Landscapes of Survival: The Politics of Emotions in the Aftermath of Neoliberal Crises

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2019

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Hispanic Studies

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Abstract

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Landscapes of Survival is an investigation of the affective life of neoliberalism. It takes the financial crises of 2001 in Argentina and 2008 in Spain to argue that, while both events have precipitated circumstances inherent to all economic crises—unemployment, austerity, migration, increased poverty—, they have also disclosed that crisis, far from being an extraordinary event, is for most a quotidian experience. In so doing, this work as a whole proposes that attention to the cultural politics of emotions sheds light on the nature of crisis as an ongoing condition under neoliberal governance. This dissertation advances recent cultural analysis of neoliberalism in the field of transatlantic Peninsular and Latin American studies that often lack particular attention to the centrality of the politics of

emotions in processes of signification and subjectification. *Landscapes of Survival* begins with an analysis of the documentaries *Otro Destino* (Argentina, 2003) and *En tierra extraña* (Spain, 2015) to explore the feeling of loss that structures the lives of young migrants whose life projects have been overturned by the crises. The project then moves on to examine love as a political emotion in the movements for justice and liberation that have opposed the politics of austerity. In this chapter, the focus is on the *Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados* and *Empresas Recuperadas por sus Trabajadores* (Argentina) and the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Spain). *Landscapes of Survival* ends with a discussion of the emergence of precarity as a structure of feeling by reading two post-financial crises novels, *El trabajo* (Aníbal Jarkowski, 2007) and *La trabajadora* (Elvira Navarro, 2014). The dissertation as a whole exposes that attention to the cultural politics of emotions in neoliberal societies is central to understanding not only how power works but also how power is resisted.

To the memory of my parents

Acknowledgments

Landscapes of Survival has been a truly collaborative effort. And for that, I have many to thank. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, which has provided me with the necessary funds to do this research in the midst of rocky times for doctoral education in the humanities. In particular, I have to thank my chair, Anthony Geist for being the absolute best mentor, the most fierce advocate of my work, and the friend I could count on when I needed it. Tony has not only given me the intellectual freedom I needed to develop my own ideas, he has cared for my well-being as a complex person with a life beyond graduate school. He has helped me navigate the difficulties of writing a dissertation while gently pushing me to always keep going, even when I doubted I could. He has believed in and supported my work as a public scholar, attentively listened to my professional plans outside of the academy, and validated them with respect and affection. Without Tony this work would not exist. I wish that someday I can be someone's "Tony," for we all know how much students need good mentors.

I am also indebted to Leigh Mercer for all the times she has listened to my ideas, given me feedback, and encouraged me to be a bold thinker. Her fantastic observations about my work have greatly enhanced this project as well as my intellectual process. I would also like to thank Cynthia Steel who, when I contacted her after almost two years of non-communication, did not hesitate in offering me her unreserved support. I would need additional time to write about all the ways in which having Kathleen Woodward in my committee has shaped this project. Kathy has inspired *Landscapes of Survival* since the very

beginning, for it was her microseminar on the emotions that laid the groundwork for the questions I have raised and for my methodological approach to answer them. She has also been a sharp, generous, and kind reader of my work, providing me with superb intellectual stimuli. For that, and for many other reasons, I will be forever grateful.

I could not have done this work without the warmth and creative energy of my public scholarship community. Imagining America and PAGE have created the space for me to think big, to break the mold of what counts as intellectual work, and to blend theory and practice. During the years I was a PAGE co-director, I had the privilege to dream of more just and egalitarian worlds with my dear friends Kush Patel, Kira Pasquesi, Romo Almanza, Frances Lee, Gale Greenlee, and Lauren O'Brien. Dreaming about the impact of our labor in creating the world we want to live in has been the fuel that has kept me going through the long—and at times dark—road that grad school is. I owe so much to my friends and colleagues from Imagining America and PAGE for being a constant source of inspiration and support. I am also so very grateful to Alan-Michael Weatherford, my partner in crime for many of the community-engaged projects in which we have collaborated. Our work with University Beyond Bars has frequently been the highlight of my graduate education. I also have Sebastián López Vergara to thank for the sense of humor and lightness he has brought to the University Beyond Bar classes the three of us have taught together.

When I moved to Seattle to pursue graduate education I did not know how much support I'd need to achieve this goal. I have been fortunate to share this journey with friends like Lise Lalonde, whose generosity and love have been essential during these past years; Céline Maillard, whose sense of humor and practicality have rescued me many times; and Sabrina Tatta, who besides being an amazing friend, makes the best cake and bread. I

have shared frustrations, laughs, disappointments and lots of love with many others: Rocío Chueco Montilla, Julia de León, Belén, Laura, María, and Paloma have been the friends I needed when I needed them. Special thank you to my friends and editors, Annie Dwyer and Will Arighi, who have made my English sound beautiful while always encouraging me with their thoughtful comments.

Finally my deepest love and thanks to my family, here and at the other side of the Atlantic. My brothers, Alfonso and Borja, and my aunts, Maite, Nati, and Pili never needed to fully understand what I was doing to always root for me. My niece, Mia, was born while I was working on my last chapter and her birth has inspired me in ways I cannot fully explain. I am so very grateful to my husband, partner, and friend, Joel Strom. He has believed in me, encouraged me, and patiently waited for me to finish. Without his unconditional support and love I simply could not have made it. He has also introduced me to the Stroms, who have become my family and community in Seattle. Kristine, Damon, Kaelyn, Curtis, and Truett Strom have cheered me up and brightened my days so many times. Audrey and Mark have nurtured me as one more of the family since the day they met me. Special thanks to Aunty Jan and Uncle Bill. With a generosity that is rare these days, they have welcomed us into their home so I could push through the last stage of the dissertation without having to worry about anything else. These final lines are indeed written from their home, which has felt like my own for the last few months.

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> "Y he aquí", termina Sir Gielgud, "que de pronto nuestro barco ya no nos pareció la embajada itinerante de un país maravilloso, sino la isla a la deriva en que cumplíamos el destierro de un país que ya no existía más".
> Leopoldo Brizuela

> Survival in the present of an ordinary collective life suffused with a historic and historical crisis to which we are always catching up is *the way we live now*.
> Lauren Berlant

Introduction: The Crises of Neoliberalism

In the 27 September 2019 issue of the progressive Argentinean newspaper *Página12*, Paz-Rudy's cartoon satirically depicts Argentina's ongoing relationship of dependence on the IMF [fig. 1]. In the cartoon we can see a man running to meet the new IMF director with a bouquet of flowers, his intention being to ask for another loan before the director has any time to learn about Argentina's debt with the fund. As I write this introduction, the country is in the midst of presidential elections and awaiting yet another loan from the IMF—this one US$50 billion. Argentines are wary of borrowing more money, as many have yet to recover from the 2001 financial meltdown, when the government defaulted. They also know what the new loan signifies: more structural adjustments, further privatization of basic services, flexibilization of labor laws, and the marketization of

life. The relationship with the IMF has not helped the Argentinean economy; rather, the mounting national debt has contributed to the devaluation of the national currency, high levels of inflation, and growing unemployment and poverty, threatening the government with another default. In other words, what Argentine society deeply understands is that the cycle of loans, debt-repayment, and austerity policies is self-perpetuating. Thus, it seems, nothing has changed since 2001. Paz-Rudy's vignette resonates with one of the main concerns of this project: the ongoing nature of crisis under neoliberal governance.

Fig. 1. The new director of the IMF has taken over; quick, let's go ask her for a loan./ But she just took over and doesn't know us yet/Exactly!

My dissertation aims to understand the affective life of neoliberalism by focusing on the financial collapses of 2001 in Argentina and 2008 in Spain. I am drawn to crisis as a

category of analysis because disasters, whether natural or man-made, disrupt the normal course of life and, in so doing, they activate distinct cultural processes. For instance, I will pay attention to migration (chapter one) and political mobilization (chapters two and three) as processes triggered by the 2001 and 2008 neoliberal crises. However, in this project, the notion of crisis works in different ways. On the one hand, I use crisis in the generalized sense of an extraordinary, unforeseen, and deeply difficult situation that has the capacity to induce shock. This is the meaning of crisis that has circulated in mainstream media and official political channels in the aftermath of the neoliberal disasters of 2001 and 2008. However, the narratives that circulate this sense of crisis offer a circumstantial, incomplete description of the social disorder generated by the financial crashes, insofar as they suggest the "cause" is not the neoliberal model but its faulty implementation. French political economists Gérard Duméil and Dominique Lévy argue in *The Crisis of Neoliberalism* (2011) that modern capitalism developed out of four major crises of capital since the end of the nineteenth century: in 1873, 1929, 1973 and 2008. According to Duméil and Lévy, "each of these earthquakes introduced the establishment of a new social order and deeply altered international relations. The contemporary crisis marks the beginning of a similar process of transition" (2). After each "earthquake," in this interpretation, the capitalist system is reconfigured to reconsolidate the global economic order. However, in this narrative of crisis, capitalism is never questioned, because economic disasters are explained as occasional errors rather than systemic defects.

In *Landscapes of Survival*, I problematize the notion of crisis as an exceptional event with definite edges by paying attention to the cultural politics of emotions in the aftermath of the 2001 and 2008 financial disasters. I argue that, while both events have precipitated

circumstances inherent to all economic crises—unemployment, austerity, migration, increased poverty—, they have also disclosed that crisis, far from being an extraordinary event, is for most a quotidian experience. In other words, this project deploys another sense of the term: crisis as ongoing existence under neoliberal rule. Mobilized in this way, crisis becomes closely tied to the notion of trauma. Literary trauma theory emerged as a field of study in the 1990s and has developed in two waves. The first wave draws from Freudian psychoanalysis to conceptualize trauma as an extremely disrupting experience that splits the psyche and, in so doing, impacts the formation of memory and identity. In this model, traumatic experiences are unspeakable and unavailable to consciousness, as they register in memory differently than do other experiences. The second wave moves away from the trope of irrepresentability and problematizes this idea of the complete fragmentation of the traumatic event that lies at the very core of trauma studies. This alternative model also theorizes trauma as disruptive; however, unlike the first wave of trauma studies, it emphasizes the possibility of both direct and indirect knowledge of the event. In this approach, recollection of the traumatic event is seen as a process whereby the subject resignifies and reconstructs new meanings in the act of remembrance. Put briefly, "the traumatic experience disrupts, yet does not foreclose memory's function or deny epistemological possibilities of the experience" (Michelle Balaev 360-68).

My own understanding of trauma relies heavily on the work of Lauren Berlant and Ann Cvetkovich, who both exemplify the second wave of trauma studies in eschewing clinical discourses that pathologize human suffering. Indeed, they stretch our understanding of what constitutes trauma: "I want to place moments of extreme trauma alongside moments of everyday emotional distress that are often the only sign that

trauma's effects are still being felt," writes Cvetkovich in *An Archive of Feelings* (3). She is interested in the affective dimension of trauma as it is felt in the ordinary experience of living life—in particular, when that life is shaped by systems of oppression. For Cvetkovich, histories of sexual violence, suffering, and exclusion get lost in grand narratives of trauma, and are better excavated at the site of lesbian public cultures within which many marginalized communities chronicle their experiences. Trauma, understood in this way, exists at the intersection of the macro and the micro, the systemic and the specific. In *Cruel Optimism* (2011), Lauren Berlant similarly argues for the need to move away from the category of trauma as a shattering, exceptional event. Her notion of "crisis-ordinariness" (10) poignantly describes the present as a time "in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on" (8). For Berlant, the focus of trauma theory on the extraordinary obscures the multiple ways in which neoliberal capitalism produces human suffering. My project draws upon and elaborates Berlant's and Cvetkovich's conceptualizations of trauma as everyday experiences of oppression, precarity, and injury. For instance, in my chapters, I mobilize this notion of trauma when I analyze the daily struggles endured by migrants (chapter one), the unemployed (chapter two) and young female professionals (chapter three) as well as the strategies for survival that emerge in the context of the crises.

In *Landscapes of Survival*, I take the financial crises of 2001 and 2008 as framing events that illustrate the relentless, ever unfolding violence of neoliberal capitalism. At the same time, the chapters problematize the notion of crisis as a chaotic temporal phenomenon that is followed by a return to normalcy. I explore how, in the context of the 2001 and 2008 neoliberal crises in Argentina and Spain, attention to the cultural politics of

emotions sheds light on the nature of crisis as an ongoing condition. By using the phrase, "cultural politics of emotions," I wish to emphasize that emotions are cultural phenomena. I also use the term in much the same way Sara Ahmed does to refer to the performative dimension of feelings: emotions have the capacity to move us to act as well as the capacity to inhibit action (2004). For instance, I explore how emotions can be powerful catalysts for political mobilization or be paralyzing. In choosing theories of emotions as my methodology, I advance a key objective: to foreground feelings as world-making practices.

In each chapter, I pay attention to a different affective experience of neoliberal crises: namely, loss, love, and precarity. My main goal is not to offer a comprehensive analysis of emotions and neoliberalism—I would be suspicious of any project which claims as much. Rather, I ask: "How do people reimagine life after catastrophe?" and follow the paths where this question takes me. My archive is also an answer to this organizing question that reflects my own concerns as a migrant belonging to the generation who came of age in the midst of the crisis in Spain. For this reason, I have tended to draw from primary sources that depict how younger generations are impacted by crisis—and how they refuse to accept an inheritance that sometimes feels like a sentence. In many ways, *Landscapes of Survival* is the story of how I came to understand it[1].

[1] I borrow this reflection from scholars of the affective turn who have place the personal and the academic, the intellectual and the intimate and the academic at the forefront of their work. In this regard, I am particularly indebted to Ann Cvetkovich and Kathleen Woodward whose research has given me license to think about those ties in my own experience.

Crises are opportunities. In her book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007), Naomi Klein argues that catastrophic events have been used to advance corporate goals and privatize basic public services. She backs her argument with extensive documentation on disasters like Hurricane Katrina, several US-led Latin-American coups d'état, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and more. Her basic premise—that moments of collective trauma are exploited for the expansion of capitalist interests—accurately diagnoses the central strategy of financial and political elites during the years of economic crisis and recession in Spain and Argentina. Indeed, the political establishment has mobilized the distress occasioned by the crises to create consensus around the austerity plans both nations have implemented. In his presidential acceptance speech of 1999, for example, Fernando De la Rúa disapproved of the privatization of the welfare state and the neoliberal economic policies implemented by his predecessor, Carlos Menem. He promised to repair the damage "el modelo"[2] had caused and called for Argentineans to confront the crisis with courage. In his speech, De la Rúa appealed to the spirit of the nation and the resilience of its citizens, asking for their patience while repaying the national debt.

Likewise, in his first address to the nation after winning the elections of November 2011, the Prime Minister of Spain, Mariano Rajoy, invoked the notion of solidarity. In his speech, Rajoy enjoins citizens to make a common effort to overcome the crisis: "Subrayo esta idea: la del esfuerzo común. Esfuerzo de todos y para todos. Esfuerzo compartido y equitativamente repartido. En una palabra, esfuerzo solidario" [I highlight this idea: that of

[2]'El modelo' is how Argentineans refer to the package of neoliberal policies carried out by Menem's during his time as President.

the common effort. Everyone's effort that shall benefit us all. Shared effort that is equitably shared. In other words, solidary effort.][3] (*El País*, 2011). This call for solidary in the midst of economic crisis traffics in patriotism to purchase acquiescence. In the context of the 2001 and 2008 neoliberal disasters, the love of the nation has been deployed to shift responsibility for the financial crises from the elites, whose practices occasioned them, to citizens, who are called upon to shoulder the austerity policies that shrink public spending. Just as the political policies of Reagan and Thatcher presented themselves as "a set of responses to a situation deemed 'unmanageable'" in the 1970s (Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval 171), so too have the policies of the austere state in the 2000s.

Crises are opportunities. 2001 and 2008 have not only been openings for capital to reorganize itself but also for people to reimagine a more egalitarian life. In recent years, several publications on both sides of the Atlantic have taken the financial disasters as points of departure to map emancipatory cultural processes made possible through the crises. For instance, in *Cultures of Anyone: Studies on Cultural Democratization in Spain* (2015), Luis Moreno Caballud suggests that the 2008 banking crisis in Spain catalyzed the democratization of knowledge production and, in so doing, fractured the hierarchical culture of expert knowledge upon which modern Spain was built. In the first part of the book, Caballud offers a genealogy of the country's modernization and identifies the cultural division between the intellectual elites—what he calls "the experts in the know"—and the rest of society as a significant feature of Spanish society. For Caballud, this process devalued the general population's ways of living and ways of knowing, and in the process, it created an excessive dependence on the cultural authority of the expert. Modernization

[3] All translations are mine.

correlative to capitalist development "effectively separates these populations from the traditional resources and knowledges that previously guaranteed their survival" (40). In the second part of the book, Caballud focuses on showing how the economic, institutional, and political crises that have unfolded in the aftermath of 2008 have opened up opportunities to question this hierarchical cultural system. Rejecting the cultural monopoly of the experts, the emerging "cultures of anyone" that he identifies promote "the idea that the people involved in a situation should be the ones to participate in changing it" (4). For example, the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages or PAH) has challenged a neoliberal system that carries out more than 173 evictions per day while bailing out the banks responsible for the real state bubble. In this context, Caballud argues, the PAH has been extremely successful in stopping evictions and producing legal documents that help vulnerable individuals litigate their cases. Caballud's important book offers an account not only of the cultural effects of neoliberalism but also of the capacities of "anyone" to resist oppressive policies. His sharp and creative analysis has paved the way for some of my own reflections in this project, particularly in chapter two.

