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SANTA CRUZ

RE-THINKING RUIZ:

NON/SYNCHRNOICITY AND THE DETAILS

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

LITERATURE

By

James N. Nichols

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The thesis of James N. Nichols

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Table of Contents

Figures

Abstract

Re-thinking Ruiz: Non/Synchronicity and the Details

James Nichols

This paper will reposition the frame through which *A TV Dante* has been seen. *A TV Dante* has been seen in relation to Ruiz's "spectral turn" and his transmedia explorations characteristic of his 1980s films, or as representative of the nostalgic wanderings of his exile films. Rather, I read *A TV Dante*, not only in these terms, but as a film that is grappling with the problematics of return after the dictatorship. As such, scholars have often looked toward to two films in particular in order to point to the problems and concerns that Ruiz's films have raised in relation to return after exile: (*Lettre d'un cinéaste ou Le retour d'un amateur de bibliothèques* (1983) and *Cofralandes* (2002). I will argue, however, that exile and return are also key topoi for *A TV Dante*.

Introduction

". . . cinema is the totality of all the arts connected by poetry - meaning poetry in the sense of craziness, the poetry that Plato was afraid of."[1]

Raúl Ruiz

"Exile is a theme in most of my films, but it's different kinds of exile. I could never have predicted that exile would become a central issue for all people in the world. We are all exiles. One of the major effects of globalization has been to turn everyone into exiles, because of the breakdown of the social ecosystems, to put it succinctly."[2]

Raúl Ruiz

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[1] See Nick James "Mexico Rising: Interview".
[2] See Raoul Ruiz, Jérôme Prieur interview in the "Un voyage fantastique".

<center>**Raúl Ruiz**
(1941-2002)</center>

Raúl Ruiz's films are complex. Throughout his career Ruiz denounced

hegemonic, market influenced paradigms and formulaic narrative modes of

mainstream cinema as he sought to revolutionize cinema as a form. His transmedia

(mixing literature, poetry, theater and television) and transgenre cinematographic

expressions drew inspiration from Chilean folklore, philosophy, and multiple

histories, as well as various aesthetic traditions, from (neo)baroque to surrealism.

Film, for Ruiz is ". . . the totality of all arts connected by poetry . . ." (James). In his

films, and in his own terms, Ruiz is speculating about "new ways of telling stories

with images using the ambiguity and richness and polysemia of the image" (Norton

10). Ruiz has said that his cinematography is "A system of multiple stories,

overlapping according to certain established rules . . . capable of generating new

stories. . . This is not just a way of writing, but a way of filming." (Ruiz, Poetics of

Cinema, 109-116**)**. More than this, Ruiz rejects straightforward, linear temporality

and narrative logics in his films—what he will eventually come to call "central

conflict theory" (11). Instead, he often uses anomalies of speech and gestures as

narrating forces for his films, and along with voice over narratives, pastiches of

literary sources and historical referents which confront the viewer with a multiplicity

of relationships between images and signs, his films can have a hermetic feel that is at

once hybrid and complex. As such, Ruiz's films can be seen as what W. J. T Mitchell

has called "imagetexts: neither pure image nor pure text, a suturing of the visual and

the verbal . . ." (Mitchell 95). As this paper will seek to demonstrate, Ruiz's films not

<center>2</center>

only inspire new interpretations of canonical literary works but present the viewer with cinematographic expressions that ask one to access different spatiotemporal configurations when attending to his filmic articulations of post-dictatorial Chile.

In his books[3] on film theory, Ruiz has said that he strives to create films whose flaws can generate an intense poetry and "*una elevada calidad de aburrimiento*" ("a high-quality boredom"; my trans.; Ruiz, *Poetica del cine,* 22). In contrast to and against hegemonic market forces of Hollywood cinema, his films strive to destabilize viewers' preconceived expectations of narrative and get them on the brink of boredom, at which they become actively engaged and realigned with the signs of the film. This approach, however, did not aim to create merely art-house films dethatched from larger cultural and political concerns; Ruiz's films retain strong interests in decentering and/or destabilizing (neo)colonialism, Eurocentric perspectives, and mainstream market forces. As such, while Ruiz's curiosity and ceaseless searches for new combinations of cinematographic expressions can seem playful and/or kitschy at times, he has also said that ". . . every joke conceals a serious problem" (Ruiz 117). In other words, the politics of these imagetexts are always already intricately related to larger social and political forces, and they call for an active viewer to be alert for nuances, their relation to larger sociohistorical attachments, and the sociopolitical reality they represent and that which they are a part of; that is, for Ruiz, everything was political, from the syntactical structure of his characters' discourse, their gestures, to his use of *mise en scène*. While Ruiz's

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[3] *Poetica del cine* (1995) and *Poetica del cine* 2 (2007)

filmography is usually divided into three stages[4], many[5] approach his oeuvre as a whole and/or continuum. Thus, this paper will trace themes and continuities in relation to Ruiz's aesthetic trajectory and their relation to *A TV Dante*.

Layout/Frame

This thesis reads *A TV Dante* through a more contextualized approach, in relation to the aesthetic trajectory within his *oeuvre* and the sociohistorical situations of these films, all of which inform my reading of *A TV Dante*. A such, this paper has two goals in mind. Firstly, I will begin with a brief overview by highlighting themes from Ruiz's early, pre-exile films: *Tres Tigres Tristes* (1968) and *La colonia penal* (1970). Through a more distant reading of these early films —with attention to the strategies, traits, and conventions (i.e. anomalies of behavior and speech, language, gestures, and adaptation)—I look at Ruiz's early aesthetic approaches and how they are deployed in historically specific contexts, along with the ideological implications of their use. By pointing out some of the tendencies exhibited in Ruiz's early, pre-exile films, I will show how these are continued and extended into his first full length film in exile, *Diálogos de exiliado*s (1978) as well as *A TV Dante* (1991). What should be noted, however, is that in order to contextualize *Diálogos de exiliado*s, this paper will make a lengthily historical detour and explicate the use of political exile and its role in Chilean politics, from independence up to the point of Ruiz's exile. This detour is necessary for at least two reasons: First, exile under the Pinochet

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[4] See Pablo Corro Pemjean (2010)
[5] See Ignacio López Vicuña and Andreea Marinescu (2017), Pablo Corro Pemjean (2010) and Michael Goddard (2013)

regime was the most tragic period relative to mass exile; a period which created a global diasporic community of Chilean exiles on a grand scale, and this community is what Ruiz takes as his subject in the film. Second, the political and economic changes that took place under the Pinochet regime would radically restructure Chilean social reality; as such, I look at political and economic changes that took place during the regime, the continuities of these policies after, and their relation to Ruiz's later films which take up themes of return after exile. Put another way, this detour serves two purposes: to contextualize *Diálogos de exiliado*s and as a historical foundation and point of reference for his later films that deal with return after exile. To this end, these early films and the historical, political, and cultural perspectives laid out in chapter one and two act as satellites and/or reference points, all of which inform my reading of *A TV Dante*.

Secondly, this paper will reposition the frame through which *A TV Dante* has been seen. *A TV Dante* has been seen in relation to Ruiz's "spectral turn"[6] and his transmedia explorations characteristic of his 1980s films, or as representative of his nostalgic wanderings[7] of his exile films. Rather, I read *A TV Dante*, not only in these terms, but as a film that is grappling with the problematics of return after the dictatorship. It has been suggested that re-encounter with the motherland has been seen as fundamental to the Ruizian ecosystem, "a search for 'the permanent Chile'" (Crespo 106). As such, scholars[8] have often looked toward to two films in particular

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[6] Sabine Doran "Ghosts with Open Wounds (pg.145) and Michael Goddard (pg. 88)
[7] Ruptures Alejandra Rodríguez-Remedi "Raúl Ruiz, Speculative Bricoleur: Pedagogical and Televisual" (pg. 171).
[8] See Alejandra Rodríguez-Remedi's "Cofralandes: A Formative Space for Chilean Identity" and Andreea Marinescu's "Raúl Ruiz's Surrealist Documentary of Return: Le retour d'un amateur de bibliothèques (1983) and Cofralandes (2002)

in order to point to the problems and concerns that Ruiz's films have raised in relation to return after exile: (*Lettre d'un cinéaste ou Le retour d'un amateur de bibliothèques* [Letter from a Library Lover or The Return of a Library Lover (1983) and *Cofralandes* (2002). I will argue, however, that exile and return are also key topoi for *A TV Dante*.

Ruiz has said that "my films change because the surroundings around me change" (Chanan 40). To this end, each of the aforementioned films concerning return after exile refers to a particular history and set of dilemmas; thus, they are significant sources for a comparative analysis of the ways in which his films have portrayed not only the problems and concerns that arise upon returning from exile but the different ways he has introduced strangeness to the shown reality of Chile—all of which not only a represent a present in crisis but grapple with the difficulties of return after exile in Chilean contexts, through cinematographic expressions. In other words, Ruiz raises various concerns with the problematics of return after exile and their implications for a sense of Chileanness (*chilenidad*), during and after the Chilean dictatorship—each confronting different moments and the problems and concerns that arise from those. The structure of chapter three and four, however, should be noted: By positioning *A TV Dante* within this linage and arguing that exile and return are key topoi, in chapter three I posit *A TV Dante* between the two chronologically, i.e. 1983, 1991, 2002. However, and precisely because these are distant readings, this chapter will look at the major themes and concerns of these films. Here, what I intend to show is that by situating *A TV Dante*, formally and thematically, amongst

these two films, we can see how—through his use of exile and return as key topoi and the problems and concerns that he is confronting within all three films—Ruiz is expanding the concerns that he first explored in *Lettre d'un cinéa* (1983), and the problems he is wrestling with in *A TV Dante* then anticipate and open up onto the themes that will be more fully explored and are of pressing concern in *Cofralandes* (2002). Then, in Chapter four, I return to *A TV Dante* for a close reading of the film and the hypotext of which it based, Dante's *Inferno*—all of which retrospectively illuminates the preceding chapter. To this end, by integrating *A TV Dante* within these wider spatial and temporal coordinates, in relation to it its antecedents and forerunners, one is able to reflect on the particular sociohistorical attachments of these films and see how *A TV Dante* adds to the wider Ruizian ecosystem, and his search for a "permanent Chile". In sum, the chapters of this paper work as scaffolding, all of which work toward informing my reading of *A TV Dante* in the final chapter.

Chapter One: Ruiz's Early Career

New Latin American Cinema

Ruiz emerged as a filmmaker in the late 1960s within the milieu of New Latin American Cinema (NLAC). At this time, many filmmakers in Latin America where concerned with revolutionary questions and objectives involving anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism, as well as the role of filmmaking within these larger questions and concerns. While Ruiz shared these cultural and political concerns, his conception of the political role of cinema differed from his contemporaries in the NLAC. Ruiz thought that his primary role as a filmmaker—within these larger political questions—was too revolutionize cinema as a medium, which put him at odds with his contemporaries in the NLAC. As such, the Viña del Mar film festivals were a place where Latin American filmmakers gathered to discuss and debate questions of cultural and political objectives within the NLAC and the role of cinema within revolutionary frameworks and shared objectives. As Ambrosio Fornet has written, there were, however, basic principles to the ideological commitments of the movement which were ratified in 1968:

> 1) To contribute to the development and reinforcement of national culture and, at the same time, challenge the penetration of imperialist ideology and any other manifestation of cultural colonialism; 2) to assume a continental

perspective towards common problems and objectives, struggling for the future

integration of a Great Latin American Nation; and 3) to deal critically with the

individual and social conflicts of our peoples as a means of raising the

consciousness of the popular masses (Pick 19-20).

In 1969, at the second Viña del Mar festival, these debates continued and new

concerns were added. Questions ranging from filmmakers and the state in a

dependent capitalist context; problems of scarcity of the materials needed to create

films, and the whether or not to engage with existing capitalist distribution systems or

to construct alternative networks; questions about the appropriate film language to

express conditions of underdevelopment; and questions of national reality and the

relations between filmmakers and 'the people' (King 1990: 69).

As focal points for these questions, two films that were shown at the 1969 Viña

del Mar festival, which —while following the basic principles of the NLAC—both

took very different approaches: Octavio Getino and Fernando E. Solanas's *La hora

de los hornos* (The Hour of the Furnaces) and Raúl Ruiz's *Tres tigres tristes* (which I

will analyze in more detail below). In *La hora de los hornos*, a documentary on

liberation struggles, the film addresses the history of Argentina and the waves of

revolutionary struggle from the Spanish conquest to modern military regimes

financed by foreign powers. This feature examines racism, social upheaval, native

massacres and the precarious political situations that could change in the wake of

revolutionary rebellion. The use of cinema as a vehicle for militant politics, however,

was not embraced wholeheartedly. Doubts were expressed about the risks of

homogenizing militant artistic practices in cinema as a formula for continental

political change modeled on the Cuban revolution. As such, the Chilean filmmakers

selected Raúl Ruiz as their spokesperson to argue against the political dogmatism of some interventions and the festival's emphasis on militant politics and film, which he felt eschewed the intricacies of cinema's potential. Ruiz has stated that:

> The way in which things are being discussed—declamatory, vague, and parliamentary—is incompatible with the Chilean way of being. We talk about things differently. What we hear here are clichés about imperialism and culture that you can read about in any magazine; and then Fernando Solanas comes to recount *The Hour of the Furnaces*, which we've already seen last night. We're going to go to the other room to talk about film. Whoever wants to come, can come with us (177 Marinescu).

To this end, the Chilean films shown at the 1969 festival offered another approach to the pressing political concerns. On the Chilean side, the feature films shown—The Jackal of Nahueltoro (Miguel Littín, 1968), Valparaíso mi amor (Aldo Francia, 1968), and Three Sad Tigers(Raúl Ruiz, 1969)—incorporated a variety of strategies which represented a variety of options, rather than a unique agenda, for political change (23 Pick). As such, Ruiz wanted to take another approach and avoid avoiding nationalistic and proselytizing tendencies.

It is important to underline, however, that while there may have been debates[9] over approaches to the role of cinema with revolutionary objectives, these filmmakers also shared a great deal in common. As Zuzanna Pick has pointed out, "During the roundtable sessions, some of the objections raised to the labeling of exemplary practices were not necessarily signs of dissent but appeals for the recognition of

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[9] See Ignacio López Vicuña and Andreea Marinescu (pg. 178)

10

differences" (Pick 23). That is, while the two films mentioned above, *La hora de los hornos* and *Tres Tigres Tristes,* differed aesthetically, they shared the desire to create a cinematic language expressive of Latin American social and political realities. Ruiz's approach, however, was more experimental and avant-garde, especially in his use of surrealist gestures[10] (which I will explain more below). Ruiz would depict contradictions, anomalistic langue, gestures, unlikely events, absurd situations, as well as fantastic elements not as the opposite of reality but as an integral and valuable part of it. As an example of Ruiz's early approach, then, I turn to *Tres Tigres Tristes* as an example.

<div align="center">

***Tres Tigres Tristes* (1968)**

</div>

To start, then, I turn to Ruiz's first full-length film, *Tres tigres tristes* [Three Sad Tigers] (1968). Based on a theatrical play by Alejandro Sieveking made the year before, [11]Ruiz has said that he conceived of the film as a "visual reflection in images of our contemporary condition" (Chanan 29). In the film, then, language and gestures are paramount. Not only is the film dedicated to of Chilean antipoet Nicanor Parra[12], who was critical of refined poetry and opted to take a more colloquial approach with his work, but the title of the film is one of the most common *trabalenguas* (tongue

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[10] See Luis Mora del Solar "Ruiz ¿Díscolo o artista de vanguardia?" (pg. 64)

[11] See Santiago Contardo Martinez, "Tres tristes tigres: mecanismos para el descentramiento de un cuerpo" (2013) for an in depth examination of these differences.

[12] Chilean antipoet Nicanor Parra poet was also a mathematician, and physicist. Ruiz drew inspiration from these poets and he used terms from physics to develop his film theory, in particular his "Six Functions of the Shot". The langue of physics was also influential for Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro, see *Poesía y Poética* pg. 144.
I will return to this and its relation to Ruiz in chapter 4.

twisters or word games) in the Spanish language: En tres tristes trastos de trigo, tres tristes tigres comían trigo. Comían trigo, tres tristes tigres, en tres tristes trastos de trigo. "Translation: In three sad plates of wheat, three sad tigers ate wheat, (they) ate wheat, three sad tigers, in three sad plates of wheat" (Morales).

Juanita Morales has suggested that the "Spanish language has many difficult sounds and words with many consonants that have to be said rather fast", and this example combines some of the most complex technical sound challenges (Morales). As such, it is often used for entertainment purposes for children, but it also has a pedagogical function: to teach children to learn difficult sounds and methods of speaking. Thus, what is important is saying the sounds and saying them fast; one need be concerned with the form, not the content. In this speech act, then, there is clearly semantic ambiguity, but the ambiguity is not was is important; what is important is saying the words, saying them fast, and saying them correctly. In other words, the signifiers are drained of their history in order to convey another meaning, the pedagogical function of the game itself. What we have here, then, is what Roland Bathes refers to as mythical speech.

For Barthes, mythical speech is a type of speech that is motivated. In a simple language system, the signifier is empty; it's arbitrary, i.e. the words that spell tree (the signifier) only signify a perennial plant because we all agree that when the letters t-r-e-e when aligned in that particular way, a perennial plant is signified. In other words, the plant does not impose its meaning on the signifier; the concept of tree does not circle back and impose itself on the page. Put another way, the signified does not distort the signifier, because the signifier puts up no resistance, or as Barthes would say, it is "unmotivated". Mythical speech, however, is always motivated; it "points

out and it notifies", it wants us understand something (Barthes 226). In mythical speech, then, the signified inflicts it's meaning on the signifier and ventriloquizes it.

Barthes gives many examples of this type of speech, throughout *Mythologies*, but here I find this example particularly fitting for *Tres tigres tristes* (both for the tongue twister and the film); Barthes ask us to imagine a student in a grammar class:

I am a pupil in the second form in a French lycee. I open my Latin grammar, and I read a sentence, borrowed from Aesop or Phaedrus: *quia ego nominor leo*. I stop and think. There is something ambiguous about this statement: on the one hand, the words in it do have a simple meaning: because my name is lion. And on the other hand, the sentence is evidently there in order to signify something else to me. Inasmuch as it is ad dressed to me, a pupil in the second form, it tells me clearly: I am a grammatical example meant to illustrate the rule about the agreement of the predicate. I am even forced to realize that the sentence in no way signifies its meaning to me, that it tries very little to tell me something about the lion and what sort of name he has; its true and fundamental signification is to impose itself on me as the presence of a certain agreement of the predicate. I conclude that I am faced with a particular, greater semiological system, since it is coextensive with the language: there is, indeed, a signifier, but this signifier is itself formed by a sum of signs, it is in itself a first semiological system (my name is lion). Thereafter, the formal pattern is correctly unfolded: there is a signified (I am a grammatical example), and there is a global signification, which is none other than the correlation of the signifier and the signified; for neither the naming of the lion nor the grammatical example is given separately (224-225).

13

Thus, in the *trabalengua* we see the same function at work. We have a sum of signs which make up the signifier, but what is signified is the concept, the pedagogical function of the *trabalengua.* And in order for this concept to impose itself, the agreed upon semantics of the words themselves and their function in the larger language system must be distorted. In mythical language, then, there is a concept that the signifier is speaking for, and the concept must distort, contort, and contradict the semantics of the signifiers; the signifiers are, in a sense, interpellated by the pedagogical function of the *trabalengua.* The tigers themselves and the cause for their sadness is not import; what is important is the concept, in this case the pedagogical function. A problem arises, however, because the words are part of a larger system (langue) which follow certain agreed upon norms, (e.g. Saussure's chess game) and the question always lingers. And as soon as one might ask, "what do you mean, three sad tigers, why are they sad, why do they eat wheat instead of meat" one would respond, "that's not important, just say it." As Contardo Martinez suggests, "*De este modo, el significante cobra su revancha frente al significado*" (7). In other words, myth is parasitic; it wants to fully break from the raw materials it uses to build itself with; it strives to but can't; there is always a residue. That is, the raw material(s) are part of a larger lexicon and linguistic system with a fullness and history, and myth wants to distort this and have one ignore this so the concept can impose itself— whether it be a grammatical example, trabalengua or whatever else. In the *trabalengua* of course there is a deep history—the history of colonization and langue imposition in a Latin American context, let alone the tigers and dietary habits, etc. etc.; the list could go on. But as Barthes would say, all of this is put at a distance, the history of the raw materials that make up myth must recede a great deal or be put in

14

parentheses if the sum of signs is to "receive its signified" (227). However, this gap

is never fully bridged; as Contardo Martinez suggests, "*Cada vez que este*

trabalenguas es proferido surge rodeado por los fantasmas de la incógnita Si el

énfasis sonoro aparece para desbordarse en la letra –por fuerza de velocidad y

obstáculo-, la Lengua, aunque aparentemente vencida, resurge oteando con su

respiro consonántico en el lugar de la transgresión" (7). That is, mythical speech

cannot obliterate all of this history; it can only put it bay. It tries to drain the history

of these raw materials, but it can't fully succeed in doing so, and they remain haunted.

By using *Tres tigres tristes* as the title of the film, then, Ruiz is suggesting that

we approach the content of the film in the same way. Similar to the erratic sentences

in the language game, which is motivated by the pedagogical concept, too, the

characters' erratic behavior in the film is supposed to impose a meaning. To this end,

the language and gestures of the characters in the film, who act and speak in

seemingly erratic ways, should be approached as a type of mythical speech (myth is

not just limited to language, after all). There is a motivation to Ruiz's focus on the

details of gestures, behaviors and speech that he has constructed in the film, which is

calling attention to something else.

In an interview from 1976, Ruiz describes the approach to his films of that

time:

> As far as I recall, I was interested then in investigative cinema. I still hold that
>
> point of view, to a degree. It seems more necessary than ever to me. . . I
>
> presupposed the existence of a cultural foundation which I called the 'culture
>
> of resistance'. I conceive of this as the synthesis of techniques of rejection of a
>
> precise order. There are rules of rejection which correspond to what we define

as civilasation, learning to read, write and behave in a 'civislied' manner; techniques which reject apprenticeship or techniques of cancellation, like alcoholism, and other more subtle transgressions of established norms. All this I called the culture of resistance. I maintained and I still maintain, that if we don't know how this culture functions, it's impossible to put it crudely to 'create' Chile. I believed it was more important to create the country than cinema. And this programme, which seems so obvious, which all Chilean film makers uphold, leads us to certain temptations. The first temptation is to 'create' the men who created Chile; in short, to devote ourselves to the exaltation of our supposed national heroes, making films about O'Higgins, Manuel Rodrigues and other scare monsters. . . The cinema is by nature investigative; it's an art which formalizes behavior. . . To record a series of gestures, which, being in harmony with a series of rules, are an art in themselves (Chanan 30-31).

