought, and as an example for larger struggles (feminist, post-colonial, racial). This would have a particular impact on the theoretical positions associated with post-colonialism developed in Latin America¹²⁰. As a result, the paradoxical crisis of the centre (Europe and North America) would be especially important to Latin America, and Richard realized this. In her words:

the present paradox consists in the fact that Latin America has become one of the margins resemanticized by the postmodern lexicon of the crisis of the centers, modulated by the Center. All of this confusion seems to indicate that the hierarchies between Center and Periphery have been changed [...]. It is not only the postmodern premise of the discontinuity of meaning that authorizes us to select and recombine fragments of statements deliberately taken out of their metropolitan context; in other words, separated from their international theoretical involvements (those made in the Center) and refunctionalized to fit the theoretical and political interest of the Periphery. (Richard, 1992a: 59).

In being aware of this debate, Latin America could take advantage of its marginal/peripheral condition by generating both new critical-theoretical interpretive frameworks from the continent, and by implementing an intellectual practice that would pervert the symbolic fabric of capitalist cultural hegemony in general. In this way, there would be no imitation of the centre by the periphery, but rather an 'exageración travesti' of the copy and a satire of the model to be imitated (Richard, 1993b). To accomplish this project, it was

¹¹⁹ For a similar diagnostic but with a different interpretation, see Brunner (1993a).

¹²⁰ This discussion has been extensively reviewed in the book *Teorías sin disciplina, Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate*, edited by Santiago Castro-Gómez and Eduardo Mendieta (1998).

necessary to develop a dialogue with Latin American intellectuals and with those connected to the academic community in the United States (Richard, 1993c).

Based on these discussions, Latin American Cultural Studies were categorized into two different dimensions. On the one hand, Cultural Studies developed *from* the North (mainly North American academia) but which studied the South, and on the other hand, disseminated research *from* and *on* the South (Latin American intellectuals).¹²¹ For Richard, both dimensions represented fresh spaces to test out her own theoretical-aesthetic hypotheses, as well as for the development and expansion of an intellectual community allied to her divergent project.

In the article 'Intersectando Latinoamerica con el Latinoamericanismo: discurso académico y crítica cultural', Richard (1998a) explores in depth her particular relation with the North American academia, Cultural Studies, and Latin America. For her, whilst Cultural Studies and Latin American studies share and collaborate productively on a multidisciplinary and trans-cultural project, the differences between the 'centralidad descentrada' of the metropolis and the periphery are not superficial. Some of these differences will now be reviewed.

One of the first differences Richard discerns between the North American academia and Latin American phenomena is the matter of distance, both geopolitical and empathetic. For her, metropolitan critical knowledge *on* Latin America suffers from a non-*transferable condition* regarding popular experience in Latin America (materiality, reality, experience, immediacy)

¹²¹ For a similar discussion but with a different approach, see Schmidt-Welle (2006).

within its theoretical frameworks and spaces (sustained by reason, knowledge, normative discourse). This radical exteriority regarding the relation with Latin America makes translation into the polished academic language characteristic of metropolitan research impossible. If this limitation is to be overcome, Richard identifies the need to understand Cultural Studies as a place-based practice.

This idea, taken from Stuart Hall (1980), became for Richard a 'plan de trabajo' that involved paying close attention to localized micro-experiences (what she refers to as 'pliegues culturales') that are not easily 'moulded' to institutional-academic space. Indeed, she sought to highlight that, beyond the walls of academia, it was possible to generate theoretical non-conformity. With this, and marking a certain distance from the university realm, Richard recognized that the kinds of criticism of the visual arts, literature, performance etc. that emerged during the Chilean military dictatorship, resonated with those that had emerged simultaneously (or with only a slight time lag) within European-North American Cultural Studies¹²². Owing to the fact that the artistic practices of the *Escena de Avanzada* maintain a conscious and permanent labour of manipulation and (de)construction of contextual signs, Cultural Studies on Latin America must, therefore, take such residual aesthetic materiality into account. Unlike commercial imaginaries, which are characterized by that which is 'desechable', aesthetic forms create fissures in the dominant order as a result of a thought mechanism which is constantly

¹²² It is worth remembering that the work and texts of the *Escena de Avanzada* had already demonstrated an openly post-modern theoretical framework, or better its art was created and expressed through a transdisciplinary focus (flexible uses of Benjamin, semiology, post-structuralism, deconstructionism, Kristeva etc.). These heterodox operations enabled the *Escena de Avanzada* to go beyond the standard discourses of sociology, political science, philosophy etc., and converged (owing to the crisis of metropolitan theoretical authority) on a peripheral practice which, while not unaware of its basic hypotheses, sought mostly to overcome them. As Richard has pointed out, this condition enabled the *Escena de Avanzada* to: 'des-acomodar la eficiencia de sus métodos con usos extrasistemáticos de lecturas más desobedientes, en llenar de turbulencias de sentido las líneas de fuerza de saber garantizado multiplicando en su interior puntos de fugas y clandestinaje' (Richard, 1997a: 11).

alert.

In addition to this, according to Richard, in order to configure a form of thought *from* Latin America it was necessary to also establish true transdisciplinarity (Richard, 1998b). Unlike interdisciplinarity, which implies a sum of different kinds of knowledge, transdisciplinarity implies a clear risk of anti-disciplinarity, as it were, since it exercises new forms of knowledge that modify already established forms of methodological knowledge and traditional objectives. For Richard, certain Cultural Studies developed in the north had succumbed to excessive academic conformity, while other studies developed in the south were characterized by precariousness and a constant change of 'functions' (such as journalistic, social commitment, artistic practice etc.). For her, this multiplication of roles has enabled the development of a series of 'montajes teóricos' as well as constant discursive experimentation (Richard, 1998a).

In the same way, while Cultural Studies *on* Latin America has concentrated upon the politics of representation or the politics of identity, Cultural Studies *from* Latin America has distanced itself from any form of identity classification. According to Richard, whilst the recognition of cultural identities and the insertion of minority groups into public structures is an important gesture, this has led to the reduction of differences and the control of representation. In other words, it has led to a simplification and reduction of certain predetermined conditions (being woman, being gay, being latino etc.), not to new reflexive lines of flight (Richard, 1998a).

Such 'illustrativeness' utilized by northern Cultural Studies has a demonstrative purpose (a correspondence between *being* and *speaking as*), but does not encourage any sort of 'zigzag de la fantasía' or 'nuevas

vagancias de sentidos'. As Richard has pointed out:

El llamado de las "políticas de identidad" —divulgado por los Estudios Culturales— a que los sujetos se *resuman a, o coincidan con* el rasgo predominante de su representación de clase, identidad o género (por minoritaria que ésta sea) suele bloquear las líneas de fuga y ruptura que el imaginario simbólico de las poéticas culturales es capaz de desatar en los registros convenidos de identificación social. (Richard, 1998a: 263).

It is necessary, therefore, she suggests, to seek out dissident expressions, mutations of speech, and visual and textual innovations which question the dominant regime of visibility (or 'distribution of the sensible' as Rancière (2011b) might say today). The search for, comprehension of, and reflection upon the 'márgenes creativamente disidentes' would thus become a privileged research space for Cultural Studies developed both *from* the south and *from* the north.

Finally, Richard seeks to highlight the fact that the academic convention of Cultural Studies has favoured its own production and dissemination through the journal article industry (that is, through functional, useful data). For her, this utilitarian variant of knowledge has not only undone the value of a rich Latin American essay-based tradition, but also stripped the human subject of importance, along with their language and knowledge. The threat of the disappearance of the critical-poetic essay is for Richard a clear result of this striving towards a knowledge market. In her words:

Creo que la pregunta por el destino de lo estético-literario en cuanto voluntad figurativa de un signo estallado y plural que critica la masa comunicológica, también recae sobre la dimensión imaginativa del *texto crítico*, seriamente amenazada por una desapasionada lengua funcionaria que borra de sus trámites notificantes cualquier "placer del texto": cualquier emoción o destello aún ligados al tembloroso

perfil de palabras sugerentes, bellas o ineficaces, que no le temen al retoque y modelaje de un *plus* de trabajo sensible inscripto en su materia decorada. (Richard, 1998a: 265 [Emphasis in the original])

Here, Richard follows hypotheses developed by Adorno in his 1958 essay 'The Essay as Form'. In it, the German philosopher reaffirms the importance of the essay over the organized knowledge of science or traditional philosophy. The essay, owing to its fragmented and discontinuous nature, pays attention to that which is changing, ephemeral, or perishable in culture. It does not seek the 'eternal in the perishable', but rather it seeks to 'eternalize the perishable' through writing. Owing to the individual's experience in modern life, certainty or truth is replaced by doubt, speculation, and provocation, as well as heresy. In Adorno's words: 'The essay is what it was from the beginning, the critical form par excellence; as immanent critique of intellectual constructions, as a confrontation of what they are with their concept, it is critique of ideology.' (Adorno, 1991: 18).

For Richard, a thought form that reflects *on* Latin America *from* Latin America must ponder what perturbs existence; that which seeks out the rupture of convenience and attempts to separate, worry, divide, and excite the interior of established systems. This critical knowledge (always interrogative) does not attempt to distance itself from theories generated in the metropolis. Rather, its objective is to be used according to the sum of micro-experiences that emerge from social space. Intellectual practice developed *from* Latin America cannot remain a 'palabra vagabunda'. It must become a form of knowledge that exercises transformative action over the material structures of society. The objective proposed by Richard is that these words emitted from Latin American Cultural Studies must be both designed to conceptualize the *other* (neo-colonialism, hybridity, heterogeneity etc.), and to proclaim a rebellious force (an 'indisciplina de lengua multiacentuada') that creates an imbalance in

the standardizing plan of the metropolitan academia.

One might wonder if all Cultural Studies from Latin America follow Richard's prescription. Certainly, not all tow the line. Within this field of research, there are many complex factions, divisions, and trenches that are difficult to classify. The same can be said of Cultural Studies written in the United States *on* Latin America. However, there are also a number of cases that do fall within what Richard proposes.

Although it is complicated to define or delimit what Latin American Cultural Studies is, what is certain is that during the 1990s within the Latin American intellectual sphere, forms of Cultural Studies were carried out that can be identified as speaking *from* and *on* Latin America based upon the discussions that Richard proposed for debate. Even though there were a variety of publishing platforms in the region, such as the *Revista Punto de Vista* in Argentina (closed in 2008, the same year as its Chilean version), the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* provided space for names and work most closely related to this brand of research. During the 1990s, Latin American intellectuals such as Beatriz Sarlo (1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1997), Néstor García Canclini (1990, 1994, 1997, 1998), Nicolás Casullo (1990, 1991), Jesús Martín Barbero (1993, 1998), Hugo Achúgar (1990), and Ticio Escobar (1991), among others, published in the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, and played a key role in the formation of a nucleus of critical thinkers key to political and cultural processes occurring in Latin America. It is also possible to identify a significant number of intellectuals based at North American universities in the journal such as John Beverley (1991, 1993, 1996, 1997), Alberto Moreiras (1993, 1995, 1998), Idelver Avelar (1994, 1997), Mabel Moraña (1997), George Yúdice (1994), Julio Ortega (1990), and Julio Ramos (1995, 1996).

For Richard (2010c), references to these authors and their work enabled an understanding of a key dimension of the debate on Cultural Studies in the region. She also insisted that recognition of the disputes within it were more interesting and critically productive than the obsession with academic standardization characteristic of the northern academia.

The book, *Pensar en/la Postdictadura* is a clear example of this project. This collection of articles¹²³ represents a direct response to both the theoretical hypotheses and political practices of democratic transition sociology, as well as an essential compilation of references, frameworks, positions, and debates emanating from Latin American Cultural Studies both regional and North American. This is also the case in the book edited by Mabel Moraña (2000), *Nuevas Perspectivas desde/sobre América Latina: El desafío de los estudios culturales*. The latter, which includes some of the names already mentioned, illustrates in more depth the question of transdisciplinarity, as well as various theoretical approaches from the South, the tense relations between culture, politics, and history, and most of all, the discussion on the fall of meta-narratives (postmodernism) and the emergence of 'local knowledges' in metropolitan and regional spaces.

In the light of this discussion, Richard needed to specify her own intellectual project with a name or label. She did not wish to be recognized within local intellectual circles as a simple exponent of Latin American Cultural Studies. On the contrary, her research experience and critical labour needed to demarcate her own particular brand of thought. As we have seen, her work on theoretical transdisciplinarity already had a particular history. Her writing

¹²³ The book includes articles by Jon Beasley-Murray, Brett Levinson, Hermann Herlinghaus, Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, Nelly Richard, Ana Del Sarto, Carlos Ossa, Federico Galende, Carlos Casanova, Idelber Avelar, Raquel Olea, Ana Longoni, Willy Thayer, Andrea Giunta, Sergio Rojas, Carlos Pérez Villalobos, and Alberto Moreiras.

and her aesthetic and political thought had been forged during the 1970s and 1980s in art catalogues, brief exhibition texts, short-lived magazines and journals. However, over the years, the precariousness and marginal nature of photocopied or typewritten texts gave way to more professional publications (such as *Francisco Zegers Editor*, the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, and Editorial Cuarto Propio). Nevertheless, Richard always maintained a distance from the North American academic journal article industry. Her objective was rather to create both a critical, deconstructive essay-based writing sustained by poetic enjoyment, as well as a commitment to the political contingency and aesthetic practices of the margins. This would come to be known as *crítica cultural*.

III. The definition, practice, and institutionalization of Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural*

The differentiation between the practice of Latin American Cultural Studies and Richard's intellectual project would become evident with the publication of her book *Residuos y Metáforas. Ensayos de crítica cultural sobre el Chile de la Transición*.¹²⁴ Published in 1998, this book compiles and expands upon certain articles previously published in the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, and was received in Chilean intellectual circles as a significant contribution to dissident and critical views on the democratic transition. Together with the book *Chile actual: Anatomía de un mito* by Tomás Moulián (1997), *Residuos y Metáforas* would become a key document for understanding the Chilean post-dictatorship era based upon a cultural, aesthetic, and political analysis (Moulián, 1998). In addition, the book would explicitly define and present

¹²⁴ The book was translated into English six years later under the title *Cultural Residues. Chile in transition* (translated by Alan West-Durán and Theodore Quester, and published by University of Minnesota Press). I believe that the translation of the title leads to a loss of a major portion of the key hypotheses that Richard defines in the original version: residues, metaphors, essays, and *crítica cultural*.

Richard's intellectual project as *crítica cultural*. Although the term '*crítica cultural*' had already appeared in one or more places¹²⁵, it is in *Residuos y Metáforas* that she presents her specific procedural version of the project.

As pointed out by Lazzara (2012), cultural criticism cannot be defined in precise terms. One of the many reasons for this is that it has never existed as a formal institutional practice. On the contrary, it is a term aligned with a concept that is characterized by working with vague traditions, scattered ideas, and often contradictory notions (Mulhern, 2000, 2003; Berger, 1995; Wollin, 1992; Leitch, 1992). In addition, there is no coherent framework of theoretical reflection or a precise definition of how to practice cultural criticism. Some authors (Kang, 2011; Eagleton, 2009; Gilloch, 2002; Hillis, 1992; Eiland & Jennings, 2014), for example, have connected cultural criticism with the work of Benjamin, as well as with Adorno (Pickford, 1997; Freyenhagen, 2012; League, 2010). In the same way, in the history of Latin America the expression has been connected to several different authors and intellectuals (D'Allemand, 2001; Podlubne, 1998; Rowe, 1995).

What is certain, however, is that Richard's *crítica cultural* maintains a clear level of specificity as compared to previous practices. This particularity is exactly what Del Sarto has observed when noting that: "Cultural critique [of Richard] construes its locus from aesthetic materiality, in order to critically transform the real" (Del Sarto, 2000: 236). Indeed, and as has been highlighted throughout this work, it is impossible to understand Richard's *crítica cultural* without taking into consideration its intellectual trajectory based on the aesthetic and performance-based practices of, amongst others, Leppe, Altamirano, Dittborn, Eltit, Dávila etc. In her observation of and writing on

¹²⁵ It is quite easy, for example, to recognize its influence in the name of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*.

these 'aesthetic materialities', the maps were drawn, the scaffolding established, and the implementation of Richard's *crítica cultural* was set in motion.

As Lazzara observes:

'[Richard] works maintain a constant focus on the margins, interstices, and edges of cultural expression, venturing that "those" residual sites are the most suitable places from which to question both totalitarian discourse and the macro-narrative constructs of the present. (Lazzara, 2012:60).

In addition to the metaphors that are made possible by them, these 'residues' are the basis of Richard's *crítica cultural*.



Figure 20. The cover of *Residuos y Metáforas* by Nelly Richard, 1998, Chile.

The cover of *Residuos y Metáforas* is a visual fragment of an artwork from 1991 called *El cadáver, el tesoro* by Eugenio Dittborn (Figure 20). The image includes a blindfolded dead body with clothes destroyed by time and the aridity of the desert. Around this central image are other images, drawings, and newspaper cuttings that provide information in Spanish and English on

the origin of the body and its history¹²⁶. This cover not only clearly defines Dittborn's work as a form of textuality, but also exhibits the uncomfortable image of a present body with an absent face.

In part, the book was the product of a research scholarship granted in 1996 by the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, as well as multiple academic exchanges between Richard and students and academics from several universities, including the Nacional de Colombia, Pittsburgh, Princeton, California-Berkeley, Stanford, and New York, among others. It was also the result of meetings and discussions held in the context of the Diploma en Crítica Cultural¹²⁷ of the Universidad Arcis, offered between 1997 and 1999. Planned and implemented as part of the 'Post-dictatorship and democratic transition in Chile: social identities, cultural practices and aesthetic languages'

¹²⁶ Between May and June 1990, the bodies of 20 individuals who had been detained and disappeared by the military dictatorship were found in Pisagua, a small town in the Tarapacá Region of Chile. According to background information compiled by the courts of justice, all of them had been jailed in the Pisagua Prison Camp immediately after the coup, and then executed without any sort of trial whatsoever. Their bodies had been kept secret (and conserved due to the aridity of the soil) until the beginning of 1990, and it is known as one of the first cases of human rights violations to become public after the return to democracy.

¹²⁷ The objective of the Diploma in Crítica Cultural of 1997 was promoted in the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* in the following way:

'El cambio político que marcó el fin de la dictadura militar (1973-1989) y abrió el proceso llamado "transición democrática" ha desplegado múltiples efectos de reordenamiento y transformación de la institucionalidad política, de los lenguajes públicos y de sus redes comunicativas, de los discursos culturales y modelos universitarios, de los imaginarios estéticos, de los circuitos y prácticas de arte, de las formas de habitar la ciudad, de las representaciones sociales de identidad y género.

El alcance de estas transformaciones no han tenido la oportunidad de ser sistemáticamente analizado en la complejidad de sus redes y entrecruzamientos político-sociales y simbólico-culturales. Este programa busca estimular cruces de reflexión transdisciplinarios ente la filosofía contemporánea, la teoría feminista y la crítica cultural, para abordar una lectura plural de las tensiones de sentido que recorren el Chile de hoy, tomando en consideración no sólo el plano formal de los discursos y prácticas institucionales sino también los planos informales donde se modulan los recursos de expresión simbólica de memorias y subjetividades en ambiguos conflictos de representación.

Los tres módulos temáticos del programa son:

1. Consenso, memoria y mercado
2. Imaginarios sociales y subjetividad cotidianas (la ciudad, la televisión)
3. Discursos artístico-culturales, saberes académicos y pensamiento crítico.

El programa consiste en seminarios de estudios (que conforman la estructura académica de un Diplomado en "crítica cultural" que tendrá lugar en la Universidad Arcis), conferencias, mesas redondas y coloquios que contarán con la participación regular de invitados nacionales e internacionales, y en espacios de publicaciones regulares (*Revista de Crítica Cultural* y otros).'

programme of the Rockefeller Foundation in Chile,¹²⁸ several Chilean intellectuals including Richard, Willy Thayer, Carlos Pérez V, Latin Americans (Ernesto Laclau, Nestor García Canclini, Beatriz Sarlo, Jesús Martín Barbero), and US-based intellectuals (Alberto Moreiras, Idelver Avelar, Julio Ramos, Mabel Moraña) participated in the programme. *Residuos y Metaforas* is a book that must be understood in the light of these discussions and collaborations.

How does Richard define her own specific form of *crítica cultural*? What are its key dimensions? How and in what way is her *crítica cultural* formalized? *Residuos y Metaforas* makes these evident establishing its three key dimensions: aesthetic, cultural and political. These dimensions are interrelated insofar as they allow for a conceptual and creative exploration that seeks to question symbolic hierarchies. Richard points out that:

Al decir “estética” hablo de formas y de materias que cobran todo su realce expresivo al trabajar con las ambigüedades, las indefiniciones y las paradojas que mantienen el sentido y la identidad en suspenso, deslizantes e inacabados. Al decir “cultura”, hablo de las transfiguraciones simbólicas con las que lo real social teatraliza sus enigmas y conflictos de representación. Y al decir “mirada política”, hablo de potenciar el coeficiente minoritario de ciertos desvíos o quiebres de significación virtualmente capaces de hacer saltar el calce satisfecho mediante el cual la realidad se reconcilia permanentemente consigo misma al precio de tener que borrar de su superficie la inadecuación y el desacierto, el malestar, como sospechosas marcas de un desliz que cae fuera del equilibrio de la conformidad. (Richard, 2001b: 23).

Moreover, these three dimensions of Richard’s intellectual project emerged precisely in this order: from the aesthetic focus of the 1970s (*Escena de Avanzada*), she moved towards more cultural concerns in the 1980s (the

¹²⁸ Together with the Corporación La Morada, Universidad Arcis, and the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*.

body, society, feminism, postmodernity), to then their political deployment in the 1990s (post-dictatorship, democracy, resistance). The combination of these dimensions makes for a particular brand of critical practice that, through aesthetic creativity and political will, sought to question the interrelations between culture and power.

If these three dimensions make up the principle of her critical practice, then:

La crítica cultural –tal como la entiendo- trataría no sólo de levantar la sospecha del lector contra el falso supuesto de la inocencia de las formas y de la transparencia del lenguaje que oculta los pactos de fuerza y los convenios de intereses que, tácitamente, amarran entre sí valores, significaciones y poderes. Trataría además de excitar la imaginación crítica en torno a las fisuras de lo real y sus otros que el arte mantiene sugerentemente abiertas, para que el lector se anime a romper el molde del sentido prefabricado con el deshacer y rehacerse de una subjetividad libre de dejarse atraer por lo desconocido de categorías y palabras vagabundas. (Richard, 2001b: 22).

In addition to this, and whilst she recognizes that *crítica cultural* designates a variable set of practices and writings that do not respond to a uniform design, and which do not seek to be labeled with academic categories, Richard adds a number of other traits to this notion.

First of all, she points out that the texts which define her *crítica cultural* represent a sort of middle road between the essay, poetic writing, and theoretical (deconstructive) critique, which together analyse the crossings between social discourses, cultural symbolization, power alignments, and subjective constructs. In concrete terms, Richard states that:

Los textos de crítica cultural serían entonces textos *intermedios* que no quieren dejarse localizar según los parámetros institucionales que

definen el saber ortodoxo; textos que reivindican su im-propiedad en relación a las disciplinas tradicionales y la noción tradicional de “disciplina” entendida como un corpus de enseñanza cuyas reglas de especialización fijan y controlan la relación (disciplinaria, técnica y profesional) entre objetos, saberes y métodos. (Richard, 2001b: 144 [Emphasis in the original]).

Secondly, she affirms that:

Lejos de ser una disciplina, la crítica cultural sería una práctica, es decir, un modo de hacer, una forma de actuar, una estrategia de intervención teórico-discursiva que selecciona instrumentos críticos en función de la coyuntura de signos que se propone analizar y desmontar. (Richard, 2001b: 144 [Emphasis in the original]).

In this way, Richard seeks to distance herself from any form of dominant thought. Beyond defining a procedural manual for *crítica cultural*, Richard makes an open invitation in the public sphere, refusing to remain within the calm institutional space of the academias (or other such institutions).

Thirdly, Richard points out that *crítica cultural* possesses an interventionist character. In her words:

No le bastaría a dicho proyecto analizar los textos de la cultura en su dimensión intradiscursiva, sino que buscaría siempre comprometer a su destinatario en un trabajo crítico de desmontaje y rearticulación del sentido para examinar las conexiones locales y específicas que unen los signos a sus redes político-institucionales. (Richard, 2001b: 144).

