Entre Nosotres: The Social and Political Spheres of Women against Prisons

Leyla Savloff

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Reading Committee:

Maria Elena García, Co-Chair

Daniel J. Hoffman, Co-Chair

Ann Anagnost

Janelle Taylor

Shirley Yee

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Department of Anthropology

University of Washington

Abstract

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Leyla Savloff

Chairs of the Supervisory Committee:
Maria Elena García, Associate Professor, Comparative History of Ideas
Danny J. Hoffman, Professor, The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies

For the past three decades, the number of incarcerated women in Latin America has increased exponentially. This dissertation examines how women in Buenos Aires, Argentina, reimagine their lives during and after prison. Although an expansion of civil rights and the increased visibility of gendered violence characterized the last decade in Argentina, prison conditions for women have deteriorated. Through collaborative ethnography with YoNoFui, a collective of formerly incarcerated women, this research reveals institutional violence as gendered and as always imbricated in larger structural forces that scrutinize women and expand the social control of their lives. One of the dissertation's central insights is that collective feminist identities emerge and sustain their work through interdependence. I assert that this interdependence unfolds not only at the level of people finding ways to support each other's journeys but also at a broader scale, as collectives rely on other organizations and individuals to sustain their political

work. I further argue that by emphasizing interdependence, contemporary feminist social movements in Argentina uphold self-determinacy as one of their central tenets. I draw from decolonial feminist theories of the state to make a case for the significance of women's cultural productions as they grapple with the effects of incarceration. My work draws from the term *entre nosotras* (among us), introduced by sociologist Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar to stress how contemporary feminist political power in Latin America foregrounds the potential of renewed forms of interdependence that break away from social relationships of exploitation. Through poetry, photography, and activism, this multimodal ethnography informs the broader framework of the *feminismos populares* that have been brewing in Latin America in the past decade to identify the specific ways in which grassroots collectives like YoNoFui contest the oppression engendered by the carceral state. By tracing the lives of women moving through various stages and spaces of incarceration, this dissertation offers an ethnography of *feminismos populares* up against the carceral state.

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Acknowledgments

I am indebted to the hospitality and generosity of YoNoFui, who welcomed me into their space and put me to work from the first instance. “If you are going to be here, you will participate,” Ramona told me when I first visited the Drawing workshop, as she handed me a penknife and included me in their class about “paper-carving.” The first time I visited YoNoFui, in their space in Palermo, I ended up ironing some pennants that were going to be sold at the *feria popular*. During my time at YoNoFui, I was given access to the workings of a collective that has continuously labored to dismantle institutional violence (by making visible how incarcerated women produce artistic visions and critiques of the state), and who remain relentless in their insistence to relate to one another outside the paradigm of surveillance and the dictates of the patriarchal state.

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Preface

Note: Except for Maria Medrano, founding member of the collective YoNoFui, and Luna, the cat, names and identifying features have been changed.

The arrival story

It started like most of my affairs—me feeling fragile and unsure—standing on shaky ground and looking for a sense of belonging in a land that is always strange. Only days after moving to Buenos Aires for my dissertation research, I noticed on a Facebook post from YoNoFui that Carmen was offering a poetry workshop. YoNoFui (It Wasn't Me), was my primary contact, and I was eager to examine their work closely. The poetry workshop seemed like a good entry point, so I reached out to Carmen and signed up. Navigating through this early stage of fieldwork, my conversations with Carmen in her poetry workshop were both informative and therapeutic.

Two months prior to my arrival, Carmen had been released from the women's prison in Ezeiza, after eight years of incarceration. She still had five more years on parole. Carmen, like many other incarcerated women, was not looking forward to her release and would have preferred to stay inside. Her father (and partner in crime) was also serving time, and she wanted them to be released at the same time. Her father was her only family, and when her release date came earlier than his, Carmen almost refused, afraid of the guaranteed exclusion waiting for her on the outside. After having a conversation with Maria Medrano, a founding member of YoNoFui, she decided not to contest her early release and left the 'Unidad 31' of Ezeiza.

Through her participation in YoNoFui's poetry and photography workshops while incarcerated, Carmen had formed a bond with YoNoFui. The collective helped her find an

apartment and some steady income, and advertised her poetry workshop in their social media. Espacio Marechal, a cultural center located in the neighborhood of Parque Centenario, offered Carmen their space rent-free so that she could teach her poetry workshops there. The cultural center had recently screened the documentary "*Lunas Cautivas. Historias de Poetas Presas*" by Marcia Paradiso, which depicts the poetry workshop taught by YoNoFui in the women's prison of Ezeiza and features Carmen as a participant. Moved by her story, Espacio Marechal reached out to her and offered their support and space.

In late February of 2014, I rode my bicycle to Espacio Marechal, and we met for the first time. Unlike the other workshops described throughout this dissertation, this poetry workshop was a service Carmen provided on her own, and I paid her a modest fee for hours of conversation, poetry, and *mate.*[1] The other workshops were offered by YoNoFui free of charge, and after meeting with Maria Medrano and telling her about my project, I participated in these workshops as a member of the social support team.

In the poetry workshop at Espacio Marechal, Carmen and I began to get to know each other by talking about coming back after being away. We were both very nervous about moving around the city. For our first meeting, I asked my partner to ride his bicycle with me to Espacio Marechal, even though the trip was about thirty blocks in an L-shape route. During the first twenty minutes when we first met, we spoke about the route we each took and how confused we were. Although I had grown up in Buenos Aires, I was coming from spending ten years in the United States, living in New York and Seattle, moving in higher education circles, studying, working as a researcher and some odd jobs, and teaching. During that same time, Carmen was incarcerated, living in two different prison units, located in the same complex of Ezeiza, on the

[1] Mate is a traditional infused drink from South America.

outskirts of Buenos Aires. There were similarities when we spoke about being away—I did not want to say so, because I did not want to compare our experiences—but in the end, it was undeniable, and we talked about how being away and then coming back involved elements and experiences we shared and connected over. Mostly, we enjoyed our conversations and found plenty of affinities with each other. The poetry workshop involved occasionally writing poems, always reading them, and for the most part, drinking lots of *mate* and talking about our experiences as we each transitioned into a new life, feeling fragile and insecure, standing on shaky ground in a strange land.

At our first meeting, one prompt was to write about an object we had possessed for most of our lives. Later, the other participant and I were asked to share. I remember the occasion as a summer day; it was sunny out so we decided to sit outside where there were some concrete stairs painted clay burnt orange. We spent the whole workshop switching our seating configuration, moving around the stairs, playing hide and seek with the shade and the sun. As I was reading about a wooden horse of mine I had just written about, out of nowhere, my voice broke, and I was surprised—a researcher carrying out her research, crying while reading her poem. There was one other participant, a woman in her thirties (Ale Rodriguez, a member of NiUnaMenos), and as I looked up, she was crying too. This was a moment of connection, an ice-breaker, much like those described in ethnographic methods. While I was embarrassed about crying while reading out loud a poem I had just written, Carmen's workshop immediately tuned me in with the fragility of habituating new spaces and forming new relationships. In subsequent meetings, Ale Rodriguez was unable to continue attending, so the workshop ended up with only Carmen and me, meeting once a week. Carmen was successful with her poetry workshop and met individually with other participants both in-person and online, making this one of her many jobs.

Although Carmen and I grew up in the same city, and we both attended private schools where we could learn English, we took up quite distinct subject positions that involved varied power relations and forms of privilege. My parents had fled Argentina in 1978 to escape the military dictatorship and settled in the United States, where they adopted my sister and me. In 1983, as democracy was reinstated, we moved back to Argentina. Because I was born in the United States, as a young woman I decided to move to New York to pursue higher education, having access to the financial-aid benefits of a U.S. citizenship but the identity of an international student. Questions around motherhood, contested notions of history, and the complicatedness of terms such as 'insider and outsider' were some of the initial questions that shaped this project.

Carmen has a different family history which nonetheless followed similar themes. Carmen's father was born in Uruguay and although he immigrated to Argentina as a young man, he never pursued the paperwork to become a naturalized citizen or updated his documents, turning him after decades of living in Argentina into an undocumented immigrant. Carmen's mother never wanted to have children, but after the insistence of her partner (Carmen's father), she caved in. Carmen had a difficult childhood partly because she grew up with a mother who did not want to be a mother and actively resented this role. When Carmen was a young teenager, she lost her mother to cancer. Carmen spent the last months of her mother's life caring for her, putting aside all the maltreatment she had received to show her mother that, despite everything, she was still worthy of love.

Two women the same age, with very little in common, Carmen and I began meeting regularly for the poetry workshop. From our first meeting it seemed to me that poetry would be a welcomed exercise in reflexivity and of accountability as well. As someone who had never been incarcerated and who belonged to a privileged class, I knew the poetry workshop would be a

productive site to consider the ethical implications of pursuing research on women's incarceration. Conducting fieldwork was challenging in more ways than one, and this workshop, while part of research, was also a gift for me.

Since I had had the privilege to visit Buenos Aires almost every year since leaving ten years earlier, I had mistakenly assumed that once I landed, it would be as if I had never left. That was not the case, and adjusting to an old life that was no longer there turned out to be a lonely and difficult process. Carmen had quite a different story. Carmen came to know YoNoFui through her participation in a poetry workshop taught inside the women's prison of Ezeiza. To her, the poetry workshop was a life-changing experience, and it became a space of freedom.

In "Breathing: Chaos and Poetry," philosopher Franco "Bifo" Berardi notes that poetry breaks the established relation between signifier and signified, opening new possibilities of interpretation and new horizons of meaning. Poetry, writes Berardi, "is the excess which breaks the limit and escapes measure," understanding excessiveness as "the condition of revelation, of emancipation from established meaning and of the disclosure of an unseen horizon of signification: possibility" (Berardi 2018, 19-21). Poetry is ground-breaking because it reopens the indefinite and makes possible what was otherwise foreclosed. When Carmen said the poetry workshop became a space of freedom what she meant was that encounters with others to read and write poetry allowed for new ideas to flourish and for new ways of knowing herself, those with whom she lived, and those who came from the outside.

Carmen always liked reading; in particular she liked reading Jorge Luis Borges' short story, "House of Asterión" because the minotaur in the story cannot be fully interpreted as evil. While in prison, she decided to try her hand at writing and composed this poem (Carmen avoids titles in poems):

La reja se estrella
contra si misma
y yo me estrello contra la reja.
El pasado, los años
las horas, el presente
el futuro, los minutos
cada segundo
queda aplastado
tras el estruendo.
La reja se cierra
deja surcos invisibles
en el mosaico
marcas que permanecen
como herida abierta en las muñecas,
cortes verticales en las venas
de esos, que no se pueden suturar.
Ustedes allá, nosotros acá
en el medio un torrente de vida
que se escapa,
es imposible unir
lo que separa.

The gate crashes
against itself
and I crash myself against the gate.
The past, the years
the hours, the present
the future, the minutes
every second
is slammed
after the blast.
The gate closes
leaving invisible grooves
in the mosaic
marks that remain
like an open wound in the wrists,
vertical cuts in the veins
of those, that cannot be sutured.
You there, us here
in the middle a torrent of life
that escapes,
it is impossible to unite
that which divides.

'*Es imposible unir lo que separa*' (it is impossible to unite that which divides) is a phrase that returned to me over and over again during fieldwork. *It is impossible to unite that which divides*. Except we live in a world of divisions trying to bring things together, to create categories to make sense of things. Living divided, but trying to think alike. Advanced capitalism and globalization are significant forces contributing to this contradictory concoction, continuously redefining configurations of living together and making sense of things. At the same time, increasing levels of inequality reach an all-time high, and surveillance technologies continue to expand their grip on women's bodies. My goal in this ethnography is to grapple with such significant forces by capturing the daily lives of women advocating for their liberation. I focus my research on analyzing feminist political power through the lens of a collective of formerly incarcerated women. In this context, interdependence presents itself as a condition for liberation at the same time that emerges as a direct response to institutional and gendered violence.

Carmen had come a long way. During the first years she was incarcerated, she rarely uttered a word. Carmen had a stutter and liked to keep to herself. She worked at the prison library, where she was required to interact with several women. However, Carmen usually looked down, shrugged, or walked away. Years later, while on the outside, I was able to witness Carmen meeting women she had known from that time. They were always amazed to see her speak in public, hear her read her brave poems, and watch her chatting away with people. Carmen always remembered the women and explained to them that the poetry workshop had not only helped her find her voice but also, in most instances, did away with her stutter. In the past, Carmen was only able to talk without a stutter when she was holding a gun while carrying out a robbery. In those moments, she did not stutter, "because they were matters of life and death," she explained. Over time, the safety that was provided only by the gun transmuted through poetry writing and her participation in the collective YoNoFui.

Carmen and I meet for our workshop regularly to this day. The first years it was in person, in various places (Espacio Marechal at the beginning, often at her apartment, sometimes at YoNoFui or cafes), and later we met via Skype. We tried to meet once a week, but sometimes months could go by without meeting. Our schedules were always hectic, but we found a way to come back to the workshop.

It was in this workshop that Carmen introduced me to the poet Mariano Blatt, a contemporary poet who visited the poetry workshop YoNoFui offered in the women's prison to share his poems and talk about the writing process. Mariano Blatt was born in Buenos Aires in 1983 and is also a literary editor and co-director of the independent publishing house Blatt & Rios. I include his poem "papelitos de locura" for a number of reasons. Blatt often mentions drug use in his poems but he does not depict this practice as one of criminality. While Latin America and drug-trafficking are often conflated, in Blatt's poems drug use is depicted as a practice of social bonding, something he shares with friends or partners. His poems also usually have an erotic component. While he does not write specifically about being queer, his poems almost always mention queer desire. His poetry reflects the expressions of dissident sexualities that characterize contemporary Argentina and enrich understandings of masculinity. Mariano Blatt also created video poems, offering a multimodal approach to access his art. "Papelitos de locura," as well as "No existís" and "AHORA" can be found online in video format. Blatt's writing relies on colloquial language and slang, and focuses on everyday experiences rather than on transcendental ones. His poetry is about wandering the streets, soccer, rave culture, and spending time with friends.

Papelitos de locura

Mariano Blatt

estaban tirando
papelitos de locura
así que todos íbamos caminando entre
papelitos de locura
algunos
papelitos de locura
estaban escritos
pero otros
no
simplemente
estaban en blanco
después de un rato
llegamos al barrio
nos subimos a las bicis
y a medida que pasaba el tiempo
pasaba también el paisaje
por adelante de mí
ahora
por ejemplo
pasaba una casa de tejas rojas
y piedras a la vista en el frente
una casa tipo chalet
según se dice
lo loco es que yo ya no estaba en la bici
estaba sentado en la vereda
y la calle giraba como cuando gira el mundo
pero en cámara rápida
lo lindo es que así pasaban las estaciones
y la casa tipo chalet también
estaba ahí
otoño casa chalet invierno casa chalet
verano casa chalet primavera casa chalet

árbol con hojas verdes
árbol con hojas amarillas
árbol sin hojas
después
despacito
caía el sol
y en la vereda se prendían otros fuegos
que iban iluminándonos las caras
y cuando salva le daba mecha
y cuando nahuel le daba mecha
y cuando kevin preguntaba si tiraba
siiiiiii, tiiiiiira
y cuando kevin le daba mecha
y cuando brian escribía en la pared
“briam”
y cuando elías me miraba de reojo
la vida era entonces una cosa real
porque pasaba una parte adentro mío
y otra un poco más afuera
justo arriba de la cabeza
como un tubito de luz amarillo
que a veces crecía
y a veces se achicaba
hasta casi casi desaparecer
y cuando elías caía con una birra helada
porque las guardaba en el freezer del kiosco
era una botella de quilmes con escarchitas en el cuello
que yo acariciaba
con la yema de los dedos
esa imagen
se sostuvo
un instante
recién
acá
dibujada
en un papelito de locura
que me encontré
en el bolsillo de atrás
así que quiero levantar
esta tarde mi voz

para dar las gracias
al estado
por haber planeado alguna vez construir una autopista
expropiar todos estos terrenos
y después nunca más construir ninguna autopista
miren cómo quedó la calle donado:
y quiero dar las gracias
también
a elías
por guardar siempre las cervezas en el freezer del kiosco
por usar esas remeras
por tener unos brazos como los que tiene
sin pedir nunca nada a cambio
y quiero dar las gracias
por eso alzo mi voz
a salva
por jugar tan bien al fútbol
y por ser mi amigo
y quiero agradecer
una vez más a dios
que hizo
como todos sabemos
todo
y que hizo
como todos sabemos
nada.

Little papers of madness

Mariano Blatt

they were throwing
little papers of madness
so we were all walking among
little papers of madness
some
little papers of madness
were written
but others
were not
simply
they were blank
after a while
we arrived at the neighborhood
we got on the bikes
and as time went on
the landscape also passed
ahead of me
now
for example
I passed a house with red tiles
and stones displayed in the front
a chalet type house
as they say
the crazy thing is that I was no longer on the bike
I was sitting on the sidewalk
and the street rotated as when the world turns
but in fast camera
the beauty is that this is how the seasons went
and the chalet type house
was also there
autumn chalet house winter chalet house
summer chalet house spring chalet house

tree with green leaves
tree with yellow leaves
tree without leaves
afterwards
slowly
the sun went down
and in the sidewalk other fires were lit
that illuminated our faces
and when salva lit up a wick
and when nahuel lit up a wick
and when kevin asked if it threw
yeeeeees, it throoooooows
and when kevin lit up a wick
and when brian wrote on the wall
“Briam”
and when elias looked at me out of the corner of his eye
life was then a real thing
because part of it happened inside me
and another bit more outside
just above the head
like a little tube of yellow light
that sometimes grew
and sometimes shrank
until almost almost disappear
and when elias dropped by with an icy beer
because he kept them in the kiosk freezer
it was a bottle of quilmes with little frost in the neck
that I caressed
with the fingertips
that image
was sustained
an instant
just now
here
drawn
on a little paper of madness
that I found
in the back pocket
so I want to raise
my voice this afternoon

to thank
the state
for having once planned to build a highway
expropriate all these lands
and then never build any highway
look how the donado street remained:
and I want to thank
as well
elias
for always keeping the beers in the kiosk freezer
for wearing those t-shirts
for having arms like the ones he has
without ever asking for anything in return
and I want to give thanks
that's why I raise my voice
to salva
for playing soccer so well
and for being my friend
and I want to thank
once again to god
who did
as we all know
everything
and who did
as we all know
nothing.

Chapter 1
Introduction

> "Abolition means not just the closing of prisons but the presence, instead, of vital sources of support that many communities lack."
>
> Ruth Wilson Gilmore

YoNoFui is a collective birthed in 2002 when Maria Medrano began teaching a poetry workshop in the women's prison of Ezeiza, in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Maria was a poet herself, part of what is known as *la generación de los 90*, a generation of poets writing against the ghastly consequences of neoliberalism and the IMF's political interventions. During the presidency of Carlos Menem (1989-1999), this new generation of authors drew attention to self-management practices that contested the alienation brought on by advanced capitalism. For example, they organized events in cultural centers and nightclubs, rather than in the more established venues for poetry readings. They wrote against cultural capital, focusing instead on objects. Williams Carlos Williams was a prominent international figure for this moment, because of his emphasis on colloquial language and locality.

Neoliberal policies that marginalized the urban poor and the implementation of a 'War on Drugs' modeled after the US translated into a significant increase in women's incarceration. In Argentina, most penitentiaries for women are located in Buenos Aires, and more than 80 percent of incarcerated women are mothers. Between 1989 and 2008, women's incarceration increased 271 percent, while men's incarceration increased 112 percent (Boiteux et al. 2010). Since the

1990s, harsher punishment and longer sentences have been applied to deter the drug traffic. Such penalties, however, have fallen disproportionately on consumers and minor actors in the drug-traffic industry. These minor actors are overrepresented by women and foreigners and characterized by low levels of education, lack of resources, unemployment, and as participants in the informal economy (Boiteux et al. 2010). In Argentina, as in the rest of Latin America, the majority of imprisoned women (between 65-80% depending on the penitentiary) are there for drug-related offenses.

The increase in women's incarceration must also be understood within the context of Argentina's neoliberal turn spearheaded by former President Carlos Menem between 1989 and 1999. During this time, the privatization of public services, the dollarization of the local economy, and the drastic opening of the domestic market to predominantly US imports and capital characterized Argentina's economy. In 1999, two years before Argentina's economic default, about 80 percent of the population in Buenos Aires found itself living below the poverty line (Guano 2008). The United States' 'War on Drugs' and its policies of 'tough on crime' were instrumental in the reshaping of both the Argentine justice and economics systems, as US economic assistance and commercial benefits were dependent on the adherence to and application of such judicial policies (Boiteux et al. 2010). During the 2001 Argentine financial crisis, new social movements responding to such policies emerged in the form of factory occupations, a proliferation of self-managed work, and growth of neighborhood collectives, precipitating new forms of collective subjectivities with alternative market economies relying on barter. YoNoFui is one example of a collective that emerged from the need to form networks of support amongst the growing number of incarcerated women.

Before teaching poetry in a women's prison, Maria worked as a legal aide which, for her, consisted mostly of taking statements from recently detained individuals. One day she had to

take the testimony of Elena, a Belarusian woman. Elena was on her way to Italy, carrying a suitcase of summer clothes in the middle of the South American winter and facing major language hurdles. Moved by Elena's circumstances, Maria decided to visit her in prison and bring her winter clothes. After that, Maria came back every weekend, and thus Elena, against all the odds, had someone visiting her every weekend during the time she was in prison. Maria's mother worked in an organization for victims of domestic violence, and her sister was a social worker, so Maria was familiar with helping others during challenging situations. However, she was not familiar with the realities of prison life. After visiting Elena for some time, she wrote the following poem:

6:30

6:30
llegás a constitución a las 7
a ezeiza a las 8.
te parás detrás de la barrera
hasta que te dejen entrar
atravesás el camino que llega a la ventanita
hacés la cola, esperás a que te atiendan,
te atienden entregás carnet y DNI
das su nombre —buscan fichan y te dan 3 números—
te hacen esperar otra hora más detrás de la puerta de rejas
te abren
entrás al pañol esperás de nuevo
te llaman por el numerito amarillo —el que tiene sello es para DNI—
vaciás tus bolsas te revisan cosa por cosa
pinchan
abren
sacan
rompen
nada relleno nada metal nada vidrio
pasan todo a bolsa

te sacan ropa azul gris negra
dejás “valores” después te dan otro cartoncito: “valores”
te hacés otra cola, otra espera, vas a requisa
te levantás el sweater
te levantás la remera
el corpiño
te das vuelta
te levantás el cuello la ropa
te tocan el cuello —el pelo
te das vuelta te desabrochás el botón
te bajás el cierre
te bajás los pantalones
te bajás la bombacha
te das vuelta te agachás (!) —te enderezás
te subís los pantalones la bombacha
te sacás los zapatos
te revisan los zapatos
te tocan los pies te sacás las medias
te ponés las medias
te revisan los bolsillos.
finalmente te dan un cartoncito: “requisado”
te acomodás la ropa
agarrás tus bolsas te acercás a la otra puerta de rejas
agarrás el “requisado” y esperás a que el milico te abra
te abre, pasás a los tumbos cargado de bolsas

nunca se termina de entrar —pensás—
y entrás

te caminás esa cuadra enlomada
te parás frente a esa puerta de hierro macizo
—y pensás que el cielo está demasiado bajo en buenos aires—
y la pateás, porque ya no te quedan manos con que golpear
te abren, entregás el “requisado”
entrás
subís una escalerita caracol así de angosta
1 piso
esperás a que te abran la puerta de hierro
la llave que la abre es enorme (con una así le abrieron la cabeza a una)
caminás, te parás en la puerta donde te piden su nombre

anotan
pasás buscás rápido una mesa
mirás si están Aldo y Mari
si están te vas con ellos, sino los esperás con una mesa...
después llegan ellas.

el tiempo se te pasa demasiado rápido
y querés decir lo que no tiene palabra

llaman pabellón por pabellón
te da escalofrío el sonido de esas voces llamando
y el conglomerado de toda esa gente que se abraza...
ellas se van pabellón por pabellón, y te quedás ahí 1 hora
hasta que termina el recuento interno, recién ahí te podés ir
—cuando ellos quieren, cuando ellos te abren la puerta, y la otra y la otra y la otra—

6:30

6:30
you get to constitución[2] at 7
to ezeiza[3] at 8.
you stand behind the barrier
until they let you in
you cross the road that reaches the small window
you make the line, you wait to be called,
they see you and you give them a card and ID
you give them her name —they search the archive and give you 3 numbers—
they make you wait another hour behind the door with bars
they open
you enter the storage area you wait again
they call you by the yellow little number —the one with the stamp is for the ID. —
you empty your bags they check you item by item
poke
open

[2] Constitución is a major train station in Buenos Aires.
[3] Ezeiza refers to the women's prison of Ezeiza, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires.

take out
break
nothing with filling nothing metal nothing glass
they put everything in the baggage area
they remove clothes blue gray black
you leave “valuables” then they give you another card: “valuables”
you make another line, another wait, you go to requisition
you raise your sweater
you raise your t-shirt
the bra
you turn around
you raise your clothes
they touch your neck-hair
you turn around you unbutton the button
you unzip the zipper
you pull down your pants
you pull down your panties
you turn around you bend down (!) —you straighten up
you pull up your pants your panties
you take off your shoes
they check your shoes
they touch your feet and remove your socks
you put the socks back on
they check your pockets.
finally they give you a small card: “requisitioned”
you fix your clothing
you grab your bags you approach the other gate with bars
you grab the “requisitioned” and wait for the militia to open
they open, you go in tumbles loaded with bags

you never finish entering —you think—
and go in

you walk that hilly block
you stand in front of that solid iron door
—and you think that the sky is too low in buenos aires—
and kick it, because you do not have any hands left to knock
they open, you deliver the “requisitioned”
you enter
you climb a snail ladder this narrow

1 floor
you wait for the iron door to open
the key that opens it is huge (they cracked someone's head open with one like that)
you walk, you stand at the door where they ask for her name
they write down
you go through, search fast for a table
you look to see if Aldo and Mari are there
if they are there you go with them, if not you wait with a table ...
then they arrive.

time goes by too fast
and you want to say what has no word

they call unit by unit
You get chills from the sound of those voices calling
and the conglomeration of all those people who embrace ...
they leave unit by unit, and you stay there 1 hour
until the internal count ends, only then you can go
—when they want, when they open the door, and the other and the other and the other—

This poem became part of Maria's published work titled "Unidad 3." Her poetry describes at once the dragging quality of bureaucracy, the absurdity of surveillance systems, and the very physical intrusion such systems have in women's prisons, even if one is a visitor. It evokes the dehumanizing practices in each step of the process and, ultimately, the genuine need for resistance. Shortly after its publication, Maria was invited by the cultural center, Casa de la Cultura, to teach poetry in the women's prison of Ezeiza, and that was the beginning of YoNoFui.

As participants began to leave the prison, women were interested in continuing with the meetings and, consequently, the poetry workshop expanded to the 'outside.' Since job prospects were one of the women's main concerns, YoNoFui launched additional workshops for formerly incarcerated women to learn skills such as textile design and book-binding. From the onset, YoNoFui was interested in the transitions between inside and outside the prison as a way to

make more visible how such distinctions are not as natural as they may appear. Part of the work carried out in the workshops involved inviting participants to think of themselves in ways they haven't before, using past and present experiences to create art and reconsider how art-making allows for new imaginaries and future visions to emerge. As a way to promote collective subjectivity, YoNoFui supports artistic spaces and self-managed work. The collective grew into a non-profit civic association that offered a variety of art-related workshops until finally reaching its current status as a '*Cooperativa de Trabajo en Libertad,*' which translates to 'cooperative of work in freedom.' In addition to the workshops, YoNoFui sells the products that emerge from the workshops, such as clothing, notebooks, their magazine *YoSoy*, and carpentry items, in an attempt to become a self-sustainable collective. While learning a skill was a primary goal for the workshops, they also worked as a space for healing, for considering differing views, and as a space of communion in an otherwise difficult life.

"Entre Nosotres: The Social and Political Spheres of Women against Prisons" focuses on this collective of formerly incarcerated women and their community-based initiatives to dismantle institutional violence in Buenos Aires, Argentina. One of the dissertation's central insights is that collective feminist identities emerge and sustain their work through interdependence. I assert that this interdependence unfolds not only at the level of people finding ways to support each other's journeys but also at a broader scale, as collectives rely on other organizations and individuals to sustain their political work.

In recent years, women-led social movements have been proliferating while also reconfiguring Latin American politics more widely (Palmeiro 2020). A movement called 'community feminism,' represented by Aymara Bolivian poet Julieta Paredes and anarcho-feminist and psychologist Maria Galindo, among others, centers the community, and not the

individual, to question the patriarchal structures and practices of society (Paredes 2010). Community feminism seeks to transcend patriarchy by questioning the neoliberal measures that sustain it and that subject women to devalued work. Community feminism works to decolonize gender by critiquing Eurocentric knowledge production and acknowledging that women's oppression existed before the Spanish conquest but was compounded with colonial power to subject women to multiple co-existing oppressions (Paredes 2016).

Maria Lugones, also writing about decolonial feminism, asserts that the "coloniality of gender" does not presume egalitarian relations in precolonial times but suggests that more complementary gender relations predated the later asymmetrical power relationships of men and women. To decolonize gender, Lugones notes, we need "to enact a critique of racialized, colonized, and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social" (Lugones 2007, 745). Mujeres Creando, a collective founded by Julieta Paredes and Maria Galindo in Bolivia, was highly effective at materializing a social movement for disobedient women through graffiti paiting, community building and performance. Galindo introduced the term "de-patriarchalisation" to dismantle the various mechanisms that feed patriarchal and colonial power, and that have historically subdued women. She considers decolonization a key aspect for social transformation and mantains that it is not possible to decolonize without de-patriarchalization, and vice versa. De-patriarchalization is an alternative to the idea of equality, of inclusion and rights, and is intended to open a new matrix of struggles and proposals, because it questions the structures (Meloni González 2020).

Following Galindo's call to depatriarchalize, I make a case for women's cultural productions as they grapple with the effects of incarceration. I trace how state surveillance imbues itself in the most intimate spheres of women's lives (limiting their reproductive rights

and scrutinizing their parental abilities), and how women contest such engagements through artistic and collaborative productions.

The title of the dissertation *entre nosotres,* a gender-inclusive phrase that translates to 'among us,' draws from the term *entre nosotras* (among us/women) introduced by sociologist Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar. *Entre nosotras* refers to the "everyday intentional practice of generating bonds of trust between diverse women to generate force and clarity, with the goal of challenging the many forms of violence and negation through which everyday patriarchal domination is exercised in private and public spaces" (Gutiérrez Aguilar in Mason-Desee 2020). *Entre nosotras* does not exclude men but rather focuses on women's spaces, such as women's prisons and women-led collectives, where interdependence gains visibility as a form of care for material and political autonomy. According to geographer Liz Mason-Deese, *entre nosotras* "contains the seeds for a new form of social reproduction, both through enabling material reproduction via the appropriation and sharing of resources, but also through producing new social relations that are not based on capitalist and patriarchal divisions and hierarchies" (Mason-Deese, 2020). My work emphasizes how feminist political power in Latin America foregrounds the potential of renewed forms of interdependence that break away from social relationships of exploitation. I use *entre nosotres* both to highlight my methodological commitment to collaborative research and to underscore the role of interdependence in the ways that contemporary multi-vocal movements in Latin America strengthen their strategies to contest gender inequality.

My title switches the *a* for the *e* to reflect how the dissemination of inclusive language in the past years redefined contemporary understandings of gender and sexuality in Argentina. Inclusive language in Argentina has replaced the *x* with an *e* (*Latine, todes, amigues*) to include

gender non-conforming individuals. These recent changes in linguistic expressions of sexual politics incarnate and confront structural inequalities that, compounded with social markers such as race, class, gender, age, and ability, limit the horizons of dissident sexualities. As women-led organizations gained visibility, their inclusion of *disidencias* composed of gender non-conforming and sexual minorities became more prominent. Hence, the category of women in this context was an inclusive one, and I refer to *entre nosotres* to reflect how feminist social movements were always already interlocked with queer activism.

Paying attention to the everyday lives of criminalized women reveals the patriarchal values that oppress women's lives inside and outside of prisons. The ways punishment is administered to women, entangled with intersecting categories such as race, class, sexuality, age, and ability, mirrors the ubiquity of gendered violence that operates to control women's bodies and police women's behavior in Argentina and beyond. Anthropologist Rita Segato, who has written extensively about violence against women, argues that gender is the cornerstone of society whose patriarchal values infuse in the building of all powers. Her research on violence points to the fact that acts of gendered violence are the elemental historical configuration of power and, hence, of all violence, since power is always the result of an expropriation that is inevitably violent (Segato 2016).

I did not set out to write a dissertation about gendered violence. I was interested in writing about art and freedom, and about the potentials in new forms of engagements. However, soon after my arrival for fieldwork research in Buenos Aires, the everydayness of gendered violence forced me to confront a dimension I could no longer deny. Routinized gendered violence reflects the manifold ways in which institutions undervalue women's lives: by stepping over their rights, naturalizing their labor, and scrutinizing their testimonies. In the aftermath of

the ‘Pink Tide,’ a term referred to a turn in Latin America, beginning in 1998 with the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, toward left-leaning progressive governments, it was surprising to see that populist governance was still marginalizing young men and women and wreaking havoc in prisons.

While the ‘pink tide’ policies in Argentina involved an extension of civil rights, including the recognition of femicide as a particular type of crime, the progressive politics of this era did not improve prison conditions for women nor deter men from committing acts of violence against women. In “LGBT Rights Yes, Abortion No: Explaining Uneven Trajectories in Argentina under Kirchnerism (2013-2015)” the authors explain that the role of the Church as a political actor opened windows of opportunities for civil rights such as same-sex marriage but thwarted feminist efforts such as the legalization of abortion (Tabbush, et al. 2018, 88). A report published by Human Rights Watch titled “Illusions of Care: Lack of Accountability for Reproductive Rights in Argentina,” explains that “over the past 10 years, Argentina has accumulated an impressive artillery of reproductive and sexual health related policies. Though they ignore key constituencies such as women with disabilities, these policies would, if implemented, go a long way to overcoming the suffering documented in this report and elsewhere. However, these laws and programs are spottily applied at best, and even when they are, the Argentine state fails to initiate accountability processes that could correct the lack of care” (Møllmann 2010). Gendered violence is one site where the lack of accountability for crimes committed against women and other minorities, including obstetric violence, fueled and renewed feminist social movements in Latin America.

To illustrate, between June 2015 and May 2018, 871 femicides and 24 transvesticides were reported despite the gender-related public policies put in place[4]. Examples of these policies include the creation, in 2008, of the Supreme Court Office for Domestic Violence, which dealt with interpersonal violence only, leaving out other dimensions that impact domestic violence such as economics, labor, politics, and the power differential between men and women, and hiding the cultural aspects that traverse all violence in society. Other relevant gender-related policies include the law against gendered violence in 2010 and the gender identity law sanctioned in 2012. In the face of these policies, the high rate of hate crimes means that, on average, in Argentina, as much as in the rest of Latin America, a woman is killed every 30 hours for her condition of being a woman.[5] In 2016, there were 290 femicides and 401 children were left motherless. I hesitate in writing this last sentence, since the value of a woman's life should not be tied to her caregiving status. But it is important to note that the repercussions of a femicide extend well beyond the termination of an individual's life.

In *Re-Enchanting the World. Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, Silvia Federici maps the struggles that women in Latin America engage in to contest neoliberalism's attack on people's means of subsistence and on the activities that reproduce their lives. Under economic constraints and political neglect, women organize to make the logic of domestic work a topic of public debate and to make visible the political character and social value of reproductive work (Federici 2018,142). Systemic gendered violence has a long history that demands disruption as rapacious neoliberal expressions in the Global South increasingly sanction it. In this dissertation,

[4] From Registro Nacional de Femicidios del Observatorio del Colectivo MuMaLá (Mujeres de la Matria Latinoamericana).
[5] From "Observatorio de Femicidios en Argentina Adriana Marisel Zambrano," *La Casa del Encuentro*, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

I conceive of institutions as structural forces and spaces that work along, against, and in partnership with more intimate ways of being that are actively involved in the nurturing of the self. Institutional violence is often understood in terms of its structural oppression, for example, in how admissions at elite schools reflect and reproduce racial, gender, and class disparities. Institutional violence, while working systemically through bureaucratic neglect, nonetheless has very corporeal expressions (Gupta 2012). This dissertation considers the corporeal and artistic expressions of institutional violence by looking at the ways criminalized women enact freedom and contest the brutality of the carceral state.

The carceral state

Michel Foucault has been most influential when considering questions of power, institutions, and the self (Foucault 1963, 1966, 1975, 1976-1984). In his genealogical account of modern punishment, Foucault discussed the concept of carceral archipelago to account for the diversity of (state) surveillance that diffused into other forms of social organization to the point of creating a carceral culture (Foucault 1975). In her collection of essays titled *Carceral Capitalism*, Jackie Wang cautions that a decrease in the total number of people incarcerated does not necessarily mean that our society, on the whole, is becoming a less carceral one (Wang 2018, 39). The carceral state is a concept that emerged from this tradition and that historian Elizabeth Hinton has defined as including law enforcement, courts, lawyers, the criminal justice system and also social programs which impose various forms of supervision and surveillance (Hinton 2016). Further, there have been extensive Foucauldian analyses that focus on how state institutions such as schools, hospitals, factories, and prisons give way to particular processes that

shape specific subjectivities through the erasure of others (Feldman 2009, Holston 2008, Ong 2006, Pérez 1999, Scheper-Hughes 1992, Stoler 2002). Foucault's work on social control and institutions has also inspired crucial feminist methodologies and theories that consider how resistance to the diagnostic category of sex (for example refusing 'woman' as a category of analysis) can do anything but reduplicate the mechanism of the subjection constituted by sexual categories in our society (Hekman, ed. 1996, Diamond and Quinby 1988, McNay 1992). Most recently, scholars have focused on the ways gender conformity is central to surveillance practices that reinforce the carceral state (Beauchamp 2019, Dillon 2018).

At the same time, currently and formerly incarcerated women carve out worlds of their own and form communal ties, they organize and engage with the political struggles of prison abolition, and they create art and find creative outlets to express their freedoms. In doing so, they challenge traditional notions of femininity and redefine the possibilities of life after prison. I emphasize how YoNoFui's collective identity, as Federici also argues, is crucial in articulating how the personal and the private are political. Furthering this argument, in *La Potencia Feminista, o el deseo de cambiarlo todo* (Feminist Potency, or the desire to change it all) Verónica Gago considers how International Women's Day (March 8) has mobilized feminist social movements throughout Latin America in contestation to neoliberal policies. Her book traces how feminist social movements, from below (through assemblies, marches, and union-like organizing), bear the potential for social transformation by making visible the intersectionality of multiple forms of violence: racial, economic, domestic, and institutional. By mapping the multiple ways women organize, she presents a thorough diagnostic of the ways economic precarity illuminates the subordinate but vital roles women occupy (Gago 2018).

This dissertation examines contemporary feminist social movements in Latin America and the ways they contribute to significant advances towards gender equity by denouncing gendered and sexual violence. I argue that they accomplish this by demanding reproductive rights and by collectively contesting, though art and activism, the oppression engendered by the carceral state. YoNoFui, the collective with whom I conducted fieldwork in Buenos Aires, offers art-related workshops both inside and outside of women's prisons, seeking to erode the distinctions between 'inside' and 'outside' that erase the continuum of institutional and gendered violence to which women are subjected.

I draw from Judith Butler's work on interdependence to show how social movements interested in imagining new worlds considered interdependency as crucial for moving forward (Butler 2020). In their latest book, *The Force of Non-Violence*, Judith Butler invites us to think about violence and non-violence. Specifically, Butler writes against the idea that non-violence is passive and limp. The aggressive force of non-violence insists on disrupting the myth of the individual as masculine and independent. As YoNoFui imagined new worlds and advocated for prison abolition, they also challenged the penitentiary for its abuses and contested the malfunctioning of the justice system, displaying the vitality of collectives and the force of non-violence that Butler describes.

Drawing on three years (January 2014–March 2017) of collaborative ethnography in Buenos Aires, my research reveals the multiple and contradictory mechanisms by which the carceral system punishes women. I detail the gendered experiences of incarceration and post-incarceration through conversations, observations, interviews, and everyday interactions with the collective YoNoFui. I trace how women reimagine their lives through cultural productions such as poetry, photography, and carpentry. As such, I present this research as a multimodal

ethnography that considers how visual imagery, handmade objects, performances, and media platforms can inform the process of knowledge production.