In a similar fashion, Marina Sitrin has provided a cultural critique of the 2001 neoliberal crisis in Argentina through extensive ethnographic research. Her work is the only interpretation of the movements for justice and liberation that offers an account of affect. In *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (2006), Sitrin defines "política afectiva" as "affective in the sense of creating affection, creating a base that is loving and supportive, the only base from which one can create politics" (vii). For Sitrin, the new civic movements that arose after the economic disaster of 2001 built a "politics of social relationships and love" (vii). Sitrin connects this to *horizontalidad*—a new way of relating

with one another beyond identity markers of power—which foregrounds the personal and collective realization of the central role that communities play in taking back control of their lives. At the core of this realization is a sort of unhappiness with neoliberal policies and frail social bonds as well as the desire "to reclaim our relationships to one another, and to reinvent ways of being that are rooted in horizontal solidarity, sharing, democracy, and love" (2013 no pagination). In all her pieces on contemporary horizontal social movements, Sitrin invokes the importance of affection between the movements' participants, where affection is used as a synonym for love (2006 vii-iii). While she argues that love is central, she does not offer an anatomy of this emotion or explain how love becomes a world-making emotion. I hope to advance her important work in chapter two, where I look at two Argentine social movements, the *Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados* (Movement of Unemployed Workers) and the *Empresas Recuperadas por sus Trabajadores* (Enterprises Recovered by Workers).

I first envisioned *Landscapes of Survival* when I wrote and presented about the movements for justice and liberation that have emerged out of the 2001 and 2008 financial disasters. These movements' creative energy, capacity to reimagine community and belonging, and unapologetic hope for a better world first drew my attention. These movements—along with Caballud's and Sitrin's insightful reflections on them—are the origin of this dissertation. The project, of course, has also taken shape in response to the sharp and suggestive work of other cultural critics in the fields of Iberian and Latin American studies, particularly recent cultural analyses of neoliberalism and the 2001 and 2008 financial crises. However, my work fills what I consider to be a significant gap in contemporary transatlantic scholarship in Peninsular and Latin American studies: the

study of emotions. In the section that follows, I offer a short account of neoliberalism as a new rationality that organizes all spheres of life. I then explain why attention to the cultural politics of emotions during neoliberal crises is central to understanding not only how power operates but also how power is resisted. I end this introduction with a brief summary of my chapters.

Emotions and Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has become a key category of study in cultural analyses. But neoliberalism has not always been the overpowering phenomenon that it is today. In his book *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (2010), Jamie Peck reminds us that, in the mid-twentieth century, neoliberalism was a marginal ideology forming against the backdrop of a strong Keynesian state. Peck argues that neoliberal thinking has existed since at least the 1920s, but he marks the foundation of the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947 as the beginning of a systematic, organized ideological effort to reformulate nineteenth century liberalism. In reimagining the role of liberalism for the new century, one of the Society's central objectives was "seizing and retasking of the state" (3-4). Cultivating relationships with influential political figures, then, as well as developing comprehensive policies advancing neoliberal aims, was of the upmost importance for neoliberal ideologs like Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek, as Peck relays. And when the opportunity presented itself in the 1970s, neoliberal ideas filled the vacuum left by Keynesian politics:

> Stagflation broke the back of the Keynesian orthodoxy—as both generative theory and as a system of government—the long-anticipated crisis for which Friedman's style of monetarist economics provided readily presentable, if ultimately flawed,

> "solutions." It was no mere coincidence that neoliberal ideas filled the attendant vacuum […] They had been scrupulously formulated for this very eventuality, as a total critique of Keynesian rationality and welfare-state government, and they had been peddled relentlessly through free-market think tanks, through the financial community and business organizations, and through the elite and mainstream media, not least by Friedman himself. (Peck, 5-6)

The crises of the 1970s opened opportunities to implement large-scale neoliberal economic policies, but the fundamental reshaping of the state has been one of the Society's most successful, lasting accomplishments. For neoliberalism has never allocated a passive role to the state. Rather, to borrow Friedman's words, the state "would police the system, establish conditions favorable for competition" (91). Far from becoming defunct within forms of neoliberal governance, the state has aided, advanced, and protected neoliberal interests and, in the process, the neoliberalization of society.

In his *Lectures at the Collége de France 1978-79* (2008), Michel Foucault was already observing the new role of the state in neoliberalism. For Foucault, neoliberalism is singular in extending the logic of the market to a principle for "the general art of government" (131). In so doing, neoliberalism requires government intervention in the management of the economic field. Neoliberals achieve this transformation of the role of the state by disassociating the market economy from the classical economic tenet of laissez-faire capitalism, which is characteristic of liberalism. According to Foucault, the resignification of the notion of competition as a "structure" to be regulated by the state, rather than a "natural given," is central to this process. "Neoliberalism," he writes, "should not therefore be identified with laissez-faire, but rather with permanent vigilance, activity, and

intervention" (132). Indeed, Laval and Dardot have argued that the almost exclusive focus on the market ideology of laissez-faire has "detracted from examination of the practices and apparatuses encouraged, or directly established, by governments" (168). For Laval and Dardot, the ascendency of neoliberalism hinged not only on economic policy, but most importantly, on neoliberal politics' disciplinary capacity to form "individuals adapted to market logics" (168). A central role of the interventionist state apparatus in neoliberalism, then, is shaping subjectivities in the image of the market.

In *Landscapes of Survival,* I conceive of neoliberalism not only as an ideological and an economic system that creates inequalities but also as a normative-economic rationality that governs all aspects of life. To further develop the idea of the neoliberalization of society, I have also relied on the work of Wendy Brown. In *Undoing the Demos* (2015), Brown argues that neoliberalism defeats the principles that organize modern democracies: namely, social equality, social protections, the public sphere, and the public university, through the "economization of everything and every sphere, including political life" (40). For Brown, a distinct feature of neoliberal rationality is that it has rendered "human beings as human capital" (34), slowly undermining democratic imaginaries. In her view, this transformation in subjectivity actively breaks down social bonds and principles of civic responsibility characteristic of the *homo politicus*, since the *homo oeconomicus* behaves like an enterprise "seeking to strengthen its competitive positioning" (33-4). Additionally, by expanding the logic of the market to every sphere of life, the state is itself privatized and its role altered. The state's legitimacy, Brown contends, "rests in facilitating, rescuing, or steering the economy" (40). In neoliberalized societies, in sum, the *homo oeconomicus*

seeks to maximize his or her benefits in a supposedly free, competitive economic field that is in fact regulated and protected by the state.

De la Rua and Rajoy's speeches, referenced earlier, both illustrate how neoliberal rationality is mobilized by the Argentinean and Spanish states in the contexts of 2001 and 2008. Both speeches depict the crises as extremely difficult economic conditions for the nation-state, and both appeal to the solidarity and resilience of citizens to confront the crises. However, rather than invoking solidarity as a democratic, justice-oriented principle, the state calls for solidarity with the austerity policies directed at bailing out the financial institutions liable for the banking crises. Following the neoliberal logic Brown describes, the state—backed by "expert" financial institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the European Stability Mechanism—aligns itself with economic interests and, in the process, decimates social protections and the public good. Additionally, by a twisted neoliberal logic, the state renders the individual responsible for the excesses of the market by blaming poorer populations for taking advantage of the welfare system without generating sufficient wealth. Accordingly, the state calls upon "contributing," hard-working citizens to redirect their "anger downward on those who exploit the public [...] people who flout the norms through an 'excess of dependence,' those who regard 'benefits as a lifestyle choice'" (Marina Vishmidt, Gesa Helms, Lauren Berlant, no pagination). Attacking the very foundation of democracy, this discourse beseeches individuals to blame fellow citizens for the failings of the system. My chapters explore two defining feelings generated by this neoliberal logic—guilt and shame—and the role of these affects in hindering political mobilization. However, I also offer a more hopeful account of how these affects have been resisted by movements for justice and liberation.

Cultural analyses of neoliberal rationality are vital to understanding how power works, but they often lack particular attention to the politics of emotions, which are central to processes of neoliberal signification and subjectification. Indeed, British geographer Ben Anderson has argued that analyses of neoliberal reason most often only implicitly incorporate claims about "the affective life of neoliberalism" (2016, 737). For instance, scholars might interpret neoliberal societies as being structured by fear or anxiety, but stop short at diagnosing the mood without exploring it in depth. For Anderson, these albeit important analyses subordinate affect to "a concern with ideological or discursive mediation and/or collapsed into a focus on the formation of purportedly 'neoliberal subjects'" (738). Anderson's primary contribution is to supplement these approaches (which he does not disregard) with an understanding of collective affects as amorphous background conditions. In so doing, he moves away from totalizing and causal conceptualizations of the relationship between feelings and neoliberalism to highlight the diverse ways that neoliberal reason emerges, is actualized, and coexists with different collective affects. That neoliberalism is lived affectively is a rather novel observation. But, Anderson also argues that we should not depict an epoch with broad strokes. Thus, in *Landscapes of Survival,* attention to the affective life of neoliberalism does not result in a one-dimensional diagnosis of "neoliberal affects." In an effort to offer an explanation of the complexity of the cultural politics of emotions, I look at certain feelings that assist neoliberal techniques of subjectification, but I also show how neoliberal reason not only emerges from what Anderson calls "collective background affects" but also is challenged by these same affective contexts.

For instance, during the financial crises and their aftermath, social anxieties about diminished access to public services and the ramifications of severe austerity measures were actualized in different ways. We have already seen one example in the speeches of Rajoy and De la Rua, which channeled anxiety into anger towards those "overusing" social services. In this way, general ambient anxiety is mobilized by the state to better govern through austerity. Additionally, drawing from Anderson's work, I conceptualize precarity as a "structure of feeling" and suggest that it actualizes different emotions and diverse rationalities. For example, in my readings of Aníbal Jarkowski's *El trabajo* (2007), precarity provokes anger at injustice and catalyzes political action, while in Elvira Navarro's *La trabajadora* (2014), it gives rise to paralyzing anxiety (chapter three).

While Ben Anderson's work has helped frame my own approach to reading the emotional life of neoliberalism as formed by "affective background conditions," that is where our theoretical similarities end. Anderson is more interested in describing what he calls the "feeling of existence" than in naming specific emotions. And while he claims to move away from a definition of affect as a-subjective and pre-individual (734-5), his methodology draws almost exclusively from a philosophical tradition whose intellectual genealogy starts in the work of Baruck Spinoza, continues with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and extends to Brian Massumi. In this strand of the "affective turn," to use Patricia Clough's and Jean Halley's phrase (2007), affect is defined in opposition to emotion. Massumi conceptualizes affect as the body's capacity "to affect or be affected" (2015 48), a definition that conceives affect as relational, for when affected by dynamic encounters with others we are also opened to being affected by them. For Massumi, affect precedes language and, therefore, cannot be intellectually registered, a characteristic that sets it

apart from emotion: "Affect is more often use loosely as a synonym of emotion (…) But emotion and affect—if affect is intensity—follow different logics and pertain to different orders" (2002 27). He insists that it is important to theorize affect as distinct from emotion, since the former accounts for embodied sensations that are not socially constituted. When affect is named as a specific emotion, Massumi argues, the potentiality of the affective experience is inhibited. In this view, affect is pre-social and pre-linguistic, while emotions are socially located and pre-determined.

My interpretation of emotions is not at odds with affect as bodily sensation and intensity. However, and I follow Kathleen Woodward here, I also believe in the power of the "psychological emotions," which Woodward describes "as binding emotions—those that connect us to other people (either positively or negatively)" (21). In *Statistical Panic* (2009), Woodward challenges Massumi's argument—although she agrees with him that affect and emotion follow different logics—and suggests that "psychological emotions and intensities […] often stand in a *dialectical relationship* with each other" (25). For her, naming our affective experiences does not diminish affect's potentiality; rather, awareness of our feelings "disclose[s] our relation with the world around us." Emotions, then, have "an epistemological edge" (7). Arguing that reflection on our experiences of emotions might lead to insights about social systems of discrimination, Woodward attributes a vital capacity for political mobilization to the emotions. For instance, she reads Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* as a superb illustration of the insights we might form when we reflect on our emotional lives. In Woolf's text, Woodward shows, the narrator discerns that her individual anger emanates from an unjust patriarchal culture precisely through the work of reflection. Further, Woolf's piece provides us "with a sense of the lived experience of the

emergence of feminism at that particular point in history" (7, 12). This interpretation of the emotions as tied to cognitive capacity and political potential is foundational to my understanding in *Landscapes of Survival*.[4] While I agree that our affective experiences are never fully available to us—we do not have words for each and every feeling—I do not see named emotions as inhibiting political potentialities. Rather, affect and emotions, bodily sensations and named feelings, are intertwined.

Woodward's conceptualization of "the psychological emotions" also contains a social dimension: our feelings attach us to others; and, they are socially grounded. This brings me to debates about the origins of the emotions. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004), Sara Ahmed outlines how emotions are perceived to either derive from the self or to stem from the social. The psychological model presumes that feelings originate with individual interiority and move outward—what Ahmed calls the "'inside out' model of emotions." On the other hand, sociological and anthropological theories of the emotions propose that feelings are not a property of the self; rather, they emerge in the social field and travel toward the individual—the "'outside in' model." For Ahmed, both theories are problematic insofar as they "assume the objectivity of the very distinction between inside and outside, the individual and the social, and the 'me' and the 'we'" (2004, 9). Thus, she does not subscribe to either:

> In my model of sociality of emotions, I suggest that emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place […] In suggesting that emotions create the very effect of an inside

[4] This cognitivist view of emotions has a long intellectual genealogy. I have particularly relied on the work of philosophers Martha Nussbaum and Alison Jaggar and cultural theorist Ann Cvetkovich; as it will become evident in the chapters.

> and an outside, I am not then simply claiming that emotions are psychological *and* social, individual *and* collective. My model refuses the abbreviation of the 'and.' Rather, I suggest that emotions are crucial to the very constitution of the psychic and the social as objects, a process which suggests that the 'objectivity of the psychic and the social is an effect rather than a cause. (10)

Ahmed's model foregrounds that emotions are neither inside or outside the individual; rather, they draw the contours of the psychic and the social through points of contact. Drawing from René Descartes' *Passions of the Soul*, Ahmed suggests that feelings are essentially about subject-object relations—where the object of an emotion can be a memory, a person, an ideology, a place, etc. "Feelings," Ahmed continues, "take the shape of the 'contact' we have with objects […] we do not love and hate because objects are good or bad, but rather, because they seem 'beneficial' or 'harmful'" (2004, 5-6). In other words, feelings not only shape but are also shaped through subject-object relations.

The process of reading objects involved the designation of meanings that are not inherent in the object: "contact involves the subject as well as histories that come before the subject" (2004, 6). As a cultural critic, Ahmed is interested in showing how emotions construct, shape, and "stick" to certain bodies or objects—e.g., the melancholic migrant; the killjoy feminist; the unhappy queer (to name some of her examples). In attaching connotations to certain bodies or objects, the emotions naturalize associations between objects, bodies, and certain cultural meanings. In arguing that emotions have histories that "stick" to objects and bodies, Ahmed is not suggesting that emotions have fixed meanings. Rather, for her our emotional practices are shaped by the culture in which we live and, by the same token, they are subject to being transformed by cultural changes. Ahmed is an

important referent of the other strand of affect theory, which locates feelings in culture and is grounded on feminist epistemology, queer theory, anthropology, and post-colonial studies. *Landscapes of Survival* draws on the culturalist view of the emotion to understand the affective cultural processes activated by the neoliberal crises.

In this necessarily abbreviated overview of the affective turn, I aim to gesture towards the different ways I conceive of the emotions in this project. In sum: I use affect, feeling and emotion interchangeably, as my main interest is in understanding what emotions do instead of what emotions are (Ahmed 2004). Furthermore, in my opinion, the sharp distinction between feelings as either bodily sensations or cognitive structures risks reproducing the Cartesian mind and body duality that the affective turn attempts to problematize. Following Ahmed, I do not wish to make "analytical distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion, and thought as if they could be 'experienced' as distinct realms of human 'experience'" (6). The body-mind divide, which inevitably pits "male rationality" against "female emotionality," is an obsolete Western construct that I circumvent in *Landscapes of Survival*.

Another important aspect of my methodology is the transatlantic approach, which functions differently depending on the chapter. I use the Atlantic as a frame of reference that allows me to push against the boundaries of what counts as national and to assert the persistent cultural ties that connect the Iberian Peninsula with Latin America. In "*Eres como un amor frustrado*," I bring the documentaries *Otro destino* (2003) and *En tierra extraña* (2015) together not only to highlight economic precarity and anomie as triggers for youth migration, but also to foreground an uneven relationship of power between Spain and Argentina. I argue that the Spanish state continues to reproduce its violent colonial

past through its contemporary immigration policies. Likewise, by looking at the shameful treatment of the now Argentine grandchildren of the Spanish Civil War refugees, I highlight the lack of solidarity of the Spanish state with young Argentinean migrants. In "Of Miracles and Wonders," I look at Argentine and Spanish social movements together to not only shed light on the obvious historical parallels, but to explore similar ways in which neoliberalism is resisted across the Atlantic.

In chapter one, "*Eres como un amor frustrado*. Migration and The Politics of Loss," I analyze the recent configuration of diasporic communities represented in the documentaries *Otro Destino* (Ezequiel Solozabal and Sándalo Capelli, 2003) and *En tierra extraña* (Icíar Bollaín, 2015). Both documentaries map the experiences of young Argentineans (*Otro destino*) and Spaniards (*En tierra extraña*) who, in the wake of economic, political, and institutional crises, feel forced to leave their homelands in search of better opportunities. Here, I am interested in the affective life of migration, more specifically, in the political potentials opened up through an active engagement with loss. In the first section of the chapter, my argument is twofold. First, I suggest that these migrants should be referred to as diasporic because their migration is forced rather than chosen, and further, they remain connected to their nations of origin and maintain a desire to return. Second, I propose that loss is the emotion that structures the experience of immigration and draw on Sigmund Freud's classic essay, "Mourning and Melancholia"(1917), to argue that melancholia—attachment to a lost loved object—should be depathologized. In the following sections of the chapter, I explore how migrants' active engagement with loss and negotiation of melancholic attachments might catalyze the examination of national histories and the formation of new political mobilizations. By focusing on the two specific

losses I identify as centrally represented in the documentaries—identity and intergenerational loss—I propose a more nuanced reading of loss.