Similar to Rancière’s later *The emancipated spectator* (2011a), Richard rejects the impositions of a particular form of writing (in which passive readers receive and repeat her ‘teachings’), but rather attempt to involve the reader in a shared task of critical vigilance. In other words, she recognizes the

intellectual responsibility of revealing the system of values and social hierarchies delimited by power, but at the same time demands the reader create strategies in order to associate and disassociate such value systems and hierarchies.

Finally, just as in the case of authors with whom she shares a sort of 'intimidad crítica', Richard states that:

la crítica cultural trabajaría en *politizar* la cuestión del discurso haciéndolo ver como trama de violencia, control y lucha en torno a la autoridad simbólica del poder de la palabra y del control de la representación. Pero la crítica cultural no se conformaría con sólo desconstruir las figuras discursivas de imposición del sentido en las que las ideologías sociales basan su poder normalizador. Pretenderían también descubrir y activar críticamente lo que se resiste a ellas: la potencialidad discordante de las entrelíneas más rebeldes de los textos de la cultura que entran en disputa con sus relatos legitimadores. (Richard, 2001b: 145 [Emphasis in the original]).

On this basis, Richard recognizes that, by encouraging rivalries and disputes with official tradition and dominant canons, what is at stake is how to encourage the emergence of writing, analysis, images, performances, poetic forms etc., which put new and diverse anti-hegemonic meanings into action. For this reason, recounting, observing, and thinking about the residues of history and society represent a key aspect of the practice of *crítica cultural*. Seeking out 'lo que ha sido dejado de lado' or 'lo que se ha omitido' —that is, such 'cultural residues'— is thus crucial to her endeavor: hence the idea of creating metaphors or critical-poetic-theoretical reflections. In other words, *crítica cultural* is practised through the identification of residues and processing new metaphors for them. This is exactly what Richard did during the post-dictatorship era: she selected the cultural residues of the transition

that offered up new critical and reflective —that is, meaningful— opportunities.

The practice of crítica cultural: 'residues' and their 'metaphors' in the Chilean post-dictatorship era

Another characteristic of Richard's thought and critical practice is her constant attention to cultural texts that politicize the most public of all spaces - the city and/or urban landscapes. Her explorations, observations, and paths through the city have over the years served as key material for understanding the formation of what Chile has become today. As a *flâneur* of Chilean modernization, Richard has witnessed the destruction of the democratic tradition in Chile up to Allende, and the birth of a new social landscape under neoliberalism from Pinochet onwards. Since 1970, her wandering through Chilean landscapes has been characterized by an attentive attitude to the forces of cultural domination. This did not change substantially upon the return to democracy in 1990. On the contrary, Richard's urban wandering has become even more pronounced. Owing to the optimistic climate surrounding the 'la alegría ya viene' campaign, her methodology of observation demanded that she become even more deeply immerse among the urban multitudes. Within these multitudes, she sought out the fragments, residues, events, and unused objects that enabled her to set out her *crítica cultural* in the post-dictatorship era.

In what follow, I review five cultural texts that led to an expanded view of the history of Chile during the democratic transition. These texts also resulted in the establishment of new political and cultural challenges.

a. *El padre Mio: el Chile confuso*

In 1989 Diamela Eltit published *El Padre Mio*. It is not possible to classify this text as a novel, but rather as a literary exploration. The book consists of a transcription of three interviews that Eltit undertook with a homeless man (whom Eltit called 'El padre Mio') in Santiago de Chile in 1983, 1984, and 1985. It can be conceived as a poetic exploration of the fragments and vestiges of the city under the military dictatorship. In making it, Eltit not only experienced landscapes and places in clear states of decomposition, but also her own abandonment and emotional fragmentation. As she points out, *El Padre Mio* was in a complete state of delirium: he was a schizophrenic surviving on his own in the city. In his transcribed speech, Chile can be observed in a state of deterioration. In Eltit's words:

Es Chile, pensé. Chile entero y a pedazos en la enfermedad de este hombre; jirones de diarios, fragmentos de exterminio, sílabas de muerte, pausas de mentira, frases comerciales, nombres de difuntos. Es una honda crisis del lenguaje, una infección en la memoria, una desarticulación de todas las ideologías. Es una pena, pensé. (Eltit, 1989: 17).

In her essay 'Desecho neobarroco: costra y adornos', an article originally published in 1994¹²⁹ but included in *Residuos y Metáforas*, Richard explores the metaphor of *El Padre Mio*. For her, Eltit's 'inestable investigación' questions the notion of the 'testimonial voice', as recognized by the social sciences. This voice, found within the city, does not however fulfill the requirements or pre-given moulds established for testimonial voices under the military dictatorship. The voice of the homeless man is the voice of a schizophrenic full of verbal disconnects, narrative absences and

¹²⁹ In Ludmer et al (1994).

incomprehensible fractures. For Richard the interesting aspect of his speech is that it does not offer a social or historic truth. Nevertheless, it is not completely false either.

The testimonial voice in *El Padre Mio* that Eltit presents in her book is not simply an aesthetic and political exploration of the outskirts of Santiago. It is, rather, a questioning of a true crisis. According to Richard, the texts transcribed by Eltit do not seek to present the truth of what happened (in order to heal the past), but rather to make dirty that which has been white-washed (the uncomfortable past). In other words, the delirium of *El Padre Mio* is so irrational that it is a concrete expression of the perplexity and confusion that resulted from the historic transformations imposed by the dictatorship. This is the Chile that is left - sick with false identities, unconnected references, confused sentences, name combinations (in the text, the man speaks of Pinochet, Frei, Alessandri, Allende, etc., without any sense of order or coherence), and incomprehensible phrases etc.

In sum, for Richard *El Padre Mio* is a cultural residue that offers a metaphor that contaminates and dirties, like the scab of a wound, the triumphant and much trumpeted economic success of neoliberal Chile at the beginning of the 1990s.

b. The iceberg of Seville: cleanliness and efficiency in the Chile of compromise

What did 'El Padre Mio' seek to dirty (or unmask)?

Between April and October of 1992, the World's Fair was held in Seville, Spain. Under the guise of 'The Age of Discovery', over 100 countries sent an

official representative bearing something characteristic of their culture and identity. After over a month of travelling by sea, the Chilean contribution arrived on the Spanish coast: a 100 tonnes iceberg from the Chilean Antarctic. It was considered by the organizers as one of the most noteworthy attractions of the fair. However, beyond its touristic aspect, the iceberg also possessed high symbolic significance.

In her text 'El modelaje grafico de una identidad publicitaria', included as a chapter in *Residuos y Metáforas*, Richard explores the theoretical and cultural significance of this modernizing gesture by post-dictatorial Chile.

For Richard, shipping the iceberg sought to reflect the social, cultural, and economic metamorphosis that Chile had experienced between the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. The objective was to introduce the new Chile to the world: a Chile that was transparent, pure, majestic, coordinated and successful; a country which, despite 17 years of dictatorship, was able to achieve an admirable political transition and economic development 'with a human face'. As such, Chile was not only able to ship 100 tons of ice from the extreme south to Seville (an efficient and technologically complex task), but was also able to transform this fragment of ice into a real *performance of identity*.

Not only was the development and progress that Chile achieved in recent years presented to the world through the iceberg, but it was also used to distinguish itself from its Latin American neighbours and associates. In effect, Chile sought to present itself to the world as an efficient 'product', close to becoming developed. In other words, it wanted to become part of the metropolitan ideal and distinguish itself from regional underdevelopment. The iceberg showed Chile as a cold and isolated country, not tropical or warm,

and as a technical and rational country, not irrational or inefficient. In sum, Chile wished to clearly demonstrate and perform the old cultural tensions that had defined Latin America: civilization and barbarism, development and underdevelopment, modernity and tradition, high culture and popular culture etc.

However, according to Richard, the iceberg was used more than anything else to make a distinction between the traumatic past of the dictatorship and the new atmosphere of reconciliation. Together with celebrating capitalist globalization, Chile at the Expo-Seville sought to eliminate the uncomfortable past and construct a Chile free of the bodies and subjectivities damaged by the military dictatorship (free of *padres míos*). The iceberg thus wanted to show the world a renewed country, transparent and clean, a disciplined country, in order to do away with any uncomfortable historic blemishes.

c. Second hand clothes: hybridization and cultural resistance in Chile

What did it mean to embrace capitalist globalization? What cultural effects did this imply for Chilean society? In 'La ropa usada y su estética de segunda mano', published in issue 9 of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* (1994c), Richard proposed discussing these questions. Through a cultural residue (used clothes), she explored how social identities are built and rebuilt based on bodies, their clothes, and their movement through the city.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the sale of used clothes in Chile, coming mainly from the United States, grew exponentially in the central neighborhoods of Santiago and other cities throughout the country. Used clothing created confusion between the local and transnational, between what is one's own and what is someone else's. Purchased mainly by the poor

marginal populations of the city, 'ropa americana' (which in Chile refers to second-hand clothing) generated a combination of corporeal and visual identities. As "leftovers of metropolitan fashion", used clothing disrupted the cultural and symbolic logic of lower-class Chile by combining local fashion with first world leftovers. Through clothing, the body exhibited the worn residues of fashion.

Within the landscapes of the urban suburbs, clothing passed down through the family was not just combined with first world fabrics and brands, but also with the smells, shapes, and 'residues' of an unknown 'other'. Whilst second-hand clothing was marketed as being of 'alta calidad y poco uso', the ways of the past were reconfigured by the new ways in which the body was dressed. As Richard points out, Chile deformed that which it received, and generated new local logics. In other words, the social matrix imported from the developed world was transformed, establishing a distinctly Chilean combination. In this way, Chileans, as well as Latin Americans in general:

combina(n) retazos de géneros e identidades en una mezcolanza y revoltura de tramas incompletas y discontinuadas, sin la guía referencial de una totalidad orgánica pero con toda la movilidad de ensamblajes que supone la lógica compositiva del modelo-para-armar. (Richard, 1994c: 24)

Chile would thus become a 'cuerpo de citas' characterized by its diversity and combinations. Despite the fact that in neoliberal Chile the forces of consensus promoted the disciplining of subjectivities, the response of the marginalized elements of society was to be out of tune with the original form. For Richard, used clothing serves as both residue and a metaphor for Chile in the post-dictatorship era, that is, a postmodern collage that criticizes and resists the fixed and hegemonic identities of the neoliberal system.

d. The transvestite Simón Bolívar: the case of Dávila and the uncomfortable presence of difference in the State

How does one question the comfortable space of political institutionality? How can notions of national and regional identity be problematized?

In August 1994, the Chilean painter Juan Dávila publicly disseminated his painting *El Libertador, Simón Bolívar*. Initially exhibited in the Hayward Gallery in London, then printed as a post card as part of a *Fondo Nacional de las Artes* project funded by the Chilean state, the painting generated mounting political tension as well as political and cultural discussion. In the painting, Dávila portrays Simón Bolívar with red lipstick and a face with mestizo traits. Unlike the military uniform of the Latin American heroes of independence, the painting portrays Bolívar as a transvestite, with breasts and without any trousers, clearly showing his feminine hips. His cape, decorated with flowers, also reveals his hand with the middle finger sticking up (an evidently obscene gesture). The painting also depicts the image of a horse fragmented into two parts - one traditionally drawn, and the other as a geometrized shape.

The clear misconfiguration of the 'padre fundador' of Latin America as a sexualized, gay, and insurgent figure elicited a series of polemical responses not just within Chilean institutions but also throughout Latin America, and especially from the governments of Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. In addition, the embassies of these countries explicitly protested to the Chilean government citing its direct funding of the painting. With this critical gesture Dávila's representation of Bolívar perverted the heroic figure of the great liberator as a Latin American symbol.

The polemic was not limited to diplomatic circles. There were also ripples felt in the Chilean government. The main criticisms of the Right as well as certain important sectors of the Concertación itself, were directed at the new cultural policies of post-dictatorship Chile, specifically, those of the *Fondo Nacional de las Artes*, administered in those years by the Ministry of Education. In addition, there were also a series of controversies regarding artistic freedom, censorship in democracy, homosexual discrimination, the selection and distribution of public funds for artistic projects etc.

In the 9th issue of *Revista de Crítica Cultural* (November 9, 1994), there was coverage of the polemic arising from Dávila's painting. This special issue presented various perspectives on the conflict, and a series of defenses of a particular 'modelo de creación artística' as well as a particular conceptualization of public cultural policy in culture. In Richard's words:

El Simón Bolívar de Dávila pasó a ser la metáfora de algo contaminante que obligó a las voces oficiales a reforzar sus mecanismos de defensa contra la impureza de lo otro y a exacerbar su sentido de pertenencia a una comunidad de valores seguros. La polémica desató temores ocultos y fantasías reprimidas: señaló una parte de lo oculto–reprimido que el libreto oficial de la postransición mantiene en el secreto de la inconfesión. Pero ayudó también a replantear el tema del arte como ruptura estética y desmontaje simbólico: el arte como fuerza crítica capaz de liberar y potenciar deseos de otredad. (Richard, 1994: 25).

In this way, Dávila's Simón Bolívar put pressure on Chile's entire cultural edifice, and problematized notions related to being indigenous, feminine, and a member of the lower classes. Dávila's work offered Richard a cultural text that questions hegemonic culture, for example, the whiteness of Latin American elites or peripheral neo-colonialism.

e. Operation 'Vuelo de Justicia': manifest insubordination

Finally, how could the politics of agreement be further resisted? How could the issue of memory and the lack of justice be brought into tension?

On December 30, 1996, one of the most impressive prison breaks in history occurred at the *Cárcel de Alta Seguridad de Santiago*. At around 3 pm that day, a helicopter hovered above the prison and let down a basket into the main patio. Four prisoners, all members of the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez and accused of the assassination of Jaime Guzmán (among other 'terrorist crimes'), escaped by air from Santiago. For Richard, operation 'Vuelo de Justicia' (as it was known) was a "symbolic occurrence".

In her chapter 'Tomarse el cielo por asalto: transgresión política y vuelo de metáforas' in *Residuos y Metáforas*, Richard again analyses insubordination and resistance in post-dictatorial Chile. For her, the escape served to shake up the politics of forgetting implemented by the Concertación. Although the government of Eduardo Frei vigorously condemned the escape, according to Richard the operation was received with joy and support by the left wing, which was disenchanted with the way in which the Concertación was handling the issue of human rights. The escape represented a direct threat to the social order created by the government and the dictatorship whilst also opening channels for new utopian possibilities. In Richard's words:

Lo que hizo la fuga –protagonizada por quienes se autodefinen novelescamente como "fragmentos de una raza extraña, destinada a escapar de todas partes, adicta a la inconformidad perpetua"- fue trazar, con sus múltiples irradiaciones y transfiguraciones de sentidos, una poética del acontecimiento que metamorfoseara la

sintaxis reglamentaria de la vida social; que abriera líneas de escape entre sus zonas de censura e inhibición para desterritorializar lo cotidiano hacia insospechados bordes de revuelta y contradicciones. (Richard, 2001b: 234).

Operation 'Vuelo de justicia' can also be understood as an example of the 'art of escape'. The escape not only utilized ingenuity and an almost cinematographic strategy, but also questioned a political regime that favoured forgetting the past over justice.

These residues and their metaphors have served to identify and exemplify the analytical reach of *crítica cultural*. Each one offers a different possible reading and paves the way for new interpretations. According to Richard's own logical framework of thought, there are no unique and complete interpretations of cultural texts. On the contrary, the objective of *crítica cultural* is to interrupt and question hegemonic cultural matrices, as well as to provoke and incite new writing and critical positions based upon like these residues. Such provocation has been a constant both among the old guard and the new intellectuals that have accompanied Richard over the years. As with the *Escena de Avanzada*, during the 1990s there was a group of names, cultural circuits and spaces of publications that formed what can be referred to as a new critical scene.

The space for crítica cultural or the critical scene in the post-dictatorship era

Crítica cultural is a practice that has been expanding, and has been deployed by other critics too. It can be considered a *dispositif* that has mobilized and directed a series of writers, artists, poets, scholars etc., towards a common

objective - revealing the mechanisms of order employed by neoliberal democracy.

Although Richard has been recognized internationally mainly for her book *Margins and Institutions* (1986) and the delimitation of the *Escena de Avanzada*, during the 1990s and after she would become identified not just by her work on aesthetics and politics, but also for establishing a new space¹³⁰ or scene of *crítica cultural* in Chile.¹³¹ This space for *crítica cultural* during the democratic transition possessed elements similar to that of the *Escena de Avanzada*, that is, a group of intellectuals, writers, poets, and academics gathered together in a space that was not only widely recognized by many sectors of the cultural Left (*Revista de Crítica Cultural*, Universidad Arcis, Instituto Arcos, La Morada, Editorial Cuarto Propio), but also organized under a 'conceptual platform' provided by Richard. Hermann Herlinghaus provides a similar assessment in his book *Renarración y descentramiento*:

La 'escena crítica', parecida a la 'nueva escena' de la década anterior, intenta construir un espacio propio en términos de crítica y contestación. Pero mientras la 'nueva escena', articulada bajo la dictadura, carecía de los recursos mínimos para una institucionalización simbólica, la 'escena crítica' interfiere en las esferas académicas. Busca establecer un discurso crítico alternativo en condiciones de la postdictadura y a la vez trata de insertarse a nivel internacional en el campo discursivo llamado "crítica cultural". (Herlinghaus, 2004: 144-145).

Evidently, there are historic differences between the two based upon intellectual projects, names, disputes, localities, and experiences. In the

¹³⁰ The notion of 'space' is used by Richard to refer to those places in which her most significant collaborators are connected to her, that is, the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* and the Universidad Arcis, among others.

¹³¹ This notion is used to refer to the scene or space that emerged after the 'new scene', which Richard describes in her chapter 'La cita académica y sus otros' (Richard, 2001b: 127-140). Here, Richard identifies this 'new scene' by its informal knowledge and critical positions regarding Chile at the end of the dictatorship.

introduction to the book *Pensar en/la Postdictadura*, Richard includes a footnote that demonstrates her interest in identifying and differentiating the space for *crítica cultural* that emerged in the Chilean post-dictatorship era:

En los años de la fundación del proyecto de la Revista de Crítica Cultural (1990), dicho término intentaba designar, exploratoriamente, un conjunto de escrituras teóricas y críticas, surgidas durante los 80 en Chile, que cruzaban —en desorden— la crítica literaria, la filosofía, la teoría del arte, la sociología de la cultura, el análisis ideológico y la crítica institucional. Llamábamos “crítica cultural” a esta mezcla de referentes teóricos informales que desbordaba, heterodoxamente, las vigiladas fronteras del saber académico de los años de la dictadura: Ronald Kay, Adriana Valdés, Nelly Richard, Patricio Marchant, Diamela Eltit, Eugenia Brito, Pablo Oyarzún, Rodrigo Cánovas y otros, fueron parte de esta aventura de reconceptualización del discurso teórico y crítico desde los márgenes de la universidad. Luego seguimos llamando bajo ese nombre, en el *espacio* de la Revista y sus alrededores, a un tipo de análisis teórico-cultural que recorre las brechas entre disciplinas para activar tránsitos entre la reflexión universitaria y los circuitos ampliados de un debate crítico sobre *arte, cultura y política*. (Richard, 2001a: 19, nota 26 – [Emphasis in the original]).

Richard transmits in a footnote what can be considered as another scene or critical space in the context of the Chilean post-dictatorship, a *space for crítica cultural*. Although there are no more references to this possible ‘reunion’ of names, frameworks, and discussions based upon *crítica cultural*, it can be pointed out that there were certain affiliations, differences, inheritances, and critical intimacies between Richard and other individuals (Federido Galende, Willy Thayer, Carlos Ossa, Carlos Pérez Villalobos, Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott).¹³² These individuals were not merely members of the editorial committee of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*¹³³, but were also

¹³² It would also be possible to widen this notion of international academics and intellectuals connected to Latin American Cultural Studies, such as Alberto Moreiras, Idelver Avelar, Jon Beverley etc. See Gutiérrez Mouat (2006).

¹³³ According to interviews held in the context of this research, many of them admitted that they had little editorial

collaborators on joint publications, colloquia, academic lectures, seminars, exposition etc. It is not difficult to discern from their work the ways in which they share interpretations, forms, contexts, and common problems. Even when there have been disputes between them (for example, the one between Richard and Thayer discussed above), this space for *crítica cultural* has found a place in Chilean intellectual history. Only time and history will tell if it has the same level of impact as the *Escena de Avanzada*.

Having identified the basic elements of Richard's *crítica cultural*, it is necessary to look into the critical perspectives that emerged based upon these ideas in a little more depth – especially those that emerged within the US academy.

IV. Criticism of *crítica cultural*: two perspectives from the North

Through the publication of *Residuos y Metáforas*, as well as a series of articles based upon her trips to North American and Latin American universities, Richard has become a renowned intellectual figure. In the past 20 years, Richard's *crítica cultural* project has achieved a level of notoriety within intellectual fields in Latin America, North America, and Europe (Ortega, 2000; Melo, 2002; Garcia, 2005). There have been numerous analyses of it, including reviews and critiques of her work.¹³⁴

sway.

¹³⁴ For example, another of the critical voices on an international and national level is Walescka Pino-Ojeda, from the University of Auckland. In her text 'Crítica Cultural y Marginalidad: Una lectura al trabajo de Nelly Richard', Pino-Ojeda (1999) levels a direct criticism not only at the condition of marginality that Richard utilized to refer to her own critical work (as well as that of the artists within the *Escena de Avanzada*), but also upon the notion of 'voluntad acumulativa' regarding how *Margins and Institutions* served as a compilation and a historic registry of artistic production, and her postmodern analysis of Latin America, mainly based upon her lack of criticism of the 'original European model' that she is perceived to have copied, subverted, and redressed. See also R. Rodríguez (2014).

One of the most important discussions of Richard's work was published in a special edition of the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies: Travesia*, in 2000, including pieces on Richard's work by Hermann Herlinghaus, Ana del Sarto, Jon Beasley-Murray, and Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott. These reflected on her work in general, and specifically on a text by Richard herself included in the same issue: 'The Reconfigurations of Post-dictatorship Critical Thought'. Together, these constitute one of the key discussions of *crítica cultural*. Here I would like to focus on Herlinghaus' and Beasley-Murray's criticisms of Richard's ideas.

In 'Memory, Performance and 'Vagabondage' as Conceptual Elements of Nelly Richard's Aesthetic Criticism', Herman Herlinghaus recognizes that, in late 20th century Latin America, there was a particular and exclusive way of thinking about the practice of *crítica cultural*. In a context characterized by the spread of neoliberal economics and post-dictatorial processes in the region, the need to establish new theories and a wider variety of ways to pursue critical practices emerged. In this context, critical thought on the periphery needed to use theoretical discourses from the centre (hegemony) in order to subvert and reform them on the basis of to their own experiences and practices. For Herlinghaus, Richard is a critic who has achieved such an objective in recent years. Thanks to her constant questioning of notions such as 'modernity', 'identity', 'culture' etc., Richard has been able to recreate 'a number of precarious conceptual figures' as well as establish one of the most complex and exciting interrelations between new aesthetic practices and *crítica cultural*. Herlinghaus recognizes that, through Richard's work: 'the division of conceptual and cognitive labour between cultural criticism and aesthetically complex discourses has become blurred.' (Herlinghaus, 2000: 250).

This certainly has nothing to do with the 'boom' in Latin American Cultural Studies, nor with processes of global epistemological transculturation. Rather, for Herlinghaus, it is a matter of the complex combination of theoretical, practical and political concerns that Richard achieved through her recourse to certain post-structuralist hypotheses as well as through the work of the *Escena de Avanzada*. Herlinghaus focuses upon Richard's 'constructive' variant of 'deconstruction', which is characterized by recognizing that literature and art together configure a new and potential form of 'insubordination'.

However, in his article Herlinghaus takes special note of the notions of criticism and memory that Richard develops in *Residuos y Metáforas*. He points out that:

Discussing cultural memory against the grain, Richard locates 'memory' metaphorically between different layers –conceptual layers of the visual, the written, the corporeal, the affective, the performative - trying to detect in all of them signs of the mis-fit within representation that breaks open the functional balance of predefined categories. (Herlinghaus, 2000: 251).

In this way, during the post-dictatorship era, Richard struggled conceptually against any and all discursive forms that tended towards crystallization. Works of art that offered alternative micro-political 'performances' were crucial in this regard: such works are characterized by their undoing of meaning and their disruption of traditional notions of both art and politics; by, that is, their inconclusive and fluctuating character. They, however, do not provide 'real answers'. It is in this last aspect that Herlinghaus finds the most significant problem with Richard's *crítica cultural* (as well as with the *Escena de Avanzada*).