In the film, then, the camera captures these transgressions and rejections of established norms through odd and intimate angles as it wanders through different facets of Chilean social reality—from bars, restaurants, strip clubs, used car businesses, and apartments, to various violent outbursts—giving the viewer an at times documentary-esque feel for contemporary life. A loosely structured plot that has many overlapping stories, mainly follows three alcoholic characters as they stumble through Santiago de Chile: two siblings, Amanda and Tito; and Rudi, Tito's boss. Ruiz shows us frustrated business deals, precarious housing situations, un/employment, and even Tito's prostituting of his sister, Amanda, to his boss after losing important documents in an attempt to save his job; an act that not only does not

save his job but ends with Tito beating Rudi violently after insulting him on the phone. However, even Rudi's employment is precarious as a boss. No form of employment is stable for anyone. The language of the film is also sporadic and it jumps from topic to topic abruptly, ranging from discussions about atomic war, Vietnam, Chilean politics (Eduardo Frei Montalva in particular) to conversations about utopianism and nationalism that drown each other out in a crowded restaurant. Ascanio Cavallo and Carolina Díaz has suggested that Ruiz's " . . *personajes conversan con repetidas elipsis, interrogaciones retóricas, asíndeton, alteraciones (...) y es fácil y frecuente que pierdan de vista el origen y el centro de sus de sus razonamientos*" (Cavallo & Díaz 262). However, there are moments when discourse is very clear. For example, when Tito is at a restaurant with a friend, his friend starts engaging in a discussion about Chilean politics with another patron. At one point in the conversation, the other patron asks Tito his opinion and Tito answers, "I don't want to talk with you or anyone" which results in his friend standing up and punching him in the face. To this end, Tito's rejection of political participation, albeit on a micro-political scale, ends with him being violently assaulted, as if to give an example of the consequences of these transgressions. More than this, the way the characters move through the city (or, their gestures) also adds to the transgression of norms. For example, towards the end of the film, Tito wakes up drunk on a moving bus, and he stumbles out of his seat and falls into a crowd of people standing in the aisle. As the camera follows his decent through an intimate close-up of his face, he is smiling and is happy to be laying on the floor of a crowded bus aisle. Similarly, he is also shown walking down crowded sidewalks bumping into passerbys.

The film works tirelessly to give the viewer examples of rejected social norms or transgressions in a myriad of ways; however, it is also clear that these characters— while at times are happy to be on the fringes—are also struggling to find a way in to dominant or mainstream society, but they aren't able. For example, the aforementioned example of Tito prostituting his sister was, after all, an attempt to save his job. Seen in this way, the anti-social or absurd events depicted in the film— from various forms of precariousness, gestures, and speaking and relating to each other—, like the *trabalengua,* signify something else for Ruiz, namely the frustration of an alienated urban middle class during the Frei[13] period. What Zuzanna Pick has called, the "suspended tempo of Chilean life" (Pick, Rouge). As such, these contortions and transgressive behaviors can be seen not only as rejections but also as endless compromises that don't lead anywhere, as was prevalent during the Frei period (the period directly preceding Allende and the sweeping changes that would accompany the U.P., e.g. state appropriations of land and industry, which I will discuss in more detail in the proceeding section).What Ruiz's film constitutes, then, is a critical ethnography of contemporary Chile and how this frustration is expressed in everyday language and gestures. Rather than dramatizing militant politics or creating films about "supposed national heroes" and "other sacred monsters", the film holds a mirror up to contemporary Chilean everyday existence. Ruiz goal, after all, was to create and develop a cinematic language adequate to contemporary Chilean life by

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[13] Eduardo Nicanor Frei Montalva was president of Chile from 1964 to 1970; his party, the Christian Democratic party, supported the military coup that ousted President Allende in 1973.

capturing everyday anomalies, habits and gestures which in and of themselves expresses the ways of being in alienation while at the same time captures what he calls "the culture of resistance." Thus, when compared to *La hora de los fornos*, as it was in the 1969 *Viña del mar* festival, we can see how this was a radically different approach to the issues of (neo)colonization and exploitation in their contemporary forms.

La colonia penal (Penal Colony) (1970)

In another of Ruiz's films from this early period, *La colonia penal* (1970), Ruiz adapts Franz Kafka's (*In der Strafkolonie/In the Penal Colony)* in order to depict conditions of existence in Latin America in terms of colonization, torture, militarism and economic dependence, although in a metaphorical or allegorical form. Ruiz himself has even stated that "for us, Kafka is a Latin American writer" **(**Buci-Glucksmann 85**)**. This technique/approach—a method selecting, combining, and transmuting sources that resonated with his own concerns—was a way for Ruiz to re-work sources and create potent political and cultural critiques which would continue throughout his career. That is, he draws inspiration from sources but changes them and transposes them onto Latin American contexts. What should be underlined, however, is the way he inverts themes and reverses storylines. This approach foreshadows his work in *A TV Dante* and these reversals and differences between the source texts and his films are important.

In Franz Kafka's famous story (*In der Strafkolonie/In the Penal Colony),* which takes up themes of militarism, colonialism, law and torture, a famous researcher/reporter visits an island colony in order to witness and report on a brutal judicial procedure and execution machine that he finds barbaric and horrifying. The

19

machine, which inscribes the condemned's body with their sentence over a period of twelve hours producing a quasi-religious experience until they are finally killed. The researcher has been called upon by the new commandant of the island, who disproves of the machine, which is a leftover remnant from the previous command, and is hoping that the researcher will feel the same; if the researcher, being an important guest from a more "enlightened" part of the world, disproves of the machine, the new commandant will seize the opportunity to put an end to the execution machine. The execution machine only has one final proponent, an old officer from the previous command, who reveres the machine and the religious experience it evokes and laments over days past when the machine was a source of entertainment for many on the island. The story ends, however, with the condemned man escaping and the officer taking his place in the machine; however, the machine, being in a state of disrepair, malfunctions, and he is robbed of the enlightened experience that twelve hours of inscription is supposed to bring on during the execution.

To this end, Ruiz takes the basic premise of this story—a visiting reporter, island, torture and militarism—, and transposes them onto a Latin American island. In the Kafka-esque island (to posit an overused neologism, but fitting in this context) these themes are mapped onto the island of Captiva, 200 miles off the coast of South America. We learn from a voice-over that the island was turned into a penal colony by Ecuador in the late nineteenth century, then occupied by the United States from 1899-1920, until it once again became a penal colony. Then in 1954, the United Nations took control and used it as an experimental society. The island then eventually gained "independence" in 1972 and is now controlled by a dictatorial president who rules erratically over the only inhabitants that the viewer is shown,

mainly consisting of males in military uniform. Essentially the film consists of a series of vignettes based on Western stereotypes about Latin America, from poets who are silenced to a dictator who laments about how much he loves his people, to the visiting western journalist who says things like, "how I love you people, you're so like children".

Like Kafka's story, Ruiz's film focuses on the visitor. Here, however, the visitor is a female journalist who specializes in third-world reports and is there to document conditions of the island and its people. From the beginning of the film, however, there seems to be a control of her gaze; on her arrival she encounters a seemingly friendly man at the small airport and they exchange pleasantries about shipping him cigarettes back to the island, but the tone seems to be disconnected from the gestures; when they are leaving the airport's small room, he grabs her arm and bends it behind her back (as if putting handcuffs on her) and begins leading her out of the airport keeping his grip on her arm as she walks, effectively controlling her gaze—a gesture that continues throughout the film. More than this, the inhabitants of the island speak an invented polyglot language that she doesn't understand and can't get access to; at one point she says, "the only language they have, I can hardly hear it". At another point, an inhabitant tells her "it's not really a language, it changes every day". During her visit she is given tours of torture chambers, as if they were trying to impress her, but she never actually witnesses any torture; encounters military type trainings; and is entertained by the dictator in bizarre ways, at one point breaking into a song that he says can last several days once he gets going.

These erratic scenes and gestures, control of the reporter's gaze, and lack of access to the inhabitant's langue, only seem to collate when we learn why the

21

journalist is actually there. The island's economy, which was once dependent on the

export of guano, has failed. Now, the island's main export is news reports of torture

and repression which are manufactured and sold for Western bourgeois consumption.

To this end, it is fitting that the language is inaccessible to the journalist and her gaze

is controlled. In Ruiz's comments about the film, he has stated that the journalist's

observations of torture and violence are part of a description that she herself has

helped to invent in order to send reports back to her paper (Chanan 38). After sending

back detailed accounts of the torture and repression seen everywhere, the journalist

realizes that she's fallen into the trap created for her by the islanders: lacking natural

resources, the island's main export is news. At one point in the film, the reporter even

assures officials that her report will gain the island notoriety and money.

Thus, unlike Kafka's story, where the new commandant wants to use the

visiting reporter's accounts of torture and execution as means to rid the island of the

machine, Ruiz inverts this aspect; here, the visiting reporter is on the island to

propagate these reports. Hence, through the film's play on stereotypes, Ruiz portrays

the effects of being an unequal state dependent on a global market and the strenuous

efforts of the "independent" island to contort itself in order to create a product that the

West will buy. As such, Ruiz metaphorically represents the effects of economic and

political dependence of a Latin American island dependent on the western bourgeois

market in the form of horrific news stories for consumption, what the media expects

from a socialist state: atrocity. And in the case of Chilean history and Western

intervention, the true atrocities would indeed some come. The film was made in 1970,

three years later would be the coup and the events that were to transpire would in fact

be tales of torture and extreme violence—not, however, as the result of a socialist

state but as the result of U.S. intervention and Cold War politics that would soon come to define one of the most brutal and periods in Chilean history. That is, the true atrocities would come in the name of free market politics and in the form of a brutal dictatorship.

Ruiz's early career in Chile was cut short, however, due to the coup and exile, which the next section will deal with in more detail. What I would like the reader to note is that the approaches that Ruiz was developing this period—language, gesture, adaptation— will continue on and into a *TV Dante*, but they will be expanded and complicated in many ways. And after the coup, there would be another recurrent theme in Ruiz's films: exile.

Chapter Two: Exile

Ruiz's Initial exile

As a result of the CIA backed coup in 1973 and the ensuing dictatorship, Chile experienced a period in which exile would become a mass phenomenon and would affect more people than ever before in Chilean history. While exile has a long past in Latin America connected with colonialism and ruling elites, in the mid to late 20th century it became an increasing epidemic (a theme that the next section will address more thoroughly). In this purge, anything and anyone that/who did not espouse the military regime and free market politics, was exiled, imprisoned, tortured and/or killed. As such, cultural and political figures were at the receiving end of this sweep and the blossoming Chilean cinema scene was cut short. The dictatorship and it interest in cultural figures, some of whom were imprisoned, tortured and killed meant that Ruiz very well could have been a target. Thus, after receiving an invitation from his friend Peter Lilienthal, to come to Germany to make a film, Ruiz decided to leave Chile, albeit relatively undramatically (Goddard 32). Thus, Ruiz left for Europe, arriving first in Germany and then in Paris, where he was to remain (López-Vicuña and Marinescu 19). Even though Ruiz's departure may not have been, debatably, a dramatic escape, he became an exile. Similarly, Latin American scholar Amy K. Kaminsky has pointed out that voluntary exile is an oxymoron (Kaminsky 9)

More than this, and as a result of Law Decrees enacted by the military regime. For example, Law Decree 81 stated that citizens who had left the country after the coup must obtain permission from the Ministry of Interior to reenter Chile, and when they renewed their passports at Chilean consulates, many exiles had the letter L stamped onto their passport, indicating that the bearers were on the list of those prohibited from returning (Sznajder and Roniger 229). Furthermore, with Law Decree 604, the regime prohibited reentrance of Chileans who had left the country for any reason at all were banished, or were not permitted to return to Chile (229-230). And at this point, Ruiz became what Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger classify a political exile. While definitions of exile are vast, here, I follow Sznajder and Roniger in their definition of political exile (which I will return to below). After Ruiz's exile, the themes of exile (and eventually return) will be recurrent and it will be the focus of his first full length film in exile, *Diálogos de exiliados* (1975). Before examining this film, however, it is necessary to contextualize and historicize the role that exile has played in Latin American politics and spend time examining why at this point in history the Pinochet regime was a radical break from how political exile had been used historically.

Historical uses of Chilean Exile:
Emerging Nation-states and Collective Identities

In order to understand the situation that Ruiz was in and the themes of exile as well as and return in his films, an understanding of the historical role that exile has played in Latin America (post-colonization) is necessary. Political exile and Latin American politics, from colonization onwards, has a long and complicated history; it is a method of political exclusion that is built into, and inherited by, political

structures. In *The Politics of Exile in Latin America* Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger put forth a sweeping historical analysis of political exile and Latin American politics, which they define as:

> We define political exile as a mechanism of institutional exclusion – not the only one – by which a person involved in politics and public life, or perceived by power holders as such, is forced or pressed to leave his or her home country or place of residence, unable to return until a change in political circumstances takes place (11).

Tracing this method of exclusion, they analyze the resilience and transformation of political exile and the complicated role it has played in shaping borders, identities and political alliances from colonial to independent rule. This form of exclusion, they argue, has been a regulatory mechanism for political systems unable to create pluralistic and inclusive models of participation, which has changed its structure within the passing of time, but that nevertheless persists (1). In doing so, they examine the social and political role that exile has had in certain points in history— the political networking and interplay between various states and agencies—and develop a tiered model that examines the complicated dynamics of exile. In its early form the put forth a three-tiered model that examines the dynamics of 1) the expelling sate 2) the exiles themselves and 3) the host countries. However, with globalization and the numbers of exiles expanding astronomically in the 20th century, they add a fourth tier to this model, namely the global tier. All of this will become clearer as I progress.

<center>

Chilean Exile in its Early Form

And the Evolution of Chilean Democracy

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<center>26</center>

In the vacuum created by the Spanish losing its grip on the colonies, new nation states were in the process of being defined and exile often played a key role transregional and continental politics. Inherited from colonial structures, exile would be transformed into a major mechanism of political regulation. During this time, however, political exile was mostly reserved for political elites and was divided by race and class. In order to put into relief how these dynamics played out in a three-tiered model, I think it helpful to see how they did so in the case of Chile.

As political elites were struggling over directions in which the newly formed nation-sates would go, this internal strife would often lead to the exile of opposing forces. Sznajder and Roniger give us an example of these dynamics in the early 19th century Chile:

> In the early 19th century, political networking shaped a rapidly changing
> scenery, highly unstable and rather anarchic, which led to countervailing
> attempts of coordination, under the dictatorship of José Miguel Carrera, who
> headed the government in 1811–1813 and 1814, a period known in Chilean
> historiography as the 'Patria Vieja' period. Part of an aristocratic family of
> Santiago, Carrera and his brothers, Juan José, Luis, and Javiera, soon found
> themselves opposed to Bernardo O'Higgins and other patriotic figures, which
> held different views for the future of Chile. The Carrera brothers had a
> localized vision of Chile and saw themselves as fit to lead as part of the
> 'créme' of local aristocracy. Contrastingly, O'Higgins and his allies conceived
> Chilean independence as a step to be taken in the framework of a
> comprehensive movement aimed at getting rid of the Spanish presence on a

continental basis, beginning from Cuyo, liberating Chile, and heading toward

the liberation of Peru (55-56).

The Carreras, however, soon found themselves on the losing side and were forced to

live abroad in Argentina. While there, they tried to organize a plot to oust O'Higgins,

but their attempts were blocked by O'Higgins' allies; while in Argentina, two of the

brothers were executed (58). However, because the Carreras were part of the

aristocracy these executions were the cause of an elitist aristocratic resentment, and

along with other elites growing tired of wars beyond Chilean borders, O'Higgins

himself eventually became an exile (58). As such, these examples show how the three

tiers—the political networking and interplay between the home country, the exile and

the host country—played out according to their own interests. That is, depending on

varying interests, exiles were often pawns in the games of various political factions.

The experience of being forced out would also, in turn, motivate certain elites

to imagine a more inclusive country and start to work towards a system of governance

that would be more comprehensive. In the case of Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, for

example, as a young liberal activist, he and participated in two failed revolts against

the Portalesian conservative regime of the 1850s and was exiled twice: first between

November 1853 and October 1855, and for a second time between March 1859 and

January 1861 (78) The experience of exile for Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna caused

him not only to re-think questions regarding identity on a personal level, but on a

national and historical level as well. In exile, Mackenna analyzed the problems of

nation building and the future of Chile and set out on an extensive historiographic

project of Chile, with the nation's future in mind:

. . . he engaged in writing the history of Chile in terms of historical justice, reconsidering the harm done by ostracism and the need for reconciliation. He thus engaged in the production of dozens of books, including two on some of the most prominent exiles: the Carrera Brothers and General Bernardo O'Higgins, heroes of the war of independence who were enemies in life, both dying in exile.15 By writing such books of history on them and on Portales, whose followers were closely related to his own exile, Vicuña Mackenna expressly aimed to reconfigure the political sphere through national reconciliation and a more open game of power. Through the writing of history, this intellectual elaborated a project of historiography aimed to reintegrate those who had been excluded in the past into the collective imagery, so to construct a way to reconcile Liberalism with the Portalesian authoritarian frameworks that, even if creating an outstanding comparative institutional stability in Chile, had to be reframed toward an expanding and more inclusive Republic. Writing on these leaders and others, Vicuña Mackenna tried to show the pitfalls of inner confrontation and violence and suggested a model for Chilean development that had universal significance. According to this model, the factionalism and political violence leading to ostracism and exile was the major hindrance to development. Development had to be based on civilized political dialogue making room for the building of a stable polity and prosperous society. This imagery was closely linked to liberal and positivist ideas and would become integrated in the modernization of Chile in the second half of the 19th century (80).

Thus, the political system that was to follow did in fact become more inclusive—not all inclusive—, but there was progress. And in 1891 a parliamentary system replaced the presidential system, the 1833 constitution was amended to grant the legislative branch greater authority over the executive branch and parties in the legislature determined cabinet compositions, and public officials were no longer allowed to serve in the legislature, which was previously a powerful presidential tool (Collier and Sater 48).This however, is not say that the form of democracy that was taking shape was ideal. Mackenna is notorious for his biased view on indigenous ways of life and his views of what modernization should look like in Chile and what was hindering to this view. More than this, the democratic system, founded on colonial and elitist structures, that would follow would stull use exile as a political tool. That is, this form of government still had its limits and many were excluded; however, while the political system still excluded many, political participation was being widened and the political spectrum in Chile was becoming a lively one.

Thus, the Chilean form of democracy progressed to be more dynamic and vibrant with a competitive multiparty system in which parties from a wide spectrum—from communist to conservatives—contended for elective office. According to one study, Chile was ranked the world's fifth most democratic nation for the years 1900-1950 (Barahona de Brito 20). Despite this, and whatever this means for the folks who conducted this study, exile, inherited from colonial structures, still played a role in democratic politics leading up and into the 20th century, and foreign capital coupled with elitist interests were still manifest. As such the use of "emergency laws" could be activated when groups posed too great of a threat to these interests. For example, and as Sznajder and Roniger have pointed out:

Even under formal democracy, Chilean political culture contained strong

authoritarian and exclusionary elements *enshrined* constitutionally and

reflected in the recurrent use of emergency laws promulgated whenever there

was a political crisis. The use of emergency legislation created a situation of

constitutional dictatorship that did not preclude the electoral game but

constrained participation and excluded those considered dangerous to the

political system (160 emphasis mine).

Take, for example, Law 6026 of 1937 and Law 8987 of 1948 which were used to

exclude communists from work and political participation (160). Between 1948–

1958, these laws forced thousands into exile, among them, Pablo Neruda (Collier and

Sater 51). Despite exile being used periodically amongst elites, it was often those who

strove for a truly inclusionary political system that would often take the brunt of this.

That is, in order to have a more inclusionary political system, this meant that the

elites would necessarily have to relinquish their power and property (often tied up

with foreign business interests); thus, when those things would become too

threatened, exile legislation would be enacted. Put another way, democracy was

working its way to becoming more inclusive, but this inclusivity must not be

inclusive enough as to threaten the elitess property and power. However, while exile

remained a political tool, there was progress as the Chilean form of democracy grew.

In fact, this multiparty and vibrant system lead to the first freely elected

Marxist president in a democratic framework with Salvador Allende's ascendancy to

the presidency as leader of the *Unidad Popular* (UP) in 1969, and he set out to

fundamentally restructure the economy and loosen the grip of ruling elites and foreign

business interests. As but a few examples of this: Chile is home to some of the largest

copper mines in the world and foreign copper companies have dominated this resource and brutally exploited the workers (Loveman 223). (A theme that many Chilean writers have taken up, Baldomero Lillo in *Sub Terra*, for example.) More than this, during Allende's presidency, the International Telephone and Telegraph corporation (ITT) controlled 70% of Chile's *Chitelco*, the Chilean Telephone Company (Loveman 138). As such, the UP set out to loosen these strangleholds.

Thus, the U.P., working within legal and constitutional frameworks provided by a 1932 decree—(DFL-520) which allowed the state to take over any company deemed essential to the economy—set out to rid the country of these monopolies (Collier and Sater 345-346). As such, all industries worth in excess of 14 million *escudos* ($1 million dollars at that time) were to be nationalized (Oppenheim 65). As is well known, however, the state paid for these appropriations, but they paid the owners what they had been claiming to make; that is, they paid them according to their tax records, which were of course far below what these companies were actually making. In any case, these nationalizations occurred mostly on two fronts: industrial and agricultural. In terms of the nationalization of the mostly foreign owned copper industries, by using a formula that incorporated excess profits, the government declared that the copper companies actually owed money to Chile (Collier and Sater 335). More than this, factory seizures also played a major role in UP policies. Workers began taking over factories and driving out owners; first in the *Yarur* textile plant in 1971 which was soon followed up by hundreds of other worker nationalizations (345-346). On the second front, the state seized all properties in excess of 80 hectares (around 200 acres) and distributed them to individual peasants

or to collective peasant groups (Loveman 228-237). The *encomienda* system, an iteration of essentially slave labor, in place since the Spanish had colonized the region, and which had characterized rural Chile since colonization, was finally uprooted (243). By employing such stratagems, the state was able to, by 1973, control 60% of gross national product; they had nationalized 25 banks, roughly 3,700 farms, and almost 500 companies (Martinez and Alvaro 54). Allende's reforms, however, would not go unnoticed.