In chapter two, “Of Miracles and Wonders,” I focus on the analysis of three important social movements that have organized against neoliberal precarity and austerity policies. Two of them are Argentinean, Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados (Unemployed Workers Movement, or MTD) and Movimiento de Empresas Recuperadas por sus Trabajadores (Movement of Enterprises Recovered by Workers or ERT), and one is Spanish, *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages or Housing Movement or PAH). I identify the vocabulary of human dignity as central to the organization of the movements’ demands, but I go beyond simply exploring the discursive formation of the term and its political role. I am fascinated by what British political theorist Karin Fierke calls “the emotional field of human dignity” (47). For Fierke, dignity has an emotional register that is injured in the face of humiliating treatment. Thus, she explores how humiliation might trigger emancipatory social movements that “grow out of basal emotions associated with the absence of human dignity and autonomy” (54). On the other hand, I am interested not in emotions that damage our sense of self-worth, but rather in love as a feeling that props up and sustains it. Expanding Fierke’s inspiring work, I argue that love works to support the longevity of the PAH, MTD, and ERT by building networks of mutual care and support that keep participants engaged in the movements over years. In this chapter, I interrogate how privatized forms of love attached to the heterosexual couple form have served to uphold capitalist culture and neoliberal subjectivity. Drawing on Michael Hardt’s diagnosis of our lack of a properly political notion of love (2007), I map a

genealogy of love reduced to the heterosexual family, showing how this form of "love gone bad" reproduces neoliberalism.

In my last chapter, "*Precarious Adrift*: Post-Fordism, Affect, and the Lived Experience of the *Precariat*," I explore how precarity emerges as a structure of feeling for young, educated, middle class women. I read two post-financial crises narratives, *El trabajo* (Aníbal Jarkowski, 2007) and *La trabajadora* (Elvira Navarro, 2014) to argue that the experience of precarity, while ubiquitous in the world of the novels, is felt differently. By mobilizing Raymond Willian's notion of "structures of feeling," I conceptualize precarity as an embryonic social formation that can be sensed in the rapidly changing practices, beliefs, and meanings of the post-Fordist state . This takes me to connect the emergence of precarity as a structure of feeling to post-Fordism and the disappearance of waged labor, permanent work, and self-realization through career aspirations for the children of the once secure middle classes. Contextualizing these narratives is important because, as I note in the chapter, precarity is not a new phenomenon. Rather, it is and has always been a defining trait of capitalism that has marked the lives of traditionally excluded populations. Still, I am careful to situate the experience of precarity as a phenomenon that impacts women in specific ways. In so doing, I draw on the work of Judith Butler and the feminist collective *Precarious Adrift* to note that the differential allocation of vulnerability is a direct consequence of normative delineations of the human. Thus, as I underline in the chapter, global capitalism does not produce and expand socio-economic inequality in a uniform manner.

España, eres como un amor frustrado, me dueles tanto que no quiero volver a verte.
(*En tierra extraña*)

Creo que un país que echa a sus hijos es un país enfermo
(*Otro destino*)

Chapter One

"Eres como un amor frustrado." Migration and the Politics of Loss

Introduction: "Are they Leaving Because of the Crisis?"

In 2015, Susanne Bygnes, a professor of sociology at the University of Bergen, Norway, published "Are They Leaving Because of the Crisis? The Sociological Significance of *Anomie* as a Motivation for Immigration," an article that focused on recent Spanish immigration. Since the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis, the Spanish community in Norway, she says, has grown from "almost non-existent ten years ago" (258) to a population of 5,000 in 2014. This figure, which might seem substantial in Norway, is rather small when compared to the 20,000 Spanish citizens that now live in Edinburgh, Scotland. And it is even tinier when one knows that, between 2008 and 2012, 700,000 Spaniards left their homeland overwhelmed by the consequences of a deep economic recession. But is a bad economy reason enough to pack the bags and abandon one's family, friends, neighborhood, city, and homeland? In her article, Bygnes attempts to understand why so many educated Spaniards are leaving their country and establishing new homes in Norway.

She notes that these migrants are young, between the ages of 24 and 34, and highly educated; most of them have a college degree and, frequently, they also have post-graduate education. "Many of the Spanish migrants I interviewed," Bygnes says, "left because they disliked the kind of society they saw developing in Spain, and not because of the economic crisis" (259-60).[5] For her, at the core of young migrants' motivation to depart is a profound disappointment with Spain as a nation ruled by corrupt politicians, a lack of meritocracy, precarious working conditions, and growing social inequalities. Bygnes turns to the work of Emile Durkheim, particularly his notion of *anomie*, to better account for young Spaniards' motivations to emigrate. *Anomie*, Bygnes explains, "arises in societies with weak co-operative communities that place a disproportionate importance on the marketplace. The state of *anomie* in a society creates feelings of discontent, meaninglessness, hopelessness and a sense of injustice" (262). Thus, Bygnes suggests that, following the onset of the 2008 recession, such conditions applied in Spain, and as a result, migrants sought to leave behind a society whose dominant mood was disenchantment.

A similar mood also characterized Argentine society during the profound economic recession experienced between 1998 and 2003. Before the government defaulted in 2001 with an external debt of $132 billion, many Argentineans had already begun to leave their homeland. The Spanish and Italian embassies were flooded with the grandchildren of Italian and Spanish immigrants that had arrived in Argentina during the great European wave of migration (1880-1940). Three generations later, they hoped to get the passports that would allow them to enter Europe legally, hence reversing the flow of movement once

[5] The same estimates come from different sources: The Spanish National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadistica), Icíar Bollaín's documentary (*In a Foreign Land*), and Maria Luisa Delgado's last book *La nación singular. Fantasías de la nación democrática Española (1996-2011)*.

started by their grandparents. In Spain, Argentineans form the third largest group of migrants, estimated at 231,630 in 2007.[6] As is the case with young Spanish migrants, most of them belong to the middle class, whose social status and opportunities vanished after 2001. Thousands of educated and highly qualified Argentineans suddenly became the 'new poor,' as 57.5 % of the population fell below the poverty line[7]. The newspaper *La Nación* published in 2003 that the magnitude of the crisis was such that it had elicited new forms of violence like "express kidnappings", a method of abduction where the victim is forced to quickly withdraw from his or her own bank. Although between 2001 and 2003 there was a kidnapping every 36 hours, *La Nación* stressed that express kidnappings only constituted a 0.05% out of the 2,800,000 millions of crimes committed in the greater Buenos Aires area each year[8]. With the disappearance of economic security, by 2002, social violence and instability became chronic as Argentina's society began to realize that neoliberal promises of prosperity were just a fantasy.

Despite their differences, there are many similarities between the causes and consequences of the crises in Spain and Argentina. The collapse of the economy was the outcome of an unrestrained economic model of capitalist accumulation, which, at the same time, has been connected to the corrupt practices of the political elites. Thus, the crises that unfolded in Argentina in 2001, and in Spain in 2008, encompassed the economic realm, but also the political, the social, and the institutional realms. In Argentina, the political

[6] These figures were estimated by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE). Céline Vermont refers to them in her article on Argentinean women's guilt after migrating to a foreign country. This number, however, does not account for Argentine immigrants in Italy and the United States.
[7] In the introduction to the edited volume *Broken Promises? The Crisis of 2001 and the Argentine Democracy*, Edward Epstein and David Pion-Berlin provide figures and statistics that sketch the chilling reality of post-2001 Argentina.
[8] "La industria de los secuestros," *La Nación,* July 29th, 2003, and "La violencia es realidad y sensación en la Argentina," *La Nación,* July 27th, 2001. Express kidnaping became common throughout Latin America during the 2000s.

leadership was complicit with transnational financial organisms as well as corporations and, following neoliberal dogma, put the country up for sale. Furthermore, former president Carlos Menem has been charged with embezzling public funds, avoiding taxes, and arms trafficking, while Domingo Cavallo, his minister of the economy, as well as other members of Menem's government were also charged with unlawful enrichment. Spain, too, experienced an outbreak of corruption that implicated the two main political parties, the Spanish Workers Socialist Party (PSOE), and the conservative People's Party (PP). Although the schemes of corruption had been building since the real estate boom in the mid-1990s, during the economic recession, a day did not pass without public officials making national headlines due to their implication in corruption cases.

The crises triggered a surge of public feelings that was critical for the political and spatial mobilization of citizens. In this chapter I pay attention to the formation of migrant communities through close readings of the documentaries *Otro destino* (Ezequiel Solozabal and Sándalo Capelli, 2003) and *En tierra extraña* (Icíar Bollaín, 2015). Both have as their primary concern the very recent configuration of Argentine and Spanish youth diasporas. My focus is on the affective life of migration, particularly on the experience of loss. Loss, I argue, structures migrants' experiences of migration and it is through the psychic work activated by loss—mourning and melancholia—that they establish different relationships with themselves, their nation's past as well as their nation's political projects. Specifically, I identify two important losses: identity loss and intergenerational loss. In addition to this, I suggest that by, centering on narratives of displacement and uprootedness, the documentaries register a subjectivity shift, namely from citizen to immigrant.

Migration as Loss

All diaspora formations have in common a foundational traumatic event. In the case of the African diaspora, it was the Transatlantic slave trade; for the Armenians, the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire, first, and by the Turkish State, later; for Jews, the beginning of their centuries-long exile dates back to the Mesopotamian Empire, when they had to leave the land that they believed was promised to them by their God. Robin Cohen has called these diasporas, along with the Irish, the Greek, and the Palestinian, "prototypical victim diasporas." For Cohen, the prototypical victim diaspora is defined by "the traumatic dispersal from an original homeland and the salience of the homeland in the collective memory of a forcibly dispersed group" (4). However, as he points out in *Global Diasporas*, these initial approaches to diasporic formations became insufficient to understand human mobility during the 20th century. Hence, in the 1980s, moving away from these prototypical diasporas, scholars from diverse fields began to expand their theoretical understanding of the term to account for the numerous phenomena that dislocate people from their places of origin, as well as to include other traumatic experiences of forced migration like economic crisis, political or religious persecution, decolonization or the negative effects of global capitalism as catalysts for leaving the homeland. Though a complete account of the various debates within diaspora studies is beyond the reach of this project, a few key disciplinary considerations are crucial to understanding why I have opted to refer to the communities represented in these documentaries as diasporic.

During the 1990s the term diaspora proliferated in academic articles as well as in popular use. Diaspora was applied to a wide range of migrant communities that could share one or more traits such as continued participation in the homeland's politics; social or emotional attachment to the homeland; linguistic ties; and assimilation or lack thereof to their hostlands' customs. The term was also stretched to denote migrant formations within the borders of the nation-state, like the queer, liberal, conservative or religious diasporas, generating a conceptual conundrum (Brubaker). The dispersion of the term was in part influenced by the primacy of deconstruction and postmodernism as modes of interpellation and academic inquiry in the humanities. Scholars educated in this kind of cultural critique were invested in destabilizing hegemonic notions of home/homeland, nation, origin, and belonging (Cohen).

Diaspora scholars felt compelled to fix some of the constitutive elements that distinguish diaspora from other migrant communities, agreeing on three: "The first is dispersion in space; the second, orientation to a 'homeland'; and the third, boundary-maintenance" (Brubaker, 5). But these foundational components of diaspora are not as straightforward as they seem and require further elaboration. For instance, for Cohen prototypical diaspora formation follows a traumatic event in the homeland that forces dispersal (2-4). Orientation to the homeland can be defined by the recreation of the diasporic subjects' culture in various locations (Clifford) or by migrants' desire to return to an idealized homeland (Safran). Lastly, boundary-maintenance can be performed in diverse manners, yet it is a distinctive trait of all diasporic communities, since it unites migrants in the hostlands whose bonds of solidarity and relationships are defined by their shared origin. *Otro destino* and *En tierra extraña* are concerned with the experiences of

displacement articulated by young migrants—and some of them not that young—uprooted from Spain and Argentina in the aftermath of neoliberal crises. Although the films document the early stages of these community formations, there are recognizable diaspora traits in them. Migrants do not describe migration as a choice, but rather as forced by material difficulties, lack of opportunities, pervasive violence, precarious job conditions, and growing social inequalities. With different degrees of desire, most of them yearn to go back to their homeland. Yet, as I explain later, there is a certain loss of attachment to national ideals that takes place in the aftermath of the financial crisis that reorganizes the diasporic subjects' urgency to return.

Despite the conceptual explosion of diaspora studies that seeks to accommodate the experiences of different migrant communities, there is a theoretical absence within this concept that stands out: The lack of attention to the affective dimensions of migration, displacement, and uprootedness. Only recently have scholars begun to address the intersections between migration and the emotions, and, in particular, the emotional processes set in motion by the traumatic experience that leaving one's homeland is[9]. Maruska Svašek, whose work focuses on diaspora and emotions, has argued that "certain emotional processes are caused by migration-specific issues." These processes, she continues, "do not take place in the isolated minds/bodies of migrants, but arise in the interaction of the individual with their human and not-human surroundings" (*Emotions and Human Mobility*, 3). In this sense, Svašek contends that, in order to account for the

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[9] Some of the most recent work on the intersections between emotions and migration has appeared in the journal *Emotion, Space, Society*. This journal maps the emergent field of migration and emotions at the same that it contributes to pioneer edited volumes on the topic. For instance, Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier, and Mimi Sheller's edited collection *Uprooting/Regroundings. Questions of Home and Migration*, Maruška Svašek's edited volumes *Emotions and Human Mobility* and *Moving Subjects, Moving Objects*.

complexity of migration, we must conceive of emotions as discourses, practices, and embodied experiences (5). To understand the way in which these three capacities of emotion interact we can think of Islamophobia and the discourse on terrorism that accompanies it. The narrative of Islamophobia constructs bodies of Arab descent as fearful and threatening, impacting policies as well as interethnic interactions—that is, discourse, practice, and embodied experiences of migrants and locals. Sara Ahmed has theorized this view of emotions as shaping the very ”surfaces of bodies” (4). For Ahmed, feelings “take the shape of the contact we have with objects” (5), and that contact with objects “involves the subject as well as histories that come before the subject” (6). She suggests that emotions are not in the subject or the object but are an effect of how they circulate in society and between bodies. This is key for migrants’ relations with others since their encounters depend on narratives that circulate prior to their arrival, shaping the first interactions they have with locals (*Emotions and Human Mobility*, 8-9). At the same time, when people are dislocated from their places of origin, they are not only impacted by unfamiliar surroundings but also by a new relationship with their place of origin. Distance from the homeland disrupts connections to place both as a space of belonging and as a national ideal.

If diasporic formations are marked by an original traumatic event, I argue that loss is the emotion that structures them, with mourning and melancholia as the psychic processes that accompany it. The affective experience of loss is multifaceted and comprises, not as opposites, but as counterparts, mourning and melancholia. Many scholars of affect theory have placed emphasis on depathologizing melancholia as unresolved grief, an idea that has its origins in Sigmund Freud’s foundational “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917). In

this essay, Freud clearly distinguished between mourning and melancholia, arguing that the ego was potentially exposed to both psychic processes in the event of the "loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (44). He described mourning as a process of "reality-testing" that indicates that the lost object no longer exists, thus demanding that the libido detach itself from the object. The "mood" of mourning, Freud tells us, is that of pain, for it is a process that encounters resistance as "people never willingly abandon a libidinal position" (45).

Mourning does not happen abruptly; it is a slow process in which the libido, bit by bit, let go of the lost object until it declares it dead. It is at this moment of complete closure that the ego is capable of attaching to new objects of love. For Freud, while mourning is the successful resolution of loss, melancholia is characterized as the ego's inability to withdraw from the lost object, a failure that collapses the subject-object separation. He wrote: "Melancholia is a disruption of the subject-object relation, where the two become one in the ego through the displacement of the loved object onto the ego" (24). In such instances, the lost object is incorporated into the melancholic subject. For Freud, it is easy to reconstruct the process whereby this happens:

An object choice, an attachment of the libido to a particular person, had at one time existed; then, owing to a real slight or disappointment coming from this loved person, the object-relationship was shattered. The result was not the normal one of withdrawal of the libido from this object and a displacement into a new one, but something different, for whose coming-about various conditions seem to be necessary. The object-cathexis proved

to have little power of resistance and was brought to an end. But the free libido was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the ego. (51)

In Freud's essay, the pathological nature of melancholy resides in this confusion he saw his patients experienced whereby what is lost becomes unclear for the ego and the "object-loss" becomes the "ego-loss". For Freud, the ego's identification with the object of love complicates successful resolution of mourning as the ego incorporates the loss. However, as I shall show, identification with the object of love and thus unwillingness to let go of it can also be interpreted as the ego's desire to reassess the meaning of some losses.

The understanding of melancholia as pathological and mourning as appropriate forms of grieving has been complicated across academic disciplines. Freud himself reformulated his theory of mourning and melancholia as separate and distinct psychic processes six years later in *The Ego and the Id* (1923). In this work, he came to the conclusion that loss is a constitutive component of the self. "The character of the ego", Freud wrote, "is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and. . . it contains the history of those object-choices" (24).[10] One of the ontological characteristics of the self, then, is that of loss, since the ego is partly constituted by the histories of lost objects of love. This raises an important question, if loss is a central element for the formation of the self, what alternative, non-pathological relationships with lost objects can the self reimagine in its engagement with loss?