In *Beyond the Pink Tide*, Macarena Gómez-Barris argues that paying attention to social activisms that are shaped by visual arts, film, performance, and music allows us to see a rising tide of world-making. Such tides create the undercurrents for political change that refuses the colonial and heteronormative violence of nation-states, exposing state power in order to move beyond it (Gómez-Barris 2018). In a similar vein, this dissertation explores the artistic expressions of a collective in order to show how their activism and artistic expressions have already contributed to notions of desire and interdependency through their contestations against state violence.

For the past decades, the prison industrial complex has shown pervasive perseverance in surviving at any cost, on a global scale, with a capacity to transform any intervention to its advantage. In a recent interview, prominent geographer and prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore explained that prison reform has become widely popular. However, abolitionists argue that many reforms have done little more than reinforce the system. For example, in every state in the United States where the death penalty has been abolished, it has been replaced by life sentence without parole. Further, campaigns to reform indeterminate sentencing have resulted in three-strike programs and mandatory-minimum sentencing, which serve to trade one cruelty for another. Overall, "reforms have not significantly reduced incarceration numbers, and no recent reform legislation has even aspired to do so...So many of these proposed remedies don't end up diminishing the system. They regard the system as something that can be fixed by removing and replacing a few elements" (Gilmore in Kushner 2019). Prison reform in Argentina has introduced

benevolent interventions such as higher education in prison, conjugal visits, drug-addiction treatments, gardening, and dog-training programs.

In the late 2000s, a civilian rather than a penitentiary worker, was named prison warden for the first time in the women's prison of Ezeiza, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, and immediate changes could be appreciated. Incarcerated women were able to access a larger offering of classes, workshops, and other implementations that made incarcerated women feel 'heard.' However, after a few years, corruption within the prison took hold, and things went back to business as usual. Once again, women confronted the tediousness of bureaucracy, the arbitrariness of the justice system, and their lack of control over it. The experience of incarceration at 'Unidad 31' involves always distrusting any sort of good news and coming to terms with sayings such as "One step forward, two steps backward."

Feminist interventions in prison reform include visitation assistance for children and prison nurseries that allow mothers to keep their small children with them while incarcerated. Feminists have also pointed out the complicated norm of having the prison system be divided into a gendered binary, leaving trans individuals in highly vulnerable situations and subjecting them to various forms of institutional violence (Davis 2013). Angela Davis discusses feminist abolitionism as theories and practices that go against that which has been ideologically constituted as 'normal.' Prisons are taken for granted as part and parcel of living in a Hobbesian definition of community, granting a complete monopoly of power to institutions. The fact that prisons are divided into an outmoded binary system of men and women shows that the many accomplishments that feminist and trans activists have achieved have yet to reach the justice system. Further, Davis subscribes to a feminism (since there are many) that insists on "methods

of thought and action that urge us to think things together that appear to be separate, and to de-segregate things that appear to naturally belong together" (Davis 2013).

This dissertation takes an abolitionist standpoint to examine in detail how the carceral state is expanding in Latin America. Through a feminist decolonial lens, I consider women's artistic expressions, particularly when they address the impact that the prison system has on women's lives both inside and outside of prisons. On a global scale, there has been an upsurge in violence against women. Unfortunately, this was exceedingly clear during my fieldwork experience as I followed the lives of women trying to regain their "freedom" and encountering similar acts of violence on the outside.

On methods

Following the Latin American studies tradition of activist research, this project is politically engaged with YoNoFui's mission of making visible the continuum of gendered violence that women endure both inside and outside prisons. As Nancy Scheper-Hughes has asked: "What makes anthropology and anthropologists exempt from the human responsibility to take an ethical (and even a political) stand on the working out of historical events as we are privileged to witness them?" (Scheper-Hughes 1995, 411). In a discussion of positionality and political commitment, anthropologist Charles Hale argues that positionality plays a crucial role in shaping one's theoretical questions and methodology. Cultural critique, asserting its contribution to the production of emancipating knowledge, affirms its political commitment to the institutional space from which it emanates. Activist research, in contrast, affirms dual political commitments from the start. Activist anthropologists strive to remain loyal to both the space of critical scholarly production and to the principles and practices of people who struggle outside the

academic setting (Hale 2006). This dual commitment does come with its limitations, such as a move away from the cultural critique, or the creation of imperfect but practical knowledge.

Hale defends these limitations, insisting they enrich anthropological work, because it "embodies a more accurate reflection of the utterly contradictory struggles of the people with whom we are allied, and more importantly still, it entails a commitment to generating the kinds of knowledge they ask and need us to produce" (Hale 2006, 115). Anthropologist Shannon Speed whose research concerns Indigenous struggles and human rights in Chiapas, Mexico defines her engagement as one of "solidarity," seeking to undermine the structures of power that work to reproduce hierarchies of power:

> I sought, in pursuing activist research in Chiapas, the areas of coincidence between my own feminist, antiracist, and anticapitalist politics and those of indigenous people waging a social struggle that forefronted many of these same goals. In general terms, the areas where they coincided were easy to identify. In concrete, practical terms, they were often much more difficult (Speed 2007:7).

From this statement, it is clear that, just as Hale noted, engaging in activist anthropology is not an intuitive enterprise and does not involve a unified production of knowledge. Emma Cervone nonetheless insists on practicing engaged anthropology noting that "although the different forms of political engagement in anthropology (activism, public scholarship, collaborative research, participatory action research, and the like) have in common the repositioning of the anthropologist and the study community as research partners who develop research and produce knowledge together and in support of social justice, there is no one formula for political engagement" (Cervone 2012: 33).

In my particular case, I joined YoNoFui in early 2014 after meeting several members and discussing my project with Maria Medrano. Previous to that, I had visited them on a number of

occasions from 2010 onwards and also attended an event at the women's prison of Ezeiza. I was interested in interviewing women under house arrest and YoNoFui needed help in their social support area. My role in YoNoFui was as a member of the 'Social Support' team, which, as the name suggests, involved a wide variety of activities resembling those of a social worker. I also attended the workshops where bookbinding, screen-printing, drawing, journalism, documentary making, and textile design were taught. Usually when new participants approached the collective, they would meet with me and we would fill out a form together gathering some relevant information. The initial in-take forms provided some helpful background, but participants' issues, questions, and struggles would often emerge throughout the workshops. My presence in the workshops allowed the workshop facilitators to remain focused on the class, while I could assist with a situation if necessary. This meant sometimes stepping outside to have a conversation if someone was upset. Sometimes it meant playing with their child outside so that they could focus on the class. It also meant collecting their concerns (in person or via text messages) and coming up with possible interventions at our 'social support' meeting. Examples of the assistance that the Social Support team could provide involved helping someone find an apartment, guiding them through the bureaucratic process of public assistance, finding a therapist, discussing their legal cases, and, mostly, listening to them.

As a member of the collective, I was also expected to attend monthly '*asambleas*' and to participate in the social activism that YoNoFui engaged in. My position in the collective was unpaid, and I happily took as it allowed me to attend the workshops that were being taught and, hence, meet the staff and participants and conduct interviews with them. The workshops allowed me to familiarize myself with handmade objects, recycled materials, pedagogical practices for

formerly incarcerated people, bureaucratic and state processes, and a range of knowledge that I hope to elucidate throughout this ethnography.

Incarcerated women, both in prison and under house arrest, were able to access these workshops though daily permits granted to them by judges. In this manner, I interacted with incarcerated women (whether under house arrest or in prison), giving them the choice to speak with me outside of their place of confinement. After knowing me for several months, many were comfortable inviting me into their homes. Interviews were unstructured in a dialogue-based format and they happened before or after workshops, when I visited them in their homes, and in a few occasions at a café or restaurant. These interviews provided me with the framework to explain what my research was about and allowed reflections on confinement, gender norms and family to emerge casually in conversation during regularly occurring *mate* drinking sessions, one of the most important collective activities in YoNoFui.

During my time spent at YoNoFui, drinking *mate* (a traditional infused drink) was a regular activity that reflected the meaningfulness of sharing a space. In passing around the *mate* during conversations, women were also encouraging themselves to think and feel collectively (Graveline 2000). Drinking *mate* also allowed women to introduce themselves by sharing their preferences. There were usually always two types of *mate* circulating: sweet and bitter (amargo). *Mate amargo* consists of *yerba mate* only, and it is as classic as black coffee. To drink *mate* you need a thermos with hot water (not boiled) and a cup, called a gourd, usually made of wood such as *palo santo*, oak, carob tree, or *quebracho*. Other materials for the gourd are pumpkin, horn, silicone, and plastic. Pumpkin is one of the most traditional options along with gourds made from bull's testicles. You fill up two-thirds of the gourd with yerba, always leaving space, since the yerba will expand with the added water. After filling the gourd up with yerba, you cover it with the palm of your hand, turn it over and shake. This will allow for all the dust (*polvillo*) to

fall on your hand so as to avoid drinking it or clogging the straw. You then add the straw, which is usually metal with a pear-shaped base as a filter, and pour the water in a corner of the gourd, trying to keep some of the yerba dry.

Not everyone is skilled at preparing *mate*. In Spanish, it is called '*cebar el mate*' where one person is assigned to pour the water and pass it around. Just as with preparing coffee, some people can have a talent for it, so, in the meetings, there were designated people who had been encouraged to pour the water. When you pour too much water, *mate* loses its taste much faster. Some people like their mate strong, but it is true that after a few rounds the *mate* starts to wash away. This is what is called '*mate lavado*,' and some people like it this way, drinking from the same yerba for hours.

Because *mate amargo* is often the most popular choice, in well-attended meetings or workshops there would be two *mates amargos* circulating and one sweet. One of the lead instructors in the silk-screening workshops liked her *mate* with herbs. This is a special kind of yerba *mate* that comes with piperine, mint, cedron, and other traditional herbs. The sweet *mate* is usually sweetened with sugar (adding one small spoon before pouring hot water), but some people prefer artificial sweetener. When someone new joined the space, often conversations began with people talking about the kind of *mate* they preferred, and the varieties are endless: you can add a bit of orange peel on the top, honey, coffee beans, milk. In some ways, the kind of *mate* you preferred revealed something about who you were. Some were stricter about drinking it a certain way, while others would have preferences according to the situation or time of the year. I always preferred *el mate amargo*, but I was lucky that I enjoyed it in all the other forms I tried. The yerba we drank at YoNoFui was from the brand Playadito. Someone had made a large donation of it, and it lasted most of my fieldwork. At first I thought Playadito was quite strong, but I got used to it and it became my preferred brand. In the summer, at YoNoFui they would

offer *tereré*, which traditionally comes from Paraguay: this is cold *mate* where you fill out a very large thermos with orange juice and ice.

By drinking *mate* both in YoNoFui and in the women's homes I could also pay attention to the language that women used to describe their present conditions and their dreams for the future (O'Connor 2000). As pleasant as these *mate* sessions were, YoNoFui was by no means a homogenous community. A closer look at one of YoNoFui's participants can show the various fissures at play in the collective and the creative ways in which they were addressed and negotiated.

One of Selene's dreams was graduating from the university and, since she knew I was a doctoral student, I became the university expert. Selene had long curly brown hair and often had headphones resting on her shoulders blasting *cumbia* or *reggaetón*. She had taken some classes while incarcerated and wanted to continue her education on the outside. Since Universidad de Buenos Aires offers some of the required classes of the first year in penitentiaries, we had many conversations about her classes and her plans, and we went together to get her registered at the Universidad de Lomas de Zamora and sort out how to transfer her credits. Selene had quite the personality. She had a sharp tongue and was very much into pushing the limits with her provocative statements.

"What an ugly purse!" she once told me, coyly smiling at me to see how I would respond. Another way Selene enjoyed being 'provocative' was by complaining about the immigrants housed in the prison. In her opinion, "they" should not be granted the same benefits as Argentines. There was a particular incident which involved a special program for training dogs. This was a pilot program in which few women could participate. Selene was appalled that among those very few women selected to 'train' dogs, some were foreigners. This was an example of the special treatment that she considered should be granted to citizens only. While most in the

collective did not agree with Selene, Selene's remarks reflect how in the women's prison of Ezeiza foreigners, in particular from other Latin American countries such as Peru, Bolivia, and Paraguay, were often discriminated against. What is more, nationalities played a part in the ways women in prison organized their alliances and networks of trust.

Disagreements on issues such as migration, labor, abortion, and gender roles where daily occurrences at the collective. Part of the collective's work involved building bridges with one another in order to create new ways of living under the inhospitable conditions of the carceral system, a system that routinely relies on racialized capitalist and patriarchal values to assert its legitimacy. For example, at one *asamblea*, one of the facilitators for the textile design workshop questioned if it would be possible to include certain requirements to participate in the workshop. Specifically, she mentioned basic math knowledge so she "didn't have to spend 20 minutes during a class on sewing patterns explaining what a right-angle triangle was." The collective debated on this issue and even questioned if reading and writing should be requirements for the poetry workshop. Maria Medrano then reminded everyone that poetry began as an oral practice, so knowing how to write is not a requirement. Carmen recalled one participant in prison who did not know how to write, and she recited her poems from memory. In this *asamblea*, we reflected on the purpose of the workshops and the importance to include everyone, no requirements asked, precisely to learn how people find creative ways to channel their talents.

I refer to Selene as a participant and not a member because it was important to her to remain 'an independent thinker' and hence she resisted being part of a collective. But she participated in YoNoFui's workshops while in prison and after her release for a period of several years. While attending the journalism workshop at YoNoFui's space in the hip neighborhood of Palermo, Selene managed to convince the hair stylist next door to give her highlights for free before her release date. At one of the meetings with the social support team, Maria Medrano

mentioned how a prison guard had pulled her aside one day and specifically asked her to always take care of Selene. As rowdy as she was, she had a way of earning the love and respect of many around her.

Selene began getting arrested at age 17 and at 37 she had already spent the majority of her time behind bars. When Selene was released in 2014, I went with other members of the collective to pick her up in a borrowed car and we drove her and her children to her new apartment, which the collective had helped her find. This was meant to be temporary housing; after the legal team at YoNoFui wrote a letter with Selene about her life story to the Presidency, she had been informed that she was going to be the recipient of soon-to-be inaugurated rent-free public housing for members of low-income communities. Selene had pushed her release date until the last day of her sentence, a rare instance since most are released early on parole. Selene did so because she did not want to leave the prison: it had become familiar to her—she knew what the norms were and how to handle herself in there.

Anthropologist Carolyn Sufrin has inquired into the possibilities that captivity may paradoxically open up. As our ethical obligation might call us to denounce institutional violence, Sufrin also suggests we also inquire into the ways in which captivity can cultivate ambiguous forms of care (Sufrin 2017). On the outside, her family was still involved in criminal activities and had a history of substance use, and as a single mother of twins, Selene preferred to rely on the assistance of the penitentiary than on her family members. She had a history with substance use herself, in particular *paco*, a highly addictive drug derived from coca leaves. Selene's sobriety was always one of her main priorities, but when her housing plans changed and YoNoFui never heard back about that promised housing, Selene relapsed. During my time at YoNoFui, the treatment options available to her failed multiple times and by the time I left Buenos Aires I was expecting a phone call with the news of her death. But she recovered once

more, looking more radiant than ever, and determined, as always, to live a different life. YoNoFui welcomed Selene every time she came back and a few members were usually in close communication with her. Several people were concerned for her and took on many tasks to support her in her recovery. YoNoFui was a space that invited women like Selene to drink mate and participate in a variety of workshops and events, encouraging women to think of themselves differently.

My involvement with incarcerated women might raise ethical questions about invasion of privacy. For this reason, my participant observation was carried out in collaboration with YoNoFui and the women involved with this organization who expressed an interest in my project. This allowed me to collect women's narratives and to consider how handmade production of objects contribute to the formation of the self. For example, some of the contributions produced by YoNoFui participants include an editorial *cartonera* (which consists of publishing poems in cardboard books and recycled material); a crafts market that took place on a weekly basis; a documentary film made in collaboration with Las Pastillas del Abuelo (a rock band); access to workshops and provision of textile work to women with house arrest; and photo exhibits displaying the work accomplished in the photography workshops. This is not merely a job-training program. Their work is presented as a tool to carve out new practices for new social roles. Their objective is to make visible the particular needs of incarcerated women and their families; to promote respect for rights in prison; and to strengthen the constitution of collective subjects.

Limitations in this project involve the implication of a group of women that are part of a vulnerable population and who may have suffered several forms of past abuses and structural violence (Fontenla 2010). Predominantly, incarcerated women have low levels of education, live in low-income communities, are often victims of domestic violence, and have a history of drug

use. Participating in the workshops and being part of the collective created ways for me to relate to others while producing artwork that enriched our conversations about futures without prisons. Through poetry writing, photography, and other forms of art-making, women organized to contest precisely those categories that deem them as outcasts from the fabrics of civil society. By interacting in the collective women shared with me their stories, personalities, and artwork while also collectively organizing to support transitions away from prison life.

The stakes

In this dissertation, I theorize both how public policy promotes the social reproduction of gendered, unwaged labor and how women engage in a politics of resistance to subvert such policies. According to policy predictions, by 2037 more women in Latin America will be represented in prison than in positions of power (Boiteaux 2017). This rise follows a global trend in the expansion of the carceral state and is inextricable from the economic context that criminalizes poverty (Bandyopadhyay 2010, Davis 2003, Fassin 2016, Wacquant 2009) . Focusing on incarcerated women brings to the fore the continuum of gendered and institutional violence to which women are subjected, both inside and outside of prisons. Throughout this dissertation, I engage with a growing global concern over gendered violence and focus on the experiences of women striving for freedom while negotiating the institution of motherhood and the aftermath of incarceration.

In YoNoFui's workshops, mostly those in poetry and journalism, but ultimately in all the workshops, participants read texts from influential thinkers writing about institutional violence and discussed their ideas. This created some tensions in the collective as certain workshops, such as carpentry and shoe-making, resisted the idea of incorporating texts and discussion in their learning environment. But YoNoFui was about more than just learning a trade. It also worked to

understand and change the wider context in which women were immersed. YoNoFui held events in which scholars would come and visit YoNoFui or participate in some other way, such as being interviewed for YoNoFui's magazine, *YoSoy*. Accordingly, much of the theory found throughout these pages comes from the scholars we read at the workshops who visited YoNoFui as part of their commitment to knowledge production that comes from grassroots efforts.

One such scholar was Rita Segato, whose work expands on the concept of 'expressive violence.' While any act of violence carries a message in it of itself, explains Segato, 'expressive violence' is the ultimate allegorical act of what sovereignty means: unrestricted control, arbitrary and discretionary sovereign will which holds the possibility to annihilate equivalent powers in others and, above all, eradicate their potency as indexes of alterity or alternative subjectivity. Expressive violence is also about consuming the other. It refers to a cannibalism through which the other willfully dies and the only opportunity to continue to exist is through the appropriation and inclusion in the body of that which has devoured. The rest of its existence remains only as part of the dominant project. Most important, expressive violence carries a message for those left alive. In her study of femicides in Ciudad Juárez, Segato identifies two axes of interlocutors. On the one hand, the vertical axis conveys a clear message of dominion over the victim. The message has a punitive aspect, and the aggressor, the profile of the moralizer, a paladin of social morality since in the shared imaginarium the feminine destiny is to be contained, censored, disciplined, reduced by the violent gesture of the aggressor who reincarnates, through his act, the sovereign function.

Segato emphasizes that her most interesting contribution is her discovery (in her study of convicted rapists in Brasilia) of the horizontal axis of interlocution. Here the aggressor addresses his peers, and he does so in several ways: he asks to be included in their society and, from this

perspective, the raped woman acts as a sacrificial victim immolated in an initiatory ritual; the aggressor competes with his peers, proving that he deserves, by his aggressiveness and death-power, to occupy a place in the virile brotherhood and even to acquire a prominent position in a fraternity that only recognizes a hierarchical language and a pyramidal organization. According to Segato, this is because in the very long history of gender, the production of masculinity obeys processes that are different from those of the production of femininity. Evidence from a cross-cultural perspective indicate that masculinity is a status conditioned to its attainment—it must be reconfirmed with a certain regularity throughout life—through a process of approval or conquest and, above all, subject to taxation by an other that, by its position naturalized in this order of status, is perceived as the provider of the repertoire of gestures that feed virility. This means that violent acts labeled as femicides are often about men asserting their masculinity and proving to their peers that they should in fact be considered 'men.' Segato claims that it is through the taut crossing between its two coordinates, the vertical, of the victim's consumption, and the horizontal, conditioned to the obtaining of the tribute, that fundamental aspects of the long and established cycle of femicides can be illuminated.[6]

By reading and discussing texts by Segato and others, women at YoNoFui considered the gendering mechanisms by which sovereign power operates. This research informs the larger framework of the "*feminismos populares*" that have been brewing in Latin America in the past decade by identifying the specific ways in which grassroots collectives like YoNoFui contribute to dismantling the carceral state. *Feminismos populares* are a diverse group of social movements

[6] The term "femicide" was introduced by Jill Radford and Diana Russell to denote the gendered and endemic nature of violence against women. Femicide is defined as "the killing of females by males because they are females" (Radford and Russell, 1992)

throughout Latin America who focus on grassroots efforts and are women-led and/or LGBTQIA+. Informed by indigenous, Black, and 'from the slums' feminisms, the *feminismos populares* demand the depatriarchalization and disruption of hierarchies within leftists movements (Korol 2016). In considering the impact that institutions have on women's lives, in this project I put front and center the cultural productions that the collective YoNoFui offers to express their visions and desires. I use a multimodal framework to explore the varied ways in which contributions of feminist social movements have contested the carceral state. Multimodal anthropology considers how the democratization of media production and the increased collaboration between anthropologists and the communities they work with, allow anthropologists to include media, poetry and collaboration as part of their research (Collins, Durington, Gill 2017).

Collaborations highlighted in this dissertation include the ones between YoNoFui and NiUnaMenos. NiUnaMenos is a feminist movement that emerged in 2015 out of the rage over the brutal killings and extreme sexual violence affecting women in Argentina today. Its name refers to the phrase "Ni una menos, ni una muerta más" (not one less, not one more dead) coined in 1995 by poet and activist Susana Chávez Castillo to denounce the killing of women happening in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico (Mason-Deese 2020). In 2011, Susana Chávez Castillo was brutally murdered in her hometown of Ciudad Juárez. The state attorney general of Chihuahua claimed that her death was not political because that night she was not engaged in activism but instead 'out having fun with friends.' This claim caused an uproar as advocacy groups contested it was part of the blame-victim process that characterizes sexual crimes. NiUnaMenos in Argentina,

which rose after what has been referred to as 'the pink tide' became part of this larger feminist movement that characterized Latin America for the past decades.[7]

According to one of NiUnaMenos members, Cecilia Palmeiro, incorporating the poetic words of Susana Chávez emphasized how "poetics is crucial for this movement in that it allows for the articulation of desire and expression (that is, it allows for the power of a new political language) as that articulation nurtures the creation of utopian images, stimulating the collective imagination to conceive and put into practice the world we want to live in, thus emancipating creative forces from the artistic field, diverting them towards the construction of a different society" (Palmeiro 2020, 6). Through a multimodal approach, I consider the photo exhibit '*Iluminaciones*' as a collaborative project that produces images to reimagine community-living. I also consider collaborations amongst collectives, their activism and performances, the networks of support between the participants, as well as cases of sensationalist media that shaped, contested and reproduced political discourse in Argentina. I share photos from one of their workshops to show how women chose to express particular moments of their lives as they were incarcerated, and to cast this process as a collective one since pinhole photography often involves a group effort. As women took turns directing their photos, they actively defined their political imaginaries. I also share the poetry we read as I participated in these workshops, and through the writing process of the dissertation, to disclose the poetic language we were engaging with as a way to make sense of our context and our new futures.

Briefly outlined, **Chapter 2** examines the everyday life of the workshops at the space that YoNoFui occupies in the city of Buenos Aires, where community members, incarcerated

[7] The pink tide refers to a turn in Latin America towards left wing governments from around 2004-2016. The shift represented a move away from traditional neoliberal policies and towards more progressive economic policies. Pink tide governments have been characterized as Anti-American and populist.

women, and women under house arrest came together to learn about writing, drawing, screen-printing, book-binding and textile design, among other means of expression. I consider the politics of women's incarceration in Argentina and detail how, through artistic production, participants at YoNoFui challenge those structures, practices and ideologies that contribute to gender disparity and carceral politics. I present the photo exhibit "*Iluminaciones*" which features the work created at the photography workshop in the women's prison of Ezeiza. As women move from the prison to art galleries and cultural centers, they illuminate the connections between the inside and outside and the personal experiences that occur throughout this process. In **Chapter 3**, I consider how the consequences of the 'Dirty War' are still present inside prisons, as former military leaders convicted of crimes against humanity manipulate the penitentiary to their own advantage to the point of transferring to a women's prison in 2014, and sharing the space with mothers and their small children, even in the present day. In **Chapter 4**, I make explicit how public policies that restrict women's reproductive rights fail to address the alarming rates of maternal mortality in the north of Argentina and instead only further criminalize women while also policing their sexualities. In **Chapter 5,** I examine house arrest as an alternative to incarceration for pregnant people and mothers of small children. Rather than proving itself as an effective alternative, house arrest brings to light the social constructions around motherhood and the gender oppression that seep into such institutions. Throughout this ethnography, distinctions between freedom and prison are further disrupted as life on the outside for some women proves to be just as challenging as life on the inside. In **Chapter 6,** I contextualize my fieldwork against the backdrop of the feminist movements in Argentina, Latin America, and beyond which began to gain traction in the recent past. These movements strove to put an end to gendered violence, to challenge the category of 'woman,' and to signal a shift toward pluralistic, gender-expansive social movements whose aim is to dismantle the patriarchal, colonial, and racist structures and

practices of gender inequality. In between chapters, I share poems that were read in the poetry workshops. These poems were written by poets from Latin America who have all lived different forms of institutional violence and chose to write against it. When oppression has a stronghold, and there are no words to speak of the unspeakable, there is always poetry.

Next I share a poem by Juan Gelman. Carmen once told me Gelman's work inspired her to write about her experiences both before prison and while living in it. In 1975 Juan Gelman was forced into exile because of his political activism and his involvement with the Montoneros, a left-wing Peronist group that used violence in its efforts to overthrow the military government. While he was living in Italy, his daughter, his son, and his daughter-in-law, at the time pregnant, were detained by the military government during Argentina's 'Dirty War.' His daughter was released after a few days, and after four months of torture, his son was killed, dumped in an oil drum filled with cement, and thrown in a river. Juan Gelman was able to trace his remains in 1990, but his daughter-in-law remains disappeared. She is among an estimated 30,000 people who vanished into the junta's clandestine torture centers, many of them dropped from planes into the Atlantic Ocean. In the late 1990s, Gelman returned to public prominence as he tried to locate the child of his son and daughter-in-law. In 2000 the President of Uruguay, Jorge Batlle, acknowledged that Gelman's daughter-in-law had been transported to Uruguay as part of the Operation Condor agreement between South American military dictatorships for wiping out left-wing "subversive" activity. She gave birth to a daughter while in Uruguay, who was misappropriated by an Uruguayan police chief and his wife. After an extensive search, in the year 2000, Gelman and his granddaughter were reunited (Fotheringham 2004).

Final
Juan Gelman

La poesía no es un pájaro.
Y es.
No es un pulmón, el aire, mi camisa,
no, nada de eso. Y todo eso.
Si.
He roto un violín contra el crepúsculo
para ver qué pasaba,
me fui a la piedra y pregunté qué pasa.
Pero no. Pero no.
Aún no.
¿Me olvidé acaso del pañuelo aquel
donde gira en silencio un vals antiguo?
No lo olvide, miradme la mejilla
y os daréis cuenta, no, no lo olvide
¿Me olvide del caballo de madera?
Tocadme el niño y me diréis que no
¿Y entonces que?
La poesía es una manera de vivir.
Mira a la gente que hay a tu costado.
¿Ama? ¿Sufre? ¿Canta? ¿Llora?
Ayúdala a luchar por sus manos, sus ojos, su boca,
por el beso para besar y el beso para regalar,
por su mesa, su casa, su pan, su letra a y su letra h,
por su pasado - acaso no fueron niños? -
por su porvenir - acaso no serán niños?
por su presente, por el trozo de paz, de historia
y de dicha que le toca
por el pedazo de amor grande, chico, triste, alegre,
que le toca, por todo lo que le toca y se le arrebata
en nombre de que, de que?
Tu vida entonces será un río innumerable que se llamará
pedro, juan, ana, maria, pájaro, pulmón, el aire, mi camisa,
violín, crepúsculo, piedra, pañuelo aquel, vals antiguo,
caballo de madera.
La poesía es esto.
Y luego escríbelo.

End

Juan Gelman

Poetry is not a bird.
And it is.
It is not a lung, the air, my shirt,
no, none of that. And all of that.
Yes.
I have broken a violin against the dusk
to see what would happen,
I went to the stone and asked what's up.
But no, but no.
Not yet.
Have I forgotten that handkerchief
where an age-old waltz spins in silence?
I did not forget, look at my cheek
And you will realize, no, I did not forget
Did I forget the wooden horse?
Touch the child and you will say no
And then what?
Poetry is a way of living.
Look at the people at your side.
Do they eat? Suffer? Sing? Cry?
Help them fight for their hands, their eyes, their mouth,
for the kiss to kiss and the kiss to give away,
for their table, their bread, their letter a and their letter h,
for their past — were they not children?
For their future — will they not be children?
for their present, for the piece of peace, of history
and joy that belongs to them,
for the piece of love, big, small, sad, joyful,
that belongs to them and is taken away
in the name of what, of what?
Your life will then be an innumerable river to be called
Pedro, juan, ana, maria, bird, lung, the air, my shirt,
violin, dusk, stone, that handkerchief, old age waltz,
wooden horse
Poetry is this.
And then write it.

Chapter 2

Freedom in Practice: Art-Making and The Politics of Women's Incarceration

Life after prison can bring about as much uncertainty and as many hurdles as one would expect. Incarceration is a life-altering experience not only for the women doing time but also for their families and communities. Depriving women of their freedom creates ripple effects on personal, collective, and structural dimensions. Such effects do not dissipate when women are released from prison but, instead, are waiting on the outside to be confronted.

"One of the striking paradoxes of the bourgeois ideological tradition," writes Angela Davis, "resides in an enduring philosophical emphasis on the idea of freedom alongside an equally pervasive failure to acknowledge the denial of freedom to entire categories of real, social human beings" (Davis 1998, 53). Denial of freedom, undoubtedly, calls for a consideration of what becomes possible and sayable in the struggle for a new subjectivity under the conditions of an ever-growing, profit-driven carceral state. As women in Argentina transition from incarceration and, later, to their 'release' into freedom, they organize and fight against institutional violence. This chapter covers experiences of women participating in the collective YoNoFui, acquiring skills in the workshops, and making art to reimagine themselves and their lives after enduring incarceration.

For the past three decades, an increasing number of women have faced incarceration in Latin America (Boiteux et al. 2010). YoNoFui works to thwart such disquieting statistics through community-based approaches and grassroots efforts. YoNoFui translates to "It Wasn't Me,"

which is a humorous play on a common and ridiculed claim in prison. When the first group of women who met with Maria Medrano was trying to come up with a name for the collective, names such as "Breaking Chains" and "Freedom Wings" were debated. None of the suggestions seemed to work until someone said, "What about Yo No Fui? That's what they all say here!" The room burst into laughter, and the name was established. This collective works with women who have been involved in the criminal justice system and have experiences of incarceration, house arrest, or probation. They offer art-related workshops in women's prisons and the collective gathering space in the city of Buenos Aires. In this space, some participants had never been criminalized. Maria Medrano was also able to recruit several of her friends and acquaintances to teach various workshops, so the group was always a mix of people with various backgrounds.

In this chapter, I explore the ways women in Buenos Aires, Argentina, forge new political selves that contest the oppressive forces of the carceral state. The carceral state is a punitive cluster of formal institutions and informal processes that place vulnerable and marginalized populations under surveillance, criminalization, control, and confinement in prisons, jails, immigrant and juvenile centers, and other institutions (French, Goodman, Carlson 2020). Specifically, the chapter is concerned with expressions of subjective power that occur across multiple dimensions: at a personal level women altered what appear as inexorable destinies; at a communal level, women created bonds that strengthen their collective power and identity; and at a structural level, women organized to contest legal reforms that constrict the social life of prisons. I examine a journalism workshop offered outside of prison, a photography workshop offered inside the women's prison of Ezeiza, and the activism that YoNoFui engaged in during the time of my dissertation fieldwork. My analysis also addresses how recent political interventions in the Argentine criminal justice system create new challenges for women not only

because they reduce access to education in prison, but also because they undermine the potentials of collective power engendered by collectives such as YoNoFui.

Throughout this chapter, I conceive of the writing and art-making practices at YoNoFui as ways of becoming as well as expressions of collective power. The notion of becoming, as João Biehl and Peter Locke have recently theorized, "emphasizes the plastic power of people and the intricate problematics on how to live alongside, through, and despite the profoundly constraining effects of social, structural, and material forces, which are themselves plastic. Unfinishedness is both a precondition and a product of becoming... a feature as generative to art and knowledge production as it is to living" (Biehl and Locke 2017, x). Such a generative feature emphasizes that freedom, in this context, is a process of becoming and is enacted through the daily practices of art-making and activism.

In the space YoNoFui holds in the city, there is a sign that reads, "There is no body search that can see my soul." A participant wrote this in the poetry workshop in the women's prison to reflect on how YoNoFui enacts freedom. Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar (mathematician, philosopher, sociologist, and activist) warns us not to think of freedom as a lack of ties or an inexhaustible spectrum of possibilities (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2015). Feminist accounts of freedom are not devoid of relationships to others nor unaffected by structural and external impediments. Freedom can also be conceived, as philosopher Virginia Held suggests, as a practice aimed at inner processes of the self: "The self-development of women involves changing the affective tastes, the emotional coloration, with which we experience the world, not only the outer obstacles in that experience" (Held in Deveux 1996, 224). Shifting attention to the inner workings of freedom does not mean that the structural forces that impinge on freedom are left unattended. Along with the sign mentioned above, there are other signs, photos, and a variety of cultural

productions at YoNoFui that aim precisely at challenging state violence while strengthening the potential changes and growth made available by collective endeavors.

Since YoNoFui is also considered a women's collective, my ethnographic fieldwork contextualized the potential contributions of such spaces as well as the possible becomings of feminist political power. During this time, freedom for the collective unfolded as a struggle and an exhausting practice. Activism, teaching in prison, public scholarship, art exhibits, radio shows, and all the ways women made their work visible proved to be an arduous process. In one of the monthly *asambleas*, Isidra, one of the founding members of YoNoFui who was in charge of finances, told us that the collective was facing a problem: she had lost her signature. As the person in charge of signing a lot of the paperwork related to the collective, she went to the bank to make some transfers and could not remember how to sign. A woman in her late forties, she had had the same signature her whole life. Forgetting how to write her signature had never happened to her before. What she wanted to tell the collective was that the burdens of the labor-intensive tasks of keeping the collective afloat were being distributed unequally, and some members were doing more than they could handle. Isidra forgot what her signature was like because she was exhausted and overwhelmed with the number of responsibilities she was handling for the collective. She had been complaining about this for months with little change.

Maria Medrano faced similar difficulties, though I never heard her complain about it. As the founders, Maria and Isidra knew all the ins and outs. They knew all the people who had been involved in some way or another, and when something came up, or a new need presented itself, almost everyone, including myself, referred their questions to them. While I mentioned Maria never complained about this, her partner did. In another *asamblea*, Ale Rodriguez, a member of NiUnaMenos who was also a member of YoNoFui, complained that the collective was impacting

Maria's health and wellbeing. She mentioned there were phone calls at all hours, always with a new crisis to solve. To YoNoFui, Maria was the person who knew everything and everyone. For Alejandra, who was now living with this as well, it was becoming increasingly difficult to witness and live with, "*Maria atiende 27 ventanillas,*" she told us. "*Ventanillas*" refers to the glass windows that bank tellers or bureaucrats have for speaking to the public. In describing that Maria had 27 windows open, Ale was pointing out her experience of now living with Maria and witnessing how Maria was always doing many things at the same time. Though I certainly remember Maria being in a bad mood, she was still very patient, polite, and considerate when interacting with others. Everyone loved Maria, and formerly incarcerated women were particularly grateful to her. She did not like the attention and tried to emphasize that the focus should not be on her but the collective. Regardless, she worked very hard, wore many hats inside the collective, and was always pushing for more, and people did notice. She always insisted on writing more drafts to publish in the magazine, in adding more workshops in prisons, in more permits for women under house arrest, more events to make institutional violence visible.

As a collective, attempts at keeping the organization working at a horizontal level were constant. There were cleaning days in which everyone was invited to clean and tidy up the space. The *asambleas* were also part of those reminders that self-determination was part of what kept the collective running and that women constantly had to come up with new projects and new ways of imagining their futures.

For many, coming out of prison was a frightening experience: stigmatization and lack of resources on the outside can offer an even less supportive environment than the prison setting. In Argentina, incarcerated women are usually part of impoverished communities, victims of several forms of abuse, and minor actors in the drug-traffic industry. As women are released from prison,

most can only go back to the same precarious life they had before being detained, and with now the aggravating condition of a criminal record. In the face of such hardships, the cultural production and art-making practices of this women's collective opened up new paths of inquiry in which debating and redefining societal expectations for formerly incarcerated women became possible.

At the journalism workshop in YoNoFui, one exercise invited participants to reflect on the multiple meanings of 'going out.' Since meanings included going out for the evening, dating someone, and getting released from prison, women considered how these meanings shifted depending on context. Women also shared their anxieties and anguish they felt before getting out of prison. When thinking about 'going out' as in getting out of prison, one of the participants concluded "I don't expect anything from the other." "I do" interrupted Paula, another participant who had never been incarcerated but at the time was unhoused. "I consider that both positions are valid, but in my case, I *always* expect something from the other. I like having a space that you share with the other from the get-go, since one alone cannot get much done." The debate turned toward privilege, personal agency, and potentials while also attending to the impact that incarceration has on a person's life. When Paula intervened with her acknowledgement of interdependence, she brought up questions of individual responsibility and its limitations.

Feminist forms of political practice can reshape consciousness as well as the social fabrics of this capitalist world toward other more inclusive worlds. For example, one of the workshops offered inside the women's prison is on carpentry. While initially some women might be skeptical about this trade, it soon became an embodiment of everything that is possible through self-determination. In the carpentry workshop incarcerated women built a mobile bookshelf, repaired the playground in the visiting area, and built children's tables and chairs to sell through the collective. Through this work, they redefined not only their capabilities but also

their environment. Women forged new selves (as carpenters, poets, photographers, workers) as they grappled with the oppressive consequences of confinement and the trauma of institutional violence. As women sought practices that enabled freedom, they engaged in a politics of becoming that altered the structural forces at play.

Collective endeavors

"Without community, there is no liberation," writes the poet and activist Audre Lorde, adding that "poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence." Poetry, affirms Lorde, is how we name the nameless: "It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action" (Lorde 2007 [1984]: 37,112). While YoNoFui strove to create a community for liberation, their work revealed the multiple dimensions of becoming that are required in their efforts to end the gendered and institutional violence to which incarcerated women in Argentina are subjected. Such becomings not only illuminate the ways freedom is enacted as a practice, they also foreground the work of creativity that women accomplished in order to contest the constrictive forces of the carceral state.

From the outset, YoNoFui was thought of not so much as a pedagogical space, where people from 'outside' would teach those 'inside;' rather, it aimed to be a space of communion, where women came together to create and envision fertile futures for themselves and their families. The idea behind this project of encounters consisted of allowing freedoms to be expressed in manners not considered before, and of inviting its participants to think of themselves in new ways.

"I am an artist without her art!" is what Ricarda often claimed, explaining that she participated in many workshops but still had to find her talent. Ricarda arrived to YoNoFui in 2013 as part of her probation in which she had to fill a certain amount of hours in a social organization of her choice. Ricarda was never incarcerated but was arrested after her dog attacked a small child and an altercation ensued. When she was arrested, she worried about where her dog was taken and about who would care for her disabled mother. In the end, since the child was not badly injured, she reunited with her dog, was able to continue caring for her mother. A friend of hers, a social worker member of the collective, suggested she joined YoNoFui. Ricarda completed her hours successfully and chose to become part of the collective, continuing to participate in the workshops and activism to this day. I remember her taking the drawing workshop and a workshop on how to fix sewing machines. The workshop in which she was a permanent fixture was the journalism workshop where we were always amazed at her expressive talent. It is impossible to translate her work to the page because when she read her texts there was always a performative rhythm, a reference to something that was happening during that particular week, lots of slang, and the texts were neither clearly prose nor verse. She concocted her own performance every time and made up words often.