The rise of the U.P. had been monitored closely by the U.S. and under the auspices of the Cold War, namely Operation Condor[14], the U.S. would unleash its full force—beginning with economic sanctions and phycological warfare, and ending with the coup. Beginning on September 12, eight days after Allende's election in 1969, Henry Kissinger began strategizing with CIA director, Richard Helm about the situation; Kissinger famously said, "We will not let Chile go down the drain" and they began discussions about a preemptive coup (Kornbluh 80). Three days later, in a meeting between Kissinger, Helms and Nixon, Nixon placed Kissinger as the supervisor and Nixon ordered the CIA to "make the economy scream" (80-83). Washington undertook a proactive effort of denying Chile imports from many countries, and tariffs that were averaging 105% on over five thousand items effectively sealed off foreign trade (Cusack 111). Their strategies and economic

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[14] Operation Condor was a U.S. Cold War policy of political repression and state terror involving the CIA and other organizations; in sum, it set out to rid the western hemisphere of communist influence by any means necessary: coups, torture, assassinations etc. See J. Patrice McSherry's "Tracking the Origins of a State Terror Network: Operation Condor" for more.

embargoes had devastating effects and caused widespread food shortages—as is now known, the CIA paid truck drivers and store owners to suspend delivers and not sell food—, which caused internal strife amongst many Chileans. More than this, their strategies included psychological warfare in order to disrupt any gains being made by the UP (Kornbluh 19). They even helped with the assassination of General Schneider, who wasn't fully on board with the U.S. coup (22). And eventually, their approach was successful and on September 11, 1973, the U.S. funded a coup and the U.P. was officially overthrown.

As such, the coup was not only a radical break in terms of Chilean democracy, but in the years proceeding 1973, Chileans were to experience a radical expansion in the numbers of those who experienced political exile. From the many times political exile had been used in Chile, from independence onwards, none did so more than the military regime of Pinochet.

The Regime & Pinochet: A radical break

The repressive military regime, ushered in by U.S. Cold war politics, would embark on a project to radically redefine the basic tenets of society, economically, politically, and culturally. During the first stage of the dictatorship (1973-1977), known as the "reign of terror" or as the active "negation" of the past, the regime set out to obliterate the collective memory of the previous government and its achievements (Richard 105). Not only would the human toll of the regime have profound effects in terms of murder, torture, and exile but through a series of constitutional and economic reforms, military and authoritarian rule would also leave a lasting impact. The regime, then, was not only on a campaign of terror, but they

were assembling commissions to dismantle and reformulate the Chilean economy, along with political and legal systems according to their own ideological tenets.

Within a month of the coup a young group of U.S. university-trained technocrats, who studied under the tutelage of Arnold Harberger and Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago's Economic Department (aka the Chicago Boys) compiled an economic prospectus for the military and set out to initiate the economic philosophy called neoliberalism (Oppaiheim148-149). Neoliberalism refers to economic policies that aim to reduce the state's role, privatize public assets, and cut public expenditure[15]. In other words, the economic policy implemented by the regime set out, not only to undo all of Allende's policies, but it also set out to radically restructure the Chilean economy. Fernando Leniz was the first minister of the economy appointed by the regime in October 1973, who relied on the economic guidance of the Chicago Boys, and by 1975 Sergio de Castro, a prominent member of the Chicago Boys was named Economics Minister; however, the seat may have been more symbolic than anything; by this time, the Chicago boys occupied nearly all of the important economic posts (Oppaiheim 148-149). In other words, the muzzle and leash were off.

With the brutal tactics imposed by the regime and the weakening of various unions and other collective forces, the Chicago Boys—with the support of the military, that is, under conditions of political immunity—were free to impose neoliberal policies with what Naomi Klein would call "shock"[16]. This re-coding of

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[15] See Harvey (2005) and Klein (2007) for detailed accounts of neoliberalism as an economic philosophy.
[16] See Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*, Chapter 2

Chilean social reality affected various political and economic structures and would

have impacts in many industries[17] as well as institutions[18]. In fact, as mentioned

above, by 1973 roughly 4,225 banks, farms, and companies had been nationalized

during the U.P.; by 1990 only forty-one of them had not been privatized (Martinez

and Diaz 54). As such, when Pinochet lost the referendum of 1988 and democracy

was restored, the *Concertación* coalition maintained the free-market model, and the

transition itself was carefully organized by the military, who still enjoyed a privileged

position of power in the following democratically elected governments (Waylen 39).

To this end, Latin American scholars such as Willy Thayer and Idelber Avelar have

seen the transition to democracy in post-dictatorship Chile not as a transition at all,

but as a picking up where the regime left off. That is, the neoliberal re-foundation of

Chile—the hyper-privatization that would continue—would not be undone and it

would not have been able to happen under democracy; the dictatorship was, therefore,

the beginning of the transition to current Chilean neoliberalism (Avelar 58-59). I will

get back to this transition and its implications for the post-dictatorial Chile and Ruiz's

films of return below, but for now I want to look at other examples of regime policy.

Another significant legacy of the regime was constitutional changes.

Immediately after the coup in 1973, a commission composed of law professors and

judges was assembled in order to begin drafting (Oppenheim 134). Under the banner

of free market politics, they set out to re-code the constitution in favor of free-market

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[17] For more on Chile's neoliberalism, see Winn, 2004; he offers specific case studies
about the impact of Chilean neoliberalism on the textile, metallurgical, fruit and
fisheries industries and the copper mine and forestry sectors.
[18] See Idelber Avelar for more on the decline of intellectuals and the rise of the
"technical expert" after the coup (Avelar, 13-14, 44-61)

policies and put forth a series of constitutional and democratic reforms that would serve as a basis as well as reinforce the laisse faire model. And from 1973 to 1980 they were drafting a document that they hoped would be iron clad. It consisted of 120 "permanent" articles and thirty-four "transitional" articles which would provide sweeping powers to the military regime (U.S. Library of Congress). One of the major changes was to the presidency.

After the coup, the presidency was supposed to rotate amongst the members of the *junta* (Admiral Jose Toribio Merino, Navy; General Gustavo Leigh, Air Force; General Augusto Pinochet, Army; General Cesar Mendoza, Police) after the coup, but Pinochet betrayed this coalition and projected himself as leader (Collier and Sater 362). Thus, the constitution that was being drafted would grant the president more power than ever before, even during the presidential era of the past century; the executive branch would be given legislative authority, and with the strategic division of the legislature, which was divided into two chambers, the chamber of deputies and the senate, with many senators being conservative and military leaning appointees (Collier and Sater 257). Essentially, the legislature was drained of decision power and the president could make policy with or with it without it. More than this, Transitional Article 24 eliminated due process of law by giving the president broad powers to curtail the rights of assembly and free speech, as well as the right to arrest or exile any citizen, who had no rights of appeal except to the president himself (U.S. Library of Congress). The president would hold the reigns. The executive, however, worked in conjunction with a wide array of other organizations which would help to reinforce policies.

Along with these, the creation of the National Security Council (*Consejo de Seguridad Nacional, Cosena*) was composed to heavily favor the military and the right-wing. This council was composed of eleven members, eight of whom had full voting rights: the president of the republic; the president of the Senate of the Republic (Senado de la República); the president of the Supreme Court (Corte Suprema); the commanders in chief of the armed forces, the director general of the Carabineros of Chile (*Carabineros de Chile*); the ministers of defense, economy, development, and reconstruction; finance; foreign relations; and interior; however, only eight of the members had voting rights, and only two were elected officials, so as to assure that the regime would maintain majority (ibid). In effect, this council could "express to any authority established by this constitution its opinion regarding any deed, event, act, or subject matter, which in its judgment gravely challenges the bases of the institutional order or could threaten national security (Article 96)" (ibid). The framers of these councils, then, clearly intended to guarantee the military authority and be able to take matters into their own hands if they thought it necessary. And along with agencies such as the *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional* (DINA), the secret police, the regime had many fists.

Not only were various agencies free to take matters into their own hands, but the regime's constitution drafted various immunity clauses into the document. During Pinochet's seventeen-year reign, thousands of Chileans were subject to arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, murder, and some were simply disappeared. As a way to insulate themselves from potential repercussions of torture and murder occurring in

the aftermath of the coup acts, various mechanisms of immunity were written[19]. A

such, they were prepared to avoid accountability for their crimes.

More than this, the regime took measures to control the elections that were to

eventually take place in 1980. In the interim between constitutional ratification and

elections, all transitory powers were assigned to Pinochet, all Political parties were

banned, and there would be no elected legislatures (Collier and Sater 237). When

elections were held, the process and manner in which they took place was to be

radically restructured. For example, and similar to the National Security Council and

other branches of the government, the electoral mechanisms favored conservative

candidates and districts were gerrymandered. This was done for two reasons: first, to

parcel historically small leftist areas within larger rightist areas as well as to create

concentrated leftist areas; in effect, to divide and weaken left leaning areas and to

concentrate leftist support so that right leaning areas would never be overwhelmed

(Magar, Rosenblum, and Samuels 714). More than this, all districts were two-member

districts and if the left was to win both seats in a district it would have to win twice as

many votes than the right candidate, in excess of 67 percent (ibid). Law professor

Jorge Contesse has said, "Chief among its obstacles to genuine democracy is the

unique binomial system of elections: for congressional seats, candidates from

multiple parties typically run in each district, and the two highest vote-getters win

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[19] See Tom Ginsburg's "¿Fruto de la parra envenenada? Algunas observaciones
comparadas sobre la constitución Chilena" (Fruit of the Poisoned Vine?
Some Comparative Observations on Chile's Transformational Authoritarian
Constitution)

office, which almost always means high representation for the minority right-wing parties (Contesse). Additionally, congressional elections were staggered; only a third of all seats would be contested per election (Collier and Sater 237).

When a plebiscite was held in 1980—elections that were to determine a new constitution and a new political system—the regimes policies became official law (Loveman, Regime Succession in Chile, 267). That is, all of the aforementioned maneuvers that had taken place, all of the economic and ideological restructurings, were set in stone, as it were. During the election itself, the regime monitored polling stations, blank votes were counted as yes votes, and, lest we forget, all opposition campaigning was prohibited (Scott 69). As a result, not only would there be a new constitution and political system, but more freedom was guaranteed to the military. That is, the commander in chief of the military was to be chosen by the military (and only removed by the military) and Pinochet was constitutionally guaranteed that position until 1998—effectively combining military and civilian functions within one person, Pinochet. (70). Moreover, the constitution also banned political parties that advocated class struggle and one-third of the Senate was nominated by the regime, and their positions were lifetime appointments (70).

In effect, the plebiscite of 1980 set out not only to erase the past but to secure the future. That is, the constitution of 1980 engineered by the technocrats of the regime over a period of ten years of careful drafting not only guaranteed disproportionate power to the right, but it entrenched neoliberal policies and made it ever more difficult to change these policies legislatively. Put another way, the constitution of 1980 replaced the constitution of 1925 and it shaped the way the next

plebiscite of 1988-89 was to be held i.e., the document outlined the procedures for any amendments as well as the election of a legislature (US lib. of congress). More than this, as Jorge Contesse has said, the document "prevents channels for the majority to express itself or for just laws to be passed." (Contesse). Although the document has been revised many times, it is still in place today and it remains a heated topic of debate. For example, in 2011 the movement "*Marca tu voto AC*", a mobilization that called for voters to write these letters on their ballets and demand a participatory process for creating a new constitution (Kubal and Fischer 26). Following this, when Michelle Bachelet ran for president for a second time in 2013, constitutional reform was a focal point and in 2015 she announced the inauguration of a Constituent Process that will was to take place (Bellolio). There are, however, those who bring attention to the inadequacies of democracy[20] itself. For example, Chilean law professor Agustín Squella recently published *Democracia. ¿Crisis, decadencia o colapso?* (2019) in which he suggests, among others things, that democracy is in disrepair and serves to propagate global elites—and that the words decay or collapse may better capture the sentiment of democracy. In any case, the economics and politics of the regime continue to haunt the present in many ways. For example, the regime drafted anti-terrorist clauses which are still used today in particular against indigenous Mapuche communities (Wadi). What should be added here, however, is that all while all of these structural changes were taking place, the regime was also actively re-shaping the body of the nation-state on a physical level, that is, exile—to which I will now turn.

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20 For more on this see, Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellini's *They Can't Represent Us!: Reinventing Democracy From Greece To Occupy* Chap 2.

Mass exile

While all of these economic and constitutional reforms were underway, another strategy was taking place: mass exile as has never before been seen in Chilean history. After the coup and leading up to the election in 1980 any and all who questioned the regime would reap severe consequences. As for those who weren't killed, disappeared, or exiled during the reign of terror, on April 30 1975 Law Decree 504 made it possible for those who had been sentenced to prison or relegation (i.e. internal exile) could be exchanged for "extrañamiento (i.e., the expulsion from the country without right to return)" which added to the numbers of those who had to flee (Sznajder and Roniger 233). While exile has been used periodically post-Chilean independence, as shown above, under the Pinochet regime and under the auspice of Cold war politics it would expand greatly (233). Through his control over the military and various other agencies Pinochet and the regime ruled the county with a brutal degree of control, and they set out to destroy all opposition in order to solidify the aforementioned economic and political policies. Military and authoritarian rule reformulated the criteria of inclusion and exclusion according to their own ideological tenets, namely authoritarian rule and free-market advocates. As Sznajder and Roniger have pointed out, the regime closed off "all forms of political expression, with the exception of those favoring military rule and military-sponsored ideas", and the regime "created whole categories of individuals and organizations to be excluded institutionally, as alien to the nation, its spirit, tradition, well-being, and future (225). As such, the scope of the enemy became so large that masses of people did not fit the mold. Therefore, exile, already built into the political structure, was activated—but under the regime; it expanded to new heights.

Cloaked in Cold War rhetoric, the military regime along with powerful
conservative sectors started purging Chile of any and all opposition. And in the
decades following the coup, we see the most tragic period relative to mass exile.
Sznajder and Roniger capture the vastness of this scope succinctly and suggest that
under the regime enemies of the state:

> . . . included such varied targets as a professor who taught Marxism and other
> 'alien doctrines'; trade union leaders and members who fought for greater
> benefits; high school students who contested the established authorities in their
> demand for reduced fares for public transportation; a priest who defended the
> poor in his parish; a lawyer committed to the cause of human rights; a security
> officer who refused to shoot students in a demonstration; members of some
> academic disciplines, especially in the social sciences and humanities, such as
> psychology, sociology, and political science . . . (142).

To this end, exile was no longer mainly a sentence for political elites and Marxists, as
has historically been the case. While many exiles may have had affiliation and/or
sympathies with varying degrees of leftist organizations— from Marxism, Leninism,
Trotskyism, Socialism, Communism, to Left-Wing Liberalism—there were those
with no connection whatsoever, or those who were opposed actively opposed to these
who were exiled. For example, leaders and activists of Chile's Christian Democratic
Party (Partido Demócrata Cristiana, or PDC)—who actively opposed Allende's
government before the 1973 military coup—also opposed the ensuing policies of the
regime and found themselves on the run (234). More than this, Sznajder and Roniger
note that "many former members of the administrative state apparatus who had been
'exonerated' (i.e., fired) because their loyalty to military rule was dubious, because of

cuts in government size, or a combination thereof" (231). And furthermore, many

had to leave Chile, because free-market neoliberal politics left many unable to find a

livelihood in a "rapidly changing socioeconomic setup devoid of any kind of political

freedom and dominated by an unbound version of free-market economics" (231). The

Pinochet regime's harsh neo-liberal economic policies also threw hundreds of

thousands out of work and created massive recurring recessions (Constable and

Valenzuela 77). That is, as many scholars have pointed out[21], the proportion of

Chileans living in poverty was higher in 1992 than it was in 1968 (Petras and Leiva,

196). According to some estimates, the number of Chileans who left Chile between

1973 and 1990 is around 2 million (230). Sznajder and Roniger say that, "Without

doubt, this has been the greatest emigration in Chilean history (230). The reign of

terror ushered in by U.S. politics was utterly devastating.

Mass Exile and 4th tier dynamics

The politics of inclusion and exclusion of the regime created a massive and

global Chilean diaspora, and to draw attention back to Sznajder and Roniger's tiered

model, this when the fourth, or global tier, comes into play. As I have previously,

shown, in the early form of exile, neighboring countries could play a decisive role in

the complex interplay between the politics of the home country and the exile and

influence political outcomes according to their interests, e.g. the execution of the

Carrara bothers in Argentina. Thus, these same dynamics are at work here. However,

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[21] See James Petras and Fernando Ignacio Leiva's *Democracy And Poverty In Chile: The Limits To Electoral Politics* (pg. 196) for the economic situation and poverty during the period.

as before when it was mainly intercontinental, Cold War politics and an increasingly globalized system of networks expand the frame; here it is global, and because the scope of exiled individuals was so large—that is, not just Marxists and elites—the issue of mass exile became a focal point for international organizations, and made for a complex political environment where the actions taken by expelling governments were increasingly questioned and placed under criticism. However, both IGOS and NGOs and the regime used this global tier.

The regime had their own global network of terror for silencing transnational opposition. The Chilean DINA (Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia, or National Intelligence Directorate) orchestrated assassinations in many countries. For example, while in exile in Washington D.C., the former Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs Orlando Letelier was assassinated by a car bomb in on September 21, 1976 (144). In the car with Letelier were two U.S. citizens, Ronni Karpen Moffit and her husband Michale Moffit; Ronni was killed and her husband was badly injured but survived the blast (Waltz 23). Moreover, the regime's Operation Colombo, an operation which intended to discredit anti-military opposition outside of Chile by the manufacture of a narrative that presented exiles as fighting amongst and killing each other, carried out assassinations. For example, 119 activists were detained and disappeared in Chile between May 1974 and February 1975, and later the same number of cadavers was found in Argentina (Sznajder and Roniger 298). As such, Sznajder and Roniger mention that "Argentine authorities denied that any of these were their victims, whereas the Chilean authorities and a censored press indicated these were the bodies of the disappeared co-nationals who died in intestine fighting abroad (298). DINA also carried out assassinations and attempted assassinations of key exiled figures in

various parts of the globe. In 1974 DINA assassinated General Carlos Pratts in Buenos Aires, and these acts continued, from Rome to Madrid and other places (298). However, the global reach of the dictatorship's terror would not come without blowback and these assassinations caught the attention of the global community; the issue of exiled opposition and its brutal killings sparked outrage and with many international and human rights organizations.

In response not only to the mass number of exiles but to the global assassinations, multiple organizational structures and networks enabled the creation of a network of committees of solidarity. Exiles were able to link up and operate within international solidarity networks and they helped develop an arena for transnational activism. As such, various groups responded and were created. Sznajder and Roniger give a us an example of some of the vast networks:

> the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and, particularly, Americas Watch, the World Council of Churches, the Catholic Church, the UNCHR, the International Organization for Migration, the Red Cross, the European Parliament and human rights parliamentary commissions cross the globe, international associations of political parties such as the Socialist International and the International of Popular (Demo-Christian) parties, confederations of trade unions at the national and international levels, and myriad NGOs concentrated on the defense of human rights. This multilayer infrastructure enabled the rapid creation of a dense network of committees of solidarity with the victims of institutionalized repression fleeing persecution (144).

More than this, exiled Chileans formed their own groups abroad which added to the density of these networks. For example, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, MAPU (Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitaria, or Movement of United Popular Action), MAPU-OC (MAPU Obrero Campesino, or Workers-Farmers MAPU), the Radical Party, the Christian Left, MIR (234). As a group, the Chilean exiles were quite diverse in terms of age and gender, occupational and class backgrounds, and regional or ethnic composition; this being a direct result of the regimes sweeping zero tolerance policies. Again, Sznajder and Roniger compile an extensive list of Chilean organizations:

> Chilean exiles created in Europe a series of organizations that combined politics and cultural collective identity and promoted networks of solidarity with a wide array of organizations and political forces; among them, Chile Democrático in Rome, the Instituto para el Nuevo Chile and the Centro Salvador Allende in Rotterdam, SEUL-Casa de América Latina in Brussels, the Comité Salvador Allende in Laussane, the Comité Salvador Allende in Stockholm, the Centro de Estudios Salvador Allende in Madrid, the Comité Chileno Anti-Fascista y Chile Democrático in London, and Chile Democrático in Paris (236).

And these groups were very active. They established transnational networks that organized major conferences and hearings in order to muster support and attention to the situation. For example, they arranged conferences in Frankfurt in April 974; Caracas in November 1974; Copenhagen in June 1974; Paris in July1974; Berlin in July 1975; Mexico, Caracas, and Athens in November 1975 (236). These continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As such, the conferences and hearings provided

meeting grounds for the Chilean opposition in exile as well as create ties with European and Latin American Leftist organizations against the dictatorship back home 236). As Sznajder and Roniger have suggested, the arrival of Chilean exiles often "energized the political scene in the host countries" (238). More than this, they lead hunger strikes in order to impact public opinion (238). This is not to say, however, that there was not strife amongst these groups (to which I will return to below). And here, I would like to underline this, because a hunger strike will be a narrative point of Ruiz's first film in exile; a film which focuses on an exiled Chilean community in France.

Ultimately, the regime's hard line—from the expulsion of leftist, rightist, and even those with no political affiliations—and the mass of people who were sentenced to exile created a situation that bridged the divided between left and right politics. As mentioned above the Marxist–Socialist U.P. rose to power within the frameworks of the Chilean democratic constitutional tradition, and it was this tradition that was broken with Pinochet. Essentially, what this did was, as Sznajder and Roniger have also pointed out, transcend the divide of the Cold War (254). That is, Chilean exiles gained support from communist countries and capitalist countries and it broadened and strengthened their unifying claim in opposition to the dictatorship. More than this, the regime's global reach of terror, with their assassinations were ineffective in the sense that they weren't able to silence opposition and compounded global criticisms. All of these—and more factors which I will touch on below—worked to put pressure on the regime and to forced them to redo some of their policies and reverse the process of exclusion especially in terms of exile (256). And in the early 1980s, exiles began returning—including Ruiz. This concession of the regime,

however, was more symbolic than anything and the rate at which they were letting exiles return at first was quite slow. For example, Thomas Wright and Rody Oñate describe the logistics of the early return policies:

> Nothing was accomplished, however, until the Chilean economy entered a severe crisis in late 1981 which sparked the first domestic opposition movement since the coup. Emboldened by the crisis, regime opponents began fielding street demonstrations by 1982. In September 1982, demonstrators protested the Supreme Court's refusal to permit the return of the expelled president of the Chilean Commission on Human Rights, Jaime Castillo Velasco. Since Castillo Velasco, a Christian Democrat, could not be portrayed as a dangerous radical, his case served to broaden support for the return movement beyond the families of UP exiles and, by uniting the left and the Christian Democrats around a common cause, posed a significant challenge to the regime. In a clear attempt at preemption, the government convened a commission to study return policy in October 1982, and on Christmas day of that year issued the first of ten lists of persons authorized to return. This cosmetic concession quickly proved to be a hoax. The monthly lists contained a total of only 3,562 names – a minuscule proportion of the exiles – and when duplications, the deceased, and persons who had previously returned were subtracted, fewer than 2,000 individuals were authorized to return – and certainly none was considered a dangerous enemy of the regime. At this rate, it would take approximately one hundred years for all exiles to be repatriated (44-45).