[10] For a compelling reading of Freud's notions of loss See Judith Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power*, where she engages with Freud's revisited formulation of melancholia to account for the formation of gender and sexual identities: "What Freud calls the "character of the ego" appears to be the sedimentation of objects loved and lost, the archaeological remainder, as it were, of unresolved grief" (135). Butler's theory on melancholic cultures and identities is also central in framing the introduction to *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, many essays of which derive from the problems I am working on here.

Identity, Migration, and Loss

"¿Os sentís de alguna manera como un guante perdido o sin pareja cuando pensáis en nuestro país?" (Do you in any way feel like a glove that has lost its other half when you think about our country?)[11]. The Spanish documentary *En tierra extraña* opens up with a series of shots of lost gloves in the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland. Gloria, a young Spanish woman, picks them up as she walks the city; a habit, we learn later in the documentary, she has been nurturing for months. We get a sneak peek of who she is within the first couple of minutes of the film: She is thirty-one years old and has a bachelor's degree in fine arts. She has taken the Spanish state exams to qualify for a job in education twice and has passed them both times, yet she has not been able to secure a teaching position in Spain. In the meantime, she works at the Spanish fashion retailer Zara in Edinburgh, a job she has had for over two years.

Following our introduction to her, the camera takes us to the interior of a building where Gloria has convened a gathering for all of those migrants who, like her, feel compelled to tell their stories. In this way, the film introduces us to other Spaniards, most of them under the age of thirty-five: Mar, thirty-two years old, holds a degree in communications but works in a dry cleaner in Edinburgh; María José, thirty, a chemical engineer with a master's in education, works as a housekeeper; Daniel, thirty, an architect with a master's in labor risk prevention, has a job as kitchen porter. As viewers, we are invited to witness many more testimonies of broken dreams, anger, disillusionment, and dislocation that give shape to a collective story of traumatic migration in the aftermath of

[11] All translations are mine

the 2008 crisis. In *En tierra extraña*, the narrative takes shape through the first-person testimonies of Spaniards who, like Gloria, sit in front of the camera to answer a series of questions related to their condition as migrants. Why did they leave? Do they want to return? What do they miss about home? What jobs do they have? In answering these questions, the protagonists—members of the recently established diaspora in Edinburgh—agree they felt forced to leave their country in search of better opportunities abroad. With the metaphor of the lost glove at its center, *En tierra extraña* gives texture to the painful experience of involuntary migration that has left so many exiles feeling incomplete, like a glove that has lost its other half.

En tierra extraña's beginning grounds one of the central themes that runs through the film by focusing on migrants' feelings of loss in its connection to their sense of self through career expectations. In the documentary, career aspirations are not only described as accessing jobs in one's fields of education, but also as dignified labor. Weaved through the first-person testimonies is a working definition of what dignified labor means for them: a respectful work environment, long-term contracts, salaries that allow independence from family members, and a sense of feeling respected and valued. In opposition to this stands the reality they have left behind in Spain: precarity, short-term contracts, poorly paid labor, and a sense of being disposable. For María it is simple: "me siento mejor aquí de dependienta que allí de profesora"[I feel better here as a shop assistant than in Spain as a teacher]. But is it really that simple? Can the ego let go of the hopes associated with the lost object of love this easily? As a cultural paradigm, psychoanalysis' understanding of mourning and melancholia offers us a model to interpret what I see as migrants' everyday negotiations in relation with their object of love. Migrants, as I shall show, do not

completely detach from their career aspirations, but, reconsider their relationship with them through the experience of loss.

María's statement captures the tension that organizes the Spanish migrant's melancholic attachment to a fulfilling career in their field of study. On one hand, the assertation "I feel better here" suggests that she has been able to attach to a new object of love and the work of mourning is concluded. But, on the other, the "better" implies a concealed grief, an unwillingness to completely abandon the loved object. Despite the personal character of the interviewees' answers this tension is a unifying thread:

> Yo a día de hoy todavía no he perdido la esperanza, pero sí, un poquito hay días que te levantas y dices tengo treinta y tres años, estoy en el take-away, a 3000 kilómetros de casa, vendiendo pollos, atendiendo al teléfono y siendo aquí pues el tirao y esto no es lo que yo quería. Llega un momento en que también lo piensas, tengo treinta y tres años, ya no hay vuelta a atrás, lo que tengo que hacer es seguir buscando y peleando. Yo cada semana dedico pues por lo menos un par de horitas a la semana, hay días que más, hay días que menos, a buscar ofertas de trabajo y a buscar trabajo de lo mío o mínimamente relacionado. (Ruben, biologist, Works at a fast food restaurant)
> [I haven't lost hope yet but some days, yes, you do wake up and think…I am 33, I work at a take-away selling chickens and answering the phone and at 3,000 kilometers from home and no, this is not what I wanted. But you also think…I am 33 and I cannot go back, I have to continue fighting and searching. Every week I look for jobs in my field for at least two hours.]

> Yo lo vivo bien porque para mí es como un juego. No creo que vaya a hacer esto el resto de mi vida, espero que no. Lo viví muy bien porque cuando llegué a las dos semanas encontré este trabajo con mi nivel de inglés yo sabía que no podía acceder a otro tipo de trabajo (…) muy bien porque no lo veo como el trabajo de mi vida o de mis sueños, es simplemente un medio para alcanzar un fin. Es decir, me permite pagarme mis clases de inglés, y tengo que añadir que gano lo mismo que ganaba como ingeniera en España. (María José, chemical engineer, works as housekeeper) [I am ok because for me it is like a game. I don't think I will do this for the rest of my life, I hope not. I was ok when I arrived because I found work very quickly with my English level, which was great because I knew I could not access to anything else. I don't see it as the job of my dreams but as a means to an ends. In other words, it allows me to pay for English classes and I am making as much as I did in Spain working as an engineer.]

Both María José and Ruben articulate their daily negotiations as they go on with their lives and jobs while maintaining an attachment to career aspirations. It is through a melancholic attachment that they can see their current jobs as means to an end and, hence, go on with their routines without losing hope. In this way, *En tierra extraña* suggests an important task for melancholia in the lives of migrants; namely, it performs the work of allowing them to let go of some aspects of the loved object and to hold on to others. The attachment to professional identity and the possibility of self-realization through a career becomes the motivating factor to move out of *anomie* as they continue striving for fulfilling jobs.

As I noted earlier in the chapter, many scholars have argued for the need to depathologize melancholia. In "a Dialogue on Racial Melancholia," David L Eng and Shinhee

Han define racial melancholia as the condition that results from the "partial success and the partial failure to mourn" of Asian American's identifications with whiteness (352). The authors draw on Homi Bhabha's "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" to explain why assimilation into the American dream—a dream anchored in whiteness and its values of middle class and heterosexual marriage—is doomed to fail. For Eng and Han, the Asian American subject never ceases to be perceived as the other, even if she is a United States-born citizen. Assimilation into mainstream US culture is hence an impossible aspiration for racialized subjects, causing a perpetual loss of whiteness as an ideal, while retaining a partial identification with it. Although they write with a different social and cultural context in mind, Eng and Han's understanding of immigration provides me with a model to understand migrants' melancholic attachments to lost objects as strategies for survival. They write:

> The experience of immigration itself is based on a structure of mourning. When one leaves one's country of origin, voluntarily or involuntarily, one must mourn a host of losses both concrete and abstract. These include homeland, family, language, identity, property, status in the community—the list goes on. In Freud's theory of mourning, one works through and finds closure to these losses by investing in new objects—in the American Dream, for example. (352)

In the documentary, the new objects of investments are, paradoxically, found in jobs Spanish migrants never aspired to have in the service industry. Yet, the position is not the source of fulfilment but rather the recognition, by employers, of tasks well performed. This takes me back to Maria's statement which poignantly captures the desire to feel valued in

the work place. As I mentioned earlier, for Spanish migrants' fulfillment through career aspirations does not only actualize through the kind of work one is doing, but through appreciation in the work place.

But, Eng and Han explain, immigrants and racialized others never fully feel integrated in the hostland. This inability to complete the process of attachment to new objects of love, along with the impossibility to mourn all the losses that accompany the experience of migration, turn immigrants into melancholic subjects. However, melancholic subjects, they argue, are not victims nor is their melancholia pathological: "Racial melancholia thus delineates one psychic process in which the loved object is so overwhelmingly important to and beloved by the ego that the ego is willing to preserve it even at the cost of its own self" (364). The experiences of immigration, assimilation, and racialization are marked by this negotiation between mourning and melancholia. This allows Eng and Han to depathologize melancholia as damage and to see it as conflict. To depathologize melancholia as debilitating is to reconceptualize it not as an inability to let go of the lost ideal, but, as María José and Ruben express, as a site of possibility.

In *En tierra extraña*, melancholic attachments do not only become a site of possibility in regards to migrants' professional hopes, but they also create the conditions for political organizing. The film traces out the action "Ni perdidos ni callados" (We are neither lost nor silent) organized by Gloria, who, along with other Spanish migrants, mobilizes her feelings of loss to take control over their own narrative. In participating in the action, they reject official discourses that portray them as a "lost generation" or as "adventurous". In the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, Dominique Strauss-Khan, former managing director of the IMF, spoke of the risk of unemployment for young generations

and called for the cooperation of the international community to save what he saw as a lost generation (2010). Simultaneously, Spanish officials insisted that migration was not a consequence of the crisis but of the adventurous spirit that is characteristic of young people.

While "Ni perdidos ni callados" confronts both discourses, the documentary places emphasis on problematizing the out of touch statements of government agents who trivialize the painful experience of migration. In so doing, *En tierra extraña* also questions the notion of European citizenship that, in theory, organizes the lived experience of trans-European migrants. Halfway through the film, Bollaín introduces a montage of archival images that starts with the TV show *1,2,3* and the festive song of a pro-European Union commercial. As the images of the TV show fade and the song continues to be the soundtrack, the next archival images we see represent national moments of celebration—Spain's integration into the EU and its consequent modernization; Barcelona's candidacy for hosting the 1992 Olympic games—to images of contemporary politicians—former Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero assuring, in 2008, that Spain's economy was in excellent shape; Marina del Corral, Secretary of Immigration and Emigration, asserting that young Spaniards leave the country because of their "espíritu aventurero" (adventurous spirit)[12]; and Esteban González Pons, who maintains that "Cuando los jóvenes, donde van a trabajar es a la Unión Europea, en realidad, están en su país" (When our young people work in a European Union country, they are actually working at home)[13]. The effect is powerful,

[12] In the original: "La convicción de nuestros jóvenes de que necesitan completar su formación y o su experiencia para ser más competitivos o, por que no decirlo, el espíritu aventurero propio de la juventud" (Marina del Corral).
[13] Following the declaration of government officials at the time, refuting statements flooded social media condemning Marina del Corral and González Pons whose names trended on Twitter along with the hashtags #espírituaventurero (adventurous spirit) and #NoNosVamosNosEchan (we don't leave; we're kicked out).

as it challenges the idea of Europe as a community of diverse, cooperative nations—with Brexit as the latest symptom of the project's materialization in the lives of Europeans.

Although Spain and Scotland are members of the European Union, the stories that weave through the film test the idea of a European citizenship. Most people would define citizenship as the legal status that comprises social, political, and civil rights and obligations binding nation-states with their constituents. However, the globalization of the economy and the intense flows of transnational migration accompanying it complicate fixed assumptions of citizenship as nationals' territorial membership to the nation-state. Some scholars like Yasemin Soysal speak of "post-citizenship,"(1994) gesturing towards current theorizations of a post-national world. Rainer Bauböck has used the term "trans-citizenship" (1994) to claim that contemporary liberal democracies need to extend citizenship rights to immigrants if they are to keep in effect the principles that organize their polities. The communal project of the European Union is based on the right to the free movement of people, goods, capital and services as well as on protection from discrimination on grounds of nationality. This re-conceptualizes traditional understandings of citizenship based on territorial membership, since nationals of any member country cannot only cross borders and work without legal impediments, but they also, at least theoretically, belong to one "Europe." This compelling narrative, which structures the European communal project, is not mirrored in the lived experiences of Spanish migrants in Edinburgh, which suggests that citizenship is not just an abstract legal status but an identity that is felt and negotiated in daily practices.

En tierra extraña shows how, with the 2008 economic crisis, the theory of the European Union as a united land has been put to the test by rendering visible a subjectivity

shift; namely, from citizen to migrant. A central sequence of the film focuses on migrants' stories of migration as an experience marked by debilitating feelings of inadequacy, non-belonging, and limited integration. Together, their stories construct a narrative that challenges the idea that working in any European Union country is like working at home:

> Cuando tú ves los inmigrantes que llegan de Marruecos y de Senegal a España o de cualquier parte de Sudamérica, pues somos exactamente lo mismo pero en Edimburgo. Lo que pasa es que como somos españoles y pertenecemos a la Unión Europea parece que es otra cosa. Pero no, eres inmigrante y cuando llegas aquí, teniendo carrera o no teniendo carrera, aparte del nivel de inglés obviamente, los trabajos a los que puedes acceder en principio es ser limpiador en un hotel o en oficinas o en un hotel o donde sea o ser kitchen porter y eso te hace sentir inmigrante porque luego cuesta mucho salir de ahí para hacer algo más. (Jara, social worker, Works as a waitress)
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> [When you see immigrants that come from Morocco, Senegal and many South American countries well arrive [in Spain], we are exactly the same but in Edinburg. What happens is that because we are Spanish and we belong to the European Union it might seem it is different. But it is not. When you get here, whether you have a degree or you don't, and depending on how well you can speak English, the jobs you have access to are as a cleaner or as kitchen porter, and that makes you feel like an immigrant because it is very difficult to do something else.]

For Jara, having European citizenship does not make the experience of migration easier, a feeling shared by others—Daniel, Maite, María José, Mar, Lucía, Ruben, Miriam, and Fran—shot in this same sequence. Despite their education, they are denied the possibility of

accessing jobs related to their careers, and thus, full integration. Migrants' first-person testimonies question the narrative of access, unity, and non-discrimination supposedly enabled by European citizenship. This sequence suggests a disconnect between the legal status of citizenship in Europe and the felt experience of migration. Geography scholar Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho has critiqued traditional theories of citizenship that tend to produce a model that thinks about this category on a macro-level but disembodied manner. She proposes the notion of "emotional citizenship" (788) as a term that addresses the complexity of social practices as well as representations of belonging and home as core elements of citizenship. Ho argues that "political actors often strategically highlight the quality of belonging (in terms of inclusion or exclusion) to define citizenly membership to the polity. Belonging to a country connotes ideals of feeling at home and feeling safe in the homeland" (794). Her ideas illuminate the centrality of feelings of belonging and inclusion as necessary components for migrants felt experiences of citizenship.

An interesting effect—and an unfortunate reality—of migrants' testimonies about their felt experiences in Edinburgh is the image they construct of Spain as an unwelcoming nation to immigrants. With this observation, I want to turn to the Argentine documentary *Otro destino* to add another perspective to my analysis of the intimate connection between citizenship, belonging, and loss, but also to explore the idea of Spain as an unwelcoming nation as it connects to Argentine others. *Otro destino,* like *En tierra extraña,* pays close attention to the affective aspects of migration for Argentine youth in the wake of the economic crisis. As in Bollaín's film, it gives migrants a platform to share their experiences of loss and adaptation to the hostland. By documenting Argentine migrants' oral testimonies, *Otro destino* also highlights the complex interplay between mourning and

melancholia in the face of loss. Just like their Spanish counterparts, educated Argentineans remain melancholically attached to the lost object of love. Lisandro Bella, who left Argentina with a bachelor's degree in business, speaks of loss for his generation as a stolen dream: "Te robaron las oportunidades de poder desarrollar tu persona en función de algo a lo que vos te gusta" [They stole from us the opportunities to develop ourselves *according* to a profession we like]. Like Lisandro, many other young Argentineans who abandoned their country after the economic disaster of 2001 lament losing the possibility of realizing themselves as professionals in their homelands.

While *En tierra extraña* problematizes belonging for Spaniards in other European Union nations, *Otro destino* represents Argentine migrants' profound disappointment in Spain. For them, Spain symbolized a place culturally and historically connected to them and, thus, an ideal place where they could try their luck. However, when they arrived the reality they found was quite bleak: some never found employment and those who did rarely had job offers in their fields of study. Yet, unlike Spaniards in Edinburgh, who can legally work, Argentineans in Spain also lost their legal status as citizens. Spain and Argentina are connected by a common history and, although *Otro destino* does not mention the origins of this relationship, it is vital to remember that it is anchored in a violent colonial past. Attending to this past also reminds us of the multiple layers of oppression that factor in the construction of the modern Argentine state. After the war of independence from the Spanish kingdom in 1818, indigenous populations were not only excluded from the political processes of nation-state formation, they also lost their sovereignty. These past events account for the historical oppression they have endured since the times of Imperial colonization and helps to explain why they are not the migrant

represented in the documentary. As it will become clear in my reading, it is not the indigenous Argentine person who has the opportunity to migrate to Spain in search of better life, but the white, middle-class *criollo* bankrupted by the economic crisis.

Some scholars have proposed thinking of the Atlantic as a space that destabilizes the binary Spain/Latin America, since the transatlantic perspective reminds us of our common history and memory (Edurne Portela). But the Atlantic is first and foremost a space haunted by the ghosts of colonial and post-colonial struggles, a space where the cultural hegemony of the West has erased the cultures of non-Western subjects and communities, and a space where new forms of neocolonial practices secured by global capitalism are reproducing colonial discourses and relations of power. Far from erasing the Spain/Latin America binary, the violent history of the Atlantic space requires us to interrogate how it has produced and continues to produce this binary into the post-colonial present, for it keeps dictating the shape relationships between the center and the margin might take.