Indeed, Herlinghaus' criticism is related to his suspicion regarding the fragmentary and residual aesthetic tactics used in the work of the *Escena de Avanzada*. For example, he takes the work of Eltit (*El Padre mío*) and, together with that of Richard, refers to them as being characterized by the figure of 'the wanderer', as opposed to that of "the exiled, or the migrant". For him, the exiled and migrant communities seek out a place of affirmation from where they can construct a memory. By contrast, the 'wanderer' suggests the experience of the 'non-place', de-territorialization and the 'fugitive', while also being both absent and present in institutions. Herlinghaus focuses his critique upon Richard's and Eltit's aesthetic and political fascination with intellectual meandering, as well as the lack of non-speculative answers that characterize their writings. In his words:

Our argument asks for relocating the perspective on memory in a way that helps to question the philosophical marginalization of rhetorical thinking within new, that is, peripheral contexts of strategic debates. 'Truth', in terms of a rhetorical cultural thinking, is not the abstract fetish of the rationalizing subject. It is instead linked to mechanisms of cultural creativity which constantly require (different) 'methods' of re-narration in order to make narratives become a factor of social imaginaries and hence (not the referential object but) a communicative aspect of the condition of memory. There are 'narrative truths' which are different from speculative ones inasmuch as social action takes place in a world as it is imagined to be, in order to produce results or failures in the world 'as it is'. (Herlinghaus, 2000: 256)

Herlinghaus' critique of Richard has to do with overcoming the rhetoric of *crítica cultural*, and taking on an interpretation of artistic production as a political, non-speculative gesture that *intervenes in the world as it is*. His criticism suggests the need for kinds of narration and performance that might make of *crítica cultural* a practice that performs justice in social space. In this way, Herlinghaus proposes discarding what is speculative and fragmented

within *crítica cultural*, and moving towards a form of critique that is committed, especially with regarding to the uncomfortable issue of memory in post-dictatorial Chile.

While Herlinghaus focuses on the figure of the 'wanderer' and the notion of 'fragmentation' in his discussion of Richard's *crítica cultural*, Jon Beasley-Murray formulates a critical analysis of her work based upon the concept of the *art of flight*.

In his article entitled 'El arte de la fuga: Cultural Critique, metaphor and history', Beasley-Murray describes Richard's thought as a project grounded in 'mobility'. This has three main characteristics: desire, passion and will. For Beasley-Murray, these three dimensions are essential for understanding Richard's political and aesthetic strategy, seeking meanings that operate as strategies of resistance against normalization and fixed social meanings. According to Beasley-Murray, Richard analyses a series of artists in order to argue that 'art, and the aesthetic more generally, can constitute a privileged locality for this rebellious impulse to flight, as well as embodying an insurrectionary impulse in its own right.' (Beasley-Murray, 2000: 259). In fact, 'Richard's work is distinguished (and distinct from the mainstream of Cultural Studies) among other reasons because of her insistence upon the importance of both visual art and the aesthetic in cultural criticism.' (Beasley-Murray, 2000: 259).

Beasley-Murray recognizes that Richard's work in *Residuos y Metáforas* is a great example of this project. In his view, when Richard analyses the residues of the past or the present (such as popular photography, used clothes, symbolism such as the Iceberg of Seville etc.), she is putting such objects into reflexive tension. However, she does this not just as a simple metaphor for

'cómo hemos sido o cómo estamos', but rather as an analytical line of flight that goes beyond both the idea of 'residue' and the 'metaphor'. Indeed, art:

may become or be taken to be metaphors (of 'how we were then', for instance), but only unstably so, and only through and in a process of transversal movement. Flight is in fact the missing (or presupposed) term in the title of Richard's book, *Residues and Metaphors*. Neither residue nor metaphor, flight is the third term that articulates and activates the historical residues and representational metaphors that populate the Chilean transition. Decontextualizing and recontextualizing elements of signification taken from history (if discarded by historiographical narratives of progress and development), art always produces multiple meanings, destabilizing any effort to order and control meaning. (Beasley-Murray, 2000: 261).

In addition, not only is it possible for art to analyse these characteristics, but certain acts or events (a 'poetics of the event') can do this too, such as in the case of the escape of the FPMR prisoners that Richard analyses in the fifth chapter of her book.

For Beasley-Murray, Richard seeks to establish new lines of flight based upon certain residues and metaphors taken from recent Chilean history. These new lines of flight operate both as dissident interpretations of the democratic transition, and as forms of rupture and resistance to policies that aim to normalize and naturalize post-dictatorial neoliberalism. Richard, for this reason, seeks to highlight a certain 'poetics of crisis'.

Indeed, Beasley-Murray notes that the poetics of crisis are the breaks within history that depend upon and open up the rebellious lines of flight. They are what enable the creation of the specific form of *crítica cultural* that Richard developed, and what differentiates it from other kinds of Cultural Studies. These rebellious lines of flight thus serve as interpretations that oppose

regimes of total order, both those of the left-wing variety and those of the post-dictatorial right:

Richard would herself be the first to agree that beyond this we also need to reconfigure a politics of *affirmation* that would understand and join with the social movements powerfully present in Chile over the past thirty years and more. The transition has never fully co-opted these movements, just as the social scientific discourse of civil society theory has never fully convinced anyone about the effectiveness of its analysis of this rebellious dissent from below. These are the movements to which we might turn to consider the politics of space, and the shifting invocation and articulation of locality, to which Richard rightly draws our attention. (Beasley-Murray, 2000: 271).

For Beasley-Murray, such a politics of affirmation would enable Richard's project of *crítica cultural* to achieve a more wide-ranging and effective presence within the social sphere. A 'poetics of crisis' was just not enough. Without the support of the resistance movements that had still not been co-opted by technocracy, the effectiveness of the *crítica cultural* project would not have achieved as much.

What can be said as defence against such criticisms? Richard ponders some answers in 'The Reconfigurations of Post-Dictatorship Critical Thought', in which she explicitly defends her intellectual project.

From the beginning, Richard seeks to distance herself from the analyses of the Chilean post-dictatorship based upon the figures of trauma, mourning, and melancholy.¹³⁵ She also distances herself from the discourses of the social sciences as well as those of the militant left wing. She questions, for example, the idea that ways of thinking about the memory of the dictatorship

¹³⁵ This discussion will be dealt with specifically in the following chapter.

and post-dictatorship should be based upon a monumental (a form of ritualistic, heroic celebration) or a documentary form of objectification of the truth as information. For her, these narratives have disregarded creative mechanisms, by way of art and literature, as preferable forms of registering memory in order to transform traumatic experiences of the dictatorship into operations of resistance, comprehension, and critical practice. In her words:

Art and literature work, thankfully, against this dual citational usage of memory as practised within the Transition, and it is thanks to their poly-signifying and irruptive labour on forms (images, stories and narratives) that the aesthetic gesture is able to intensify memory as a battle of symbolizations. It is thanks to such irruptions that art and culture have become the registers most attuned to the exploration of the disaggregated, the split, the residual, the convulsed (of all that vibrates as fragment, detail and broken singularity after the death of the organic symbol). (Richard, 2000b: 275).

For Richard, critical poetics explore the ruptures and fissures of experiences that have been socially broken by the coup. To explore the meanings of experience and the subjective textures that emerge in this context, a constant conceptual reformulation and reflexive distancing is required in order to transform the painful images of the past into something more:

It seems to me that this irrepressible tension between what has been *destroyed in representation*, on the one hand, and the need to recreate new forms of *critical incidence* that contain the image of this destruction without remaining contemplatively adhered to it, condenses one of the most arduous tasks of the intellectual field of post-dictatorship [...] This supposes practices of the production and insertion of meaning into the polemical contexts of the present which are able to occasion a clash of statements, institutional friction. (Richard, 2000b: 276).

However, to carry out such a project, it is necessary to face a series of obstacles. One of these, as Richard points out, is the tension between

academic culture (the professional universe of discursive thinking) and intellectual practice (criticism's networks of social intervention and public debate). For Richard, it is here that the primary differences lie. At the time, there seemed to be a consensus in which everything was set; things were unchangeable and the banality and triviality of daily life had triumphed. For Richard, creating a critical discourse in a context characterized by constant simplification and argumentative reduction was a complex task. How to promote an alternative voice, resistance to hegemonic definitions?

Richard's answer is: through *difference as action and as process*. In her words:

The present is composed in a stratification of statements which, because they are arranged according to always unstable relations of force, present less solid and coordinated zones in which to test ('ensayar') difference. And these 'testing' zones, in which what is in formation (ways of being, seeing and reading) does not yet coincide with a complete or definitive meaning, are key sites in which cultural critique can fine tune its arms so as to attempt to modify the ideological configuration of the present. (Richard, 2000b: 278).

In other words, Richard proposes that reintroducing conflicting points of view within the dominant systems of valuation is a key function of *crítica cultural*. It is through this that current values, powers, and meanings come to confront each other. For Richard, time of the present cannot be ignored. *Crítica cultural* could not abstain from daily life. On the contrary, it must participate in each occurrence and consider culture as a *battlefield of meanings*. However, Richard points out that critical thought cannot disregard public space or simply remain comfortable within academia. In both cases, there is a risk of becoming just another 'leftover' or a trivial shadow of hegemonic space. For this reason there must be constant vigilance at every turn which hegemonic

practice makes, as well as a permanent search for a critical poetics. In this sense, Richard echoes Adorno's proposal (in 'Cultural Criticism and Society') that *crítica cultural* takes place *within* culture and not *above* it. For this reason, it must always maintain a certain degree of relative marginality. In Adorno's words: 'The dialectical critic of culture must both participate in culture and not participate. Only then does he do justice to his object and to himself.' (Adorno, 1982: 33). In fact, Richard herself, as well as the cultural objects that she analysed, are part of the social fabric, and for this reason those who practise *crítica cultural* must always be alert to and vigilant of transformative potential. In other words, practitioners of *crítica cultural* must always seek out fissures in the system. As Richard notes:

as in every formation of statements, the present reality of the Transition (consensual homogeneity, market seriality) shows fissures and disjunctures which expose the grammar of order to unforeseeable zones of agitation and turbulence from where criticism can rescue whatever refuses assimilation into the functional languages of institutional culture and politics. (Richard, 2000b: 279).

Such fissures can emerge as a result of better and more knowledge, imagination, and from various kinds of critical practice, in the form of lines of flight and poetic practices of dissidence that break with the normative logic of the transition.

It is along these lines that Richard responds to Beasley-Murray and Herlinghaus:

All of this is just to say that to transform the present and actuality into a zone of critical labour does not imply surrendering to its simple pragmatics, but rather to read —out of and against its time— what runs through the present as ambivalence, disagreement or resistance. Without this reading of the present, for what speaks or

labours against its grain, we would not know how to intervene in the debate on the inconclusive formulation of the new, saving what is still in the process of invention (works, texts, critical fictions) from states of normative consolidation looking to *fix* their value. (Richard, 2000b: 280).

For Richard, *crítica cultural* does not reject social rebellion or public critical practices. On the contrary, she attempts to discover all forms of insurrection or rebellion that make an effort to break with common sense and dominant versions of reality, and expose them in a variety of political and critical spaces (such as journals, conferences, universities, exhibitions etc.). The exercise of criticism, in her view, is a micro-politics that is contingent, relational and contextual. In addition, she sees in the poetics of writing, of visuality, and of performance concrete examples of othering and alteration. If not, what is *crítica cultural* for?

Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural* was constructed as an intellectual force that proposed to create constant suspicion of the hegemonic cultural order based upon aesthetic practice and experience. However, and as both Herlinghaus and Beasley-Murray have pointed out, for much of its existence *crítica cultural* was not able to find any concrete place within the social sphere. Its challenge then was somehow to make progress in this regard. Future developments would provide the opportunity for it to do so.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to outline the emergence and critical reception of Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural*. With the return to democracy, the intellectual practices undertaken by Richard and those close to her achieved

a certain degree of public notoriety within the Chilean intellectual sphere. If during the 1970s and 1980s her critical-political interventions were undertaken and recognized within a very marginalized space, during the 1990s her theoretical, aesthetic, and political reflexive strategies achieved significant visibility owing to, amongst other things, the birth of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*. This 'deseo de revista' would both become an analytical platform focusing upon the aesthetic, literary, and philosophical dimensions of social experience in Chile during the 1990s, and establish a complex (non-complacent) dialogue within the political landscape of the Chilean post-dictatorship. Richard's theoretical and critical practices in the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, as well as in her various other publications, were at first well received by the authorities of the new governing institutions (sociologists of the democratic transition and the militant left wing). However, it would soon become a more uncomfortable and disconcerting voice for times newly defined by democratic consensus and negotiation (Eltit, 2014). For the new governing elite it was necessary to minimize conflicts in order to maintain what had been achieved through much sacrifice: democracy.

However, Richard did not diminish her efforts to dismantle the weak and false politics of agreement. Other spaces for discussion augmented the visibility of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, such as the Universidad Arcis, the *Editorial Cuarto Propio*, the Corporación La Morada, and the Instituto Arcos, among others. Thanks to these spaces and platforms, critical thought during the 1990s became inserted into intermediate spaces or institutional niches within the new democratic regime without becoming institutionalized, maintaining a healthy degree of marginality. In this context, and owing to the fact that the marginal discourse of the 1970s and 1980s had lost strength during the democratic transition, Richard's intellectual project experienced both a theoretical transition (from art criticism to cultural criticism), and took on a

defensive position (countering critiques of her intellectual project).

Both the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* and other editorial projects in Chile and abroad dealt with new aesthetic and political problems in addition to those that had already been mentioned such as the restructuring of the public sphere during the democratization process, the role of the intellectual in the media, the relationship between art and politics, the question of academic-instrumental knowledge, debates between modernity and post-modernity, the emergence of Latin American Cultural Studies etc. Richard and the group connected to her project worked tirelessly to reveal and exhibit the strategies that official politics utilized in order to hide certain issues from the public gaze. Such issues included the traumatic past of the military dictatorship and the present complacency concerning neoliberalism. Such issues were always dealt with by way of an explicit defence of aesthetic experience.

Thus *crítica cultural* can be understood as a critical and transformative practice that explored the multiple and incessant sources of disobedience, emancipation, and resistance by contemporary subjects through art and literature, cultural 'residues' that work through poetic and political metaphors. This is not an easy path to follow within academia or political institutions. As I have attempted to show in my account of *Residuos y Metáforas*, each historical moment as well as every cultural 'residues' provides the occasion for a novel interpretation and a critical-political intervention through the deployment of poetic metaphor: examples such as the Iceberg of Seville, operation 'Vuelo de Justicia', the case of Dávila's Simón Bolívar etc., helped to make progress regarding the overall comprehension of *crítica cultural*.

On October 10, 1998, Augusto Pinochet was arrested in London. This marked the beginning of a new historic and political process in Chile (Davis,

2003; Spooner, 2011). In effect, it meant a complete change both in the daily lives of Chileans and in ways of thinking about the political transition and its cultural impacts. As Stern would note, this occurrence was: 'the start of a major unraveling of memory impasse.' (Stern, 2010: 211). With the arrest, the political polarization that had previously been neutralized by the *Concertación* governments became crystal clear. Both in the streets and around dinner tables, it was possible to observe the two conflicting sides - those who supported Pinochet (both as a historic figure and his political and moral project), and the detractors and victims of the dictatorship.

However, at the beginning of 2000, Pinochet returned to Chile. Owing to his state of health, as well as a series of political manoeuvres by the government of Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, Pinochet would not be extradited to Spain by the British government. This marked a new era in Chilean politics, initiating a new effort in the search for justice. Several cases on human rights were re-opened and the issue of memory would become increasingly central. If the neoliberal economic model seemed impossible to transform or replace, at the very least a debate on recent political memory was becoming necessary. During the 2000s, Richard would concentrate much of her efforts on elucidating what was understood by 'memory' and how to produce a radical discourse about it via *crítica cultural*. As we will see in the following chapter, Richard's persistence regarding the relation between aesthetics, politics, and culture as she conceived it would continue to be the primary axis of her project of reinterpreting the past, questioning the present, and imagining the future. Whilst some projects would end (such as the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* in 2008), others would emerge with renewed vigour.

CHAPTER 4

Nelly Richard's *crítica de la memoria*

Introduction

If during the 1990s the political practices of the Concertación were characterized by the *politics of agreement* with the military right wing, during the 2000s the first disagreements between the two sides emerged (Weeks, 2014). Whilst the neoliberal economic structure 'with a human face' would remain intact (Solimano, 2012; Taylor, 2006), during the 2000s the nation was governed by presidents tied to the Socialist Party and close to the historic figure of Salvador Allende (Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet). These years were thus characterized by a political and social shift; one sustained by economic growth and the emergence of a society more demanding of social and political rights (Sehnbruch & Siavelis, 2014).

This new social and political scenario would commence with the death of Augusto Pinochet (Joignant, 2013; Lazzara, 2009). What had previously been an explicit pact of non-aggression between politicians and military personnel quickly transformed into a series of conflicts regarding the democratic transition following the detention of Pinochet in London. While the political consensus worked seamlessly to achieve Pinochet's return to Chile, historic fissures and wounds soon emerged within the national landscape following the death of the ex-dictator in 2006. As a result of these events, a series of legal processes related to human rights abuses were initiated against military personnel who had been active during the dictatorship, leading to the emergence of a discourse on historic memory (Collins, Hite & Joignant, 2013).

When the first socialist president of Chile since Salvador Allende, Ricardo Lagos, became President of Chile in 2000, in addition to policies framed around the idea of a macro-economic balance, a series of political and administrative decisions were made regarding the fomenting of culture and social protection, along with several constitutional reforms (Fuentes, 2014). The year 2003, for example, marked the 30th anniversary of the coup, leading to a surge in reflections, publications, and debates on the historic facts and consequences of the military dictatorship. The 'Comisión Valech' was created in order to reveal the identity of those who had been tortured, detained, and persecuted for political reasons between September 11, 1973 and March 10, 1990. Unlike the 'Informe Rettig', which focused upon identifying those who had been disappeared and executed during the military dictatorship, the 'Informe Valech' concentrated on the victims who survived the crimes committed by the military regime's repressive apparatus (Wilde, 2013). However, despite the legal efforts to shed light on cases of human rights abuses, providing economic and social reparations to the victims, very few cases benefited from the Commission's work. In addition, the report established that the names of the military personnel involved would remain confidential for 50 years, closing off any possibility of justice.

The Lagos administration, which ended in 2005, managed to sway attempts by the military and right wing supporters of the dictatorship to establish a 'punto final' on the issue of human rights. However, his government was unable to foment a complex discussion on historic memory within the public sphere. The issue would, however, be widely aired under the following administration.

After a close presidential election, in March 2006 a woman became President

of Chile for the first time in its history. Michelle Bachelet was a member of the Socialist Party and the daughter of an army general who had been tortured to death by agents of the military dictatorship. Exiled to Germany by the military authorities, Bachelet became a landmark case in the political history of Chile and Latin America. Her biography and political trajectory would oblige the country to reconsider the issue of historic memory, and engage in new discussions of gender, politics, and culture (Franceschet, 2010; Haas & Blofield, 2014; Borzutzky & Weeks, 2010).¹³⁶ With the arrival of Bachelet, the discussion of historic memory would achieve renewed political status and would become an issue of public interest. At the same time, her arrival in power would, according to some, be a sign of the end of the political transition (Weeks, 2010). But progress on human rights and social policy would not live up to expectations (Weeks & Borzutzky, 2012). This would have significant consequences for the Chilean political process.

At the beginning of the 2010s, the Concertación coalition lost control of government after twenty years in power. Despite the widespread popularity and general support for the Bachelet administration, the candidate of the Concertación, ex-President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, lost the presidential elections to the right wing candidate Sebastián Piñera, a Chilean millionaire connected to the Pinochet-supporting conservative parties. This not only led to the collapse of the political landscape generated by the Concertación, it also meant the erosion of a large portion of left wing cultural and intellectual space.

¹³⁶ In her text ‘¿Qué significa una presidenta mujer socialista en Chile?’, Richard writes: ‘La biografía de Michelle Bachelet ha sido capaz de convertir el signo “mujer” en una línea de fuerza que anuda los fragmentos disímiles de una historia política densa y tensa. Las identidades fragmentadas y recompuestas que mezcla su tránsito biográfico, nos sugieren cómo el gobierno de una presidenta socialista podría llevar los flujos de lo múltiple y lo plural a abrir un juego de las diferencias que, sin excluir los conflictos y los antagonismos, extiende la democracia.’ (Richard, 2007c: 144). See also Richard’s analysis of the ‘significante Bachelet’ in Richard (2013: 192-207). For a feminist analysis of Bachelet, see Burotto and Torres (2010).

For intellectuals such as Richard, this defeat and political collapse represented nothing more than an obvious response to the silence and disregard that the Concertación had shown towards dissident voices and the general public for the past 20 years. Despite policies designed to overcome poverty implemented since 1990, the lower and middle classes, that is, the vast majority of the population, had to develop survival strategies under an exclusive and unequal economic model (Han, 2012; Araujo & Martuccelli, 2014). As a result of successive unfulfilled promises, the exhaustion of the old *Concertación* was becoming clear.

However, with the arrival of the Piñera administration, a new political cycle began, characterized by the student movements of 2011 and a series of social conflicts such as the Mapuche movement (Villalobos-Ruminott, 2007, 2012b; Crow, 2013), the expansion of sexual and reproductive rights (marriage equality and abortion), and the ecology movements (Silva & Rodrigo, 2010), among others. The Piñera administration had to face the birth of a new Chile, one forged out of the first student movements of 2006, the primary purpose of which being to establish a *society of rights* rather than a *society of consumers*.

As *Vice-rectora de Extensión, Comunicaciones y Publicaciones* of the Universidad Arcis, Richard witnessed these processes. Without actively participating in traditional media (television and nationally syndicated newspapers), Richard managed to position herself as a key figure in the Chilean artistic and intellectual field. Her publications, writings, and public interventions had become points of reference for thinking about Chilean artistic and cultural production over previous decades, and were critical of the Concertación coalition and its policies regarding memory and human rights.

While Richard had already dedicated much attention to the debates on memory during the past decade, this issue would receive special attention during the 2000s, and indeed up to the present day. Richard and her collaborators in the 'espacio de la crítica cultural' began to establish an open dialogue on political and aesthetic production based upon the issue of memory. During the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the coup in 2003, a theoretical, aesthetic, and political debate emerged aimed at understanding the past, thinking about the present, and imagining the future of Chile. As she had done from the very beginning of her career, Richard sharpened her calling as a *flâneur*. Through her wandering and observation of memory sites and museums, Richard began yet another chapter in her intellectual career.

This final chapter explores the key dimensions developed by Richard on the issue of memory in Chile between 2000 to 2015. Specifically, this chapter describes how *crítica cultural* experienced a theoretical, and especially political, shift towards the issue of historic memory. In these years, Richard maintained the analytical schema of *crítica cultural* developed during the previous decade, but expanded the model to include a new idea: *crítica de la memoria*. As Richard understands it, *crítica de la memoria* is a negative critique of the *dispositifs* of official memory established during the Chilean transition, which sought to eliminate traumatic memories in favour of silence. Based on this critical displacement, Richard proposes to investigate the injustice and 'pactos de silencio' that had dominated Chile during the transition, as well as to develop a political and aesthetic commitment to keeping uncomfortable issues of memory alive. If criticism of *crítica cultural* focused upon its lack of social intervention and historic commitment, through *crítica de la memoria* Richard would take an important step in politicizing her

crítica cultural. However, this would continue to be a politics characterized by uncovering those elements that interrupt or inconvenience the institutional 'pliegues' of official memory based upon aesthetic experience.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, the primary characteristics of Richard's *crítica de la memoria* are presented. First, the differences between Richard's *crítica cultural* and philosophical thought connected to discourses of 'melancholy' in the post-dictatorship era will be described. Once the difference between these has been established, the primary characteristics and dimensions of Richard's *crítica de la memoria*, and its main political and cultural challenges, will be reviewed.

The second part of the chapter then describes the analyses and critiques that Richard makes of the media, art, spaces of memory, and publications dedicated to memory during the 2000s. It will also provide specific analyses of other cultural texts that, in my opinion, support the debate initiated by Richard.

The last section of the chapter describes current challenges to the *crítica cultural* and *crítica de la memoria*. In a context characterized by capitalist globalization and the diversification of global networks of power, critical practice has had to face new theoretical, cultural, and political challenges, as well as to re-evaluate its mechanisms and *dispositifs* for action. This last section is designed to present these debates and to evaluate their contexts, as well as contribute to discussion of the future of cultural criticism in Chile and in Latin America.