What this quote captures, is not just the incremental rate of returnees, but that exile

became a uniting force for political opposition against the dictatorship. Exile caught

the attention of the international community again in 1984 when the regime's return

policy caught the attention of a globalized press. In 1984, six former U.P. members

attempted to fly into Santiago and were denied; they then lead a hunger strike in

Bogota which became a major world news story (Sznajder and Roniger 299). It

wouldn't be until September 1, 1988 that all restrictions of exiles were lifted, which

as an attempt for the regime to legitimize the oncoming plebiscite (299). However,

mass exile would ultimately come to backfire for the regime, and as a result of the

diverse Chilean exilic community many political alliances were formed which may

not have been formed otherwise; to this end, an alliance of seventeen parties came

together in the October 1988 plebiscite that defeated Pinochet's bid for presidency

(254). As mentioned above, however, this political defeat did not mean an undoing of

the many policies set in place by the regime.

At this point, I turn back to Ruiz's films. What should be underlined, however,

(if you are still with me, reader) is that this historical digression provides a necessary

foundation for Ruiz's films. That is, his first film deals directly with the heterogenous

exile groups and he shows the problems and strife that arise within them, so an

understanding of this is crucial. Just as important, however, this had to be written in

order to show how Pinochet was a radical break, and even after Pinochet, the many

policies were not changed; this is crucial because post-dictatorial Chile and return

after exile are key topoi in his three films I mention. Now that this long, but

necessary, detour has been taken, it gives us a sense of the community that Ruiz was trying to capture in his first film in exile.

Diálogos de exiliados (1974)

(Dialogues of the Exiled)

As the preceding section has demonstrated, the Chilean exilic diaspora was quite diverse and composed of many groups who may have had clashing ideological positions. As such, Ruiz's first film full length film in exile, *Diálogos de exiliado*s, takes this head on. The film harks back to his first feature film, *Tres triste tigres,* in the sense that various everyday anomalies of behavior, modes of speech and gestures are important and constitute an ethnographic approach. Ruiz sets out to capture these, then, in the film and portray the problems that arise within a resistance movement in exile as the group clings onto their Chileanness (*chilenidad*) while trying to navigate life and political activities in exile, in Paris. Their position seems to resonate with what Susanna Bachmamn has called the dual position of exile. Bachmamn suggests that there is a dialectic in the positionality of an exile, being both inside and outside, belonging and being an outsider at the same time; that is, of inhabiting a space (the host country) but being outside (the home country) and being excluded from the social life and what was important before (Bachman 16). To this end, through various episodic scenes, which give the film a documentary style feel to the ethnographic approach, Ruiz seems to capture various anomalies of behavior and speech within this dual position. Ruiz shows how modes of speech and cultural identities that the exiles hold on to—from parties, songs, and traditional Chilean dances like the Cueca to former political affiliations—are out of place in their new surroundings. Zuzzana Pick has said, that these aspects of the film are of particular

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importance, because through them, "Ruiz uncovers for us a whole way of being, a mentality, culture and ideology" (Pick, Rouge). As such, the film addresses the difficulties encountered by exiles as they seek to continue resisting the regime, find work and establish themselves in the host country. Their mannerisms, however, create friction with the French left, as well as with other Chileans.

One of the ways Ruiz portrays this dual position is through his representation of space in the film and the way that bodies move within it. The entire film is shot indoors, a "closed circuit" as Zuzana Mirjam Pick has pointed out (Rouge). Within the apartment where the majority of the action takes place, the viewer is shown an endless stream of exiles coming and going. This over-population causes for cramped living quarters and they struggle to find floor space in which to sleep, causing endless modifications to the space itself—from dividers being opened and closed to windows being used as doors. In this sense the space and the modifications seem representative of this dual position; that is, the space they are inhabiting and navigating, being inside an apartment (i.e. host country) but uncomfortably so, and the endless modifications never seem sufficient to incorporate their bodies comfortably to the apartment. These cramped quarters and busting at the seams then cause tensions within the exiled community as well as with their French neighbors, which makes their situation seem doubly precarious.

The friction within this dual position of exile also plays out on a discursive and political/ideological levels amongst the French left and Chilean exiles. To posit a pertinent historical example of this friction and the fractures that occurred within the leftist Chilean exiles, I posit a historical example. The Chilean communists and socialists—who had been a potent force in the U.P.—suddenly found that their ideas

of leading a broad anti-Fascist front were not well supported (Sznajder and Roniger 242). As such, in 1979 there was a split within the larger group: on one side, the radical left wing who supported all forms of insurrection, armed and popular; and on the other side, a more moderate wing that eventually came to embrace the revalorization of democracy and the place of the market, and eventually the ideology of the *Concertación*. (242). That is to say, the latter would come to embrace and continue the free market policies set in place by the regime.

To this end, Ruiz's film can be prophetic in the sense that it anticipates the splits and conflicts that were to follow. In the film, then, this tension is portrayed, albeit with a satirical slant, through documentary-style interviews and conversations where tactical questions emerge. For example, the group kidnaps visiting Chilean musician, but this "kidnapping" is so light hearted that the musician feels as if he is amongst brothers. He is eventually set free because the group comes to determine that there are incompatible ideological differences. In fact, the musician doesn't realize his interaction was a kidnapping until much later. More than this, Ruiz uses money to show how these tensions play out. Money that is donated and intended for the MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria/Revolutionary Left Movement) fund passes through various exiles who each take a bit in order to pay for necessities like rent, telephone and doctors' bills. And other donated funds, intended to be used as airfare for someone trying to flee Chile disappears. Throughout the entirety of the film, these tensions take on various forms and ranging from accusations of political conversations being too intellectual and thus alienating working class exiles, accusations of CIA infiltration within the group, and even debates about the quality of meat in France vs. Chile. At one point, a member of the group decides to go on a

hunger strike, even though his comrades disapprove of the tactic. This friction is then also portrayed within the relations between the French left, who don't seem to understand the Chilean's modes of behavior and actions. It seems they would rather gloat about their commitment to international politics, often through long speeches about commitment and sympathy, without much concern for the specific situation of this particular community of exiles.

Ruiz's satirical approach was, however, criticized and he received flack for his ironic portrayal of exiles and their inability to adapt. In a 1975 interview, Ruiz has said in response to criticism that: "It is not a question of pessimism, but for me irony is an important tool of political analysis. The present tragic situation is the result of a certain political process: it is important to be lucid rather than bemoan our fate; irony is necessary to refresh and clarify our perception of things" (King 177). Many, however, interpreted the film as a slap in the face (Goddard 35). For example, some viewers thought that Ruiz's portrayal—particularly with the tensions around money—was damaging to the community; to which Ruiz has said that they thought the film "gave a bad impression of the Chilean migrants that could be manipulated by right wing and anti-Chilean organizations" (Bax et al. 114). In other words, Ruiz received harsh criticism from all sides, left and right. More than this, many Chileans thought that it took away from the abuses of the Chilean dictatorship (López Vicuña and Marinescu 4-5). In any case, what resulted was a break between Ruiz and many in the exile community, and Ruiz was only able to resume making films after making connections with French filmmaking institutions, in the first instance meaning L'Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA) and Cahiers du Cin.ma (Bonitzer et al

19–23). In other words, Ruiz's political approach in film was not interpreted as he had hoped; in fact, the film provided the exact opposite.

Ruiz had hoped the film would provoke dialogue, that is, he set out to portray these absurd situations in order to show the mistakes that must be avoided amongst the exile community. Ruiz has said that he "was convinced that it was a militant film, a species of provision for all the errors which could be committed and which we would have to avoid" (MacWilliam). Seen in this way, I would like to turn our attention back to the opening scene of the film. As many have pointed out (footnote Goddard, and Vicuna, and pick), the film is modeled off of Bertolt Brecht's *Flüchtlingsgespräche* (Refugee Conversations), a quote from which prefaces the film. However, what the film's opening scene also explicitly resembles is the first lines of Anna Segher's *Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen* (The Excursion of the Dead Girls). For example, in the opening scene we are shown what resembles a documentary style interview with a man asking a Chilean exile where he is from. The interviewer repeatedly asks the Chilean this and tries to guess possible locations—ranging from Hungary, Italy, Portugal to Indonesia, Mozambique and Angola, etc.—, the answer is always similar, "no further, much further away'. The interviewer, however, can't seem to imagine why a man from so far away, unimaginably far, would be in Paris. And in Segher's story, revolving around a German woman, Netty, living in exile in México, the first lines we read are "no, from much further away, from Europe". and the Mexican man asking her the question can't also can't seem imagine to why a woman from so far away would be in Mexico. Like Ruiz, Seghers was living in exile while writing the story and the semi-autobiographical narrative which can be seen as a working through of past traumas—or a movement from a melancholic state towards

mourning—an active working through of her past, in order to re-position herself in the present[22]. In both, then, and what this citation and Ruiz's comments about the film would seem to suggest, is that a similar movement is being registered, a working through in exile where one is both inside yet outside; however, whereas in Segher's story it's a working through of past traumas on an individual level to re-position herself in the present, in Ruiz's film, it is an anticipatory working through on a collective level. That is, the film shows what mistakes must be avoided when trying to maintain political activity and maintain their sense of Chileanness (*chilenidad*) after the crushing historical defeat and geographical break triggered by the Pinochet coup and the ensuing regime. In Ruiz's films that were to come, exile would be an important *topos*. He will return to this theme again and again and in a myriad of ways[23]. And eventually, in relation to exile, we will see Ruiz take up another *topos*, namely return.

Chapter Three: Return

Ruiz's Return

The year 1983 marked major turn for the dictatorship. Preceding this, in late 1981, the Chilean economy entered a severe crisis which sparked the first domestic opposition movement since the coup (Wright and Oñate 41). This event set many

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[22] See Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia".
[23] Ruiz's films La ville des pirates [City of Pirates] (1983) and Les trois couronnes du matelot [Three Crowns of the Sailor] (1983) take up the theme of exile. See Zuzana Pick pgs. 176-185

things into motion, one of which was the issues of exile and return policies. In September 1982, demonstrators protested the Supreme Court's refusal to allow Jaime Castillo Velasco, the expelled president of the Chilean Commission on Human Rights, to return from exile, and because the regime could not narrate him as a dangerous radical—he was a Christian Democrat with no affiliation to the U.P.—it helped bring together a coalition of left and the Christian Democrats which posed a significant challenge to the regime (47). To this end, the regime created a commission to re-work the return policy and in late December of 1982 the first list of persons authorized to return from exile was issued, and many more would follow—as mentioned above (48). Thus, in 1983 exiles were returning, censorship of books was lifted and 200,000 mourners gathered in the streets to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Pablo Neruda's death (Avelar 47). As such, Ruiz would be one of the many who would return to Chile, albeit briefly and intermittently.

And it was also in 1983 that Ruiz received official permission to return to Chile (Marinescu 182). However, this spatial and temporal return to Chile was a traumatic experience for Ruiz. He even went as far to say that "the military government was like the logical outcome desired by all Chileans" (Rodríguez-Remedi 91). As Alejandra Rodríguez-Remedi has pointed out, the Chile that Ruiz returned to was similar to what Gabriel Salazar has termed the "traditionalist consecration of order,' to the extent that authoritarianism, arbitrariness and repression of human rights come to be celebrated as patriotic values" (91). The experience of return even provoked what Ruiz has referred to as "*cauchemars de sieste*" (siesta nightmares) which had a Walt Disney quality to them (Goddard 80). For Ruiz, then, the Chile that he re-encountered after exile was surreal, and his films of return will articulate this

experience—as would many other Chilean exiled filmmakers[24]—in various ways, as we will see below. Ruiz's films of return seem to resonate with what Uruguayan writer Mario Benedetti's neologism, *desexilio*: the experience of return after exile which implies a return in the literal sense, but also that such an experience of spatial and temporal displacement never ceases (Benedetti). As such, in his filmic articulations of return, we will see struggling with this ceaseless displacement in light of his traumatic encounter(s) with the country he had been exiled from, during and in the aftermath of dictatorship.

Trope of Return in Ruiz's Films

In Ruiz's films that take up return[25] after exile, all of which were made in responses to his visits to Chile (*Lettre d'un cinéaste ou Le retour d'un amateur de bibliothèques* [Letter from a Library Lover or The Return of a Library Lover] (1983); *A TV Dante* (1991), *Cofralandes* (2002), we will see how techniques from previous films—anomalies of behavior and speech, language, gestures, and adaptation— are still deployed, but another technique is added, surrealism[26]. That is, in the

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[24] According to Andreea Marinescu "Miguel Littín and Patricio Guzmán returned to Chile intending to film and expose the hidden reality of the dictatorship. In Acta General de Chile/General Statement on Chile (CU/CL, 1986), Littín clandestinely returns to Chile in order to unveil the hidden traces of resistance against the regime and to bring personal memories of Allende to the forefront. In Chile, Memoria Obstinada/Chile, Obstinate Memory (CA/FR, 1997) and Salvador Allende (BE/DE/CL/FR/SP/MX, 2004), Guzmán returns from exile with the purpose of recovering the lost history of the Allende period, to collect and paste together the "restos" that were hidden from view, but that are still present beneath the surface. Faced with the concept of a lost collective due to military repression, both filmmakersturn Allende into the symbol of a collective dream that was shattered before it could become reality" (182)

[25] Another Ruiz film that directly examines the theme of return is *La noche de enfrente* [Night Across the Street] (2012); a future comparison between the thematics of return would be fruitful.

[26] See Jayamanne pg. 161, Richardson pg. 160, and Rosenbaum pg. 224.

aforementioned earlier films we can see how Ruiz is developing a style and testing out ideas which will be continued, extended, and added to in the later films. However, because Ruiz's films of return deal with return at certain points in time, they all have different concerns, but I intend to trace how each film—and through his recurrent use of return as a *tropos*—de-romanticizes return and suggest that we can see continuity amongst the concerns that each film raises in their views of Chilean social reality.

Ruiz's aesthetic trajectory in the 1980s began to mix sounds and images with voice over narrations and music which combined and pastiched multitudinous contents and referents from Latin American and European sources in an intensified way, which can make the films seem hermetic or highly abstract and have a disorienting feel to them, i.e. surreal. Surrealism, as such, aims to provoke emotions through the creation of "new images through juxtapositions" on three discursive levels— image, narrative, and sound—which become contradictory and destabilize the viewer's epistemic fantasy (Russell 103). In these films, we will see how surrealist techniques—voice over narratives, pastiches of literary sources, drama, historical referents, and more—confronts the viewer with a multiplicity of relationships between images and signs, exceeding simple notions of representation and linear logic and in doing so, Ruiz breaks down the boundaries of genres, especially those that separate film and literature. And as viewers, the confusion generated by these heterogenous elements ask us to access different spatiotemporal configurations, which is precisely Ruiz's aim. Ruiz uses variations of surrealist strategies which complicate and amplify the cluster of problems that one has to attend to when articulating the traumatic the experience of return after exile and dictatorship in a Chilean context. Put another way, films that capture the aftermath of a crushing

political defeat and one of the most successful revolutions of the right, which aimed at implementing new social, political and economic systems that left a trial of carnage in its wake. In other words, through similar formal and thematic techniques and his use of return as a trope, Ruiz access a dimension of political thought that confronts not only the need to come to terms with the past but also to define its position in the new present(s): 1983, 1991, 2002. As such, he takes different approaches with the trope in the films and introduces strangeness to the shown reality of Chile in order to not only a present in crisis but to grapple with the difficulties of return after exile in Chilean contexts.

Thus, while the three films have the aforementioned formal and thematic commonalities, they each have particular concerns. Ruiz has stated that his films change as the realities around him change (Bolzoni 40). As such, while his use of return trope is recurrent, his filmic articulations of the vicissitudes of history take up different concerns at different times. That is, each film defamiliarizes and visually shows the strangeness of the nation (*lo Chileno*) through representations of returned exiles. In the three films, he uses various combinations/adaptations of literary texts and historical footage and combines public spaces and also private in order to narrate and visualize the city. In other words, Ruiz raises various concerns with the problematics return after exile and what the implications are for a sense of Chileanness (*chilenidad*), during and after the Chilean dictatorship, each confronting different moments and the problems and concerns that arise from those. For example, in *Lettre d'un cinéaste*, Ruiz approaches the problems of memory on a personal level during the dictatorship; in *A TV Dante*, the nation is the subject, particularly, concerns of law and return after exile are paramount; and in *Cofralandes* he reflects on the

reconstruction of Chile's collective memory by again taking the nation as his subject. I should, however, preface this by saying, like Alejandra Rodríguez-Remedi (87), I draw no dividing line between Ruizian documentary and Ruizian fiction; Ruiz himself was at pains to blur these lines throughout his career. What I intend to show is that by situating *A TV Dante* (1991),*formally and thematically, amongst these two films, we can see how through his use of the return trope and the problems and concerns that he is confronting within them, Ruiz is expanding the concerns that he first explored in *Le Retour* (1983) and the problems he is wrestling with in *A TV Dante* then anticipate the themes that will be more fully explored and are of pressing concern in *Cofralandes* (2002). What should be underlined, however, is that in all of the films, the collages of elements that constitute them, have historical and political anchors—these are not just art-house films that aim to be seen as totally removed from social reality—, and they have a common denominators, exile, return, and Chile (*lo Chileno*) during and after the dictatorship.

Lettre d'un cinéaste ou Le retour d'un amateur de bibliothèques
(Letter from a Library Lover or The Return of a Library Lover) (1983);

In Ruiz's first film after re-encountering Chile after exile, *Lettre d'un cineaste*— based on this traumatic experience—, Ruiz takes a surrealist documentary type approach and uses the return trope to wrestle with questions of memory and what has been lost and forgotten during the dictatorship on a more personal level. As stated above, the during the first stage of the dictatorship (1973-1977), known as the "reign of terror" or as the active "negation" of the past, set out to obliterate collective memory, as Nelly Richard would say (105). The regime's aim, then, was to fill this void with a new cultural logic. As Idelber Avelar has suggested that "the

dictatorship's *raison d'être* was the physical and symbolic elimination of all resistance to the implementation of market logic, the always new commodity. . ." (20). That is, the incessant production of the new by discarding the past; however, this new is built upon the ruins of the old, and remnants of the past continue to haunt the present—which the film is directly engaging with. Thus, upon re-encountering his homeland, this draining of the past and implementation of a new cultural logic had been in full force for ten years. As such, Ruiz's film is concerned with recapturing the forgotten past through various experiences with previously familiar spaces in the present and encounters with old friends (who are actually living-dead), as well as memories.

In the film the narrator, which is Ruiz's voice, is trying to remember the day before the military coup in 1973; however, this task is repeatedly interrupted by memories of his childhood and the search for a lost book. Throughout the film, the camera captures various objects and spaces that were once familiar, while the voice-over narration often complicates what is seen and heard in straightforward manner. Beginning with Ruiz's childhood home, while the viewer is shown images of Ruiz's home in a dilapidated state the narrator, Ruiz, adds that the house is different from when he left. But as the search for the book continues, scenes are repeated, disrupting a straightforward storyline, and the lost book seems to have no end in sight, and the movement of the camera and its jump cuts and lack of straightforward relationality from one shot to the next, only complicates the search. As Andreea Marinescu has said, "the visual aspect of filmed reality refuses to support the narration's purported quest for memory" and throughout the essay she shows how Ruiz uses documentary a form and intentionally subverts its logics (187). (An approach which we saw in the

Penal Colony and we will see in *A TV Dante*). After the narrator anodons the search,

he suddenly remembers that he left it in a bar, where he encounters a friend, who we

end up finding out is actually dead and has been for ten years, i.e. since the coup.

However, immediately after this encounter, the viewer hears the narrator announce

that he was actually sitting on the book the entire time. And finally, the narrator says,

"And here I found the key to what happened on that night of Pinochet's coup." . . .

"The key to it all was a poem from my childhood, which I had never managed to

learn by heart. That night I realized that I would never manage to memorize it."

(Marinescu's translation, 360).

In this sense, return is working in the film to show the impossibility of a full

and complete return. Ruiz's film is continually confronting the ruins of the past—

whether it be his childhood home, a dead friend, or a forgotten memory. In Ruiz's

film, then, he seems to be working within and against the cultural logic of the

dictatorship, which is trying to submit the past to the immediacy of the present; that

is, Ruiz only remembers what he has forgotten. As such, Ruiz's film shares

characteristics similar to other cultural products produced in the wake of

dictatorships. As Avelar has said of much post-dictatorial cultural artifacts (some of

which were produced during the dictatorship, like Diamela Eltit's *Lumperica*) draw

the "present's attention to everything that was left unaccomplished and mournful in

the past" (2-3). In Ruiz's film, then, this is being registered; Ruiz is confronting these

ruins, drawing the viewer's attention to them—there is an insistent search for

recuperation, an attempt to cling to the past in order to recuperate it— but they are

left incomplete. It's a film about forgetting, but also the refusal of that as such; it

seems to resist the perpetual present that has been ushered in by the dictatorship,

working against this logic of forgetting and parallel to it; it clings to the past in order to retrieve it, even if the retrieved is the acknowledgment of the forgotten.