Ricarda was tall and skinny and whenever she could she would bicycle to YoNoFui's space in Palermo from her apartment in the neighborhood of San Cristobal. Ricarda was the main caretaker for her disabled mother and besides caring for her mother, Ricarda spent a lot of her time in Parque Centenario selling used clothes she received from donations. Her appearance oscillated between offering hints that she must have been really beautiful as a young woman, to wondering about her mental health. My favorite quality about Ricarda was her sense of humor, and while others might scratch their heads trying to figure her out, Ricarda and I always

understood each other very well. Some events that made others puzzled about Ricarda included a failed attempt to visit the women's prison because she brought along her subway card instead of her ID, carrying a trash bag all the way from YoNoFui to her house thinking it was a bag of clothes, and showing up to events on the wrong date.

At the workshops, Ricarda told us about her daughter, and how she was trying to mend the relationship with her. When Ricarda was younger, she was middle-class and worked with her father at a real-estate agency. Her plans to inherit her father's agency were thwarted when she got involved with a man and became addicted to *paco*. From that period, Ricarda lost almost everything and severed her relationship with her daughter, a lighting professional who worked in theaters. Ricarda was always talking about her daughter and how proud she was of her, but with sadness she also mentioned how her daughter has remained somewhat distant from her since her drug use.

YoNoFui was a sober space. This was important because it wasn't uncommon to have participants in recovery so alcohol was never present in their spaces and events. During the time I knew her, Ricarda had some relapses. In particular, I remember Selene complaining about finding Ricarda smoking in the bathroom during the journalism workshop. The bathroom at YoNoFui was shared with the neighboring spaces. It was located outside, in between YoNoFui and the next-door space which was used as a communal kitchen and as a theater school. The bathroom was a small space, with a toilet with no seat and a wonky flapper, and a sink with a faucet that barely worked but which we used to get the water for the *mates*. It was almost a public restroom that sometimes offered interesting surprises, but the people next door, who prepared meals to distribute for free, were pretty good at keeping it clean. Carmen, for example, refused to use that bathroom. If she had to, she would walk to a restaurant nearby and ask to use

their restroom. Carmen was a clean freak who used bleach so often to clean her bathroom while incarcerated that she lost most of her fingerprints. Her fingertips are smooth and this created some problems during her conditional release as it was often very difficult to get her fingerprints. One would think it is a master plan for a criminal but in her case it was really due to her high standards for clean bathrooms.

After Ricarda was warned that she would not be able to participate in the collective unless she respected the space's rules, I never heard about another complaint and I know she continues to participate until today. Her past drug use might explain some of her odd behavior, but to me Ricarda was as she described herself, "an artist without her art," always wandering and discovering new crafts, trying to build a life while caring for her mother and participating in a collective that invites her to channel her creativity. As part of the journalism workshop, Ricarda became part of the editorial team of *YoSoy*. Ricarda was in charge of replying to letters sent to the magazines and offering advice. While she joked that she was an artist without her art, Ricarda's contributions to the collective were plentiful. She was outspoken and unafraid to share her ideas. She participated at events and was interested in bringing down walls that separated people. Even though she had not been incarcerated, she was committed to building a movement against state violence and to writing in untraditional ways that made us reflect about our social context.

YoNoFui aimed to provide visible and tangible connections between lives on the inside and the outside. For example, every year YoNoFui organizes poetry readings outside the penitentiary at cultural centers and in their space in the city of Buenos Aires. Incarcerated women are able to attend these events by requesting special permits approved by the judges assigned to their cases. Poets are also invited to guest-lecture at the women's prison, the way Mariano Blatt

did, to strengthen the bridges and connections to worlds outside of prison. This dynamic, of coming out and inviting in, introduced and connected people who never would have met otherwise. Cultural events that include incarcerated women are spaces that support the formation of communal bonds between those incarcerated and those on the outside. These bonds are crucial in preventing women from going back to prison after they are released.

The purpose of such cultural events, and the workshops, is to encounter one another, and bridge the gap of what is considered outside and inside. The poetry workshop, for instance, involved a close-knit group of women who continued to meet after their release. As such, the workshops offered on the outside were conceived to support women's transitions. Their aim was to inspire self-management practices for careers that allowed them to work from home and on their own schedules. The workshops were always led by pairs. By having two people facilitate a workshop there is always a sense of support, somebody else who is always there to help tackle the varying issues that may arise. When discussing certain topics that might be triggering, or if a debate turns heated, there is always someone available to go for a walk, and the workshop can continue with the work.

YoNoFui grew into a non-profit civic association that offered a variety of art-related workshops until finally reaching its current status as a worker cooperative. As Lorde writes, community is key for liberation, and YoNoFui offers a communal space where writing poetry is one of the ways women can begin to enact their future visions and affect their living conditions. Writing and art-making emerge as processes of becoming which empower incarcerated women and their families, while also strengthening the social fabrics of the community at large. However, as women move away from the dehumanizing practices of prison life, these becomings toward freedom prove to be no easy feat. Freedom and struggle are always reworked in this

process, and writing and art-making help illuminate the ways having a community and a safe space to meet can provide sustenance and form networks of support that were not always there.

My ethnographic analysis highlights freedom not so much as a fixed idea, but as a practice, assuming different meanings depending on the individual who enacts it. Writing is a practice of freedom. Working to redefine social roles is also a practice of freedom. Expressing one's identity outside the heteronormative framework of sexuality can be a practice of freedom, as I will describe in Paula's story. The efforts carried out by the collective YoNoFui that are part of this chapter involve writing in the journalism workshop, taking photographs while in prison, and engaging in social activism to influence law reforms on incarceration issues. These examples contextualize how enacting freedoms is a demanding and ongoing practice. In *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*, Angela Davis describes the work of the grassroots organization Transgender, Gender Variant, Intersex Justice (TGI Justice) in San Francisco Bay Area. This organization, led by trans women of color, calls for a dialectic of service provision and abolitionist advocacy. Davis cites their work to depict a kind of feminism that urges us to be flexible, and to warn readers against becoming too attached to our objects of study, or objects of political organizing. According to Davis, the TGI project shows us that the process of trying to assimilate into an existing category (such as 'woman' or 'freedom') in many ways runs counter to efforts to produce radical or revolutionary results (Davis 2016, 100-101). Feminist abolitionist efforts then involves working to undermine the normative assumptions of the concept of freedom, understanding that freedom can happen both inside and outside of prisons.

At YoNoFui enacting freedom meant to be part of the politics of liberation that works towards prison abolition. It involved, among other things, visiting government offices, writing press releases, calling in to radio shows, participating in panels, calling lawyers and social

workers, applying for funding, teaching workshops, traveling back and forth to prisons (which almost always involve inconvenient locations), meeting with potential sponsors, volunteers, or partners, attending gatherings with other social organizations, protesting, creating media content to share on social media websites, constantly negotiating with the penitentiary system about what is allowed and what is possible in a workshop taught inside a prison, taking testimony about women's experiences inside the prison, the courts, and the public healthcare system, and attending and providing testimony to congressional meetings where legislation concerning incarceration is being considered. YoNoFui relied on the assistance of volunteers, state funding from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development, and contributions from friends and acquaintances who were lawyers, social workers, psychologists, artists, and entrepreneurs. Enacting freedom in YoNoFui's case involved a constant process of becoming. YoNoFui relied on funding from various sources, and each source was examined on a case-by-case basis. For example, while YoNoFui was highly critical of the penitentiary, they did partner with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development to offer workshops inside and outside prisons.

Although YoNoFui relied on state funding, donations and volunteers for their work, this does not mean that they were indiscriminate about what they received but rather that they were able to work because of a complex network of interdependence. When the Ministry of Security wanted to pay for an advertisement in the collective's magazine, *YoSoy*, the collective refused and declined their payment, even though the magazine was in serious need of financing. But the collective was clear in their message that the magazine was meant to be read in prisons. If the magazine printed ads for the Ministry of Security, the mission of the magazine would be threatened as it would appear to be in partnership with the penitentiary. Accordingly, YoNoFui

thoroughly vetted their partnerships to make sure they were consistent with YoNoFui's mission statements. Granted, there were disagreements about said partnerships; eventually, though, what became evident was that partnering and connecting with other organizations and sources of funding was one of the reasons why YoNoFui was able to survive and thrive. The flux in funding also meant that the organization was constantly changing and adapting to the political and economic context at hand.

When I first began fieldwork, YoNoFui was at a high point, enjoying the benefits of a decade-long policy change propelled by the Kirchner era, which focused on a Peronist agenda of empowering working-class and low-income communities.[8] A series of policies and measures were implemented that disbursed social assistance, such as the *Asignación Universal por Hijo* (AUH), which disbursed a monthly stipend for each child, up to a maximum of 5, under 18 years of age, prioritizing disabled and younger children. The Kirchner Era also provided additional funding for cultural centers, education, and partnerships with social organizations such as YoNoFui. These funding began to slowly deteriorate by 2015 and by the time I left fieldwork in 2017, under the government of Macri, funding sources were again limited and unreliable, and the collective shrank in size.

Next I offer a timeline of relevant moments in Argentina's complex history that impacted the organization during fieldwork. It covers laws enacted during the last military dictatorship that impacted the workings of the criminal justice system by protecting the military. It also distinguishes policies enacted during left-wing neoliberalism and how such policies varied from

[8] The Kirchner era refers to the presidencies of Nestor Kirchner (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015) which were characterized by the adoption of human rights policies, nationalization of industries, and an emphasis on workers' rights, among other things.

the more conservative and outwardly neoliberalism pushed by the government of Mauricio Macri.

Figure 1. Timeline of political events in Argentina

Writing as a way of becoming

The journalism workshop met once a week, on Thursdays, at YoNoFui's headquarters located in Palermo, a neighborhood centrally located in the city of Buenos Aires. At the headquarters they held main events, meetings, sold their products, and offered some of their workshops, in particular book-binding, drawing, silk-screening, and journalism. From the outside, the space has colorful walls decorated with graffiti murals and greenery. Inside, it is a loft-like space, with white-washed exposed brick. It is vibrant—cluttered with the stuff that participants have made,

the products that they sell, works in progress, and the stuff of making. There is usually a black cat named Luna, and women meet around a table. Luna, the eternally pregnant cat, had litters several times while I was there. While there was a vested interest in spaying her, Luna always managed to avoid getting placed in a crate, allegorically holding on to her own version of freedom.

In any given week, there might be between 5 and 20 women attending a workshop. As women arrive, there is always someone preparing *mate*, and putting some snacks together. If weather permits, they might take the workshop outside. On the inside walls, you can find posters advocating for prison abolition, photography from the women's prisons, or pictures claiming justice for women who were murdered while incarcerated. The journalism workshop starts at eleven o'clock in the morning and the first half hour is spent catching up and waiting for everybody to arrive. Usually before noon, slowly, a certain order is manifested and women begin their work. This work can involve reading book excerpts or newspaper articles and then writing in response to a prompt. Sometimes participants write a press release together, prepare questions for an interview, plan their messages for a women's march, or work on the content for their magazine, *YoSoy*. On occasion there are guest lectures where writers, lawyers, artists, and other friends of YoNoFui come to share their knowledge. On a typical day at the workshop, women engage in reading critical texts and writing exercises. Their writing is then read out loud and women discuss their differing ideas. It is not always easy, particularly for a new participant, to read aloud texts that were just written and are often very personal. But with time, women get familiar with this process and begin sharing their work more often.

Paula is one of the most committed members of YoNoFui. She has been part of the collective for many years, attending the journalism workshop weekly. She wears short hair and

prefers men's clothing. Even if people often refer to her as 'Sir' and think she is going to the wrong restroom, it is important for her to be recognized as a woman. Paula positions her identity to disrupt hegemonic understandings of womanhood and challenge heteronormative assumptions of what women should look like. On this day, she was wearing a black beanie and took a deep breath before reading. Paula is a performer, among other things. She participated regularly in the theater of the oppressed and is an outspoken activist involved with a number of organizations. Nevertheless, she is always shy before reading her material. She has some childlike mannerisms, like opening up her chest with pride while smiling with shyness and looking down. She has a piercing in her eyebrow, and besides her beanie, she was also wearing several layers of clothes. It was winter, and even though the workshop meets between eleven in the morning and two in the afternoon, the space was always cold. She hunched down to read and moved nervously. Grabbing the paper with shaky hands, she read:

> It moves, the branch moves. Women's movement, empowered women. Extraordinary movement of dissidences. It moves. Smell of sautéed onion and *mate lavado*. Texts with smell of scrambled ink. It moves with every heartbeat on the street. The drums and beat. It moves. We bring each other and distract each other. Movement of she-wolves. Explosive, furious movement. Movement and struggle. Disobedient voices, hoarse voices. The branch moves. If one yells, the world moves and all women respond. It moves and rage gets organized. We have arrived to disturb. We are the intruders. All the ones you've killed are today my muses. Hard voices, voices that do not quiet. Movement and struggle. We struggle for those who are not back. Here and elsewhere, up and down. We are the stone in your shoe, the ones keeping the score. We rebel against patriarchy. Brazen movement. Movement. Because we come out together, organized in unity.

When the reading ended, Paula tried to be serious, frowning her mouth for a few seconds until her face would blush and she couldn't hold her smile any longer, looking down but feeling proud. She apologized while beaming. I always wondered what part was her performance and what part was her sweetness.

Paula's presence at YoNoFui was always relevant because she had never been incarcerated nor involved with the criminal justice system. YoNoFui is not intended for incarcerated people only. It was always meant as a bridge, as a space of coming together. She was always outspoken about other prisons that are part of society. When she began attending the workshop, she had "*problemas de consumo*" as living on the streets often led her to use drugs and alcohol. According to her accounts (since this never happened while attending a workshop) she would also often get involved in violent situations as well as in aggressive behavior. Her presence in the workshop opened up meaningful conversations about belonging and the constructions of solidarity. When Paula got pregnant after being raped on the streets, she did not tell anyone. She was able to hide her pregnancy and one day she informed some members of the workshop that she was in the hospital and had given birth to a son. Due to a public policy put in place during the Kirchner era, Paula was able to rent a room through public assistance in a tenement house-turned-hotel for her and her child, and her life as an unhoused person ended.

During the time I knew her, I saw a lot of meaningful becomings in Paula's life: she committed to sobriety, secured stable income and housing, and got a handle on her anger management issues. From the first time I met her, Paula always liked to talk openly about her children. She told me about her daughter and her beautiful name, and explained to me that after an open adoption process, her daughter lived with her co-parents. The story with her youngest son is longer and complicated, but he is now placed in an open adoption as well. When we first met, her son was living in an orphanage close to YoNoFui and oftentimes she would visit the orphanage on her way to or from the workshop. She always thoroughly enjoyed spending time with the children present at YoNoFui and usually shared pictures of her children. Paula had a very playful personality, and it often seemed as though she enjoyed children more than adults.

She was always very aware and protective of the children present. In the heated debates and discussions that happened in the journalism workshop, it was always Paula who would remind us all that there were children in the space and we should watch our language and keep the dialogue amicable.

In her first years, Paula's involvement with YoNoFui was at times challenging. She often felt she did not belong and that she could not write about incarceration because she had never been "inside." She felt out of place yet she kept coming back, week after week, because she understood that having a place that felt safe and stable was important for her life. While she received help in paying her rent from the government, that assistance was contingent on her living with her child. When she started the process of adoption for her son, her living situation immediately became more precarious. The stress of going back to the streets was overwhelming for Paula. Enacting freedom, in this case, was keeping a consistent routine and commitment to the collective. At the workshop, she engaged in using her own voice and her experiences in her writing. It was a process that involved a lot of work on her part as she learned to deal with the frustrations of the writing process. Attending the weekly workshop was not always easy. There was always *mate* and company. There was always a willingness to understand the other and a desire to build solidarity, but considering the diversity of the women involved in the workshop, there were always disagreements, clashing personalities, and differing points of view.

When we read Virginie Despentes's *King Kong Theory,* a bold feminist memoir and manifesto, it sparked strong reactions. Paula liked the text, which is addressed to "the ugly ones: the old hags, the dykes, the frigid, the unfucked, the unfuckables, the neurotics, the psychos." The author, Despentes, writes:

> In my case, prostitution was a crucial step in rebuilding myself after the rape. A business of dollar-by-dollar compensation, for what had been taken from

> me by brute force. I must have kept intact whatever I could sell to each client. If I could sell it ten times in a row then it wasn't something that could be destroyed by use. My sex belonged to me only, it didn't lose value through being used, and it could be profitable. I was once again in an ultra-feminine position, but this time I was bringing in a profit (Despentes, 2010 [2006], pg. 67).

While the workshop usually focuses on Latin American authors and activists, participants often read texts such as Despentes's book that explore bountiful, controversial feminist questions that can be debated from diverse perspectives. Several older women in the workshop dismissed the idea that sex work could be liberating or empowering. Paula offered her insight into how you can be deprived of your freedom even if you are not in prison. And you can experience freedom in unpredictable places as well. You can be locked out on the outside by a bureaucratic system of public assistance that seems intent on excluding those in need. It was Paula's experience with the system on the outside that inspired her to become an activist. Paula wrote about her experiences living on the streets to emphasize that transient people are not all the same, that opportunities are worth giving, that safe spaces are important, and community building is key to practices of freedom.

Pinhole photography: Art as a way of becoming

In addition to creating a space for gathering, YoNoFui defends expressiveness whether it is through the written word, the products they create, activism, or their photography workshop. The photography workshop is taught inside one of the women's prisons in Ezeiza, Buenos Aires. One of the key features YoNoFui promotes is that of self-determination. A participant in the poetry workshop claimed: "It's no coincidence that the kind of reflection that allows for self-determination comes not only from a prison but from a women's prison. There is a matter of

gender in this issue: the difficulty in realizing your worth. Many of us come from violent and abusive situations. What the poetry and photography workshops achieve inside prisons is to get to those very personal and individual spaces, which you can say "This is untouchable." What poetry allows is for the personal to come out. And though this exercise, women explored how the personal is political.

In the essay "Narrating Ourselves Anew," art critic Jessica Lynne cites photographer Carrie Mar Weems because in her work, Weems concerns herself with investigating subjectivity in domestic and public spaces. Weems asserts that "to be concerned with the self or the autobiographical is inherently to attend to the relationships of power around which we negotiate, that impress upon us. In this way, autobiography becomes a conduit, a material component that troubles, confounds, or makes clears one's (many) relationship(s) to the world" (Lynne 2019, 142). Lynne invites us to consider the ways in which photography can rely on the autobiographical as a methodology for examining social infrastructures, and also as a celebration of a specific interiority or set of experiences. Her essay also cites Saidiya Hartman and her work *Lose Your Mother* to illustrate how the act of looking closely at one's own position within historical and social processes can help us understand their larger significance and reach (Lynne 2019).

In what follows, I present the photo exhibit '*Iluminaciones*' put together by YoNoFui. It shows a particular moment in time when women were learning about photography, exploring their identities, and questioning their surroundings. There are two elements about this photography workshop that are relevant to consider. One particularity of this women's prison in Buenos Aires is that it has a prison nursery. Prison nurseries are special prison units designed to keep mother and child together. In Argentina, over 80% of incarcerated women are mothers and

women in prison can choose to keep their children with them until the age of four. The photography workshop included participants who were housed in the prison nursery. Hence, in some of the images created by this workshop, babies or elements and spaces related to child-rearing are present. While the images present moments of intimacy, by no means they suggest that prison nurseries are acceptable spaces for women or children. Rather, they describe a temporal reality of women's lives and the ways they choose to represent it.

One other element to consider is that the photography workshop is taught using a special technique called 'pinhole photography.' Pinhole photography is lens-less photography. It consists of a small box with a tiny hole that replaces the lens. Light passes through the hole and an image is formed in the camera. Pinhole cameras are small or large, improvised or designed with great care. Cameras have been made of seashells, oatmeal boxes, soda cans, or cookie containers. A pinhole camera is simply a box, with a tiny hole on one side, and film or photographic paper on the opposite side. A camera used with the pinhole method can be made with empty matchstick boxes, like the ones used by YoNoFui, which are safe for prison due to their unthreatening character. While the visual imaginary of prisons might resemble a black box with a tinge of light that passes through a whole, the images from '*Iluminaciones*' contest that imaginary by precisely, through a black box, producing images filled with light. The colors enliven the images to disrupt and confound the viewer about the ways women carry their lives in prison.

Correctional institutions often blur distinctions between 'benefits' and 'rights' and the women's prison of Ezeiza was no exception. Visitations, proper nutrition, access to healthcare and education, being able to shower—these were all things that could be easily taken away for a variety of reasons (Price and Sokoloff 1982, Watterson 1996). Taking a class in prison was no different. It required vast amounts of effort and insistence, as the penitentiary operated with

plenty of paperwork moving at a snail's pace. Class materials were heavily inspected and sanctioned. The long commute was hard for those teaching when often students did not show up. A common explanation for these absences was that guards had "forgotten" to go get students for their classes. Other times, prison guards were late. Arbitrarily, the penitentiary could cancel daily activities without warning. In inviting women to write poetry or taking a photography class, YoNoFui is part of a project to imagine an otherwise when the rights of common decency are punitively withheld.

Educational spaces are disappearing in prisons, and classes like this one are rare. Following what Loïc Wacquant elsewhere referred to as 'law-and-order pornography,' the expansion of carceral politics takes place under a symbolic climate where "everyday incidents of "insecurity" are turned into a lurid media spectacle and a permanent theater of morality" (Wacquant 2009). Law-and-order pornography in Argentina expressed itself in the form of conservative cries for security that complained that people in prison had jobs while high rates of unemployment were surging nationwide. Judges were pressured into 'tough on crime' policies in a number of ways. For example, in 2015, I attended a trial with YoNoFui and other organizations to support judge Axel López as he was one of the very few judges that avoided harsh sentencing. Judge Axel López was on trial after granting daily leaves to a man that murdered a woman during his outing. While Judge López was absolved for following protocol (the man had been respecting his daily leaves for the past four months), the message was clear: the "revolving doors" of the prison, which allowed those deemed as criminals to be free, even if momentarily, should be closed. An inefficient criminal justice system, sensationalist stories that fed into a discourse of 'security,' and a sense that authorities are never held accountable, resulted in judges providing very limited permits for leaves and lawmakers pushing for a reform of the federal law

24.660 (which details the treatment of prisoners) to strengthen the penitentiary's grip on how sentences are carried out.

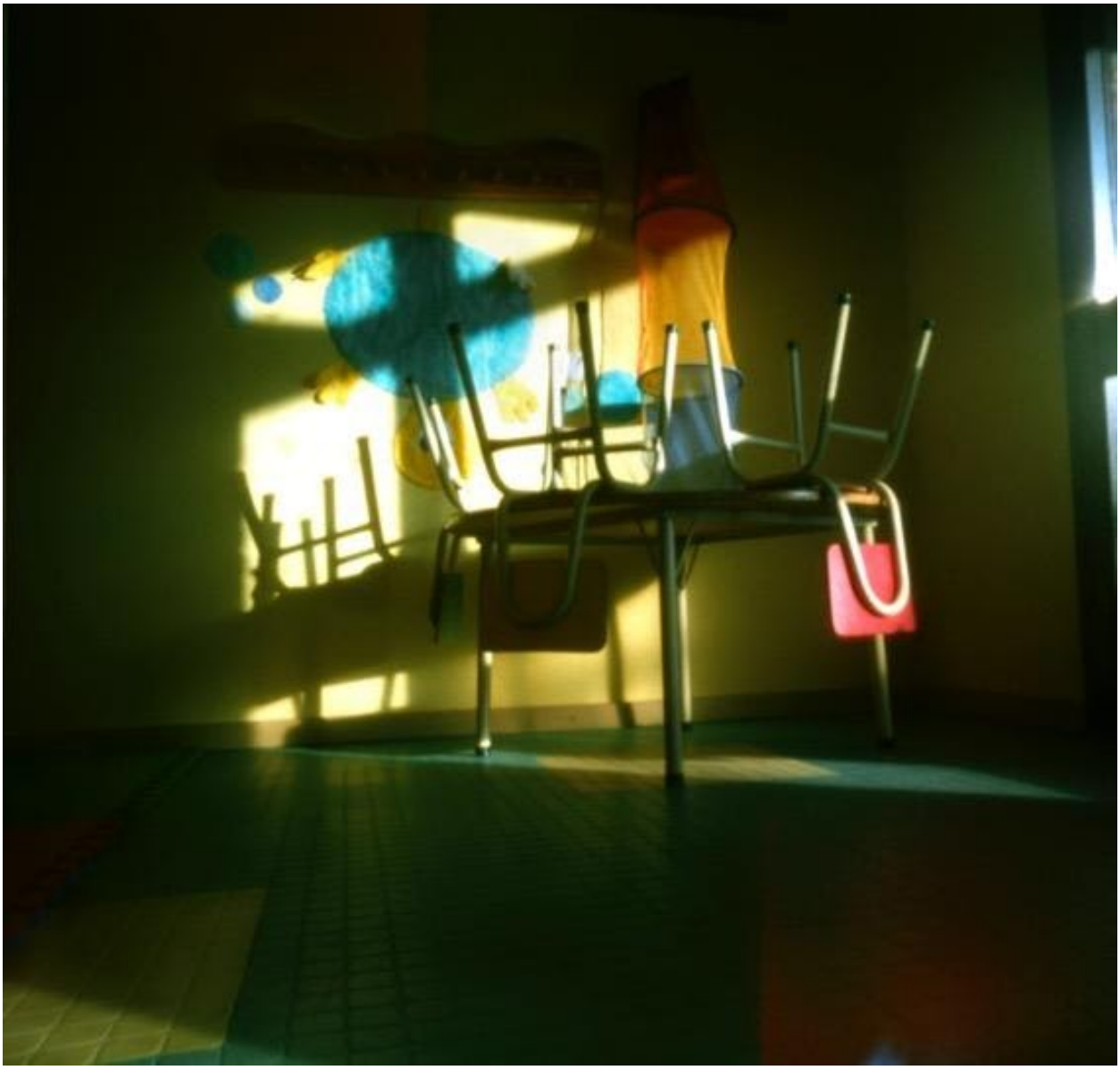
In this context, YoNoFui worked hard to make visible the ways in which revolving doors actually reduce recidivism and strengthen the support systems needed to thrive after prison. In 2014, the photo exhibit '*Iluminaciones'* showcased the work that emerged from the photography workshop. Following a multimodal framework that incorporates media into anthropological research, I share the following images produced collectively by YoNoFui. The premise of the workshop was to promote self-expression, to see the space the participants occupied from different viewpoints and, in turn, to think of themselves from a different perspective. Because pinhole photography takes a few minutes to capture an image, the time of image-making was meant for introspection. "Pinhole cameras invite for a reflection of the moment a photo is taken," said the class facilitator, Gabriela. "They require a more critical view to think about what the image will actually show."[9] While the photography workshop has now produced several exhibits, I chose to showcase '*Iluminaciones*' because most of the participants were present at YoNoFui during my fieldwork research, and I was able to witness as they presented their work in various galleries and cultural spaces. As they moved away from the prison and resisted on the outside, women who shared their photos were holding on to a particular time of their lives that afforded them the opportunity to discuss how collective endeavors, as well as light, can be found in what is often assumed as a black box.

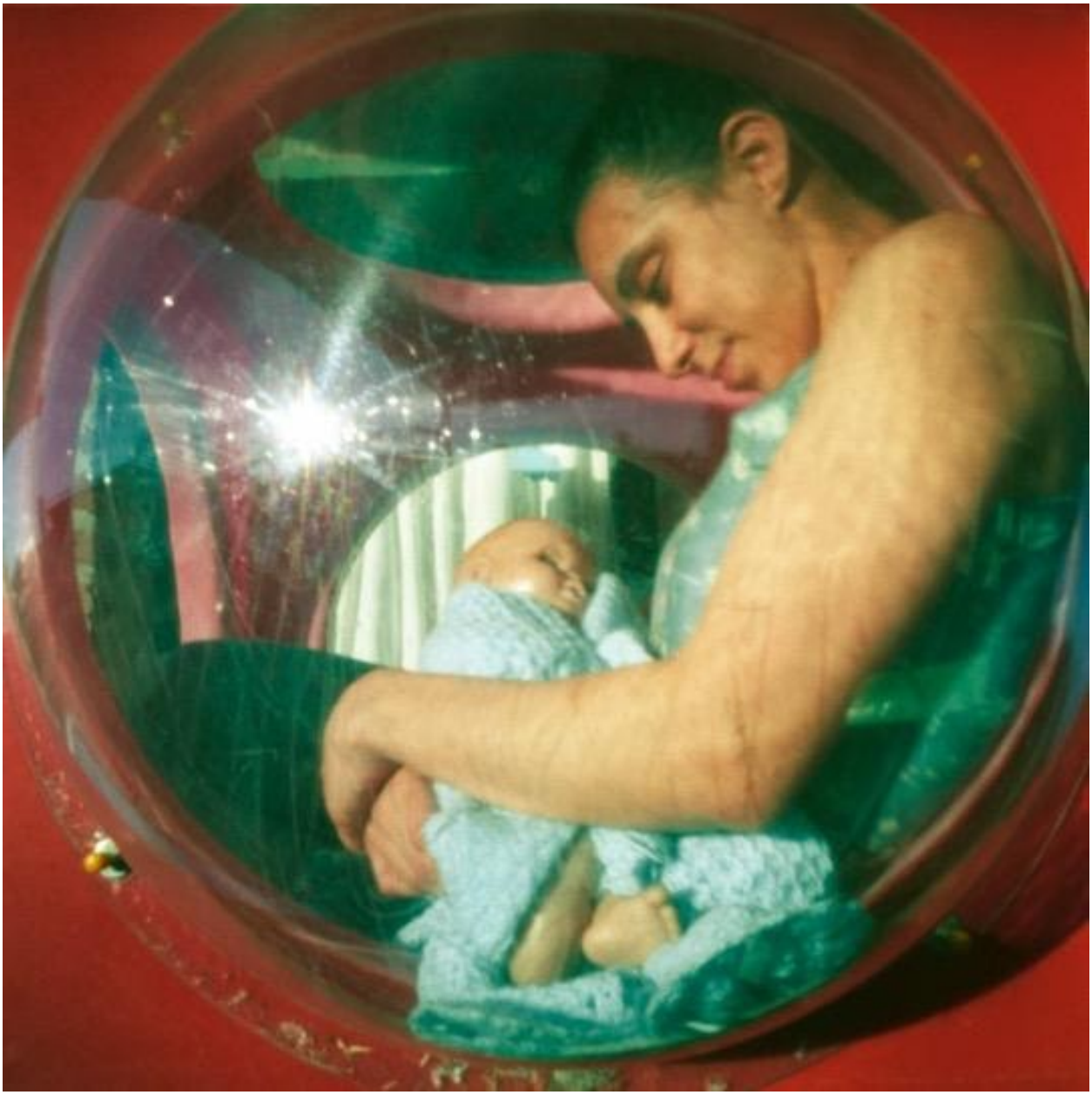
Multimodal anthropology acknowledges the centrality of media production to the everyday life of both anthropologists and our interlocutors (Collins, Durlington & Gill 2017). Multimodal anthropologies incorporate not only the visual, but also aural and tactile media that

[9] Excerpt from magazine *YoSoy*, Issue #2, 2016.

anthropologists produce, post, and share. Since my fieldwork was carried out in collaboration with the collective YoNoFui, I myself participated in the workshops where I learned how to make the notebooks for my fieldnotes, I learned the many steps involved in silk-screening, drawing, and the basics of textile design; and in the Appendix I share poems I wrote at the poetry workshop. Not because they showcase talent but rather because at YoNoFui poetry is a practice for everyone. Learning alongside the women of YoNoFui informed my understanding of the complex intricacies of each craft and the questions each brought out about how we relate to one another. At an event organized by the Universidad de San Martin in Buenos Aires, Carmen was invited as a panelist to discuss the bridges and continuums between the inside and outside. She stated: "With other incarcerated women we coincided that being in prison did not mean we were outside of society, we were very much inside of it. What happened is that society did not want to look at us." As with their poetry, in the images of '*Iluminaciones*' women express their desires and provide evocative fragments of their everyday lives. The photos represent their social interactions in a photography workshop in the women's prison of Ezeiza as well as a reflection on how pinhole photography as a method can enunciate new questions about collective selves.

Figure 2. “Iluminaciones” (Illuminations) - Photo exhibit by YoNoFui.






Javier

What begins as a class that a woman takes to get out of her unit for a while, a class that uses a camera made out of a matchstick box, can impact participants months and even years later: that same woman can then stand in a photo exhibit as an artist, able to discuss her work and talk about herself in a different way. To imagine herself, from another viewpoint: as a maker of images, as someone who is proactive in her life and deliberate in her expression, who has talent to share and who is able to express artistically. She becomes part of a meaning-making process and contributes to cultural productions that are worth looking at.

Regarding her experience in the photography workshop, Soledad, a member of YoNoFui, stated, "It was a space within the deprivation of my freedom that allowed me to make decisions, to have control over certain processes, even if the end result was uncertain."[10] While the prison setting strains opportunities to express oneself in artistic ways, both the poetry workshop and the photography workshop provide a platform where communication and projecting oneself as writers and artists become possible. Carmen, another workshop participant, noted that "when I take a picture, I look for the same thing as when I write: to translate an emotion, a heap of sensations from a specific moment... what seems inexplicable with words."[11] Further, in a prison setting where time moves at a particular pace and rhythm, somewhat fixed and structured, the photography workshop provides the alternative to imagine life otherwise— "photography gave me the possibility of reinventing my days, of reinventing the same patio," added Carmen.

The photography workshop is more than anything a space for gathering, for using the senses in a collective way, and for reflecting about emancipatory practices and alternatives to incarceration. In his essay, "Literature and Life," Deleuze writes:

[10] Excerpt from magazine *YoSoy*, Issue #2, 2016.
[11] Ibid.

> Even when it is a woman who is becoming, she has to become-woman and this becoming has nothing to do with a state she could claim as her own… To become is ...to find a zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferentiation… where one could no longer be distinguished as *a* woman, *an* animal, or *a* molecule - neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form (1998:1).

The exhibit '*Iluminaciones*' allows us to see how participating in a photography class in prison can lead to a photo exhibit in an art gallery. It involves a process of becoming, of strengthening a collective identity as well as an individual one, that seeks to promote change in the social life of prisons, to find a zone of proximity, as Deleuze expressed. When women surround the camera as a group to plan each photo they take, the photography workshop provides the platform to create strategies of personal and social becomings, since it involves a collective construction of the gaze. As described by the class facilitator, Gabriela, "these are not denouncement photos, but an attempt to capture the everyday lives of women deprived of freedom; they show the quotidian efforts women engage in to live, to mother inside prison walls, to build a space of light that allows them to resist and from there think about new possibilities."

Expressiveness is fostered in all YoNoFui's workshops not only among the women themselves but within the organization as well. For example, the textile design workshop often has participants who have been confined to house arrest interested in learning a skill and working from home with a sewing machine. One afternoon while in YoNoFui, I remember one of the 'facilitators'[12] of the workshop noticed that some of the pillows sewn by a woman under house

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[12] YoNoFui is a collective that works in a horizontal manner and the colloquial language often used in hierarchical work environments many times failed. As mentioned previously, YoNoFui also tried to move away from a pedagogical framework so I avoid the term 'teacher.' For more on 'horizontalism' (or *horizontalidad*) and social movements in Argentina, see the extended quotation from Colectivo Situaciones in: Marina Sitrin, *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina.* Oakland, CA: AK Press, pp. 53-55.

arrest had an added accessory, a pom pom attached to the zipper that solved a number of issues: it did away with the potential discomfort of the zipper and it eased the process of opening the cover of the pillow so that it could be removed for washing. This was used as a collaborative opportunity and it was decided that from that moment on, pillows will come with pompoms. Allowing different women to do their work from home opened up the possibilities in which creative expressions became possible through the work, invigorating moments of inventiveness that improved the product as well as strengthened the organization.

Activism against institutional violence

YoNoFui fosters community building through the workshops they offer and through the activist work in which they engage. While the collective often hosts cultural events such as poetry readings and festivals, they also participated in protests related to gender and institutional violence. YoNoFui designed and produced a big flag with their name 'YoNoFui - organización política y social,' and the borrowed phrase "the only thing unreal is the fence." The phrase gracing the flag is from a poem by Paco Urondo (1930-1976), a controversial figure who stood against state violence. He was also a writer and journalist and was assassinated by the Argentine Security Forces during the last military dictatorship. The poem, written while he was detained in a prison in Buenos Aires, reads:

La Verdad es la Única Realidad

Del otro lado de la reja está la realidad, de
este lado de la reja también está
la realidad; la única irreal
es la reja; la libertad es real aunque no se sabe bien
si pertenece al mundo de los vivos, al

mundo de los muertos, al mundo de las
fantasías o al mundo de la vigilia, al de la explotación o de la producción.
Los sueños, sueños son; recuerdos, aquel
cuerpo, ese vaso de vino, el amor y
las flaquezas del amor, por supuesto, forman
parte de la realidad; un disparo en
la noche, en la frente de estos hermanos, de estos hijos, aquellos
gritos irreales de dolor real de los torturados en
el angelus eterno y siniestro en una brigada de policía
cualquiera
son parte de la memoria, no suponen necesariamente el presente, pero
pertenecen a la realidad. La única aparente
es la reja cuadriculando el cielo, el canto
perdido de un preso, ladrón o combatiente, la voz fusilada, resucitada al tercer día en un vuelo inmenso cubriendo la Patagonia
porque las masacres, las redenciones, pertenecen a la realidad como
la esperanza recatada de la pólvora, de la inocencia
estival: son la realidad, como el coraje y la convalecencia
del miedo, ese aire que se resiste a volver después del peligro
como los designios de todo un pueblo que marcha hacia la victoria
o hacia la muerte, que tropieza, que aprende a defenderse, a rescatar
lo suyo, su
realidad.
Aunque parezca a veces una mentira, la única
mentira no es siquiera la traición, es
simplemente una reja que no pertenece a la realidad.

Paco Urondo, Cárcel de Villa Devoto, abril de 1973.

Truth is the Only Reality[13]

On the other side of the fence is the reality, on
this side of the fence there is also
reality; the only thing unreal
is the fence; freedom is real although it is unknown

[13] Translation by the author.

if it belongs to the world of the living, to
the world of the dead, to the world of
fantasies or to the world of surveillance, exploitation or production.
Dreams are dreams; memories, that
body, that glass of wine, love and
the feebleness of love, of course, form
part of reality; a shot in
the night, in the forehead of these brothers, of these children, those
unreal wails of real pain of those tortured in
the eternal and sinister angelus of a police brigade
anybody
is part of the memory, they don't necessarily suppose the present, but
belong to reality. The only apparent reality
are the fences squaring the sky, the lost
chant of a prisoner, thief or combatant, the voice
shot, resurrected on the third day in an immense flight covering the Patagonia
because the
massacres, redemptions, belong to reality as
much as the demure hope of gunpowder, as the innocence
of summer: they are reality, like courage and the convalescence
of fear, that air that refuses to come back after danger
as the outlines of a whole people that march towards victory
or toward death, death that stumbles, learns to defend itself, to rescue
what belongs to itself, its
reality.
Although sometimes it seems like a lie, the only lie
is not even treason, it is
simply the fences that do not belong to reality.

Paco Urondo, Prison of Villa Devoto, April 1973.

YoNoFui's flag borrows the phrase, "The only thing unreal is the fence" because part of their work is to challenge the prison system and make visible its institutional violence. According to one of the founders, Maria, their goal is not to "make prison better," but to support women before, during, or after incarceration. This involves engaging in activist practices and bureaucratic and legal procedures to improve the living conditions of women, both inside and

outside of prisons. During 2014-2017, part of this political work involved disputing the reforms of the federal law 24.660. This law details the specific ways in which deprivation of freedom should be carried out by the state: how individuals should be treated while incarcerated, the disciplinarian methods involved, the rewards, access to work, education, healthcare, spirituality, social and family relations, and social assistance after prison. YoNoFui contested these reforms which they considered regressive as they involved harsher sentencing, reduction of parole (mandating to serve the full sentence instead), cuts in the day leaves that are allowed once the release date approaches, and almost no access to education.

Other repressive measures are expressed in unnecessary hurdles in gaining access to education. In 2016, the penitentiary decided that no cameras were allowed in the photography class, so YoNoFui had to resort to offering a theoretical photography class. From that class emerged the photo exhibit 'Imágenes Guardadas,' which displays written descriptions of imagined photos, and the photos that other women took on the outside, based on the descriptions. The exhibit was hosted at the Matienzo cultural center, in the neighborhood of Almagro, in Buenos Aires, and it was successful in both strengthening the links between the inside and the outside and making visible the impacts that institutional violence has on educational spaces.