Thanks to the student movements of 2011 and the social demand for a

society of rights (free, public, and quality education, social equality and protection etc.), Chile has had to rethink itself politically. This new scenario involved the end of the *Concertación* and the beginning of a new political front known as the 'Nueva Mayoría'.¹³⁷ At the end of the Piñera administration, this new political coalition proposed to both accept the mistakes of the past, and to endorse the demands of the social movements. With the support of the 'Nueva Mayoría' and certain sectors of the student and workers movements, in the 2014 presidential election Michelle Bachelet again became President of Chile.

Based upon this historic background, this chapter seeks to complete the revision and analysis of Richard's intellectual career which began in 1970, and to present the current elements that enable *crítica cultural* and *crítica de la memoria* to maintain their relevance with regards to the new political and cultural challenges that Chile faces today.

¹³⁷ Which maintains the same political parties as the *Concertación*, plus the Communist Party of Chile and other political forces.

I. *Crítica de la memoria*

Richard's intellectual concern with memory is not a recent phenomenon. Since the *Escena de Avanzada* in the 1970s and 1980s there has been widespread aesthetic production linked to the issue of memory. From the exhibitions of Leppe and Altamirano, to those of CADA and Dittborn, as well as the writings of Eltit, Kay etc., there has been an accumulation of experiences, perspectives, and debates that have served the need for reflection during the post-dictatorship. This work enabled Richard to create her first theoretical and poetic ideas regarding the cultural landscape of Chile under the dictatorship. Subsequently, as we have seen, these 'archivos' (of bodies, landscapes, photographs, urban meanderings etc.) have been brought to bear upon the present in order to think about the past and to reconstruct the future.

As noted in the previous chapter, although the democratic government during the 1990s made efforts to shed light on the events that occurred during the military dictatorship, these were entirely insufficient. The phrase 'justicia en la medida de lo posible' sums up what occurred during those years. For the political authorities at the beginning of the 1990s, human rights cases had to be resolved in the courts of justice, and the state could not intervene in these processes.

This scenario persisted during the first government of Aylwin as well as the beginning of the Christian Democratic administration of Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle. Disillusionment regarding the search for justice was becoming crystallized within the local landscape. However, in October, 1998, the political sphere in Chile was rocked. Owing to the efforts of the Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón, the ex-dictator Pinochet was arrested in London by British

authorities (Davis, 2003; Spooner, 2011). For the first time in international legal history, an ex-dictator could lose his condition of diplomatic immunity and be made to appear before foreign courts for crimes against humanity (Stern, 2010). After years of disillusionment for the families of the disappeared, finally the incapacity of the state and of the Chilean courts of justice to bring the ex-dictator to trial was exposed on an international stage. Richard would note:

Esta sacudida de la noticia, que hizo estallar la energía contestataria del tema de los derechos humanos en Chile y en el mundo, remeció nuestra problemática de la memoria. Al desorganizar bruscamente los minuciosos pactos –de silencio y complicidades, de temores y vigilancia- con que las máquinas oficiales de la Transición sellaron su “democracia de los acuerdos”, el caso Pinochet evidenció la necesidad de reexaminar críticamente la lógica encubridora de estos pactos transicionales. (Richard, 2000e: 9).

Pinochet's detention and its effects can be considered a real *event* in the national political and cultural scene. This event can be interpreted in the light of Alain Badiou's (2005) *Being and Event*. Here, Badiou points out that an event emerges in history as something unexpected, unpredictable, and inconceivable, the primary effect of which is to subvert the hegemony or dominant system of beliefs in a given historic moment. As a result of such an event, it is possible to make way for new phenomena of creation and reflexive novelty, that is, new forms of intellectual resistance. This event (the arrest of Pinochet) also had another particular characteristic. It was localized and singular, but at the same time universal. Based on it, not only were new theories forged and new legal processes regarding human rights initiated in Chile, but new questions were also raised on human rights internationally (Nash, 2007; Roht-Arriaza, 2006). The power of the Pinochet case allowed for the formation of a new kind of historic subject, the purpose of which was to

promote a 'universal singularity', which is to say a truth that is valid for all.

The 'Pinochet event' triggered memories of the cold, rough, uncomfortable history of the dictatorship in Chile. It also made clear that a legal report was not enough to declare the desired 'punto final' of the right wing military dictatorship. On the contrary, it saw the *politics of remembrance* challenge the *politics of agreement* that the Concertación had embraced during the 1990s.

In view of the need to convert memory into a new arena of political expression, social intervention and media performance, together with her collaborators Nelly Richard organized the Colloquium 'Políticas y estéticas de la memoria'¹³⁸ in August, 1999 at the Universidad de Chile. The objective of the event was to reflect upon the moral and political discussion of historical memory, as well as its wounds. For Richard, these wounds are those that:

deben ser incorporadas(os) a las narrativas históricas de la Transición para que cobren visibilidad no sólo los brillos del éxito político-administrativo y técnico-comercial de la modernización democrática con los que se viste la actualidad chilena sino, también, lo más oscurecido por ella: los fracturado y convulso de biografías rotas, de subjetividades en desarme, de lenguajes y representaciones llenos de cicatrices que el frenesí mercantil ha desalojado cruelmente de sus vitrinas del consumo. (Richard, 2000e: 11).

What Richard proposed was to initiate, in the State and in the public realm, a wide-ranging discussion of memory and the cultural texts that surround it. In other words, she not only appealed for more ample recognition of the victims and their traumatic experiences, but also for recognition of the aesthetics of

¹³⁸ At the same time, the exhibition 'Memoria(s)' was held at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Chile, presenting the work of Carlos Altamirano, José Balmes, Gracia Barrios, Roser Bru, Francisco Brugnoli, Gonzalo Díaz, Eugenio Dittborn, Arturo Duclos, Virginia Errázuriz, Carlos Leppe, Guillermo Núñez, Lotty Rosenfeld, and Mario Soro.

memory while putting the political action of her *crítica cultural* into practice. The politics and aesthetics of memory should be highlighted, she maintained, in order to inconvenience the documentary and monumental logic of current political institutions and, based on this, to prevent history becoming merely a set of official remembrances.

Based upon this chain of thought, each colloquium involved the participation of various intellectuals connected to or associated with the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* (Tomás Moulian, Carlos Ossa, Willy Thayer, Carlos Pérez Villalobos, Diamela Eltit, Raquel Olea, Pablo Oyarzún, Guadalupe Santa Cruz), international figures (Claudia Feld, Martine Déotte, Stéphane Douailler, Alain Brossat, Jean-Louis Déotte), as well as the Chileans (Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, Patricia Verdugo, Carmen Hertz, Marco Antonio de la Parra, Humberto Giannini). During the various interventions, a series of issues such as the secret agreements between the Concertación and the right wing ex-military government, the role of the media, the perspectives of witnesses and victims, the role of photography in memory, aesthetic practices and critical languages, the relation between the body and violence, the experience of trauma, and the relations between memory and human rights, were discussed.

Two positions emerged regarding the conflict over the role of memory and criticism in the post-dictatorship era (Galende, 1998). On the one hand, there were those who were associated with a certain philosophical account based on the idea of 'melancholy', and on the other, there were those in favour of more political and cultural interventions, or *crítica cultural*, that is, those prepared to mourn the human cost of the military dictatorship.

This distinction, derived from the classic 1917 study by Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', plays a significant role at this moment. As

pointed out in Freud's analysis, both melancholy and mourning emerge as a result of the loss of 'something' that is irreplaceable and painful, which in this case is the fall of Allende and the emergence of the military dictatorship. Both, however, face this 'original sin' in a different way. Whilst thinkers committed to history's melancholic implications are completely marked by this event (an irreparable weight), those who have mourned accept the consequences of the dictatorship and assume that history goes on. In addition, while the former avoid mourning and consider any critical political action in a democracy to be illegitimate, those who have mourned assume that it is impossible to go back, and instead focus their will and criticism on a new project: a new, possible life.

In her text 'Las marcas del destroz y su reconfiguración en plural', Richard (2001a) engaged with this debate in order to establish the foundations of her *crítica cultural* and its relation to memory in the post-dictatorship context. In it, Richard begins her argument by recognizing that the coup was not just a real coup against representation, but also involved a *loss of the word*. Borrowing these ideas from the Chilean philosopher Patricio Marchant (2000), Richard sought to point out that, although there was a 'pérdida de la palabra' during the military dictatorship (and partly during the post-dictatorship), it was necessary to recover the word through action. In other words, in order to deploy her *crítica cultural* with regard to the issue of memory, it was necessary to put the mute nature of melancholy aside.

In doing so, Richard responds directly to a text of Alberto Moreiras (1993, 1999) entitled 'Postdictadura y reforma del pensamiento', published originally in the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*. According to Richard, Moreiras and others such as Thayer (2000) clung to a kind of thought that had survived from the revolutionary political transformation (the militant fervour of revolutionary

ideals) into the struggles for a return to democracy (the historic conviction of truth), but which since then, now in a neoliberal context, had succumbed to scepticism and indifference characterized by mistrust in the transformative capacity of critical thought.

For Richard, this philosophical line of thought was characterized by unproductive melancholy. Owing to its self-reflexive nature in the contemplation of failure and loss, its political role rested upon scepticism of any new critical expression of memory. In other words, Moreiras' views not only prolonged the memory of the loss and infertility of all critical-political action, but also seemed to be comfortable cultivating melancholy as an individual refuge that gives up on reality. For Richard, this meant an irreconcilable passivity with regard to the battle-ready spirit that was required for the political and cultural discussions of the democratic transition.

In her words:

Recobrar la palabra después de la “pérdida de la palabra”, salvándola del naufragio de lo indecible; romper el círculo autorreferencial de una negatividad de la pérdida indefinidamente vuelta sobre sí misma; realizar “el duelo del duelo” (Moreiras) exige retramar **articulaciones significantes y conexiones operativas** para que la memoria enlutada no quede presa de esta soledad melancólica. La tarea es difícil porque, junto con imaginar sentidos futuros que rearticulen la pérdida en nuevas relaciones de contextos, la crítica tendrá que defender el lugar y la posición de estos sentidos futuros en las redes polémicas de la actualidad donde se negocian y se pelean las diferentes estrategias discursivas de la memoria y del recuerdo. Y es ahí, en esa incierta zona de promiscuos contactos entre **lengua crítica y actualidad**, donde más se complica el problema de la intervención crítico-intelectual. (Richard, 2007a: 177 [Emphasis in the original]).

In this way, for Richard the need to overcome the unprocessed effects of

melancholy and transfer the grief-stricken past to a present and future that is open to reflection was very clear. To overcome the psychic blockages, the paralysis of will, and the immobilization of the subject, it was necessary to face two highly interconnected issues: on the one hand, to understand critical and aesthetic forms involved in the mobilization and transformation of critical meaning, and on the other, to become critically inserted into current contexts and situations. In the first case, Richard again takes up certain ideas developed by Kristeva (1992), and again emphasizes that the arts and literature are a privileged way of achieving new and productive reconfigurations of traumatic experience. In her words:

Si nos trasladamos al escenario de la memoria social del duelo histórico, esta lectura de las relaciones –por construir- entre **lo perdido** y sus **trazas recreadoras** nos señalan la importancia de confiar en las estéticas críticas para que las zonas más estremecidas del recuerdo encuentren fuerza, valor e intensidad, gracias a ciertos trances de la forma y la significación. (Richard, 2007a: 173 [Emphasis in the original]).

The second path consisted of knowing how to manage one's critical voice in a context dominated by the banality and bureaucratic and commercial control of the day. If the arts and literature had to expose the wounds of history despite being discredited by a melancholic philosophy, a critical voice had to express itself in the social sphere, and especially in the media (television, newspapers, etc.). In Richard's words:

Si no hacemos el intento de disputarle a la actualidad otros montajes de la percepción, otras hipótesis de lectura, otros diagramas de la mirada cuya fuerza crítica impugne los trazados preexistentes, estaremos abandonando el presente a su suerte sin ni siquiera haber intentado modificar en algo su configuración hegemónica. (Richard, 2007a: 183).

Based upon this, *crítica cultural* had to intervene by following what Derrida (1994) calls a 'vigilant counter-interpretation'. That is to say, a work of resistance that implies both interpreting (knowing *who* speaks and from *where*), and by strategically intervening in the 'artificial' reality of the day.

Richard proposed conceiving memory based upon a *crítica cultural* that seeks to explore discursiveness in a context that makes up the present, or those aesthetic and critical residues that face the present without being contained by the melancholy characteristic of philosophical discourse.¹³⁹ In this way, by focusing upon issues dealing with memory and justice in Chile, she makes it clear that *crítica cultural* had a political application, thus overcoming the critiques that those such as Hermann Herlinghaus, Hernán Vidal, and Jon Beasley-Murray made regarding Richard's lack of political commitment.

Richard thus came to integrate her discussion of memory in public space in post-dictatorship Chile into her critical practice. Public intervention had always been part of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural's* agenda. In the 2000s it became an exceptional space for political and cultural debate and discussion, along with other organized events, colloquia, and seminars. Regarding the latter, it is important to highlight the International Colloquium *Utopía(s) 1973 – 2003. Revisar el pasado, criticar el presente, imaginar el futuro*, organized by the Universidad Arcis in the Edificio Diego Portales between September 4-6, 2003. Key intellectual figures, both Chilean¹⁴⁰ and international,¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ In this sense, John Beverley (2011, 2014) is wrong to include Richard among the neo-arielist or ultra-leftist tendencies, characterized by their lack of public influence. Although the protests and discontent that emerged in Chile from the mid 2000s took place due to a series of historical events, social processes, and general popular resistance, it is possible to propose that the critical reflection developed by Richard and her collaborators in the Universidad Arcis (Tomás Moulian, Gabriel Salazar) during the 1990s lasting throughout the 2000s fed the student and social movements of 2006 and 2011.

¹⁴⁰ In addition to Jorge Arrate, Tomás Moulian, and Nelly Richard, Gabriel Salazar, María Eugenia Horvitz, Olga Grau, Carmen Berenguer, Miguel Vicuña, Pablo Oyarzún, Diamela Eltit, Alfredo Castro, Víctor Hugo Robles, Kemy Oyarzún, Alejandra Castillo, Adriana Valdés, Carlos Pérez Villalobos, Giselle Munizaga, Guillermo Sunkel, Faride Zerán, Jorge Larrain, Sofía Correa, Bernardo Subercaseaux, Martín Hopenhayn, Juan Pablo

participated in this colloquium, and the programme for the event concentrated on the following guiding questions, which clearly demonstrate the issues that Richard would confront in her own approach to the notion of *crítica de la memoria*:

¿Cómo oponerse a la trivialización mediática que disipa el recuerdo de la historia en los tráficos de una actualidad que se olvida del olvido, a penas ha circulado la efímera noticia del pasado a conmemorar? ¿Cómo rebatir el oficialismo de las conmemoraciones políticas de los treinta años del Golpe Militar, poniendo en escena voces no tan predecibles –ni tan dueñas de sí mismas- como las de los *reconocidos* protagonistas de la historia que no hacen sino reafirmar lo ya sabido? ¿Qué lecturas del pasado *contrastar* para que sean varias y disímiles las secuencias de argumentos y sucesos, de experiencias y simbolizaciones, de lógicas de interpretaciones, llamadas a descentrar la linealidad de una única razón histórica? ¿Cómo dejar sin suturas ciertas fallas de inteligibilidad de una historia cuya crisis debe seguir expresándose a través de los huecos de comprensión que aún la perforan, para mantenernos en constante estado de alerta frente a las verdades blindadas de las retotalizaciones demasiado seguras? ¿Cómo comprometer a las disciplinas académicas en la problemática del recordar, sin que las fronteras de la universidad le quiten fuerza ciudadana al debate especulativo sobre las tramas de la historia y la memoria? (Richard, 2004a: 13 [Emphasis in the original])

Following the tone of the questions posed by *Utopia(s)*, it is worth asking: How did Richard understand the idea of memory? What are the primary characteristics and dimensions of the notion of memory she deployed? What benefits and disadvantages does an intellectual project such as *crítica cultural* acquire by entering into discussions on memory in the Chilean post-dictatorship era?

Sutherland, Patricia Espinoza, Fernando Blanco, Eugenia Brito, José Joaquín Brunner, Carlos Peña, Grínor Rojo, Claudio Fuentes, etc. also participated.

¹⁴¹ Among those invited, were Beatriz Sarlo, Jean Franco, Alberto Moreiras, and Andreas Huyssen.

In order to respond to these questions, Richard summed up her critical work on memory in the 2010 book *Crítica de la memoria (1990 – 2010)*. In it, she summarizes a large part of her reflections on memory, art, and politics, and also establishes an analytical model that although based upon *crítica cultural*, is now connected to the issue of memory: a *crítica de la memoria*. If in the 1990s Richard's *crítica cultural* analysed and questioned the politics of agreement of the democratic transition based upon certain cultural texts, during the 2000s her critical work developed a concrete debate on memory and the violation of human rights in Chile. With this turn to *crítica de la memoria*, Richard emphasizes and realizes the political dimension her *crítica cultura* had always contained.

Throughout *Crítica de la memoria*, Richard presents her analyses and reflexive models that had been developed during the *Concertación* governments (Patricio Aylwin 1990-1993, Eduardo Frei 1994-1999, Ricardo Lagos 2000-2005, and Michelle Bachelet 2006-2010), and the initial years of the Sebastián Piñera administration. This change in political power cannot be considered a merely superficial one. On the contrary, if with the death of Pinochet in December, 2006 a new critical impetus was generated (along with a generalized sense of failure regarding the fact that Pinochet had never been brought to justice), with the arrival of Piñera to the presidency (as Pinochet's political heir and defender of the neoliberal model), new challenges regarding political and critical intervention emerged related to the issue of memory in Chile.

In this context, the book deals with the complex history of post-dictatorship Chile as well as the latest events and discourses that emerged at the beginning of the 2010s. For example, her analysis includes Piñera's uses of

the term '*desaparecidos*',¹⁴² as well as the terms 'futuro', 'crecimiento', 'modernización' and 'lucro', all of which are notions tied to the neoliberal market economy.

Faced with this scenario, Richard points out that, despite the symbolic rupture of the geological and political 'double earthquake' of 2010 (both geological and political), it is even more necessary to again put historic notions of crime, truth, justice and reparation into tension. In her words:

La memoria designa una zona de asociaciones voluntarias e involuntarias que se mueve entre el pasado y el presente, ambos concebidos como formaciones incompletas en las que se entrelazan lo ya consumado con lo aún no realizado. (Richard, 2010a: 16).

As the past is always inconclusive, memory is always latent, alive, and attentive. Only in this way is it possible to maintain a critical force of estrangement that continues to perturb the still unsundered present.

Richard points out that:

Podría decirse que lo que este libro llama "crítica de la memoria" es una crítica negativa de aquel dispositivo de la memoria oficial de la

¹⁴² As noted by Richard: 'Ya les era difícil a los familiares de las víctimas de la tortura y la desaparición del régimen militar, concebir la imagen de Sebastián Piñera festejando su triunfo presidencial desde el balcón del mismo Palacio de la Moneda que fue bombardeado en 1973 por encargo de aquellas fuerzas políticas que urdieron al menos uno de los costados de su candidatura. Pero les hubiese resultado inimaginable a estos familiares de las víctimas del régimen de Augusto Pinochet, un régimen criminalmente experto en desapariciones, que el discurso presidencial del 11 de marzo 2010, pronunciado desde el mismo balcón, incluyera esta sorprendente mención: "los que siguen desaparecidos en el océano azul que no ha querido devolverlos...los vamos a seguir buscando". El terremoto de febrero de 2010 hizo reaparecer la categoría de desaparecidos obligándola a desplazarse de repertorio el mismo día en que, literalmente, asumía como gobierno el programa del "cambio" anunciado por la Alianza por Chile. La figura de los desaparecidos salió del campo de los derechos humanos tradicionalmente movilizado por una sensibilidad de izquierda (que sabía de los cuerpos tirados al mar por operativos militares durante la dictadura) e ingresó subrepticamente al mundo de las catástrofes naturales, instrumentalizado por la derecha con el fin de legitimar su gobierno de "reconstrucción nacional".' (Richard, 2010a: 10). A similar analysis can be used to refer to the case of 'the 33' miners who were trapped 688 metres underground in Atacama, Chile, as a result of a collapsed mine (Franklin, 2011). The Piñera government was able to get them out alive, thus transforming the notion of the 'desaparecidos' into something resolvable through the logic of engineering and practical solutions.

transición chilena que buscó apaciguar el recuerdo, obliterando las luchas de sentido y las batallas de interpretación que debían mantener vivo el pasado en discordia, para no restarle fuerza batallante en la confrontación de lecturas de la historia. (Richard, 2010a: 17).

Although Richard recognizes the historical and legal importance of the efforts of the *Concertación*¹⁴³, she does not fail to disagree with the conciliatory ideal of the democratic consensus, including its ethic of forgiveness. Her thought focuses more on criticizing the routines of the institutional politics of memory, which sought to crystallize memory into a document or a monument.

As such:

la “crítica de la memoria” no sólo debe encargarse de revisar y discutir las huellas del pasado archivado por la historia para reanimar contra-interpretaciones de lo sucedido y lo relatado que se mantengan refractarias a la canonización de los hechos y sus versiones legitimadas. Le incumbe también a la “crítica de la memoria” descifrar los silenciamentos, las reservas, las omisiones y las negaciones, los *lapsus* que desfiguran o socavan la representación histórica con su pasado turbulentamente ubicado en el fuera-de-archivo de las narrativas institucionales y, también, de las disciplinas académicas. (Richard, 2010a: 18 [Emphasis in the original]).

Crítica de la memoria, then, is both *within* and/or *based upon crítica cultural*. In both senses, criticism is used as a destabilizing force regarding discursive hegemonies and the crystallization of meaning. At the same time, both seek to restore and analytically expand cultural symbolization, aesthetic models, and social practices. Attentive to the changes in cultural landscapes, Richard would widen her outlook and analytical meandering towards issues such as

¹⁴³ For instance: Informe Rettig, Informe Valech, Parque por la Paz Villa Grimaldi, Memorial del Cementerio general, Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos, the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, etc.

archives, monuments, street performance, buildings, memorial sites, etc. Sites and landscapes of memory would once again demand use of her analytical 'wandering'.

In this way, *crítica de la memoria* had similarly to seek out the residues and create the metaphors that would enable it to create new political and cultural maps. As a result, *crítica de la memoria* is made up of certain analytical dimensions that were already evident within *crítica cultural*. The latter, however, is now made more complex through the inclusion of a set of new elements.

First, *crítica de la memoria* conceives of art and critical *ensayismo* as an indispensable unity. Together, they make up linguistic games that between them establish interpretative challenges as well as decentralizing the social definitions and crystallizations of which they are a part. Unlike popular or mass consumption artefacts, art generates formal experiences that attempt to problematize that which is factitious or imposed. Art and literature born out of the question of memory play a fundamental role in *crítica de la memoria*.

Second, not all art forms and language experiences tied to memory possess critical equivalence. In Richard's words:

no todas las formas de configurar el pasado a través del recuerdo son equivalentes entre sí, por mucho que todas ellas se sientan animadas por la misma voluntad de condena a lo siniestro de ese pasado de tortura y desapariciones. (Richard, 2010a: 21).

Even when the materialization of memory (monuments, archives, testimonies etc.) plays a part in its discussion, all must be judged based on each of their specific symbolic and narrative functions. These functions offer and mould a

relationship between experience, narration, voice, and discursiveness. However, and owing to the exponential growth of testimonial records and confessions, it is necessary to be attentive to the various visions of the past and to put them on reflexive display. It is not possible, from a critical perspective, to put oneself in another's position. Although there is such a thing as empathy, compassion, and the search for comprehension, it is important, nevertheless, to put oneself in the other's place *without taking their place*. Only through critical distance is it possible to achieve analytical productivity.

Third, *crítica de la memoria* is very suspicious of any and all attempts to define a unique vision of memory. It must speak out on any semiotic or cultural maneuvers that certain discourses exert within social space. For *crítica de la memoria*, no one narrative can pretend to represent an immovable truth, or a total and complete meaning. In this way, *crítica de la memoria* must promote the articulation of 'algún punto de vista' (una mirada siempre *otra*) on images, testimonies, and interpretations of the past. Thinking about the past is always a terrain that is politically disputed.

Fourth, *crítica de la memoria* always seeks to diversify discursive visions of memory. In doing so, it puts such visions within a *political* realm, not conforming to the search for intervals or fluctuations within hegemonic symbolic orders. *Crítica de la memoria* recognizes that, within the neoliberal machinery and its globalized cultural hegemony, there are fissures into which creativity, mutation, and resistance can be inserted. As Richard points out:

Lo que desea la crítica es producir oscilaciones favorables al cambio entre la identidad de lo ya cursado –la diferencia diferenciada- y lo que está siempre en trance de acontecer heterogéneamente como potencia metamorfoseante –la diferencia diferenciadora- en las

geografías de discursos y representaciones cuyos vectores poético-políticos se mueven *entre líneas*. (Richard, 2010a: 25).