TV Dante (1991)

In *A TV Dante* (1991), Ruiz uses the return trope and the representations of the nation again, and his film explores the transmutation and strangeness of reality immediately after the dictatorship. As Catherine L. Benamou has suggested, "rather than filter" his own ideas and subordinate himself "to the shape of the hypotexts" Ruiz would select "stories that resonated, literally or metaphorically," with his own concerns, "transforming the adaptation into an active conversation with the authors of the original. Hence the identity of both authors, literary and cinematic, is reflected in the new work" (107). Two aspects of this film, then, provide rich entry points for Ruiz's use of the return trope and its relation to post-dictatorial Chile: intermediality and translation, or, adaptions of western canonical works. That is, for both the epic poem and the film, Ruiz's adaption opens up rich relationships between protagonists (the pilgrim in both the film and the poem), conflicts, and territories, and in conjunction with a contrapuntal, historical analysis the cluster of problems that the film raises—e.g. cultural imperialism, neo-liberalism, post-dictatorship, exile and return— work together to represent a complex visual re-inscription of the strangeness of the nation (*lo chileno*) in this post-dictatorial moment. Like Ruiz's previous films, the ways that these source texts are re-worked is important. In this film, then, we see a continuation of previous approaches (gesture, language, adaptation), but also added is the surrealist transmedia experimentation which is heightened and intensified in this film and continues in *Cofralandes.*

In this film, Ruiz will translate and geographically resituate Cantos IX-XIV of Dante Algieri's *Inferno* and superimpose them onto contemporary images of Santiago de Chile. This approach seems to seems to resonate, then, with what Idelber Avelar has called the Oediapl thrust common to Latin American cultural production:

> We murder the European father by outplaying him under his own rules; we show him his moribund body while he acknowledges that the crown has a new bearer. The victorious Oedipal narrative told the story of a dead father reading the books written by his son. As is the case with every triumphant Oedipus, however, not all accounts were settled; the father never dies as irreversibly as one imagines. There is always a restitutive moment in which the father's ghost, the specter once thought to be unequivocally conjured, returns to haunt the living (27).

As such, Ruiz's film seems to resonate with this Oedipal thrust in at least two ways. First, Ruiz's film adaptation radically transmutes the original not just formally, i.e. text to film, but spatially and temporally by transposing the text onto images of contemporary Chile. What happens in this transposition and transmutation, in the relationships between images and sound, textuatlity, visuality and gestures, then, is that Ruiz's film creates an adaption that reverses the internal logics of the *Inferno* (this is vague; I know, but I will return to it below, reader). But as with the dead father, the remnants of the original literary source remain by way of a voice-over narration of the original text.

However, the Oedipal thrust also resonates on another political level, i.e. the dead father as the dictatorship; that is, in the film, Ruiz is constantly drawing our attention to the consumption of human flesh and the tension that arises in scenes

where some characters see this clearly while others are unable to recognize this consumption (again, I will explicate this below). To this end, the film is trying to draw attention towards not only the barbaric origins of the post-dictatorial moment— the pile of carnage that the current political system is founded on and in which is seemingly been condemned to silence and oblivion—but also to point attention towards the continuity of the dictatorial policies that would remain. For example, as Tom Nez has pointed out, the *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia,* the governing coalition that ruled continually from 1990-2009 portrayed themselves as 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 (182). More than this, in the early 1990s there was an economic boom, a bubble as it were, and 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 (184).

Thus, Ruiz film captures these tensions, albeit in a Ruizian manner. That is, the complex layering of images, sounds, languages, narratives, and the gestures of the bodies, all work to create an affect for the moment and a representation of post-dictatorial Chile, one that hints towards the past, the violent integration into the world market , and the present, as the continuation of the polices that the regime would put in

place—a continuation, just in a more abstract manner. Andrés Solimano will call this a form of neoliberalism "with a human face" (Solimano 23). However, just as these social, political, and economic relations, are more abstract, so too is Ruiz's approach. That is, in the film, Ruiz takes up the themes of recognition, consumption of human bodies, law, and return in order to explore the tensions of the period directly proceeding the dictatorship, but in a surreal way that rarely corresponds to linear reason. However, there is a logic to the film, one which calls for an active engagement, but I will explore this more below. To this end, I want to underline that the tensions that Ruiz's films is wrestling with in terms of exile and return seem to anticipate the concerns of his next film, which also takes up the return trope and we will see similar concerns; that is, the lasting effects of the dictatorship. In other words, the concerns that he is wrestling with in TV Dante—return after exile and law—will open up onto his representation of the nation and his use of the return trope eleven years later in *Cofralandes.*

Cofralandes (2002)

Eleven years after *A TV Dante*, Ruiz deploys the return trope again in *Cofralandes.* This time, instead of the *Inferno*, Chile is based off the imaginary land of Cofralandes, a popular Chilean utopia of a land of plenty where there is no poverty, houses can be eaten, and rivers are made of wine; however, this imaginary land takes its shape fourteen years after the dictatorship and more than a decade of neoliberal re-democratization. Just as in *A TV Dante* and other films, the re-working of references are important. However, as in *A TV Dante*, Ruiz pulls from a vast repertoire of Latin American and European sources and combines and pastiches them in order to defamiliarize and make strange the country of the returning exile. Here, however, we see him using the same techniques with the same object, Chile, but the

references this time are mostly Chilean. However, there is another Oedipal thrust here; like Oedipus's lingering dead father, even though most of the references are Chilean, the film follows European as they travel through Chile, while Ruiz's voice acts as the voice-over narrator through much of the film.

Ruiz has stated that he imagines Cofralandes "spiritual autobiography" or "great almanac"; an anthology or compilation of miscellanea, poetic texts and lessons (aprendizajes) about Chilean history, stories, culture, language, landscapes and national identity (Rodríguez-Remedi 96). Ruiz re-works these reference points that range from everyday city spaces and personal childhood spaces and memories while Ruiz's voice often acts as the voice-over narrator—similar to *Lettre d'un cineaste*—in order to show the effects of Chile's neoliberal re-democratization on personal and collective memory. In other words, he shows how cultural artifacts, memory, and social relations have been re-coded by this process, but he also doesn't surrender to this draining and re-signifies them in various ways. A process which Rodríguez-Remedi has called a rescue of referents that contributes to the ongoing process of "(re)construction and (re) invention" of postdictatorial Chilean society that "seeks to conduct us further toward the 'heart of Chileanness (*chilenidad*), a landscape of fragmented identity and memory haunted, José Bengoa argues, by the insecurities of compulsive modernization and nostalgia for lost community" 64 (93). In the film, then, the camera captures everyday scenes and personal childhood spaces which take shape in the wake up the dictatorship's wreckage.

As such, the film raises questions of post-dictatorial Chile and the transition to democracy. In various ways, several scholars have shown how the post-dictatorship democratic regime deepened the neoliberal policies set in place during the

dictatorship. For example, Chilean scholar Willy Thayer has said that "transition" to democracy is a misnomer that disguises a more fundamental shift from the modern state to the post-state market:

> Let us not take 'transition' as the postdictatorial process of redemocratization in Latin American societies, but rather more broadly, as the process of 'modernization' and transit from the modern national state to the transnational post-state market. In this sense, for us the transition is primordially the dictatorship. It was the dictatorship that made the transit from State to Market, a transit euphemistically designated as 'modernization' (Avelar 46).

Similarly, and building off of Thayer, Idelber Avelar, has suggested that "The epochal transition was no doubt the dictatorship, not the return of civil rule that ensued once the real transition had been accomplished. In other words, the return of democracy in itself does not imply a transit to any place other than the one where the dictatorship left off" (Avelar 58). He goes on to say that the dictatorship was a "two-decade-long processes where even the return to democracy was highly controlled and ultimately hegemonized by the military regimes themselves (59). In other words, by shifting the focus of the real transition back onto the dictatorship, instead of the democracy that was to follow, one sees how the fundamental changes that were put in place by the military regime—so fundamentally transformative that only dictatorial style politics would be capable of carrying them out—are still in place. That is, the democratic regime that was to follow was just a continuation of the policies set in place by the military regime, i.e. if there was a transition, it was the dictatorship itself. To this end, by seeing the democracy that was to follow the dictatorship as a transition to another place, we are threatened by a definitive stasis. And this stasis

would have effects not just on political policy but in the social and cultural realm as well. For example, Nelly Richard has suggested that Chile's market-oriented society is entrenched in a perpetual present, what she calls "the audiovisual regime" that was developed under military rule and continued with democracy. For Richard, this regime, with television as its focal point, produced a homogenous temporality that engenders forgetting, and she contrasts it with artistic media experiments that sought to develop a politics of the trace through images that supposedly retained a mark of temporal alterity (Richard; Cultural Residues; 98). Within this framework, then, Ruiz's film seems to be working in and against this kind of presentism as well as showing the effects of the neoliberal democratic polices on the nation and on its cultural referents. In other words, the form and content of the film, by taking as its object Chile during this time, Ruiz sets out to capture, as well as re-work references that have been re-signified.

The film(s) that make up Ruiz's *Cofralandes* are vast; it's a seven-hour, four-part series. Thus, to get into the depths of all the complicated refences points and camera techniques would be beyond the scope of this paper. So here, I would like to point to a few key aspects of the film, particularly those that *A TV Dante* anticipates. As stated above, Ruiz broadens the scope of his historical exploration and uses folklore and literary texts to access distinct aspects of collective and personal memory to show the effects of the neoliberal democratic regime.

For example, he shows how the ideological uniformity—put in place by the military, then extended into the neoliberal democratic regime to follow—penetrates personal memories. Taking a combinatory approach as he did in *A TV Dante,* Ruiz layers sounds of radio transmissions during the day of the coup on top of images from

Figure 1: Ominous Father Christmases standing in formation.

the filmmaker's childhood backyard which is populated by a group of ominous looking Father Christmases standing in formation. The formation of their bodies, then, resonates with the functioning principles of the military and by extension order and uniformity of a militaristic type:

What these layering of images and sounds, coupled with the space of Ruiz's childhood backyard seem to suggest, then, is that the political and social uniformity is not only affecting the present but is reaching back to re-shape the past; that is, personal childhood memories of Ruiz are also retroactively haunted by the present. And in another scene Ruiz goes on to show that this ideological uniformity is very much present in the everydayness of the current post-dictatorial consumer society, where neoliberalism is presented as the only viable option. For example, and as Andreea Marinescu has keenly pointed out:

> . . . the camera records people standing in lines without knowing why they are standing in lines. While wandering the streets of Santiago, the camera focuses on a person having a heart attack, but the paramedics refuse to take him to a hospital before he writes them a blank check to cover his future hospital expenses. We notice that the person's bank is Citibank, serving as a reminder

71

of the ever-present flow of global capital. This scene compels the spectator to

contemplate that an individual without the same financial means could not

survive a similar incident . . . The absurdity of the situation of daily neoliberal

life prompts one to question the concept of reality itself. There is also a parallel

between the alienation of the neoliberal subject and the exilic filmmaker

behind the camera. While the dictatorship alienated its citizens through forced

exile, today's consumer society alienates its citizens through economic

exclusion. Members of both categories are rendered nonsubjects through their

exclusion from political life" (192)

To these ends, with these two examples, Ruiz's childhood memories and the

aforementioned, Ruiz seems to show how the logic of ideological uniformity is

omnipresent. More than this, Ruiz shows people riding a bus with cloths over their

faces:

Figure 2: Neoliberal Society in the film.

Thus, this representation adds to the highly individualized neoliberal landscape. What

Andreea Marinescu refers to as "the alienation of life in neoliberal society (192). To

this end, Ruiz uses layers of audio and imagery to create an imagetext—the same

approach he took in *A TV Dante*— that represents the bleak country upon return, but

he does not succumb to this nihilism wholeheartedly.

The film also pushes back against this hegemonic ideology on formal and

contextual levels and uses cultural and historical referents to motivate new ways of

thinking about the past and how they are defined in the present, or how they have

been re-signified by the present. On a formal level, the film, which was made for

Chilean TV, is resisting the presentism of the "audio-visual regime" by layering

contradictory sounds and images which often creates an audio-visual disorder and

disrupts linear and uniform modes of storytelling and by extension ideological

uniformity. Ruiz is also doing this on a contextual level. For example, Ruiz's use of

literary references and his reconstitutions of canonical Chilean literary works. In the

film, we see a Ruizian tableau vivant recreation of Blest Gana's novel, *Martín Rivas.*

Jamie Concha has indicated how this novel is requisite reading in the education of

Chileans as Chileans and how it plays a key part in the national imaginary and

functions as a national allegory; that is, fulfilled love as an allegory between

provincial and aristocratic classes (Concha xiii). What is interesting, however, is the

particular ways that he re-works the novel, as he did in *A TV Dante* and *La colonia*

penal. To this end, and as I will show below and as I have shown with *Penal Colony*,

the re-working of these pieces, in their differences in light of political and historical

situations are important aspects of his films. And again, I think Andreea Marinescu's

use of Ruiz's adaptation is worth quoting at some length:

> ". . . the film's reworking of the Martín Rivas novel by reinventing names and
>
> relationships destabilizes the reading as of the novel as national allegory.
>
> While the details of the plot and the characters' descriptions receive little
>
> attention, *the narrator places emphasis on the historical event that is portrayed*
>
> *in the book*: the first Liberal attempt to challenge the autocratic and oligarchic

tendencies of the Chilean political system guaranteed by the 1833 constitution. This event, the first Chilean Liberal revolution of 1851, is experienced as a break—"y una mañana . . . revolución"—indicating a moment of interruption in the visual representation of the novel. While the images of the characters appear frozen in time, the narrative voice gives life to a new way of seeing the novel, where the interpretative weight is placed on the historical breakdown in the linear national discourse. The film's focus on historical crisis contrasts with the novel's overall optimistic representation of Chilean nationhood. Thus, while the novel has traditionally been interpreted to culturally reinforce nationalism, the documentary's focus *on the rupture of the political fabric* (the reformist Liberal rebellion) underscores a history of differences and divergent positions that traverse and interrupt the construction of national hegemonic discourse" (193, my emphases).

Marinescu's analysis is excellent, no doubt. What I would like to draw attention to, however, is that, as she has pointed out, the narrator emphasizes "the historical event that is portrayed in the book: the first Liberal attempt to challenge the autocratic and oligarchic tendencies of the Chilean political system guaranteed by the 1833 constitution". I think another particular emphasis could be added here: the revolution was a failed liberal revolution. In the novel, the aristocracy and landed gentry prevail. That is, the voice-over narrator is re-working the novel and focusing attention on a failed attempt. In the novel, the aristocracy and landed gentry prevail, and as history will show much later, Pinochet and elites will prevail again in 1973. A failed attempt in 1851 and a failed attempt in 1969-1973 when Allende was overthrown, which leads us to the present of the film which captures the wake of these defeats. As such, I

think this emphasis puts into greater relief other aspects of the film—as well as aspects that *A TV Dante* anticipates, e.g. its concerns with law after exile and upon returning—, namely the draining of langue and the inability for the a post-dictatorial society to see themselves represented in democracy.

Just as in Ruiz's other films, language and/or the manipulation of it plays a key role. There are various scenes where syntactical fracturing and repetition are used for effect. This aspect of the film has been captured succinctly by Alejandra Rodríguez-Remdi:

> A mí ya se me está olvidando el castellano. . . Cuando quiero decir algo, se me borran las palabras. Quiero decir algo. Nada. Se me borran las palabras. Ayer quería decir "edificio." Nada. . . Todo se olvida. Menos la esperanza. Pero ahora está por ver: ¿cómo se dice "esperanza" en castellano? "Esperanza" no existe en castellano. Es un chilenismo. . .Y yo que quería decir "Chile" y me salió . . . ¿quién sabe qué? Es que todo se olvida. Es que todo se olvida. "Y lo último que se olvida es la esperanza." Pero ¿qué quiere decir "esperanza"? Vamos viendo. "Esperanza" quiere decir "sandía." No, "sandía" quiere decir "pera."
>
> (I'm forgetting Spanish. . . When I want to say something, the words are erased. I want to say something. Nothing. The words are erased. Yesterday I wanted to say "building." Nothing. . . You forget everything. Except hope. But there's the problem: how do you say "hope" in Spanish? "Hope" doesn't exist in Spanish. It's a Chileanism. . . . And I who wanted to say "Chile" and I came out with . . . who-knows-what? You forget everything. It's because you forget everything. "Hope is the last thing you forget." But what does "hope" mean?

We're finding out. "Hope" means "watermelon." No, "watermelon" means "pear.") (94).

Building off of Norbert Lechner's call for the resignification of language—in particular the language of democracy, as it fails to provide, not only a language, but a system of government where social actors can recognize themselves—, she has suggested that the aforementioned quote conveys the effects of the lingual modifications ushered in by the harsh censorship of the Pinochet regime, "the free-market Concertación coalition governments and the exigencies of cultural dependency" (Rodríguez-Remdi 95). Thus, Rodríguez-Remdi is seeing continuity between the policies laid down by the regime and the democracy that would follow.

In this sense, then, the concerns that *A TV Dante* raises in particular those with the return of law, recognition, and return after exile seem to still be pressing for him fourteen years later. That is, the impasse that *A TV Dante* reaches in regards to law and return after exile seem to open up onto his later concerns in *Cofralandes.* Thus, the film is an expansion and continuation of these, just in a different way, from other angles. By situating *A TV Dante* and his use of the return trope in other films, I have tried to bring into greater relief Ruiz's approach to these concerns and the formal approaches he has taken with them. As such, now that I have briefly situated *A TV Dante* and his use of the return trope in other films, I believe this brings into greater relief Ruiz's worries that seem to be consistent in the Ruizian ecosystem and the search for a "permanent Chile", in particular within his films of return. So, finally, I turn back to the object at hand: *A TV Dante*.

Chapter Four: *A TV Dante* (1991)

As we have seen throughout his career, Ruiz uses texts from various sources, inspiring new interpretations. As such, Ruiz adaption—his transmedia experimentation— of Dante's *Inferno* follows suit. In *A TV Dante,* Raúl Ruiz updates, translates, and geographically resituates Cantos IX-XIV of Dante Algieri's *Inferno.* Ruiz has often suggested that his "ultimate goal was to be able to wander freely from story to story or world to world, to find the bridges between one imaginary space and another" (Martin 691). And in his portion[27] of *A TV Dante,* he manifests this by superimposing Cantos IX-XIV onto contemporary images of Santiago de Chile. In this adaptation, the film is strung together with myriad combinations of elements. Ruiz combines kitsch imagery of horror movie effects and images of Chilean street life, which Ruiz described as a pastiche of 60s political documentary[28]. Each Canto runs for about ten minutes and all are prefaced with the words, "Santiago de Chile." More than this, the audio which is often composed of more than one musical layer with various songs, languages, narrator voices, shouting and singing crowds, and sound effects are all deployed at various times. To connect these multitudinous referents, Ruiz moves back and forth between four types of audio-visual syntax: Classical Hollywood syntax, or Hollywood continuity editing; Russian montage in the Eisenstein-Vertov tradition, or Soviet montage; French impressionism; and a free-

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[27]*A TV Dante* is a three-part series made for British television's Channel 4. Peter Greenway and Tom Philips directed the first two in 1989. However, it remained unfinished due to Michael Kustow's departure as artistic leader of the channel and disputes over leadership, and in 1991 Ruiz created his portion. (Philips 245)
[28] See Adrian Martin's "Raúl Ruiz: An Annotated Bibliography"

associative grammar reminiscent especially of American avant-gardist, or US avant-garde associative editing (ibid). All of this works together in order to create a rich dramatization of the *Inferno,* updated and transposed onto post-dictatorial Chile.

The *original* text, however, is not lost entirely; a voice over narrator reads the text (in English translation) throughout the film—sometimes aligning with the images directly, sometimes not; both make for thought-provoking (dis)junctions if one pulls on any given thread. Put another way, in the film there are at least two distinct stories: the original *Inferno* and Ruiz's portrayal of Chile, using the original as a jumping off point but radically changing it. A major difference between the two is the Pilgrim character and the role of exile. Both Dante Alighieri and Raúl Ruiz were exiles, and just as the *Inferno* is filled with 14th century Florentine political commentary and allegories; too, Ruiz's film is filled with late 20th century Chilean political commentary and allegories—both of which often collate around exile. In the *Divina Commedia*, the Pilgrim is exiled from the beginning, both physically and allegorically, that is, in his relation to god. As such, the ensuing narrative is about this pilgrim's journey as he makes his way "home" to paradise. In Ruiz's film, the Pilgrim a lawyer returning to his homeland after being exiled; that is, this pilgrim is already home, and the ensuing narrative revolves around his journey with his homeland. Put another way, the journey has ended; he is home. More than this, Ruiz's pilgrim is carrying a *codex civils*; in other words, Ruiz's pilgrim is not symbolic of Christian theology, but juris.

This is, however, a Ruizian re-encounter with the homeland. As such, Ruiz's use of heterogeneous images and sounds and multitudinous contents and referents are ceaselessly modifying space, time and internal logics of diegesis in order to combine

distinct ways of seeing and understanding Chile after exile and the dictatorship. This representation interrupts hegemonic modes of narration and linear reasoning and produces feelings of strangeness and distance—a seemingly anachronistic collage of images and sounds— with which various critics have struggled. Take, for example, these two contradictory statements: In Michael Richardson's "The Baroque Heresy of Raúl Ruiz" Richardson argues that:

> One has the feeling that he [Ruiz] does not want to follow any kind of path but rather to tangle up the paths so that we get lost. Since this world contains all worlds, including heaven and hell (one of his less successful films, A TV Dante, envisions Hell in Santiago de Chile, without making any political point about Pinochet's regime). (161)

In contrast to and against Richard's comment, Amilcare Iannuci, in "From Dante's *Inferno* to Dante's Peak: The Influence of Dante on Film," suggests that Ruiz's film is:

> Interested primarily in a radically politicized film making process and in a distinct1y political kind of cinema, almost like propaganda, this interest is evident in his segment of *A TV Dante* which is grounded in a politicization of the text . . . one feels that the narrative power of Dante's text has been sacrificed to inculcate a decidedly Marxist message focused on class struggle and the oppression of the proletariat (26-27).

Is *A TV Dante* inculcating a Marxist message or is it tying us up so we get lost? While interpretive flexibility opens up the possibility for many right answers to exist, an aspect that makes criticism so exciting, there are wrong answers. In addition, Ianucci's essay lacks any explication of what is meant by "Marxist message"; the

phrase is posited without any explanation to how the author sees this working in the film. It seems to me, then, that neither of these critics have given Ruiz's film the time and attention it deserves. And throughout this paper I will not only demonstrate how these comments are not only dismissive of the complexity of Ruizian thought, but I will also propose a way to read the imagetext and deal with the complex elements of the film in order to demonstrate how we see a continuation of narrative strategies— gestures, langue, and adaption—and how these are working in relation to his use of the return trope in his other films.