The law reforms in question seek to reduce not only educational opportunities (currently available to only 3% of incarcerated individuals), but healthcare benefits and work opportunities as well. The reform switched the language to emphasize work, health care, and education as 'benefits' rather than rights. These benefits are left to the discretion of the penitentiary to decide which inmates, if any, can receive them. Further, the reform neither considers nor suggests the implementation of policies (such as work quotas) to address the discrimination individuals with criminal records face once they are released. Work prospects for formerly incarcerated

individuals, especially when they cannot invest their time while incarcerated in education or work experience, become slim to none (Han 2017). Such hurdles become harder for women who are often single heads of households, solely in charge of childcare (Oaks 2015).

Concomitantly, this reform endorses the penitentiary as the sole power in charge of incarcerated lives since it greatly reduces the participation of outside professionals (offering classes, workshops, or other types of 'benefits'). Professionals who work outside the penitentiary are critical in making the transition to a life away from prison possible. Before the reform, the judicial power was in charge of handling those on parole, conditional release, or any other alternative in sentence completion (such as house arrest). With the new modifications, the penitentiary system alone will be in charge of the entirety of the sentence. Lawmakers appealed to 'closing the revolving door' to justify the reduction in alternatives to incarceration. 'Closing the revolving door' also means reducing access to education and the connections to social organizations and universities, therefore diminishing the permeability between the outside and the inside. Without incentives for education, the prison will in fact turn into a much more closed system overseen and controlled by the penitentiary alone.

The penitentiary system in Argentina is infamous for obliterating prisoner's rights, for torturing, and for allowing murders disguised as 'suicides' on a regular basis. YoNoFui often advocated for the case of Florencia Cuellar, a former participant who was brutally attacked and died while incarcerated.[14] The Observatory against Gendered Violence (OVG) in Buenos Aires denounced violent searches at the women's prison of Los Hornos after prison guards destroyed

[14] From 2009 to 2012 the following women died while in prison: María Laura Acosta, Cecilia Hidalgo, Yanina Hernández Painnefil, Silvia Nicodemo, Romina Leota, Vanesa García Ordoñez, Ema Alé, Noelia Randone y Florencia Cuellar. The penitentiary never clarified the details of their deaths, and eventually began referring to them as suicides. Accesed from https://agenciaparalalibertad.org/festival-por-el-esclarecimiento-de-la-muerte-de-florencia-la-china-cuellar/

women's property, transferred five women to another prison and placed several others in solitary confinement on the night of November 26, 2016 (Calotti 2016). The next day there was a scheduled student event to celebrate the end of the academic year, with several university professors in attendance. The event did not take place and the women were punished. These forms of violence are one of the many that are routinely executed in prison settings. Granting more power to such a system, and reducing checks on control within it, can only worsen living conditions inside the prison walls.

This law reform directly affects the work of YoNoFui as they will no longer be able to offer their workshops in the women's prison. It will no longer be possible to pursue the goals of learning a trade or acquiring a high school degree (or elementary school degree) while incarcerated. Carmen, a member of YoNoFui, testified against the reform, letting legislators know that she came to know YoNoFui as an incarcerated woman. She spent eight years behind bars, and during that time she came in contact with the workshops offered by YoNoFui, specifically, the photography and poetry workshops. She declared that it is through her participation in those workshops that today she can have a life where her writing and her voice matter. She also testified that while she was incarcerated the workshops were the only spaces where she could feel like a person. After participating in the workshops, she was able to fund her *editorial cartonera*, a press that publishes books using cardboard and recycled materials. During her testimony, she stressed that, although she was the founder, this was a collective effort in which her classmates assisted and supported her to make this project happen. As Lorde describes, "Interdependency between women is the only way to the freedom which allows the I to 'be,' not in order to be used, but in order to be creative" (Lorde 1984, 111). This interdependency of

acknowledged and equal difference is what generates the power to imagine and create other ways of being in the world, such as a women's collective like YoNoFui.

The reforms to constrict the social life of prisons come on the heels of a highly repressive and punitive discourse that correlates with the expansion of neoliberal policies. This was not always the case, as historian Lila Caimari recounts in *Apenas un Delincuente. Crimen, castigo y cultura en la Argentina 1880-1995.* In her historical analysis, Caimari describes how, beginning in the late 1800s and growing into the 1930s, an imaginarium of the convicted as an individual worthy of compassion coupled with a thorough depiction of the prison setting as rampant with plentiful forms of abuse, shifted the public discourse to the view that the punitive experience of the carceral setting was utterly ineffective (Caimari 2012). The advent of dictatorships that plagued Argentina and the advancement of capitalism, slowly but steadily dissolved the humanization of those incarcerated, or, for that matter, any sense of communal bonds. As Diana Taylor describes it, "Just as human beings disappeared, so did civil society" (Taylor 1997).

Anthropologist Rita Segato introduces the term "pedagogy of cruelty" to refer to the preying capitalist economic structures that require unmitigated individualism and the dissolution of communal bonds to sustain its power. The "pedagogy of cruelty" teaches us that relationships among objects are elevated from relationships of communal bonds, hence making empathy undesirable among community members. It affects our capacity to put ourselves in the shoes of the other, which is the condition for empathy, care and respect. Our skin only gets thicker and mass media foments that morbid pulse (Segato 2016). Maria, one of the founding members of YoNoFui, wrote an article for a major newspaper stating how this reform violates the principle of resocialization, which is the only basis for conviction in the current Argentine Constitution (Medrano 2017). It also violates International Treaties to which Argentina is a signatory,

worsening prison conditions by overcrowding, increasing health risks for prisoners, and intensifying the risk of violence and death. Reducing the day passes and the benefits that accumulate as the release date approaches removes the motivation for those imprisoned to follow rules. Standardizing how one spends time incarcerated means that it ceases to matter how one invests one's time while in prison, presupposing that individual behavior does not count. Whether you study, work, learn a trade, have good conduct, or do absolutely nothing makes no difference for the system. Sentencing is the same, regardless of your actions. The motivations and encouragement to avoid prison life and seek opportunities for work and/or education become a moot point as confinement becomes an inexorable destiny.

YoNoFui's trajectory inside and outside of prison affirms that being able to study and work while in prison, and having incentives such as day passes, broadens the network of affective relationships and financial support. This network makes it possible for individuals to lead a life outside the prison system. The progressiveness involved in sentencing, that is, the privileges that one accrues as one is about to be released, prepares individuals for life on the outside by making the transition a slow process, rather than an abrupt change.

For lawmakers who want to address 'the revolving door' and prevent recidivism, Maria's article suggested two bills that are at stake to address employment opportunities after incarceration. One affects YoNoFui to the core as it pertains to allowing people with criminal records to be part of the administrative council of cooperatives. For YoNoFui, becoming a worker cooperative involved a great deal of slow arduous labor. It was devastating to learn that some of its founders, because of their past convictions, could not hold any official position within the cooperative that they themselves built. YoNoFui and other organizations working with formerly incarcerated people have been campaigning for the last few years to get this regulation

modified. The other bill proposes to hold employers accountable for fulfilling work quotas for people with criminal records. Thus, rather than enforce harsher sentencing and aggravate prison conditions, a better alternative would be to generate public policies that ameliorate the conditions of life after prison. When discussing recidivism, the experience of freedom is one that should encompass social inclusion and employment opportunities to create feasible opportunities for those who regain their freedom.

Freedom as struggle

The work of YoNoFui challenges the perception of the prison as a closed institution. The collective demonstrates and insists that the prison is very much entrenched in society and there is a relevant continuum between the prison and civil society. Public policies that aim at 'closing the revolving door' reduce educational opportunities in prison and the traffic of individuals from the outside. Offering opportunities such as spaces of education is a better alternative than empowering an already punitive and corrupt system. In the journalism workshop offered in the prison of Ezeiza, Silvia, one of the participants, wrote:

> Writing provokes spaces of reflection in which we can assimilate the different emotions that traverse us. Rage, anger, impotence and anguish translate onto the paper to become something else. And that mutation begets the possibility of processing that pain differently. That is also what our work is about: thinking of ourselves *with* others, finding ourselves in a text or in a poem, and thriving together.
>
> Why do I sometimes feel invisible?
>
> I want my life back, my freedom, my family and I only have one objective: 'Behave well' but on this side, what does that mean?

> It means putting up with all the shit that comes my way, every injustice, every threat, I feel that as the days go by, 'behaving well' means I need to annul myself, minimize myself in this world where the loudest rules, it sucks…. Just to regain my freedom I have to be invisible….

The prison system is designed to make people like Silvia feel the way she does. Interventions such as the ones YoNoFui offers grant women the space to come together and expand their political imagination. This is not a job training program; nor is it a therapeutic exercise, either. Their work is presented as a tool to promote new practices for new social roles. Ines, a member of YoNoFui from the initial days, frequently mentioned a memory from her life prior to incarceration that reveals traces of her new self. She recalled that on sunny days her neighbors, also stay-at-home moms, would often comment "What a nice day to wash clothes" (and hang them on a clothes-line). She confessed that whenever she heard that comment, she would think "What a great day to have an affair!" Ines has six children. She has been married for more than 35 years to a man she calls 'Bigotes' (Moustaches), and she often boasted that as a Scorpio she knew to keep the passion alive. They also enjoyed holding hands when they walked together and they talked several times on the phone throughout the day.

Out of all the women at YoNoFui who were engaged in partnerships or marriages, Ines' spouse was the one I saw most frequently. As a taxi driver, he would often come to pick her up or at least drop by to say hello if he happened to be in the area. As befitted his nickname, he did have a mustache and a friendly manner, and if he sometimes had to witness meetings that were running late, it was clear that he was not only comfortable with the space but also very supportive. YoNoFui was very important for Ines. Even though she had many family demands, not only from her children but also from her in-laws, she devoted a lot of her time to the collective and was always very clear as to why.

Before incarceration, Ana Inés was a happy wife and a happy mother. Raising six children in La Boca, her life revolved around the household and her caretaking duties. When you meet Inés, you immediately notice her nurturing personality. Though she enjoyed talking about sensual practices, she was a very hard worker usually taking care of those around her. At YoNoFui she was always making sure guests had a *mate*, or a pastry, or a book, or whatever it was that they needed to feel included.

When Inés talked about incarceration, she describes the experience almost in a positive light. In part, this reflects the hardships she encountered once she was released. One unexpected surprise came when she was finally back home and she could not fully recognize the home she had inhabited for so many years. There was a door she did not remember being there. Doing the dishes felt odd after years of using plastic cutlery; the weight of her own dishes only made her feel like a stranger in her old house. Her children had developed a new system with new rules and now, as a new intruder, she had to learn and adapt to their choices. Even though she was 'framed,' she is in many ways grateful for the experience. Being away from her children, knowing that overnight both she and her husband were taken away leaving their children to fend for themselves was traumatic for everyone. The experience of incarceration was difficult as well. Her relationship with her husband, ever so loving, also came at a crossroads.

Inés had a close friend who happened to be a man. Before prison, she would often see this friend behind her husband's back. Bigotes was the type of man who thought women could not be 'just friends' with men. When Inés was detained, her friend decided to visit her in prison and this did not sit well with Bigotes. When Bigotes confronted her about it, she clearly stated that she had no issues with getting her own lawyer and getting divorced. She had reached her limit, and she would not give away any more of herself. With everything she was going through, her friend's visits were one of the few things she had left, and she was not willing to give that up.

While in prison, Inés found herself. She discovered art and art-making as a way to get in touch with herself. Ana became Inés and never went back. After she was exonerated, she always made sure to carve out time for herself, which she usually spent at YoNoFui. While before prison she went by Ana or Ana Inés, after prison she made sure people only called her Inés. Being part of the Social Support team was one of her many duties in YoNoFui. We were a small group of three members. Her presence was vital in our team since there were occasions in which women could only speak to someone who had gone through the experience of incarceration.

In 2002, Maria decided to offer a poetry workshop in a women's prison, and slowly, YoNoFui began to take shape. Today, more than fifteen years later, the organization is supported by women's work and by contributions from other institutions (such as the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Social Development, and Universidad de Buenos Aires), small businesses, artists, and volunteers. Their objective is to make visible the particular needs that incarcerated women and their families have; to promote respect for human rights; and to strengthen the constitution of collective endeavors. Collective endeavors can bring about social transformation through their self-reflective action, their capacity for resistance, and by providing a discursive space where collaboration emerges from a critical and liberating perspective. Collective endeavors open up new critical spaces where collective strategies for individual and social transformation become possible.

This chapter has argued that expressions of subjective power that contest the oppressive forces of the carceral state are produced through collectives such as YoNoFui in Buenos Aires, Argentina. These are meaningful becomings of women transitioning out of prison life, who organize social events and protests, while also producing art together. My analysis addressed how recent political interventions in the Argentine criminal justice system create new challenges

for women by reducing access to education in prison and also by discouraging efforts from collectives such as YoNoFui. Their writing and art-making practices redefine freedom as a process and a struggle that always needs reworking and is in a constant state of unfinishedness. In this case, enacting freedoms is an exhausting and ongoing practice. The collective, however, not only contributes with critical prison perspectives and feminist interventions to the criminal justice system, but also as a source of social support. Collective endeavors, such as YoNoFui, provide a safe space for feminist practices to strengthen their social fabrics and politics.

The poem I present below is from Macky Corbalán, a poet from the south of Argentina who died in 2014 at the age of 51. Macky Corbalán was a life-long activist who found feminism after her church penalized her for coming out as lesbian. In an interview for Almacen Literario, Macky Corbalán states that she thought she was a feminist because she was a lesbian, but after joining the movement, she realized it was also because she was a woman. For her, feminism is about liberation, not just women's liberation—liberation from imposed roles that oppress men as well as women and gender non-conforming. After joining a lesbian activist group, she came to understand patriarchy as an integral system that encompasses it all. Following Foucault, their goal was to focus on micropolitics and find freedom in the quotidian rather than in the individual categories (such as worker, woman, middle-class). Corbalán sees poetry as the genre of writing against power, and sees poets, like lesbians, as dissidents of the hegemonic system of dominance.

Humanos
Macky Corbalán

Leo en ellos como en páginas escritas.
Atravieso sus órganos opacos, su piel,
el susceptible hilado de los nervios.
Es lo de siempre, lo de cada época:
rencillas, acuerdos y desánimo. Una cosa
no entiendo: esa oscura,
repentina agitación
cuando recuerdan.

Humans
Macky Corbalán

I read in them like I read written pages.
I traverse their opaque organs, their skin,
the susceptible spinning of the nerves.
It's the usual thing, that of each era:
quarrels, agreements and discouragement. One thing
I do not understand: that dark,
sudden agitation
when they remember.

Chapter 3

Everyday Cruelty: 'Dirty War' Convicts Move in and Still no Menstrual Pads

"I'll tell you what Freedom is to me. No fear."

Nina Simone

The transfer (May 23rd, 2014)

> "At dawn, we were woken up with screams and shoved, two guards per inmate… We were kept until noon inside the transportation cars without bathroom breaks, no breakfast, some inmates had barely any clothes or shoes. We were inspected with no respect for our dignity. Our most valuable belongings were 'lost' in the way. We were relocated to inferior conditions as those in Unidad 31. I spent a week without sheets, towels, or cutlery, eating with my hands, and I was even diagnosed with scabies. To date, I have not resumed all the activities that are part of my routine, nor found a new job that seems appealing. The living conditions have not improved either."
>
> "I lost many of my activities, psychological support, and medical assistance, the communal spaces, the people, the respect. It's like starting all over again. We are having many cohabitation issues, and there is a lot of discrimination for those who come from Unidad 31."
>
> "I want to denounce the psychological damage that I suffered. I struggle with everything now, I don't feel well, I cannot study, I speak about this matter and feel unwell."[15]

[15] Testimonies taken by the collective YonoFui and printed in their magazine *YoSoy*, Issue 1, 2014.

These descriptions depict the coercive and sudden transfer of 32 women incarcerated in Unidad 31 of the penitentiary complex of Ezeiza in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Friday, May 23, 2014. Prison transfers are a common practice for any penitentiary system. It works as a dispositive of power that prevents those incarcerated from getting too familiar and acquiring knowledge about the workings of the space they occupy (Foucault 1975). A common chess move in the prison world, this particular transfer possessed layers of arresting elements that are worthwhile analyzing. With no prior notification, women were forcibly and violently removed. Considered the "best prison" in Argentina, Unidad 31 is one of Argentina's prison nurseries, designed to house mothers imprisoned with their children and women with good conduct. Since there was no warning and it happened so fast, so early, and so unexpectedly, many women had to leave all their belongings behind.

Institutional violence in prison settings can operate in a multitude of ways. Assigning two male correctional officers to each incarcerated woman in a minimum-security prison, conducting body searches at frequents intervals—these actions illustrate institutional violence in action. The women removed from Unidad 31 were transferred to Complejo IV of Ezeiza, which is a maximum-security prison with reduced access to education, to work opportunities, and to medical treatment. Two older women were locked away in the isolation cells while the transfer was happening and could hear the screams and loud noises of the violent eviction, but did not know what was happening. Days later, during a poetry workshop, they would compare the experience to the last military dictatorship that took place between 1976 and 1983—a comparison all too appropriate since the reason for the abusive transfer was to accommodate 88 men convicted of crimes against humanity. The group of older men were previously imprisoned in Complejo II of Marcos Paz. The transfer was justified with the rationale that these older adults needed easy access to medical treatment, available at Unidad 31.

Institutional violence proves to be gendered when men's wellbeing in the penitentiary is prioritized over that of women. One of the features that distinguish women's prisons from men's prisons in Argentina is a significant disparity in access to medical treatment, education, and work opportunities (CELS 2011). The order to transfer the men was issued by the Directives of the Federal Penitentiary Service (Resolution 557/2014) with no prior warning, and at seven o'clock in the morning a forcible operation was carried out by male prison staff. While women were not allowed to take most of their belongings with them, men convicted of crimes against humanity arrived at the Unidad 31 with their belongings, home appliances, and even their chinaware. Since then, men have remained housed in Unidad 31 despite the fact that YoNoFui partnered with other organizations such as Limando Rejas (Filing Fences) and collected more than 750 signatures demanding that women be reassigned to their wing. This demand was reviewed in September 2014 by judges Antonio Pacilio, Carlos Nogueira, and Carlos Vallefin, who compose the Sala III of The Cámara Federal de Apelaciones de La Plata (Federal Chamber of Appeals of La Plata). The judges appealed Resolution 557 and demanded the men be removed from the women's prison. While the appeal offered 20 days for the removal to happen, it has yet to take effect.

This event traces a line of institutional violence both from the 'Dirty War' and today, illuminating how institutional violence operates in ways that erase distinctions such as 'inside' and 'outside.' The power of the Armed Forces, the military institution in Argentina, impacts the ways justice is administered, obliterating any possibility of impartiality and offering a blanket of protection not only to those convicted of crimes against humanity but to other military personnel as well. At the same time that the prison transfer was appealed (and completely ignored), Marcelo Girat, a former counterintelligence Subofficial of the Navy, was convicted to 14 years of incarceration for raping his daughter over a period of four years, from when she was 13 until

she was 17. In addition to the rapes, the victim also testified to being subjected to torture. Her father would tie her to a chair, burning her with a spoon and forcing her to confess why she had attempted suicide. The abuses happened at home and at the Navy Base in Mar del Plata, where they worked. Rocío, aged 20 in 2014, testified that her father got her a cleaning job at the Base during the night shift (Perfil 2014). With her testimony and the testimony of witnesses from the Navy Base, Marcelo Girat's culpability was undeniable. The court, however, determined that Marcelo Girat could serve his sentence under house arrest, sharing the home with his daughter, the victim of his crimes.

Because Marcelo continued to threaten his wife and daughter in court, his home confinement was revoked, and he was sent to prison. His destination would be the penitentiary Batán, in Mar del Plata, where men convicted of crimes against humanity are incarcerated, and receive a host of benefits such as Internet access. In 2017, the court added 18 months to Girat's sentence because, while incarcerated, he continued to harass and threaten his daughter online (Diario Popular 2017). Even when individuals have been convicted and incarcerated, the Armed Forces exert significant influence over the penitentiary system, reflected, for example, through the advantages the military receives ranging from light sentences to benefits in prison.

The 'invasion' of men into a prison designed exclusively for women and mothers is one of the many instances in which institutional violence favors the masculine majority which dominates prison worlds and which neglects women's worlds and needs. Even though the last decade in Argentina has seen an expansion of civil rights and the increased visibility of gendered violence, prison conditions for women have deteriorated. In this chapter, I argue that the masculinist oppression that characterizes the prison system unravels new legacies of the 'Dirty War.' I consider the women's transfer of 2014, and its wider implications on the operations of gendered and sexual violence during the 'Dirty War.' To accomplish this, I describe the term

'*genocida*' and the power that this figure had during the dictatorship, and continues to have today. Last, I display some of the cultural contributions that organized women produced as a way to promote self-determinacy and to contest the gendered institutional violence that impacts women today.

While my original intention was to write about Argentina in ways that did not revolve around the last military dictatorship, I quickly realized that the aftermath of such an atrocious event is still very much alive.[16] I was at a journalism workshop when we found out that the incarcerated women in the women's prison of Ezeiza had been violently displaced to accommodate older men convicted of crimes against humanity. I was also in the book-binding workshop when the grandchild of Estela de Carlotto appeared.[17] It was in these workshops that women made sense not only of their lives and their subjectivities but also of the geopolitical context which they occupied. It became clear at once that as difficult as it might be to write about state terror and its lingering consequences, the task was unavoidable. My reluctance was not because of an inclination to erase history. Instead, I held the misconception that to write about freedom, I had to steer away from state terror as much as possible. Through the event of the transfer, and the many identities recovered through the work of the Abuelas, I learned that freedom is not about running away from state terror but rather, about confronting it.

[16] See Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters - Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minnesota Press. 2008. In chapter 3, Gordon cites the work of Luisa Valenzuela as one that "exposes the absurdity of a scientific practice (whether it is psychoanalysis, semiology, or anthropology) without social or political reference." (2008, 96).
[17] Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo has been working since 1977 to find children abducted or born in confinement during the last military dictatorship. Throughout my fieldwork research (2014-2017), 15 individuals recovered their identity thanks to the work from Abuelas. Estela de Carlotto is the President of the organization and looked for her grandson for 36 years until she found him in 2014.

The death of Menéndez / What is a '*genocida*'?

On March 27, 2018, Luciano Benjamín Menéndez, aged 90, died of cancer in the province of Cordoba, Argentina. When I heard about his death, I first thought about his location. Where did he die? Was he in Ezeiza? This odd question comes from the fact that in 2018 *genocidas* were still housed in the women's prison of Ezeiza, sharing the space with women.

Genocida is the term used in Argentina to refer to those who committed crimes against humanity during the last military dictatorship (1976-1983). Menéndez was the last *genocida* of highest military rank left alive, with the worldwide record for the highest number of life sentences for crimes against humanity. He received 14 life sentences plus two additional sentences of over 20 years. Luciano Benjamin Menéndez was also known as '*El Cachorro*' (the puppy), '*el chacal*' (the jackal), or '*La Hiena*' (the hyena). Known as the harshest of them all during the dictatorship of Jorge Rafael Videla, in 1979, he was detained after an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Videla whom he considered a 'softy.' Even Videla feared him, as was evidenced when Carlos Escobar was kidnapped. Carlos Escobar was the son of Videla's childhood best friend, and when Carlos's father begged Videla to release his son, his answer was telling: "If this is in the Menéndez area, there is nothing I can do" (Platia 2018)

During the trials against Menéndez, one of the most vivid testimonies came from muleteer Jose Julian Solanille, who worked around the fields in La Perla. La Perla was the region of Cordoba's main clandestine detention center opened in March 1976 where more than 2000 individuals disappeared until its closure at the end of 1978. Of these, only 137 survived (Feitlowitz 1998: 74). In his testimony, Jose Julian Solanille described seeing a large pit and around 100 people standing in two rows, some dressed, others naked. Most people were hooded or blindfolded— "… those who could see, were screaming. Some ran but were shot in the back. That's when we ran away with my friend. We were scared shitless. We had crawled to the top of

the hill, but we came down running. Afterward, they were burnt. There were explosives. The smoke with that horrible stench came to my house. It was unbearable" (Platia 2018). Solanille also stated that Menéndez was on the scene. He had arrived in a white (Ford) Falcon car. Solanille did not see Menéndez shoot, even though he was wearing his weapon. However, he saw him give the order. According to other testimonies, Menéndez gave orders that "everyone should do everything" so that no one's hands were clean from blood, sealing a pact of silence that would decimate a generation and damage so many more to come (Platia 2018).

In *A Lexicon of Terror*, Marguerite Feitlowitz recounts the testimony of a survivor that speaks to the narrative logic. "Every layer of our reality was death. There was virtually no way to improve our chances of surviving. Your conduct did not affect what happened to you. Moreover, their conduct was irrational. Why am I alive? My parents paid a ransom, and we have relatives in the army. But others had the same situation and were still massacred. Nothing you were or did matter. They'd use it all—or not—and then annihilate you if that's what they felt like." In the book she later wrote with her ex-husband, Astelarra tells of a prisoner who went out of his way to be useful even in the "operating theater." This meant, as a survival strategy, behaving like a model prisoner, attempting to side with the military. When one day his name was called for transfer, he protested the error [transfer meant execution] and insisted that his case be checked. A while later, the gendarme returned to inform him that there was no mistake and that everything was in order. After that group of transfers was gone, the director of the camp, Major Ernesto Barreiro, declared to the prisoners left in the cell block, "This is no place for mercenaries…" (Feitlowitz 1998:75).

In *Disappearing Acts*, Diana Taylor defines the theater of operations as a term that refers to the performative nature of nation-ness, mediated through the visual sphere and also to the military's flagrant theatricality in destabilizing the population en masse. Each aspect of the

theater of operation reflected the same struggle and objectives: men struggled for control and supremacy over the feminized body (Taylor 1997:98-99). Diana Taylor describes state terror during the dictatorship as "acts of socio-political decomposition and re-composition governed by collective fantasies prioritizing certain kinds of bodies congruent with the nation's self-image" (Taylor 1997: 150).

Against the backdrop of economic and political turmoil, the military regime intervened under the name of 'order and decency' targeting first industrial workers, working-class organizations, and the national trade union organization to guarantee a free-market economy (Fisher 1989). It is no coincidence that most of the 137 who survived La Perla were members of the upper-middle class. In the following photo, taken in 1984, a year after democracy had been reinstated, the group of Madres de Plaza de Mayo and other human rights activists gathered outside Canal 13, where Menéndez had been a guest on the journalistic TV show '*Tiempo Nuevo*.' Driving away in his Ford Falcon car, Menéndez was disturbed by the protests and exited his car holding a knife used for parachuting, proceeding to attack the Madres and others human rights activists. The image shows Menéndez, who could only tolerate 'order and decency,' revealing his omnipotence and power as his son and his bodyguard, attempt to restrain the "gentleman" known as 'Menéndez.'

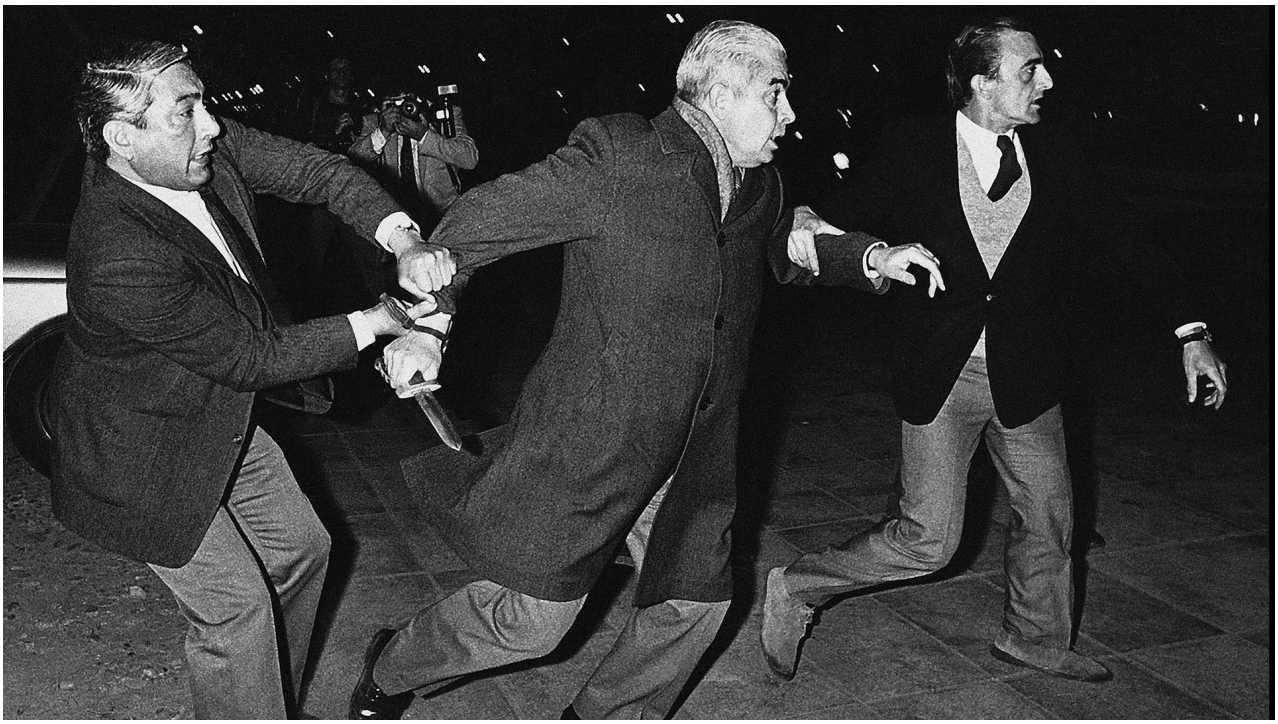

Figure 3. Photo of Luciano Benjamín Menéndez by Enrique Rosito, 1984

In October 2014, at a short distance from La Perla, forensic anthropologists found and confirmed the identity of the remains of four young activists from Juventud Peronista Universitaria (Peronist University Youth). Their names were Lila Gómez Granja, Alfredo Sinópoli Gritti, Ricardo Enrique Saibene Parra, and Luis Agustín Santillán Zevi. In 1977 some children in the area were playing in the surroundings of concrete ovens when they found a severed hand. Their families were evicted shortly after, and one of those kids, Andrés Quiroga, decided almost 40 years later to head to Espacio Memoria La Perla to clue in the anthropologists. Quirogas's decision to act on a memory of life under state terror in order to restore the present illustrates how people are actors and co-creators of meaning, redefining the legacies of the 'Dirty War.' As Antonius Robben writes in his ethnography of political trauma in Argentina, "the traumatizing sequels of state terror, ultimately, helped bring down the military regime through

frequent street protests, national and international appeals for justice, and incessant calls for truth by people searching for disappeared relatives" (Robben 2005, 342).

In *Surviving State Terror: Women's Testimonies of Repression and Resistance in Argentina*, sociologist Barbara Sutton writes that one of the ways gender matters to state power has to do with the state apparatus's regulation of sexuality and reproduction. These regulations, which can range from policies to sexual violence, are never confined to exceptional contexts of armed violence. In fact, the ubiquitous presence of sexual and gendered violence and the impunity that perpetrators enjoy in peacetime and democracy fuel and are consistent with what happens in contexts viewed as exceptional. Further, Sutton writes, "While the embodied violence that detainees experienced in the camps was extreme and had its own specificity, overlapping tactics continue in the present, including in police stations, prisons, and other institutions of confinement" (Sutton 2018: 238-239). This chapter explores how the sexual crimes committed during the last military dictatorship in Argentina were part and parcel of how institutional violence was operationalized. Further, it considers how this form of violence that took place in detention centers can inform the different ways women communicate as well as silence their experience of incarceration.

This brief overview of survivor's accounts of the 'Dirty War' illuminate how the institutional violence experienced in women's prisons today is inextricably linked to the trauma of state terror, the power of the Armed Forces, and the sexual violence that is prevalent in prison settings. The accounts presented in this chapter reveal the relevance of gender to understand how sexuality and reproduction are regulated by the state, both in times of extraordinary state violence as well as in democratic times. The design and management of prisons is one place we can see both the way the violence of the 'Dirty War' reverberates into the present, as well as the intersections between this particular historical violence with the ongoing oppression of women's

bodies. When the men transferred to the women's prison, at least two messages became clear: gender is very much part of the process of state formation, and the women's prison of Ezeiza, where men and women cohabitate, is one of the manifestations which reveal how the legacies of the 'Dirty War' are very much alive.

On prison design

The design of prisons can reveal much about how contemporary structural forces work toward the oppression of women's bodies. The women who stayed in Unidad 31, were forced to share their space with men convicted of crimes against humanity and were subjected to extreme levels of unequal treatment as they witnessed the privileges that the older men enjoyed. This is what I refer to as Everyday Cruelty. As men and women cohabitated in a women's prison, women were subjected to unimaginable forms of cruelty.

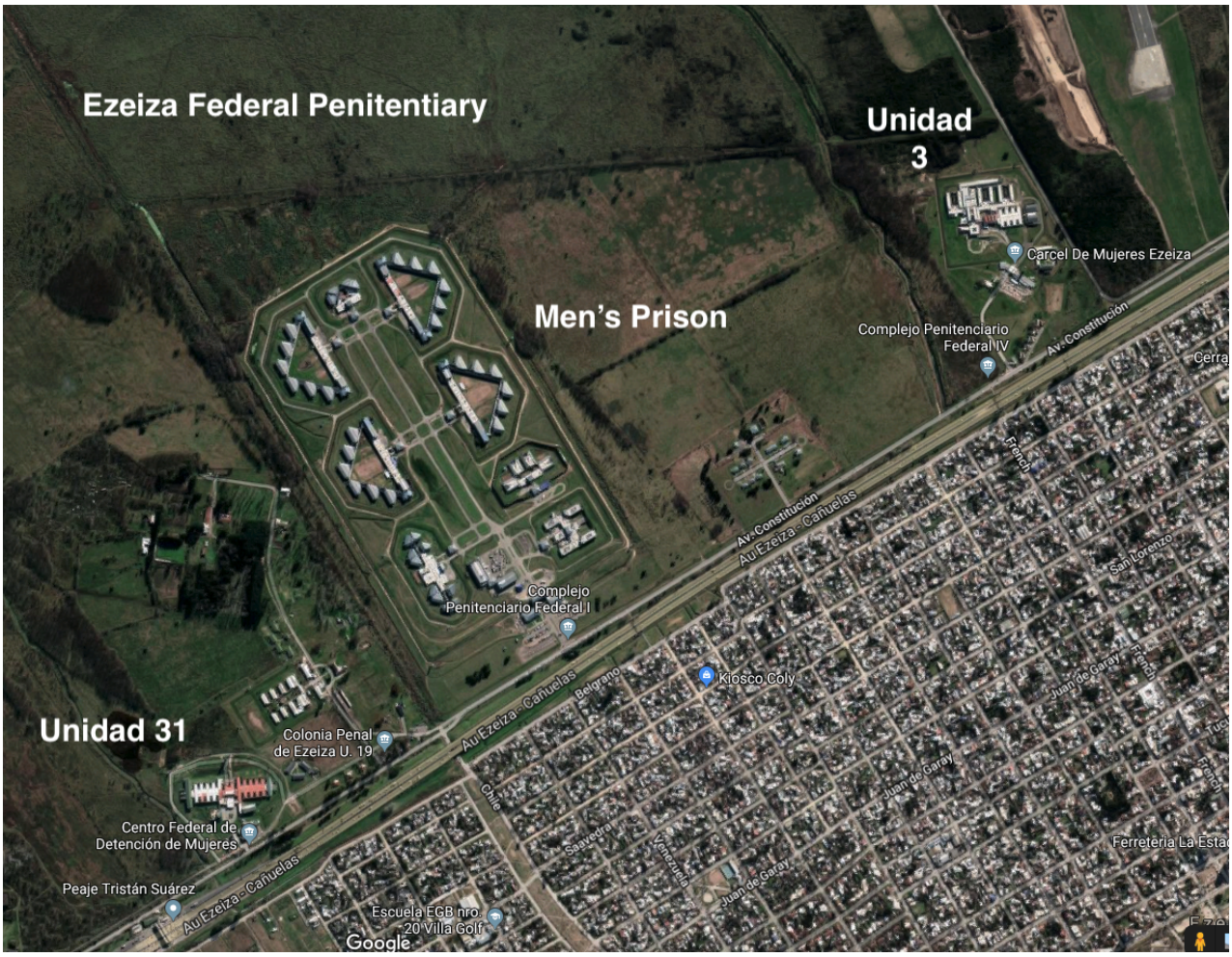

Figure 4. Map of Ezeiza's federal penitentiary complex.

The prison complex in Ezeiza consists of 6 or 7 (depending on who you ask) modules. Two of those are for women. One is Unidad 3 (formerly known as 4), and the other is Unidad 31. Unidad 31 is a special unit designed for women and mothers. It opened its doors in 1996 as a state-of-the-art institution, sometimes referred to as "the spa" by YoNoFui participants, to meet the needs of women incarcerated with their children. The women's prison of Ezeiza is specially designed for mothers because it has a prison nursery, where children can play with swings and slides, where there are small chairs and tables for their comfort, and where children live with

their mothers until they reach the age of four. In 1998, during Carlos Menem's presidency, 'Unidad 31' made headlines for opening a daycare facility so that women would work while their children could learn and play in a space without bars from the age of six weeks (45 days) until four. The prison nursery provides diapers, food, private rooms, and for some, a private television. It offers a community of other mothers (a double-edged sword which I describe later in the dissertation), and it provides the opportunity to work while also being able to take one's children to the in-prison daycare.

The prison consists of *pabellones*, which house between 10-20 women each, and it also has an area closer to the gate referred to as '*las casitas*' which involves small apartment-like units, with bathrooms and kitchen included, usually shared among four or five women. This particular kind of housing unit is exclusively for those who are very close to being released, acting as a sort of half-way house. It is part of the different stages that the penitentiary has set up to prepare a person for the outside. The last step (for the lucky) is moving into these units and enjoying the benefit of daily exits, or sometimes weekend passes, in which the person slowly becomes adjusted to life on the outside. The weekend passes also assist in strengthening bonds with a network of support on the outside and begin the preparations needed to plan for life after prison. Usually, during these outings, people can begin to identify which neighborhood they are going to live in, whether they will share their housing with others, look for job prospects, or choose what school their kids will go to. While these are the steps that the penitentiary should follow to prepare women for life on the outside, such steps are not always taken. When guaranteeing a safe transition out of prison fails, the responsibility rests on the penitentiary and on the justice system. Overcrowding, lack of funding, and poor management are all factors that contribute to the negative experience women have transitioning out of prison.

Unidad 31 is divided in two sections. One section was used to house women with outstanding conduct and the other section has the prison nursery and houses women with their children. Unidad 3 is considered a unit of maximum security while Unidad 31 is a minimum-security facility. Carmen, my main consultant, was first housed in Unidad 3 (at the time known as 4) and then moved to Unidad 31 where she worked in the library of the unit. The prison complex also has a special unit to help those battling drug-related issues. Correctional officers there are not referred to as '*celadores*' (guards) but instead they are called '*operadores'* signaling that this is more a therapeutic place than a prison. The rest of the prison complex houses men.

Women's prisons challenge the default design of prisons because they require a different array of spaces, in terms of their uses and their forms, among other things. In the case of the prison nursery of Unidad 31, the unit was equipped with childcare materials, a playground, and rooms to accommodate women and their children. The photos of the exhibit "*Iluminaciones*" shared in the previous chapter are part of a photography workshop offered by YoNoFui in this prison unit. Despite the special accommodations found in prison nurseries like Unidad 31, incarcerated women endure institutional violence in myriad ways, whether by denying them menstrual pads, reducing their access to education, delaying and reducing their work salaries, or vigorously enforcing standards on how women should carry their lives. In Chapter 5, I examine the impact that the category of motherhood has when judging if a woman is of 'good conduct' (Cynthia Garcia Coll, Janet L. Surrey, Phyllis Buccio-Notaro, and Barbara Molla 1998). In the following section, I consider how sexual politics challenge the hegemonic design of prisons and its inadequate infrastructures that fail to uphold women's reproductive rights.

Menstrual equity

In "Are Prisons Obsolete? Angela Davis insists that gender is a central category to understand state punishment. For example, masculine criminality is considered more "normal" than feminine criminality and women who have been punished publicly by the state are usually considered "significantly more aberrant and far more threatening to society than their numerous male counterparts" (Davis 2003: 66). Davis also explains that while deviant men have been constructed as criminal, deviant women are considered insane. Regimes that reflect this assumption continue to inform women's prisons; for example, psychiatric drugs are still distributed far more extensively to imprisoned women than to men (Davis 2003). Besides allowing the circulation of drugs in all of its forms, the penitentiary system in Argentins also disregards the Bangkok Rules by prioritizing men in their larger offer of jobs and education, and in the use of prison space. The Bangkok Rules, or formally, "The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders," is a set of 70 rules adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 22 December 2010 that focus on the treatment of women offenders and prisoners (UN 2010). These rules are set to prevent the maltreatment of women in prison and aim to eradicate institutional violence.