In light of this, and fifth, *crítica de la memoria* is deeply suspicious of the transparency and innocence of languages (visual, textual, performance-based etc.). It believes in the power of written and visual expression as tools for expressing contempt. In addition, it is also suspicious of the comfort of academically useful knowledge, choosing to instead strengthen knowledge that causes disciplinary discomfort. Both poetic and critical language foregrounds conflict in order to exacerbate the breaks within official narratives. Unlike formal knowledge (academic, legal), *crítica de la memoria* does not desire to self-regulate and establish official frameworks for interpretation. On the contrary, it only seeks to offer a possible interpretation that serves as a critical driver for the use of new and diverse forms of written and visual expression.

Crítica de la memoria establishes its point of departure on the above five key dimensions. In doing so, it takes a series of materials as analytical references - political events, the landscape of protest, photography, artistic interventions, testimonial literature, commemorative projects, monuments, places of memory, documentaries, publications, magazines, television programmes etc. In each of these, *crítica de la memoria* looks to discover a 'residue' or a sign that makes it possible to put critical reflection to use. An analytical programme is thus established that offers interpretations (a point of view), which attempt to illuminate a piece of the puzzle that is overlooked by official interpretations.

Nonetheless, Richard's work on memory has not been openly recognized by 'traditional academia', which is dedicated to the formal comprehension of memory in Chile. Not only has the academia ignored Richard's specific

interpretations of these issues (in English-language publications on the subject there are practically no bibliographical references to her work), but it has also paid very little attention to the art, literature, and audiovisual work that deals with the fabric of memory in Chile at all. This evidently reinforces Richard's position of 'relative marginality' regarding the formal and consensual space of the 'objective' disciplines (Stern, 2010; Collins, Hite & Joignant, 2013). For such disciplines as the legal and political sciences and sociology, spaces for symbolic representation have always played a secondary role regarding the issue of human rights, and do not deserve a relevant position in academic analysis. However, during the 2000s research associated with Latin American Cultural Studies (both in Chile and beyond), did include references to Richard's analyses and concerns (Gómez-Barris, 2008; Lazzara, 2006, 2007, 2014; Peris, 2005; Pino-Ojeda, 2011; Fornazzari, 2013; Seydel, 2012). Here, the politics and aesthetics of memory have played a key role in comprehending the symbolic, poetic, and dramatic phenomena experienced during the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship era. Although historic compilations of memory, as well as the legal accumulation of incriminating evidence, are both key to justice and memory, it is also clear that through aesthetic and political sensitivities the symbolic fabric regarding the political past and memory are also put in play.

How did Chilean television and the media represent the conflicts over memory and human rights? What critical perspectives can be established based upon the emergence of places of memory, memorial sites, museums, and institutes of human rights in Chile? How did the visual arts discuss the political and critical effects of memory?

Richard's *crítica de la memoria* answered such questions. Throughout the 2000s and the 2010s, Richard has paid special attention to these issues and

sought to establish a critical interpretative framework to apply to a series of artworks, memorials, books etc., which have been of special interest to her. Both through the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* and other editorial projects, Richard has applied the principles of her *crítica de la memoria* to a significant number of works.

The following section looks at some of the analyses that Richard has made of Chilean television, the testimonial character of certain literary works, visual art, and memorial sites and museums. In addition, other cultural texts are analysed through certain elements of Richard's thought in order to offer new ideas for understanding processes of memory in contemporary Chile.

II. Cultural landscapes, aesthetic artefacts

Since the second half of the 2000s, Chile has been characterized by a new form of dealing with public spaces and spaces of memory. Those changes were quite clear to Richard. As a contemporary *flâneur*, her incursion into the multitudes, places of memory, buildings, and street corners were key to the development of her *crítica de la memoria*. Television, biographical work, visual arts, and places of memory would all be key elements in this process and Richard applied a critical perspective to all of them.

Media and memory

As we have seen, Pinochet's arrest was a jolt to recent Chilean history, and a break in the politics of consensus and agreement. This was true both in political life as well as in the daily lives of the Chilean public. In classrooms, work spaces, and family life, discussions of the 'Pinochet case' became a

recurring theme. In this context, the media¹⁴⁴ played a key role. All covered the events in London and devised a series of special programmes, reports, and analyses of the case itself. But there was little discussion of human rights abuses and the struggle for justice by organizations such as the *Agrupacion de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos de Chile* (Diaz, 1997). As Kristin Sorensen noted with regard to Chilean television during the post-dictatorship era:

Coverage of themes and issues related to the dictatorship and human rights is partial and cryptic. [...] Yet, especially until 2004, there was virtually no coverage or discussion of the systematic use of torture that was practiced on what many estimate to be hundreds of thousands of Chileans and non-Chileans detained during the dictatorship, many of whom are still living. (Sorensen, 2009: 32).

The communications scenario in the 1990s and 2000s was characterized by disinterest in presenting discussions of memory. This had already been noted by Richard and her collaborators in the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* at the end of the 1990s. In the special editions of June 1999 and November, 2000 entitled 'La cultura de la memoria: medios, política y amnesia' (Nº18), and 'Lo público y lo privado' (Nº21), respectively, several authors showed how television and written journalism in Chile had overlooked the issue of historical memory. For example, in his text 'La trama estallada (Television y Espacio Publico)', Carlos Ossa emphasized that, during the transition: 'la televisión circula en y por lo público como la verificación imaginaria de la edad de lo pospolítico, el triunfo del advertising sobre lo ideológico.' (Ossa,

¹⁴⁴ In Chile, as in the rest of Latin America, the media is mostly administered by special interest groups, both directly and indirectly connected to the rightwing supporters of the coup and the economic elite, and there has been a clear monopoly over information from the 1990s up to the present day, with the corresponding imposition of issues by these special interest groups. Whilst some alternative channels of communication have emerged, such as the magazine *The Clinic*, founded in 1998 as a response to the detention of Pinochet in London, and which to this day maintains a constant tone of irony, politics, and humour, and Channel 2, an experimental youth television channel that broadcasted from 1995 until 1999, there is no media law that regulates monopolistic practices in Chile. For the relation between the media and democracy in Chile, see Arriagada and Navia (2013).

2000: 20). In other words, Ossa showed how the media in the post-dictatorship era discouraged any public interest in politics, in favour of banal cultural content.

The consumer and entertainment industries thus played a fundamental part in distracting the minds of the public and avoiding any uncomfortable confrontations with memory. In Richard's words:

El escenario televisivo de la transición dejó la memoria golpeada, a la memoria herida del golpe militar, sin rostros ni cuerpos de referencia, sin sujetos *de* la historia ni sujetos *con* historia, sin los testimonios de las víctimas que no sólo contribuyen a reforzar la ética de la denuncia sino que ayudan a que la memoria social cuente con un tejido de experiencias únicas y singulares que le da espesor simbólico y expresivo al recuerdo del pasado. (Richard, 2010a: 37 [Emphasis in the original]).

In order to highlight the unresolved conflicts regarding memory in Chile at the beginning of the 2000s, Richard analysed the treatment of street women on television in the context of Pinochet's arrest in London in 1998 (Richard, 1999; 2007a; 2010a). The purpose was to highlight the importance of discussing unresolved issues in the media.

Based on the images presented on television reports 'desde el lugar de los hechos' (in London, 1998), Richard sought to develop a critical comparison between the bands of women representing the pro-Pinochet faction and the women belonging to the groups representing the family members of disappeared Chileans. Through these images, it was possible to see how both sides confronted each other at street protests in London and in Santiago de Chile. According to Richard, while the women supporting Pinochet saw the arrest as an international Communist conspiracy, the women related to the

disappeared saw the event as a possibility for international justice. While the Pinochet supporters connected the image of Pinochet to religious references (for example, their use of Nuestra Señora del Carmen, patron saint of the Chilean military), the women supporting the cause of human rights utilized images of their fathers, sons, brothers, and other family members who had been disappeared by the repressive forces of the Pinochet regime. While the women who venerated Pinochet used colour images of the ex-dictator, as well as imprinted t-shirts, stickers, and badges emblazoned with the dictator's smiling face, the family members of those who had been executed for political reasons presented black-and-white photographs and photocopies of the faces of those who had been disappeared. While the former held up colour posters inscribed 'Pinochet es inmortal', the latter posed the question '¿Dónde están?'¹⁴⁵. While the former came down from the upper class neighborhoods of the city (those which benefited most from the dictatorship), the latter came to the city centre from the outskirts and suburbs of the city (areas deprived under the neoliberal model).

In sum, Richard showed how the televised images began to present the historic differences between the 'triumphant' and the 'defeated': between, on the one hand, the enraged though without regret, and on the other, those made desperate by persistent injustice. For Richard, highlighting these differences was vital if the enraged were to demand more in-depth treatment of these issues on television.

How long would it take for television to integrate such issues into their

¹⁴⁵ Similar to the 'Siluetazos' in Argentina (Longoni & Bruzzone, 2008), the family members of the disappeared in Chile have used signs with photographs of the faces of their disappeared family members, obtained from family heirlooms or from national identification photographs, with the question 'Where are they?' These signs have always been present at the protests for justice organized by the families of the disappeared. With the arrest of Pinochet, these signs appeared on the media constantly. See Richard (2007a).

programming? How would they deal with these debates?

Whilst during the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the coup in 2003 several television programmes and news reports were shown, this effort was unable to effectively communicate the darkest periods of the military dictatorship. However, the death of Pinochet in 2006¹⁴⁶ generated an immediate impetus for news as well as a resurgence of social and political divisions in the country (Sorensen, 2009; Stern, 2010). As a result, televisual treatment of the issue of memory became unprecedented.

Although certain media that had supported the coup and the military government, such as *El Mercurio*, are still functioning as 'if nothing has happened'¹⁴⁷, through other programmes on private and public television channels there has recently been an attempt ('*en la medida de lo posible*') to revert the previous whitewashing of the issue by the media.¹⁴⁸ Arguably the pressures and demands made by both human rights groups and critics of the media (such as Richard and her circle) were finally heeded during the second half of the 2000s. Such pressure would pay off in the end. Created and written by 'children of the dictatorship' (those born between 1973-1990) in order to be discussed among the 'witnesses of the coup' and the 'children of democracy' (those born since 1990), a significant number of such television programmes have been produced since 2008. These, I believe, have made

¹⁴⁶ See the documentary *La muerte de Pinochet* (2011) by Bettina Perut and Ivan Osnovikoff. The film presents three takes on the event (a supporter of the military government, a Communist, and a parking attendant from the outskirts of Santiago). For me, the figure of the parking attendant is of particular interest, as it reflects a perspective of general confusion and bewilderment, characteristic of Chile during the post-dictatorship transition to democracy.

¹⁴⁷ The documentary *El diario de Agustín* (2008), directed by Ignacio Agüero, deals with the role of the newspaper *El Mercurio* before, during, and after the military coup. The documentary is also interspersed with media interviews and conversations with the directors of the newspaper, and experienced a series of episodes of censorship and difficulties regarding its exhibition in Chile.

¹⁴⁸ It is obvious that, by the end of the 1990s, television programmes for young people emerged which, through irony and irreverence, managed to generate a polemic about the '*política de los acuerdos*' as well as the recent past. Concrete examples were *Plan Z* and *Factor Humano* on Channel 2 Rock & Pop. See Blanco (2014).

some progress in reporting the issue of the violation of human rights during the dictatorship, placing traumatic historical facts on a mass media platform, such as television, for the first time. In the following section, I briefly analyse four of these television series in order to further contextualize Richard's *crítica de la memoria*.

The first two series dedicated to thinking about historical memory in Chile were *Los 80* (Channel 13, 2008-2014) and *Los Archivos del Cardenal* (National Television Channel, 2011).¹⁴⁹ Both emerged, among other reasons, in order to commemorate the celebration of the bicentennial of Chilean independence.

a. Los 80: dictatorship and the middle class family in the 1980s

Los 80 was a television series that portrays the daily life of a middle class Chilean family in the 1980s. Throughout the series, it is possible to observe the experiences and decisions of the Herrera family, and to identify through these experiences the social, economic, and cultural transformations that took place in Chile as a result of the neoliberal reforms. The series shows how the different characters faced a chain of situations characteristic of the time - unemployment, university privatization, women's entry into the job market, political persecution, the emergence of advertising and consumerism, protests, business ventures etc. In each of these situations, the series seeks the viewer's emotional identification with the Chilean family of the 1980s. Although the series highlights the supposed deepest values of the Chilean family (its strength in the face of adversity), this does not take precedence over the discussion of political issues, as well as other matters often

¹⁴⁹ For a critical and descriptive analysis of both series, see Schlotterbeck (2014).

uncomfortable to discuss even now. In several episodes, the presence of Pinochet's secret police and their particular *modus operandi* play a significant role in the Herrera family's life. For example, in one of the episodes the eldest daughter of the family is explicitly tortured, producing great consternation among the public. *Los 80* offered Chilean audiences both a nostalgic memory of those years, and for the first time in a fictional Chilean television series, the representation of illegitimate actions and violations of human rights against Chilean citizens. By the end of the series in 2014, its creators refused to conclude the seven season series with a happy ending. Instead, they sought to look into the future, presenting the life of Félix (the youngest son of the Herrera family) in a contemporary context. In doing so, they directly criticize the 'children of the dictatorship', characterized by their apolitical character, social disinterest, and reluctance to question the consequences of the neoliberal model.

b. Los Archivos del Cardenal: human rights and the Catholic Church

If *Los 80* seeks in part to reinforce Chilean family values, *Los archivos del cardenal* (2011) seeks to highlight the work of the Catholic Church in the defence of human rights during the military dictatorship. Broadcast by the Televisión Nacional de Chile in 2011, *Los archivos del cardenal* tells the story of the work done by the professionals of the 'Vicaría de la Solidaridad' for the legal defence of detained political prisoners, those who had been tortured, and those who had been disappeared during the military regime. The programme shows both the daily life and the work environment of a family connected to the 'Vicaría', as well as emblematic cases of human rights violations in Chile (for example, the 'Caso Degollados' and the assassination of the union leader Tucapel Jiménez). Unlike *Los 80*, which focuses upon daily life and the recreation of a 'periodo nostálgico', *Los archivos del*

cardenal exposes the disrespectful actions of the Courts of Justice, explicit acts of torture and persecution by the Central Nacional de Informaciones (CNI), the shocking treatment of cases of the disappeared by the media, the despair of human rights lawyers seeking justice etc. Based upon real but fictionalized cases, the series attained unforeseen ratings on one of the three main Chilean television stations. Beginning with its first episode in July, 2011, the series achieved a high level of interest and was harshly criticized by the Chilean right wing (Schlotterbeck, 2014). Members of the military dictatorship questioned the series, saying that it was 'clearly favourable to the Concertación', and for presenting the 'left wing as a victim'. Despite these criticisms, *Los archivos del cardenal* was able to showcase the laudable work of the Catholic Church in the search for justice and respect for human rights, and to reinforce the idea that the Pinochet government had established a coordinated policy between the secret state and the Courts of Justice. In sum, *Los archivos del cardenal* offered younger generations a crude portrait of how Chilean society experienced a regime of total repression and control, governed by terror and silence. However, it also exposes how, in the context of a dictatorship, people spoke out at great personal risk in order to fight for life, human rights, and democracy.

A second round of series dedicated to the issue of memory emerged in the context of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the coup in 2013.¹⁵⁰ Two deserve special attention. Funded and broadcasted by a private television channel (Chilevision), the series *Chile, las imágenes prohibidas* and *Ecos del desierto* added to previous efforts to discuss the effects of the past on contemporary Chile.

¹⁵⁰ See the analysis by Waldman (2014) of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the military coup.

c. Chile, las imágenes prohibidas: *past and present in images*

Unlike *Los archivos del Cardenal* and *Los 80, Chile, las imágenes prohibidas* does not incorporate fictional elements. On the contrary, it presents concrete cases of human rights abuses during the military regime, and uses witnesses interviewed in the present. The programme exhibits previously unknown images, videos, and other audiovisual materials. It then contacts those who were either directly involved or witnesses to the events selected by the editorial team. Throughout the series, the stories, experiences, and dialogues between the host and the human rights abuse victims were designed to present formal denunciations. In each case, there is not an attempt to balance the perspectives (between perpetrator and victim), rather than present the cases in all their raw agony. The cases of *Población La Victoria*, the *Estadio Nacional*, the forced entries into *Torres de San Borja*, the case of *Los Hornos de Lonquén* and, especially, the 'Quemados' case were all presented.¹⁵¹ In all those who were directly connected to the events were interviewed. Their voices, faces, bodies, and stories serve both to contextualize the images of the past, and to publicize voices that had been silenced for so many years. Forty years later, new generations were able to hear both the suffering and the thoughts of the victims or witnesses of a series of dramatic human rights violations committed by agents of Pinochet's secret police. For the first time, these accounts enabled public condemnation of such agents and collaborators, as well as presenting the testimony of a traumatic experience.

As in the previous series, this programme was also criticized for its biased view of history, as well as for promoting division and hatred between Chileans

¹⁵¹ The 'Quemados' case is a clear example of how these series came to have an impact on the search for justice in Chile. See Azul (2015).

(Reyes, 2013). On the contrary, what *Chile, las imágenes prohibidas* effectively does is to reveal the images, voices and stories that had been silenced during the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship era. These series proposed opening up old wounds with new questions through the revelation of images which, until then, had remained hidden from public view.

d. Ecos del desierto: Justice and biography

Shown in 2013, *Ecos del desierto* was one of the last series of this type to be broadcast. Proposed as a miniseries, *Ecos del desierto* is a biographical treatment of the human rights lawyer Carmen Hertz. The series is divided into two periods. First, the years that Hertz spent in the north of the country during the Allende administration. This part deals with the initial years of the Salvador Allende presidency and his downfall, as well as the consequences of the 'Caravana de la Muerte'¹⁵² on her life and family (including the disappearance of her husband and the political leader Carlos Berger). The second part focuses on the period from the final years of the dictatorship to the current day. This part deals with Hertz's human rights work in the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, and the threats and violence that she experienced from the supporters of the Pinochet regime. Both parts are interspersed with present-day views. Through a dialogue with her now adult son, the series main character expresses her doubts, dreams, and disillusionment with how history has played out.

Even though *Ecos del desierto* is based upon a 'personaje reconocido' in the history of human rights in Chile, the series presents a case of an experience shared by thousands of family members of those detained and disappeared

¹⁵² See Verdugo (2001).

by the military regime. In its attempt to present a non-fiction story, *Ecos del desierto* seeks to highlight a portion of history which, whilst resonating with the militant left wing, also includes a critical view of the *Concertación* and its perpetuation of neoliberal policies. More than anything, *Ecos del desierto* problematizes the post-dictatorship era based on the 'ahora biográfico' of Hertz, the depressing political and cultural consequences of history for the present day.

In sum, these series demonstrate the emergence of the topic of memory in the Chilean media, problematizing it as well as expanding on the questions at stake. For example: have the younger generations been convinced of the importance of understanding historical memory? How many more images are left that are as yet unknown? As pointed out by Richard in her *crítica de la memoria*, even when these TV programmes have managed to pose these questions 40 years after the military coup, it is important, nevertheless, to remain aware of the commercialization of memory, and of media tactics to trivialize such issues. Media coverage of memory is most definitely not a guarantee of historical consciousness.

Biographical space and memory

During the Chilean post-dictatorship era, a great number of testimonies, personal memories, personal diaries, filmed life stories, short narratives, representations of private expressions etc., emerged. With the return to democracy, many politicians, public figures, and intellectuals felt the need to tell their own stories in the context of the bigger history. Effectively, and especially since the 2000s, personal stories would give way to new forms of

biographical narrative in post-dictatorship Chile.¹⁵³

For Richard, this phenomenon was of special importance. From the beginning, she recognized that even when such stories emerge ‘del neoindividualismo capitalista que consagra lo personal en perjuicio de lo colectivo mediante la espectacularización de lo íntimo.’ (Richard, 2010a: 72), it is, nevertheless, important to analyse the biographies, autobiographies, and testimonies that the publishing houses had promoted during the post-dictatorship era.

Richard had already analysed similar biographical writings. In 1996, for example, she and Diamela Eltit wrote a biographical-analytical portrait of the political leader of the Communist Party of Chile, Gladys Marin (Richard, 1996). In addition, Richard included a chapter with an analysis of two testimonial books in her book *Residuos y Metaforas: El infierno* by Luz Arce¹⁵⁴, and *Mi verdad* by Marcia Alejandra Merino. The chapter ‘Tormentos y Obscenidades’ looked at the fragile border between the integrity of being (being consistent with the militant, left wing cause) and betrayal of the ideals of absolute loyalty (as the result of torture and the experience of terror).¹⁵⁵

Richard similarly dedicated her attention to collections of journalistic interviews, and produced a particularly critical interpretation of *Romo: Confesiones de un torturador* by Nancy Guzman. In her essay, ‘Las confesiones de un torturador y su (abusivo) montaje periodístico’, Richard (2001c) criticizes the graphic representations of terror in the narrative

¹⁵³ The emergence of biography in such contexts is not exclusive to Chile. In Argentina Arfuch (2013, 2010, and 2002) has looked at the same question. Beatriz Sarlo (2005) has also analyzed the culture of memory and the subjective turn. See also Nora Catelli (2007) and Paula Sibilia (2008).

¹⁵⁴ On the case of Luz Arce, see Lazzara (2011b).

¹⁵⁵ See the first article written on this issue in the *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, N°11, November, 1995.

provided by the torturer, Osvaldo Romo. A couple of years later, Richard (2003b) would further explore the market in confessional literature and would analyse the autobiographies of Monica Madariaga,¹⁵⁶ Gladys Marin,¹⁵⁷ and Clara Szczaranski.¹⁵⁸ In her analysis of these three biographies, Richard looks at the question of the 'feminine' in the hierarchical world of Pinochet's military government (Madariaga), in the militant ideology of the Communist Party and the revolutionary dream of the *Unidad Popular* (Marin), and in the verticality of the reason of state as well as the pragmatic nature of agreements reached in the context of the democratic transition (Szczaranski).

For Richard, these testimonies served as proof of what could not be legally or materially verified as a result of silencing by both the dictatorship and the *Concertación*. Such voices clearly demonstrate the violence and terror of past experience, as well as its deep effect on history, and serve as a warning to social consciousness. However, Richard makes it clear that such testimonies must not always be accepted as authentic, unique, and true representations of the victims' voices. As has already been explored regarding the key aspects of *crítica de la memoria*, any testimonial discourse is a *discourse*, and must not be frozen into something that is unquestionable. As Richard notes:

El desmontaje de las retóricas de lo sincero, lo verdadero y lo auténtico que sustentan los relatos de las publicaciones aquí comentadas es una de las varias tareas de una crítica de la memoria que no confía en la inmediatez del habla ni en la transparencia del sentido de las narraciones interiores; que no renuncia a problematizar la relación entre experiencia, voz y representación. Y que no teme admitir que la voz de la víctima, en sí misma y por sí misma, no detenta el privilegio ético de representar índices de

¹⁵⁶ (1942 – 2009) Ex Minister of Justice under Pinochet.

¹⁵⁷ (1941 – 2005) Ex President of the Communist Party.

¹⁵⁸ (1948 -) Ex President of the State Defence Council.

conciencia que deban considerarse absolutamente superiores a los que pueden surgir de las otras construcciones de la memoria que se entrecruzan con ella en la esfera pública de los discursos, donde compiten múltiples visiones del pasado que se interpelan unas a otras y que, por lo mismo, deben ser conjugadas *en plural*. (Richard, 2010a: 79. [Emphasis in the original]).

The analyses that Richard made of these testimonies analyses the complex relationship between intimate and confessional narratives and recent history. In doing so, not only did she seek to problematize the aim of the narrative itself (the author's aspiration and 'true and authentic' narrative), but also to offer an alternative reading from a fresh perspective. In concrete terms, Richard did not propose to simply describe the quality of these intimate narratives, but rather to establish a critical record that might lead to a *historical clarification* and thus achieve the ethical imperative of 'nunca más'. Therein lies the importance that Richard attributes to her *crítica de la memoria*. It takes a position from beyond any discourse, so as to then explain what its argumentative positions both hide and reveal. At this point, it is possible to produce an interpretation that highlights the roughness around the edges of the texts, including their visual components, in order to establish a contrast with that which is convenient and regulated by the established order.