<div align="center">

Ruizian Complexity & *A TV Dante*

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The diegetic and non-diegetic elements of *A TV Dante* create scenes that are densely packed, uneven in their sedimentations of images, languages, and references, which crystalize into a narrative structure that is at once hybrid and complex. The aesthetic of the film—the polyphony of languages, uneven stacking of images and the adaptation of Dante's *Inferno*—create a lexicon and thematic that warrant a critical engagement, yet combined with the kitsch aspects— the cheap horror effects—the film seems to combine what Roland Barthes would call readerly and writerly[29] qualities, an aspect that has been overlooked. Often, critics point to an interview with Ruiz where he mentions elements of the film that resemble a television cooking show and a Chilean joke: "*si uno se porta mal en esta vida, en el más allá se convertirá en chileno*" (Monteagudo). As I have mentioned in the introduction, Ruiz has said that ". . . every joke conceals a serious problem" (Ruiz, Poetics of Cinema 117). Within this

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[29] A readerly text succeeds in communicating meaning on a surface level, not much work is needed in order to get pleasure from the narrative. A writerly text, however, deploys complex discursive strategies and calls for a deeper engagement when participating in meaning making. See Roland Barthes, *S/Z.*

joke, then, Ruiz's concerns with return after exile and post-dictatorial Chile are serious problems. Many critics, however,[30] are distracted or fixate on the surface level aspects of the film and fail to engage critically with the piece and/or align it with Ruiz's other return films. Interestingly, Iannuci's essay, which prefaces this paper, is dedicated to showing how Dante's text contains both readerly and writerly qualities, which has enabled it to appeal to a wide array of audiences throughput the centuries (6-7). Throughout the essay, various renditions of the text are discussed in popular visual arts and cinema, but when Ianucci mentions Ruiz's adaption of the text, there is a brief misrepresentation and dismissal (26-27). To this end, Ianuuci's argument seems to take on a hypocritical valence in its refusal to apply the very method that is advocated in the essay.

Ruiz's film, I argue, has these readerly and writerly qualities built into the formal and thematic characteristics and should be approached as such. For example, one can read the *Inferno* on a surface level and enjoy the narrative; however, when the intertextual character of Dante's *Inferno*—chalked full of rhymed theological verses, references to poets and dead philosophers, stories from the Old and New Testaments, classical literature and philosophy, Italian and European medieval history, similes, rhetorical devices and figures of speech—is taken into account, modes of interpretation blossom into potent critiques. No one questions the intertextual character of this text. And when critics only fixate on the kitsch or surface level aspects of Ruiz's film—from the cheap horror images, to the pedestrian

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[30] See Tabea Kretschmann "*A TV Dante – Cantos I-VIII* (1989) by Peter Greenaway and Tom Phillips: A 'symbolical translation' of Dante's *Inferno* for television", Jonathan Rosenbaum's "Ruiz Hopping and Buried Treasures: Twelve Selected Global Sites" and the aforementioned Ianucci and Richardson.

observation that Ruiz's superimposition suggests Chile is Hell—the readerly aspects are eschewed. Other critics, however, have been more attentive to the subtleties and complexities in Ruiz's work. For example, in the essay "Hanging Here and Groping There" Adrian Martin suggests that Ruizian cinematography can be thought of as a game of hide and seek, which disrupts traditional conflict driven narrative. Thus, the dense audiovisual layering in Ruiz's film, as well as in Ruiz's oeuvre, should also be approached with the same intertextual curiosities as the *Inferno*.

Theoretical Frame

The question, however, still remains: how is one to approach the associations between scenes which are not quite chronological and intentionally disrupt narrative logic? To think of these elements as merely anachronistic would be dismissive and would eschew the formal complexities of Ruiz's film. Thus, in what follows I put forth a way to read Ruiz's film that takes into consideration these complexities while also keeping focused on their common denominator, Chile after exile and the dictatorship. This, however, may be easier said than done. Ruiz has said that it is vital that each film have its own combinatory system, its own logic (Ruiz, Poetics of Cinema, 112–113). Similarly, Ruiz was not only a filmmaker, but a theorist and he wrote many books on film theory, particularly about his films. As such, I approach the complex narrative and temporality that organizes *A TV Dante*, and I put forth a method for reading the film. However, there are several conceptual terms which must be understood for my reading of the film, which I hope will become clearer as the analysis progresses.

I begin, then, by turning to Ruizian theory itself, namely his "Six functions of the shot." According to Ruiz the basic syntactical unit of his films, the shot,

potentially contains or performs six functions: centrifugal, centripetal, critical, combinatory, allegorical and holistic (Ruiz, Six Functions). In theory, any shot of a film could perform all six functions, at all times. However, as Adrian Martin has pointed out, this was more of a utopian goal for Ruiz, perhaps impossible to achieve in its totality (Martin). In any case, I believe this offers a good way into the formal complexity of *A TV Dante*. However, for this film, I believe three are particularly pertinent: centripetal, centrifugal, and combinatory. As I described earlier, Ruiz drew inspiration from Chilean poets, especially Nicanor Parra who was a writer and physicist; to this end we can see how aspects of Ruiz film theory have also been influenced by this, namely centrifugal and centripetal functions. According to Ruiz, "[S]hots will follow each other according to the centrifugal function" (Ruiz, Six Functions). That is, elements of a particular shot can be thought of as objects being acted upon by a force which draws energy away from the center of the shot, i.e., themes and affects of these shots reach out to connect with following and preceding shots. And the counterpart to centrifugal force, then, is centripetal force; a force directing energy towards the center of an object, i.e. independent or autonomous themes or affects of shots that are acting within and upon that shot. In physics, these two forces are generally thought of as two sides of the same coin. In other words, there is a dialectic between these two forces, which makes for a densely packed labyrinthian-like shots where themes and affects sometimes only work within the shot, but sometimes opens up onto other shots in interesting ways when read relationally—at which point, Ruiz's "combinatory" potential of the shot come into play. Ruiz's suggests that ". . . the functions that are present in each shot are only activated once in contact with other shots, though they are independent of those shots. They are like threads that tie and untie" (Bandis 58). Put another way, themes and affects can be

re-mixed into alternative sequences of shots, making for differing semantic and syntactic associations. Thinking of the film in these terms, then, gives us a language to approach the structure of the film and its semantic and syntactic associations; thus, adding the insight that the logics of otherness and distinction which do not all function the same way (to which I return below). As Martin has succinctly pointed out, Ruizian cinematography can be thought of as a game of hide and seek, which disrupts traditional conflict driven narrative (Martin). What I would like to suggest, then, is that the densely packed shots and audiovisual syntax in *A TV Dante* require a method. To this end, I find the method of *Begriffsgeschichte* helpful for generating analyses of Ruiz's film in terms of his Six Functions.

On a formal level, then, the densely packed shots and semantic and syntactic associations between them create an uneven layering; however, the contents of the shots have social and political histories behind them. And as a supplement to Ruiz's functions of the shot, as a way to approach the uneven sedimentations, I find that the practice of *Begriffsgeschichte* can help one approach Ruiz's complex narrative constructions. *Begriffsgeschichte* is best understood as method or set of procedures used to study past thinkers and thought, a way to interpret how political and social concepts change through time, on a linguistic and socio-historical level. Grammatically, it is a compound word made from two vocabulary items: *begriff* (concept) and *geschichte* (history). As such, it can be translated as history of concepts or conceptual history (Begriffsgeschichte) (Richter 3). Reinhart Koselleck suggests that this method[31] "investigates concepts used in the past to order experience; it seeks

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[31] Melvin Richter suggests that as a practice, one using *Begriffsgeschichte* deploys methods originated from philology, historical semantics, and structural linguistics in

to discover the theory such concepts contain. In other words, this method uncovers those concepts which can serve as the basis for theories, and then examines thematically how such concepts change over time" (Koselleck, intro to G.G., 21). While getting into all the intricacies of *Begriffsgeschichte* would be beyond the scope of this paper, I find its basic tenets fitting for Ruiz's film. As such, and in Koselleck's words, *Begriffsgeschichte* can:

> . . . clarify the diverse strata of meaning descending from chronologically separate periods. It therefore goes beyond a strict alternation of diachrony and synchrony and relates more to the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*) that can be contained within a concept. Put another way, it deals with the theoretical premises of social history when it seeks to evaluate the short, medium, or long term, or to weigh events and structures one against the other (Koselleck 90 *Begriffsgeschichte* and Social History).

Throughout the essay, "*Begriffsgeschichte* and Social History*",* he uses this method and explicates the etymological and socio-political content of *Bürger*, democracy, and *Bund* and suggests that *Begriffsgeschichte* uses both diachronic and synchronic analyses in order to disclose the diverse meanings descending from chronologically separate periods. In other words, *Begriffsgeschichte* avoids anachronism. In terms of

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its analysis of political and social language. He states: "the first two distinctions, derived from Saussure, are between: (1) language (langue, Spmche) and speech (parole, Rede) and (2) synchronic and diachronic analyses of language. The two remaining distinctions are between: (3) semasiological and onomasiological analyses and (4) semantics which seeks to determine 'meaning' through analysis of single words ("lexical semantics") and semantics which studies "meaning" within that larger unit known as a semantic or linguistic field" (pg. 3).

the film, then, I find this a useful tool for shedding light on the multiple temporalities within the film and the multitudinous contents and referents that Ruiz uses. Put another way, looking at the elements of the film synchronically, as in the syntactical unit of the shot, as well as diachronically within the whole film, Dante's *Inferno*, and their relation to post-dictatorial Chile—while, however, thinking of these "beyond a strict alternation of diachrony and synchrony" as mentioned above. To this end, following this method helps a viewer think about the implications of these multitudinous contents and referents—Ruiz uses cultural, political and historical referents that span centuries at times in order to portray an image of post-dictatorial Chile—and how political critique is working in highly complex ways, which is characteristic of his mid to late films.

In other words, the method of *Begriffsgeschichte* helps one frame how such logics of distinction are at work in Ruiz's portrayal of post-dictatorial Chile. As such, I use *Begriffsgeschichte* as a method and think of concepts in the film more broadly. As we will see below, at times, a concept working within the film is law/democracy, but I will also argue that the crowd can be seen in conceptual terms. That is, by taking the crowd as a concept, I will approach the crowd through a contrapuntal, historical analysis and look at how the crowd is functioning in the *Inferno,* within the text, while keeping focused on the text within its larger socio-historical and political context and then "weigh" that against how the crowd is functioning in Ruiz's film in order to look at changes—changes which have particular implications for Ruiz's representation of post-dictatorial Chile and Dante's *Inferno.* Or, as Koselleck would say, I will look at "the ideological currents" that crystallize around expressions and which must be examined (Koselleck 87 B & SH). To this

end, *A TV Dante* requires that one be attentive to the cultural references in their original context and also how Ruiz is updating and transmuting them in the film, and by extension their implications for his representation of post-dictatorial Chile.

Keeping this frame in mind, what I would like to suggest, then, is that the aesthetic of Ruiz's film and the hybrid, complex, and overlapping narratives (one could say, the writerly aspect) creates a compression of various elements—languages, images, textual referents—which are best read through the lens of the non/synchronous. In this sense, non/synchronicity denotes Ruiz's use of centripetal, centrifugal and combinatory functions of the shot, as well as *Begriffsgeschichte* as a method for analyzing these elements—both within the film and in relation to the larger sociohistorical and politics contexts of which they are a part—and weighing them against each other; that is, Ruiz's film is best approached when one reads their uneven layered relationality—multiple yet singular—as a snapshot of the non/synchronous. Put another way, the superimposition of Dante's *Inferno* onto contemporary Chile combined with the layering of languages, images and other referents create diverse strata, layered on top of each other, unevenly. If this seems like a stretch, reader, here, I point out the resonance or consonance with the *terza rima* rhyme structure of the *Divine Comedy*—ABA, BCB, CDC, DED, a rhyme scheme looks backward and forward at the same time while moving horizontally, but which can also be read vertically[32]—and the reading of the film that I am suggesting in this essay. In effect, I argue that the formal and thematic characteristics of Ruiz's film also call to be read in a similar manner—hearkening back and projecting forward

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[32] See K P Clarke's "Humility and the (P) arts of Art" in *Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy*

horizontally and vertically in their relationality, i.e. centrifugal, centripetal, and combinatory functions— both amongst the formal elements of the film, and with Dante's *Inferno.* And critics[33] have either missed these kinds of twists and turns, these kinds of nuances, or they have not wanted to do the work that Ruiz's film warrants.

What's My Angle?

So in what follows I put forth a way to read Ruiz's film, in the film's terms. Starting with an analysis of a sequence of shots in the first scene, I demonstrate how the elements in these shots—the various languages, music, textual references, and imagery— are not merely disparate elements chosen haphazardly, but in their relationality (centrifugal and centripetal forces) form an uneven sedimentation of layers that, when read together, crystalize into an aesthetic—an aesthetic which then opens up onto the rest of the film. I will start, then, by looking at the non/synchronicities of the formal and thematic characteristics of the first scene which acts as a kind of hermeneutic for the rest of the film. And after doing so, I turn to a non/synchronous close reading of two aspects in the film. First, I look to Ruiz's re-working of hell's Furies in Canto 9 as they stand on top of the gates of Dis, hell's inner city. Here, I put pressure on previous readings of Ruiz's Furies in order to show how a layered non/synchronic reading brings the political allegory to the surface—an allegory that permeates much of the film. Secondly, and following Ruiz's suggestion that one should start from the detail[34], I turn to a contrapuntal, historical close reading

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[33] The work of Adrian Martin and Michael Goddard is expansive and thorough in many ways, and I would like to build on, expand and in some places show the limits to their analyses of Ruiz's film. See works cited for examples.
[34] See interview with Michael Goddard in *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz: An Impossible Cartography* (175)

of representations of crowds in Dante's text and Ruiz's film. There, I argue that

Ruiz's representation of crowds—his divisions and combinations of masses, or as I

have shown above, their gestures—opens up a fertile way to see, and re-see, the

Inferno. That is, by reading the divisions and combinations of these crowds as

characterized by difference, one can see a relational dialectic working between them;

the two are not opposed to each other, but work on each other from within. In other

words, the writerly aspects of the crowds—when read through the non/synchronic, on

top of each other unevenly—brings to the surface the political-ideological critique

that is working in Ruiz's film. A critique that retrospectively illuminates overlooked

aspects of the *Inferno*.

A Funding Interlude

Ruiz's portion of *A TV Dante* was made as a result of an interesting confluence

of historical factors. Ruiz's involvement with French television's *Institut National de*

l'Audiovisuel (INA) took place at a particularly opportune time for a filmmaker like

Ruiz. After the reorganization of the *Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française*

into separate agencies, the INA began with a desire to be as different as possible

(Christie 81). During this phase Ruiz initiated projects that linked various national

broadcasters[35], a pattern that continued in *A TV Dante,* which involved a relationship

between the INA, VPRO in the Netherlands and Channel 4 in Britain (82). This

openness, however, was eventually reigned in and the INA was made to tailor its

commissioning more closely to programmers' needs (81). During this window,

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[35] The miniseries *Manoel dans l'île des merveilles* (1984) with INA and Radiotelevisão
Portuguesa (RTP), followed by a feature, *Les destins de Manoel* (1985) is pattern which continued
in *A TV Dante* (1989–91). (82 Christie)

however, and when this partnership was made, Channel 4 was also experiencing a particularly adventurous phase. That is, before the Channel Four Television Company switched to the Channel Four Television Corporation, a move which—like the INA— stopped the funding of experimental projects, there was a tendency to support such projects (Hopkins). And during this brief window, both broadcasters were able to fund projects that didn't aim at the center of the mass-market population, but aimed at the fringes. To this effect, Ruiz's work with the INA coincided with its most independent and adventurous phase, a time in which there was an opening for experimentation in television, a brief window of relative distance from the demands of the mass market.

Scene One: Sedimentations

The layering of Ruiz's film has a palpable presence from the start, which I use as a way into the aesthetics of the film. The elements in the first sequence of shots of Canto 9 work to create an aesthetic which will be the audiovisual priority throughout the film; the layering of languages, images, and intersecting stories, all warrant a critical spectatorship. First, I point attention to the languages in the first sequence of shots in which a plurality of languages are deployed; the voice-over narrator is reading an English translation of the *Inferno* while Spanish and German are interspersed at particular moments. Here, one can see the resonance with the original text; that is, plurilingualism is also a trait deployed in Dante's *Inferno*, e.g., the Latin of Virgil, the pilgrim's vernacular, and the incomprehensible mumblings of the devil all work together as linguistic cues to reveal affect. Throughout the original, there are

also various references to veiled speech, which prod the reader to look deeper[36].

Taking into consideration the delicate linguistic work of the original, I also approach

Ruiz's film with the same curiosity, which as we will see is a trait often deployed by

Ruiz to reveal affect and nuance.

Auditory Layering

As the film begins, the viewer is presented with a black screen and then the

words "Canto 9," and "Santiago de Chile," all while hearing a crowd[37] shouting "*viva

la muerto*". The shouting, however, spills over and onto the first shot, which slowly

fades out as an image of a bureaucratic waiting room suddenly appears. The darkness

in which one first hears the crowd and the slow fade and overlap onto the first images

are suggestive of the spectral characteristics of the crowd motif throughout the film, a

very important detail. Next, there is a brief pause in the audio and a German woman

singing takes auditory priority; this German, however, is a fragment from the

chamber opera *Weiße Rose* (White Rose), which tells the story of a sister and brother

guillotined by the Nazis in 1943 for leading a resistance group. Throughout the rest of

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[36] Quote is from UT Austin's Dante Worlds project, circle 5, Cantos 7-9: "When Dante interrupts the narrative to instruct his (smart) readers to "note the doctrine hidden under the veil of strange verses" (*Inf.* 9.61-3), he calls upon the popular medieval tradition of allegorical reading. Commonly applied to the interpretation of sacred texts (e.g., the Bible), allegory--in its various forms--assumes that other, deeper levels of meaning (often spiritual) lie beneath the surface in addition to (or in place of) the literal meaning of the words. Allegory was also used to "moralize" (or Christianize) classical works, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* The medieval Platonic tradition often allegorically interpreted texts according to a body of esoteric doctrine believed to originate with Hermes (hence "hermeticism")."
[37] Also important to note is that there are two crowds represented in the film, and they fulfill different roles: crowds that represent resistance and crowds that seem implicit on the consumption of human flesh, which I explain below. This paper, however, focuses on the former.

the film, pauses and gaps in the audio, which allow for one layer to gain auditory priority, are often used to add to the narrative. Keeping this in mind—and remember that Canto IX of Dante's *Inferno* is being read, which is telling the viewer about Virgil being powerless for the first time, that is, he is unable to gain access to the city of Dis, hell's inner city—we can see how Ruiz's shot maintains the frustration of impasse, but re-works and adds to them: access is denied not at hell's gate but in a Chilean post-dictatorial bureaucratic waiting room. However, the music adds another allegorical layer, which connects this Chilean bureaucratic waiting room with anti-fascist resistance, or attempted resistance. More than this, during the first scene we hear a layering of two womens' voices speaking in thick Chilean accents in what seems to be an interview. The voices say, things like, "¿Yqué debo este gobierno? ¡Nada! ¿Nada? ¡Nada! (3:30) and they go on to say things like the government has only given them poverty and fear, a lot of fear. Thus, the sedimentation of these layers in Ruiz's shot—when read together, or on top of one another— contain a multitude of micro-fictions, which crystalize into an affect of impasse and frustration in an updated Chilean post-dictatorial moment (impasse here is a centrifugal function).This layering technique was used by Ruiz's in other films as well, and is generally used to deepen the audio and visual connections[38].

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[38] This layering of disjunctive audio and visual elements is a them that can be seen in much of Ruiz's work; for example, his contribution to the French TV program/series, *Rue des archives*. Ruiz's portion of this program, *Petit historie de France*, deploys archival footage of plays and phots montages and overlays it with audio of school children reading from French history books in order to deepen and complicate representations (Goddard 54). Ruiz will also take this approach in *Cofralandes*—as I have shown above.

Visual Layering

Visually in the first sequence of shots, the mise en scène of the bureaucratic waiting room is dispersed with layered with images of the grotesque and the everyday. The first establishing shot gives the viewer a view of a bureaucratic waiting room which at first seems completely

Figure 3:Normal bureaucratic waiting room.

normal (Figure 3; 0:20). This normality, however, is then interrupted when a man crosses the screen, stops, turns his head, and looks directly at the

Figure 4: Bureaucratic waiting room interspersed with the grotesque.

viewer; after his head has turned, the viewer sees a protrusion of brain matter (Figure 4; 0:28). However, the people in the waiting room—aside from the pilgrim—are not alarmed by this, and they don't react (recognition and misrecognition of the grotesque are important centrifugal functions for the film, and I want to underline them here). This is then followed by a series of jump cuts of various grotesque images ranging in severity: a burning boot; a cup and saucer on fire; a book on fire; an image of a man with a split open scalp and intestines wrapped around his neck; and a man with a wounded head drinking a dark liquid from a cup, which spills out of a wound in his neck and is collected into another cup, which he drinks again (Figure 5; 2:46). (The

theme of consumption and the human body will be an important detail and what to underline it here—I will return to back to this below).

Figure 5: Man drinking through/from hole in neck in bureaucratic waiting room.

This series of cuts also produce a layering effect; images of faces undisturbed, grotesque images, and the pilgrim's face all create an uneven layering of images and sentiments, as it were. More than this, in between these layered jump cuts of the bureaucratic waiting room, the camera takes time to focus on the book the pilgrim is holding, his *codex civils*, and the way he squeezes the book tightly with this hand. That is, he seems to look toward his law book for comfort in the midst of the horrific images he is encountering.

Interestingly, the aforementioned Iannuci suggests that the layering of surreal and grotesque images—in the author's words "a proliferation of disgusting images"— contributes to the sacrifice of the "narrative power of Dante's text . . . to inculcate a decidedly Marxist message" (26-27). Ruiz's grotesque images, however, are not far off from the grotesque in Dante's *Inferno,* e.g. in Inferno 32.133-34 Ugolino della Gherardesca gnaws at another's skull as they are frozen in lake Cocytus in the middle of hell, or the horrific—and highly problematic—image of Mohammed looking at Dante's pilgrim and then with his hands spreading his chest open, saying "See how I

94

split myself!" in Inferno 28.28-30. Clearly this diatribe on Ruiz's film seems to be motivated by something else. Other critics, however, have been a bit more attentive in their critiques. For example, Michael Goddard suggests that, ". . .the scenes and descriptions of torture and death, while fully in keeping with the textual descriptions of the Inferno, cannot but evoke the recent Chilean history of disappeared people, subject to brutal forms of torture and execution which both in reality and imagination were no less monstrous than those tortures imagined by Dante" (95). In other words, the film builds on Dante's thematic, but Ruiz paints a grotesque and social tableau which is not hidden from sight in the middle of earth, but exists alongside the everyday and is a part of it.