Institutional violence has a long history in Argentina and is inextricable from the formation of the modern state—a state modeled after white European ideals and following the carceral policies of the United States (Rodriguez 2006). State formation is a continuous process requiring daily affirmations that consolidate state power and its institutions (Caimari 2004, Gupta 2012). Part of these daily affirmations are what I refer to as Everyday Cruelty—daily activities that may appear mundane but that are loaded with punitive measures for those who do not subscribe to the state's ideals (Fassin 2013, Pérez 1999).

During my time spent at YoNoFui, women often shared accounts of menstrual periods and incarceration, revealing the impact that stress can have on women's reproductive health. Paying attention to the way prisons address women's reproductive health reveals broader histories of gender and power that impact the wellbeing of all women and society as a whole. One afternoon at the journalism workshop, Carmen wrote the following excerpt:

> I thought about all the times I had to move my dignity aside to naturalize what I should have never accepted, what nobody should accept. When I was detained and taken to the holding cells in court, I got my period...who knows if from stress or what, but I remember I had no way of getting a menstrual pad, a piece of toilet paper, or cotton. I remember I was body searched several times, of the worst kind, the deep ones... "Get up, get down, sit up, squat, come on, quick, a bit more, open up, flex.." as they looked at my stained clothes in disgust.
>
> I spent the whole weekend trying not to think about the discomfort, the foul smell, the laughter of the prison staff. I could see the stains spreading through the only clothes I had. No guard offered me a pad. I remember I stood on my feet for more than 48 hours, isolated, and appalled at the concrete cell that looked like a barrack from a concentration camp, infested with roaches. I thought I would not leave sane from that place; the hours went by so slowly; they seemed eternal illuminated by the continuous artificial light. Two days went by like that, from a Friday to a Monday, until they brought me up to court, dressed as I was. It seemed as if I was coming back from war next to the perfumed judicial workers. After walking through the halls of the Palace of Justice, and meeting the judge, I was then taken to prison.
>
> That was one of the many *vulneraciones* (wrongdoings) that I experienced while incarcerated. I experienced wrongdoings against my person and experienced violence against the collective rights of all incarcerated women. I had to naturalize such treatment, naturalize pain as if it was part of the conviction.
>
> Today we fight so that no woman has to lose her dignity for being incarcerated; we fight against the wrongdoings of the State so that it is not a lottery whether you leave sane or alive from prison. We organize so that state violence does not kill us and does not riddle our dignity with its patriarchal legacy.

Instances of prisons denying menstrual pads to women are not unique to Argentina; countless stories worldwide have emerged regarding the lack of consideration for women's reproductive health. In Colombia, for example, incarcerated women are provided with two menstrual pads per month, with the option of purchasing them for a price that is five times higher than what it costs on the outside. Women resort to using their clothes, tying blankets around their waist, making menstruation synonymous with stress, shame, and punishment. According to formerly incarcerated Chandra Bozelko, who was imprisoned in the United States, "Even though keeping inmates clean would seem to be in the prison's self-interest, prisons control their wards by keeping sanitation just out of reach. Stains on clothes seep into self-esteem and serve as an indelible reminder of one's powerlessness in prison. Asking for something one needs crystallizes the power differential between inmates and guards; the officer can either meet the need or they can refuse, and there is little one can do to influence their choice" (Bozelko 2015).

How does one theorize menstrual blood in all its tangible and most concealed forms? Could menstrual blood signal that women (not only those who menstruate, but women as a category of analysis, including normative and non-normative bodies) might inhabit other worlds, with their particular design, infrastructure, and practices that challenge hegemonic carceral practices? In her ethnography of the political violence in Northern Ireland during 'The Troubles,' Begoña Aretxaga recounts how working-class women organized against British rule and carried out, as had been done in the men's prisons, a no-wash protest. (Aretxaga 1997: 136). A group of 32 women, known as the Armagh women, spent a year incarcerated in tiny cells without washing themselves and living among urine, feces and menstrual blood. Aretxaga writes that "The transgressive power of menstrual blood comes from an excess of signification that threatens the boundaries of what constitutes the social order" (Aretxaga 1997: 127). Just as Berardi spoke of

the power of poetry to remain boundless, Aretxaga considers that in this instance, "menstrual blood became a symbol through which gender identity was reflected, pushing to the surface what had been otherwise erased" (Aretxaga 1997: 139). Through their menstrual blood, women showed that their strike, like their lives, was different from men's.

Also writing against erasure, Miriam Lewin and Olga Wornat, former activists and now established journalists, published in 2014 a book titled *Putas y Guerrilleras* (Whores and Guerrillas) in which they accounted for the sexual crimes that took place in the clandestine detention centers during the last military dictatorship in Argentina. The authors explain that the sexual violence inside the clandestine detention centers was a systemic plan. It was a way of claiming the territory of those defeated in the alleged war, a way of reinforcing virility and satisfying a perverse joy (Lewin and Wornat 2014: 481). While many women who were detained in clandestine detention centers testified sexual violence was the norm, very few of these women identified as victims. Despite the vast amount of literature written about the torturous events that took place during this time, little has been written about sexual violence and the pervasive character it had inside the detention centers, and beyond (Aucia et al. 2011, Bacci et al. 2012). Women in detention centers were doubly condemned as traitors, accused of subversion by the military, and distrusted by their peers—the abuses included not only rapes but also outings to the city, disguised as dates for the military.

What impact do these silences have on women's reproductive rights in contemporary Argentina today? In this chapter, I argued that the masculinist oppression that incarcerated women endure is imbricated with larger structural forces that sustain a lack of access to fundamental rights in prisons. The Bangkok Rules is the first internationally agreed set of rules dealing with the treatment of women prisoners, and one which Argentina has subscribed to.

Although the Bangkok Rules were mentioned at several events I attended regarding incarceration, gender inequality continues to be prevalent today, both inside and outside prisons. An example of the routinized form of abuse carried out by the carceral system happened in August 2018, when the women's prison in Los Hornos, Buenos Aires did not provide water for six days due to a failed water pump. At the time, there were 500 women housed in that prison and 65 children under the age of four. The penitentiary did not provide bottles of water. Women found a leaky faucet three blocks away from their unit and organized to take turns throughout the night to collect water in jerry cans. This everyday cruelty is routinely normalized in penitentiaries as part of the experience of prison, an institution where, according to the National Penitentiary Office, more than half of incarcerated women awaiting trial (Procuracion Penitenciaria de la Nación 2017).

Figure 5. Unidad 33 de Los Hornos, photo by Carolina Camps.

Creative Resistance

YoNoFui, The Universidad de Buenos Aires, religious organizations, and smaller collectives that promote art and yoga are some of the few institutions that provide educational opportunities in women's prisons today. Class offerings are limited, and there are usually several obstacles and challenges presented when teaching and learning in a prison environment. When Carmen had the opportunity to take a poetry workshop by YoNoFui, she decided to take it. Before taking YoNoFui's poetry workshop, Carmen never cared much for poetry. She signed up for the workshop as a way to pass the time. She was never interested in either grassy hills or perpetual sunsets, and rhyming was not a preference of hers. However, one day in the poetry workshop offered by Maria Medrano, Carmen read the poet Antonin Artaud and was intrigued. Right then and there, she understood that poetry did not have to be about romance or nature. Poetry could also be about visceral cruelty. It could be about the darkness of violence, and that was something she could write about.

During the time Carmen was incarcerated, she lived in two different prison units, located in the same complex of Ezeiza, in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Every weekend she visited her father, incarcerated at a different prison complex, bringing him food and staples. While penitentiaries are mandated to provide food, in Argentina, women would often 'fix' the food provided by adding a wide range of ingredients sold at the prison market. Visits from one prison to another are possible between family members, though it is no easy task. Her father's penitentiary, Marcos Paz, is an hour-long drive from Ezeiza, so Carmen was usually picked up around four in the morning, loaded in the prison 'cart'—a sort of van to transport inmates—and would have to wait for several hours, usually until noon, before arriving at her destination. There are no bathroom breaks on this journey, and the length and stops made during the trip were

usually unknown to Carmen. The lack of bathroom breaks is one small example of how the penitentiary routinely practices everyday cruelty to enforce its social control.

Carmen's choice to prepare food for her father, and to subject herself to such uncomfortable trips, speaks not only to her family values but also to the fact that this trip was her only visitation right, and maintaining social bonds is a main priority whether you are on the outside, or in prison. Carmen did not receive any visits while incarcerated, and the only way she could see her father was through this arrangement, since her father has diabetes and the trip would have been too risky for him. After getting transferred to Unidad 31 for her exemplary conduct, and joining YoNoFui's workshop, Carmen became a poet. With time, she launched her own publishing house from prison and printed her poetry books on cardboard material. Carmen dedicates her venture to innovation in unconventional media, and she describes it as one born in confinement but always free nonetheless, since "words cannot be confined."

Carmen was always a prolific writer in YoNoFui's workshops. Not only is she a talented poet, but throughout my fieldwork, she also frequently participated in panels and symposia, media interviews, and in the activist events that YoNoFui organized. The collective was very grateful to Carmen, sometimes referring to her as "the octopus" for the number of activities and tasks Carmen was involved in. She was part of the editorial team of their magazine *YoSoy*, led multiple workshops, and held a part-time job that provided her with some steady income. Carmen was also close to Selene, and it was Carmen who insisted I interview Selene.

Selene knew the prison well. At 34, she had been involved in the criminal justice system for much of her adult life, suffering the death of her infant daughter while incarcerated. She also developed an unhealthy attachment to the institution, feeling many times that this was her home and the only place where she could find a stable, reliable environment.

Selene was a mother of twins who was nearing the end of her conviction when the *genocidas* moved into her prison unit. Although she was a candidate for early release, Selene is one of the few who chose to stay in prison until the full completion of her sentence. What is more, while children can remain in prison until the age of four, Selene was the very rare exception who was allowed to keep her children with her in the prison until they were five. At the time, they were living in one of the *casitas*, and her fellow housemates would help her care for her kids. I admired Selene's foresight, as the reasoning for postponing her release was to take the time to make sure everything was as organized as it could be so that she would have a smooth transition regarding housing, work, and school for her children.

With time, I realized Selene's postponement of her release had less to do with strategic planning than with the fact that Selene was highly affected by the long-term impacts of institutionalization. For Selene, life on the outside was hard to imagine as the prison setting offered her shelter and a semblance of stability. "*No te abraces a la reja*" was the advice she received from her lawyer. *Abrazar la reja* (to hug the fence) is a phrase used to describe the institutionalization of individuals. It describes the act of hugging the prison bars when one is set to be released. An example of Selene's attachment to the institution was that she chose to live in Ezeiza, near the prison, when she was first released. Sabrina, another woman I met while conducting fieldwork, also struggled with her release. Once outside, she chose to commit a petty crime so that she could return to prison. Their families were what drove them to the prison, and they knew that in order to change their lives, they needed to stay away from them. This meant that being on the outside meant being on their own, with no support system in place and no resources to count on.

On one of her daily leaves, a benefit that is given to individuals approaching their release date, Selene was in the journalism workshop in Palermo, recounting what it was like to live with

the older men there. Her testimony provides invaluable insight on how far everyday cruelty can go. Selene understood the seriousness of the crimes these men committed. She also knew that the reason for the move (that the older men needed to be close to medical care) was bogus since the men were regularly transferred to the military hospital in the city and did not visit the prison hospital. During that workshop, Selene wrote the following excerpt:

INTRUDERS by Selene

> While the president celebrates Independence on TV on May 25, the women detained in Unidad 31 of Ezeiza live unusual moments after the transfer of half of the population to another unit, with the sole purpose of giving the place to men convicted of crimes against humanity.
>
> We, who are suffering these changes, so painful for those who have left, we continue to fight for them and for the mothers of the prison nursery, so that they are not transferred.
>
> Four days have passed, and we are still vibrating from these sick political movements that take away the tranquility of our daily routine.
>
> Second day of coexistence and the first inconvenience arose: The girls go to the entertainment space, every Tuesday, they practice murga. The sound of the drums, the drummer, the dishes angered the intruders who furiously turned to their Module Chief to end the noise that would not let them take a nap.
>
> Are you aware that you are occupying a place that does not belong to you?

Selene had to witness how visitation rights were extended for these men, allowing their families to bring all sorts of staples without any inspection. Their visits were for longer periods of time and their family members were treated by the penitentiary staff as VIPs. Another benefit the older men have is an ‘open cell’ policy, which allows them to circulate through their unit freely, even at night (Dandan 2016).

She witnessed the massive amount of power and privilege these men had while in prison, and yet, she mentioned how she could not help but feel sad for them. It made her sad to see them with their walkers, old and tired. To know that they were going to die in prison. She could not help but feel empathy, for she knew what life in prison was. The fact that Selene had to witness these abuses of power, that she had to cohabitate with men in a women's prison, and still feel sorry for them is a piercing example of the cruelty of the carceral system.

Women's incarceration in the past years has reached an all-time high, showing that the carceral system continues to expand as prison conditions for women worsen. As the table below shows, between 2015 and 2018 the number of incarcerated women has nearly doubled. While still a minority in prisons (about 5-10% worldwide), women's issues are largely unaddressed and institutional violence remains prevalent targeting women's reproductive rights and overall safety. World Prison Brief reports the following numbers for Argentina:

Year	Number of female prisoners (not including those in police comisarias)	Percentage of total prison population (not including those in police comisarias)	Female prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)
2002	2,402	5.3%	6.4
2005	2,172	5.0%	5.6
2010	2,719	4.6%	6.7
2015	2,963	4.1%	6.8
2018	4,990	4.8%	11.1

Figure 6. Table of women's incarceration in Argentina by World Prison Brief

While women in 2005 comprised of 5% of the total prison population, by 2018 that number lowered to 4.8% even if the number of incarcerated women rose from 2,172 to 4,990. This is because the overall prison population, often convicted of victim-less crimes and facing harsher sentencing, is growing as well, while keeping women a minority in prisons.

At that same workshop where Selene shared her experience, one participant who was formerly incarcerated spoke about the arbitrariness of the system, and the ways women are often punished for their gender. While reflecting on the transfer, she wrote the following text:

THE SUPPOSED DEMOCRACY
By Caro

> On 05/23/14 an unfair event occurred in Unidad 31 of Ezeiza, where the mothers detained with their children are housed. tthey evicted more than 30 women to transfer over 50 genocidas that are really dangerous for society.
>
> We are talking about evicting women from a model unit, designed to house women and not men, much less *genocidas* and torturers. All this movement was made so that they enjoy comfort and improvement in health. This transfer involves transferring women to former Unit 3 and mixing these "subjects" in the same prison where children under four years of age live, which is not allowed.
>
> This situation, personally, generates a lot of anguish and impotence, and it would not be wrong if instead of spreading fear through the media, society is told about these things ... because nobody is exempt from becoming a prisoner, considering this supposed democracy in which we live.
>
> While the President sells us a May 25, the supposed liberation, we are living under injustice and misinformation.

Some of the women who were transferred in the rushed operation chose to participate in the poetry workshop offered by YoNoFui in Complejo IV of Ezeiza. Reflecting on the event, they wrote the following texts, which YoNoFui later published in their magazine *YoSoy*:

Spit on Dignity
by Palma Li from Unidad 31

Again a new experience in jail. Again in Complex 4, the other side of the coin. I can't breathe, discern, control my anguish or stop crying. Today is Saturday, the count went by and I heard my new companions speak. We are 24 in this unit, but only 5 of us come from Unidad 31. 24 hours have passed since the transfer and nothing makes my head calm, I think about how violent everything was, the absurd manipulation, the lack of information, versions and rumors that in the end turned out to be true. It was 6:45 a.m. when they came screaming into the cells, we were all sleeping.

- Get up, ladies! Stand by the bed, fast ...!

Again my dry mouth, colic and impotence, the prison takes my freedom and everything I own, how and when he wants.

Now I know what some of our disappeared could feel. Only the hoods were missing.

Again the irony of our justice ... despite being Unidad 31, a prison for model prisoners, we were excised, to leave the place for the *genocidas*. "Human Rights" ... Yes, walk "right", "human" sons of bitches. That was what I felt, a lot of manure with helmets and shields spitting out my dignity. Again, I see from within the indifference of people. "Al Don Pirulero" comes to my mind, each one attending their game or taking care of their own ass.

Yes, we are women who made mistakes, but we don't stop being mothers, wives, girlfriends, grandmothers, we cry, we laugh, we suffer and the only difference is confinement. Again, I feel my body magnetized to the floor, but my hands can still take a pencil and dump on paper what very few are doing for our rights.

Again my memory is activated.

Who can defend us?

Will it be justice?

When the transfer happened in May 2014, YoNoFui was offering workshops in Unidad 31, Complejo IV, and in their space in Palermo in Buenos Aires. In the workshops, writing exercises prompted participants to write about the transfer that traversed all, and YoNoFui compiled testimonies from women experiencing the transfer from various vantage points. Some of these were then published in their magazine *YoSoy*. At the workshop offered on the outside in the neighborhood of Palermo, women gathered to read texts about March 24, the day Argentina celebrates "*Día de la Memoria*" and were invited to consider the implications that the transfer had in the broader history of state terror. March 24 is the national holiday to remember the events that took place during the 'Dirty War.' They also read texts about the resistance of incarcerated women during the last military dictatorship. While the workshop considered the everyday cruelty that incarcerated women were facing, they also spoke and wrote about other forms of cruelty, that happened not only inside of prisons but outside of them as well.

As a writing exercise, they did what is called '*cadáver exquisito*' (exquisite corpse), which is a method where a collection of words or images is collectively assembled. On one piece of paper, participants take turns writing one sentence and folding the paper to cover what they've written. At the end, the paper is unfolded and the text is read as one. This is the text from the workshop that day:

I listen to the words of others
in the collective I find resistance.
The resistance of my body was and will be
the food of my soul
my values, my conviction
for having memory
and in one way or another, violence
and repression
still part of our life,

stories we hope are just a bad memory
and let's not relive it again
in a sick relationship
in a prison that represses
in a claim that silences us.
We continue to live under the same repression
humiliation and demoralization
Like 41 years ago!
It's hard to reveal what one day made us shut up
and here we are, saying, shouting, getting visible,
but everything, the whole system prepares you to get worse again.
The worse you are, the better: but it is important to say ...
Do not forget. Remember. To resist. Get organized
To fight and not repeat history.

In this chapter, I have considered how a contemporary prison transfer is woven into the fabric of Argentina's longer history with state terror. The ways punishment is administered on women includes a violation of their sexual and reproductive rights. The photograph of Luciano Benjamin Menéndez waving a knife with complete impunity, during democratic times mirrors the omnipotence of the Armed Forces and those who continue to defend the last military dictatorship under the claims that there was a need to restore 'order and decency.' What the photograph does not show is the brutality of the penitentiary system when it transfers women away from their familiar spaces, routines, and employment in order to provide a full array of benefits to former military men convicted of crimes against humanity. The work of YoNoFui, offering workshops for artistic expressions and putting together cultural productions, such as their publications, shows particular ways of contesting the contemporary workings of penal institutions and the Justice System. They are examples of creative expressions that contest the ways sexual and reproductive rights are obliterated in women's prisons and beyond.

In the next chapter, I consider reproductive rights in Argentina and how their entanglement with racialized gendered violence help explain the remarkable differences between provinces for rates of maternal mortality in the country. I focus on the northern province of Jujuy, which has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the country. By analyzing a particular case of infanticide, I examine the ways the criminalization of abortion engenders new forms of gendered violence both at the institutional level and in the register of social condemnation of women who deviate from ideals of 'womanhood.'

Next, I share the poem by Victoria Santa Cruz, an Afro-Peruvian choreographer, composer, and activist. By performing her poem, surrounded by drums and other people, Victoria Santa Cruz invites us to think of poetry as lived experience, and of performance as a collective way to disrupt long-held views on what it means to be a racialized woman. In her poem, she recounts a childhood memory of being marked as an other for being black. Throughout the poem, Santa Cruz describes a trajectory of racism impacting her self-esteem and well-being. Later, she subverts her internalized racism and resolves her blackness was her way towards liberation and self-realization. I include her poem because when Carmen showed me her video performance in one of the poetry workshops, she asked me to write about self-representation. The next chapter concerns how sensationalist media can thwart a woman's process of self-representation. While she is not black, she is from Jujuy, a province that is rampant with gendered violence and a long history of discrimination towards indigenous communities (Brent 2018). The systemic racism that Santa Cruz writes against in her poem depicts how surveillance practices and social condemnation constantly criminalize racialized women in Latin America.

Me Gritaron Negra

Victoria Santa Cruz

Tenía siete años apenas,
apenas siete años,
¡Que siete años!
¡No llegaba a cinco siquiera!
De pronto unas voces en la calle
me gritaron ¡Negra!
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra!
"¿Soy acaso negra?" —me dije ¡SÍ!
"¿Qué cosa es ser negra?" ¡Negra!
Y yo no sabía la triste verdad que aquello escondía. ¡Negra!
Y me sentí negra, ¡Negra!
Como ellos decían ¡Negra!
Y retrocedí ¡Negra!
Como ellos querían ¡Negra!
Y odié mis cabellos y mis labios gruesos
y miré apenada mi carne tostada
Y retrocedí ¡Negra!
Y retrocedí…
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra!
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Neeegra!
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra!
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra!
Y pasaba el tiempo,
y siempre amargada
Seguía llevando a mi espalda
mi pesada carga
¡Y cómo pesaba! …
Me alacié el cabello,
me polveé la cara,
y entre mis cabellos siempre resonaba
la misma palabra
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra!
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Neeegra!
Hasta que un día que retrocedía,
retrocedía y que iba a caer
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra!

¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra!
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra!
¡Negra! ¡Negra! ¡Negra!
¿Y qué?
¿Y qué? ¡Negra!
Sí ¡Negra!
Soy ¡Negra!
Negra ¡Negra!
Negra soy
¡Negra! Sí
¡Negra! Soy
¡Negra! Negra
¡Negra! Negra soy
De hoy en adelante no quiero
lacear mi cabello
No quiero
Y voy a reírme de aquellos,
que por evitar –según ellos–
que por evitarnos algún sinsabor
Llaman a los negros gente de color
¡Y de qué color! NEGRO
¡Y qué lindo suena! NEGRO
¡Y qué ritmo tiene!
NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO
NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO
NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO
NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO
Al fin
Al fin comprendí AL FIN
Ya no retrocedo AL FIN
Y avanzo segura AL FIN
Avanzo y espero AL FIN
Y bendigo al cielo porque quiso Dios
que negro azabache fuese mi color
Y ya comprendí AL FIN
Ya tengo la llave
NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO
NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO
NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO
NEGRO NEGRO
¡Negra soy!

They Yelled at me: “Black!”

Victoria Santa Cruz

I was just seven years old,
barely seven years old...
What seven years old!
I was not even five!
Suddenly, some voices on the street,
they yelled at me: “Black!”
Black! Black! Black! Black! Black! Black! Black!
Am I “Black”? - I told myself (Yes!)
What is it to be a “Black”? (Black!)
And I didn’t know the sad truth which that hid (Black!)
And I felt black (Black!)
As they said (Black!)
I stepped back (Black!)
Just as they wanted (Black!)
And I hated my hair and my fleshy lips
And I saw with sadness my brunette skin
I stepped back (Black!)
I stepped back...
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black! Black! Black!
And the time went by,
and I always so bitter
I continued to carry my heavy burden
On my back,
And how it weighed!
I straightened my hair
And put on makeup in my face,
But among my soul I heard
Always the same word:
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black!
Until one day that I stepped back,
I stepped back and I was going to fall out-
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black! Black!

Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black!
So what? so what?! (Black!)
Yes — (Black!)
I'm — (Black!)
Black!— (Black!)
I'm black! (Black!),
Yes-— (Black!)
I'm— (Black!)
black! — (Black!)
I'm black!!
From today onwards, I don't want
to straighten my hair (I don't want!)
And I'll laugh at those
that to avoid —according to them —
to avoid some bitter moment
they call black people "people of color"
And what a color! (Black!!)
And how good it sounds! (Black!!)
What a rhythm it has!
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black!
Finally!
I finally realized! (Finally!)
I don't step back anymore (Finally!)
I move forward confident (Finally!)
I move forward and hope (Finally!)
And I bless the Heaven because God wanted
my skin jet black color,
And I understood (Finally!)
I already have the key:
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black! Black! Black!
Black! Black!
I'm black!!!!

Video Poem available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZBHvMaTiuU

Chapter 4

The Many Bodies of Romina Tejerina: Gendered Violence, Reproductive Rights and the Social Condemnation of Infanticide

Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well-adjusted normal woman has a ... divine composure), hasn't accused herself of being a monster? Who, feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short, to bring out something new), hasn't thought she was sick?

Luce Irigaray, May 13, 1980.

In 1978 anthropologist Laila Williamson noted that "infanticide has been practiced on every continent and by people on every level of cultural complexity, from hunter-gatherers to high civilizations, including our own ancestors. Rather than being an exception, then, it has been the rule" (1978: 61). This rule, however, takes different shapes and forms according to the contexts. In Argentina, the 1994 reform of the Constitution included as a main point the ratification of the international legislation on human rights. Human rights discourses in Latin America have undergone what anthropologist Lynn M. Morgan described as a cooptation by religious conservatives to advance religious moral and political agendas that work specifically against reproductive rights movements. Human rights campaigns have for the past decades in Latin America been increasingly institutionalized and represented as natural rights, family rights, and the rights of the unborn (Morgan 2011). The removal of the term "infanticide" from the criminal code offers a particular example of the links between human rights discourse, religious institutions and state legislation. Infanticide is a judicial term that lessens the conviction of

women who practice abortion attempts or kill their newborns as a way to 'hide their dishonor' when abortion technology as a legitimate form of family planning is not available. Before its removal in 1994, sentences for infanticide ranged from one to six years. In 2005, Romina Tejerina was accused of killing her newborn and convicted not of infanticide, but of murder aggravated by kinship, and sentenced to 14 years in prison.

In this chapter I analyze representations of a 'deviant' woman in state discourse and civil society and explore her case of infanticide in the northern region of Argentina. I examine the relationships between gender norms, modernization and state building to reveal competing conceptions of women's embodiment. The aim of this analysis is to display not only the diversity of the feminine body but also question larger narratives that expose static conceptions of the available roles for women. The conviction of Romina Tejerina raises questions about what it means to be a feminine citizen in northern Argentina, what traits and practices ensure social belonging and which ones do not, and, finally, how gender norms and family ideals affect conceptions of motherhood. To answer such questions, I will underscore that the prevalence of gendered violence against women in northern Argentina limits their reproductive rights and reinforces the social condemnation of those individuals who challenge such structural inequalities. According to the United Nations Population Fund, violence against women is inextricably linked to gender-based inequalities. When women and girls are expected to be generally subservient, their behavior in relation to their health, including reproductive health, is negatively affected at all stages of the life cycle (United Nations Population Fund 2020).

From late June till late August of 2012 I was conducting preliminary fieldwork in Buenos Aires, Argentina, when the case of Romina Tejerina was brought to my attention. Unable to travel to the north of the country, I followed the media coverage of her case. This coverage

revealed multiple and contesting embodiments of Romina, and expressed national anxieties around women's maternal responsibilities and the constitution of the desired feminine citizen. Some examples of headlines include: *"Tejerina Case: the raped girl that killed her baby, refuses to declare"/ "We are only waiting for the liberation of the victim [Romina]"/ "Romina spent the first week of freedom locked in her house" / "Romina Tejerina already working on getting her new life."* In this chapter, I understand Romina Tejerina as part of a larger context in which ideas on personhood, gender, justice, and human rights in Argentina shape contemporary enactments of infanticide and affect women's reproductive health.

Scum in the tiles

When Romina entered the Guillermo Patterson hospital in San Pedro, Jujuy, on April 16, 2003, Dr. Mónica Torres de Pilili asked her not to "play nervous, or innocent. Look at what you've done, crazy woman." (Licitra 2004). At the time Romina had just given birth in the bathroom of the home she shared with her sisters. This was a new housing arrangement made possible by her eldest sister Mirta, who, at the age of 40, had decided to move out of her parents' home. Mirta, Romina, and Erica (a third sister) viewed the new home as a place of freedom. Mirta explained in an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine that she wanted a different life for her younger sisters. She described that at their parents' household sex was perceived as: "dirty, dangerous, horrible and sinful. We were told that if we ever showed up pregnant we would give papi a brain aneurysm. That is why Romi never said anything. Also there was the fear of mami, who would beat us with a saucepan. I thought that if they came to live with me they could have a better youth" (Mirta Tejerina in Licitra, 2004).

Part of enjoying that youth involved going dancing at Pacha, one of the two nightclubs in San Pedro. Romina was known for her good dance moves and she also confessed to loving fashion and being bossy. According to her sister, when certain bands played at the club, Romina was asked to dance on stage. It appears that on August 1, 2002, Mirta, the eldest sister and head of the new household, 'gave permission' to Romina and Erica to go dancing at Pacha. On August 1, the northwest region of Argentina celebrates *la Pachamama*. Throughout the region offerings are given to 'mother earth' so that crops and cattle are fertile throughout the year. That night, when Romina left the club looking for her sister, her neighbor, twice her age, approached her and raped her in his car. He covered her mouth and told her that if she said anything, he would kill her parents. Romina remained silent. Seven months later she gave birth in the bathroom. She cut the umbilical cord, used a white towel to wrap the baby, placed it in a cardboard box, and stabbed the newborn multiple times with a kitchen knife kept in the bathroom to scratch away the scum in the tiles (Licitra 2004).

Mediated Bodies

In "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," Donna Haraway describes how vision has been usually portrayed as the "conquering gaze from nowhere" and perversely used to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power (Haraway 1988: 581). Vision has been closely associated with the power to see without being seen and the power to represent while escaping representation. Haraway suggests that despite the association between vision and unequal relations of power, reclaiming that sense and thinking with vision might enrich feminist discourse since vision can be useful for avoiding binary oppositions. She presents a doctrine of

embodied objectivities that can be referred to as "situated knowledges" (Haraway 1988). From the early 1980s, and with an influence of French postmodernism, anthropology started to develop new paths of inquiry that aligned with Haraway's situated knowledges. These paths of inquiry challenged previous notions of interpretation, representation, identity, and locality, and involved a critique of the gap perceived between the world that is being investigated and the world that is investigating (Said 1993). There was also a move away from all-encompassing ideas, a rejection of grand theory, and the notion of completeness in ethnographic description (Hayden 2003, Mol 2003, Strathern 1991). In considering ethnographic practices for the twenty-first century, American sociologist Norman Denzin asserted that ethnographers should move beyond the traditional, objective forms of writing about peoples to more "experimental and experiential texts, including autobiography and performance-based media; towards greater expression of emotion; to fictionalization, thereby expressing poetic and narrative truth, as opposed to scientific truth; and also towards lived experience, praxis and multiple points of view" (Denzin 1996). Pursuant to this line of thinking, Haraway insists on a feminist writing of the body that metaphorically emphasizes vision again because:

> we need to reclaim that sense to find our way through all the visualizing tricks and powers of modern sciences and technologies that have transformed the objectivity debates. We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate color and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name. So, not perversely, objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment, and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility (Donna Haraway 1988: 582).

The media coverage of the case of Romina Tejerina is an example of the theoretical and political scanners that reveal contested meanings of when a human life begins, who is considered a

victim, and who a perpetrator. The mediation of Romina Tejerina's case is a particular gaze that reveals Romina's multiplicity of bodies. It also reveals the need(s) that specific forms of knowledge have for Romina's bodies as a way to push forward particular agendas, lend support to specific discourses, generate counterhegemonic strategies of visibility, or express contemporary concerns about the ways in which the Catholic Church is a major political actor shaping discourse and policies on gendered inequality and violence. As Anne Jerslev has stated "The mediated body seems to have no limits" (Jerslev 2006: 134).

Yet, following Haraway's words, rather than searching for a false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility, this chapter explores how a constellation of particular bodies emerged through the media: the threatened safety of her body on the outside, the policing of Romina's body in abortion debates, the regulation of her body in prison, and the sanctifying of her body in a song. I will also reflexively consider the enterprise of theorizing Romina's body myself. This analysis will underscore, as well as question, the need for these bodies to transform, contest, and reinforce particular discourses of gendered inequity and violence. By analyzing Romina Tejerina's case, I consider Romina's body beyond its physicality to shed light on the particular cultural, political, and social messages attached to her case and the way these messages reflect on the status of women in Argentina. High rates of maternal mortality are one measure of the status of women in the north of Argentina. Romina Tejerina avoided such maternal death but had to confront other consequences that were captured by the media frenzy around her case. I seek to heed Haraway's advice, that understanding "how these visual systems work, technically, socially, and physically ought to be a way of embodying feminist objectivity." This account will hence be strictly partial, a way to start a conversation, offering only excerpts of a web that is still very much in a process of continuous contestation.

The headlines

On Wednesday, June 27, 2012, Romina Anahí Tejerina stressed to her lawyer that she wanted to return to prison immediately.[18] Her statement, only days after being released, made headlines in several Argentine newspapers and other media outlets. Her case had become a site of social controversy for several reasons: it was used as a platform for debates on the legalization of abortion, on violence against women, for human rights activism, as a symbol for feminist struggles, and for establishing the efficiency (or lack thereof) of the criminal justice system. According to media debates, many saw her crime as unforgivable regardless of the fact that she had done her time. Some regarded the claims by women's rights organizations, that "criminals can be victims as well," as outrageous and unacceptable (La Nación 2006).

Romina spent nine years in prison, two-thirds of her sentence. She was released early for good conduct. During the time she was incarcerated she acquired her high school degree, earned daily leave to go work for a non-governmental organization (NGO), and began to pursue a degree in Tourism. The media emphasized her activities while in prison and her plans to move forward with her life as a sign that she had the tools and motivation to integrate back into society. The media also expressed community resistances against her release from prison (Costello 2012). According to national and local media, her desire to return to prison, a symptom of her nervous breakdown, stemmed from several instances of verbal aggression she endured while out on the streets. Since Romina belonged to a small community, anonymity was impossible. The strong condemnation from her community forced Romina to relocate to the capital of Jujuy. The first few days she made sure she was always accompanied by family

[18] Tejerina's exact words translate to 'Why did you get my freedom? Why did you get my freedom? I want to go back to prison right now…' From Unknown, (2012), 'Romina Tejerina sufrió una crisis nerviosa', Política, Diario Perfil, June 26. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

members, but, with time, she felt encouraged to go out on her own. Unfortunately, the community reacted with outrage. Inhabitants of the area seemed unready to deal with Romina's freedom and the fact that she was a woman at liberty, able to walk the streets of her city. Since her breakdown, Romina has not returned to prison nor expressed any desires to do so.

In "Monsters Stories: Women Charged with Perinatal Endangerment" anthropologist Anna L. Tsing discusses a new form of perinatal vigilance that attempts to re-naturalize ideas of maternal nurturance as the essential trait of 'decent' womanhood. Tsing established that "criminalization gains its importance within a cultural setting in which the unsupervised death of a newborn is a public tragedy that cannot be resolved without a renewal of the state's civilizing authority" (Tsing 1990, 289). In this case, a barrage of social condemnation, media harassment, and, what Charles L. Briggs has called elsewhere *cause célèbre,* accompanied the renewal of the state's civilizing authority.[19] In a study conducted by the Universidad Nacional de Jujuy about the media coverage of Tejerina's case, between 2003 and 2008 the two local newspapers in Jujuy published 120 articles about Romina, with several of them appearing on the front page and the vast majority published in the Police section (Lello 2009). This study considered articles only at the local level without taking into account the media coverage at the national level. The exposure of the case at the local level stayed close to the language used in police reports, offering descriptions of Tejerina that still contain her within the role of the 'criminal.' At times, she is also described as a victim of rape. Overall, her perinatal experience (the period surrounding childbirth) is isolated from all the other aspects of her life with the assumption that pregnancy is a transcendental moment that, as such, places a woman outside the complexity of her particular

[19] Charles L. Briggs examines media accounts of infanticide in Venezuela and suggests these 'stories about stories generate discourse about violence that limits the range of subject positions. See Charles L. Briggs, "Mediating Infanticide: Theorizing Relations between Narrative and Violence." *Cultural Anthropology* 22, no. 3 (2007) 315-356.

story. Such assumptions reinforce ideas on motherhood as a woman's central role (Tsing 1990, 297).

Her mother and her sisters were also common recipients of frequent insults from their neighbors and they, too, had to relocate to the capital of the province. Despite the fact that Romina felt ready to move on with her life, the hostility and social condemnation she suffered after regaining her freedom provoked a nervous breakdown and propelled a media frenzy.

Figure 7. Photo of Romina Tejerina on the day of her conviction in 2005.

Threatened Bodies

Romina Anahí Tejerina was born in June 24th, 1983 in San Pedro, a small city in the northern province of Jujuy in Argentina. Though San Pedro is considered a city, its slow rhythms and population of lazy stray dogs characterize the pace of life there. Despite this slow pace, news, gossip and questions of honor are some of the things that travel fast there and every neighbor soon knew of Romina's story.

At first, the only person aware of Romina's pregnancy was her younger sister, Erica. For months, Romina wore a girdle around her stomach and often took laxatives to hide her condition. She weighed around 100 pounds and exercised regularly. During that time, Romina also approached a few doctors to request abortion services. Such attempts failed because Romina could not afford the costs of the procedure (De Masi 2012). Being unable to afford a safe procedure is not an unusual concern for women in Jujuy. In Argentina, every year, around half a million women have a clandestine abortion. Abortions have to be clandestine because abortion is illegal nationwide. Even in extenuating circumstances, it is unusual for a judge to approve such a procedure. The criminalization of abortion does not deter the practice. Rather, it encourages clandestine abortions, which threaten the lives of thousands of women each year (Jarstreblansky 2011).

The area where Jujuy is located ranks highest in maternal deaths caused by unsupervised and illegal abortions. Half of maternal deaths are due to unsafe abortion practices induced by pills, parsley, or probes (Micone 2010). Reaching 2 deaths per 1,000 women, this number respectively doubles and triples the rates of maternal mortality from abortion in the center and south of the country. Argentine journalist Josefina Licitra described areas of Jujuy as sites where

"the births and deaths of women and children are taken in a similar fashion as that of llamas and dogs: without much fuss" (Licitra 2004). This lack of concern for the lives of women and children is also related to the racialization which characterizes the north, an area with diverse indigenous groups and a significant lack of resources for education, housing, and working conditions.

It also reveals the way sexism and ethnic stigmatization are normalized in society, making invisible the workings of gendered violence by undervaluing those voices that dare to contest such oppression (Martinetti 2013). According to journalist Licitra, print media in the area often cover such stories: one story involved a father in La Esperanza who impregnated his daughter and avoided incarceration thanks to his wife, the mother of the impregnated teenager, who begged the judge for his release, explaining that, as head of household, he was the only income-earner. Another news story describes a woman who grabbed a lamppost in the street for support, gave birth, and then walked away, leaving her newborn as food for stray dogs. Echoing such stories, Elsa Cocher, teacher and activist of Corriente Clasista y Combativa, gave a speech in defense of Romina and asked: "Do you know how many fetuses are buried in backyards?" (Licitra 2004). Corriente Clasista y Combatista is a political organization in Argentina that engages with workers' rights and unions. They are also concerned with unemployment and retirement benefits and associated with indigenous groups and veterans from the Malvinas/Falklands War. Cocher's speech was one of many events that were carried out calling for the liberation of Romina. More than fifty national and international organizations from feminist and activist groups joined Romina's cause for liberation.

The contrast between the strong reactions Romina's neighbors expressed before and after her liberation and the claims of injustice from national organizations marks one splitting of Romina's bodies. Such contrast also expresses contested understandings around the practice of infanticide. While the prosecution and some neighbors considered Romina Tejerina a murderer who should be convicted to a life sentence, other social groups fought for her liberation and claimed that punishment should be granted to her attacker and not her. At the same time, enactments by local politicians and judges around her case display some of the workings of state authority that attempt to shape another specific kind of desired body. Romina's eldest sister, Mirta, recalls a conversation she had with a local representative in which the politician complained about "these girls that go out, with short skirts and that music that they dance to, and the alcohol they consume.…" The mayor of San Pedro, Julio Moises, stated to her that "raped women do not exist. They all want it." (Licitra 2004). In this instance, state actors handling the case of Romina Tejerina condemned Romina's lifestyle and marked her as outside the desired norm. Romina has been situated in multiple embodiments that represent a manifold of opposing views on issues that range from the legalization of abortion, to infanticide, to gender norms under a sexist society. These embodiments were fostered by arguments from the left, the right, and everywhere in between.