As we have seen, the television scenario with its corresponding round of testimonies and confessions has played a key role in problematizing memory in Chile. From the perspective of a *crítica de la memoria*, such works have enabled non-complacent versions of official history. They have also facilitated the development of interpretations that provide new lines of creativity and resistance. In what follows I will look at the role that the visual arts have played in the debate on memory in Chile.

Visual arts, critical thought, and historical memory

Unlike the useful and academic knowledge of the legal expert, the visual arts, writing, and *crítica de la memoria* have dealt with those cultural ‘residues’ that have circulated through more uncertain and unresolved cultural spaces. In Richard's words:

El arte y la crítica cultural recogen estos fragmentos desarmados de las simbolizaciones de la memoria no para programar su juntura bajo el principio organizativo de una visión unificadora sino, más bien, para subrayar la aspereza de las texturas y el desensamblaje de los planos que contrarían lo convenido y regulado por las disciplinas constituidas e instituidas en el mundo académico-profesional como disciplinas *a salvo*. (Richard, 2010a: 182 [Emphasis in the original]).

While scientific-legal knowledge and government institutions seek to monumentalize memory (as a document, statue, building etc.), the visual arts and writing explore the gritty details regarding those dimensions of traumatic experience that are most confusing and difficult to represent. In this sense, the poetics of memory offer a record that is complemented by legal evidence against human rights violators. In addition, together with explicit legal evidence (such as documents, forensic reports, testimonies, photographs), the visual arts and critical writing help to strengthen a regime of truth and justice. As Richard has pointed out:

Al arte crítico, al pensamiento artístico y a la crítica cultural les incumbe la tarea de explorar la tumultosa opacidad de aquellas simbolizaciones del recuerdo llamadas a desmarcarse del brillo de la visualidad satisfecha de las mercancías que no admiten contratiempos al luminoso despliegue de su instantaneidad mediática. (Richard, 2010a: 189).

As I have repeatedly stressed, the relation between art, literature, performance, video art, photography, and critical writing has been fundamental for understanding Richard's *crítica cultural*, and her *crítica de la memoria*. As in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the artists of most interest to Richard have always been those closest to her own history, and moving into the 2000s there was no major variation in this interest. During the first decade of the 21st century, she again concentrated on the works of Carlos Altamirano, Eugenio Dittborn, Lotty Rosenfeld, Catalina Parra, and Paz Errázuriz. Such interest can be observed throughout the publication of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* (N° 22, 23, 28, 29-30, 33 and 35), as well as through a series of catalogue publications and in the re-edition of her books (Mosquera, 2006; Richard, 2010a, 2010b).

Indeed, whilst the concept of the *Escena de Avanzada* had been unnoticed within Chilean cultural space during the first part of the 1990s, by the end of that decade and especially during the first half of the 2000s, it is possible to observe a boom in reflections on it (Peters, 2011). It is thus not a coincidence that *Copiar el Edén*, the book catalogue by Gerardo Mosquera published in 2006, made special mention of the role and influence of the *Escena de Avanzada* both in local artistic production and in writing on art (theory, analysis, critique etc.). Nor is it a coincidence that the special issues 29 and 30 of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* were dedicated exclusively to analysing artistic production from 1960 onwards, paying special attention to the production of the *Escena de Avanzada*, CADA, and the artists involved in these circuits. In the same way, nor should it be considered a coincidence that the publisher Metales Pesados would re-edit and publish *Márgenes e Instituciones. Arte en Chile desde 1973* in 2007, with a new introduction and additional images, as well as an additional document entitled "Escena de

avanzada y sociedad, documento FLACSO no. 46” (Pérez Villalobos, 2009; Diaz, 2007).

However, the renewed interest in the *Escena de Avanzada* was accompanied by criticism and polemics. As we saw in Chapter 2, the discussion between Richard and Willy Thayer on the coup as consummation of the vanguard and the problem of the *Escena de Avanzada* was extremely intense and marked a reflexive landmark within the Chilean cultural and intellectual sphere (Valderrama, 2008; Villalobos-Ruminott, 2013a). In addition, this discussion led to Thayer’s departure from the directorate of the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* in June, 2006. In this way, the *Escena de Avanzada* not only existed in the 1970s and 1980s, but also persisted temporally and intellectually into the 2000s and in the discussion of the aesthetic and politics of memory.

If during the dictatorship Richard paid particular critical attention to Lotty Rosenfeld's *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento* and her interventions through CADA, as we have seen, in the post-dictatorship era close attention was paid to her video installation *Moción de orden* in 2002, as well as her urban interventions *Estadio Chile I, II y III* in 2009 (Richard, 2009c, 2009e, 2010a; Madrid, 2009). In both cases, Richard again highlights the capacity for negativity and resistance that Rosenfeld cultivated in both her historic and contemporary work. Unlike the militant culture that seeks to elevate defeat as the result of an epic battle, Rosenfeld's work delves into the discrepancies of identity and the broken fragments and wandering discourses of memory, which favour a vision of the past as an inconclusive narrative that is always open and unstable.

This is especially visible in Rosenfeld's 2002 multimedia intervention, *Moción de orden*. In it, she interspersed videos and images of news items on both a

global and Chilean scale, and projected them onto various emblematic spaces in Santiago. Among the video sequences was a third projection, which portrayed lines of ants in movement, with the objective of metaphorically imitating the standardized transit of the average workday. The idea was to evoke the mechanisms of control utilized by the media, and how these mechanisms homogenize human behaviour. However, at some point during the projections, a finger would suddenly interrupt the columns of marching ants. At this point, the movement goes from passive and uninterrupted order to total chaos. As Richard has pointed out, this interruption alters the order of feelings associated with daily routine (pragmatic neutrality), and demands that one reorganize the orders of feeling and meaning attributed to daily life. In her words:

Moving from place to place and circulating incessantly, the undulatory proliferation of ants escapes the disciplinary logic of unitary power. Critical art, the art of opposition, must look everywhere for ways to crack the system; it must explore multiple escape routes. That is why Rosenfeld's critical art is located in the intersections (at the crossings) where the interruption of regimentation and unidirectional movement produces a dispersive release of mutating meanings. (Richard, 2009c: 125).

In this way, the visual arts and critical writing offer elements of discussion of social space, elements that propose to interrupt or inconvenience daily routine. In the case of memory today, certain visual arts have attempted to maintain this critical spirit. Its objective has been to insist upon the debts of memory through the use of files, photographs and testimonies. Its political interest has been, primarily, related to strengthening these historic documents in the present tense. In other words, their primary objective has been to permanently reposition traumatic history and the pending debts of memory.

In recent years, a series of artists has emerged with their own poetic use of material. Names worth mentioning include Iván Navarro, Alicia Villarroel, Bernardo Oyarzún, Voluspa Jarpa, Bruna Truffa, among many others.

Voluspa Jarpa's latest work¹⁵⁹ concentrates on archived material and its relation to memory. In concrete terms, her visual art utilizes a series of declassified CIA documents (and documents made public by other security agencies) as both supporting and analytical material. Throughout *Litempo* (Mexico, 2013), *Minimal Secret* (Spain-Madrid, 2012), *Biblioteca de la No-historia* (Santiago-Chile, 2012), *La NO-historia* (Porto Alegre-Brazil, 2012), and *L'Effect Charcot* (France-Paris, 2012), Jarpa's work maintains its thematic unity by stressing the need to symbolize history through documents and images (Figure 21). As noted by Jarpa:

Uno de los puntos analíticos que abordo en mi trabajo es el tema de los documentos censurados como material mismo que conforma la obra, estableciendo así una serie de interrogantes acerca de lo omitido y la posibilidad de hacerlo visible. Para ello, relaciono dicho material con los regímenes lingüísticos del texto y la imagen, entendiendo que su exhibición y disposición espacial, así como también las huellas que portan —las tachas, timbres, anotaciones, logos, firmas, fechas—los ubica en el lugar de tránsito e indeterminación donde habitan las nociones de texto e imagen, dotándolos de una atmósfera híbrida que desregula el ordenamiento del lenguaje, acercándolos a una ansiedad y confusión propias del efecto del trauma psicoanalítico. (Jarpa, 2014: 16).

¹⁵⁹ For more information on the work of Voluspa Jarpa and her connections with agents of the *Escena de Avanzada*, see Blanco (2010).



Figure 21. 'Litempo-México City' Voluspa Jarpa, México, 2013

In this way, Jarpa's work has explored how, by exhibiting documents publicly, with all of their corrections and redacted content, the visual, metaphorical, spatial use of declassified files, enables the expansion of the question of memory, as well as insisting on the need to declassify the files kept secret by espionage agencies around the world.

Sites of Memory, Memorials, and Museums

Another key aspect of Richard's *crítica de la memoria* has been her work on memory sites, memorials, and museums. In addition to her reflections

concerning television, documentaries, testimonies, and artistic production, memory sites and spaces *for* memory have been a key aspect of recovering and conserving the traumatic past. As has been stressed in all countries that have experienced dictatorships, cities and national landscapes contain marks, wounds, or landmarks that bear witness to the traumatic past and establish a new surface for aesthetic, political, and architectural inscription (Meade, 2001; Andermann, 2012a, 2012b, 2015; Sosa & Serpente, 2012). If the military dictatorship sought to make the bodies disappear and hide the evidence, during the post-dictatorship procedures were established to both identify and associate names with bodies (in many cases this is simply an impossible task) and to identify the places where political murders took place and make them public.

If during the military dictatorship any house, street, or building could have been a torture or detainment centre, during the post-dictatorship significant efforts would be made, primarily on behalf of the families of the disappeared, to unmask such places and seek out legal evidence against the perpetrators. Their suspicions, accumulated since the era of the dictatorship, would come to be confirmed by legal investigations. Such places, which before had blended in with the urban landscape, later became imbued with new meanings and interpretations. They were no longer clandestine centres of torture and assassination, but in order to expose what their use had been during the dictatorship, they became 'marked' places. The recovery of such places as spaces of memory by family members of the 'detenidos desaparecidos', meant embracing the theoretical and practical problems regarding the 'market of memory' in Latin America (Bilbija & Payne, 2011), as well as entering into political and commemorative discussions in Chile (Hite & Collins, 2009).

The protection of these memory sites is thus a measure that helps block the politics of forgetting and to promote the upholding of human rights. However, the measure is also necessary in order to continue to interrogate the past based upon a constant exchange of meanings and discourses. As there are many memory sites, a *crítica de la memoria* must review the discourse associated with each one of them, and examine the symbols of memory that are utilized in each space. Faced with this problem, Richard poses the question:

¿cómo potenciar críticamente una figura del recuerdo que no se mantenga auto-centrada en la mera designación literal del pasado acontecido sino que, descentrada, abra múltiplemente ese pasado a las tácticas de interceptación, negociación y confrontación, provocación y contestación que en el escenario del debate público sean capaces de des-ubicar y re-ubicar a la memoria en función de las batallas políticas, simbólicas, estéticas e institucionales que debe seguir librando intransigentemente la dinámica del recordar? (Richard, 2010a: 236).

For Richard, the memory sites, museums, and memorials should serve not simply as testimony to what has occurred clandestinely under the military dictatorship, but should also deal with the problematic relationship between experience and representation, between that which was experienced and that which is recreated, between the dramatic past and the continuity of questioning the past. Along these lines, Richard takes on the notion of counter-monument, developed by James Young (1994) in order to conceive of memorials as places to challenge the premises of the monument. Unlike the coherent narrative of the monument, the objective of the counter-monument:

‘[it] is not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by

passers-by but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desanctification; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet.' (Young, 1994; 30).

In other words, his idea is to disassociate before identifying, to transfer the compassionate view and encourage vigilant examination.

For Richard, aside from the corresponding pedagogical project, the debate on exhibiting the horror in a museum space is important. She considers it to be an unresolved issue that demands discussion. However, she pays far closer attention to questioning the tendency that is inherent in any monument, museum, and memory site, which seeks to domesticate, fix, or freeze historical memory in time. For her, the issue is how to make a critical review of human rights in the present, and to project new related issues towards the future. Therein lies the political development of her *crítica de la memoria*. Her efforts with regard to these issues have focused upon both the search for justice and the promotion of an intellectual project that could influence the way in which memory is exhibited and thought about.

Under this plan, the questions that Richard asks of memory sites can be traced back to 2000. In her article, 'Sitios de la memoria, vaciamiento del recuerdo', Richard (2001d, 2009d) presents the cases of *El parque de la memoria de Villa Grimaldi*, the *Memorial del Cementerio General*, and the *Muro de la Memoria del Puente Bulnes*.

In the first case, Richard highlights the struggle of the families of the disappeared to protect *Villa Grimaldi* from private real estate speculation and to recover it as a memory site. However, she asks why a space that had previously been identified with fear, dark cells, asphyxiation, and blindfolds

would be transformed into a place for taking pleasant walks and which was decorated with beautiful gardens¹⁶⁰. In her words:

The spatial homogeneity and geometry of Villa Grimaldi make an ordered *field of vision* out of what was once a lacerated *texture of experience*, disembodied the lived matter of remembrance, whose deep subjective fractures are unrecognizable in this flat, serene, uninterrupted map. (Richard, 2009d: 177).

For Richard, *Villa Grimaldi* adorns the vestiges of memory with a pacifying spirit, and one that is even imbued with a sense of religiosity (between death and resurrection), rather than being presented as a maze of pain, the crudeness of which would encourage visitors to reflect anew and in a more complex way upon the past.¹⁶¹

Unlike *Villa Grimaldi*, Richard considers the *Cementerio General (Memorial a los detenidos desaparecidos, el Patio 29)* and *El Puente Bulnes* to offer better elements with regards to a *crítica de la memoria*. For example, the memorial to the detained and disappeared in the *Cementerio General (el Patio 29)* proposes a discussion of the imbalance between the fixed number of spaces available for the bodies, and the impossibility of accommodating all of the disappeared listed on the memorial.¹⁶² This is achieved by leaving empty spaces that are waiting to be filled by the bodies of the disappeared that have yet to be found.

For its part, the *Memorial del Puente Bulnes* takes this idea further. It is made up of 936 photographic portraits printed onto ceramic tiles and inserted into the wall of the bridge with images of the disappeared. In addition, there are

¹⁶⁰ For particular reference to this, see the intimate narrative of Sepulveda (2011).

¹⁶¹ Several reflections and studies have been written on Villa Grimaldi. Among the latest analyses developed are Gomez-Barris (2008, 2010), Violi (2012), Andermann (2012a, 2012b), Salazar (2013), Klep (2012) etc.

¹⁶² For a specific analysis of this case, see Ruderer (2013).

256 tiles without portraits, which correspond to the disappeared that it has not been possible to identify or find. As it is a public place that is used everyday in the city, the *Memorial del Puente Bulnes* invites daily reflection from those who use it. In facing forward, both the photographed faces of the disappeared and those who have not been found highlight the still inconclusive hope that even unsatisfied memory remains hopeful and in search of the truth.

Together with these memory sites, Richard (2010a) also analyses the work of the *Colectivo Londres 38* and the *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos de Chile*. *Londres 38* is the address of a house where torture and human rights violations were routinely practised during the military dictatorship. Recovered in 2005 by the Chilean state and declared a historic monument, *Londres 38* has resisted becoming an official memory site that is directly dependent upon government institutions. It is rather recognized as a space that continues to recall the difficult relation between thinking about history, giving shape to memory and facilitating situations for the transmission of meaning. *Londres 38* is thus understood as a space that has resisted monumentalization and which proposes a thinking about history from this empty, unfurnished, inhospitable, and vacant space (Figure 22). To date, *Londres 38* defies clear definition and has yet to become established as a formal memory site.¹⁶³ It continues to define and redefine itself, by expressing both the memory of a place as well as historical memory. As Lazzara has pointed out, *Londres 38* is:

un sitio no-sitio, un lugar-no-lugar, un espacio de memoria “Monumento Histórico” oficial que heroicamente se resiste a su museificación y a su monumentalización. Como un proyecto no-realizado y en perpetuas vías de renovación, en Londres 38 es

¹⁶³ See this definition of principles in <http://www.londres38.cl/1937/w3-propertyvalue-32083.html>. (March, 2015).

palpable la necesidad de renovar constantemente las formas para que la memoria no se estanque ni se atrinchere. (Lazzara, 2011a: 87-88).



Figure 22. Inside Londres 38, Santiago de Chile

If *Londres 38* was proposed to generate an open discussion of the dilemmas of memory, the *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos de Chile* was designed as an architecturally monumental space to present 'lo que nos une

a todos': our national history.¹⁶⁴ Inaugurated on January 11, 2010 by Michelle Bachelet, only days before the presidency was handed over to the conservative Sebastián Piñera, the *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos de Chile* is recognized as the primary museum dedicated to memory of the military dictatorship. The museum:

seeks to draw attention to human rights violations committed by the Chilean state between 1973 and 1990. Its mission is to allow dignity for victims and their families, stimulate reflection and debate and to promote respect and tolerance in order that these events never happen again.¹⁶⁵

As expected, the *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos* has generated the most significant debates on memory in Chile. Starting with its intellectual design, the project had to justify its public mission before a socially and politically diverse group of people. For some, mainly the right wing coup-supporting factions, the creation of such a museum was considered inappropriate (similar arguments were utilized for the previously mentioned television series). In their view, such a project would only strengthen the 'division' between the promoters and adversaries of the military dictatorship, and generate an unnecessary conflict of historical interpretation for subsequent generations.¹⁶⁶ For its part, the *Concertación*, led by Bachelet, considered the project as a pressing debt owed to Chilean society. For them, it was necessary to disseminate the atrocities committed by the military regime, and to educate future generations about the universality of the

¹⁶⁴ For a description of the inside of the Museum, see Andermann (2012b).

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/el-museo/sobre-el-museo/> (March, 2015).

¹⁶⁶ In this regard, it is important to mention a polemic that emerged in 2012 regarding the role of the Museum for certain sectors of the right wing. According to these sectors, the Museum lacked an exhibition that explained the historic events that had led up to the military perpetrating the coup of 1973, and the posterior human rights violations. In response, certain sectors of the left wing rebuked these arguments, pointing out that human rights violations are not and cannot be 'put into context'. Simply put, this conflict represented an expression of the tension between a history museum (which simply exhibits historical artefacts) and a memory museum (a selective memory that is recreated in the present). See Mora (2012).

principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In sum, the Museum sought to raise awareness of the ethical imperative of ‘Nunca Más’.¹⁶⁷

For Richard, the *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos* can be analysed from several different points of view. One of them, for example, is the architectural figure of the Museum (Figure 23). Designed for specific purposes, the Museum was planned by a Brazilian architectural practice, which had won the project through a public bidding process. It is possible to note the use of material such as copper (the most important natural and economic resource in Chile) and glass (a material that ‘nada retiene’). As highlighted by Richard:

La translucidez del vidrio –*sacar a la luz, facilitar la vista, exponerse a la mirada*- nos indica, metafóricamente, que se acabaron las políticas del secreto y la disimulación sobre la violencia homicida del régimen militar, y que la construcción del Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos es la ratificación institucional del logro dilucidador y transparentador de los avances de la transición que habría convertido el pasado largamente confiscado en un pasado ahora disponible: un *pasado-en-exposición*. (Richard, 2010a: 266 [Emphasis in the original]).

¹⁶⁷ As pointed out by the current Director of the Museum, Ricardo Brodsky: ‘The Museum describes itself as making known the systematic violations of human rights by part of the Chilean state between the years 1973 and 1990, so that by ethical reflection on memory, solidarity and the importance of human rights, the national will is strengthened so that deeds which affect human dignity are never repeated. In this sentence, long debated during the process of building the Museum, are the defining principles that frame the tasks, the possibilities and limits. The Museum of Memory and Human Rights is the expression of the need to establish the dictatorship’s criminal character and revindicate the dignity of victims of human rights violations.’ (Brodsky, 2014: 5)



Figure 23. Main entrance of Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Santiago, Chile

Another of the dimensions analysed is the placement and/or distribution of the work and testimonies within the Museum (Figure 24). Negotiating this content begs the question: Do we recreate the past in all its horror, or favour critical and reflexive distance? Furthermore, do we exhibit the scenes, objects, and testimonies of torture, or stimulate the critical deciphering of the historicity of the events? For Richard, even when the Museum exhibited certain real objects of horror (stretchers and devices used for torture), this favoured organizing frameworks for the comprehension of the past through photos, audiovisual material, testimonies by the victims, oral archives, documentation, legal files, etc. In doing so, the Museum is able to complement that which was *shown* with the *telling* of the voices of the victims, that is, it is able to balance the raw quotation of history (the object, the archive) with the sensible voice of testimony (with all the various ways of feeling and speaking of the past).

In the Museum, both the objects and the voices represent a chronological itinerary from September 11, 1973 up to the plebiscite and the triumph of NO on October 5, 1988, and ending with the presidential election of Patricio Aylwin in 1990. In each of the rooms, the visitor moves from that which was hidden to a re-established truth, from the hopeless era of military repression up to the hopeful phase of the return to democracy. For Richard, the *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos* does not hide the conciliatory desires of transitional Chile. For her, the inauguration of the Museum by Michelle Bachelet was meant to reinforce this idea. Bachelet, daughter of a member of the military who was tortured by his brothers in arms, and a woman who became President of the Republic of Chile, represented historic reparation and the rediscovery of a country damaged by its own history. In Richard's words:

La biografía política de M. Bachelet encarna el discurso oficial de la memoria como reconciliación, como re-encuentro de la sociedad consigo misma en un marco integrador de entendimiento y respeto por las diferencias que ya no debían leerse como antagonismos sino como diversidad y no-contradicción entre visiones llamadas por la transición chilena a cohabitar pacíficamente en el marco de la "democracia de los acuerdos". (Richard, 2010a: 269).



Figure 24. Interior view of the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Santiago, Chile.

From this perspective, for Richard the Museum represents a museography in accordance with the discourse of the *Concertación*. Although she recognizes the effort aimed at establishing a place for reflection with critical distance from about the traumatic experience of the past,¹⁶⁸ she also questions the hidden

¹⁶⁸ In the Museo de la Memoria there is an installation by the artist Alfredo Jaar entitled ‘La geometria de la conciencia’, the purpose of which is inserted within the concept of the ‘poetics of memory’ proposed by Richard. Jaar has explained his work in the following way: ‘The entrance to my space is 20m away from the entrance to the museum. People walk down 33 steps to reach a level of 6m underground. So the title of the work is La Geometria de la Conciencia, which means The Geometry of Conscience. The piece consists of the subtle graduation of light. You first reach a 5m-square plateau. Even though it is still in the open air the light is filtered by the depth. Here you face the entrance, which is minimal. Once you enter the second space, which is also 5m square, there is nothing – just concrete walls and floor. The only light is indirect, coming from the two side doors. There is a museum guide who welcomes you and explains that you will enter a third cubic space where you will spend three minutes inside, that the door will close automatically, and that you have to turn off your phone and remain silent. A maximum of ten people are allowed. Finally you go in and the door closes automatically behind you and you find yourself in full darkness for one minute. (The guard has explained that there is a panic button if there is an emergency and you need to get out.) After a while your eyes get used to the darkness and you start seeing silhouettes on the back wall. The silhouettes are all different. There are two kinds – half of them are victims of the Pinochet regime, the others are anonymous Chileans whom I photographed on the streets of Santiago. But they are mixed up. People can perfectly recognise relatives or loved ones, other people just see silhouettes. After 60 seconds of darkness, the lights come on and gradually intensify. It takes 90 seconds to go from 10% to full intensity. When you get used to the blinding light you realise that both side walls are mirrored, which creates an infinite wall on both sides. You are illuminated historically, conceptually, physically and emotionally by the faces of the living and the dead. I wanted to suggest that this monument was not only for the 4,000 people who died under Pinochet. This is a monument for all Chileans. Instead of marginalising the victims like most memorials do, I wanted to integrate them into a collective narrative. We are all together, I wanted to suggest. This is a monument for 17 million Chileans alive and dead. I thought hard about how in memorials the victims are always marginalised. We create these crypts or mausoleums and bury them there as if to get rid of them. Logically there is always resentment from the relatives who feel that society has never really understood their pain. I wanted to suggest another paradigm for memorials.’ (Jaar, 2011: 1).

strategies behind this seemingly benign project. Richard continues to stress the danger of 'crystallized memory' and the need to question strategies of historic and comprehensive fixation.

The *Museo* thus builds on and moves beyond the official *Informes Rettig* and *Valech*, for it has been inscribed into recent national history as a place not for ritual or withdrawal, but rather for the retention of memory. As a completely new building, it is not a memory site museum. On the contrary, what is presented there is a sum of facts, testimonies, archives, and artefacts that incite the visitor's reflection. Within the Museum there is no room for rituals, only persuasion of the value of human rights as a universal principle. This objective, however, is not only fulfilled through the exhibition of terrible past events. Human rights must also be protected in the present day.