Otro destino establishes a link between past and present generations of Argentineans and Spaniards by reminding viewers of the flows of movement that connect both countries. It contextualizes the mass migration of Spanish political exiles to Argentina during and after the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) as a key point of reference of a shared past. Although the national independence movements during the early nineteenth century had generated strong discourses of opposition to everything Spanish, during the Spanish Civil War, the Argentinean intellectual elite mobilized in support of the Republic, creating favorable conditions for the reception of Republican migrants. Spaniards fleeing the

violence of the war were warmly welcomed in the ports of Buenos Aires and given the opportunity to prosper, something that Argentineans still remember.[14].

Otro destino discloses the reverse of this story by giving voice to the grandchildren of Spanish exiles and, in so doing, it unveils an uneven relationship of power between both nations. The film begins by asking young Argentine migrants their reasons for leaving their country as it juxtaposes archival images of the state violent response to the 2001 crisis. The next sequence frames the flow of migration from Buenos Aires to Madrid and Barcelona in the context of Spain's amendment of its Civil Code. Since 2003, Spain eradicated the age restriction—at that time, eighteen years old—for the children of Spanish exiles to apply for citizenship through an amendment to Act 36. Following the economic crisis of 2001, this legal reform was cheerfully received in Argentina in a time of much needed solidarity. As *Otro destino* conveys, the Embassy of Spain in Buenos Aires quickly filled up with the children and grandchildren of Spanish political exiles hoping to acquire their European passports. However, the path to citizenship was not straightforward and many Argentineans of European descent decided to leave their country before acquiring the proper legal documentation. Their arrival in Spain was subjected to the scrutiny of repressive border control legislation arranged by the European institutions of immigration control. In this way, the film shows the insincerity that lies at the core of changing the Civil Code while aggressively policing Argentines arriving in Spain. In just three days, the

[14]Bárbara Ortuño Martínez has written extensively on the Spanish Republican exile in Buenos Aires. See her doctoral dissertation *El exilio y la emigración Española de posguerra en Buenos Aires, 1936-1956*.

documentary reveals, fifteen Argentineans suspected of wanting to stay in the country, were detained at the Barajas airport in Madrid.[15]

The extension of citizenship rights was an ambiguous means of amending the violent histories that had forced so many Spaniards into exile, to say the least. For those migrants who crossed the airport's border, the struggle continued, since it was not guaranteed that they would be granted a permit to legally reside in the country, even if they had Spanish ancestry. In what sounds like a Kafkaesque nightmare, Verónica Ott puts words to the absurd situation:

> Te encontrás con una realidad bastante complicada, porque siendo nieta de españoles no puedo sacar los papeles; entonces es todo un círculo…no puedes sacar los papeles no puedes conseguir trabajo y para conseguir trabajo necesitas los papeles y para sacar los papeles necesitas trabajo. Es toda una ridiculez.
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> [(When you arrive])You encounter a complicated reality because as the grandchild of Spaniards I cannot get my citizenship documents and that puts me in an impossible situation: if you cannot get the documents, you cannot apply for jobs; if you do not have a job, you cannot apply for the documents and, in order to get citizenship, you need to have a job. It is ridiculous]

Verónica is trapped in a bureaucratic maze and unable to benefit from the reform of the 2003 law. Inherent to the legal modification of the Civil Code is Spain's rehearsal of its imperial history. Spain's problematic relationship with its colonial past has been addressed

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[15] The Spanish-Argentine TV series *Vientos de agua* explores the shared flows of migration and common history between Spain and Argentina. It follows the emigration of a character named José to Argentina in 1934 and the return of his son, Ernesto, to Spain, after the 2001 economic crisis. The family saga focuses on Ernesto's hopes of finding a better life in Spain and his shattered dreams after his arrival. Key topics related to immigration like loss, emotional hardships, and discrimination are pivotal in the show's narrative. Despite its popular cast (Ernesto Alterio, Eduardo Blanco, and Héctor Alterio), it was not received with enthusiasm by Spanish audiences and was cancelled by Telecinco after a couple of episodes.

by Joseba Gabilondo in his critique of contemporary Spanish historiography as an institutional discourse that represents the colonial past as non-violent. For Gabilondo, this is not a phenomenon unique to Spain but part of a larger "effort on the part of European States to forget their histories of colonial, racial, and ethnic violence" (249-50). What he describes as discourse is translated into practices such as the bureaucratic ambiguity of the 2003 law. This frustrates former colonial territories' endeavors to exist in a non-hierarchal relationship with the ex-metropolis at the same that it enforces concrete forms of existence and identities for migrants from those territories.

The power dynamic that is perpetuated through the practices of former European empires is particularly evident in the position they take on immigration. Migrants are 'allowed' to live in the former metropolis territory if they do not threaten the hierarchal societal order already in place before their arrival. Although Argentine migrant identity is not represented as stigmatized in *Otro destino*, there is a suggestion that different groups of migrants are arranged in an order that assigns human worth based on race. For Argentine migrants in the film, complete integration into Spanish society can be as challenging as it is for other migrants. Yet, apart from isolated discriminatory instances, and of course the inherent contradictions in the reform of the Civil Code, they feel accepted and welcomed. This apparently positive trait of Spaniards is based on an economy of sameness: The Argentine immigrant looks like the Spanish native; the color of their skin is the same; they have a common language and a '"shared" culture.

Argentines are not accepted because of Spanish society's compassion with migrants escaping difficulties but because they do not present a challenge to the nation. Consequently, Argentine migrants are "easier," as explained by several Spanish natives that

appear in the film: "Para ser sincero depende de qué clase de inmigrante. Para mí no es lo mismo inmigrantes de África, no soy xenófobo, lo que pasa es que las circunstancias cuando vienen aquí son muy malas para ellos y se meten en el tema de delincuencia" [To be honest it depends on the kind of immigrant. For me it is not the same if they come from Africa, I am not a xenophobe but when they come the circumstances for them are really bad and they end up involving themselves in crime]. This general opinion is corroborated by Leticia, one of the Argentine migrants in *Otro destino*: "El tema es con los moros, los marroquíes, pero les caen muy bien los argentinos" [The problem is with the Moors or Moroccans, but they really like Argentineans]. "The moors", as Spaniards pejoratively call immigrants from any Arab country, are rejected and equated to African immigrants. Implied in the statements given by Spanish natives are obvious racist views, but, also, an evaluation of who can easily adapt to Spanish culture without the integrative effort of the hostland. Acceptance then is dependent on a 'natural' adjustment of the migrant to the new culture. But, in this equation, the previously colonized subject is never seen as an equal: They are either excluded because of the challenge they present to the nation or accepted on the condition of easy assimilation. Thus, regardless of whether immigrants are perceived as 'ideal' or 'unsuitable' for the hostland, both identities are grounded on a structure of loss. If accepted, migrants are required to visibly be and behave like natives of Spain, which implies they must let go of what they have left behind in their homelands. If they are rejected, they are denied the possibility of belonging, for there is no common ground on which to mourn the losses that come with migration.

Sarah Ahmed identifies these two perspectives on immigration as embodied in the figures of "the model immigrant" and the "melancholic migrant." Both identity formations

place sole responsibility on the immigrant who is asked to assimilate to the hostland culture. In *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), Ahmed examines the ideology behind the construction of "happy objects" as associated with some forms of sociability and ideas and not others. Hence, the promise of being happy directs us towards some objects and imaginaries at the same time as it drives us away from others. Ahmed makes a critique of happiness as already invested in specific ideological social forms, like the heterosexual family, and, in return, offering a selection of "unhappy archives" that come to life through "feminist, queer, and anti-racist histories as well as in socialist and revolutionary modes of political engagement" (17). Each of these archives organizes a chapter in her book, with "Melancholic Migrants" engaging with the history of British colonialism and the racist practices that inform immigration attitudes today. For Ahmed, migrants who are read as melancholic are diagnosed as unwilling to detach themselves from lost objects of love left behind with migration. This is perceived by the hostland as migrants' failure to adapt to the multicultural nation to which they have been welcome. Thus, for Ahmed, the melancholy migrant is the "ghostly figure" that haunts contemporary culture as an unnecessary and hurtful remainder of racism, which in the imaginary of the multicultural nation is something that belongs to the past (148). The history of racism is then perpetuated by the melancholic migrant:

> The migrant who remembers other, more painful aspects of such histories threatens to expose too much. The task of politics becomes one of conversion: if racism is preserved *only* in migrants' memory and consciousness, then racism would 'go away' if only they would let it go away, if only they too would declare it gone. (148)

On the other hand, the "model immigrant" is able to let go of past histories of discrimination and racism—at least in the eyes of the hostland—while at the same time adding to the national fabric by bringing diversity. To become a model migrant, Ahmed suggests, the melancholic needs to turn away from the past so that she can be happy and, in this way, share with others the happiness that comes with being aligned with the 'right' objects.

Otro destino complements this view by suggesting that migrants' acceptance into Spain is contingent on a previously 'shared culture.' Yet, 'shared culture here means only the culture of white Argentineans, not the culture of other Latin American countries. In the film, Spaniards claim to be understanding with immigration as long as they are 'easy immigrants' like Argentineans. In the documentary, the easiness of the Argentine migrant is described by an interviewee in connection to their level of education: "[los argentinos] me parece que son gente que viene a trabajar, no veo en ellos temas a nivel de delincuencia, de bandas. Siempre he entendido que los argentinos son gente muy culta, muy preparada y me parece muy bien" [I think they are people who come to work, I don't think they get involved in crime and gangs. I have always understood that they are very educated, very prepared and I think it is great]. According to this view, to be accepted as an immigrant in Spain, one has to have an education and abide by the law. But, since only white Argentineans of European descent are interviewed in the documentary, *Otro destino* seems to suggest that whiteness is a necessary part of acceptance. The idea of Argentina as a white nation has been manufactured and perpetuated in trans-Atlantic Hispanosphere's popular imagination by Argentinean and foreign writers alike. Graciela Montaldo and Graciela Nouzeilles regret these biased views that have rendered Argentina as "an oasis of Western

civilization in a darker continent" (3). In their latest book together they challenge this myth by offering a counter narrative that deconstructs the image of a white and homogeneous nation. Although Argentina's modernization took place after its independence from the kingdom of Spain, in the film, its whiteness is considered as the ultimate shared trait between both nations.

Argentineans gain the status of 'model immigrants' in Spain because of their white skin, their European descent and values. Their presence in the national territory is non-threatening since they are already perceived to be aligned with the 'right objects,' an alignment that started with colonization. Yet, Spain, as the young democracy it is, is also an incipient multicultural nation and as such has had major difficulties adjusting to the waves of African and South American migration. The premise of acceptance based on a shared culture does not extend to brown and black bodies from the Caribbean and other former colonies where phenotypical traits differ. In contrast to the model immigrant embodied by white Argentineans, the non-white immigrant disrupts life in Spain. Following Ahmed's distinction in *The Promise of Happiness*, they are "unhappy migrants" who do not attach to the right happy objects and injure the nation with their crimes.[16]

Migration and Intergenerational Loss

For the Spanish and Argentine diasporas, loss is a multidimensional feeling that is *felt* in different spaces and tied to multiple temporalities. For the migrant, loss starts in the

[16] *El otro en la España contemporánea. Práctica, discursos y representaciones*, a volume edited by Silvina Schammah Gesser and Raanan Rein, offers interesting approaches that complement my own approach to the challenges that immigration has presented to Spain in recent years.

homeland and becomes a feeling that elicits action. For instance, for Rubén, the biologist in *En tierra extraña*, losing professional opportunities in Spain *moves* him to go to Edinburgh in search of a better future. But loss can also be paralyzing or can leave us stuck in places, hence impeding movement. If, in the previous section, I explored melancholic attachments, I now explore what I call intergenerational loss. To this effect, it is important to remember Ahmed's theorization of emotions: "What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place" (*The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 11). Emotions are about movement and about attachment. As I will show now, both documentaries suggest how the psychic work activated by loss enables migrants to critically engage with the past, which simultaneously alters diasporic subjects' understandings of the present.

In *Otro destino,* loss is connected to the fading promise of the "good life." I use the term "good life" in the same manner Lauren Berlant does to refer to the ideological order that restructured most Western nations after the Second World War. In post-World War II capitalist democracies, she says, the idea of the "good life" has been attached to the hopes of "upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and lively, durable intimacy" (3). To have a "good life," then, is dependent upon the possibility of bettering one's life, an option that, in theory, is available to all members of society. If this imaginary articulated the fantasy of self-realization in the post-war era, it has now turned nearly impossible to achieve as a result of the rapid deterioration of social, economic, and political conditions. What was once optimism, Berlant suggests, is now "cruel optimism:" "A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (1). If optimistic attachments exist in a space of possibility, cruel optimistic attachments harm

us because they are no longer achievable. She raises a key question: "Why do people stay attached to conventional good-life fantasies—say of enduring reciprocity in couples, families, political systems, institutions, markets, and at work –when the evidence of their instability, fragility, and dear cost abounds?" (2). It is important to remark that she is critical of the fantasies of the good life as anchored in normativity inasmuch as they exclude imaginaries that do not conform to conventional values.

Although *Cruel Optimism* was published after the 2008 financial crisis, Berlant does not see the crisis as an isolated event that destroyed the likelihood of fulfilling a good life. Rather, the unlikelihood of fulfillment is a consequence of the uncontrolled, careless nature of capitalism. In this sense, the financial meltdown of 2008 and its ongoing consequences expose the false neoliberal dogma that associates economic liberalism with democratic values, progress, and equality. While Spain and Argentina's histories cannot be equated to the Western democratic nations Berlant has in mind—the Euro-USA center—their accelerated integration into the global capitalist market during their transitions to democracy after the 1970s makes them akin to other European and US systems. As highlighted throughout this project, both nations, Argentina in particular, but also Spain, were used as "poster children" to showcase the benevolent and equalizing power of neoliberalism.[17] The rapid expansion of neoliberal policies and ideology in Spain and Argentina determined the advent and consolidation of the same Euro-Atlantic imaginaries during the late 1970s and 1980s.

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[17] As Mario E. Carranza points out, Argentina was considered the "poster child for successful pro-globalization "'economic adjustment policies" (65) until the economic meltdown of 2001. Carranza argues that market-oriented neoliberal reforms, also known as the Washington Consensus, were forced onto Latin American nations as the only way forward. Yet, when the economy in Argentina collapsed, international financial organizations as well as the United States stated that neoliberal reforms were not at fault, but that it was the fault of Carlos Menem's government, which had not implemented them correctly.

In *Otro destino*, young migrants look at the deterioration of life not as a direct result of the crises but as a chronic condition. The film illustrates migrants' feelings of disillusionment with Argentina as a nation that has failed to live up to the promises of the social state by attending to the loss of a future that has yet to be lived. However, for migrants, the impossibility of achieving one's dreams is not only attached to their present reality but fundamentally tied to the past. Thus, reflecting on their families' histories is a key component to understanding loss intergenerationally. For Pablo Canelo, a 23-year-old Argentinean who moved to Madrid in 2000 with his pregnant wife and his son expresses his feeling of disenchantment in relation to a genealogy of loss. In his reflection on the reasons for migrating, he reveals a sort of awakening, for he realizes he no longer believes Argentina's reality will ever improve:

> Creía mucho en mi país, en que las cosas iban a salir bien cuando era más chico pero una vez que hice fuerza realmente y vi lo que había hecho mi padre, lo que había hecho mi abuelo que todo había sido en vano porque seguían luchando el día a día para comer, me di cuenta de que no era lo que quería para mí. No quería esperar cincuenta años más haciendo un poco de cada cosa o de todo a la vez, laburar mucho para ver lo poco que me dura o lo poco que sirve hacer todo esto.
> [When I was younger, I used to fully believe in my country, I used to believe that everything was going to be okay but once I gained enough courage and saw what my dad and my grandpa had done, for nothing, because they continued to fight on a daily basis to eat; I realized that I did not want that for me. I did not want to wait fifty more years working multiple jobs, working a lot to see how quickly money disappears and how it is not worth fighting like this.]

Pablo attests to a fundamental change in the perception he has of his country first as a space of opportunity and later as one of impossibility. His disillusionment with Argentina is revealed through awareness of the precarious life conditions endured by his grandfather and his father. As he says in the documentary, he has seen them work hard their entire lives in less than desirable circumstances—they have had to juggle multiple jobs—yet their life-long efforts and hard work have not even secured them the "comfort" of a daily meal. By reflecting on his grandfather's and father's lives, Pablo is able to understand that the loss endured by his generation is anchored in an unequal system of opportunities.

He is not the only one whose emotional awareness is enhanced by attending to family history. Verónica Ott, whose bureaucratic nightmare I discussed earlier, is also concerned with the chronic nature of the crisis. This time, Veronica's mother, interviewed in the documentary, is the one who remembers her daughter's words: "Mamá, vos trabajaste toda la vida, luchaste tanto, y llegaste a este momento y mirá, no pudiste lograr lo que querías" [Mom, you worked your whole life, you fought so much, and now look, you couldn't achieve what you wanted]. For Verónica's mother, her daughter's grasp of Argentine reality becomes a catalyst for action as she convinces her to leave the country and interrupt the cycle of unrealized hopes. By tracing genealogies of struggle that encompass past, present, and future, Pablo and Verónica's feelings of loss gain historical depth. Both migrants, point out the chronic nature of loss for several generations, hence questioning the isolation of the economic crisis of 2001 as a singular event that wiped out the possibilities of growth for younger generations.