The judicial case(s)

Romina's case was divided in two, with one judge for each case. On the one hand Romina was charged with murder; on the other, Eduardo Vargas, her attacker, was charged with raping her seven months before she gave birth. The judge in charge of her murder case ignored the defense's claims that Tejerina was suffering from mental impairment at the time. Her defense

lawyer argued that Romina's rape was a traumatic experience that led her to deny her pregnancy. Romina testified that she saw the rapist's face in her newborn. The judge, however, stated that by attempting to secure an abortion procedure she proved to have homicidal tendencies before the event, as well as at the time of birth. Since her sentence, community groups and political representatives are attempting to reinstate the legal classification of infanticide—which was removed from the legal code in 1994—but have failed so far.

The judge in charge of her rape accusations, Jorge Samman, was already known in the area for his ruling in the case of Olga Verón. Olga Verón was consistently beaten and raped by her father, a police officer, since childhood. At age 16, she denounced him several times and even declared to the judge "I don't want to live with him anymore." The judge replied, "Go back home and respect your father, who takes care of you and loves you." Two months later, Olga shot her father in the head while he was sleeping. She was sentenced to life in prison (Dillon 2005). During Tejerina's trial, her attorney demanded that Judge Samman include as evidence a DNA test to prove Vargas was the perpetrator of Romina's rape. Judge Samman dismissed the request for the test, and instead questioned witnesses about whether Romina wore short skirts and behaved in a provocative manner. He released Eduardo Vargas after 23 days of detention (Tiempo Argentino 2011). Several organizations saw Romina's case as filled with misconceptions and injustices and began to mobilize to contest the conceptualizations of women's embodiment as systematically submissive to male authority and which prevents women from enacting their reproductive rights.

Desired bodies

In her essay, "Joan's Two Bodies, A Study in Political Anthropology," Winnifred Fallers Sullivan discusses the ways religion may figure in the alchemy of the ordinary member of the body politic. That is, what is the role of religion in relation to the state's idea of what constitutes a 'normal' body? She asks "How might we seek to understand body and state *after* the critique of secularism and separationism—a*fter* our reintegration of religion into our account of the human—without succumbing to the totalizing assumptions on most political theologies of the right and the left?" (Sullivan 2011, 307). When discussing Joan of Arc's natural body, Sullivan brings to the foreground the power of the clothes she wore: "[Joan of Arc's] judges were positively obsessed with her clothes… It is not an exaggeration to say that she was condemned because of her refusal to wear women's clothes. She was disturbing to the natural order of things. But her clothes were also her power" (Sullivan 2011, 315). When the judge presiding over a rape accusation inquiries about the length of the victim's skirt rather than questioning the behavior of the perpetrator, it is important to consider the mechanisms that highlight the feminine body as deviant. While Sullivan speaks of the two bodies of Joan of Arc (her body politic and her natural body), Romina Tejerina offers up a multiplicity of bodies that allows a multi-faceted analysis of Argentina's current political and social life. Her case also opens up a space in which gendered violence and gender politics in Jujuy, in Argentina, and elsewhere can be revisited.

In *Civilizing Argentina*: *Science, Medicine, and the Modern State*, Julia Rodriguez argues that Argentina's fall into instability and crisis was the ironic consequence of measurements taken to 'civilize' the nation in the name of progressivism, health, science, and public order. In her discussion of women's confinement, the author establishes that at the turn of the twentieth

century there was a struggle between the Catholic Church and physicians and hygienists over the control of private lives, such as in the parental training of mothers. In some areas medical professionals prevailed while in others the professionals backed off and left women in the hands of the church. Rodriguez argues that even though women's lives started to change in new ways (such as, for example, access to the mental health clinic), scientists "held views of vice and virtue that were remarkably similar to those of religious institutions" (Rodriguez 2006: 95-100). Even though this historical moment was an opportunity to turn away from church control and oppressive practices that narrow definitions of women's embodiment, science and medicine practices ended up offering so-called 'liberal' views which also considered the nuclear heterosexual family as the foundation of a peaceful, orderly society that demanded women submit to male authority. Accordingly, both church officials and state scientists viewed, and promoted, motherhood as the 'natural' central role for women in the family. This particular understanding of women's role engenders negative sanctions to those women who deviate from the norm. It not only universalizes the material conditions of women but also has an impact in how their reproductive rights are defined.

Imprisoned bodies

Judge Jorge Samman (the judge assigned the case of Romina's rape accusations) had sentenced Olga Verón to life in prison after she murdered her abusive father in Jujuy. While in prison, Romina and Olga became close friends. The Unit 3 of Jujuy's Penitentiary system is known as 'The Farm.' Romina confessed that before arriving there she always thought that 'The Farm' referred to a camping site. She remembers that while growing up their father would tell her and her sisters that they would end up there. This was of course said as a threat so that the

daughters would remain on the 'right path.' Romina arrived at 'The Farm' with her parents. The penitentiary had no available vehicles at the time of her transfer so her family drove her there. On Romina's first day in prison, Olga Verón, also an incarcerated woman there, called her fresh meat and Romina collapsed and had to be taken to the infirmary. Claudia, another woman doing her time, warned Romina about going to the dining hall. She whispered into her ear not to go there because she would get beaten up. When Claudia arrived, she was beaten up in the dining hall and correction officers were nowhere to be seen.

Claudia had been imprisoned after murdering her five-year old daughter. She committed the crime after her husband raped their daughter. While in prison, she was referred to as '*guasa*,' the term used in prison for those women who commit infanticide. After Romina arrived, she avoided the dining hall until everyone settled down. Then, she spoke about her rape and avoided a beating. Another woman told Romina that because she endured all the verbal abuse with plain indifference, she had earned the respect of the other incarcerated women. Although respected, she also earned the reputation of being a spoiled brat. Incarcerated women in Jujuy wear their own clothes, rather than wearing a uniform and, just as she did on the outside with her friends, Romina was happy to share her clothes with the other women. She changed her mind after a while, however, when she realized that her clothes lost their 'coolness' and novelty by the time it was her turn to wear them. Romina's reputation was also fueled by the fact that she had access to her own hair straightener and she did not eat the food provided by the penitentiary, but instead the one her family delivered for her (Licitra 2004). In 2009, Romina's lawyers and family members denounced the penitentiary for an incident in which other incarcerated women physically abused Romina. As a way to 'protect' her, she was put in isolation for several days and kept from seeing her psychologist.

Santa Tejerina: the sanctified body

Outside of prison, contestations of Romina's bodies continued. León Gieco, a prominent musician and songwriter in Argentina, composed a song in honor of Romina, entitled "*Santa Tejerina"* in honor of Romina. In 2006 Emilio Vargas, the man Romina identified as the neighbor who raped her, took the songwriter to court, accusing him of instigating crime through that song. The case was dismissed and the song was included in Gieco's latest album, '*Por favor, perdón y gracias*' (Blejman 2006). León Gieco expressed that his song was part of the struggle for her freedom and in an interview on July 1, 2005, he stated:

> With the upmost respect, I dare sanctify a person who has suffered a lot, Romina Tejerina. I dedicate the song to her and an entity called Avivi [a rape victim association]. I sanctify her and I forgive her. This of course will bring me some trouble with those that **mediatically** think that a person who killed their child needs to get a life sentence. This is agreeing with the rapist. I write to the violence she endured, and it is a popular sanctification…There are individuals who people choose to crown with a sanctification because of what they have been through, or because they are persecuted (Gieco in Blejman, 2006, emphasis mine).

It is interesting that Gieco points out a group of people who think "mediatically"—through knowledge provided by mass media and without questioning the accuracy of it. Thinking mediatically stands in opposition to Haraway's call to 'situated knowledges'. This gaze reads from the media and judges accordingly, from a distance. It is a form of visioning that is distorted precisely for the lack of connection with the sense of vision. Further, Gieco also reminds us that demanding a life sentence for infanticide aligns with the demands of Eduardo Emilio Vargas for convicting Romina to a life in prison. Vargas' insistence on Romina's criminality only highlighted his position as the moralizer that Segato described when discussing 'expressive violence.'

The trouble that León Gieco anticipated came also from his own turf. Elena, his domestic worker, expressed her dissatisfaction at his recent actions. Further, Gieco had to forgo a collaborative concert in Jujuy with renowned musician Lito Vitale because he did not want to ruin his friend's concert. There had been threats of an '*escrache*,' an Argentine practice of public shaming (such as egg throwing and graffiti), to prevent public amnesia and confront society with the legacies of the 'Dirty War.' Historically, *escraches* began with attempts to make public and visible the identities of those considered responsible in the military dictatorship of 1976-1983. Gieco revealed that he composed the song out of impotence and declared that the idea to sanctify her came to him as the only possible way to defend her, "The sanctification is a metaphor. It is my artistic vision to add insult to injury to the hypocrisy of people" (La Nación 2005).

As a way to better understand the media harassment around the case of Romina Tejerina it might be helpful to consider how the debates became obsessed with the story of infanticide. This story reflected wider national debates about what constitutes personhood, and what makes up for an acceptable feminine citizen. When discussing "What Makes Images Unacceptable?" French philosopher Jacques Rancière defines the meaning of 'unacceptable' as a matter of dispositive of visibility. According to Rancière, an image is an element in a chain that weaves a sense of reality, or a common sense, "as a community of sensible data: things that are supposed to be given in the eyes of everybody, modes of perception of these things, significations that are given to them" (Rancière 2007). Common sense is a form of being together, relying on a certain community between things and words. The media system is a common sense of this sort: a space-time dispositive that frames common givens, common ways of looking at them and making sense of them. The point, states Rancière, is not to denounce the reality hidden behind this frame. Rather, the point is to build other "realities" or other forms of "commonsense," which

he refers to as "dissensus," a term employed in comparison to consensus. "Dissensus does not merely mean conflict, just as consensus does not merely mean an agreement" (Rancière 2007). While consensus allows for conflicting interests, aspirations, and values, we are nonetheless obliged to agree on a certain given and look at it and name it 'as it is.' Dissensus, on the other hand, is not just conflict; it is also a moving away from a framed reality, singular and equal for all.

When we consider the case of Romina, the varied portraitures the media presented of her clearly disrupted social consensus, and questioned ideas around common sense, revealing divides and public truths within Argentine society. Gieco confessed to attempting to shake up a commonsensical notion of Romina by offering a counterpart, that of 'the saint.' The commonsensical notion that Gieco described is the one offered by sectors who emphasize Romina as a murderer and held the view that she should have been convicted for life (the death penalty has been abolished in Argentina). Yet, the sanctification of Romina offers nothing more than the counterpart to 'the whore,' understanding these as cultural tropes that represent radical positions around a woman's maternal responsibilities. In this instance, the body of Romina is still stuck in somewhat essentializing figures that fail to acknowledge the complexity of her being and foreclose richer notions of womanhood. The fact that Romina's body had to be sanctified in order to be forgiven raises questions about the insidiousness of Church rituals in popular culture and about why it is necessary to turn Romina into a saint rather than accept the body/ies that she presents. The act of sanctifying her does point out to a structural form of violence that persecutes those who contest the notion of a natural order.

The case of Romina Tejerina provided Argentine society with a multitude of questions and instances that were never easy to define. When does personhood begin? What constitutes a

victim? Winnifred Fallers Sullivan suggests that when it came to analyzing the trial to Joan of Arc,

> it is difficult to resolve the contradictions in Joan's own testimony and in the attitudes around her with respect to her clothes because the conventionally available choices to explain what she did, then and now, were either that she willfully transgressed social norms or that she did what she was told…[Instead] we take her at her word, not resolving her into either the androgynous rebel of the 21st century or the pious servant of God. We might imagine Joan rather taking up the role of soldier and captain for a while without repudiating the norms of her society. On the contrary, she was helping to make her society work, improvising within the available roles, myths, and political dogmas. And there is evidence that she tried to resign the role when she was finished, seeking to return to private life- and to women's clothes (Sullivan 2011: 315).

In a similar manner, the reactions toward Romina Tejerina gravitated between seeing her as a victim of a religious and patriarchal society or as a horrible woman guilty of an unspeakable act. In addition, there is also the image of Romina wearing high heels and short skirts, dancing away in a club. Haraway's call to reclaim vision is an opportunity not only to strive for seeing in alternative ways, but also to articulate "the visualizing tricks and powers of modern sciences and technologies that have transformed the objectivity debates" (Haraway 1988, 582). In determining whether Romina Tejerina should stand trial or not, the decision was an instance that marked Romina as a person who was 'objectively' sane and who was not the survivor of a traumatic event such as rape. In addition, the portrayals of Romina are very telling of the values and conceptions that are at stake when describing a woman convicted of a crime. Her portrayals also reveal a desire to essentialize her being into one thing or the other, leaving little room for complexities and contradictions.

Theorized bodies

Just as Sullivan argues that Joan of Arc embodied the French state (both the one that was decaying and the new state that was emerging), in many ways Romina Tejerina became an emblematic figure of certain oppressive forces that threaten women's bodies on several levels while attempting to control it. Sullivan states that "The many ambiguities of her identity and authenticity, together with the difficulty her contemporaries had in reading her, allowed the fiction to work—while it did. That is the strength of fictions" (Sullivan 2011: 315). The spectacle that was made of Romina's story reflects the difficulty in not being able to fully essentialize her as one way or the other, thereby pointing out limited understandings of women's embodiment. Her complexities became so visible that they forced the discourse on common sense to redefine, as well as to question, the acceptable. Sullivan adds that "the problem of continuity in human matters, the problem of maintaining at once the many twinned aspects of human mortality and immortality, is present in many places. We know it best today in the fiction of the corporation" (Sullivan 2011: 319). Hence, Tejerina was both the victim of the state and she *was* the state…Just as with Joan of Arc, you cannot build a heroic politics—of the left or the right—on Romina Tejerina if you actually pay attention to what she did and what happened to her. You cannot line her up on one side or the other. You cannot resolve her bodies into one (Sullivan 2011: 320). It is also impossible to say that this case is about the failure to separate religion and politics. Religion is not the problem. The problems are multiple but certainly tied to the structural violence that gender prejudice and discrimination produce. Such violence has been enacted in a myriad of instances such as questioning whether Romina wore skirts or the lack of access to abortion services. Much in the same way that Joan of Arc inhabited the politics of her time, Romina Tejerina has also come to galvanize a discourse about reproductive rights that is

still very much in contestation and in need of further revision. Romina's defense lawyer stated that the case of Romina is the same for all women in Jujuy who denounce sexual abuse: the women get investigated, not the traumatic event.

Milagros Socorro Tejerina died in the hospital, two days after she was born. René Reyes, an acquaintance of the Tejerina family and the police officer on duty the day of Romina's arrival at the hospital, chose the name. The cause of death was a brain hemorrhage due to knife wounds (Licitra 2004). This particular death, and the attack performed by Romina, generated a series of tensions, resonances, transformations, resistances, and complicities that reveal much about the status of women in Argentina. Romina's case expressed national anxieties around women's maternal responsibilities and the constitution of a desired feminine citizen. It also points out to the multiple oppressions suffered for being a young, underprivileged woman. Emilio Vargas is still free, abortion is still illegal nationwide, sex education is lacking in the north of Argentina, and religious groups still condemn women like Romina. Feminist organizations led by women built alliances to contest the conviction of Romina, with the view that what affects Romina, has a larger impact on women and their communities (Pan y Rosas 2012). At a time when, in Russia, Pussy Riot members are convicted of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred and in the US a Missouri representative claims that in instances of 'legitimate rape,' women's bodies block an unwanted pregnancy, it is relevant to discuss local articulations of a much more prevalent oppressive force. Donna Haraway states that "feminist accountability requires a knowledge tuned to resonance, not to dichotomy. Gender is a field of structured and structuring difference, where the tones of extreme localization, of the intimately personal and individualized body, vibrate in the same field with global high-tension emissions. Feminist embodiment, then, is not about fixed location in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in

orientations, and responsibility for difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning" (Haraway 1998, 588). The fact that Romina hid her pregnancy speaks volumes to the shame Romina felt and her fear to be condemned by her family and her community. According to her lawyer, "It is important that we were able to see this case with a critical vision; this is the first step to change our reality" (Noro 2005).

Theorizing a woman's bodies is not an easy task. Inspired by Luce Irigaray's exploration of intersubjectivity, this chapter displays not only the diversity of women's bodies but also questions larger narratives that expose static notions of the roles of women. As a challenge to phallogocentrism, the choice to write about Romina Tejerina is not only an attempt to enact "situated knowledges," as explained by Haraway but also a proposal to push for alternative ways of thinking about feminine embodiment and subjectivity. Tejerina's case opened up a series of windows in which meaning-making, knowledge production and power relations were all put under scrutiny. The case presented unwavering and relentless challenges toward gender politics, while at the same time displaying resistances to such changes. The case also highlighted the need to revise policies on women's reproductive rights in Argentina. Because Tejerina's life is still unfolding, it is uncertain what the implications and consequences of the mediation of her bodies will be. It is uncertain whether this case will provoke a backlash on women's rights in Jujuy or whether it transformed the political landscape for the better. What is certain is that explorations into what can constitute womanhood are practices 'in the making' that need to focus attention not only on the expansion of horizons but also on the undoing and contestation of discourses from the Church, the state, the criminal justice system, and beyond, that aim at constructing a narrative on the control of women's bodies.

As the prison proves to be unequivocally the wrong answer for the strengthening of social ties and the development of thriving communities, looking at alternatives to incarceration might be a tempting path to follow. In fact, part of my fieldwork was focused on exploring a particularly 'benevolent' alternative to incarceration, that of house arrest. House arrest is not a new practice. In 1633 the Catholic Church convicted Galileo of heresy and he spent the rest of his life under house arrest. The way it is being implemented in Argentina has specific purposes and meanings: protecting the mother-child bond in a domestic sphere while absolving the state from much of the care involved in the completion of such sentence. In practice, however, this alternative to incarceration proved no benefit and provided a stark contrast to what house arrest means for those convicted of crimes against humanity. In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of this policy for women and the negative impacts it has for women's reproductive rights.

Next I share a poem from Luis Chaves, whom I enjoyed reading with Carmen during many of our meetings. Luis Chaves was born in 1969 in San José, Costa Rica. His poetry focuses on domesticity, the everyday and the vicissitudes of intimacy. By paying attention to the details of everyday objects, Chaves unveils the politics that are part of quotidian life.

Los animales que imaginamos

Luis Chaves

esto que ves antes no existía. dice
las personas acomodan sus sombreros.
corrigen sus posturas y sonríen desde el papel.

es agosto y llueve con la voz de nina simone.
el apartamento es una cama gigante
donde se cubren las partes duras del amor.

afuera el mundo gira como siempre.
unos viven esperando el autobús de regreso.
otros adrede dan direcciones equivocadas.

en una habitación en pleno centro de san josé.
al colchón se le salen las entrañas.
faltan sillas para las preguntas.
hay noches desbordadas en los ceniceros.

ella es una niña que crece
como la santalucía entre las ranuras de concreto.

sentado frente a la lámpara.
él junta sus manos y aparece un pájaro en la pared.
mirá cómo camina este elefante. repite ella.
él enrola otro cigarrillo y cambia de canal.

se habla de dios. la muerte.
desnudos o en ropa interior.
bajo las sábanas las rodillas como cabezas atentas.
él lee cuentos con la sangre en llamas.
ella se duerme justo antes de llorar.
es la voz de nina simone y llueve como agosto.
hay latas vacías junto a las pantuflas.
ropa tendida en el alma de los dos.
desde los extremos de la mesa.
sus miradas se encuentran

como regresando de pueblos lejanos.

ella canta el blues de la negra. confunde las estrofas.
da golpecitos con el índice a su reloj.
de noche él deja sin seguro la puerta.
para que el miedo salga a caminar.

pero el tiempo no entiende de estas cosas.
para él todos son animales.
todos tienen lecciones que aprender.
y un viernes hay una grieta en el aire.
la puerta trasera abierta de par en par.
un pájaro dibujado con tiza negra vuela en la pared.

en un cajón remoto calla nina simone.
así tuvo que ser. piensa él.
que ya no frecuenta ciertos lugares.
y a veces se queda quieto de repente
cuando escucha pasos minúsculos en el cielo raso.
recuerda el tono atropellado de sus palabras:

todo el invierno es agosto
y llueve siempre como su voz.

The animals that we imagine

Luis Chaves

what you see here did not exist before. he says
people fix their hats.
correct their postures and smile from the paper.

It's august and it's raining with the voice of nina simone.
the apartment is a giant bed
where the hard parts of love are covered.

outside the world turns as always.
some live waiting for the bus back.
others purposely give wrong directions.

in a room in the center of San Jose.
the mattress spills its guts.
chairs are missing for the questions.
there are nights overflowing in the ashtrays.

she is a girl who grows
like the santalucía does out of the cracks of the concrete.

sitting in front of the lamp.
he puts his hands together and a bird appears on the wall.
look how this elephant walks. she repeats.
he rolls another cigarette and changes channels.

they speak of god. death.
naked or in underwear.
under the sheets the knees are like attentive heads.
he reads stories with the blood on fire.
she falls asleep right before crying.
It's the voice of nina simone and it rains like august.
there are empty cans next to the slippers.
there are clothes hanging from both of their souls.
from the ends of the table.
their eyes meet
like coming back from distant towns.

she sings the blues of the black woman. confuses the stanzas.
taps the watch with her index.

at night he leaves the door unlocked.
so that the fear can take a walk.

but time does not understand these things.
for him they are all animals.
everyone has lessons to learn.
and on a Friday there is a crack in the air.
the back door wide open.
a bird drawn with black chalk flies on the wall.

in a remote drawer, nina simone quiets.
that's how it had to be. he thinks.
who no longer frequents certain places.
and sometimes he suddenly stands still
when he hears tiny steps in the ceiling.
remember the trampled tone of his words:

all winter is august
and it always rains like her voice.

Chapter 5

Deviant Motherhood: House Arrest and Social Belonging

> Freedom is not a static condition we achieve once and for all. Nor is it something absolutely foreclosed to us by male domination. Instead, it is a process of struggle we engage in, in part by resignifying the personas of femininity, and the meanings given to our "sex," so to express and represent who we are in singularity, and in the complexity of our other basic identifications.
>
> —Drucilla Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation*

On October 27, 2009, a symposium titled "Arrest Sweet Arrest" was held at the Centro Cultural Rojas, a center created in 1984 as part of the Outreach Program of the Universidad de Buenos Aires. The cultural center, located in a historically diverse neighborhood of Buenos Aires, was established as a permeable entity between community and higher education. At a walking distance from the theater district, the neighborhood of Balvanera is usually the home of artists, brothels, and cumbia night clubs. It is filled with cafés and small businesses, covered in murals, and traditionally inhabited by Armenian and Jewish communities, as well as Koreans and Bolivians. The "Arrest Sweet Arrest" symposium examined a recent policy that extends the "benefit" of house arrest to incarcerated women who are pregnant, mothers, or the primary caregivers of small children. Before this extension of house arrest, incarcerated women who were pregnant or had children under the age of four were assigned with their children to special

units in the penitentiary, often referred to as "prison nurseries."[20] Policy-makers, journalists, women under house arrest, and neighborhood collectives all gathered to analyze what this new alternative to incarceration entailed and to raise urgent questions about how this new form of state care actually domesticates imprisonment. As Drucilla Cornell suggests in the above epigraph, freedom in this particular context is an unresolved struggle that women engage in, not only to negotiate what alternatives to incarceration entail but also to construe ways of interrelating to one another, that disrupt the "hegemonic story of how femininity is mapped onto femaleness within patriarchal cultures" (Cornell 1991: xxvii).

Feminist interventions have long critiqued the dichotomy between the public and the private, showing that the home is often a site of abuse as much as of care (Barrancos 2008, Federici 1998, Tarducci 2014). YoNoFui emerged out of these broader movements, taking particular inspiration from the actions of Argentina's *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, an association comprising of mothers whose children were "disappeared" in the late 1970s. According to prominent geographer and prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "In Argentina, under the fascist military government (1976-1983), *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo* defied the presumption that women should not meddle in affairs of the state- which is to say the male, or public, sphere- by organizing on the basis of a simple and culturally indisputable claim that mothers ought to know where their children are" (Gilmore 2007: 194). *Las Madres* are a constant collective reminder of the power that organized women can garner to challenge institutional and state violence (Fisher 1989).

The juxtaposition presented at "Arrest Sweet Arrest," of carceral logics moving into the domestic sphere and women's collectives organizing against them, embodies the larger stakes for

[20] In the United States, for example, eleven states provide prison nurseries: California, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia.

prison abolition and collective liberation under neoliberalism. If we account for the gendered politics of prison, of motherhood, and of women's labor, house arrest can operate as a cruel mechanism that expands the social control of women. House arrest in the contemporary Latin American context reveals much about the gendered character of the prison industrial complex and the erosion of social policies of the welfare state. As historian Premilla Nadasen explained, "Neoliberalism's dismantling of the economic safety net, trend toward privatization, and rise of the security state have increased the burden on women" (Nadasen 2013). Through this framing, I consider state-based care practices as inevitably entangled with the profit-making, social control techniques that characterize contemporary prisons in Argentina and beyond. In this chapter, I argue that house arrest, portrayed in state policy as a form of care for children of incarcerated mothers, in fact relocates punitive methods of the carceral system into the home. I contextualize the ways motherhood substantially challenges ungendered, unraced constructions of the prison by redirecting individuality toward an interrelated and intersubjective construction of the self.

To seriously examine alternatives to incarceration for women, one must look to more radical forms of care, such as those created by YoNoFui. YoNoFui does not just offer educational spaces in women's prisons; as a workers' cooperative YoNoFui also sells the handcrafts from the workshops, such as clothing, notebooks, their magazine *YoSoy*, and carpentry items, to become a self-sustainable collective. This is not a job-training program. The work of these women is presented as a tool to carve out new practices for new social roles. Their objective is to make visible the continuum of institutional violence women endure, both inside and outside of prisons, and to strengthen the constitution of collective subjects. They put together photo exhibits and poetry readings and organize protests against institutional violence and campaigns for prisoners' rights, providing care on a broader spectrum. In addition to spending

time at YoNoFui, I also interviewed legislators behind this new house arrest policy, as well as social workers, lawyers, women under house arrest, and incarcerated women whose applications for house arrest had been denied. This ethnographic work unveils how the practice of house arrest informs broader national anxieties around women's maternal responsibilities and the constitution of a desired "feminine" citizen. It also emphasizes the carceral system as one drenched in discriminatory and punitive practices toward women who defy conventional ideas of motherhood and find themselves outside heteronormative middle-class values (Carlen 1983). YoNoFui illustrates the increasing organized political power of formerly and currently incarcerated people, women under house arrest, artists, scholars, and community members who work to provide the radical care that the state fails to provide.

The rise in the criminalization of poverty follows a global trend in the expansion of the carceral state. Anthropologist Carolyn Sufrin, in her ethnographic account of pregnant women in a San Francisco jail, exposes how care that emerges behind bars is a symptom of broader social and economic failures to care for society's most marginalized people (Sufrin 2014). For example, marginalized women in jail receive medical care behind bars that they cannot access on the outside. Care, in this instance, is not only about controlling and governing subjects but also about fostering everyday affective relationships. In a different context, Mahuya Bandyopadhyay, also offers a sociological analysis that emphasizes the everydayness of prisons as social sites that allow for negotiation, resistance, and subversion (Bandyopadhyay 2010). Despite these and other important studies on women's incarceration, care practices regarding women in prison have remained peripheral, dispersed, and outside critical anthropological debates (Aretxaga 1997, Pemberton 2013, Rhodes 1991). In the case of YoNoFui, everyday affective relationships are also paramount, but what makes their care distinct and radical is that they attend to the

bureaucratic procedures that are necessary to improve the living conditions of women involved in the carceral system. By tracing how processes around punishment and social control affect understandings of gender norms and family ideals, I investigated the ways women reimagined their lives under such constraints.

One of my research participants, Sabrina, offers a sobering example of how the prison provides basic services unavailable to women outside. Sabrina's parents never registered her birth, so Sabrina never had a formal identity document to apply for jobs and benefits. As a young woman she began the process in 2003 and only received her document in April 2018, after YoNoFui assisted her with the manifold required bureaucratic procedures. During that time, Sabrina was formally recognized only by the penitentiary, where she completed her elementary education. When I met her in 2014, she was in her mid-twenties and a single mother of an eighteen-month-old daughter. As her release date approached, she was more afraid of her life on the outside than in prison. Instances of care such as this complicate depictions of prisons as dehumanizing punitive institutions while also underscoring the cruelty in having prison be the first horizon of inclusion for people living at the margins of the state.

Since the 1990s, harsher punishment and longer sentences have been applied to deter drug trafficking. Such punishment, as I have previously mentioned, has fallen disproportionately on minor actors, overrepresented by women and foreigners (Belknap 2006). Anthropologist Aihwa Ong insists we understand neoliberalism not as an economic doctrine but as an extraordinarily malleable technology of governing that is taken up in different ways by different regimes: "Neoliberal governmentality results from the infiltration of market-driven truths and calculation into the domain of politics" (Ong 2006: 4). Further, neoliberal technologies are inextricably linked to the biopolitical mode of governing that views the population as living

resources to be harnessed and managed by governing regimes (Ong 2006: 6). In January 2009, as women's incarceration grew at an exponential rate and penitentiaries proved ill-equipped to manage prison nurseries, the Argentine state extended house arrest to pregnant women and women who were the main caregivers of small children and/or disabled family members.

The Neoliberal Prison

Recent prison studies focused on disrupting the prison setting as a rigid and impervious site. As an alternative to incarceration, house arrest should also be interrogated as instance of state care (Feldman 1991, Garland 1991, Law 2010, Rius 2012). In 2018, Michelle Alexander wrote about house arrest in the United States as "e-carceration." She warned that "if the goal is to end mass incarceration and mass criminalization, digital prisons are not an answer. They're just another way of posing the question" (Alexander 2018). In Argentina, house arrest constitutes a site of neglect where women must fend for themselves. Rather than offer caregiving support, the state abandons incarcerated women by placing them in the domestic sphere to perform reproductive labor as a way to complete their sentence.

The prison system is designed to promote individualism and isolation rather than strengthen community and familial ties (Bernstein 2005, Comfort 2008). Prison nurseries were introduced as a benevolent measure to keep mother and child together. However, the institutionalization of children presents a new array of challenges. In 2008 and 2013, women in prison nurseries in Buenos Aires staged hunger strikes to protest the penitentiary's deplorable infrastructure, the presence of rats and insects, and the failure to provide enough food for the children. According to official reports, prison conditions for mothers and their children were highly inadequate in terms of diet, clothing, medical care, and the conditions for physical and

emotional development of children. Transitioning to life outside of prison is especially traumatic for children who have only experienced life behind bars and are suddenly separated from their mothers when they reach the age of four (UNICEF 2009). House arrest emerged as a "more humane" alternative to the institutionalization of children. Discourses on the rights of children were at the forefront of the legislative project to extend house arrest to women. Such discourses, however, and the sanctions for women to mother "appropriately," follow women throughout their carceral experience as a constant threat to lose their children or the benefit of house arrest.

From a historical perspective, the prison has always been considered a masculine space and continues to be so today, partly because women worldwide comprise around 5 percent of the prison population. Looking through the lens of motherhood in order to understand punishment and social control foregrounds the masculinist frameworks that penal institutions rely on. Because women are a minority in institutions of punishment, women's issues have been largely ignored, silenced, or inadequately addressed (Howe 1994). Motherhood as a category of analysis brings to light the multiple contradictions and heteronormative expectations that society places on women (Smart 1996: 37). Understood as a social and historical construct, motherhood reveals itself as a highly political and contested site of inquiry.

Before the 2009 extension of this "benefit" to mothers, house arrest was limited to the elderly and terminally ill, suggesting and reinforcing the home as a preferred location for care practices. When "Arrest Sweet Arrest" was held in October of 2009, there were only a few dozen women who could provide testimony. Marcela Trujillo was one of these women, with children ages five and three. While providing testimony at the symposium, she noted:"I have to request permission for everything. If my son is dying, what do I do? I am locked up, I cannot take him to the doctor. I have the same issue with food. In prison, I was locked up but I had a job. If I had a headache, I

could go to the infirmary and ask for ibuprofen. Now I have to put up with terrible headaches because I cannot afford it." Her statement expressed some of the concerns women face as they are granted house arrest, considering that most of them are unmarried and single heads of households (Vallejos 2009). According to the 2001 national census, 81.75 percent of single-parent households in Argentina were headed by women, while only 18.25 percent were headed by men (CELS 2011). As the main providers for their families, women face the difficult decision to stay in prison with steady employment or apply for house arrest where work opportunities are slim.[21] The lack of public policies to address the myriad situations women face under home confinement is another symptom of broader social and economic failures to care for society's most marginalized people (Sufrin 2017).

House arrest, a seemingly more humane alternative to incarceration, not only fails to address the needs of women and children but also reconfigures the flawed logic of the prison system in the domestic sphere. For example, in 2015, the *Patronato de Liberados*, the official entity in charge of overseeing parole, conditional release, and house arrest, was on strike for several months. This meant that visits from social workers ceased, and women under house arrest had no contact with the criminal justice system for several months. Such was the case with Amalia, whom I met in October 2014 at a book-binding workshop in YoNoFui where participants learn how to make notebooks for retail sale. When Amalia joined the workshop (weeks after it had begun, as often happened with women under house arrest whose permits were always delayed), she was asked to introduce herself. Amalia was unafraid and outspoken: "I've been hungry. I lost

[21] For more details on mothers' incarceration in Argentina, see Tabbush and Gentile, "Emotions behind Bars." For more details on poor women in Buenos Aires, see Geldstein, "Working-Class Mothers as Economic Providers."

a lot of weight after I left the penitentiary. I am not ashamed anymore. I am as poor as they come and it is just me and my daughter."

House arrest as a site of neglect punishes women even more harshly when they are migrants, indigenous, and/or survivors of abuse. Amalia had come to Argentina from Peru for surgery after a bus accident left glass shards in her arm. Since she could not afford the surgery in Peru, Amalia traveled to Argentina, where public hospitals provide medical care to everyone. When I visited Amalia at her home I did not ask why she had been incarcerated. As a rule, I never asked women why they were in prison. Early on I learned this was simply not a polite question to ask, nor did it elicit the most interesting conversations. Amalia told me about her time in prison prior to being granted house arrest, during which she discovered she was pregnant. Her first missed period coincided with her time of arrest, so Amalia attributed her missed periods and fatigue to the stresses of prison life. Though she had been told in Peru that she was infertile, she found herself pregnant at the age of 42. She gave birth to a daughter behind bars, with a lot of pain and poor medical treatment. When her daughter was about 18 months old, Amalia was granted house arrest and moved to a rented room with a shared outdoor bathroom and no support system. A neighbor was willing to sign the papers saying he would support her, but soon after that he moved away. The federal legislation that extended house arrest to mothers offered no suggestions or solutions to the economic uncertainties that incarcerated single mothers face. Amalia never told her family in Peru that she was incarcerated. When they called her urging her to visit as her father was dying, she told her family work prevented her from returning. YoNoFui's book-binding workshop allowed Amalia to focus on handmade objects made with recycled materials; she was invited to visit once a week, offering a place of belonging and creates communal ties that were not always there.

Writing about neoliberal governmentalities, James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta argue that, by focusing on the ways in which states are spatialized, an analysis of the legitimacy of the state gives way to understanding the particular practices, ideologies and experiences that shape such legitimacy. They introduce the term "vertical encompassment*"* to illustrate how state power works: on the one hand, by naturalizing the notion that the state finds itself 'above' society implementing policies in a top-down fashion, while, on the other hand, by revealing that the multiple scales of state power comprise family dynamics, community organization, the nation, its geopolitical location, and its relation to globalization (Ferguson and Gupta 2002: 982-3).

Despite this vertical encompassment that defines governmentality (processes in which the conduct of the population is governed through institutions, discourses, norms, identities, etc.), Ferguson and Gupta suggest that with neoliberalism "the logic of the market has been extended to the operation of state functions, so that even the traditionally core institutions of government, such as post offices, schools, and police, are, if not actually privatized, at least run according to an 'enterprise model'" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002 989, quoting Burchell, "Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self"). This logic is further described by political scientist Wendy Brown who defines neoliberalism as a political rationality that renders every human being and institution, including the state, on the model of the firm, supplanting democratic principles with entrepreneurial ones in the political sphere (Brown 2011).

After spending time with women under house arrest who participated in YoNoFui's workshops, the humane practice described in the legislative proposals was not evident. Sweet it was not; nor was it homey. The ongoing neglect and bureaucratic contradictions that depict the experience of women under house arrest reflect how prisons are organized with men as the model prisoner, failing to address the gendered dimensions of childcare. House arrest relieves the

state from providing food, shelter, and care. This shift, from government to maternal responsibility, uses symbolic and discursive tools that assume that women are the ideal caregivers of children and that the domestic space is their ideal site of belonging. Women under house arrest are subjected to the intersection of two institutions: motherhood and the criminal justice system. As institutions of social control, they make the state an active participant in engendering specific habits and ideologies for incarcerated mothers. Using the domestic space to complete the prison sentence works to socialize these women into the citizens and mothers they are supposed to be, imposing habits and ways of being that were "lacking" in the past.

House Arrest in Praxis

House arrest is still filled with ambiguities and contestations from the judges who have the authorization to grant it. Judges rely on reports from social workers who assess the woman's neighborhood, living space, and support network to determine how feasible home confinement would be. The confusion arises from misguided beliefs that house arrest offers a form of freedom when in fact it is another way to complete a sentence. Judges vary in their interpretations of what is allowed under home confinement. Some judges might grant permissions for daily leaves or to work from home while others do not. Mariluz, a young mother from the Dominican Republic, requested permission to drop her son off at school; her permit was approved quickly with no questions asked. But for Denise, the request to drop her daughter off at school was approved only after she drew a detailed map of the route between her home and the school. Judges often scrutinize the most intimate aspects of a woman's life, including how she handled herself during her pregnancy, her socioeconomic standing or neighborhood, and the number of children she has ("too many" is frowned upon and constitutes a 'failed character').

After I interviewed women who immigrated to Argentina from Peru, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, and Spain, I found state bureaucracies that included embassies and consulates were even more confusing. Camila had arrived from the Dominican Republic, and as a single mother of twins, she found herself at the prison nursery. When her twins approached the age of four, she decided to apply for house arrest to avoid separation from them. She had a cousin on the outside who agreed to help her out, and a *comadre* (comother), a term I heard many women use to refer to close friends who help raise the children. Camila described the weeks leading up to the judge's decision as incredibly grueling. She was depressed and anxious about the possibility of losing her children. When her house arrest was approved and she left prison, she suffered from panic attacks and dizziness. The city, with its buses, people, and cacophonic sounds, was overwhelming and difficult to manage. Even though the surveillance mechanisms under house arrest are not comparable to the constant visibility that women are subjected to in their cells, the prohibition of leaving the home is still a very distressing factor for women under house arrest, particularly when they have to care for small children.

While most women were diligent about the restrictions that house arrest imposed, a few tested the limits of their confinement. Claudia was under house arrest after a brief stint in prison when she arrived at the documentary workshop riding a motorcycle. Within minutes of arriving, she mentioned that after the workshop she was heading to the cinema school to post fliers about renting her home to students for their movie projects. Claudia was the main caregiver of her three grandchildren and thought this would be a good way to make some money from home. Claudia struggled to understand our concern that she could lose the benefit of house arrest if found riding a motorcycle around the city and that YoNoFui could lose the ability to offer workshops to women under house arrest if women went to other places on the days of the

workshop. Even though she was used to disregarding rules except her own, with time she embraced the collective and continued to attend workshops even after completing her sentence. To Claudia, this had become a space for herself.

After being part of the collective for a few years, the day came when Claudia was stopped on the streets and asked for paperwork for her motorcycle. Since she could not produce the required paperwork, the police took the motorcycle away. At the workshop, she confessed that she did not recognize herself when she chose to stay calm and let them take the motorcycle. But she kept thinking about the collective and how she was not alone. The care that Claudia found with YoNoFui was not just about healing and providing a sense of belonging. It is also about building strategies on how best to deal with the patriarchal defilement of the state. This form of radical care is unlike the care of the state: while public policies aim to domesticate women, YoNoFui offers political imaginaries that encourage women to engage in self-management practices and collective endeavors. Workshop participants collaborated selling food staples at popular events. The textile design workshop and the book-binding workshop received orders from buyers, and in supporting women under house arrest, YoNoFui created opportunities for them to work from home and earn an income.

In November 2014, I attended another house arrest symposium. This time it was held at the Bauen Hotel, a resurrected business run collectively by its workers in the financial district of Buenos Aires. Self-management practices were precipitated after Argentina's 2001 financial crisis during which neoliberal policies disfavored national factories and small businesses for large transnational corporations. Facing the closure of the factory they worked for, workers chose to organize among themselves and continue to run the factory in a collective manner. Verónica Gago has elsewhere called these practices baroque economies, that is, the articulation

of economies that mix logics and rationalities that tend otherwise to be portrayed (in economic and political theories) as incompatible (Gago 2017). With a similar DIY philosophy, YoNoFui emerged in 2002, first as a poetry workshop inside prison and later adding more programs both inside and outside prisons.