One of the last policies related to matters of human rights was the inauguration in June, 2010 of the *Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos de Chile*. In addition to the *Museo de la Memoria*, the mission of the Institute is to take the necessary precautions and to promote the validity of human rights in contemporary Chile.¹⁶⁹ Based upon constant vigilance regarding respect for current human rights regulation, the Institute has formed Chile into a nation that not only publishes reports on annual human rights conditions in the country, but also one that legally protects all citizens that have ever had their human rights encroached upon. For example, such mechanisms have played a key role in the protection of students protesting for educational reform, as well as in the cases of the Mapuche peoples and other private citizens that have been detained. However, it is also possible to see the Institute as a public organism responsible for representing the official memory of human

¹⁶⁹ See <http://www.indh.cl/mision-vision-y-objetivos-indh-2> (March, 2015).

rights as well as for protecting the moral legacy of the Concertación on this issue. Through its operation, the Institute has been able to both promote the notion of human rights within several spheres of Chilean society (education, media, public realm etc.), and to recognize the efforts generated in this area over the past 20 years. Progress has been significant. However, even today there are challenges that require maintaining a critical perspective. As Richard points out in her *Crítica de la memoria*, it is necessary to be wary of all forms of the crystallization and manipulation of history, and especially of the residues of memory. This is even more important as there are still open wounds, despite the fact that over 40 years have passed since the military coup. In other words, there is still justice to be done.

III. The challenges of *crítica cultural* and *crítica de la memoria* in recent years

The late 2000s were not easy for Richard. After 36 issues and 18 years of uninterrupted publication, the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* closed its doors. Following in the footsteps of the magazine *Punto de Vista* in Argentina, in 2008 Richard decided to shut down her bi-annual publication without prior warning.¹⁷⁰ According to Richard, the closure was due in part to having lost the feeling of what 'Beatriz Sarlo llama "el deseo de revista". Y cuando ese deseo deja de hacerse sentir, es la señal de que la revista ya no es necesaria.' (Richard, 2008a: 7). However, the cessation of this project meant 'un nuevo aire' for her critical project. As Ticio Escobar has observed:

Entiendo el hecho mismo de interrumpir la publicación sistemática de la *Revista de Crítica Cultural* como un gesto político y ético por parte

¹⁷⁰ Richard (2008a, 2008b, 2009b) published a selection of articles from the *Revista de Crítica Cultural* in three volumes entitled: 'Debates críticos en América Latina. 36 números de la *Revista de Crítica Cultural* (1990-2008). 1, 2 y 3.'

de Nelly Richard: un acto extremo que convoca el espacio abierto de la detención y la espera. La obra que levanta la Revista no puede sino conducir a ese límite de la palabra que puede sólo ser traspuesto imaginando otro tiempo. (Escobar, 2009: 11).

Richard's critical energy did not dissipate, however. On the contrary, she took her critical project all the way to the classrooms of the Universidad Arcis, as well as to other editorial and academic spaces. Nevertheless, her decision would be challenged by the worst fear coming true for the Chilean left: the return to power of a right wing government.

The early 2010s seemed like a defeat for the political parties of the Concertación coalition. After 20 years of centre-left government, Sebastián Piñera became President of Chile and his ministerial cabinet was made up of businessmen and politicians connected to the military regime. It is still not clear whether the presence of Piñera in government generated a radicalization of critical positions towards the dominant market model that had been in place since the dictatorship. However, 2011 is remembered as the year of the student and social movements, or simply as the 'Chilean Winter' (Villalobos-Ruminott, 2012b).¹⁷¹ Initially students took to the streets with the slogan 'educación gratuita y de calidad', in addition to demands from the Mapuches, sexual, ecological and regionalist movements, etc. The early 2010s saw a generalized trend of political re-activation and the re-emergence of such that had never been seen before in the democratic era.

If the defeat of the *Concertación* meant the closure of a post-dictatorship process, paradoxically the arrival of Piñera saw the start of a new period of social politicization. The social movements, led by university and high school

¹⁷¹ In order to understand the roots of the student movement of 2011 and its consequences, see Donoso (2013), Bellei and Cabalin (2013), Cabalin (2012), and Saavedra (2015).

students, would prove to be a landmark in political thinking. Certainly, the movements and protests called into question neoliberal notions that had previously been deeply rooted, such as free market education and the retreat of the state. The notion of rights (the right to a good education, the right to health, sexual rights, labour rights etc.) widened the margins of the notion of human rights. Indeed, the de-naturalization of the market society was the primary goal. The idea was, in short, to move from a 'market society' to a 'society of rights'.

In this scenario, it was necessary to rethink *crítica cultural* again. The landscapes of the Chilean post-dictatorship period had been completely displaced. Now the 'cuerpos sociales' were making themselves known in urban space. The protests were changing the use made of the streets, plazas, and public spaces, including the façades of buildings. For example, the occupation of schools and universities became a daily affair in several cities across the country. Together with violent clashes between students and the Chilean police in the streets, most schools and universities were decorated with signs and posters, with artistic installations and barricades made from school infrastructure (desks and chairs, etc). At the same time, the student and social leaders became recognizable faces throughout the media. The student and social movements not only made the general political class uncomfortable, but also questioned the neoliberal model as the only axis of social coordination.

For Richard, this amounted to a substantial change in the political and cultural landscape:

De ahí la revelación de conciencia que dibujó horizontes de cambio hasta entonces no vislumbrados colectivamente en Chile para

traspasarle a lo social, gracias a la movilización estudiantil del 2011, una nueva potencia de transformación crítica que se atrevió a cuestionar las evidencias de lo dado que nos habían familiarizado con la inevitabilidad del cálculo como medida (rentable) de todas las cosas. (Richard, 2013: 211).

This imbalance within a neoliberal model based upon efficiency and objective rationality opened up new opportunities for critical practice. Hence in the first half of the 2010s, political, social, and cultural spaces in Chile saw a new era of politicization (PNUD, 2015). Thanks to the disorder in the streets and voices calling for constitutional reform and assemblies, new and unforeseen 'sentidos comunes' emerged.

For example, from Richard and her collaborators emerged the project 'Imaginaros Culturales para la Izquierda'. Initially conceived as an archive-in-progress to support the presidential candidature of Jorge Arrate¹⁷² in 2009, and in 2011 as a critical intellectual idea under the Piñera government, this project sought to unite a series of artists, intellectuals, and citizens in order to co-create in the form of a dictionary, a series of concepts, ideas, and 'problematics' that resisted the dominant neoliberal culture. Notions such as 'sindicalismo', 'venceremos', 'minoría', 'nueva izquierda', 'Chilenidad', 'estadísticas', and 'constitución', among others, were problematized by authors who, together, attempted to re-articulate a micro-politics of spaces and places in Chile during the 2010s. In this way, 'Imaginaros Culturales para la Izquierda' sought to ask uncomfortable questions and to question the dominant cultural frameworks in the neoliberal context.¹⁷³

What could *crítica cultural* be in this new context? Does it still have a role?

¹⁷² Chilean left wing politician and intellectual. He was a minister under Salvador Allende, Patricio Aylwin, and Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle. Currently, he is the husband of the writer Diamela Eltit.

¹⁷³ See this debate on The Clinic Online (03 Febrero, 2011): <http://www.theclinic.cl/2011/02/03/the-clinic-debate-quedo-la-caga-con-los-imaginarios-culturales-para-la-izquierda/> (October, 2015).

What role does art play in today's times of globalization and student protest? What artistic practices were utilized to deal with issues of memory, culture, and politics at the beginning of the 2010s? And, crucially: what is the future of *crítica cultural* in Chile and Latin America?

As insisted upon throughout these pages, Richard's *crítica cultural* is characterized by its commitment to understanding and intervening in its historic context. It is also dedicated to expressing disagreement with hegemonic discourses *through* critical aesthetics, and do so *from* within the political and intellectual realms. Her objective is to seek escape (or 'flight') between the *intersticios* of 'hegemony' through a use of writing understood as poetic and political transgression. As Richard notes:

El presente no es un estado *ya compuesto* sino un conjunto disparejo de *fuerzas-en-composición* que varía incesantemente en sentidos e intencionalidades según las actuaciones que lo mueven. (Richard, 2013: 80).

For Richard, it is vital to always put oneself at risk and never falter in one's critical efforts. Even if the ends are not guaranteed, micro-political struggles must identify and highlight the poetics of criticism (forces-in-process) that are in dialogue with the present (temporality-in-course).

In the text '¿Que hacer?', Richard (2011a) points out that, under global capitalism there seems to be a tendency to annul the 'principle of distance' that is characteristic of modern critique. Apparently, there is no longer an 'outside' of the system or a pure outside from where one can criticize and observe reality. It is no longer possible, in other words, to emit a distanced judgement of what is real (of the powers, the institutions, the market etc.). Although it is true that this observation is to some extent true, Richard affirms

that this 'no anula la posibilidad –creo yo- de imaginar otros modos de no proximidad y de no-coincidencia entre lo dado y lo reformulable, entre lo existente y su devenir-otro.' (Richard, 2011a: 132). In fact, for her it is possible to see in the concepts/metaphors of *pliegue* and *intersticio* a way out of the problem. Both are strategies that break apart the inner logic of the sedimentary discourses, but always with a precise distance. As William Rowe writes: 'Tratar de ubicarse fuera del espacio social es inútil. Pero no producir un ámbito de relativa inmunidad significa incapacitarse para una actividad radical.' (Rowe, 1996: 20).

Crítica cultural, then, should be aware of its condition of being 'inside' and 'against', and of denouncing the 'historical reality' by selecting objects, art, and practices that enable new critical textualities. The accusatory gesture may be achieved on the basis of this selection. The selection of images, writing, performances, works of art, sounds etc., facilitates the generation of an area of questioning within hegemonic space. Current *crítica cultural* must thus confront the resistance that has arisen against non-conformist writing. This resistance is today, Richard insists, administered by capitalist globalization and seeks to annul all complexity of interpretation in favour of a 'texto simple y transable'. It is for this reason that it is important, for example, to uncover the past in order to question the present and construct the future. In Richard's words: 'Examinar estos desplazamientos del pasado en tanto resignificaciones es precisamente tarea de la crítica.' (Richard, 2011a: 139).

It is thus the function of *crítica cultural* to know how to distinguish or identify discursive manoeuvres (artwork, testimonies, archives, artistic experimentation) that are located in the *pliegues* and *intersticios* of social institutions in order to favour disruption. However, this job of selection must be done within a concrete and identifiable space. It is not possible to exercise

current *crítica cultural* from within a 'non-space', within the abstract realm of social space. On the contrary, one must recognize one's location within the confines of social institutions, and from there test one's limits in an effort to move towards the heterogeneous, the dissimilar, the fleeting. In Richard's words:

Localización, posicionamiento y contexto –operados por la agencia crítica- son entonces las condiciones para distinguir entre, por un lado, la segmentación capitalista que multiplica las diferencias para reabsorberlas indiferenciadamente y, por otro, las luchas de segmentos político-existenciales que buscan arrancarle a lo globalizado y lo totalizado ciertos vectores de subjetividad no-cautiva en inacabados procesos de traducción y descalce. (Richard, 2011a: 147).

In order to distort the present, *crítica cultural* install itself in specific, concrete localizations. Although it is true that one can never know what the impacts of such efforts will be, the important thing for *crítica cultural* is to constantly seek out discomfort and a rupture in the social sediments of a certain cultural space. However, what can generate such a break in the *pliegues* and *intersticios* of dominant space? Despite the mistrust of 'cultured' or 'academic art' that emerged in certain Cultural Studies, for Richard it is here that some of the best critical tools can be found.

As pointed out by Rowe (1996), Cultural Studies has basically focused upon the analysis, comprehension, and critical analysis of popular culture. However, for him: 'habría que criticar al supuesto de que las grandes obras artísticas deben excluirse del Cultural Studies por no contribuir al estudio de la cultura popular o la vida cotidiana.' (Rowe, 1996: 39). This same defence can be applied to Richard's *crítica cultural* today. In her article 'Humanities and social sciences in critical dialogues with cultural studies', Richard (2012a)

reinforces a defence of aesthetic practices. In effect, today's *crítica cultural* must respond to the concerns of popular production and its complexities, as well as contemporary formal aesthetic proposals. Indeed, for Richard:

The task of taking responsibility for the 'reception process' of culture [...] need not cloud the 'production work' of the aesthetic: the aesthetic being thought as a differentiating rank of certain symbolic practices (those of art and of literature) which generate particular 'vibrations of feeling' in a serialized world of cultural industries. (Richard, 2012a: 173).

Certainly, rock music, cartoons, television soap operas, videos, etc. can be considered social texts. All enable the understanding of popular culture. However, *crítica cultural* reinforces the idea that artistic production possesses formal differences regarding their forms of production, their semantic complexity, their experimentation with codes, their symbolic condensation, and in their 'estrategias retóricas' and their 'desplazamientos de formas'. As Richard points out:

It is down to art, literature and critical thought to reintroduce - *minoritarily*- the disorder of the unclassifiable into the world of the classified and the classifier. Faced with university techno-marketing, only the critical game of disobedient language can break down the resigned homology between the politics of governability, the administrative nature of the social, the industrialization of culture and the professionalization of useful learning. (Richard, 2012a: 175 [Emphasis in the original]).

From the first analytical essays based upon the work of Carlos Altamirano and especially Carlos Leppe, it was possible to observe the importance of critical writing for Richard as well as of the art itself. Later, and thanks to the increasingly complex history of the Chilean post-dictatorship era, *crítica cultural* widened its margins of operation to include the spheres of politics,

culture, (neo)feminism and memory. Confidence in critical writing and aesthetic production, as well as a political commitment to history, have all contributed to constructing the trademark of Richard's thought. This is especially evident in the political development of *crítica cultural* through to *crítica de la memoria*.

What new aesthetic poetics and politics emerged within the Chilean scenario during the mid 2010s? What dimensions of recent artistic production have mobilized the attention of Richard's *crítica cultural*? What critical and political lessons do they offer for *crítica cultural* today?

Whilst Richard never stopped working together with figures from the *Escena de Avanzada* and the *crítica cultural* scene, today there is a clear need to deal with new 'residues' and to create different 'metaphors'. Richard has facilitated such renewed experimentation, both aesthetic and political, expanding the analytical horizons of *crítica cultural*. They are worth mentioning here.

In the prologue to the book *Enciclopedia del amor en los tiempos del porno* by Josefa Ruiz-Tagle and Lucia Egaña, Richard (2014c) includes a dense text on the transformations of sexuality, and the meaning of 'queer' in current feminist literature. For her, Ruiz-Tagle and Egaña's encyclopedia evoked a new effort to dismantle the safe binary identities of contemporary sexuality. In the prologue, she relates the sexual to that which is wrong, diverted, abnormal, while also straying far from any essentialist notion of feminism ('nosotras las mujeres').

For Richard (2011b), this kind of artistic practice mixes sedimented sexual

categorizations in order to make room for the imagination of difference.¹⁷⁴ As with *Cuerpo Correccional* by Carlos Leppe —or in the work of writer Pedro Lemebel (Richard, 2008c)—, in the prologue to *Enciclopedia del amor en los tiempos del porno* Richard insistently reinforces the value of art not just as a framework for resistance to the binary-sexual mode, but also its force as reflexive material that can create new possibilities within the body.

Other of her current interests have focused upon visual memory, the social memory of objects, and post-memory. In the first case, Richard interprets the book *El golpe estético* by Luis Hernán Errázuriz and Gonzalo Leiva. In her analysis, Richard recognizes the importance of incorporating, 'la organización de los relatos con los que la historia oficial escribió su oscura narrativa del poder autoritario y totalitario' (Richard, 2014a) into the frameworks of her *crítica cultural*. While historically her lines of analysis had focused upon memories of suffering and catastrophe, Richard look at how books such as *El golpe estético* analyse the schemas and representational codes that the dictatorship itself designed as it evolved. To analyse, for example, public sculptures that the dictatorship erected and its architecture, imaginaries, and urban designs, offers enough insights to mobilize new interpretations based on *crítica cultural*. *El golpe estético* presents the relationship between aesthetics, ideology, and representation that the military dictatorship produced during its years in power. It also explores the symbology of the military regime in the city as well as the operations aimed at the homogenization of bodies, identities, emotions, and feelings. For example, it highlights both the military operation for cleansing the city walls of the *Unidad Popular* posters, as well as the massive practice of cutting the hair of young men. In addition to this, the book presents a selection of the mechanisms

¹⁷⁴ This issue has been analysed in previous work by the same autor (Richard, 1994d).

used to dismantle the public sector for the benefit of private interests (for instance, the privatization of State companies). Finally, through an analysis of coins, bills, stamps etc., it shows how the strategies of heroism (the triumph of freedom over Marxist oppression), as well as the modeling of habits, behaviour, perceptions, and values in neoliberal Chile were visualized (thanks to the alliance between the market and television). In sum, for Richard this book explores the need to widen the margins of possibility for *crítica cultural*, and to consider the 'visual memory' of the dictatorship as a necessary sphere of analysis in order to shake up the hegemonic frameworks of the past and of the present.

In her interview-article 'La memoria social y la política de los objetos', Richard (2015a) highlights how the work of two young people, the architect Pedro Alonso and the designer Hugo Palmarola, revives the importance of objects as materialities that embody aesthetic and ideological controversies, as well as micro-narratives of histories and cultural forms. In her text, Richard reviews the shipment that both professionals sent to the 14th Venice Biennial in 2014. The project consisted of exhibiting a panel of prefabricated concrete (used for the construction of homes) from the Soviet factory KPD, which had been installed in Chile during the *Unidad Popular* era. The defining characteristic is that it was signed by Salvador Allende in 1972, and then erased by the military dictatorship. This panel was later utilized by agents of the dictatorship to hang religious figures, and was then left abandoned until it was recovered by Alonso and Palmarola. The interesting thing about the shipment is that, in addition to being exhibited with documents concerned with social housing policies of the Popular Unity, the panel also expressed how the privatization of KPD by the dictatorship changed the social standing of the firm. Originally designed for the construction of social housing, it took on a profoundly commercial role oriented towards the neoliberal real estate

market. For Richard, the shipment demonstrates how critical research can reflect on memory and its corresponding political consequences up to the current day, and can strengthen new critical imaginations in educational spaces. As a fragment or a 'residue', a prefabricated wall panel utilized for social housing under the *Unidad Popular* government and usurped by private interests can offer elements of novel and necessary reflection leading to a better understanding of history.

If in previous cases Richard had explored memory operations and materialities, in her analysis of post-memory in Chile she used as a cultural text recent Chilean films. In her text 'Memoria contemplativa y memoria crítico-transformadora', Richard looks at the film *No*, directed in 2012 by Pablo Larrain. In doing so, she (2014d) utilizes in two ways the metaphor and concept of the footprint to refer to post-memory¹⁷⁵. On the one hand, the footprint as a recorded trace (a specific event that leaves a historic record), and on the other hand, as a current force. Thanks to this memory, one can now re-think the past based upon new supports for historic perception and social consciousness.

No, the first Chilean film to be nominated for an Academy Award, tells the story behind the televised 'No' campaign that enabled the Concertación to defeat Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite. As Richard points out in her analysis, the film has been questioned mainly for underestimating the social forces involved in the return to democracy (unions, social movements, students etc.), opting instead to highlight the campaign's publicity manoeuvres. In other

¹⁷⁵ For Richard, post-memory is understood as: 'como aquella relación con el pasado (en este caso, la dictadura chilena) que no se limita a la experiencia directamente sufrida por quienes fueron víctimas o testigos de los acontecimientos traumáticos. La postmemoria es aquel campo tramado por la cadena de referencias e interpretaciones de lo sucedido que se vincula con el pasado mediante versiones de versiones, imágenes de imágenes, relatos de relatos ya alejados de su origen histórico. (Richard, 2014d).

words, *No* omits collective struggles, in favour of the communicative strategies of a cultural hyper-capitalism, the objective of which being to sell democracy as a publicity product. Beyond this general critique, Richard also asks: ‘¿Cuál es el valor de la “postmemoria” que el film *No* le traspasa al recuerdo de la salida de la dictadura: un valor mimético-contemplativo o bien crítico-transformador?’

Richard’s response is that the film can be categorized as part of a contemplative post-memory design. In other words, *No* opted for both an aesthetic of simulation while leaving the past unaltered. This is even observable in the aesthetic gestures of the camera and the visual filters utilized. In the film the director decided to use the same cameras as were used in the 1988 campaign. In Richard’s words:

Se trata de un recurso que, en la película, lleva *el presente de la grabación* (hoy) a confundir sus imágenes con *el pasado grabado* (ayer), en la visión especular de un tiempo idéntico a sí mismo, que se vuelve hermético a cualquier disturbio de signos que amenace con romper el espejismo de la copia. (Richard, 2014d).

By attempting to imitate the past historically and as an aesthetic strategy, without adding anything new to the present, Larrain’s film ignores the questions raised by the Student Movement of 2011 regarding the consensual neoliberal model in post-dictatorship Chile. The slogan of the movement — ‘¡Fin al lucro!’— demonstrates a social desire for change and transformation which Larrain’s film does not deal with. Thus the spectator of a film such as *No* can be seen as a passive agent, who does not engage with any kind of problematizing reflective exercise. The task of post-memory, according to Richard, is quite the opposite, being to promote an inquisitive memory in which critical consciousness generates true shocks in the present. In other

words, it is able to correct that which is unsatisfactory about the known past through the poetics of memory. In this way, as we have seen, series such as *Chile, las imágenes prohibidas* and *Ecos del desierto*, among others, offer a critical framework that is more aligned with the hypotheses of *crítica de la memoria*.

How can justice be done to memory and to new social phenomena? How can new social phenomena be interpreted based upon critical art practices? How can a critical, aesthetic, and political narrative be developed in a historic context in which the borders of art as well as of national representation have been blurred? For the 56th Venice Biennial in 2015, Chile was represented¹⁷⁶ by the curatorial project *Poéticas de la disidencia*. Curated by Richard along with the artists Lotty Rosenfeld and Paz Errázuriz, this project can be considered a summary of the intellectual project produced by *crítica cultural*. Indeed, the curatorial project joined three female artists related both directly and indirectly to the *Escena de Avanzada*, while simultaneously speaking from a local and historical position (a revisionist view of the military dictatorship up to the democratic post-transition in Chile), but without excluding the social movements that have sprung up in recent years, including the student movement of 2011. The work chosen for the Biennial pays close attention to the historic and social textures of Chile, that is, dictatorial violence (1970-1990), neoliberal consensus (1990-2010), and public protests by students, mapuches, and other social groups (2010-date).

Poetics of dissidence joins the artistic experience of the visual artist

¹⁷⁶ The decision to ship the artwork was made based upon a public competition organized by the Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes de Chile, in which the evaluating committee was made up of individuals such as Gerardo Mosquera (International Curator), Claudia Barattini (Minister of Culture), Alfredo Jaar (artist), Roberto Farriol (Director of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Chile), Francisco Brugnoli (Director of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Chile), among others.

Rosenfeld to that of the photographer Errázuriz. Both artists had initiated their work in a context dominated by the dictatorship, and today live in a country that is besotted with neoliberalism. Rosenfeld's objective has always been to get out onto the streets, to wander through the urban fabric as well as to observe family practices, secret lives, excluded faces, the dissent of sexual bodies, the footprints of misery and abandonment, the poses of mental illness, the urban marks of contempt etc. Both artists, through a photographic exhibition, on the one hand, and video art, on the other, have used the bodies and cities of Chile over the past 40 years.

As Richard points out on *Poéticas de la disidencia*:

The 'southern' vector of the Latin American as a peripheral-interstitial formation passes through the poetics of both Errázuriz and Rosenfeld with its irregular weave of cultural gaps, historical leaps of modernity, anti-neoliberal ruptures in times of globalization, mismatched references between urban languages and rural dialects, social precarizations of naked lives, obsolete techniques and artifices of post-production, stoic memories of defeat, affective needs in search of a refuge for self-generating the common, utopian impulses and creative diagrams of emancipation. Both Errázuriz and Rosenfeld, two female artists, have formulated their aesthetics of obliqueness to derail the symbolic hierarchies of identity, culture and gender with refined mechanisms of intersection: on the one hand, we find the formation of pairs that find in the being-together or the creating-together the first associative motive of a deprivatization of the singular understood as the property-essence of the being or the authorship-authority of the work (Errázuriz). On the other hand we find the insistence upon the performativity of the body as a biographical support of a political-social memory that cuts through the individual and the collective with the multiplying energy of the act of strengthening wills, desires, and imaginaries of otherness (Rosenfeld). (Richard, 2015b: 41).