The relationship between the chronic—the continued struggle for the good life that Pablo and Veronica identify in past generations—and the punctual—the 2001 economic

crisis—is instructive. It suggests a novel awareness for migrants: by identifying the chronic condition of precarious modes of living, possibilities for new attachments emerge. For Pablo and Verónica, their families' losses are not the consequences of specific moments in the history of Argentina; for, as they recognize, economic uncertainty has been an engrained problem for Argentine society since at least the authoritarian regime of the 1970s. Neoliberal policies, hyperinflation, and harsh measures imposed by the IMF and other financial institutions have slowly defeated the collective dreams for a better life that arrived with democracy. In completely shattering the material conditions of existence for the majority of Argentineans, 2001 also becomes a moment that opens up a space to conceive imaginaries other than those imposed by the capitalist mode of production. Pablo and Verónica's migration to Spain can be read as a form of agency that attempts to interrupt genealogies of loss and broken dreams. In this way, engagement with family histories is at the center of understanding loss intergenerationally.

In *En tierra extraña*, the genealogy of struggle delineated by migrants has a clear location in the nation's history as well, this time in the Spanish Civil War. Before explaining the way in which memories of the Civil War become a vital motor for political action in the Spanish diaspora, I need to take a detour to situate the conflict that violently altered Spanish society at the dawn of the 20th century. The war began on July 17, 1936, with the uprising of a radicalized faction of the military led by General Francisco Franco, who plotted to overthrow the Second Republic, a democratically elected progressive government, by a coup d'état. The military encountered a strong movement of opposition and resistance on the part of the Republic's supporters, resulting in a long, brutal conflict (1936-39) that would end with the victory of the rebel Nationalist front. The magnitude

and consequences of the Spanish Civil War can only be understood when put in context, for, as the historian Helen Graham has explained, the conflict was "an intrinsically European phenomenon" (11). The twentieth-century history of Europe is one of growing tensions between its imperial powers but, more than that, it was a period of ideological clash between liberal democracy and military autocracy. The First World War (1914-18) is said to be the first main ideological confrontation fought between the Triple Entente and the Central Powers. The victory of the Entente allowed for the advancement of democratic values in Europe; at least until the expansion of Fascist ideologies in Italy, Germany, and Spain.

The tensions that had been brewing inside Spain before the war were locally specific but they were also a reflection of the growing hostilities between those two opposing ideological blocs in Europe. In fact, many historians consider the Spanish conflict to be a preamble to the Second World War. During the duration of the Civil War in Spain, the rebels received military support from Hitler and Mussolini while the Republic struggled to convince Great Britain and France to break the Non-Intervention treaty they had agreed on in 1936. The Republic did receive support from other nations, mainly from the Soviet Union, Mexico, and the International Brigades—paramilitary groups of anti-fascist volunteers from all over the world. This brief explanation of the geopolitical composition of the powers at play during the Spanish conflict illustrates that what had started as a coup d'état to overthrow the Republic rapidly grew into an international combat. For Graham, this happened due to the "culture war" already in place in Europe: "This was a form of politics that everywhere derived from the acute clash between values and ways of life – rural against urban; tradition against modernity; fixed social hierarchy against more fluid,

egalitarian modes of politics" (43). Since its election, the government of the Republic desired to restructure Spanish politics and society by implementing a series of progressive reforms. However, the Spanish elites, along with the Catholic church and the military, strongly—and often violently—opposed the Republic's attempts to democratize Spain.

The persistence of the memory of Civil War in Spain's society has more to do with the cruelty endured during the conflict and its aftermath than with its international context. Thus its most long-lasting consequences are tied to the nature of a conflict that turned families, friends, and neighbors against one another. With the vacuum of power created by the military coup, rebel and republican zones witnessed a popular uprising that led to the extra-judicial assassination of the "enemy", however the executioners defined that. The ideological tensions between those who supported the changes advanced by the Republic and those still attached to the old order had turned into intense hatred and resentment in the years preceding the war. In the poor, rural south where the landowners felt threatened by the Republic's attempts to redistribute wealth, the brutality was systemic. As the Army of Africa led by Franco advanced from Andalusia and Extremadura to the north of the country, local authorities and elites joined them to annihilate everyone who had supported the Republic in any capacity. In the small villages that make up the geography of rural Spain, where everyone knows one another, the identities of sympathizers with democratic ideas were made public—with the acquiescence of the Catholic Church. The viciousness of the crimes and mass assassinations would devastate the social fabric of Spain. Helen Graham perfectly captures this idea when she claims that, before the war, Spain was a country where alliances were locally structured and "the immediate community (*patria chica*)" was "the lived unit of experience" (40). Once the

conflict erupted, many thought that they would be safe by returning to their villages since the communal ties were strong there. However, the nationalist forces had destroyed the idea of "home as a safe space":

> So many of the victims of extra-judicial killing in rebel territory – whether famous or anonymous – died precisely because they went home. Only there they discovered that "home" no longer existed: the originary violence of the military coup meant precisely that nothing could exist outside the brutal political binary it had imposed. (31-2)

The end of the war did not bring with it the dissolution of the political binary; on the contrary, the defeated were persecuted, tortured, imprisoned, and, often, killed. Many saw exile as the only way to survive political persecution or plain starvation. It has been estimated that with Franco's victory some 500,000 Republicans escaped to France, most of whom were placed in concentration camps. 15,000 exiles were able to get to Algeria; and 30,000 fled to Latin America—Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, and Costa Rica. After the war, those who believed Franco's promise of peace stayed behind. 250,000 were imprisoned, 50,000 murdered, and 4,000 died of starvation.

The memories of the Civil War and its long aftermath have resurfaced during the economic recession both in relation to familial histories of struggle and to the problematic transition to democracy. The documentary *En tierra extraña* brilliantly depicts both. For the defeated in the war, exile was oftentimes the only resource to escape death, whether this was a threat posed by political persecution or by material conditions. This was particularly true for the rural poor and the working classes, since the dictatorship protected the elites. The politics of forgetting that characterized the transition to

democracy erased the Republican exile and its impact on the families they left behind from official national memory. Yet, Bollaín's documentary creates a temporal narrative in which past, present, and future co-exist in a continuum as she explores the connections between them throughout the film. Whereas the official national discourse is invested in representing contemporary migration as an individual option amongst others, the documentary brings to the fore the structural nature of exile, both immediately after the war and eighty years later.

Engagement with the past, however, is not *per se* a negative endeavor, as I have already indicated. We have learned this from Freud's writings on mourning and melancholia, as well as from all the work they have inspired. Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" offers an alternative account of how to actively engage with the past, as well as taking stock of the ethical implications of such an endeavor. Benjamin referred to this active engagement with the past as "historical materialism," which he contrasted with "historicism." For him, historicism empathizes with the victors in history, fixing past events in a narrative that privileges their position. Where historicism presents a well-ordered past composed of "major events," historical materialism approaches the past with "curious detachment." Benjamin writes that "without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror [. . .]There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (258). In the history of every victory, there are embedded histories of loss, as well as lost histories. Active engagement with past losses is important for its political performativity that resists freezing the meaning of past events.

"Theses on the Philosophy of History" can be read as an ode to mourning, for to not engage with the past would be to forget. Historicism's concern with the causal narration of events, past and present, presumes to operate in "homogeneous empty time," whose basis is progress. But historical materialism's continued engagement with loss holds the potential to rewrite the past, to reconstruct other histories erased by the victors. For Benjamin, to forget the past is to neglect an inter-generational "secret agreement":

> There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that. (256)

Benjamin saw the mourning of absences left by loss as necessary to redeem past struggles. In order to achieve this, we need to approach the past as connected to the present and projected into the future, not as a temporality of isolated events reduced to a sequence of eras. Hence, the ethical imperative to situate migrations historically.

In engaging with Spain's history, *En tierra extraña* not only redeems past struggles of displacement but it also opens up a moment for political change in the present. In the documentary, when migrants from older generations are interviewed, the memories of the Republican exile generate tension in the present. Rosa, a book store manager in Edinburgh, remembers her mother's exile vividly. Her family has endured the dispossession of forced exile for decades; they have been forced to migrate because they had nothing to eat:

> Mi madre fue emigrante después de la Guerra y se fue por hambre y por necesidad y nosotros ahora tenemos que hacer lo mismo, sus hijos; porque te vas a buscar una

situación de vida . . . .Ya somos muchas generaciones marchándonos porque no tenemos una opción de trabajar en nuestro país.

> [My mother was an immigrant after the Spanish Civil War and she left the country in order to survive. Now her children have to do the same. You leave in order to have a life . . . We are not the first generation by any means to leave Spain because there is no work there.]

As Rosa tells us about intergenerational struggle in her family, the medium shot that frames her face closes and archival images in black and white appear on the screen. Rosa's testimony serves as the narrative voice to the images that document the massive Spanish exile that took place during the Civil War. Both image and sound tell the same story of suffering caused by the forced migration that Spanish society has endured, a suffering that cuts across generations and is unevenly distributed. As she explains to the camera that her mother left Spain with a small suitcase and without knowing any German (or anything about German culture for that matter), Bollaín introduces the "Noticiario Español" (Spanish News), broadcast by NO-DO, the official TV channel during Franco's dictatorship. The Noticiario presents a historically decontextualized narrative of Spanish exiles living abroad in the post-war period; it does not clarify how these migrants who experienced nostalgia during the Christmas season arrived in Germany, why they left their homeland, or why they are still there. The scene is key because it serves Bollaín as an example of the empty narrative *En tierra extraña* deconstructs.

NO-DO shaped Spaniards' cultural and ideological imaginaries during the dictatorship, offering a skewed representation of reality. *En tierra extraña* shows a short documentary that chronicles "Operación Patria" (Homeland Operation). "Operación Patria"

was an initiative launched by Franco's propagandistic apparatus that circulated the regime's version of post-civil war migration. The ideological intent was clear, namely, to showcase the benevolence of Franco, father of all Spaniards, who, during the Christmas season, remembered his children living abroad and sent them a "piece of home." Esther Gimeo Ugalde has argued that Bollaín's montage of Rosa's testimony and archival images highlights

> la fuerte oposición entre la posmemoria de Rosa (hija de emigrante) respecto a la emigración de posguerra, narrada a través de su testimonio, y el discurso propagandístico de la dictadura franquista. El montaje va dirigido a enfatizar la dialéctica entre ambos discursos: memoria y contramemoria. (57)
> [the strong opposition between Rosa's post-memory (daughter of emigrants) regarding post-war migration and Francoist propagandistic discourse. The montage emphasizes the strong dialectic between both discourses: memory and counter-memory].

In this way, "Operación Patria" erased the history of Spanish migrants living in Germany during the dictatorship as much as the contemporary Spanish governments attempt to do with today's migration. By weaving together Rosa's oral account of her family's past narrative with the NO-DO documentary and diasporic subjects' stories, Bollaín suggests that official narratives—present and past—need to be interrogated and retold.

Personal stories are at the center of the film: they denote the trauma of intergenerational dispossession and bring past struggles to the present to remind the viewer of the importance of remembering. But the dialogue between past and present articulated in both documentaries does not only engage past losses; it turns diasporic

subjects into political agents. Migrants in the films do not only function as victims; their engagement with their nations' political practices, past and present, opens up the possibility for them to create new attachments alternative to the nation-state.

Epilogue

Reading *Otro destino* and *En tierra extraña* together provides important insight into the emotional processes activated by migration, especially if the diasporic subject feels it as forced or involuntary. But loss, as I have suggested, should not be mistaken for a debilitating emotion for, it is through the processes activated by it that migrants reimagine themselves and their relationships with their places of origin. Although it is undeniable that the loss experienced by these diasporic subjects is profoundly enraging and painful, it is nonetheless galvanizing and empowering. Thus, rather than seeing them as victims, the documentaries show migrants as agents who take control over their lives despite the arduous circumstances in which they find themselves.

That loss is resignified by Spanish and Argentine migrants should not be mistaken by a reconceptualization of loss as positive for these communities. On the contrary, their losses are excruciating and the source of great anger. But, for these diasporic subjects, loss is mobilized to escape their anomic societies whose national political projects have turned unbearable. To conclude this chapter, in a somewhat unorthodox manner, I'd like to center migrants' first-person testimonies and let their words do the explaining:

> Los últimos meses me sentía muy mal…era todo una consecuencia de hechos que te iban aplastando. Era como una avalancha. Prendías la televisión y te atacaban los

medios. Prendías la radio, la música, el FM y te salían con que había cortes de ruta, con que el Fondo Monetario no le quiere dar el crédito a la Argentina, hablás con tus viejos y tus viejos te dicen que no se vende nada, hablás con tus amigos y te dicen que los están por rajar del laburo […] Ves chicos sacando comida de la basura y gente en traje que sigue mirando el piso, mirando hacia delante como si no pasara nada. Todo eso era una cuestión muy fuerte. Nos acostumbramos tanto a verlo que por ahí perdimos la sensibilidad realmente. A mí me jode ver a un pibe buscando comida de la basura o a un pibe de tres años pidiendo monedas. Es terrible.
(Lisando, *Otro destino*)
[The last few months I was feeling disheartened; it was all a chain of events that crushed you like an avalanche. You turned on the TV or the radio and it was all about workers blocking roads, the IMF's refusal to help Argentina; family and friends anxious because they have lost their jobs or the companies where they work are falling apart [. . .]You saw kids trying to find food in the garbage and people in suits passing by without even looking at them as if nothing was wrong; it was overwhelming. We had gotten used to a terrible reality and we were no longer sensitive to that. But we need to know that it is awful to see a kid eating from street garbage, toddlers asking for money.]

Sí me identifico con esa desilusión y con esa decepción. Me parece que las bases de la política en España no han sido nunca unas bases sólidas […] Tú no puedes basar un sistema en la corrupción como está basado el nuestro, se viene abajo y ahora tenemos que pagar todos menos los peores. (Gloria, *En tierra extraña*)

> [Yes, I do identify with that disillusionment and disenchantment. I think that the political foundation in Spain has never been solid […] You cannot build a system based on corruption, like ours is because it crumbles and now we have to bear the consequences while those who have created this mess do not.]

Lisandro and Gloria describe anomic nations where social bonds have been broken; shared responsibilities between members of the same national community have vanished, fear of losing precarious jobs governs people's lives, and ties of political and economic solidarity do not shape human relations. For them, such reality is overwhelming and, while living abroad attachment to their nations get complicated.

Loss, I have suggested, opens up potentials for new imaginaries and forms of attachment for the diasporic subject. In the case of Spanish migrants, the loss of professional identity along with the subjectivity shift from citizen to migrant—which signals another loss—becomes the basis for political organizing. In resisting the complete detachment from the lost loved object, they intervene in official discourses about their experiences and, in turn, they become the owners of their stories. Loss also becomes a catalyst for reflection that takes migrants to the past. In examining their nations' histories, they look at socio-economic inequalities as the primary indicator of intergenerational loss. By reflecting on their parents' and grandparents' lives as material evidence of genealogies of inequality, they feel compelled to change their lives.

It is love that can access and guide our theoretical and political *"movidas"*—revolutionary maneuvers toward decolonized being.
Chela Sandoval

Justice is what love looks like in public
Cornel West

Mírate dentro: somos otros (Look inside yourself: We have changed)
PAH activist

Chapter Two

Of Miracles and Wonders

Introduction: From Economic Sensation to Social Catastrophe

My previous chapter attended to the recent configuration of the Spanish and Argentine diasporas. In this chapter, I examine the formation of movements for justice and liberation within the borders of the nation-state. The fact that migrants predominantly came out of Spain and Argentina's middle classes reveals another side of the economic crises and their consequences: namely, that the children of the middle classes were the ones who had the option of leaving their homes in search of better living conditions. This points to fundamental inequalities at the core of both societies in terms of economic, cultural, and social capital. In brief, movement outside the borders of one's homeland is a privilege for some and not others. In the specific cases of Argentina and Spain, emigration was oftentimes a privilege inaccessible to the most economically disenfranchised. Other

times, emigration was not entertained as a possibility, regardless of social positioning. Yet the discontent with the Spanish and Argentine governments' handling of the neoliberal crises prompted protests across both countries, fomenting unprecedented political and institutional crises in the young democracies.

Movement within the borders of the nation-state took the shape of multiple and diverse social movements that organized against precarity and austerity. In this chapter, I will pay close attention to three of them: The Argentine *Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados* (Movement of Unemployed Workers, MTD from now own), *Empresas Recuperadas por sus Trabajadores* (Recovered Enterprises by Workers, ERT from now own) and the Spanish *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages or Housing Movement, PAH from now on). While I pay attention to the specificity of the local cultures out of which the MTD/ERT and PAH emerge, my approach is informed by transatlantic studies. The Atlantic as a frame of reference allows for pushing the boundaries of what counts as national while asserting the persistent cultural ties that connect the Iberian Peninsula with Latin America. By looking at the movements together, I not only want to shed light on the more obvious historical parallels, but also aim to illuminate the connection between similar ways of resisting global capitalism.

As I explained in the previous chapter, the collapse of the economy in Spain and Argentina was the outcome of an unrestrained economic model of capital accumulation compounded by the corrupt practices of the political elite. The liberalization of the economy in both nations can be traced back to the repressive regimes of military dictatorships: Rafael Videla in Argentina (1976-83) and Francisco Franco in Spain (1939-75). When the countries started their transitions to democracy, the new Argentine and

Spanish elected governments accelerated the deregulation of the economy and the flexibilization of the financial markets that had begun in the late years of the dictatorships. The neoliberal democracies advanced by right- and left-wing parties alike rested on a hegemonic discourse that emphasized the need to restructure the economic and financial systems with a view to "modernization." The years of "apertura," which literally means opening, of the markets to foreign and domestic private capital were attended by immense economic growth and much celebration. Praised by international entities like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as well as by the governments responsible for implementing the measures, Spain and Argentina were referred to as "economic miracles." The rhetoric around both countries' transitions to neoliberal democracies was strikingly similar, emphasizing the supernatural nature of such rapid economic progress.