As with the earlier symposium, this event gathered judges, lawyers, social workers, women under house arrest, formerly incarcerated individuals, neighborhood collectives, and organizations against state violence to search for better answers for women under house arrest. As the concerns discussed that day began to multiply, government officials were heard whispering, "Don't complain too much or the benefit will be removed altogether," revealing how the state's care of the children had slowly morphed into a threat used against criminalized women.

One of the main sources of distress was the denial of permits to the women and the subsequent isolation they suffered. Examples of permit requests included dropping off/picking up their children from school, going to therapy or a doctor's appointment, and taking a class or workshop. Incarcerated mothers are often single heads of households, and being unable to work, to leave for grocery shopping, or to make trips to the pediatrician when the children's health is at stake, is a constant source of affliction. The nominal stipend women get from the state not only reflects that women's lives are devalued but also manifests the lack of consideration toward single mothers who often cannot rely on other sources of income. Women are faced with impossible choices: remain in a violence- stricken, drug-fueled prison nursery that provides diapers, shelter, and food, or accept the alternative of house arrest, even if that involves, at least for some, going back to an abusive household. Once under house arrest, the threat of losing this benefit if found outside the home is a very powerful and cruel tool for social control.

Immersed in a heavily male-oriented criminal justice system, incarcerated women, both in prison and under house arrest, face myriad challenges in which the patriarchal control that dictates many societal norms is indisputable (Haney 2010, McCorkel 2013). Constructions of motherhood are critical sites where the sexual division of labor becomes explicit and reproductive labor is revealed as undervalued yet vital sustenance of the state. The constructions of dominant normative constraints create certain categories of mothers deemed 'bad' or 'inadequate' because they fail to live up to ideals of motherhood imposed through public policy (Smart 1996: 39). These categories, however, are not reflective of the care that the children receive but actually used to reinforce normative values of family making.

Motherhood as Institution

I met Ana in a journalism workshop, where she wrote a chronicle to make sense of her ever-confounding experience with the Argentine justice system. Her son, Bautista, born in 2012, was the first baby in Argentina registered with two mothers. In a drastic turn of events, when Bautista was six months old Ana was incarcerated, and they ended up in a prison nursery. Ana had worked for the government granting permits to nightclubs. On December 30, 2004, there was a fire at *República Cromañón*, a cumbia nightclub in the Balvanera neighborhood, and 194 people died. Over 1400 people were reported injured, largely because some of the emergency exits were locked. Ana had been demoted from inspector to desk clerk because she repeatedly warned her superiors that understaffing prevented the city government from ensuring venues were safe. Regardless of the mountains of paperwork that proved she was not responsible for this systemic oversight, Ana was found guilty of neglect and sentenced to two years of incarceration. Her application for house arrest was denied on the basis that her son had another mother, Gabriela,

who could take care of him. But Bautista went to prison, incarcerated as an infant, because Ana was breastfeeding him, and Gabriela and Ana, despite both being his mother, were not interchangeable caregivers.

With this particular case, the court, as an institution, proved to be ill-equipped to understand mothering outside of a heterosexual framework. Here, the study of motherhood is relevant in two important ways: on the one hand, it exposes assumptions that women, and not men, are the individuals who should be in charge of child rearing, and on the other hand, it proves that behaviors that challenge institutions, such as same-sex marriage, are still considered deviant, or criminal, notwithstanding their legalization.[22] Had Ana been married to a man, not a woman, the assumption that the baby could stay at home with the dad would not have been made, and Ana would most likely have been granted house arrest.

While incarcerated, Ana participated in YoNoFui's pinhole photography workshop, which collectively produced the photo exhibit titled "*Iluminaciones*." During this time, Ana also appealed the rejection of her house arrest application, and won. Under house arrest, Ana joined the journalism workshop in YoNoFui, offered in the central neighborhood of Palermo. The radical care YoNoFui offers, aimed at changing the structural conditions under which criminalized women reimagine their lives, is relevant not only to social movements in Latin America, but also to discourses of alternatives to incarceration worldwide. Care, in this women's collective, involves the reliance on others to inform the process of self-determination.

As others have shown, alternatives to incarceration can often expand rather than contract the

[22] Same-sex marriage was legalized in Argentina in July 2010. It was the first country in Latin America and the second in the Americas to allow same-sex marriage nationwide.

net of social control (Platt 2019).The fact that prison nurseries exist only in women's prison reinforces the misconception that reproductive labor is a predominantly women's enterprise. It also points to the need to make visible the ways in which "institutional motherhood revives and renews all other institutions," so that those aspects of women's lives that contribute to patriarchal structures can be identified (Rich 1995:45). Carol Smart argues that motherhood is an institution that *presents* itself as a natural outcome of biologically given gender differences, as a natural consequence of (hetero) sexual activity, and as a natural manifestation of an innate female characteristic: the maternal instinct (Smart 1996). By paying attention to the expectations attached to mothering, the material conditions and constraints placed on women as they carry the responsibility of bearing and rearing children become more apparent (Federici 2012). As Adrienne Rich points out "The experience of maternity and the experience of sexuality have both been channeled to serve male interests" (Rich 1995: 42).[23] Smart provides a revisionary history of motherhood, writing that there has been "such a heavyweight machinery brought to bear on women to force them into motherhood [that] we must ask why these measures were necessary if motherhood itself was simply a biological process like aging" (Smart 1996:38).[36] Smart presents a Foucaldian analysis that connects the naturalization of motherhood as an institution with the institutionalization and criminalization of sexual norms as techniques of power.

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[23] In this work, Rich describes how during the 1970s feminists in the United States perceived motherhood as a burden that contributed to the oppression of women while also considering it a source of power and a way to engage with communal ties and activism. See also Chase and Rogers, *Mothers and Children*, 6–8. For example, *Mom's Apple Pie* is a documentary that recounts the struggles and hardships that lesbian women faced in the 1970s in the United States as they were stripped of their parental rights due to their sexual orientation. It also features interviews with founders of the Lesbian Rights Project (now the National Center for Lesbian Rights) and the Seattle-based Lesbian Mothers' National Defense Fund who throughout these years organized, assisted, counseled, and supported hundreds of women facing custody battles (Laine and Reinstein, *Mom's Apple Pie*).

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault traces how reproductive intercourse was actively "naturalized" during the Victorian era and how other forms of sexual activity became defined as unnatural and perverse (Foucault 1990). Alongside this particular construction of sexuality, pregnancy and motherhood were equally "naturalized" to satisfy very particular ideals. While folk knowledges of contraceptive and barrier methods were commonly and widely used, during the Victorian era these folk knowledges were "forgotten" and "English upper-class brides of the late eighteenth century, trained to hide any interest in sexuality, warned not to listen to the gossip of servants, and cut off from the larger female community, were probably more ignorant of the workings of their bodies than their grandmothers had ever been" (Smart 1996:40). Working-class women, on the other hand, were being forced to interrupt their breastfeeding as it clashed with the demands of labor. With the suppression of contraceptives and the criminalization of abortion, motherhood became increasingly unavoidable while at the same time hailed as a woman's greatest achievement. Unsurprisingly, women who deviated from these Victorian ideals were criminalized, pathologized, or both (Ehrenreich and English 1989, Smart 1996).

Anthropologist Lynn M. Morgan recounts how, throughout the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the collection of embryos created a further categorization of human development that redefined when human life begins (Morgan 2009)This new conception of human development interpellated women to care for the fetus from the moment of conception. The scrutiny of women expanded not only to monitor women's behavior but also to introduce techniques of monitoring into women's bodies. A contemporary example that illustrates this dimension of policing was reported recently in Wisconsin when, according to the "fetal protection" law, a pregnant woman can be arrested at a health clinic during a prenatal checkup

and convicted if she has a past history of drug addiction.[24] Motherhood highlights the normative constraints that affect women's lives today, and the carceral system enforces these constraints even more firmly. As the criminal justice system administers punishment on mothers who break the law, motherhood as a category of social analysis makes explicit the punitive consequences for deviating from a dominant view of gender roles.

Sociologist Lynne Haney explored the practices and uses of motherhood in a prison designed for mothers and children in the United States. In her study she concluded that, when implemented in this particular institutional space, this promising alternative ended up undermining, subsuming, and punishing motherhood, often in quite contradictory ways. Women were instructed on specific ways to reprimand their children and on specific rules on when to allow children to snack between meals, and when to watch television. Troubled by their constant exposure, women "surrounded their bunk beds with sheets, creating a cave-like area where they could retreat with their children" (Haney 2013: 116) The institutional processes of control and domination that operate in traditional prisons do not vanish in prison nurseries. Rather, they are reconstituted to reflect dominant ideas about gender, race, and class (Dillon 2018). Motherhood in this prison was an expression of true intimacy and a sign of potential pathology, a model of selflessness and a sign of selfishness. It was represented as both as a way to absolve oneself of those crimes and as a symptom of those crimes (Haney 2013). These contradictions draw attention towards a need to revisit motherhood as an institution that is often naturalized and romanticized but also very much punitive.

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[24] Alicia Beltran was arrested after admitting a past struggle with Percocet. The fact that she was clean at the time was not enough proof that she could control herself. Silva, "Shackled and Pregnant."

While these interventions and critiques of motherhood emerged from groups of women belonging to distinct socioeconomic and racial backgrounds in the United States, in Argentina Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo were highly influential in symbolizing the political terrains of motherhood. Las Madres have historically been regarded as beacons of human rights while at the same time been referred to as *las locas* who would not compromise under the terrorism of a dictatorial regime. Their work was not meant to eradicate motherhood from women's lives but, rather, to change the conditions under which motherhood was being conceived while holding the state accountable for its terrorism.

Stratifying Motherhood

Broad concepts such as motherhood that engage a wide variety of ideologies, experiences, and practices run the risk, if uncontextualized, of rendering issues of power invisible (Butler 1990, Foucault 1973). The social context of motherhood can reveal the often unequal relations of power between men and women, dominant and subordinate groups, colonizers and colonized (Chase and Rogers 2001). To understand the practice of motherhood, it is relevant to first understand that "a feminist praxis is not limited to gender issues, but rather sees gender as part and parcel of a number of contingent issues, such as race, sexuality, class, and able- and disabled-bodiness, insisting that these cannot be viewed in isolation."(Dubrofsky and Magnet 2015: 3). Indigenous social movements have been pivotal in addressing how colonial violence is always entwined with the carceral state, making prisons necessary institutions to maintain settler sovereignty (Dhillon 2015).

The house arrest of Milagro Sala is an exceptional case that makes evident the unequal power relationships between the Argentine state and indigenous communities. Milagro Sala is an

indigenous leader and activist who founded the collective Tupac Amaru in the northern province of Jujuy. In 2016 she was detained on the grounds of inciting social unrest and has been incarcerated ever since. In July 2017 she was hospitalized after carrying out a hunger strike in protest against being placed in solitary confinement in a cell without a window. In 2018 she was granted house arrest due to concerns for her declining health. Adding to the arbitrariness that characterizes house arrest, police constantly surveilles the house where Milagro Sala is serving time, and she has a strict schedule for visiting hours, two conditions that are not part of the stipulations of house arrest.

While the decisions as to who is approved for house arrest are discretionary to each judge, there is a pattern of harsher punishment to women who deviate from middle-class values (home-owners in a heterosexual marriages), such as migrant, transgender, and indigenous women. In addition, persecutions to political leaders that contest neoliberal policies are not unique to Argentina. In Brazil, it was Marielle Franco, a Black feminist and socialist leader that was punished by the mandates of the neoliberal state as she was shot multiple times and died in March 2018. Berta Cáceres, an environmentalist and indigenous leader in Honduras was also shot to death in March 2016. These persecutions across Latin America bring to light the continuum of institutional and gender-based violence that women experience as well as the historical linkages between settler colonialism and the carceral state. Milagro Sala's life is endangered. She embodies the way that interlocking systems of power impact the bodies of indigenous women, who are surveilled and punished more harshly for their condition of being women, indigenous, and poor.

Mothers of all races, classes, and ages are subjected to patriarchal control, however differently they may experience this control (Ortner 1974). Poor women and women of color are

in particular subjected to invasive forms of control and assaults on their rights to mother. For example, between 2006 and 2010, 150 incarcerated women in California were unlawfully sterilized.[25] Middle-class women face other hurdles: lack of access to legitimate family planning technologies such as abortion services, or lack of accommodations in their workplace for breastfeeding. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp discuss "stratified reproduction," a phrase originally coined by Shellee Colen as "the power relations by which some categories of people are empowered to nurture and reproduce, while others are disempowered" (Ginsburg and Rapp 1991). This stratified reproduction sheds light on which lives are privileged and whose futures are discouraged. Situating motherhood in prisons highlights the current workings of stratified reproduction and the ways in which institutions are complicit in this process. Further, it also reveals new expressions of neoliberal governmentalities that not only execute violence on women's bodies but also redefine the ways in which the state, implementing cost-effective policies, cares for incarcerated women.

Sociologists Constanza Tabbush and Maria Florencia Gentile describe in their study of Argentine prisons how mothering is a key aspect of many incarcerated women's emotional lives, shaped and constrained by prison regulations as well as cultural expectations. Prison cultures themselves are rife with emotions attached to mothering, positioning it as one of the main social objects that regulate a prison's informal moral economies. For instance, in women's prisons infanticide, the killing of a child, is considered to be the worst crime a woman can commit (in men's prisons, sex offenders are similarly maligned). As such, other women informally

[25] Dr. James Heinrich defended the sterilizations as "cost-effective" by stating, "Over a 10-year period, that isn't a huge amount of money, compared to what you save in welfare paying for those unwanted children." However, victims stated otherwise: "He made me feel like a bad mother if I didn't do it" ("California Prisons Were Illegally Sterilizing Female Inmates").

penalized it in the form of verbal abuse or mistreatment in everyday exchanges. In the previous chapter, I detailed the story of Romina Tejerina, accused and convicted of infanticide, and how the discourses generated around her case, say much about the status of women today in Argentina. In the context of prison, as in the world outside its walls, motherhood distributes specific material and symbolic resources, whether in the form of rewards or as negative sanctions (Tabbush and Gentile 2013).

Motherhood is central to the critical inquiry of prisons, not peripheral, invisible, or as appendages to men, because the production of knowledge is in itself gendered. Dominant systems of knowledge used for the design of prisons and policy making reflect masculine views of the social world that leave out the richness and complexities involved in child-rearing practices. Michelle Rosaldo warned anthropologists that ignoring gender asymmetry blinds us to the sorts of facts we must understand and change and instead proposed that what appears as "natural" must be understood as a by-product of "non-necessary institutional arrangements that could be addressed through political struggle and, with effort, undermined" (Rosaldo 2006).

Concluding Remarks

Institutional confinement extends beyond the prison and has taken various forms such as homeless shelters, the asylum, detention centers, and prison camps. As women and children move from the institution into home detention, certain legacies of the penal system move into the home as well (Caimari 1997). However, other types of institutions, such as neighborhood and women's collectives, offer new forms of sociality that redefine imprisonment, family, and care. YoNoFui promotes solidarity and acknowledgment of differences in their community-led space,

allowing for alternative subjectivities to prosper. More important, the collective contests house arrest as a condition of isolation and instead cares for a community that reconfigures the notion of neoliberal governmentality as an enterprise in the search for profit. As Verónica Gago has explained, the informalization of the economy emerges primarily from the strength of the unemployed and of women, who enact from below the potentials found in the receding effects of neoliberalism (Gago 2014). Rather than coexisting in isolation, YoNoFui is interested in developing communal ties and strengthening collective efforts against institutional violence.

Still, the violence that characterizes the carceral state has impacts that defy the imagination. Mariela was a member of YoNoFui who participated in the textile design workshop. She and her two adult daughters, one of which had a newborn, were under house arrest. In 2016, a van from the penitentiary picked them up to take them to court to sign an *abreviado*, a legal agreement similar to a plea bargain. Mariela and her daughters were part of the nearly 50 percent of incarcerated women who are pre-trial, that is, detained without a conviction. Women sign *abreviados*, relinquishing the right to go to trial in the hopes of accelerating the process. When the van that was taking them to court crashed, Mariela died and her two daughters, including the newborn, were hospitalized. The baby died some days later. The delivery of Mariela's body was delayed because they had to wait for the judicial order to remove her ankle bracelet. The penitentiary stated that the women had some sort of metal baton and the van crashed as the women planned an attack. Everybody who knew Mariela insisted this could never be the case. Yet this is one of many instances in which the criminal justice system favors the interests of the penitentiary over the welfare of incarcerated women. The stigma and invisibilization that incarcerated people endure made her death just one more of the many bureaucratic procedures that legitimize the carceral state.

While it is uncertain how the praxis of house arrest will develop in the coming years, certain constraints are already easily identifiable. Instances of radical care that work to compensate for the erosion of the welfare state are not found in the public policies addressed to care for women and children. Instead, it is through grassroots efforts and collectives, such as YoNoFui, that women create a supportive environment where they can advocate for their futures. What could be defined with further detail and more precision are the specific transactions in which the state punishes through neglect while labeling this management of social control a humane form of sentencing that protects the interests of children. The institutional violence that incarcerated women endure, whether in prison or under house arrest, replicates, albeit in alternative forms, the gender-based violence that is prevalent in the Argentine state and much of Latin America today. While prison strikes and feminist social movements can change the conditions under which women live, it is ultimately the public policies put in place, such as house arrest for women, that can shed light on the material consequences that ideologies of gender and motherhood have on women's lives. Attending to those who push the boundaries of such ideologies, the deviant mothers themselves can provide much foresight when considering alternatives to incarceration, gender roles, and family ideals.

The following poem was written by Susana Thénon (1935-1991), a lesbian poet and photographer born in Buenos Aires. Thénon was interested in the impossibilities of language, attempting to write from marginal spaces so as to locate the reader in the periphery. Her final book, *Ova Completa*, includes the poem below, where she evokes how the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, once thought of as crazy, redefined the politics of memory in Argentina through their activism.

¿por qué grita esa mujer?

Susana Thénon

¿por qué grita esa mujer?
¿por qué grita?
¿por qué grita esa mujer?
andá a saber

esa mujer ¿por qué grita?
andá a saber
mirá que flores bonitas
¿por qué grita?
jacintos margaritas
¿por qué?
¿por qué qué?
¿por qué grita esa mujer?

¿y esa mujer?
¿y esa mujer?
vaya a saber
estará loca esa mujer
mirá mirá los espejitos
¿será por su corcel?
andá a saber

¿y dónde oíste
la palabra corcel?
es un secreto esa mujer
¿por qué grita?
mirá las margaritas
la mujer
espejitos
pajaritas
que no cantan
¿por qué grita?

que no vuelan
¿por qué grita?
que no estorban
la mujer
y esa mujer
¿y estaba loca mujer?

Ya no grita.

(¿te acordás de esa mujer?).

Why is that woman screaming?

Susana Thénon

Why is that woman screaming?
Why is she screaming?
Why is that woman screaming?
who knows

That woman, why is she screaming?
who knows
look what pretty flowers
Why is she screaming?
hyacinths daisies
why?
Why what?
Why is that woman screaming?

And that woman?
And that woman?
who knows
that woman must be crazy
look look at the mirrors
Is it because of his stallion?
who knows

And where did you hear
the word steed?
it's a secret that woman
Why is she screaming?
look at the daisies
the woman
mirrors
birdies
they don't sing
Why is she screaming?

they do not fly
Why is she screaming?
they don't bother
the woman
and that woman
And was that woman crazy?

She no longer screams

(Do you remember that woman?)

Chapter 6

Lucía, nos mueve el deseo
Lucía, we are moved by desire

Por un feminismo popular, abierto y heterogéneo que nos incluya a todxs.
Por un feminismo capaz de abrazar la multiplicidad de luchas, expresiones y estallidos vitales.
Por una revolución feminista que haga temblar la tierra, nuestras vidas y nuestras prisiones en cada mundo cotidiano.
#VivasLibresDeseantesYAutonomasNosQueremos
#NiUnaMenos

For a feminism that is popular, open and heterogeneous that includes us all.
For a feminism capable of embracing the multiplicity of struggles, expressions and vital bursts.
For a feminist revolution that shakes the earth, our lives and the prisons of our everyday worlds.
#WeWantUsAliveFreeDesiringAndAutonomous
#NotOneWomanLess

YoNoFui, 2017

In the above epigraph, YoNoFui has incorporated the hashtag #NiUnaMenos, which translates to Not One Woman Less, reflecting the ways in which YoNoFui strengthened their platform by building alliances with other feminist movements. At the time of my fieldwork, *feminismos populares* was one of the names given to the feminist social movements in Latin America emerging from community feminism. *Feminismos populares* refers to social movements from working-class, poor, and otherwise marginalized communities that build alliances on the ground and from below (Brent 2018). According to feminist writer and educator Claudia Korol,

feminismos populares are a diverse group of social movements throughout Latin America who focus on grassroots efforts and are women-led and/or LGBTQIA+, even if some women do not identify as feminists and are part of other grassroots mixed organizations. Informed by indigenous, Black, and 'from the slums' feminisms, the *feminismos populares* demand the depatriarchalization and disruption of hierarchies within leftists movements. *Feminismos populares* promote collective and horizontal modes of organization that contest colonial and patriarchal capitalism. In Argentina, the *piquetero* movement that emerged after the 2001 neoliberal economic crisis was an earlier strand of the *feminismos populares*: they hosted, once a month, a women's assembly where women gathered to discuss their issues as well as denounce the police brutality impacting their families (Korol 2016,142-3).

In the previous chapter, I traced how the practice of house arrest for women in Argentina extends neoliberalism's logic of the market to incarcerated women as it relieves the state from providing resources while under house arrest. In this chapter, I situate YoNoFui within vibrant *feminismos populares* that wove together a highly diverse social movement that opens up possibilities for liberation against and beyond the carceral state by insisting on networks of interdependence that challenge the neoliberal logic.

In their most recent work, *The Force of Non–Violence*, Judith Butler suggests that a new idea of equality can only emerge from a more fully imagined interdependency, an imagining that unfolds in practices and institutions, in new forms of civic and political life (Butler 2020, 44). It is also worth noting that Butler does not write about equality as an individual right, but, rather, as part of a collective, "Whatever claims of equality are then formulated, they emerge from the relations *between* people, in the name of those relations and those bonds, but not as features of an individual subject. Equality is thus a feature of social relations that depends for its articulation on

an increasingly avowed interdependency–letting go of the body as a 'unit' in order to understand one's boundaries as relational and social predicaments" (Butler 2020, 45). The *feminismos populares* were pivotal in turning the political focus onto their bodies, looking at the close relationships between extractive capitalism, institutional violence, and the body. Indigenous movements, such as *Las feministas de Abya Yala* and the *mujeres zapatistas* in Chiapas, and leaders such as Berta Cáceres in Honduras, were influential in conceptualizing the body as a place to begin the process of decolonization. In 2019, Mayan leader Lolita Chávez was part of the *Encuentro Plurinacional de Mujeres y Disidencias,* held yearly in Argentina since 1984, and claimed "We protect our body as our first territory of defense" (Carbajal 2019).

During the weekend of October 8 and 9, 2016, around 70,000 women gathered in the Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres (National Women's Meeting) in Rosario, Argentina. At that time, the Encuentro was still known as *de Mujeres* (Women's) until it was decided in 2017 to change its name to *Encuentro Plurinacional de Mujeres y Disidencias* to be more inclusive. This yearly event, which began more than three decades ago, has been steadily growing in the past years. The event consists, among other things, of workshops that aim to address women's issues and provide a platform for a continually expanding feminist political agenda. It serves as a reunion as much as a political gathering, a pedagogical space, and a celebration of womanhood. This last point should not be confused with discourses of trans-exclusionary radical feminism. Although in the United States women-only spaces might refer to a history of biological determinism and a history of exclusionary practices against those who could not successfully fit into the category of women, in Argentina, when I discuss women-led movements, I am describing inclusive spaces where men, trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals are always welcomed. It is open and inclusive in the sense that workshops can be

organized and attended by veteran feminists as well as curious people who are beginning to wonder what the word feminism actually means. For this reason, it is relevant to emphasize the ways context gives meaning to terms such as women-led movements.

That particular weekend in Argentina was an occasion of women's celebration and recognition of vital bursts. During that same weekend, however, a tragic event took place in Mar del Plata, a city 260 miles south of Buenos Aires. Women, men, trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming in Argentina were reminded (as if it was hard to forget) of the prevalence of gendered violence that affects the region today. On Friday, October 8, the same day the Encuentro de Mujeres began, Lucía Pérez, age 16, was abducted as she left school, drugged with cocaine, raped repeatedly, and tortured by impalement to the extent that she died from cardiac arrest.[26] Lucía was taken to a hospital by two men who claimed she had overdosed on drugs. Lucía's body had been washed and changed into fresh clothes, but doctors soon realized she had been subjected to extreme sexual violence. The two men were convicted for selling drugs to a minor but absolved of rape and murder charges. The three judges noted that "Lucía had a temper that was far from submissive, she chose to buy drugs and had consensual relationships with men as old as 29 years of age." In short, Lucía was asking for it and was responsible for her own death. This is the official message that judges gave when absolving the men of rape and murder charges, bringing to the fore the way institutional violence reinforces the patriarchal mechanisms that condone sexual assaults. In 2016, there were 290 femicides in Argentina. The brutal killing of Lucía Pérez was one of them.[27]

Throughout my fieldwork research in Buenos Aires, YoNoFui worked in close collaboration with the NiUnaMenos movement as well as with smaller organizations and

[26] Impalement is a practice of torture in which the body is penetrated by a foreign object.
[27] Femicides in Argentina are recognized by the law since late 2012.

collectives. Concerned generally with women's lives and freedoms, NiUnaMenos stands against femicide and gendered violence. During these alliances, I witnessed and participated in several marches organized by NiUnaMenos. Unfortunately, these marches were usually organized after the body of a young woman had been found, brutally murdered, usually sexually assaulted and then dumped and abandoned, disposed of, asserting the message that in a patriarchal society women's bodies are perceived as property.

In this chapter, I interweave ethnography of feminist activism with considerations of four different performances and the social fabrics each generates against gendered violence. I argue that, as collectives and organizations worked toward social transformation, contemporary feminist social movements in Latin America strengthened communities and advocated against institutional violence. Through this interdependence, collectives worked horizontally, however imperfectly, against prisons and patriarchal structures. Through a performance studies lens, I examine how collectives in Latin America redefined gendered subjectivities.

In the scalar digital video, *"What is Performance Studies?"* scholars from seven different countries throughout the Americas reflect on performance as meaning-making practices. Diana Taylor, one of the leading scholars in the field, explains that performances, such as a political rally, constitute the object of analysis to show how performances function to transmit cultural knowledge, memory, and identity. Performance, according to Taylor, also constitutes the methodological lens that enables scholars to analyze events as performance. YoNoFui's protests and activism are performances of resistance, citizenship, and gender, among others. Understanding events as performances suggest that performance also functions as an epistemology. An 'embodied practice,' along and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing (Taylor 2003).

I begin analyzing a performance of interdependence by Judith Butler, who asserts in *The Force of Non-Violence*, that non-violence is far from passive or weak. Rather, the practice of non-violence directly implies a critique of individualism and an elaboration of social bonds that require non-violence (Butler 2020: 15). To understand interdependence, I examine an excerpt from the documentary *Examined Life* by director Astra Taylor. I focus on the section that features Judith Butler, as she chooses to 'perform' with disability activist Sunaura Taylor. In addition, I consider as a second performance, what has been referred to as 'tortazo,' a kissing protest demanding the end of violence toward same-sex relationships. The third performance is "Bancátela" by actress Zuleika Esnal, which exemplifies the ways one individual, in this case, Zuleika Esnal, can become imbricated in a broader collective movement by telling singular stories of women surviving violence. The last performance I consider is "El violador eres tú" by the Chilean collective LasTesis. While the specific contexts of these performances vary, their messages add layers of understanding to the performative power of *feminismos populares*: one is part of a Canadian documentary about philosophers, another one is a protest about lesbian visibility and against homophobia, and the last two are protests against sexual and institutional violence, one taking place in Argentina, and the other, a global viral phenomenon that began in Chile. These performances are different expressions of casting vulnerability as a political power to promote interdependence and collectively contest gender oppression.

Feminismos populares provide a fertile ground to consider the many ways in which feminist social movements in Latin America have been contributing to new understandings and connections between collective political struggles and the role of interdependence in how these movements build alliances to strengthen and enrich their platforms (Gago 2019). Following Taylor, these performances offer rich demonstrations of contemporary activism against gendered

violence; as performances, they illustrate the power of interdependence and the creative ways in which women defy violence against their bodies. The activism and alliances among collectives and organizations provide an array of cultural productions and art worlds where dissident desires and disobedience are some of its main components.

Performance 1: Vulnerability in resistance

I draw my first example from a Canadian documentary to highlight a performance of interdependence at the scale of human bodies. While the documentary *Examined Life* features interviews to philosophers walking by themselves and ruminating about the meaning of life, in the excerpt with gender theorist Judith Butler, we are introduced to a performance of interdependence. Butler walks through the streets of San Francisco with disability activist, Sunaura Taylor, the director's sister, presenting her ideas as always in dialogue. On their walk, they consider the potential of acknowledging human interdependency and, in doing so, question the stakes for social belonging. They go shopping for a sweater when Sunaura Taylor gets cold, and Judith Butler helps her try a sweater on. When Sunaura Taylor pays for it, she needs the cashier to hand her the change for her purchase in a particular way, giving her instructions so that they can work together. Later, Butler cites Deleuze's question of what a body can do, and Sunaura Taylor recounts how she avoids doing certain things in public, such as using the mouth to carry a cup, to avoid disrupting a certain "common-sense" that may find her use of the mouth as upsetting. This excerpt points out the ways embodied knowledge is also understood in how bodies relate to others and their surroundings, including and in particular, with their infrastructures.

Butler has elsewhere written about how acknowledging vulnerability can be a vital part of resisting. Does resistance require overcoming vulnerability? Or do we mobilize our vulnerability? (Butler 2016, 13). According to Butler, mobilizing our vulnerability involves describing the "powerful citational force of gender norms as they are instituted and applied by medical, legal, and psychiatric institutions, and object to the effect they have on the formation and understanding of gender in pathological or criminal terms" (Butler 2016:18). The theory of gender performativity, explains Butler, has never prescribed which gender performances were right, or more subversive, and which were wrong, and reactionary. The point was precisely to relax the coercive hold of norms on gendered life—which is not the same as transcending all norms—for the purposes of living a more livable life (Butler 2016: 18). To understand how our performances are interdependent, it is also important to understand interdependence at the scale of social movements. Feminism is a crucial part of these networks of solidarity and resistance precisely because feminist critique destabilizes those institutions that depend on the reproduction of inequality and injustice (Butler 2016: 20).

During the course of my fieldwork, the city of Buenos Aires offered a plethora of events, conferences, and meetings regarding women and incarceration. It was in these meetings where interactions between social organizations, state officials, lawyers, entities, correctional officers, formerly and currently incarcerated people and their family members provided a visual illustration of the assemblage of individuals, collectives and institutions that constantly negotiate the terms of women's imprisonment. What was always clear at the end of such events, whether they gathered to debate particular legislation such as the reform to the law 24.660 discussed in chapter 2, or house arrest for pregnant people and mothers, was that policy changes aimed at caring for women tended to increase surveillance and paperwork more than improve the quality

of women's lives. Although the focus was on questions about gender inequality in prison, the broader social context of feminist movements wove itself into the conversations addressed in YoNoFui and broader society.

From 2015 onwards, events organized by feminist social movements grew exponentially. For example, in March 2015 NiUnaMenos organized a Reading Marathon in the Museo del Libro y de la Lengua, in which artists, journalists and activists shared their texts. Located at the Biblioteca Nacional Mariano Moreno in Recoleta, the event, like many others, was sparked by the onslaught of gendered violence and rise of femicides. Part of NiUnaMenos's demands involved a critique of the media coverage of femicides, which often scrutinized the victims and focused on what the victim was wearing and what her conduct was like. As a collective formed by journalists and scholars, NiUnaMenos was interested in hosting this event at the Museo de la Lengua to reflect on the ways in which the language we use is also part of our context. Community-based initiatives such as this were often co-organized by various organizations, had a number of special guests, music, food and other community building initiatives.

One of my dissertation's central insights is that collective feminist identities, like YoNoFui, emerge through interdependence. As YoNoFui promotes autonomy and practices of self-determination, it is precisely those bonds held with others that redefined the meanings and potentials of autonomy (Bessire 2014, Garcia 2005, Gow 2008, Sanford 2004, Perry 2013). Writing about feminist research, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo makes explicit the difficulty in juxtaposing Indigenous cultures' recognition of the power dialogues that constitute them with the assertion of Indigenous peoples' right to their own culture and self-determination. "At this political crossroads," recounts Hernández Castillo, "it was the Indigenous women themselves who offered me clues on how to rethink Indigenous demands from a nonessentialist perspective.

Their theorizations on culture, tradition, and gender equity, set down in political documents, memoirs of encounters, and public discourses, but also systematized in their intellectual writings, are fundamental perspectives that must be taken into account by the project to decolonize feminist anthropology" (Hernández Castillo, 2016).

In this dissertation I assert that the interdependence between the feminist social movements in Argentina and broader Latin America, unfolds not only at the level of people finding ways to support each other's journey but also at a broader level, with collectives relying on other organizations and individuals to sustain their political work. In the following section, I elaborate on the concept of interdependence and its relationships with gendered violence. I describe the performances of 'el tortazo,' Zuleika Esnal, and LasTesis as cultural productions that illustrate the potential of Latin American social movements and their contributions to gender equity and gender diversity.

On interdependence and '*entre nosotres*'

In recent years, women-led social movements have been proliferating while also reconfiguring Latin American politics more widely. As I mentioned in the introduction, the title of my dissertation, *entre nosotres*, is inspired by the term '*entre nosotras'/ 'entre mujeres'* ('among women') from sociologist Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar. *Entre mujeres* does not exclude men but rather focuses on women's spaces, such as women's prisons and collectives, where interdependence gains visibility as a form of care for material and political autonomy. *Entre mujeres* also refers to a broad gamut of issues which are not considered political and hence politicize the private sphere as well as challenge the dichotomy of private and public. *Entre*

mujeres is also open to experimentation and the renewal of the political without subscribing to any previous political canons, so as to reinvent, deform, and defy. This is where Gutiérrez Aguilar considers the politics of desire come into place: by strengthening social bonds that enhance relationships of interdependence, we develop an autonomy from the collective: "I cannot find my voice if I am isolated." (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2016).

I refer to *entre nosotres* to stress how feminist political power in Latin America foregrounds the potential of renewed forms of interdependence that break away from social relationships of exploitation. I use the gender inclusive 'entre nosotres' to both highlight my methodological commitment to collaborative research and to underscore the role of interdependence in how contemporary multi-vocal movements in Latin America strengthen their strategies to contest gender inequality. The dissemination of inclusive language is one of the many expressions of contemporary sexual politics that confront structural inequalities and that, compounded with social markers such as race, class, gender, age, and ability, limit the horizons of dissident sexualities. As women-led organizations gained visibility, their inclusion of 'disidencias,' composed of gender non-conforming and sexual minorities, became more prominent. Hence, the category of women became an inclusive one, and I refer to 'entre nosotres' to reflect how feminist social movements were always already interlocked with queer activism. This chapter informs the larger framework of the "*feminismos populares.*" NiUnaMenos' member Cecilia Palmeiro has defined this movement as a "collective intelligence moved by the desire for the construction of the commons: common discourses, knowledges, demands and practices; but also commons of a social reproduction that allow for escape from violence, exploitation and indebtedness" (Palmeiro 2020).

On gendered violence

Shortly after Lucía's murder in October 2016, there was a case of gendered violence in Buenos Aires which illustrates how expressive violence as explained by Rita Segato can operate through 'corrective rape' as a tool for 'correcting' women, particularly women perceived as butch lesbians. Higui was arrested in 2016 after stabbing a man who had been harassing her for the past ten years. As she was leaving her sister's house the day Argentina celebrates Mother's Day (October 16), Higui was attacked by a group of 10 men who were intent on a 'corrective rape,' a form of hate crime aimed at people who are perceived as non-heterosexual or gender non-conforming. Higui fought back using a knife she got used to carrying around to defend herself from the constant attacks she suffered around her neighborhood. An earlier attack from the man she stabbed and killed involved him setting her house on fire (Carrasco 2020).

Corrective rape, then, is part of a larger chain of moralizing acts performed on women's bodies. The punishment for those who deviate from heteronormative ideals of gender or challenge patriarchal structures, is rarely exacted only once. In Chapter 1, I mentioned the case of Rocío Girat, who ruffled feathers in the Armed Forces after testifying on the sexual abuse from her father. While Marcelo Girat was removed from his position in the Army, Rocío's experience with the justice system was far from over. On October 2, 2017, Rocío's wife, Mariana Gómez, was arrested in the subway station of Plaza Constitución after arguing with the police about smoking and kissing her wife, Rocío. During the arrest, the police continually misgendered Mariana, referring to her as a boy because she was not dressed in a 'feminine' way. In June 2019, Mariana Gómez was convicted to one year in prison in suspension for resisting to authority. From these instances of 'corrective rape' and policing those who step out of the heteronormative framework, feminist social movements organized with LGBTQIA+ movements to stand against gendered violence. By performing gender outside of the heteronormative

framework, Higui, Rocío Girat, and Mariana Gómez became part of a campaign for lesbian visibility.

Figure 8. Image that circulated of Rocío Girot and Mariana Gómez kissing.

Performance 2: el tortazo, a kissing protest

The image in Figure 7 shows a photo of Rocío Girat and Mariana Gómez displaying their kiss as a challenge to the patriarchal structures of the Justice system that penalize women for kissing in public, despite the 2010 legalization of same-sex marriage. As LGBTQIA+ organizations advocated for the absolution of Mariana Gómez, images of Mariana Gómez and Rocío Girat circulated through social media platforms to spread the message that 'every kiss is political' and, as seen in the image above, 'In each kiss a revolution.' While these images began circulating in 2017, I distinctly remember an event called 'El tortazo,' which took place on September 5, 2016. I learned about this event from Paula, who came to the journalism workshop and told the whole group about it. In late August 2016, a young woman named Belén was sitting at the café La Biela, caressing and comforting her girlfriend as she cried. La Biela is a well-known traditional cafe located in the upscale neighborhood of La Recoleta. Upon witnessing the scene, their waiter asked them to leave as if the act was an obscene one. Belén decided to share her experience on a Facebook post and invited everyone to join in the protest, inviting lesbians to gather outside of La Biela to kiss in public. An excerpt of her post read: "I call for a multitudinary and homosexual kiss so that we are the majority and our reality and history make sense for everyone. Monday, September 5 at 8PM Public *tortazo* in La Biela." *Torta* in Argentina is slang for lesbian. *Tortazo* is also a play on the word *cacerolazo*, which is a popular form of protest where participants bang pots. The post circulated widely and the protest was a successful event celebrating lesbian visibility. The public *tortazo* gathered women from around the city to protest discrimination against LGBTQIA+ communities and demand the end of lingering notions of 'decency' that only accept heterosexual public displays of affection and intimacy and police those who fall outside of it.

In another expression of interdependence, the image of Rocío Girat and Mariana Gómez also shows that both of them are wearing the green handkerchief that represents the campaign for the legalization of abortion in Argentina. The white handkerchief is the symbol belonging to the Madres de Plaza de Mayo; the green handkerchief has come to represent the impressive campaigns that feminist social movements put together to demand the legalization of abortion nationwide. The image also speaks against silencing sexual violence. Mariana Gómez, like Rocío Girot, is a victim of sexual abuse. In 2012, Mariana denounced her stepfather and step-grandfather for abusing her and her two other sisters. Mariana Gómez and Rocío Girat have both been very outspoken and called on others to denounce sexual crimes and the names of perpetrators, who often happen to be family members.