What can be seen in *Poéticas de la disidencia* is how the 'deambular visual' of a series of Chilean artists have fed, poetically, theoretically, and politically,

Richard's own critical transformations. Thanks to these multiple lines of flight, of affinities, struggles, resistances, collaborations, a form of writing was developed that is unique in the history of Chilean critical thought. As she has done from her arrival in Chile in 1970 to this day, Richard has developed an interpretation of the political, aesthetic, and cultural landscapes of Chile which are undoubtedly of central importance when looking rigorously at yesterday, thinking critically of today, and transforming the future with hope.

IV. Conclusion

In this last chapter I have attempted to explore the ways in which Richard has discussed—and developed—the question of memory in Chile from 2000 to the present. Specifically, the chapter describes how *crítica cultural* experienced a theoretical and, especially, a political shift as it incorporated the question of historical memory. Indeed, in this period Richard maintains the analytical schema of the *crítica cultural* deployed in the previous decade, but broadens its horizons so as to develop a *crítica de la memoria*. As I have tried to show, with her *crítica de la memoria* Richard provides *crítica cultural* with a political core.

The question of memory is not established solely upon the basis of reports, monuments, and museums. Richard's discussion of memory also takes place within a variety of symbolic spheres in which art, literature, and 'escritura crítica' play a significant role. All of these provide cultural texts on the basis of which to rethink the past, question the present, and imagine the future. With the proliferation of cultural production tackling such issues in Chile today, new meanings and sensibilities have been put into public circulation. Thanks to their dissemination on television, or through other specialized spaces for

'poéticas de la memoria', significant progress has been made in making the issue of human rights ('Nunca Más') a recognized ethical imperative. It still remains difficult, however, to assess what the impact of these efforts on the younger generations has been.¹⁷⁷

This is the context in which the challenges that *crítica de la memoria* faces emerge. How can historic memory be installed into the spaces of everyday life? Beyond the monumentalization of memory, the objective of *crítica cultural* and *crítica de la memoria* is constantly to encourage an open-ended view of history; in other words, to encourage a logic of the counter-monument that inhibits its *crystallization*. Such provocation is constructed both through the generation of creative mechanisms, as well as by unearthing and denouncing the crimes committed. Indeed, today in Chile there are still important political and figures who maintain close ties with the military regime.¹⁷⁸

Recent years have also been marked by the emergence of social (especially student) movements against the right wing government of Sebastián Piñera. This is not an insignificant occurrence. On the contrary, thanks to the demands of the student movement, a generalized questioning of the neoliberal model has spread throughout the country. The voices of protest have not only been heard with regard to the issue of education, but on a more general cultural level too. Chile has witnessed the emergence of a new period of politicization (calling for a shift from a 'market society' to a 'society of

¹⁷⁷ I share the view of Miriam Cook who points out that: 'The unprecedented quantity and unique nature of commemorative action in the Pinochet coup's 40th anniversary year indicated that the tectonic plates of memory are shifting in the seismically active country of Chile' (Cook, 2014: 29).

¹⁷⁸ As pointed out by Cherstin M. Lyon: 'But to explain who Allende was, why the military orchestrated a bloody coup, and why some Chileans were targeted as "dangerous" is hotly debated throughout Chile today. Victims and perpetrators still live side-by-side in the same communities. Without answers to some basic questions, thought, Chileans and international guests may walk away with major misunderstandings of the history of the Pinochet era, even though they may understand the core message of human rights' (Lyon, 2011: 144).

rights'), and the intellectual practices of Richard and her collaborators are closely connected to this change.

Following a hard-fought presidential election in 2014 between Michele Bachelet and Evelyn Matthei¹⁷⁹, Bachelet was elected President of Chile for a second term. Supported, though not without reservation, by the social movements (students, workers, sexual minorities, etc.), Bachelet has opened a new chapter in the history of Chile. In this context, *crítica cultural* and *crítica de la memoria* will have to do what they do best.

In this period, Richard has, like a contemporary *flâneur*, woven a path through the political and cultural fabric of contemporary Chile, through its urban landscapes, spaces of marginalization and resistance with a critical eye on everyday living conditions. As in previous decades, however, her *modus operandi* is not explained solely by such 'wandering'. The latter can be best understood by its capacity to incorporate her perceptions and sensations of these landscapes into her interpretation of the art generated within the political and cultural spheres. For this reason, this chapter seeks to make clear that the existence of artistic expression demands interpretations, and a kind of writing, that are adequate to its own complexity. It is here that Richard's *crítica cultural* and *crítica de la memoria* are, I believe, exemplary.

Richard's *crítica cultural* resists current discourses of scepticism, and the indifference with regards to the transformative capacity of critical thought. This is especially true today. Despite the efforts that have been made in the name of truth, justice, and reparation, in Chile today a historic debt with the past still remains. It is the perseverance of *crítica cultural* and *crítica de la*

¹⁷⁹ Daughter of a member of the military junta, General of the Chilean Air Force Fernando Matthei.

memoria that, at least in part, establishes a form of resistance to forgetting by highlighting the poetic and critical actions of the present.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this thesis is to describe and analyse the intellectual trajectory of Nelly Richard from 1970 to the present. In doing so, I not only explored its main theoretical ideas and Richard's discussions about art, politics, and society in Chile and Latin America, but also touched upon the political and cultural contexts that served as its backdrop. At the same time, this thesis provides an analysis of a series of works of art, particularly visual, that have served to interpret and understand these processes. Over four decades of history, Richard experimented and discussed a series of theoretical, aesthetic, and political ideas circulating both in the Chilean intellectual sphere as well as internationally. This led to a specific form and practice of *crítica cultural*. This thesis analyses this process.

Applying a chronological and transdisciplinary analysis, I have attempted to show that Richard's *crítica cultural* has played a key role in recent transformations of Chile's artistic and intellectual environment. Her critical strategy has been characterized not only by revealing the social and cultural workings of hegemony, but also by questioning them through the recognition, analysis, and valuation of practices emerging from within specific moments of history. That is to say, Richard has adopted a vigilant attitude to and through aesthetic materialities and cultural texts of an ongoing period. In this sense, I have suggested that Richard does not offer or define a particular 'way of doing' cultural criticism, but that throughout her work she has put into practice a *crítica cultural* of Chile's socio-political processes.

This thesis describes and analyses the episodes or moments that would gradually forge this specific form of *crítica cultural*. The chapters focus especially on how, starting during the military dictatorship, art criticism derived

into a form of critical thinking that would cover both the process of democratization in Chile and the question of historical memory. Consequently, Richard's intellectual trajectory cannot be fully understood merely on the basis of her art criticism or according to the boundaries delimited by the *Escena de Avanzada* in the 1980s (which has been the focus of great academic attention in recent years). Rather, as I have sought to highlight, the importance of Richard's critical thought resides precisely in her incursions into a vast range of political, cultural, and social arenas and not merely artistic interests. I thus attempt to show how Richard's *crítica cultural* emerged from engagement with the work of art, yet, without overlooking this aspect, subsequently developed through the various disputes and tensions within Chile's symbolic-cultural milieu.

This investigation begins with Richard's arrival in Chile and her first approaches to Chile's intellectual milieu. After the military coup of September 1973, Richard developed a permanent collaboration with artists (Leppe, Altamirano, Smythe, CADA), philosophers (Kay, Valdés), writers (Zurita, Eltit), and art critics (Mellado) in connection with the works of art that emerged in the context of dictatorship. Owing to the 'cultural blackout' of those years, as well as the prevailing political 'state of emergency' Richard and her colleagues developed a series of creative and reflexive strategies in order to overcome the imposed censorship. In fact, the density and complexity of these productions, both visual and textual necessitated a process of reading and interpretation that was unprecedented in Chile's critical-intellectual space at the time. Art catalogues emerged for the analysis of these works as well as new experiments in publishing (*Manuscritos* or V.I.S.U.A.L.). In Chapter 1 I also explain how such events gave rise to a break with the history of art in Chile as it had manifested itself until 1973. And this occurred precisely through a distancing from the cultural production of the time of the *Unidad*

Popular as well as the new cultural institutions established by the military regime.

Chapter 1 demonstrates that, from the precariousness and isolation of private galleries, photocopies, self-published catalogues, Richard was able to establish the groundwork for a total renewal in the manner of conceiving works of art and their relationship with Chilean society. In analysing the 1970s, I emphasized visual-textual experimentation and reflexive-philosophical collaboration in a context characterized by political repression and prosecution. In doing so, I stressed the importance of Richard's writing style (her theoretical quotations, her references to works) and at the same time explored her *juegos de lenguaje*. Here I discovered that these first analytical works were already an early form of Richard's future *crítica cultural*. These texts were not footnotes to the works of art or journalistic notes. On the contrary, they were analytical exercises offering a complex reading of works of art under the historical processes taking place at the time. In this first chapter I trace the emergence of what might be termed the scaffold of Richard's *crítica cultural*.

In Chapter 2 I described the growing complexity of Richard's thinking in the 1980s. In doing so, I took a particularly close look at one of her most outstanding works: *Cuerpo Correccional*. As we have seen, this piece was characterized by its direct engagement with the relationship between the work of art, biography, and society while at the same time incorporating theoretical voices —those of Derrida, Benjamin and Kristeva— that were new to Chile at the time. Together with *El Espacio de Aquí* by Ronald Kay, *Cuerpo Correccional* is a key work in Richard's intellectual trajectory and of *crítica cultural*. On the basis of Carlos Leppe's work —and together with other works analysed in the chapter— Richard established a new critical discourse in

Chile's artistic milieu, which she labelled *Escena de Avanzada*. Emerging from a series of sociopolitical changes, (the 1980 Constitution, social and political reform, and the privatizing of education), in recent years the *Escena de Avanzada* has become a 'marca garantizada y registrada', serving as an example of the relationship between art and politics in Chile. My research, however, does not focus upon the *Avanzada per se* but rather on its theoretical, critical, and practical consequences. Indeed, I explore how works associated with the *Avanzada* led to the emergence of a particular form of essayistic practice. It is possible to say, therefore, that in the late 1980s the 17 years of military dictatorship brought about a change in the way art criticism was practiced in Chile. The focus upon the visual, the material, and the 'crítico-poético', exemplified by the *Escena de Avanzada* evolved into a broadening of issues, concerns, conflicts, and interests embracing politics, culture, and the arts. Indeed, in the late 1980s there was a noticeable shift and broadening of the margins of Richard's theoretical and critical writing, which now focused upon a discussion of postmodernity/modernity, the notions of centre and periphery, and on processes of democratization and (neo) feminism.

As described in Chapter 2, in the late 1980s Richard became aware of the need for a more particular version of *crítica cultural* given the lack of interest in the *Escena de Avanzada* and a new political cycle in Chile *ad portas*. This raised the question of what to do with the critical material accumulated by Richard over the past 17 years. Aware that art criticism *per se* failed to realize a broader political potential, Richard decided to extend the boundaries of her 'battlefield' and take on a new role - that of public intellectual. From this point on, and thanks to certain support platforms such as Universidad Arcis, Richard's *crítica cultural* would take on a more complex form and become what it is today.

In Chapter 3 I discussed the institutionalization of Richard's critical-intellectual project. In this chapter I explained how Chile's return to democracy enabled the definitive emergence of the label of *crítica cultural*, together with the appearance of its first critics. Thanks to the founding of *Revista de Crítica Cultural* in 1990 and the consolidation of Universidad Arcis —as well as a series of publishing houses (Cuarto Propio, La Morada) and academic programmes (diploma and masters courses, seminars)— Richard was able to engage more deeply in the political and cultural debates concerning Chile's transition to democracy. Although the onset of this adventure was promising, over the years Richard would become aware of the new democratic authorities' lack of interest in the critical debates developed by her and her circle. The post-dictatorship period in Chile —the preferred denomination for the period, as opposed to the 'transición democrática', a term many believe fails to include the traumatic past of the dictatorship— was a complex period for Richard. On the one hand, she had to co-exist in a new cultural context marked by the 'democracia de los acuerdos' with right-wing supporters of the military regime, and on the other she had to deal with a series of questions and confrontations with the social sciences in connection with the political administration of the transition (Brunner, Vidal). For her, this meant joining the institutional fold of Chile's intellectual elite, establishing a 'relative marginality' for herself (as well as a *performative marginality*). In this sense, her critical strategy was characterized by a permanently defensive position and at the same time by the reinforcement of her critical practice in a more concrete and singular format.

As we have seen, the book *Residuos y Metáforas. Ensayos de crítica cultural sobre el Chile de la transición* represents a new high point in Richard's intellectual trajectory. Its pages summarize almost 30 years of critical practice

and lay down the foundations of her intellectual project, already well-known now as *crítica cultural*. At this time the notion referred to her impulse to agitate the (re)configurations of power, the representations, the values, and significations that crystallize and become the natural embodiment of Chile's post dictatorship period. For this reason, and as I have observed earlier, Richard's *crítica cultural* became an intellectual practice at the disposal of the critical thinking of that time. Moreover, her writing and participation in seminars, colloquia, and encounters would open up a space for a new generation of intellectuals. Indeed, the establishment of a 'space for cultural criticism' in the 1990s – including intellectuals such as Carlos Ossa, Carlos Pérez Villalobos, Federico Galende, Willy Thayer, Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, etc. — would make way for a new critical impulse in post-dictatorship Chile.

But this critical-cultural project was not exempt from criticism. On the contrary, in this thesis I include the main criticisms of Richard's thinking and explain their counter-arguments. This was a key aspect of the evolution of Richard's critical practice and how over the years it gradually transformed some of her postulates. Chapter 4 engages with this transformation.

After Augusto Pinochet's detention in London in October 1998, there was an important debate in Chile in connection with justice and memory during the military dictatorship. As I showed, this 'event' gave rise to a new stage in Richard's trajectory as a critic. Chapter 4 is devoted to the exploration of Richard's analyses of memory and specifically her broadening of *crítica cultural* to the notion of *crítica de la memoria*. In this chapter I explain how this new stage can be understood as the political realization of Richard's thinking owing to her political-intellectual commitment to a reinforcement of the 'pregunta incómoda sobre el pasado' and the absence of justice in Chile. Here I argue that Richard's *crítica de la memoria* not only sought to analyse

archives, reports, monuments, and museums, but also that she focused upon various symbolic-cultural spheres in which art, literature, and critical writing played a fundamental role. Thus my objective in this last chapter was to demonstrate that the objective of *crítica cultural* and *crítica de la memoria* was and has been to permanently promote an open question about history. In other words, to promote the logics of the 'counter-monument', that is, a challenge to, rather than the crystallization or monumentalizing of, history. And this challenge takes place not only through the selection and analysis of the various cultural texts and expressions of artworks, but also through the explicit reference to, and denunciation of, crimes committed. In this sense, in this last chapter I seek to defend the idea that *crítica cultural* remains active in multiple forms and with new objects of interest.

In spite of current difficulties in maintaining the critical word (global capitalism, policies of austerity, generalized de-politicizing, social and economic inequities), Richard does not desist. Whilst it is difficult to determine the impact of Richard's *crítica cultural* —it cannot be assessed on the basis of its direct impact on this or that dimension of society¹⁸⁰— its historical role has been to resist the current climate. Therefore, its strength arises from its continuous exploration of new aesthetic forms and 'materializations' through writing in order to unveil the culturally homogenizing strategies of our times. Hence Richard's *crítica cultural* continues to defend and promote the tradition of the critical essay as developed in Latin America in the 21st century, using

¹⁸⁰ However, the work of Richard served as a platform for the intellectual and academic recognition of several of those involved in the *Escena de Avanzada*. For example, Raúl Zurita would be awarded the Premio Nacional de Literatura in 2000. Three years later, Gonzalo Díaz received the Premio Nacional de Artes Plásticas, and Eugenio Dittborn in 2005. Diamela Eltit has been awarded a series of international prizes and has achieved an international notoriety unknown to other Chilean women writers. The same has occurred with the photographer Paz Errázuriz and the visual artist Lotty Rosenfeld. Even Carlos Leppe, who suffered an almost irreversible falling out with Richard at the beginning of the democratic period, has played a fundamental role in the artistic and academic circuit. In sum, all of them have achieved undoubted recognition in the fields of Chilean and international art.

the essay as a tool for social and political change. Consequently, she not only resists a contemporary machine of academia which privileges publications that are politically harmless but with a high impact factor, but also today's lack of interest in theory and the 'emancipating word'.

In sum, the aim of this thesis is to describe a branch of the history of cultural criticism in Latin America through Richard's intellectual trajectory, acknowledging the idea that her *crítica cultural* is a productive intellectual practice. In other words, the trajectory of her criticism has not only created political-aesthetic concepts and lines of flight, but has also served to record some of the most significant passages of Chile's cultural history over the past 45 years. And she did so always *from* the perspective of 'difference' and as a nomadic observer, a contemporary *flâneur*. In fact, one of Richard's main characteristics has been her ability to remain in the margins or institutional gaps, and from this strategic position she has persevered in recovering the cultural residues that empower processes of *political de-territorialization*.¹⁸¹ Consequently, the great value of Richard's *crítica cultural* resides in how it has provided us with conceptual and analytical tools that have enabled us to see and understand society in another way, from another point of view. In doing so, Richard has invited us to search for new cultural sources and diverse expressions of art, broaden the scope of the questions, generate new concepts, and propose new ideas.

Writing this thesis felt like tidying up someone else's library, one that lay dispersed on several different latitudes. Unpacking the first catalogues, photocopies, articles, and books about Richard's work was a diffuse and confusing process. However, as time passed I discovered that initial chaos

¹⁸¹ Here I use the term coined by Deleuze and Guattari (2011: 3-28). See also the analysis by Adrian Parr and Paul Patton (69-74) of the concept of de-territorialization included in Parr (2010).

gradually gave way to a sense of order, of history, providing me with a timeline with which to define moments, semantics, and problematic nodes that made sense as a narrative. And upon grouping them in decades, these texts configured a unit; they made sense according to historical time. At the same time, however, these documents raised new questions and demanded a broader brush, a large-scale treatment. In this sense, this thesis constitutes a cartography — the art of drawing up maps to provide a reading or orientation in territories to be explored — one created on the basis of gathering, analysing, and recording Nelly Richard's theoretical debates and political-aesthetic explorations from 1970 onwards.

Hence, and whilst this thesis involved a complete revision of the texts, books, essays, and catalogues that Richard prepared from the time of her arrival in Chile, this task will always be incomplete. Although the compilation of documents was thorough and resorted to the largest quantity of sources possible, this research acknowledges the possible existence of photocopies, issues of magazines, articles etc. that have not been included as part of the study. Yet this did not in any case imply losing track of the general argument of this investigation. Likewise, throughout the investigation I had to leave out an important number of works, artistic genres, artists, writers, and cultural texts that were present in the years analysed. Those that have been discussed in this study were considered necessary to explain the processes and discussions developed here. Any selection involves some form of limitation.

This study not only acknowledges limitations but also accepts that, thanks to them, new research questions have opened up.

One of the intellectual figures who accompanied Richard in the early years

was Ronald Kay. After the publication of his book *Del Espacio de Acá*, his work has continued to become more widely available in Germany and to a lesser extent in Chile. Although studies of his philosophical and poetic work have emerged bit by bit, we should ask ourselves about his intellectual and critical trajectory. A deeper analysis of Kay's work would permit us to understand other dimensions of the relationship between art (photography and painting), theory, and poetic writing in Chile.

Another issue that is suggested in this investigation is the comparison between Richard's intellectual trajectory with that of other Latin American intellectuals such as Néstor García Canclini¹⁸², Beatriz Sarlo¹⁸³, Jesús Martín Barbero, and Jean Franco, among others. In fact, there are many intellectual, biographical, and critical crossovers in this generation. Exploring the similarities, differences, and problems between Richard and these authors would permit a broader discussion of Latin America generally.

A further line of analysis that could be developed on the basis of this thesis concerns the influence of Richard's critical practice both upon present-day academia and upon the cultural policies of the Concertación governments. Whilst this investigation discussed several cases in which there were crossovers in these areas (for example, cultural policies and the paintings of Dávila, given Richard's strong influence as *Vice-Rectora Académica* at Universidad Arcis), it was not possible to provide concrete proof, including evidence and records, of mutual influences and interferences. Therefore, we may ask ourselves about the nature of the reception of Richard's ideas and critical project by Academia¹⁸⁴ as well as by Chile's cultural institutions. A

¹⁸² The Brazilian investigators Bruno Perón (2015) realized a similar investigation to this thesis about the work and intellectual trajectory of Néstor García Canclini.

¹⁸³ For a summary of his work about art, politics and society see Popovitch (2012).

¹⁸⁴ However, there is new evidence that her thinking has impacted on this particular area. See Herrera & Richard

deeper examination of these issues would help to demonstrate how Richard's work has had, is having, or will have an impact on the local or international circuit.

Finally, one of the challenges for Richard's *crítica cultural* might be to expand the field of its artistic analysis. During this investigation it became evident that Richard paid little attention to artistic manifestations such as theatre, music, cinema, or dance. By focusing upon the visual arts, photography, and literature, she was able to draw up a plan of analysis focusing upon the image and the word. However, during the 45 years covered in this investigation, there were a series of songs, theatre pieces, dance performances, films, documentaries etc. the analysis of which would have further contributed towards new critical readings of Chilean history. Elements of *crítica cultural* and the *crítica de la memoria* throw light upon this matter, and this poses another challenge for future investigators and cultural critics.

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Forty-two years have passed since the military coup of 1973 and still a series of questions remain unanswered in connection with justice and memory in Chile.¹⁸⁵ Every year the coup slips further back in our memories and poses growing challenges to critical thinking. In fact, in a few years we will be commemorating the 50th anniversary of the coup. How can we maintain a *form* of active criticism? How can we maintain an alert, sceptical gaze upon art, literature, and memory during the coming decades? To keep critical practice alive is no mean feat and new historical questions continually arise.

(2015). Indeed, the Rector of the Universidad de Chile, Professor Ennio Vivaldi, presented the book at the Casa Central of the Universidad de Chile on 9th October 2015.

¹⁸⁵ For example, in 2015 several institutions dedicated to memory in Chile (London 38) have denounced the 'pactos de silencio' maintained by the military to cover up crimes against humanity in Chile.

However, and in spite of the auspiciousness of this time of political consciousness in Chile with student mobilization, expansion of social rights, acknowledgement of the Mapuche, *crítica cultural* continues to face new challenges.

In 2014 Universidad Arcis began to experience one of the greatest financial and institutional¹⁸⁶ crises in its history, marking Richard's departure as *Vice Rectora*. As a founder and key figure at Arcis, Richard left behind one of the most significant projects in her intellectual trajectory. Yet the end of the critical-academic project represented by this university not only closed an important chapter in the field of *crítica cultural* in Chile, but it also raised the question of how to keep that critical project alive.

The 'Arcis factor' exemplifies the fact that maintaining a critical position is always a utopia in process. In this scenario, it would seem that a new time is emerging for Richard's *crítica cultural*. Recalling the closure of *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, her critical practice has not ceased. On the contrary, with the new political moment in Chile, critical resistance has re-emerged in the form of fresh generations of ideas.¹⁸⁷ Although Richard's prominence has diminished somewhat in academia, her voice and writing continue to engage with the local intellectual circuit through publications and interviews and through encounters in university classrooms, the launching of books by independent self-publishing houses, and the private views of exhibitions in

¹⁸⁶ See, for example, the article by Figueroa (2014).

¹⁸⁷ Indeed, today there are new generations of cultural critics formed by Richard (I am referring to people such as Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, Federico Galende, Miguel Valderrama, Oscar Ariel Cabezas, Alejandra Castillo, etc.). But the latter are substantially different from Richard's they are academics tenured in Chilean and US universities. In this sense, their material and intellectual condition is completely different. However, the practice and critical will does not differ from that critical/historical spirit.

galleries in the periphery of Santiago (e.g. Galería Metropolitana¹⁸⁸). Today, more than ever, Richard inhabits that difference and minority existence that she forged over the past 45 years.

Nelly Richard's *crítica cultural* is based upon the idea that reality holds within it the seeds of its own renewal. Her concern is to interrupt, or at least disturb, the continuum of history. And she believes, also, that this is possible through 'materialidad estética' combined with poetic writing as the union of these two elements bears the possibility of finding that 'moment of danger' in Benjamin's word that redeems the past, questions the present, and builds a new future. This study attempts to describe and understand an intellectual project that continues to advance in that direction.

¹⁸⁸ Galería Metropolitana has played an important role in the alternative circuit of the visual arts in Chile. See http://www.galeriametropolitana.org/texts/english_pres.html (October, 2015).

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