But in the opening paragraph to the introduction of his new book, *Cultures of Anyone* (2015), Luis Moreno Caballud bluntly depicts the state of a country that looks nothing like the Spain of the economic miracle:

> The Spanish state, 2008–May 2015: unemployment rates approach 25%, and 50% among young people. Eight million living in poverty, according to official figures. The second highest rate of childhood malnutrition in Europe. The highest rise in economic inequality of all states in the OECD. Some 3 million empty homes and about 184 families evicted from their homes every day. (1)

The paragraph captures an unsettling reality in which loss has become ubiquitous. Not coincidentally, Martín Caparrós describes the Argentine crisis and recession in similar terms. In *Qué País* (2002), he provides an estimate of losses that occur in Argentina every

fifteen minutes—the same amount of time, he points out, that it takes an average reader to get through the introduction to his book. Within a fifteen-minute time span, 36 people lose their social status and fall into poverty (in a country where 15 million already live in poverty); 26 Argentines lose their jobs; 6 children between the ages of 6 and 14 drop out of school to look for a job or because they cannot pay for the bus fare to get to school; 22 Argentines experience depression and anxiety (some seek mental health treatment and some commit suicide); and 3 Argentines emigrate to other countries.

The neoliberal crises in Spain and Argentina have turned everyday life into a battlefield where subjects are forced to adjust to the ever-present feelings of loss and risk. Moreover, they have revealed the incompatibility of neoliberalism with the protection of rights that guarantee a life with dignity. But the crises have also unveiled people's capacity to organize politically and to imagine new ways of being with each other, prefiguring alternative forms of belonging and community. When people organize against the isolating, dispossessing and violent nature of neoliberal democracies, they discover the power of collective life—of a world built in common. As Nick Montgomery and carla bergman write in *Joyful Militancy* (2017): "It is not that people first figure out how oppression works, then are able to organize or resist. Rather, it is resistance, struggle, and lived transformation that makes it possible to feel collective power and carve out new paths" (50). In resisting the state's aggressive austerity measures and market-oriented policies, Spanish and Argentine participants in social movements reimagine a shared world as they build networks of love and care.

In this chapter, I start with the premise that neoliberalism dispossesses life of dignity and proceed to more carefully examine dignity's meaning and function in modern

democratic nation-states. By looking at official discourses on human dignity and the political resignification of the term by participants in the PAH, MTD, and ERT, I show the disconnect between sanctioned discourses and state practices. I argue that dignity plays a central role in the survival of movements for justice and liberation, especially as they extend beyond the protest form. I draw centrally on the work of Karin Fierke, who has theorized humiliation as a feeling that violates human dignity and subsequently triggers movements for justice and liberation. But extending this important work: if humiliating treatment endangers human dignity and serves as the *catalyst* for political movements to emerge, as Karin Fierke has argued, I also contend that radical love *sustains* movements organized around the idea of dignity.

In claiming that love is an emotion that works to support the longevity of the PAH, MTD, and ERT, I mean that by building networks of mutual care and support participants remain engaged in the movements throughout the years. I use the adjective radical in the sense of transformative and I conceptualize love as an affective and political capacity that arises from *horizontalidad*, a set of practices whose aim is to break hierarchical relationships of power. The cultivation of this capacity involves conflict, conciliation, constant undoing of internalized oppressions, care, creation, and attunement to emergent cultural formations. It is through creating communities sustained by radical love that participants can be transformed, detaching from neoliberal forms of subjectivity and creating new ways of being. To trace these communities I have relied on documentaries that reflect how the PAH, MTD, and ERT have taken shape, the principles that organize them, and their challenges. For example, I draw on the Spanish documentaries *La Plataforma* (Jon Herranz, 2014) and *Dignity/Dignidad* (Michelle Teran, 2015), which focus

on the movement for dignified housing. I also map the PAH's activities by following blogs and campaigns that utilize online platforms to center the testimonies of participants to mobilize support. In the Argentine context, my main references are the documentary *The Take* (Naomin Klein, Avi Lewis, and Silva Basmajian, 2004) and Marina Sitrin's ethnographic work, which map the work of different MTD and the ERT.

Reclaiming Dignity, Resisting Neoliberalism

Dignity has become a key word and a key demand in post-economic crisis Argentina and Spain. However, what does it mean to live a life with dignity? Why is dignity a central claim of new civic movements? And, most importantly, what does it feel like to have or to lose dignity? The ubiquitous presence of human dignity in legal, constitutional, political, and popular discourse has recently energized academic conversations about the concept's origin and meaning. In the introductory chapter to *Understanding Human Dignity* (2013), Christopher McCrudden outlines current debates by focusing on the disciplines of theology (primarily Roman Catholic), philosophy, law, and human rights. The edited volume of almost eight hundred pages covers in great detail discussions taking place within and across disciplines, evidencing the traction this concept has gained in recent years. I am most interested in philosophical understandings of the concept, which, as McCrudden points out, "frequently touch on the relationship between dignity and human rights" (43). Philosophical debates and human rights thinking inform the political function of dignity in Spanish and Argentine movements for justice and liberation. Oftentimes, the claim for a life with dignity is grounded on lived experience and the belief that the current neoliberal

system denies human dignity. Political claims are substantiated by attending to the disconnect between a supposed protection of dignity in national and international constitutional texts and the violation of basic rights.

Despite extensive, multifaceted, and at times contradictory uses of the concept of dignity, there are three main strands of thought that anchor our current understanding of the term. These strands have distinct genealogies, yet they also converge or diverge in different historical moments. In brief, dignity can be conceived as connected to the intrinsic value of human life, or as the social status of a person, and/or as the capacity to behave ethically (Michael Rosen, 8-16). Andrew Brennan and Y.S. Lo shed light on the association of dignity with social status, distinguishing between classical and modern understandings of dignity. The classical view of dignity, they point out, has its origin in the etymological meaning of the word *dignitas*, which, in the Latin original, referred to "the status that dignitaries had—a quality that demanded reverence from the ordinary common person—the vulgar, in the original meaning of that term" (44). In this view, dignity is unevenly distributed in society; some are more deserving of it than others. This conception justified a hierarchal structuring of human society that dispensed differing sets of privileges and rights, according to station. In today's democratic societies, this strand of dignity takes a different meaning: with an egalitarian conception of society, constitutional rights that used to be reserved for a few citizens are extended to everyone; in theory, at least.

An important aspect of dignity that emerges in the classical Western world as well as in some Eastern traditions—Brennan and Y.S. Lo draw parallels between the philosophies of Cicero and Confucius—is that dignity can be achieved via the cultivation of virtues. In this sense, this other strand focuses on an understanding of dignity as connected

to the ability a person has to pursue and nurture ethical habits and certain character traits that facilitate the feeling of dignity. This cultivation involves affective and behavioral dispositions:

> Dignity is partly constituted by the disposition to feel self-esteem and to induce esteem from others. This affective disposition is the first component of dignity. It is justified by the second component of dignity, namely the behavioral disposition to honor the duties and rules of conduct that are rightfully expected of a person of dignity. Without such behavioral disposition to act honorably, the affective disposition to induce self-esteem or esteem from others would be unjustified. (45)

This aspect of dignity is both dependent on how one feels as a consequence of virtuous behavior—self-esteem—as well as on how one is perceived by others—honorable, worthy of respect—which in turn reinforces self-esteem. In this sense, the feeling of dignity encompasses the private and the public, although it could be argued that it is a social emotion. For it is the gaze of others that affirms one's behavior. To further elaborate the behavioral resonance of dignity, the authors note that in the classical conception, dignity is attained through the cultivation of virtues and lost through poor conduct. In this sense, they say, "a farmer who earns his living by honest physical labor is more dignified and honorable than a corrupt government official, tyrant, or businessman who profits by exploiting the poor or the weak" (46). This conception of dignity places ethics at the core of the term's meaning. In contemporary movements for justice and liberation, too, ethics and dignity are integrally connected, beginning with the Zapatistas in Latin America in the early 1990s and continuing with the *Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados* in Argentina during the economic crises of the 1990s and 2000s.

Our contemporary use of dignity is tied to modern discourse on human rights. This use of dignity brings to the fore the third strand which understands dignity as intrinsic to human life and, in so doing, centers the imperative to protect it. Philosopher Rosalind Hursthouse traces this idea of dignity to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, when the two concepts—dignity and human rights—interwove for the first time. The UN Declaration of Human Rights was written after Second World War as a direct response to the Holocaust, and was unanimously signed by the fifty-six member states in 1948 (only eight nations abstained). The preamble to the international Carta Magna affirms that the "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world" (Preamble, no pagination). Since then, human dignity has been the justification for human rights and duties (Doron Shultziner 2007). While these strands have seemingly opposed histories and conceptions, Hursthouse argues that our current ideas about human dignity are an amalgam of all of them. The classical view conceptualizes dignity as hierarchical but also invokes the rational capacity we possess to guide our behavior in an ethical manner. Thus, in this view, everyone can achieve dignity if one's behavior is ethical—or lose it by behaving unethically. In modern thought, on the other hand, human dignity is not contingent on behavior since it is conceived to be inalienable. It is for this reason that dignity can be wielded as an argument for the protection of rights and ground the worth of all human life as well as for the mandate to behave ethically.

I am most interested in the convergence of the three strands in the practices of MTD/ETR and PAH participants; particularly, in how these movements incorporate ethical behavior in their efforts to build a more just society. This convergence resonates with

Immanuel Kant's conceptualization of the human capacity for rationality and its centrality for a well-functioning society. For Kant, "dignity belongs to the capacity to think for oneself and direct one's own life with responsibility both for one's own well-being and for the way one's actions affect the rights and welfare of others" (Allen Woods 54). Thus, the ethical quality of dignity in Kant suggests a communal dimension: the well-being of a society relies on relationships of reciprocity and respect between all of its members. Dignity conceptualized in this way has grounded the contemporary movements for justice and liberation that Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellini have described as horizontal. Sitrin and Azzellini identify two main waves: The first wave transpired during the 1990s and early 2000s in a Latin America devastated by two decades of neoliberal policies and the second one was triggered by the Arab Spring in 2010 and the material struggles experienced across multiple nations and social positionings, after the banking crisis of 2008. In these horizontal movements, dignity becomes an organizing, guiding ethical principle.

Dignity entered the language of anti-neoliberal movements in the Indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico, in January of 1994 with the Zapatistas revolutionary uprising. It became central to the MTD and ERT in 2001 in Argentina, and it has also shaped the Spanish 15M[18] and its multiple iterations, including the PAH[19]. In their first

[18] While I address the 15M later in the chapter it might be helpful to note that the 15M, also known as the *Indignados* is a the social movement that emerged out of one of the biggest protests in Spain since the beginning of crisis. The *Indignados* take their name and many of their principles from a small book published in France in 2010, *Indignez-Vous!* by Stephan Hesse. In the book, he impels young people to feel outraged at the violation of human rights and to reject the tyranny of the neoliberal global economic order.

[19] I choose to refer to the Zapatistas' uprising to historicize dignity as a political category and then move on to the national realities of Spain and Argentina. However, it is important to remind the reader that the centrality of dignity as a political category is not unique to these movements. It was central to the Landless Rural Workers Movement in Brazil, the indigenous communities of Bolivia, and the multiple national civic engagements that have recently rejected austerity measures in post-2008 Europe.

"Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle," the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN)[20] stated "¡*Ya basta*!" [Enough!] to the systemic oppression of the capitalist state and the violence orchestrated against the Indigenous communities of Chiapas—and by extension, all Mexico. The global resonance and significance of the Zapatistas' declaration inheres in its identification of neoliberalism as a worldwide enemy for the dignity of all human beings. John Holloway has written extensively about the movement, stressing that "the Zapatistas uprising is the assertion of indigenous dignity" (165). He continues to note that although they are "overwhelmingly indigenous in composition, the EZLN has always made clear that it is fighting for a broader cause" (166-67). This cause has been eloquently articulated in declarations, essays, and letters written and disseminated by members and supporters of the EZLN on their official website. In their "First Declaration for Reality: Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity," they addressed the "people of the world" and called for a trans-continental gathering to discuss economic, political, social, and cultural aspects of neoliberalism as well as to identify strategies to resist it. This call in January of 1996 resulted in the congregation of 3,000 people from all continents in the occupied territories of Chiapas the following summer. For the Zapatistas, current struggles against oppression are interconnected, as they are all rooted in histories of colonialism, genocide, and global capitalism. The fight against neoliberalism was identified as the common fight for dignity[21]:

> Durante los últimos años el poder del dinero ha presentado una nueva máscara encima de su rostro criminal. Por encima de fronteras, sin importar razas o colores,

[20] EZLN stands for Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional in the original Spanish.

[21] For key analyses about the Zapatistas' impact in Mexico and other movements see *Zapatistas! Revolution in Mexico* (London: Pluto Press, 1998); Gloria Muñoz's *El fuego y la palabra* (Mexico: Revista Rebeldía, 2003), and John Holloway's and EZLN's blogs.

el Poder del dinero humilla dignidades, insulta honestidades y asesina esperanzas. Renombrado como «Neoliberalismo», el crimen histórico de la concentración de privilegios, riquezas e impunidades, democratiza la miseria y la desesperanza. (Subcomandante insurgente Marco, 1996)

[In the last years, the power of money has presented a new mask over its criminal face. Above borders, no matter race or color, the Power of money humiliates dignities, insults honesties and assassinates hopes. Re-named as "Neoliberalism", the historic crime in the concentration of privileges, wealth and impunities, democratizes misery and hopelessness.]

Advocacy for a life with dignity is commonly articulated amongst anti-neoliberal movements across the world**.** Beyond an economic model that redistributes resources from the poor and the working classes to the elites (David Harvey 2005), or an ideology that produces self-regulated subjects that internalize the logic of the market (Wendy Brown 2015), neoliberalism is identified by the Zapatistas as a system that produces negative affects, like hopelessness and humiliation. The affective component of dignity has been key in mobilizing collectivities and in undoing neoliberal subjectivities, as I shall show. And not only hopelessness and humiliation, but the reverse of those negative feelings, namely, hope and love.

In "Human Dignity, Basal Emotion, and Global Emotionology" (2015), Karin Fierke offers an account of emotions as culturally learned and enacted. She is interested in the role of dignity and humiliation in the context of a global culture of resistance against oppression and, more specifically, in the role that calls for human dignity played during the Arab Spring. The idea of human dignity, Fierke says, has gained "deep emotional resonance

against the backdrop of not only the Holocaust, but a history of imperialism, colonialism and racism" (45). For her, the language of human dignity is used by marginalized groups demanding the protection of equal rights based on shared humanity. She takes the work of Avishai Margalit as her point of departure to theorize what she calls "the emotional relational field of human dignity." Margalit's *The Decent Society* (1996) proposes that a decent society whose aim is the well-being of all its people is a society that does not humiliate its members. He distinguishes between a "civilized society," where individuals do not humiliate one another, and a "decent society," where institutions do not humiliate citizens (23). "Humiliation", he writes, "is any sort of behavior or condition that constitutes a sound reason for a person to consider his or her self-respect injured" (33).

Fierke further argues that dignity has an emotional component that is injured when humiliating treatment occurs. Humiliation belongs to what she calls "basal emotions." which "relate to existential concerns about survival and value as human being" (45). Because dignity has been defined in relation to what it means to be human, behaviors and norms that violate that very idea of our humanity are codified in national and international constitutional texts. Fierke argues that the "global emotionology of emotions"—how societal norms shape the experience as well as the expression of emotions—begins to change after Second World War when human dignity becomes institutionalized in international legal discourse as an idea that has meaning across cultures. Her understanding of emotions as cultural constructs is key, for in our post-war cultural "global emotionology," she argues, humiliation is strictly forbidden, as it is an attack on the dignity of people throughout the world. She sees fear, shame, and loss of self-respect as emotions associated with humiliation and hence as opposed to the protection of human dignity. For

Fierke, emotions are value judgments—she follows Martha Nussbaum here. We can thus reflect on how we feel when our sense of self-worth is injured, and by reflecting on what constitutes injury to human dignity, certain behaviors can be codified and subsequently penalized. By the same token, actions that nurture dignity in society can and should become guiding ethical values.

On the one hand, for Fierke, humiliating others is the behavior that most damages the dignity of the person. On the other hand, the refusal to accept oppressive life conditions and the violation of rights might transform humiliation into an expression of one's autonomy and movements for justice and liberation (52). The connection between autonomy and human dignity is key:

> The autonomy of the body is (…) the focal point of 'basal' emotion at the international level. In this respect, human dignity and the prohibition on humiliating treatment are to the individual body what sovereignty and non-interference are to the 'body politic'. In both cases, while the boundaries of the body differ, autonomy and agency are central concerns. Interference in the state, like humiliation of the human body, is understood to be a violation that impacts autonomy (…) Going back to Hobbes, the central problem of sovereignty has been articulated as one of survival. (52-3)

Fierkes' argument focuses on understanding how humiliation might trigger emancipatory movements that "grow out of basal emotions associated with the absence of human dignity and autonomy" (54). We begin to see that the emotional relational field of human dignity that Fierke has in mind is comprised of negative feelings. However, while I agree with her this might be the origin of oppositional movements, I contend that their survival beyond

the protest form is reliant on "positive basal emotions" that ground human dignity, as well. Because she pays close attention to what might be called "negative basal emotions," Fierke does not delve into the "positive basal emotions" that also shape the relational field of human dignity. In the following sections I show that if humiliating treatment endangers human dignity, radical love sustains it. I offer an account of radical love, which grounds the equal dignity of all human beings in movements for justice and liberation in Spain and Argentina.