Hell's Furies

Previous Commentary

Following the bureaucratic waiting room, the viewer is shown a hazy aerial view of Santiago while the text from the *Inferno* reads, "This marsh that breathes out such a potent stench surrounds the dreadful city of despair . . ."(4:31), and directly after this, the viewer is presented with Ruiz's representations of Hell's Furies on top of the gate of Dis, hell's inner gate. And here it is worth noting previous commentary. For example, Richardson's comment, one of the other quotes that prefaces this paper, has been seen as problematic by critics other than myself. For example, Goddard takes this comment to task and discusses how political allegory is working in the film. Goddard, however, goes on to suggest that that Richardson is only "half correct" and proposes that the film is very much about the "the political unconscious of Chile as expressed through cinematic images and its presentation of the country as a latter-day

hell is as redolent with critical implications for the Chilean political situation . .

."(Goddard 93). Goddard, however, grounds this claim in a shaky reading of the

Furies in Canto 9, (which he mistakenly refers to as the Gorgons[39]) and I think it is

worth quoting him here at some length:

> At one point during this montage that passes jarringly between the realistic and
> the highly stylised the following words are spoken: 'surrounds the dreadful city
> of despair which we can enter by force alone.' This is one of many moments in
> A TV Dante that support its reading as a political allegory, without the object
> of this allegory being made explicit. The idea of taking the city by force
> resonates both with the recent political history of both the Popular Unity
> revolution and the Pinochet coup while at the same time making reference to
> the fact that after the 1988 referendum was the first time it was possible to
> return to Chile to make films with any degree of freedom. In other words,
> Santiago was both taken by force by Pinochet and being taken back by force
> both on the level of cinematic expression and everyday life. However, it would
> be a trap to read any of these allegorical moments too literally in terms of
> recent Chilean history since Ruiz's aesthetics rejects militant polemics and
> prefers to play with images of Chilean history. For example, when the text
> refers to three hideous gorgons that to merely cast one's eyes on would
> precipitate dire suffering and the abandonment of all hope of returning, we see
> three well-dressed Chilean bourgeois women, chatting happily about Chile,
> while superimposed in the foreground are giant spiders. This kitsch

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[39] The Gorgon is Medusa in the text.

superimposition deflates any directly symbolic reading of the film while

parodying the aesthetics of militant cinema's representations of social classes

(94-95).

While I agree with Goddard's suggestion that there are many moments in the film that

support its reading as a political allegory, he grounds this claim in a shaky reading of

the Furies, which is then followed by a refusal to closely engage in the scene. If he

were to acknowledge the Furies, he would surely contradict himself and be unable to

make the claim that the political allegory hovers between the Pinochet coup, the

Unidad Popular, and the 1988 referendum (which I will demonstrate below).

Goddard's way around this, then, is to suggest that the Furies (and remember he has

gotten his characters mixed up, he calls them Gorgons) scene is deflated because of

the "kitsch superimposition", which also seems strange, because kitsch

superimpositions are built into the characteristics of the entire film. I will make this

point by turning to a close reading of the Furies speech, something Goddard

sidesteps. Thus, a non/synchronic reading of this passage will expose the shaky

foundation of Goddard's claim. And I will argue that it is not Richardson who is

"half-correct" but Goddard himself; that is, the political allegory is in fact there, and it

does in fact hover, but not between the three poles Goddard has suggested.
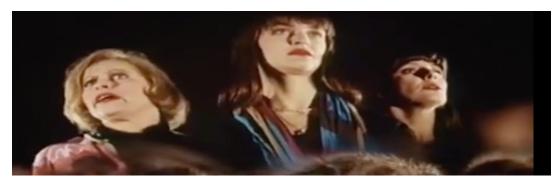
My Reading of the Furies

Figure 6:Ruiz's Furies.

On a surface level, Goddard's claim that the Furies are chatting happily, is,
well, wrong—even with the interpretive freedom granted to multiple readings of
media. The women are not "chatting happily", but are in fact very concerned. More
than this, they are gazing out over hell/Chile and they are not in agreeance with what
they see. All of this can be seen by the looks on their faces as well as their dialogue
(4:53). At this point in the film, there is another brief pause in the audio and the
Furies' dialogue takes auditory precedence, but is then layered over again by the
narrator's voice; however, their dialogue remains mostly legible even in the layering,
which adds to the effect of misrecognition. And when one takes the time to read these
sedimentations, again, the micro-fictions that are built into the film come to the
surface.

So here I transpose the dialogue of the Furies. There are three of them, but only
the first woman is registering the grotesque as she peers out, while the second doesn't
see (or perhaps doesn't want to entrain, or refuses, seeing) anything and the third

remains curios, straining to see, but remains unable. Thus, from left to right, the Furies dialogue reads:

(Woman 1) Mira a ese niño, fíjate tú mira lo que hace, juega golf con ellos, ¿ves tú?

(Woman 2) Yo no veo nada

(Woman 1) Ve tu allá. Este conjunto es Chile, ¿Chile nuevo?, no es cierto. No, Chile grande, el conjunto chile grande. Esta haciendo empanada de tortilla, empanada de queso, empanda de diente.

(Woman 3) ¿Dónde?

(Woman 1) Subsecretario de comercio interior, está matando. Kiwi con helado, ¿qué te parece?

(Woman 2) Yo no veo nada

(Woman 1) Hecho, mató, está comienzo con la mano.

First, I would like to point out an overarching motif, or centrifugal function, in the film that is at work here: the consumption of human flesh. As mentioned above, Ruiz's suggests that ". . . the functions that are present in each shot are only activated once in contact with other shots, though they are independent of those shots. They are like threads that tie and untie" (Bandis 58). As such, this centrifugal function here plays out in various ways throughout the rest of the film. Here, it becomes entangled with the layering of the grotesque and the everyday, which can be seen when Woman 1 mentions empanadas, but then realizes they are made with teeth, i.e. the every-day act of preparing food coupled with the disturbing images of cannibalism. Also

working in this shot are the thematics of recognition and misrecognition[40] of human

consumption. What I would like to underline, however, is that directly preceding the

Furies appearance, the camera captures a crowd of well-dressed people moving in

erratic individualized ways as if in a hurry to get somewhere, before the camera cuts

to the Furies faces. These well-dressed business people often appear in places where

flesh is being consumed and often fail to recognize it. As such, Ruiz uses the Furies

dialogue in connection with this group and human consumption. For example,

Woman 1 uses the informal imperative "fíjate tú mira," but one woman does not see

it, while the other remains searching. Also worth noting in the dialogue, and

something I will explain more below, is the linking of consumption of bodies with the

Figure 7: Crowd 1 in Ruiz's Inferno (Business Attire).

"*comercio interior*" and the imagery of people in suits.

Human Flesh Consumption, The Grotesque &
(Mis)recognition
as Centrifugal Function(s): An Excavation

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[40] The Furies are unsure; they can't agree, while these horrors are happening, not all
of them see it. This resonates with the tensions and political divisions of recent
Chilean history and debates about post-dictatorial politics. See the documentary
Ulises' Odyssey for a potent example of these divisions within a family.

At this point, I put my analysis of the Furies on hold and make a brief, nonlinear detour before coming back to the Furies' dialogue. So far, I have tried to demonstrate how Ruiz layers audio-visual combinations. As such, I would like to demonstrate how a non/synchronic reading of consumption of human flesh and the everyday are working with—or, are "activated" in relation to— other shots, that is, how these are "like threads" that connect with other shots. Put succinctly, my analysis of the film (the form of this essay) is similar to the form of the film (multiple layers/uneven sedimentations of elements) and the film requires that the writing about it be similar, i.e. nonlinear. Therefore, I ask that you have patience when reading this section, reader; I will jump from scene to scene at times in order to show how centrifugal functions are connecting: the form and content of the film demand it.

To this end, this detour will show how the functions of violence, human flesh and consumption (as centrifugal functions), reach out to various other shots throughout the film, while keeping in dialogue with Goddard's comments. For example, the Furies dialogue hearkens back to the grotesque in the opening sequence of shots of Canto 9, particularly with the man drinking the dark liquid that flows out of a hole in his neck. However, the consumption of human flesh also projects forward. For example, in Canto 11 of Ruiz's film the viewer is presented with a long tracking shot of a slaughterhouse full of suspended and headless corpses layered with seated men reading newspapers, unaware or unconcerned with their surroundings. In the original text, this circle of hell represents the sins of violence (categorized in three ways: violence against God, violence against oneself, and violence against one's neighbor) as well as commentary on fraud (Barolini). However, as critics have

mentioned, in this Canto there is also an implied positive evaluation of material goods and their relation to violence (ibid). As such, Ruiz's re-working of this Canto is in dialogue with this is, and more.

The long tracking shot in Ruiz's Canto 11 is a clear homage to the slaughterhouses in Solanas and Getino's *La hora de los hornos* (1968) and by extension Sergei Eisenstein's Strike (1925), both which use slaughtering of cows in their montages as emphases. In *La hora de los* hornos, the viewer is shown an extended sequence which presents various images alternating between slaughterhouses and commercial ads for cosmetics, cars and lingerie (Williams 130). Williams goes on to mention Robert Stam who:

> describes this sequence as a fusion of Eisenstein and Warhol, in that we have a juxtaposition of slaughter and the advertising of the products of multinational companies. He stresses that, in Argentina, workers can barely afford the meat they produce, but are, nonetheless, bombarded by ads for frivolous products. Stam further explores the role of music in the sequence: 'The vapid accompanying music by the Swingle Singers (Bach grotesquely metamorphosed into Ray Conniff) counterpoints the brutality of the images, while underlining the shallowly plastic good cheer of the ads' (Stam 1990: 209).

To this end, Ruiz's tracking shot of the slaughterhouse seems to resonate with this in various ways. For example, leading up to the tracking shot a song is used to add effect and affect. We hear a playful Mariachi song by Silvestre Vargas "*El que sabe sabe*", in a call and response style— backup singers denying that someone knows something, while the lead affirms that that person indeed knows. Visually, as the shot begins, in the foreground the viewer is shown a man's head pearling out of a

Figure 8: Man reading newspaper in slaughterhouse.

wooden crate reading a newspaper while bodies are hanging in the background (Figure 8; 23:44). This song then slowly fades out and eerie screeching anxiety producing sounds take precedence as the images become more grotesque (24:00).
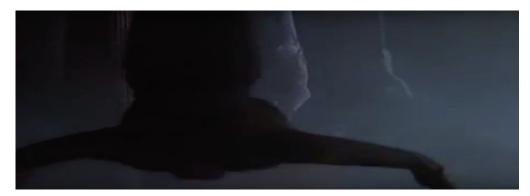

Figure 9: Bodies hanging in slaughterhouse.

These juxtapositions continue as the shot tracks the warehouse, and as the viewer sees more bodies and more men sitting on or in wooden shipping crates reading newspapers—seemingly unconcerned, or unaware, of their horrific surroundings (these are
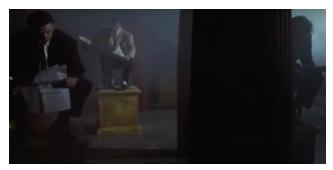

Figure 10: Men reading newspapers unaware or unconcerned.

103

same figures who were moving erratically, directly proceeding the Furies' dialogue) (Figure 10; 24:32).

Here, I would like to underline an important aspect. As I have mentioned above, well-dressed business looking people appear at various times, often in the spaces where bodies are being consumed and/or being butchered; although, while mostly they are unaware or unconcerned, at times they are physically taking part in mutilation. For example—and to demonstrate how this group is portrayed in other scenes—this thematic is then continued in Canto 12 as people dressed in business attire are shown in the same setting as Canto 11. As this group is shown walking in a fragmented pattern, as they did directly proceeding the Furies dialogue, the camera then cuts to them in a single file line, which then swiftly cuts to them sticking small flags on nails in a brain, and finally we are shown many hands chopping up a human leg with a butcher knife (Figure 11; 38:54). The way this group moves through the film creates a stark counterpoint when compared to the other mass of people (crowd 2) that I will examine below, and I want to underline it here; I will return to their movements (i.e. gestures) below.

Interestingly, Goddard himself points to the thematic of consumption and human flesh in Canto 14 and writes that this Canto "begins as a kind of grotesque cooking show . . . a parody of the television cooking show and a lurid evocation of the worst torments of hell . . . It seems to pose the question of at what point does the human body become just another form of consumable flesh, a question equally

Figure 11: Hands chopping up leg.

applicable to the fictional world of Dante and the real world of torture and dismemberment" (96). The thematic of consumption and human flesh, of course, resonates with the Pinochet regime, as Goddard points out, but to leave it there seems pedestrian. In Ruiz's film— in the many references to the dead and living dead, human flesh and consumption, and mis/recognition that collate at various moments— there are other political resonances.

As I have mentioned above, the long tracking shot in Ruiz's Canto 11 is a re-working of the 7th circle of hell reserved for those who commit acts of violence and fraud. Teodolinda Barolini captures the themes of violence and their relation to material goods in the original Canto succinctly:

"The first two kinds of violence, violence against others and violence against the self, place a significant stress on possessions and material goods, very apparent in Dante's language: "in lor cose" (in their things [Inf. 11.32]), "nel suo avere" (in his possessions [35]), and "ne' suoi beni" (in his goods [41]). Both violence against others and violence against the self feature the abuse of

material goods, which need to be protected from violent depredation. Material

goods, in other words, are here viewed not as objects of disdain and

reprehension, but rather as objects to be protected from human violence

(Barolini).

What Ruiz represents in his film, then, is that bodies are represented as if they were

material goods, but it this is not always recognized by those in the film, who are often

dressed in business attire. The physical placement of dead bodies in the film and their

juxtapositions or layering with the business attire group and mis/recognition

throughout, seems to be suggest that the those who are implicit in the carnage and

horrors around them are not aware—or, as Marx might say, they are not aware of the

"the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour" or their "phantom-

like objectivity" or ghostly materiality "gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit", which in

the film a material presence in the film, albeit in the form of dead bodies (Marx169,

128).

As such, in connection with the Furies dialogue in Canto 9 and with the

connection in Canto 11 and many other places where human flesh and consumption,

the business thematic, and mis/recognition collate, Ruiz's film seems to be insistently

emphasizing misrecognition of this violence and consumption, and the viewer is

constantly shown the failure of this recognition as such. The picture that Ruiz is

creating of post-dictatorial Chile, then, is that some are frantically aware of the

horrors of their surroundings and are trying to get others to see it—some try and

can't, while others simply refuse; however, those who seem most implicit are not

aware. This seems to resonate, then, with the tensions of the transition period itself;

that is, not only was the present built on the ruins and carnage of the past, but the

post-dictatorial democratic regime would continue and extend the harsh neo-liberal economic policies put in place by the military regime. Put another way, in this portrayal of Chile, the military regime is no longer doing the butchering; now, others are implicit in this carnage, but they aren't always aware of it and not everyone sees it.

Back to the Furies' Dialogue

Now that I have made connections between human flesh consumption, the Grotesque and mis/recognition, I turn back to Furies' dialogue. Here, I direct attention to the use of four words: *grande*, *conjunto,* and *comercio interior* . As the Furies stand on top of the gate gazing out over Hell/Chile, woman 1 says "*Ve tu allá. Este conjunto es Chile, ¿Chile nuevo?, no es cierto. No, Chile grande, el conjunto chile grande*." Thus, following the layered reading that I have been demonstrating, I would like to spend some time with the word "*grande*" and look at the relationship between the Spanish and Italian word. In Italian—and remember that throughout the film we are hearing an English translation of an Italian text—the word *grandi* signifies the upper classes, the whole body of the aristocracy[41]. And in Spanish, the word *grande* is generally used to refer to something that is large, wide, tall etc., but it can also be used to say that something is too much to handle or too much for. Keeping these resonances in mind, I now turn to the word "*conjunto.*" *Conjunto,* as a noun, can be translated as a collective of people or things, a group. I think it's worth mentioning, however, the resonance of this word with the word, *junta,* the group of

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[41] See *The Living Age Volume 144* (580)

military generals that took power after the 1973 coup d'état. After the coup, the presidency was supposed to rotate amongst the members of the *junta* (Admiral Jose Toribio Merino, Navy; General Gustavo Leigh, Air Force; General Augusto Pinochet, Army; General Cesar Mendoza, Police) after the coup, but Pinochet betrayed this coalition and projected himself as leader (Collier and Sater 362). Pinochet's position then quickly evolved into an authoritarian dictatorship that was responsible for over thousands of deaths and disappearances, mass exile, and political imprisonments—all of which have been mentioned above. The Pinochet regime's harsh neo-liberal economic policies also threw hundreds of thousands out of work and created massive recurring recessions (Constable and Valenzuela 77). Thus, while there may be no explicit references, it is worth noticing the elements and resonances of the words. Even without these shaky resonances, there is a connection being made between the new group of Chile, the consumption of human flesh, and domestic commerce—all of which undermine Goddard's claim.

And finally, Goddard's comments and his attempt to demonstrate a dialectic between moments of the film as a political allegory for recent Chilean history and the trap of reading these moments as political allegories are problematic for other reasons. First, Goddard suggests that the phrase "surrounds the dreadful city of despair which we can enter by force alone," ". . . resonates both with the recent political history of. . ." the Popular Unity, Pinochet coup, and 1988 referendum (94). Here, Goddard's claim conflates the use of force with these three moments, which is a generalization and equation of violence that seems, to me, highly problematic (although perhaps the German word, *Gewalt,* could have helped him here). He goes

on to say that ". . . it would be a trap to read any of these allegorical moments too literally in terms of recent Chilean history since Ruiz's aesthetics rejects militant polemics and prefers to play with images of Chilean history. . ." (95). And straight away we see a contradiction: he is suggesting that the phrase resonates with recent political history, e.g. the regime, but then writes that it would be a trap to read "these allegorical moments too literally in terms of recent Chilean history. . .". To square this circle, then, he grounds his claim by saying "Ruiz's aesthetics" rejects militant polemics, and it's here that the claim folds in on itself, again. That is, in his next sentence, which acts as the textual justification for his claim—his example of "Ruiz's aesthetics"—he points to the Gorgons/Furies, first by a misreading of them, followed by a refusal to engage in their dialogue (as stated above). The implication here, then, is that something has to have "militant aesthetics" in order to be making a political critique, which seems representative of malnourished conception of what can and can't be considered political. Goddard seems to strive to read Ruiz's films totally removed from certain aspects of the social reality that they represent and contorts his readings in order to sidestep pertinent issues of the film and its portrayal of Chilean social reality— not only with the regime, but with the neoliberal policies that continue today, and which Ruiz's later films will take up. And as I have shown, the Furies' dialogue—even aside from the esoteric resonances with upper classes and the *junta*—would dismiss his claim that the scene resonates with three moments of recent Chilean history: Popular Unity, the coup, and the referendum. In other words, the references to human flesh and consumption alone would negate two of his three allegorical readings: Popular Unity and the referendum.

This, however, does not make for a dismissal of Goddard's claim in its entirety; only two of the three legs of this stool have been knocked out. Goddard is correct to say that Ruiz's aesthetics seem to hover between political allegories, without being too explicit. However, Goddard seems to have gotten these poles mixed up. I would like to suggest, then, that the film does in fact hover between political allegories, but there are two in particular that seem to reach out and connect with other shots most often. That is, while Ruiz's film may hover as a political allegory, it hovers between the poles of Pinochet's dictatorship and the inherited neoliberal policies of the *Concertación* which would continue long after the plebiscite. In other words, when one looks at the elements of various shots and scenes, which I have begun to do, these layers—the grotesque and the everyday, consumption of human flesh, recognition/misrecognition, and as we will soon see, resistance—seem to sediment most often as an allusion to the horrors of Pinochet's regime and the harsh neo-liberal policies which will stay in place, and which Ruiz will take up in his later film *Cofralandes*.

Crowds,

(Dis)continuities & Subversions

As this paper has tried to demonstrate many times, Ruiz's use of gesture in his films are important. As such, Alejandra Rodríguez-Remedi has pointed out: "Ruiz has recommended that aspiring filmmakers study Spinoza's philosophy of affects as a framework for understanding 'specifically cinematic emotions.' He speculated that 'cinema can, with small elements, transmit the complexity of human emotions'" (Rodríguez-Remedi 146). To this end, I keep this in mind in my analysis of the crowd and their gestures in *A TV Dante* film. In my reading of the crowds in Ruiz's film, I

use two of his quotes to frame my analysis. First, in a 2009 interview, Ruiz suggests that he tries to begin the construction of a film with a detail and "to develop the detail and to go outside the detail which becomes bigger" (Goddard 175). Second, in the essay "The Six Functions of the Shot", Ruiz's suggests that ". . . the functions that are present in each shot are only activated once in contact with other shots, though they are independent of those shots. They are like threads that tie and untie" (Bandis 58). And as I have shown thus far, the details and formal elements, in Ruiz's film, when read together or on top of each other, crystalize into a narrative structure. I would like to suggest, then, that an important, often overlooked, and rarely explicated[42] detail is Ruiz's portrayals of crowds in the film; moreover, also lacking in Dante scholarship are analyses of the crowds in the *Inferno* (much of the work on crowds in the *Divine Comedy* has focused on *Purgatorio*[43]), so here I do both. Thus, following the non/synchronic reading of the film, I read the crowd details in the same manner; that is, I read the crowd motif not only in relation to various shots in Ruiz's film, but on top of the crowds as portrayed in the original, and by doing so peculiar distinctions arise. What I argue, then, is that a close comparative reading of the (dis)continuities in the crowds—the divisions and combinations, the movement, the ways they communicate—will demonstrate how this detail in Ruiz's film acts as a critique on ideology, law, and power in his portrayal post-dictatorial Chile, while also working to register resistance, which in turn shines light on the logics that drive the narrative of

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[42] Goddard's reading of the film mentions the crowds in passing, but he does not elaborate.

[43] Much of the work on crowds' movements in the *Commedia* has focused on *Purgatorio*.

Dante's *Inferno.* So, in order to see how Ruiz's re-coding of Dante's crowds subvert

logics of the *Inferno,* I begin with the crowds in the original.

Crowd Constitution:
Communication & Fragmentation

To begin this layered reading of the crowds, I turn to the original text[44] and start with

a close reading of stanzas III.103-107 and III.112-117 and analyze how they are

constituted— their divisions and combinations—and how they move. In Canto III,

Dante's pilgrim and Virgil arrive in the vestibule of hell. There, they encounter a

mass of people at the edge of the Acheron River, the first river in hell, waiting for

Charon, the boatman who transports souls across the river[45]. What I would like to

point out here, however, is the manner in which the crowd is portrayed on the

riverbank. As they wait to cross:

> They cursed God and their parents, the human
>
> race, and the place and the time and the seed of their
>
> sowing and of their birth.
>
> Then all of them together, weeping loudly, drew
>
> near the evil shore that awaits each one . . ." (III.103-107).