Activist becomings

This chapter is titled 'Lucía nos mueve el deseo' in honor of Lucía Pérez and another Lucía. The name Lucía was used as a fictional name for an emblematic case involving an 11-year old girl in Tucuman who was a victim of sexual abuse by her step-grandfather. When Lucía's mother requested an abortion, approved by the law in the case of rape, she encountered innumerable obstacles from the doctors, the church, and the justice system. One of her doctors insisted that in order to save "both lives" it was important to wait until her daughter was seven-and-a-half months pregnant. In the 23rd week of pregnancy, Lucía had an emergency C-section in which the fetus died. Several organizations against gendered violence organized a petition to the Comision Interamericana de Derechos (CIDH) to denounce the province of Tucuman for denying access to integral health care and for preventing a life without violence. By refusing to grant Lucía her abortion right, the manifold institutions that intervened in Lucía's life failed to protect her from the institutional violence she was forced to endure. At the age of 11, it becomes

pretty difficult to blame the victim by scrutinizing the way she was dressed or the place she was going, or the friends she had. Yet, the province of Tucuman, their doctors, their representatives, the justice system, and community members failed to uphold Lucía's right to an abortion.[28]

Lucía's story was a rallying point as feminist organizations denounced sexual violence and demanded abortion rights. At the same time, *feminismos populares* fostered connections with other types of disobediences to patriarchal structures, including ongoing demands for truth and accountability for the dictatorship. A particular example is that of Pablo Verne, the first to testify in a trial for crimes against humanity as a child of a *represor*, a term used for military who participated in the 'Dirty War'(Confino and Jasinski 2019). In the trial 'Juicio ContraOfensiva Montonera,' Pablo Verna testified as the son of one of the doctors that anesthetized kidnapped people before having them thrown off from airplanes into the Atlantic Ocean in what has been known as '*vuelos de la muerte*.'

In *A Lexicon of Terror*, Feitlowicz corroborates such forms of state violence through Scilingo's testimony on the flights of death. Scilingo testified that death-flight duty was rotated among all naval officers; during his two-years (1976-77) at the ESMA (A Navy school that operated as a clandestine detention center), "a hundred Wednesdays, between 1500 and 2000 people were thrown into the sea" (Feitlowicz 2011 [1999] 227-8). Pablo Verna is part of the collective "*Historias Desobedientes*" (Disobedient Stories) which made its public appearance in May 2017, on the occasion of the march to repudiate the Supreme Court ruling that enabled the benefit of 2 × 1 (serving half the sentence) to those convicted of crimes against humanity. With the motto "we do not reconcile," the "relatives of *genocidas* for memory, truth and justice"

[28] On 02/14/2020, Lucía's perpetrator was convicted to 18 years in prison. Clarin, 2020. Accesed from: https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/caso-lucia-condenaron-18-anos-carcel-violador-nena-11-anos-negaron-aborto-legal_0_nqivakOW.html

organized and began to intervene in the ongoing memorial dispute on state terrorism. In November 2017, they presented a project to modify articles 178 and 242 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which prevent them from reporting and giving testimony against their parents. The court's decision to allow Verna's testimony, after intense debate, sets a new landmark in the history of human rights around the world. The justice system has now changed so that people can testify against those responsible for crimes against humanity while also refusing the inheritance as their children, changing their last names and, indeed, disrupting patriarchy and the legacies of the 'Dirty War.' The collective Historias Desobedientes raises questions on what it means to testify against one's father and how people are coming to terms with such testimonies, appealing to social responsibility and collective memory. The work of collectives like Historias Desobedientes invites us to consider how speaking against one's father also casts larger narratives of sexual and domestic violence which have been gaining visibility throughout Latin America (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010).

Performance 3: Bancátela

On May 20, 2016, a 16-year-old girl was raped by 33 men in Rio de Janeiro. This event shook Brazil, where a woman is raped every 11 minutes, and all of Latin America as well. The actress Zuleika Esnal wrote a Facebook post about it which quickly went viral through all of Latin America. Sometime later, a video was recorded of the following text:

Bancátela

Violaron entre 30 "hombres" a una piba de la edad de mi sobrina. Un año más, ponele. Treinta; aunque no es seguro. Ella contó 28 pero antes de quedar inconsciente le pareció escuchar a uno gritando "Somos 33!!!!" O treinta y ocho. No recuerda.

Dice que cree que la drogaron porque no podía moverse, que se reían de ella y que pensó que iba a morir.
Dice que el alma duele más que la vejiga destrozada y es más difícil de sanar. Dice que se baña todo el tiempo, todo el día. Que siente culpa aunque no sabe bien de qué. Y que sueña que le sale basura de los ojos y la boca. Dice que no entiende.
Lo primero que preguntó la policía fue si alguna vez había estado en una orgía.
16 años tiene.
Lo segundo, que por qué estaba donde estaba.
Estaba donde estaba porque la drogaron, y así, DROGADA, fue llevada a una casa abandonada.
La violaban de a dos, para hacer más rápido. Algunos repetían. Como si fuera un plato de comida. 16 años tiene.
Dice que no sabe si quiere cumplir diecisiete. Dice que para qué.
Vi la foto de uno de esos hombres, con la boca abierta y la lengua afuera al lado de la vagina sangrando de esta chica de la edad de mi sobrina.
Pensé en mí misma cuando a los quince, volviendo del colegio un tipo me siguió dos cuadras con la pija afuera.
Pensé en mí misma a los 21, volviendo en tren desde Moreno y un pibe se masturbaba en el asiento de al lado se bajó riéndose cuando empecé a gritar. Recuerdo que vi el asiento manchado y vomité. Lo mío no fue nada. Algunas pesadillas de vez en cuando.
16 años tiene.
La encontraron deambulando, como ida, desorientada y sangrando.
Dice que tiene vergüenza. Y que no sabe por qué.
Yo creo que tiene vergüenza porque es lo primero que aprendemos. Lo que nos hacen creer.
Que si la pollera era corta, BANCATELA.
Te emborrachaste, BANCATELA.
Te gusta coger pero no quieres que te violen? Estas loca? BANCATELA
Te gusta andar sola de noche? BANCATELA.
Te pones a hablar con cualquiera? BANCATELA
BANCATELA.
BANCATELA.
BANCATELA.
Vivimos en un mundo donde denunciar una violación se convierte en otra violación peor. Porque el que debería protegerte te llama puta aunque no lo diga. Cuestiona tu ropa tus gustos tus horarios.
Cuestiona tu cuerpo. Tus hábitos, tu concha.
NO SEÑORES.
Lo que deberíamos cuestionar es la clase de hombres de mierda que estamos criando como sociedad. De esos que agarran una mina y se la pasan entre todos como si fuera una botella de cerveza hasta que ya no queda nada. O sí. Quedan los restos. Y a ver qué hacemos con eso. Se lo

debemos. A esta piba. Y a todas las demás. A cada hija, a cada amiga. A cada mujer. Porque pudo ser cualquiera de nosotras. Y puede volver a ser.

Put Up with It

About 30 “men” raped a kid of my niece’s age. One year older, give or take.
Thirty; although it is not certain. She counted 28 but before she passed out she thinks she heard one shouting “We are 33 !!!!” Or thirty eight. She does not remember.
She says she thinks they drugged her because she could not move, that they laughed at her and that she thought she was going to die.
She says that the soul hurts more than the destroyed bladder and it is harder to heal. She says she showers all the time, all day. That she feels guilty although she does not know why. And she dreams that garbage comes out of her eyes and mouth. She says she does not understand.
The first thing the police asked was if she had ever been in an orgy.
She is 16 years old.
The second, why she was where she was.
She was where she was because they drugged her, and like that, DRUGGED, she was taken to an abandoned house. They raped her in pairs, to make it faster. Some repeated. As if it were a plate of food. 16 years old.
She says she does not know if she wants to turn seventeen. She says what for?
I saw a picture of one of those men, with his mouth open and his tongue out by the bleeding vagina of this girl of my niece’s age.
I thought of myself when at fifteen, returning from school, a guy followed me two blocks with his cock out.
I thought of myself at 21, coming back on the train from Moreno and a kid was masturbating next to me and he got off laughing when I began screaming. I remember that I saw the stained seat and threw up. What happened to me was nothing. Some nightmares from time to time.
16 years old.
They found her wandering, with glazed eyes, disoriented and bleeding.
She says she is ashamed. And she does not know why.
I think she’s ashamed because it’s the first thing we learn. What they make us believe
That if the skirt was short, PUT UP WITH IT.
You got drunk, PUT UP WITH IT.
You like to fuck but don’t want to be raped? Are you crazy? PUT UP WITH IT.
Do you like to walk alone at night? PUT UP WITH IT.
Do you talk to everyone? PUT UP WITH IT.
PUT UP WITH IT.
PUT UP WITH IT.
PUT UP WITH IT.

We live in a world where reporting a rape becomes another, worse violation. Because the one who should protect you calls you a whore even if he does not say it. They question your clothes, your tastes, your schedules.
Question your body, your habits, your pussy.
NO, SIRS.
What we should question is the kind of shitty men we are raising as a society. Those who grab a woman and pass it to everyone as if it were a bottle of beer until there is nothing left. Or there is. The remains remain. And let's see what we do with that. We owe her. To this girl and to all the others. To each daughter, to each friend. To every woman. Because it could have been any of us. And it can happen again.

In a talk she gave in 2018 at an event celebrating inspiring women, Zuleika shared that sometimes empathy is confused with putting yourself in someone else's shoes. She said she has empathy but doesn't know what it is like when your dad fucks you. But she can say 'Estoy acá' (I'm here). And that is what she says when she receives between 50-100 messages a day from women from all over the world. She does not have a fixed schedule, calls and messages arrive at all hours, Monday through Sunday. She does not have any resources other than her cell phone. She lives with friends or her mother because she cannot afford rent. 'I am here' is what she says to the women that write to her. 'I am here' turned into a vast network when she clarified that she was no saint and anyone can offer whatever they have to women who suffer gendered violence. Zuleika is an actress and she writes. Three days after sharing her Facebook post she began receiving 150 messages a day from women from all over Latin America, who shared their stories and inspired Zuleika to write them down.

At first, she would get sick all the time. She had a miscarriage. As her messages went viral, so did the threats—messages about the many ways she will be raped, how she will be incinerated, the color of the trash bag she will be put in when they leave her at her mom's place. But Zuleika remains committed to listening to women's stories and sometimes visiting them in person. Out of the 8,000 women she talked to between 2016 and 2018, only 50 were willing to

give their names. This number reflects the silences and censorship surrounding sexual violence and the importance of the work of organizations and individuals to destigmatize speaking up against sexual abuse. Zuleika Esnal has continued to perform other texts she writes, almost always retelling the stories she gathers from the women that reach out to her. She is also part of a collective *Actrices Argentinas*, which denounces sexual harassment in the workplace and works in alliance with NiUnaMenos. What is salient about her work is that by writing about sexual abuse, Esnal was choosing to write about a topic that has remained taboo for far too long. By making visible the vast number of women that reach out to her with experiences of abuse, Esnal is disrupting the normalization process that naturalizes gendered violence as part of the condition of being a woman.

At a women's march organized by the feminist movement NiUnaMenos in Argentina, YoNoFui held a sign that read "*No Estamos Todas, Faltan Las Presas*;" (We are Not All Here, The Inmates are Missing). This was a significant way of signaling that even with multitudinous attendance it was important to highlight the absence and erasure of incarcerated women and their rights. In this way, YoNoFui wove itself in various other social movements, activists, and thinkers to make visible the prevalence of institutional violence affecting women's prisons today. In mapping these networks of interdependence, I emphasize the role of collective identity in how women-led grassroots movements in Latin America today contest the oppression of the carceral state. Focusing on incarcerated women as they transition out of prison brings to the fore the continuum of gendered and institutional violence that women are subjected to, both inside and outside of prisons.

During the last stretch of fieldwork research, YoNoFui joined the Asamblea de Mujeres, which met monthly, sometimes weekly, to organize important events such as the Women's

March on March 8th and other events such as the now recurrent march of June 3rd, organized by NiUnaMenos. On June 3, 2015, NiUnaMenos had its first Women's March. I attended, fearful, as I was pregnant with my first child with a due date of June 11. As soon as I stepped out of the subway station, my fears dissipated. This was not like any of the protests or marches I ever attended. The overwhelming presence of women meant that there were children and many other pregnant women around. In all the women's marches I attended during fieldwork, the attendance was so big that cell phones would never work. There was no way of getting reception, not even close. In order to meet someone, you had to arrange a particular location and time, and even these plans failed many times.

YoNoFui usually agreed to meet outside the cafe 'Confitería del Molino,' located in the corner of avenues Callao and Rivadavia, and right across the street from the Congress. We had to meet outside because despite its coveted location, the cafe closed its doors in 1997 and has not reopened since. The corner is boarded up and if you look up you can see stained glass windows and a corner turret with windmill sails. We sometimes failed at meeting at del Molino because the crowd could prevent you from getting there, a tide of people pushed you in ways you did not anticipate, or you could run into someone else and change plans. Women attended in groups, organized collectives showed up with signs, costumes, painted faces and musical instruments, and young women showed up with their friends, in a festive mood and curious about this new phenomenon that was happening everywhere and seemed unstoppable. There were signs everywhere, denouncing sexual violence, claiming for the legalization of abortion, and offering new ways of thinking about womanhood and collective ways of being.

I did not stay for long during that first march. I was locked into an intersection without being able to move much and slowly but surely the space got too crowded for my bump. But I

attended other subsequent marches, and each time the attendance grew bigger than the previous one. The images from drones confirmed that this movement was not going anywhere, that change was imminent, and the transformations were not only political and social, but also personal. On the streets, catcalling almost disappeared. Men would now often begin conversations with "I don't mean to offend…" Campaigns against catcalling were popular across Latin America and widely shared between organizations. In order to address the many layers of gendered violence, catcalling was a powerful example of the everydayness of this violence which is often masked as praise. Catcalling was also a powerful example to illustrate the insidiousness of sexual violence and its many disguises. A performance that best exemplifies the collaborations between feminist collectives and their shared message against sexual violence is the performance "Un Violador en tu Camino" by the collective LasTesis which I will consider in the next section.

Performance 4: Un Violador en Tu Camino

Against the backdrop of police brutality and political repression in Chile, four women in the feminist art collective LasTesis, were moved by the disheartening rape statistics in Chile and inspired by the work of Rita Segato on rape. In Chile, only an 8% of resolved cases of sexual assault reach some sort of conviction. LasTesis created a performance titled 'Un Violador en tu Camino' (A Rapist in Your Path)which references a slogan created by the Chilean police during the 90s, 'Un Amigo en tu Camino' (A Friend in Your Path). This slogan was created to disrupt the public perception on police brutality. By replacing *amigo* for *violador*, LasTesis seeks to display that sexual violence is not an isolated event but a social and political one. The performance begins with a group of women standing in lines with their eyes blindfolded and drums or an electronic beat in the background. Women shuffled from side to side and began

chanting. Throughout the performance there is choreography according to the lyrics. At one point, women squat making references to body searches. Their attires vary but some are supposed to dress in "provocative" ways so as to point out that sexual assault is not about how women dress. The phrase 'Sleep quietly innocent girl, without worrying about the bandit,' is a reference to the song 'Order y Patria' which was mandatory to be played in schools during Pinochet's dictatorship. By pronouncing the song's verses in an ironic way, the women announce through performance that nobody will sleep quietly now as women are on strike. The performance ends with the women pointing fingers at the state as the ultimate rapist. The anthem is about the complicity of judges, courts, institutions and police in failing to address sexual assault. Their performance took place in November 2019 in Valparaiso, Chile and it included the following lyrics:

A Rapist in Your Path

Patriarchy is a judge, who judges us for being born
and our punishment is violence that you do not see.
Patriarchy is a judge, who judges us for being born
and our punishment is the violence you already see.
It is femicide
Impunity for the murderer
It is disappearance
It is rape
And the fault was not mine, or where I was, or how I dressed
And the fault was not mine, or where I was, or how I dressed
And the fault was not mine, or where I was, or how I dressed
And the fault was not mine, or where I was, or how I dressed
The rapist was you
The rapist is you
They are the pacos (police)
The judges
The state
President

The oppressive state is a male rapist
The oppressive state is a male rapist
The rapist was you
The rapist is you
Sleep quietly innocent girl,
without worrying about the bandit,
who for your sweet and smiling dreams watches over your carabinero lover.
The rapist is you
The rapist is you
The rapist is you
The rapist is you

This performance quickly generated a global interconnectedness between feminist social movements. It has been reproduced widely all over the world, with women adapting the lyrics to their local configurations and languages and dressing according to their customs. The performances in other parts of the world are now recorded in an interactive map such as the one the next figure represents:

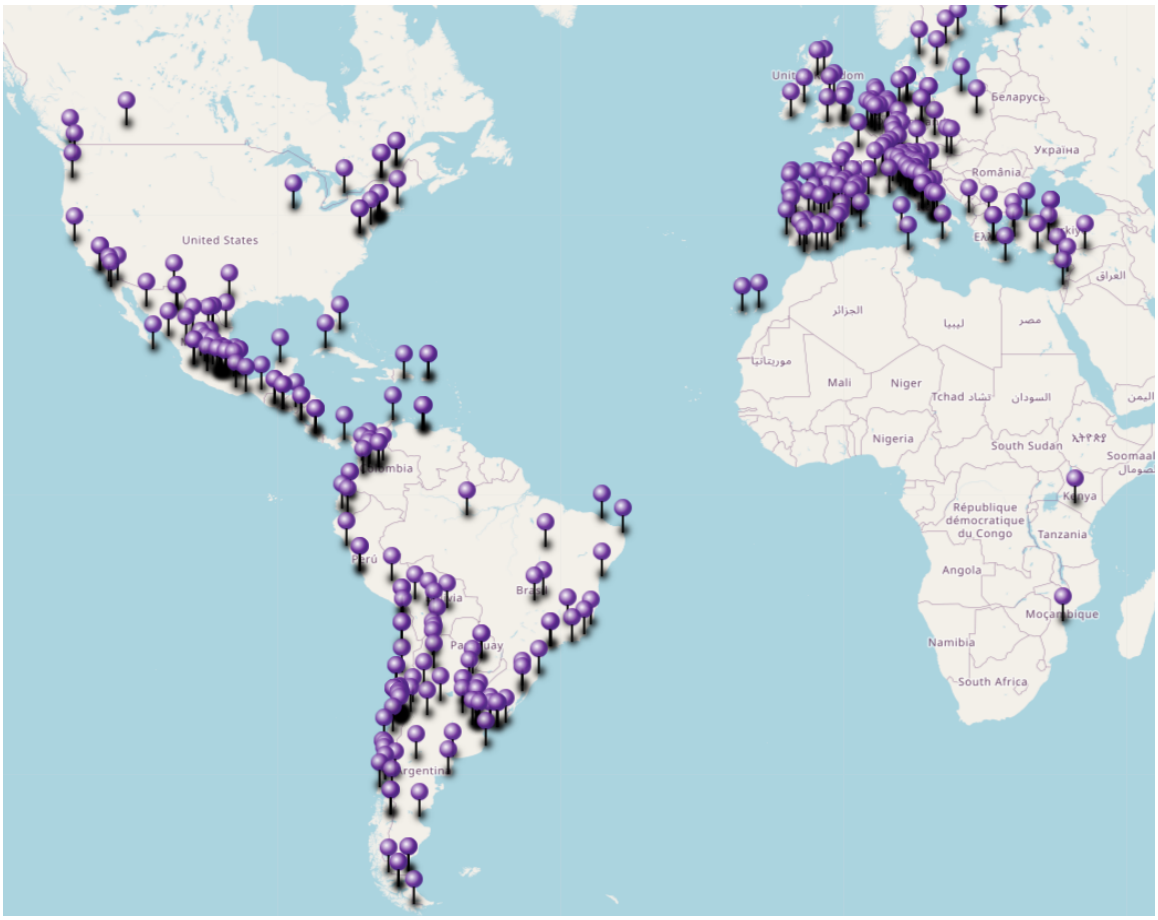

Figure 9. Interactive map with links to performances can be found at: http://umap.openstreetmap.fr/fr/map/un-violador-en-tu-camino-2019_394247#3/24.85/-25.93

"Un violador en tu Camino" clearly struck a nerve among feminist groups while also providing a platform to refer to the particular contexts of each performance. Police brutality, the justice system and patriarchal values are a common denominator among all performances along with the refusal of victims of sexual abuse to be blamed for the rapes they had to endure. Throughout this chapter, we have seen interdependent bodies, organizations, and networks of care struggle and organize against sexual assault, against the policing of LGBTQIA+ communities, for accountability for crimes against humanity during the dictatorship and for women's reproductive rights such as abortion. The goal of this overview is to provide a broader context to understand how YoNoFui was never working in isolation, but part of a larger feminist movement that has

been expanding worldwide. It seems fitting to include "Un Violador en tu Camino" as a performance of how *feminismos populares* unabashedly confront the carceral state that upholds gendered violence as a way to legitimize itself while manipulating the justice system to its advantage.

Conclusions

When Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar visited YoNoFui, we sat outside around a table drinking mate to discuss activism when someone asked: "Why can men in prison organize strikes so successfully, and women are so hard to organize? Men usually present one clear goal, one demand and women can never agree, and all have different interests."

Yes! - answered Raquel. Women can organize, and she recounted her experience in a Bolivian prison, where she was incarcerated for five years for her activism against state violence. While incarcerated, Raquel and a few others organized several strikes. Was it always challenging? Yes. One of the main contributions of her book *Desandar el Laberinto* is that she learned the multifarious meanings behind the word *Si* when women were asked if they would participate in the strike. Yes, as in no; Yes, as in I will think about it; Si as in I will have to see how things go; and Si as in Yes. Women's spaces, whether a women's prison or a women-led collective, are always multiple and complex. Political endeavors that embrace this feature strengthen their platforms while also holding space for inclusive efforts that strengthen social networks and promote communal relationships. The demands, under the current capital carceral state, are always plentiful, particularly when it concerns incarcerated women who are not only constantly surveilled but also subjected to the harshest realities of state violence.

This chapter explored contemporary performances of feminist activism that rely on interdependence as a way to challenge gendered violence. Through the strengthening of social fabrics, feminist collectives contest institutional violence by advocating against hierarchical structures that reinforce patriarchal values. Activism that challenges traditional understandings of the category of 'woman' redefine, through performance, notions of a 'feminine' subjectivity to show that force, resilience, desire, and interdependence, are all part of the feminist struggle for non-violence. Performativity, like poetry, can operate as a methodological device to reproduce as well as disrupt meaning-making practices that inform the ways memory, identity, and experience are gendered. The performances considered in this chapter represent different ways in which vulnerability is propelled as a political power to collectively contest social, political, and economic inequality.

In this dissertation, I chose to present women's stories, not to highlight their victimhood, but, instead, to understand their resilience as part of a larger political struggle that seeks to disrupt the hegemonic narrative that confines women to ideals of good behavior, passivity, and heteronormativity. Women who challenge institutions are examples of the desire to live otherwise. From micropolitics to activism, feminist social movements have been working on the ground for decades, challenging neoliberalist policies that dictate the feminization of poverty and contesting patriarchal structures that expand the social control of women's bodies and lives.

Throughout this ethnography, I offered varied examples of contemporary social movements in Latin America, often referred to as *feminismos populares,* and the complex web of relationships and events that allows these movements to rely on each other and strengthen their political platforms (Gago 2019). Following Diana Taylor, these performances show how contemporary activism demanding to abolish prisons, against gendered violence, and for the

legalization of abortion, provides a creative and fruitful ground to reimagine new desires to pursue and new ways to relate to one another.

YoNoFui is one collective, which, through art and activism, has consistently offered a platform as well as a place of belonging for women who disobey the dictates of a misogynistic state. Their artistic expressions revealed desires for richer understandings of freedom that do not rely on boundless individuals but instead engage collectively with local, global and transnational political struggles. Not to make normal possible, but to make normal impossible. As I finish this dissertation during pandemic times, which deem the future uncertain, in the Appendix, I share a recent manifesto YoNoFui published on the virus COVID-19. As YoNoFui currently works to demand the penitentiary guarantees safety for those incarcerated, and distributes groceries to women under house arrest, in their manifesto, they invite the reader to seriously consider living otherwise.

I share one last poem from Jose Watanabe, a Peruvian poet known as the 'poetas peruanos del 70.' This generation of poets experimented with colloquialism and, during its initial stage, focused on collectives more that individuals. As YoNoFui invites us to rethink our worlds outside of prisons, I would like for this dissertation to be an invitation to think of collectives as ways to consider subjectivity and the potentials of what is possible, beyond the individual.

Animal de Invierno

Jose Watanabe

Otra vez es tiempo de ir a la montaña
a buscar una cueva para hibernar.

Voy sin mentirme: la montaña no es madre, sus cuevas
son como huevos vacíos donde recojo mi carne
y olvido.
Nuevamente veré en las faldas del macizo
vetas minerales como nervios petrificados, tal vez
en tiempos remotos fueron recorridos
por escalofríos de criatura viva.
Hoy, después de millones de años, la montaña
está fuera del tiempo, y no sabe
cómo es nuestra vida
ni cómo acaba.

Allí está, hermosa e inocente entre la neblina, y yo entro
en su perfecta indiferencia
y me ovillo entregado a la idea de ser de otra sustancia.

He venido por enésima vez a fingir mi resurrección.
En este mundo pétreo
nadie se alegrará con mi despertar. Estaré yo solo
y me tocaré
y si mi cuerpo sigue siendo la parte blanda de la montaña
sabré
que aún no soy la montaña.

Winter Animal

Jose Watanabe

Once again it is time to go to the mountain
to look for a cave to hibernate.

I go without lying to myself: the mountain is not a mother, its caves
are like empty eggs where I pick up my meat
and forget.
Once again I will see in the skirts of the massif
mineral veins like petrified nerves, maybe
in ancient times they were traveled
by chills of a living creature.
Today, after millions of years, the mountain
is out of time, and doesn't know
how our life is
or how it ends.

There it is, beautiful and innocent among the mist, and I enter
in its perfect indifference
and I curl up surrendering to the idea of being of another substance.

I have come for the umpteenth time to pretend my resurrection.
In this stony world
no one will be happy with my awakening. I will be alone
and I will touch myself
and if my body is still the soft part of the mountain
I will know
that I am still not the mountain.

Appendix A

I conclude this dissertation by sharing a manifesto YoNoFui wrote during these pandemic times. Currently, YoNoFui is advocating for trans women in prison and distributing groceries for women under house.

Somos Plaga (We are the Plague) by YoNoFui

We are the type of people not included in the emergency plan. Strange bodies. The discarding of a society that treats us in any circumstance as second-class citizens. For them, we are the virus. We know. We take responsibility. We mutate, we survive, and, therefore, there is no antibody that stops us. We are immunized from any bullshit, because we have spent most of our lives exposed to poverty, hunger, drug use, life on the streets, prison, the symptoms and the aftermath of capitalism; about its effect on our lives we can write long and hard. That is why there is no quarantine or obedience that assures us of a livable life under the parameters of a society of which we seem not to be a part.

The prison taught us a lot about confinement. From all this we have learned and are still learning, and we know how to subsist to all this list of cruelties and injustices. We know what survival, violence, contempt, pain, anguish, indifference is all about. We know it because our bodies know it, we receive every lash on it. Our power is born from there and is the counter-effect of what they try to impose on us.

We don't want to go back to normal once this happens, because normality terrifies us, criminalizes us, and locks us up. Instead we say "let's make normality impossible," that algorithmic normality that forces us to live the life of capital, that if we don't obey we end up being held in all spaces, that normality that makes you a terrorist or a suspect if you don't get on with the police.

If from birth we breathe the air that capital imposes on us, then they should pay us for being born, give us a salary for existing, give us free and universal medical coverage. It is time to demand everything, to rethink our justice, to get out the grump we have inside and to run away from obedience. How much of this withdrawal is a strategy that circulates an intensification of the ways of living prior to COVID-19? To close borders, to have an interdependence with cyberspace, materially alienated from our friends, from our ranches, from our peers with the intention of breaking everything that we have been building or disarming. How much of that

leaves us more alone in the midst of a lot of people, where each one is connected with the virtual illusion of being close?

The scavenger way of living that is proposed to us, a police state that expects you to denounce your neighbor, instead of asking them, how are you, what's wrong with you ... That is the virus that worries us the most. The pandemic from which very few can flee. The one that destroys networks, affective tissues and genuine interest in others. Because no, we are not all together in this false unit of facing the virus, we do not do it the same way. We do not think or practice care in the same way, if the call is to take care of life, it is not the same ways of life that we are wanting to take care of.

In there, in the prisons, there are different viruses, one is that of the *yuta* (police), you can become *re yuta*, but also the virus is the *yuta posta* (actual police), the one that beats you up in the requisition, the same one that makes you remember every day that you will not be able to go home or wherever. The same *yuta* that today is beating up youth in the prisons for protesting, because they do not have food, because they do not have medical attention, and nobody cares about that.

We are suffocated, we do not want the State to continue to have the monopoly of violence, we are prepared and we call not to stop the flow that we have been causing, not to stop the force that pushes us to defy the techno-patriarchy, to find the collective gesture to confront the confinement, the denunciation and the surveillance.

Now perhaps someone will skirt the contours of confinement, those contours that become sticky, that stick to us like chewing gum that we cannot remove if not by tearing them from the base. It is thought that the quarantine began yesterday, for us the quarantine began the day the jails were invented.

Appendix B

Poetry written by author in Carmen's poetry class

This poem was written in 2018 after reading the poem 'De costado' by Damián Ríos, who was born in 1969 in Entre Ríos, Uruguay. Ríos is a writer and editor (partner of the independent publishing house Blatt & Rios).

El amarillo	Yellow
Es amarillo	is yellow
De todos los lados	from all sides
Acá y allá	Here and there
Amarillo #3 y amarillo #3	Yellow #3 and yellow #3
Uno y el otro	One and the other
Y el vidrio que los separa	and the glass that divides them
Los separa o los une	divides them or unites them
Se tocan o se miran	do they touch or do they stare
El amarillo	Yellow
Es amarillo	is yellow
De todos los lados	from all sides
Durante el día	During the day
Y también a la noche	and also at night
Hay una sola verdad	There is one truth
Y muchos amarillos	And many yellows
Que se miran y no se tocan	that stare at each other and do not touch
Que se apoyan en el vidrio	they lean on the glass
Que se mienten amarillos	and lie themselves yellows
De un lado y del otro	on one side and the other
El vidrio no es amarillo	The glass is not yellow
El vidrio es vidrio	Glass is glass
Y miente sobre la verdad.	and lies about the truth.

At times, the prompt for writing was listening to a particular song. In this case, we listened to Astor Piazzola, “Tristeza de un Doble A.”

Paralizante	Paralyzing
Nervio que recorre la pierna	nerve that travels the leg
Azul.	blue
Pulsa	pulsating
Se torna morado	it turns purple
Podrido	rotten
La pierna quedo dura	The leg is now stiff
Y ya no se mueve	and it no longer moves
Hace frio	It’s cold
Frio que no es mas azul.	cold that is no longer blue
La pierna ya no siente	that the leg can no longer feel
A veces la muerte casi no se siente	Sometimes you can hardly sense death
A veces pasa desapercibida	Sometimes it goes unnoticed
Se apoya	It leans
En la pierna dura	on the stiff leg
Que ya no se mueve	that no longer moves
Y ahí se queda	and it stays there
Ya sin frio	no longer cold
Ya sin pulso	with no pulse
Nervio negro y quieto	nerve that is now black and still.
Las terminaciones	Endings
que nunca llegaron a puerto.	that never came to port.
Todas las decisiones	All the decisions
que no se tomaron	that were not made
esperan en la pierna	they wait in the leg
paralizada	paralyzed
cubierta con una manta	covered with a blanket,
como si acaso.	as if.
A veces la muerte se queda quieta.	Sometimes death remains still.

While sometimes we would look at photographs before writing, during this particular day, the prompt was to write about a photographic memory from our past.

San Miguel

Siempre me levanto descalza.
Las baldosas son rojas
oscuras y frías.

De las primas mas grandes
heredamos
estos camisones de nylon
símil organza.
Tienen volados en los hombros
y me convencen de que soy una princesa.

Afuera, los pinos.
Afuera vamos a comer con platos de madera.
Al terminar el almuerzo
mi papa dirá "helping."
Tenemos que ayudar a levantar la mesa.

Siempre le cuestiono
por qué no la levanta el también.
Siempre me contesta "haz lo que te digo
y no lo que hago."

Pero en este caso, no es lo que hace,
sino lo que no hace.

Hoy, sin esas baldosas
me despierto con las medias puestas.

San Miguel

I wake up always barefoot
The tiles are red
dark and cold.

From the eldest cousins
we inherited
these nylon gowns
seemingly organza

they have ruffles in the shoulders
and convince me I am a princess.

Outside, the pines.
Outside we will eat with wooden plates.
When we finish lunch
my dad will say "helping."
We have to help clean up the table.

I always question him
about him not getting up.
He always replies
"Do as I say and not as I do."

But in this case it is not what he does,
but what he doesn't do.

Today, without those tiles
I wake up with my socks on.

The prompt for this poem was to write about your habitat. At the time, I was back in Seattle writing the dissertation.

Habitat

La escalera es de madera
tiene restos de Pintura color hueso
su dueña comenzó el proyecto
pero no lo termino.
El piso también es de madera
No puedo usar tacos porque es madera blanda
No uso tacos
pero cuando el pibito arrastra la silla,
se me ponen los pelos de punta
A pesar de que no es mi piso
y no es mi silla,
pero sí mi hijo.

En el centro de la cocina hay una mesada
Que también es de madera.
Isla creo que la llaman
Ahí lo invito a mi hijo
a que me ayude a cocinar.
Le entrego el cuchillo de plástico duro
y la tablita también
y alguna verdura.
A veces, muchas veces, le doy un huevo.
Le gusta romperlo, le gusta pedir ayuda
y es fácil de mezclar.

Son pocos los momentos
donde la “isla”
me ayuda a centrarme.
Las aguas se calman.
La tormenta se apaga.
Y por un momento, ahí estamos
él y yo.
Con una tablita y un cuchillo,
tratando de ayudarnos
entre los dos.

Habitat

It is a wooden staircase
with remnants of bone color paint
Its owner began the project
but did not finish.
The floor is also wooden
I cannot use heels because it is soft wood
I do not use heels
but when the kid drags the chair,
I want to pull out my hair
even though it is not my floor
and it is not my chair,
but it is my son.

In the center of the kitchen there is a table
which is also made of wood.
Island I think they call it
There I invite my son
to help me cook.
I give him a hard plastic knife
and a cutting board,
and some vegetable.
Sometimes, many times, I give him an egg.
He likes to break it, he likes to ask for help
and it is easy to mix.

There are few moments
where the "island"
helps me center
The waters calm down.
The storm is extinguished.
And for a while, there we are,
him and I.
With a board and a knife,
trying to help each other out.

The next two poems were written during fieldwork trying to process how living abroad impacted interpersonal relationships and my personal crisis with domestic life.

Volver nunca es volver

Lo que no te quiero decir
es que me voy a ir
y cuando me vaya
no me vas a reconocer
aunque te avise
lo vas a sentir repentino

y después voy a volver
y voy a ser otra
aunque me reconozcas

Volver nunca es volver
El tiempo es otro
Uno es otro

Yo volví
para no encontrarme
Para acordarme
de todas las razones
por las que me fui
Volví y me olvidé de irme
No encontré nada
Pero igual me quede
Volví para poder desdibujarme
borrar las cicatrices
Y hacer nuevos garabatos.

Going back is never going back

What I don't want to tell you
is that I will leave
and when I leave
you won't recognize me
even if I warn you
it will feel sudden

And then I will come back
and I will be other
even if you recognize me

Going back is never going back
Time is other
One is other

I returned
to not find myself
To remember
of all the reasons of
why I left
I got back and forgot to leave
I found nothing
but stayed nonetheless
I got back to blur myself
to erase the scars
and sketch new lines.

Untitled

Papel arrugado
Caño de escape
Pelos en la ducha
Lagaña en los ojos
Cera en las orejas
Tampón sucio

Molestia eterna
Encuentra la manera de reproducirse
una y otra vez
se propaga como epidemia
No le temo tanto al zika
como a que mi mañana sea como ayer

Ropa con olor a humo
Pies sucios
Bolsas para sacar afuera
La canilla que no anda
La manija que está suelta
Basurita en el ojo
Comida vieja en la heladera
Me cuesta sacarme el pelo de la boca
Piel escamosa
con cicatrices y costras
Me rasguñaste de nuevo
justo ahí
donde me estaba por curar
Se pasaron los fideos
y se rompió el tostador
No regamos las plantas
Y ahí quedaron, dando tristeza.

wrinkled paper
tailpipe blast
hairs in the shower
goop in the eye
wax in the ears
dirty tampon

Eternal discomfort
finds the way to reproduce itself
over and over again

it spreads like epidemic
I don't fear zika as much
as my tomorrow being like yesterday

clothes that smell of smoke
dirty feet
bags that need to be taken out
the faucet that doesn't work
the door handle that is loose
speck in the eye
old food in the fridge
I can't get that hair out of my mouth
scaly skin
with scars and scabs
You scratched me again
right there
where it was about to heal
the noodles are overcooked
and the toaster is broken
we didn't water the plants
and there they are, offering pity.

Sometimes, Carmen would choose a couple of lines from a poem we read and as a prompt we would have to write including those lines in our poems. In this case, we used a line from the poet Fabián Casas:
"The only music that exists
is outside of us"

Te refregas y tratas de limpiar tu ropa
Como si no fuese el final del día
Como si el cansancio
No estuviese apoyado
sobre el marco de la puerta

Trato de acomodarme el pelo
sin entender bien qué pasó.

La siesta que no fue.
La invitación que no llegó.

Creíamos que íbamos a poder.
Creíamos que íbamos a ir lejos.

-Todavía podemos- me digo

Los sonidos vibran con más eco.
Afuera, parece haber alguien.
Pero el marco de la puerta está vacío.

El aire esta seco,
faltante de esa humedad que acobija.

Aparecen preguntas
que había dejado para más tarde.
Preguntas
que ya no sé cómo responder.

Perdimos.

No nos encontramos.
Y nos olvidamos de preguntar
a dónde va
la soledad.

You rub yourself and try to clean your clothes
As if it was not the end of the day
As if tiredness
was not leaning
on the door frame

I try to fix my hair
confused about what went down.

The nap that did not happened.
The invitation that did not arrive.

We thought we were going to make it.
We thought we were going far.

-We still can- I say

The sounds vibrate with more echo.
Outside, there seems to be someone.
But the door frame is empty.

The air is dry,
missing that moisture that shelters.

Questions appear
that I had left for later.
Questions
I no longer know how to approach.

We lost.

We did not find each other.
And we forgot to ask
Where to put solitude away.

One of the earliest poems I wrote, describes the experience of giving birth. Carmen encouraged me to write about it after I told her I was disillusioned with the experience and it was difficult to explain why.

To let go (2016)

I have the bump real tight
my skin taut
fissured by stretch marks
discomfort is overwhelming.
My sense of modesty,
nonetheless,
remains.

They ask me to push
but I remain modest.
I don't want to let go
for fear of spilling my guts
I go to the bathroom
and sit on the toilet
in the dark
I remove my gown
and sit naked.
For hours I've wanted to be naked
but out of modesty I've refrained.
In the bathroom, in the darkness
alone,
I'm still uncomfortable.
I am stuck
and there's no way out.
In the bathroom, in the darkness
alone,
I'm still uncomfortable.
I am stuck
and there's no way out.

With the bump real tight
I worry about what others might think
If they are counting the minutes,
wondering.

I can't, not like this.

I want to escape the inescapable
I'm in anguish
and the anguish
brings about more anguish

I should be going through this

with peace and ease
even ecstasy.
Not sitting on the toilet, in the darkness
trying to rush so as not to worry the others.

Do not ask me to push.
I am embarrassed.
I make the face
but I don't push.

Hours later...
I am dancing in hell.

Finally, facing everyone
in the birth room
I desperately remove the gown
and I am naked.

-Good, that's better - says the midwife

The obstetrician berates and threatens me

- I don't know what I'm doing wrong - I reply, attempting to expose
how I've been cornered.

- Push, Push, Push

I feel bad about pushing a resident
- I'm sorry - I say
still (always) full of modesty.
And then, suddenly
the hill in my belly goes flat
you can see the bones from my ribcage
people around me are perplexed.

That's when you show up
bringing all the relief in the world
and taking all my modesty away.

I end with this poem, which I wrote after finding a new research project.

Better dreams to fulfill

You arrived like an affair
As if I slept uncovered
wearing a silk gown.

Lying in bed
Awake pretending to sleep

Tending to the other
Resigning myself
that tending to the other
is the best I can do.

I was not looking for it.
You showed up like that,
on the other side of the swamp
as I was lying down
without better dreams to fulfill.

I am on the other side
but I can imagine crossing
to move the mountain.

You talk about choice
as if it were easy.

You talk about jouissance
as if it were within reach.

I learn things from your breaths.

You move me from the corner of my kitchen
And untie the knot on my apron.

You speak of mandates
as if you were free.

You speak of stigma
as if it could be erased.

I listen
as if reading braille
Fascinating worlds
Elderly like the mountain
worlds that wait
to be wandered
lazily

Slowly

To trace
a lot of detail
To fascinate me
with its simplicity
with your wisdom
and your breath

Worlds that await me
to score in detail
better dreams to fulfill.

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