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[44] I am using the English translation of the text—a problematic aspect, I know.
Although, I would argue that my analyses would also be fitting of the original, but
that argument would make for another paper.
[45] An important aside: Dante's scene is a re-working of Aeneid, which is itself
drawing from Homeric poems, with, however, some important changes; layering is a
thematic at work here in many ways.

What the text does, then, is give the reader a representation of a crowd that is fragmented, or individuated, which can be seen in their cries. This fragmentation, however, is shown to have a complicated relationship with wholeness in stanza 106 as they are then shown moving in unison. In other words, the crowd is first portrayed as divided, and after this is made clear, the text reads, "Then all of them together." What this seems to do is reinforce that, while they are moving in unison, fragmentation is posited in this constitution of the crowd. And this fragmentation, or individuation[46] of the individual in the crowd, seems to be suggestive of an important underlying point: individuals come after collectivities, and are constituted by a process of individuation; it is not that a group of individuals constitutes a collectivity. That is, the mere appearance of collective action, which upon reflection—in this case their cries—is revealed to be nothing more than dissociated individuals acting simultaneously. This makeup of the crowd is a recurring theme in the *Inferno*, and it is a theme, which as I will show later is reversed in Ruiz.

Desire

And in Stanzas III.112-117, this fragmentation in the crowd is portrayed in another way—with an added element, desire. Firstly, I point out that this scene is a re-working of the Aeneid, and when these two passages are read on top of each other, the fragmentation that I have been discussing becomes clear, namely in the imagery of the leaves and the falcon metaphor. For example, Dante's text reads:

> As in Autumn the leaves remove themselves one

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[46] See Paolo Virno's *A Grammar of the Multitude* for in depth examples of individuations.

after another, until the branch sees all its raiment on

the ground:

so the evil seed of Adam throw themselves from

that shore one by one, when beckoned to, each like a

falcon to its lure"

(III.112-117).

And to see how this passage is a re-working of the simile in Aeneid VI. 352-357

(which is a re-working of Homer), here is the same scene:

as many as the leaves that fall

in the woods at the first frost of autumn, as many as the birds␣

that flock to land from ocean deeps, when the cold of the year

drives them abroad and despatches them to sunnier countries. (Virgil)

What this layered reading reveals, then, is that these changes become key differences,

just as Ruiz's changes become key differences. For example, in Dante's re-working

of the text there is an emphasis on singularity. First, this is seen in the imagery of the

leaves motion: leaves fall "one by one" in Dante vs. "the leaves fall" in the Aeneid.

This is seen again in the shift in the birds: they are likened to a single falcon[47] in

Dante vs. many birds in the Aeneid. Thus, these shifts in plural to singular speaks to

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[47] The Italian is actually "*uccello*' (bird), but this translation of the word still registers
the shift from plural to singular.

the fragmented/individuated constitution of the crowd. Like this text, the differences are quite important, which in Ruiz's film, differences will be just as important.

Contrapasso

Other notable commentaries have seen this re-working of the Aeneid as being Dante's commentary on desire. For example, Leo Pertile suggests that, "for Dante the shift from one metaphor to the next (closely linked by the leaf and the bird being single) follows the transformation in the souls, as their reluctance is changed into a desire to cross" (68). That is, fear turns to desire as they cross the river; they desire their fate. This desire, however, is closely linked with Dante's concept of *contrapasso* and I think it is worth mentioning, albeit briefly, how contrapasso works in the text. *Contrapasso* is the formula by which the myriad of punishments are allocated in the *Inferno*. Or as Pertile has stated:

> With this term (from the Latin contra pati) Dante sums up the retributive
> principle, which establishes that every soul must suffer (Latin pati) in the
> afterlife according to the sin he or she has committed on earth [. . .] It does not
> function merely as a form of divine revenge, but rather as the fulfilment of a
> destiny freely chosen by each soul during his or her life. In the Comedy the
> state of the souls after death does not seem to have been devised and enforced
> by an external agent; rather, it seems to be "a continuation, intensification and
> definitive fixation of their situation on earth. (77)

What I would like to point out is that, in the logic of Dante's *Inferno,* punishments are not being placed onto people; people have "freely chosen", as it were. So, Dante's re-working of the text seems to be working in at least two ways; it demonstrates fragmentation and desire. Here however, I would like to spend a bit more time

thinking about how and why the crowds in Dante's *Inferno* are active participants in their own subjugation. In other words, I want to complicate the role of *contrapasso* in the *Inferno* by looking at the roles of desire, participation, and oppression through another lens, that is, I look to the rhetoric of the gate in order to see another way examine the causal processes and power relations in the *Inferno.*

<p style="text-align:center">Hell's Gate and the Logic of</p>

<p style="text-align:center">The Inferno: Moving Bodies</p>

Hell's gate plays in interesting ideological role in the *Inferno.* As Pertile has pointed out, the gate is an inscription of a "piece of Hell transported onto the page by the poet who says that he saw and read it with his own eyes. . . In fact, the gate declares itself to have been made in the name of justice by the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (70). What seems to be of interest here is that the gate "declares itself." That is, it seeks to create a reality that may not actually exist. The imperative to "abandon all hope" is just that, it's a demand, a request, and something is only requested if there is a chance of something else happening. One might even say, that the limits of hell's power are made apparent before one even enters.

These limits are taken up by William Clare Roberts in his essay "Marx in Hell" and he points out that the gate "has already been made a liar before Dante encounters it" (47). Roberts reminds us that Dante's Hell is not always capable of this command, and draws our attention to four figures who have passed through hell: Virgil, Christ's harrowing of Hell, and Aeneous and Paul—two mortal humans—have gone down and returned safely (47). All of which are devasting to hell's self-conception. Roberts goes on to suggest that:

. . . if so many have exited, then Hell's fearsome admonition seems less like fate and more like braggadocio. Hell *wishes* that entrants had no hope of leaving, but, with so many past exceptions, it might not get its wish. Paradoxically, the possibility that hope might be empirically warranted is good reason for Hell to so vehemently demand that all hope be abandoned. Hell can't very well be filled with hopeful souls. If hope might actually be reasonable for its guests – and even the slimmest odds are reasonable over eternity – then Hell *must* scare that hope out of them. Hell can only be Hell by successfully interpellating its denizens as hopeless. Thus, by reversal, that the gate to Hell has such a frightful inscription is itself evidence that Hell is not *really* so frightful as it claims. If Hell were really hopeless, it wouldn't have to pronounce it, but would welcome entrants mutely to their doom. The inscription seeks to construct a reality that *does not* exist, and *cannot* exist, but *approximates* existence only through the lie *that* it exists. It is this interpellating per- formance that Virgil disrupts with his demand that Dante abandon his suspicions and put his cowardice to death.

What Roberts is alluding to in this argument is that Hell's power rests on, and is in fact upheld by, a misrecognition of causes and effects. That is, the effect, the ignorance of hell's limits, and the cause, servitude, i.e. subjugation to the invisible power that is believed to be there, reinforced through the gate's rhetoric. What Roberts is deploying in his argument is, of course, a reference to Louis Althusser's notion of interpellation, which if one recalls is actually commentary on Spinoza's political theory—neither of which are mentioned in his text (this is all the more

surprising because Roberts even uses the term "multitude" later in his essay). So, what is ultimately undergirding Roberts' claim is the political philosophy of Spinoza. (As an aside, Ruiz was well versed in Spinoza's philosophy, which I will mention below). And while Roberts' insights into the limits of Hell's power open up interesting interpretations, he does not sufficiently explicate why the denizens of hell do not see the limits and elides the fact that the denizens in fact desire to actively participate in their own suffering, as is seen in III.112-117.

Thus, in Canto's III.112-117 one is struck by the resonance, or consonance with the rhetoric of the gate and the role that superstition plays for monarchial power in Spinoza. For example, in the preface to the *Theologico-Political Treatise* Spinoza writes: "Nothing is as effective in ruling the masses as superstition . . . The greatest interest and the greatest secret of the monarchical regime is to deceive all men (Spinoza xi). And I think Warren Montag succinctly captures this sentiment when he suggests that:

> The secret of despotism is not its ability to persuade minds but its ability to move bodies to extract from them their force and power turn turn the power To its own benefit all the while producing the retroactive effect of a consent that conceives itself is the origin of the actions of the body. And the discipline and obedience maybe all the more efficient when the system of despotism works without a despot, a play of forces producing a world of servants without masters (48-49 Montag)

In other words, the gate is a juridical fiction of absolute power, which builds a political community entirely on the imagination, yet it has the ability to move bodies. This is all the more fitting because not only is the gate is unguarded, but the ruler of hell, Lucifer, is portrayed as a babbling, crying character stuck in the middle of a frozen lake—who in the end the pilgrim and guide use as a ladder to climb out of hell in Canto 34. That is, the diegetic world of the *Inferno* presents us with a system of despotism without a despot. Here, it is worth recalling the logic of Dante's *contrapasso,* which is "freely chosen", and in fact desired by the sinner—not "devised and enforced by an external agent . . ." (Pertile 77). Ultimately, the crowds and the gate of the *Inferno* present us with a multitude that is capable of resistance, yet actively participates in their own oppression. This paradox, then, warrants the question: why? Or as Spinoza puts it, "why do men fight for their servitude as though it was their salvation?" (xi). And the answer lies in the gate, that is, superstition.

Anger

And finally, I look to one more place in the *Inferno* where Dante's crowds are shown moving in unison. In Canto 8 an interesting dynamic is shown between individual and collective entities in order to express three forms of the same sin, anger. In this Canto, Dante is using an Aristotelian template to show how wrath (anger that is expressed) and sullenness (anger that is repressed), are two poles of the same sin, while between there lays a happen medium:

Sullenenss *tristitia* ←←←←   righteous anger   →→→→ rabid wrath[48]

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[48] digitaldante.edu

In this canto, those who acted out anger on earth are shown in the river Styx (which is portrayed more as a swamp) but in different ways. For example, those who engage(d) in wrathful anger ruthlessly attack one another and those who engage(d) in sullen anger stew beneath the surface of the murky swamp, albeit they are all contained to the Styx (VIII. 109-26). And while traversing the river, the Pilgrim is accosted by a wrathful soul: the Florentine magnate Filippo Argenti" (VIII. 40-41).[49] This assault is an example of wrathful anger on an individual scale, Argenti acting out this sin on the pilgrim. However, the dynamic gets complicated as the pilgrim is made to perform righteous anger (the virtuous midpoint) in exchanges of insults (34-39) and in his desire for Argenti to be "soused in the broth," all of which Virgil espouses (52-53). Before this scene ends, however, there is another performance of wrathful anger. Soon after the pilgrim's request to see Argenti "soused", the text reads:

> A little later I saw him torn apart by those muddy
>
> People in such a way that I still praise God and
>
> Thank him for it.
>
> All were crying: "At Filippo Argenti!" and the wild
>
> Florentine spirit turned on himself with his teeth. (VIII. 58-68).

And here we see again the interesting division and combination of Dante's crowds; the crowd is united in their attack against Argenti, but Argenti is also attacking himself—all while they are performing the same sin. This theme of anger and divisions and combinations of individuals and collectivities, which as we shall see later, becomes an important aspect for Ruiz's crowds, with some important

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[49]   This is also a reference to the *Decamaron*.

distinctions. This canto ends, however, in a transitory manner as the pilgrim and his guide are refused entry and wait at the gates of Dis, which I would like to recall is where Ruiz's film begins and where he is re-working these themes of impasse, frustration, and anger.

Ruiz's Crowds and the Pilgrim,
i.e. the Returned Exile

To begin my analysis of Ruiz's crowds (crowd 2, that is), I call attention to the beginning of my reading of the film, scene one. There, the film begins with the crowds shouting "*viva la muerto*" over a black screen, which gives it a spectral characteristic (a centrifugal function). Here, however, I read the crowd in Ruiz's Canto 9 on top of Dante's Canto 8; a reading which brings to the surface how Ruiz's re-working of the *Inferno* continues and denies certain characteristics, both of which are significant (which I will get to below). Read in this way, the shouting in Ruiz's film resonates with the crowds that I have just discussed in Canto 8 of Dante's *Inferno*, namely the angry crowds performing wrathful anger in the river Styx, which then speaks to the angry valence of Ruiz's crowd. To this effect, contained in the small detail of the crowd shouting at the beginning of Canto 9 in Ruiz's film, are multiple temporalities, the detail has a trans-temporal narrative flow; there is an echo from the past, Canto 8, and there is a projection to the future of the film—a detail that is in consonance with the *terza rima* structure and the non/synchronous aspects of Ruiz's film

The first time the viewer is shown an image of the crowd that has been

shouting, lurking in the interstices of the film, is in a montage sequence of the streets

of Santiago. This sequence takes place directly after the pilgrim and his guide have

been granted access to Dis, the inner city of Hell, which is supposed to be particularly

hopeless. In this scene, there are clearly aspects of militant aesthetics; we are

supposed to be in the depths of hell, but people are protesting (Figure 12: 7:52). I

think moments like this lead to Iannucci's comment that the film inculcates a Marxist

Figure 12; Crowd 2 protesting.

message: Chile is Hell; we must protest it. What complicates this surface level

reading, however, is how the crowd is shown. That is, the viewer is presented with a

sequence of the crowd through a series of long tracking shots, which the viewer will

later find out is the point of view of the pilgrim and the guide riding in a car. One

point of view is a tracking shot of the crowd protesting and shouting "*viva la muerto*"

(7:56). And in this tracking shot the subject that the camera is following is the crowd

itself; that is, the crowd is multiple, but the tracking shot suggests that it is a singular

subject.

However, the viewer is then given the point of view of the other side of the

street—that is, the other side of the car—with a totally different crowd, and the

viewer is shown normal everyday images of a marketplace and neighborhoods of

Santiago (Figure 13; 8:13). And when the camera changes its point of view there is a pause in the audio—the shouts stop—and the chorus to the classic Tango song "*Como abrazado a un rancor*" takes auditory dominace: *Yo quiero morir conmigo/sin confesión y sin Dios/crucificao en mis penas/como abrazao a un rancor/Nada le debo a la vida/nada le debo al amor:/aquélla me dio amargura/y el amor, una traición".* Like the song in the opening scene of the film, this song adds to and complicates the overall affect of the montage. The song is about a man who is about to be executed and believes that life and love have failed him. On the surface, it carries antireligious undertones, but as *José Gobello* has pointed out, these should not be read too literally; instead, they should be read as the man not giving in to his fate and that resentment helps him more than consolation to cope with bitterness[50]. Thus, when all of the elements of this montage sequence are read together—multiple, yet singular—the

Figure 13: Crowd 2 in marketplace.

shot/reverse shot seems to be giving the viewer two forms of resistance; on one hand, a kind of stereotypical representation of resistance in one crowd, and on the other it

[50] José Gobello: Conversando tangos. Buenos Aires: A. Peña Lillo Editor, 1976.

shows a nuanced resistance, resistance in an untenable situation. In other words, this montage sequence not only represents the passage of time, but the shots work together to represent a homology of resistance. Compared to Dante's crowds, desire and anger are working differently here; the crowds are pushing back against the situation they are in, not actively participating and "freely choosing," but pushing back—even if it may not appear so on the surface.

In Canto 10 of Ruiz's film the shouting crowd is portrayed again; however, in contrast to the previous representations of the crowd, the proximity between the pilgrim and the guide and the crowd shift, and the close proximity sparks fear in the pilgrim. Just before the crowd motif appears in Canto 10, the camera wobbles the screen hazes creating a disorientation, which is followed by a quick cut to the crowd angrily banging on an iron gate with wooden crosses, which suddenly becomes focused on them (Figure 14; 13:49):

Figure14: Crowd banging on gate.

This transition seems to be suggestive of the role of the crowd in the film: the crowd acts as an orienting function, which the editing performs in the transition. This is then followed by an establishing shot (Figure 15; 14:05). This shot operates at several levels: First, it carefully demonstrates spatial relationships between the crowd and the pilgrim and guide; unlike the first portrayal of the crowd, the two are not in a car

somewhat protected, but are on the other side of a wall, hiding from the angry crowd as they shout "*viva la muerto*", while wooden crosses are protruding from behind it. Second, the iconography of the crosses linked with the act of resistance can be seen as a re-coding of how theology is working on the crowd when compared to the original; Ruiz is subverting the superstitious aspects of theology in Dante's *Inferno.* And lastly, this shot works to show the pilgrim and his guide's fear of the crowd—a theme which continues throughout, but begins here with close proximity. After the establishing shot a cut and close up of the two are shown to have sacred looks on their faces and the pilgrim says, "*gracias a ti muralla*" (14:12). The safety provided by the wall, however, is fleeting and there is earthquake which seems to remove the barrier; although we do not see this, and the crowd begins to chase them (14:43). The fear that the crowd inspires—first portrayed in this scene, will continue throughout the film— is representative of an interesting dynamic between the two.

Figure 15: Crowd and Pilgrim at wall.

As mentioned above, unlike the pilgrim in Dante's *Inferno,* who is an exile passing through hell in order to reach paradise, the pilgrim in Ruiz's film is a lawyer

who has recently returned to his home country after exile. Put another way, the journey has ended; he is home. More than this, he is carrying a *codex civils*; in other words, Ruiz's pilgrim is not symbolic of Christian theology, but juris. And throughout the film we hear a voice-over narrator reading in Spanish— reading inheritance laws, often while we the viewer is being shown the movements (i.e. gestures) of the crowds the pilgrim (45:08). Their relationship, as I have been showing, seems to be structured by an affective ambivalence, which is expressed in a myriad of ways throughout the film. For example (and excuse the list), in some shots the crowd is shouting for a bullfighter while looking toward the pilgrim (32:11); at other times the guide calls for the crowd's help when he says he sees a brutal torcherer (34:00); in another shot, the pilgrim and guide are contained within the same enclosure as the crowd—a reversal of Canto 10—and as the crowd bangs and shouts on the wall at their side, the camera captures an intimate close up of their faces which are registering fear (37:14); in another, the pilgrim is shown running from the crowd in fear, but as he stops they gather around him and applaud (44:15). And lastly, the pilgrim is shown to be intermixed with the crowds at what seems to be a celebratory party (48:40). This ensemble of collisions between the pilgrim and the crowd work together to create both tension and flow, disjunction and overlap, but never resolution.

It is these sorts of twists and turns, these sorts of nuances, that on a narrative level foregrounds the nature of the relationship between the masses, the pilgrim, and resistance in the film. What this ambivalent relationship between the pilgrim (who seems to represent law and return to his home country after exile and the dictatorship) and the crowds seem to speak to, then, the tension occurring in the beginnings of the

126

Concertación government, as mentioned in chapter three. That is, the new government would not drastically change the policies set in place by the regime but would in many cases extend them. In the film, then, the themes of recognition and misrecognition, consumption and human flesh, grotesque and the everyday, and their resonances with Pinochet's regime and policies that were continuing, seem to speak to the problematics of the historical moment; a moment founded on the carnage and ruins of the past and the midst of a democratic regime that posed itself as a form of neoliberalism "with a human face" which would rather not look at its horrific origins.

More than this, the crowd in the film, (as a centrifugal function) has a spectral and orienting function, which seems to work as an ecumenical unifier. And in the portrayals of the crowds—from containments and resistances to ruptures—there is clearly a resistance working in the overall mise en scene of the film, which constantly draws our attention to the consumption of human flesh, the grotesque and the everyday, etc. What complicates this, however, is the relationship between the crowds and the pilgrim. The pilgrim, symbolic of law returning, i.e. inheritance, to the country and can't seem to find his place within the crowd. He doesn't know where he stands in relation to them: proximity sparks fear in him; he runs from them; at other times he calls to them; and at other times they chase him down and applaud him; but he is never at ease amongst them in the film. This strange cat and mouse relationship between the crowds and the pilgrim, then, seems to speak to the tension of the early post-dictatorship period (mentioned above); the crowds and the pilgrim both look to each other for legitimation, but the gap remains unbridgeable in the film.

And lastly—to briefly recapitulate—the layered reading of the crowds in Dante's *Inferno* and the crowds in Ruiz's film has shown how the contrapuntal,

historical dialogic relationship between the two is working. For example, in the original, we see how anger and desire work to constitute and animate the crowds—in some cases fragmenting, in others uniting—but always portraying a crowd that is actively participating in their own subjugation. And in Ruiz's film, the crowds are also constituted and animated by anger and desire, but these affects work to unify, not fragment. In effect, there is a political dimension to these affects that both are playing with, and they demonstrate how these are used as a means for various ends, i.e. to oppress and/or to resist. What Ruiz leaves us with, then, is a re-working of the *Inferno* that highlights the parasitical relationship of superstition in the original, and he subverts it, infuses it with resistance, but it's a resistance that that doesn't lead to resolution, i.e. the pilgrim and the crowd never fully come together; the relationship between the crowd and the return of law remains tense.

What Ruiz has done in this film, then, is taken the internal logics and themes of the *Inferno—contrapasso,* desire, anger, and fear—and used them to undermine its own internal logics. The film gives us representations of anger and desire combined with the themes of containment, resistance and rupture, but as I have shown, they don't land anywhere. And as I have argued, the formal elements of the film seem to coalesce most often around two political allegories: Pinochet's regime and the neo-liberal policies that would continue after the plebiscite in 1988. The film was made in 1991, three years after the referendum, but the referendum would not dismantle the oppressive and consumptive structures that would remain in place. To this effect, the aporetic relationship between the crowds and lawyer seem to be suggestive of a central underlying theme: the crowds' resistance will not find resolution by looking to the law that is returning. In Chile, the military regime controlled the period of what is

often referred to as the "transition to democracy"—as I have shown above democracy picked up where the regime left off (i.e. Thayer, Avelar as mentioned above).

By re-working and superimposing the *Inferno* onto contemporary Chile—a re-working that uses the internal logics of the *Inferno* against itself, undermining, but not resolving —Ruiz seems to be suggesting that the return of law will not be actually be a resolution. The solution must come from somewhere else, but where or what that is Ruiz does not say. Read in this way, the film—the superimposition of a European text onto a Latin American context—can be seen as a metaphor for not only colonial structures and cultural imperialism but as the inherent and inherited tension within the logics and restoration of the "transition". To this end, the critiques of law that Ruiz's film is playing with seem to anticipate his portrayal of Chile eleven years later.

What I have tried to argue, then, is that the political critiques and allegories are built into the film's formal and thematic elements, but they need to be teased out; Ruiz's shots demand that we spend some time in them, be curios and poke around. Ruiz does not give us a film with ready-made solutions. What the film does do is motivate us to think, to show us the limits of the logics that have been superimposed and inherited and he asks us to try to think outside of them, beyond them.

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