Dignity, Autonomy, and Freedom in Movements for Justice and Liberation. Argentina.

The current fight for dignity in Argentina centers on the struggle to break away from political clientelism, an entrenched Peronist practice that is founded on the exchange of material needs for political support. Peronism remains one of the most contested historical moments in Argentina, generating opposing interpretations and theories as well as emotional attachments ranging from love to hate. And in fact, the history of Peronist politics is key to understanding the resignification of dignity in resistance to neoliberalism by the MTD and ERT. In the current fight for justice, dignity becomes an emancipatory capacity and, in so doing, it allows participants in the movements to break away from the regulatory function it had during Peronism. Juan Domingo Perón, a military officer, served in various government capacities before arriving to power in 1946. As Minister of Labor, Perón extended the welfare state to unionized workers and created a social insurance program for Argentineans, an effort that garnered widespread popularity and working

class support. In 1946, Perón was elected President of Argentina and went on to serve two terms. In 1955, he was overthrown by a military coup. Directly after the coup, the Peronist party was banned and Perón was forced into exile, residing first in several Latin American countries and eventually in Spain[22]. Today, the heir Peronist political party—the Justicialista—is one of the in the two main political parties in the nation.

Peronism was, and continues to be, a complex phenomenon that both empowered and coopted a disenfranchised working class. Under Perón's government, workers gained important rights, acquired a distinct political consciousness, and expanded their visibility in Argentine political life. His second wife, Evita Perón, was pivotal in contributing to the popularity of the regime. A self-proclaimed feminist, she fought for universal suffrage, making it possible for women to vote for the first time in 1947. The Peróns were loved by the popular and working classes who saw them as "saviors of the poor." Labeled mother of *los descamisados* (the shirtless ones) because of her own poor origins, Evita has since then been a symbol of social justice in Argentina. But if all of these traits of Peronism do seem—and are—desirable for a society that strives to be egalitarian, why has Peronism always been surrounded by controversy?

In the late 1960s, Gino Germani, an Italo-Argentine sociologist, set forth one of the leading interpretations of Peronism by focusing on the migrant movement that occurred before Perón gained presidential power. Germani's theory of modernization argues that the rise of Perón was aided by rural migration to urban Buenos Aires and the subsequent transformation of rural workers into industrial workers. In the early 1940s, Buenos Aires

[22] It is important to remark that Perón was received as a political exile by the Francoist regime, a seemingly antithetical authoritarian leader whose main support came from the upper classes—a fact that adds to the complexity of Peronism's interpretation.

sheltered newly industrialized workers as well as workers with a strong anarchist-socialist union tradition. While urban workers had established labor politics, the peasants arriving from rural Argentina experienced the alienation of industrial work and urban life all anew. Perón, who was already popular for his policies as Minister of Labor, took it upon himself to bring together old and new industrial workers and to foster a unified working class identity. In turn, he became one of the most admired, supported, and loved political leaders of Argentina's working class.

Although Perón has traditionally been understood to be a working class leader, more nuanced scholarship argues that he also "enjoyed some degree of support from old and new sectors of the Argentine bourgeoisie" as well as support from some sectors of the military (James P. Brennan 81; Mariano Potklin 38). However, the rise of Perón to power and his successive governments have also been read as a symptom of Argentine pathology; in this reading, Peronism is understood as the local iteration of European Nazism and Fascism. In any case, while the working classes elevated Perón and Evita to the status of saviors, the middle classes and intellectuals oppressed under the regime had a very different experience (Mariano Plotkin 30). His critics, during his time and after, have described Perón as an authoritarian, nationalist-populist leader who manipulated the working class and hindered Argentina's progress in the regional and global economy.

Although this view of Perón has been challenged,[23] it is undeniable that Peronism "inaugurated a new disciplinary governmentality" (Graciela Monteagudo 119). Drawing on

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[23] In *Poor People's Politics: Peronist's Survival Networks and the Legacy of Evita* (2001) the sociologist Javier Auyero complicates the idea that the poor are under complete political control through the system of political clientelism. He focuses his sociological study in Villa María, one of the most economically impoverished, marginalized, and stigmatized shantytowns in the greater Buenos Aires. He argues that it is by means of clientelist relationships that the poor mobilized resources to survive. For Auyero, political clientelism should

Michel Foucault's notions of biopower and governmentality, Monteagudo has argued that Perón's policies and ideological discourse created a new, self-disciplined worker:

> The good Argentine worker was somebody who was not involved in politics (except for being Peronist) causing no troubles to the government, employing his time in going from home to work and from work to home. Peronism defined the culture of the working class in those years—anticommunist, anti-imperialist, nationalist, and hierarchically organized under the leadership of Perón. (119-20)

In the construction of this new working class subjectivity, Peronism attended to three axes: nation, freedom, and dignity. In Peronism, the political participation and virtuous labor of the working class built the egalitarian nation. Argentine working class freedom, whilst possible because of Perón's guidance, had been won through the sovereign desire of the workers who had freely elected him as their democratic leader. In this way, a democratic and inclusive Argentine society was contingent on the dependency between Perón, as the charismatic leader that had created a fair system, and the support he received from a freed, unconstrained working-class.

As this new and clearly defined class consciousness took shape during Peronism, dignity became a central component of workers' subjectivity. In his seminal work on the relationship between Perón and the working class, *Resistance and Integration* (1988), Daniel James argues that to understand Peronism's success, one needs to look at quantifiable aspects—expanded unionization and labor rights and the integration of the working class into political life as a social force—but also to other, more intangible factors, namely, "pride, self-respect, and dignity" (25). For James, the Peronist apparatus, had to

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be seen as a system that it is analyzed and utilized by poor people for their own survival as well as a system of control.

carefully play the balancing act of mobilizing and controlling the working class—with the ultimate objective of integrating workers into capitalist relations governed by the state. To achieve this, Perón responded to the ubiquitous sense of desperation, bitterness, and impotence felt amongst the working class during the 1930' (the *década infame*) and gave shape to a new working class subjectivity defined by dignity. Before Perón was elected, it seems, workers felt humiliated, stripped of rights, and silenced; during Peronism, they became part of a larger narrative: that of the imagined community of the nation in which the working class was a significant social and political force.

If the power of Peronism rested in the self-respect and dignity it afforded workers (36), as James argues, its authority also relied on the political deactivation of the working class, precisely by mobilizing dignity as a technology of control. In attaching workers dignity to the Peronist political apparatus, the Peróns positioned themselves as the only defenders of the poor's' dignity. Thus, dignity became internalized as directly connected to Peronism, which effectively established a hierarchical relationship of dependence with the leader. As Marina Sitrin has argued, dignity emanated from disciplined labor and served as a technology of control, as workers derived their sense self-worth from strictly following Peronist norms of behavior. She writes:

> The dignified worker under Perón is one who works hard and produces. Workers were to feel proud of their work and country: a good worker, a dignified worker was the person who went to work, arrived early, worked hard, maybe even doing overtime, and then went home and was able to buy things for their family due to his hard work. This work and the ability to buy back one's value with the wages from

> that work was dignified. In this sense, dignity comes from the relationship of exploitation and subjugation. (45)

Thus, under Perón, working class dignity was contingent on honorable and virtuous work as prescribed by the Peronist state apparatus. As Sitrin points out, this concept of dignity is hardly emancipatory because worker's self-esteem was mobilized to their own exploitation.

The demobilization of the working class through the recognition of its dignity materialized through several practices. Sometimes, recognizing the dignity of the working class took the form of protected rights; other times, it took the form of gifts or infrastructure—albeit the money came from a fund controlled by Evita to which the workers were obliged to donate (Sitrin 45). This practice of political clientelism—exchanging goods and services for political favors—has been common in the Justicialista Party since Peronism and it continues to exercise control over the most economically disenfranchised. In today's political clientelist system, the *puntero*, a political broker who serves as the intermediary between the political party and poor communities, is responsible for gathering people at rallies as well as accumulating votes for the Peronist Justicialista Party. In return, the *punteros* manage and distribute welfare money and services for the unemployed workers and poor families.

During the economic recession that started in the 1990s under the Carlos Menem presidency (a Justicialista leader), working class unemployment skyrocketed and clientelism was unable to contain the resulting social unrest. This is when the MTD and the ERT started to take shape in a process that has fundamentally redefined working class affiliations with the Peronist state. The MTD and ERT are not monolithic movements. As

distinct, locally grounded political formations, their degree of independence from the state varies. However, there are some commonalities amongst the different MTD and ERT participants, who all aspire to create radical egalitarian spaces with minimal to nonexistent dependence on state authority. This imagined independence from the state apparatus not only pertains labor relations, but actually encompasses every aspect of life. The communities built around (a resignified idea of) dignity reimagine life holistically and radically, undoing hierarchical relations of gender and class by centering relationships of care and love.

If Peronism was crucial to the emergence of a distinct working class consciousness, the different governments since the transition from a dictatorship to a neoliberal democracy have created the conditions for that identity to be deconstructed and reimagined. The collapse of Argentina's economic system in 2001 was the result of decades of neoliberal policies that had slowly deteriorated life conditions for the majority of the nation. Argentina's external debt has its origins in Jorge Rafael Videla's military dictatorship (1976-1983). After the end of Videla's regime, neither Raúl Alfonsín, first democratic President of the Republic (1983-89), nor Carlos Menem, who succeeded Alfonsín (1989-1999), fulfilled the democratic promises that got them elected. Instead, following the Washington Consensus, they enacted structural adjustments that consisted of increased taxes, greater labor flexibility, and the deregulation of the market[24]. During

[24] The Washington Consensus is a set of 10 economic policies drafted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the U.S Treasury Department. These institutions considered that the package of 'adjustments' designed were necessary for the recovery of developing countries in crisis. Some of the policies were deregulation of the market and financial systems, tax reform, trade liberalization, cut in social spending, and privatization. The implementation of such measures was mandatory for developing countries that were hoping to obtain very needed loans during the so-called debt crisis in the 1980's. The consequences of the Washington Consensus' economic program have been catastrophic in Latin America as well as in other regions of the world. Contrary to Neoliberal dogma that the policies would bring equality, they have

Menem's two successive governments, or the "Menemato," the rhetoric of modernization concealed the aggressive neoliberal reforms that drove the nation's economy to collapse. With the opening of Argentine markets to foreign capital, the privatization of state industries, and flexible labor regulations, factories and businesses were downsized or closed to maximize profits. Thousands of Argentines lost their livelihood and those fortunate enough to keep their jobs had to endure the worsening of labor conditions. Fear hindered any type of dissent, since being employed, no matter the conditions, was better than falling below the poverty line along with one third of nation's unemployed.

Lacking the leverage of the strike, unemployed workers began to organize by blocking main transit routes in Argentina or by taking back factories that had declared bankruptcy during the 1990s. But the MTD movement was in great part triggered by the privatization of the Argentine state-owned oil company, *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales* (YPF). Its privatization was accompanied by massive layouts and closures, measures that affected Argentine provinces dependent on the oil industry. In 1996, the towns of Cutral Có and Plaza Huincul in the interior province of Neuquén gained national attention when more than 5,000 people blocked one of Argentina's main highways. What initially began as specific communities' demands for education, healthcare, employment programs, unemployment subsidies, and opposition to further structural adjustments, quickly turned into a national movement. The ERT movement was parallel in its formation, emerging as unemployed workers' creative response to extreme situations of socio-economic precarity. By recuperating abandoned workspaces and putting them back into production,

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deepened income inequality between the rich and the poor. The rejection of this model after the 2001 economic crisis in Argentina extended through Latin America impelling several countries to create MERCOSUR.

unemployed workers autonomously addressed the problems created by the state and private capital.

A conflict at the core of working class identity in these movements raises the question of the location of dignity in the context of Argentina's neoliberal crisis. While some Peronists remain optimistically attached to the affordances of political clientelism, others strive to build communities autonomous from the state and its institutions. Auyero has argued that despite the corrupt practices of some Peronist leaders, impoverished Argentines continue to associate Peronism with social justice and the distribution of goods and services to the needy, an everyday practice embodied in the figure of the *puntero*:

> People's memories of Peronism are truly effective in the present because they constitute a politics. They fulfill the important function of legitimating the broker's current positional centrality; in other words, they justify brokers' power. And that centrality is conferred, not only because brokers are perceived as historical protagonists in the improvement of the shantytown, but also because they are seen as fulfilling the function that Peronist government once fulfilled: distributing goods and services. They are seen as today's Peróns. (202).

Auyero points out that most shantytown dwellers and working class interviewees with whom he spoke did not see Menem as a true Peronist. They saw him as an impostor who used the good name of the Peróns to enrich those at the top with his market-centered policies and corrupt practices. In this context, Auyero explains, the *puntero* continues to sustain the memory of "true" Peronism, and the "love for the poor" associated with the Peronist state renews the hope in the paternalist and charismatic leader as savior.

However, this relationship of state dependency is precisely what the MTD and ERT aspire to break away from. And in the process of reimagining life, new relationalities and subjectivities have emerged. The MTD and ERT not only reject traditional Peronist politics based on clientelism, they also attend to the problematic nature of neoliberal relations governed by the state. In MTD Solano (located in the greater Buenos Aires), a *compañera*[25] explains that they came together as a collective when they understood that unemployment was not a short-term phenomenon. During the 1990s, they started to demand subsidies from the state to help them cover their most immediate needs—food, education, healthcare—and used road blockages to force political representatives to listen to their grievances. However, she says, when they all came together at the road blockages, many of which lasted for weeks, subsidies did not feel like enough:

> We started getting some money from the state with these protests, but in the assemblies, we discussed fighting for more than the tiny amount of subsidies they threw at us. Together we decided that we had to fight for something much larger, and that's where the whole idea of fighting for dignity emerged. Fighting for freedom. Fighting with *horizontalidad.* (Sitrin 100)

Marina Sitrin argues that the MTD as well as ERT have consciously resignified the Peronist concept of dignity. She sees this resignification as a manifestation of the rupture with the past and an instance of the creative impulse in current movements for justice and liberation in Argentina. Dignity, for participants in the MTD, is not something granted by a political leader in the form of subsidies; it is something that it is constituted by the capacity to behave in 'a certain way,' i.e., according to an ethical code reinvented against the

[25] MTD participants refer to themselves as *compañero* o *compañera*, which means comrade.

backdrop of the neoliberal crisis. During the 1990s, when the nation's economy was undergoing steep recession and high levels of chronic unemployment, the MTD reassessed their relationship with the government.

One of the most remarkable tactics of the Solano MTD has been to agree on utilizing state subsidies to create their own communal enterprises organized around the principle of "power-with, the power to build community" (Monteagudo 107). In so doing, they decide in assemblies what needs were more urgent in the community and how to address them. The Solano MTD runs communal kitchens, organic gardens, bakeries, child-care support, and even health care clinics. This ethical principle that centers the needs of all the members in the community has enabled the MTD to not only tackled collective problems but to also break away from the relationship of dependence with the welfare system managed by the state. In this sense, dignity is very much connected to the idea of behaving ethically that originated with the classical idea of dignity as the rational capacity of humans to guide their behavior. At stake in claiming dignity in this context is the potential to resist neoliberalism by redefining what a life worth living is.

Dignity, Autonomy, and Freedom in Movements for Justice and Liberation. Spain.

What does a life with dignity look like in liberal democracies? This question has reverberated throughout the Spanish state in the midst of severe economic, institutional, and political crises since 2008**.** In Argentina, the notion of dignity that is deconstructed and reconstructed in movements for justice and liberation is connected to a concrete political leader. In Spain, in contrast, understandings and reimaginings of human dignity are

attached to the discourse of human rights. Ratified in 1978, Spain's constitution stipulates the ethical duties of the state to protect the basic rights that guarantee human dignity. As is also the case in other European social democracies, the Spanish constitution includes rights that safeguard human dignity by guaranteeing equal access to universal education and health care, adequate work and housing, and social security and retirement benefits. Furthermore, in the Spanish constitution, the dignity of the person is conceived as fundamental to social and political harmony (article 10 Tittle I), a conception that reflects the historical moment the text was drafted: the transition to democracy. Because the right to dignity does not appear as independent but as related to other protections, the Spanish Supreme Court has tended to "show the connection between dignity and the rights of the person" (Oehling de los Reyes 170).

When the constitutional text was written during the transition to democracy, after almost 40 years of military dictatorship, a primary concern was ensuring social and political peace in the construction of a democratic Spain. It was, for this reason, imperative that citizens be assured of their equal rights in the process of building a new society. In contrast to the systematic violation of human rights that took place during the dictatorship, the new Spain would mirror other social democratic European states by protecting individual liberties and pledging to secure "vital minimum rights," elaborated above. At the same time, the transition to democracy after Franco's death in 1975 consolidated the capitalist economic transformation that had begun in 1959 with the Stabilization and Liberalization Plan.[26] This dual process encompassing the extension of egalitarian rights

[26] Spain's capitalist market economy can be traced back to the dictatorship, specifically to the 1959 Stabilization and Liberalization Plan. The autarky imposed by General Francisco Franco after the Civil War (1936-39), failed to—among many other things— provide national economic growth. Towards the end of the

and freedoms along with the consolidation of capitalism decisively marked Spain's assimilation to European liberal democracy.

Since the official beginning of the economic crisis, the constitutional text has become a site of struggle between the two political parties that have governed the nation since 1982 on one hand, and citizens dissatisfied with the "Regime of 1978" on the other. The "Regime of 1978," which has recently been baptized as the "Culture of the Transition" (Guillen Martín 2016), alludes to the series of political and economic processes that functioned together to build a democracy that is fundamentally anti-democratic. While the official narrative—European and Spanish—characterizes the transition to democracy as model and exemplary, critics see these years as laying the foundation of a defective democracy. In the wake of the economic crisis, popular dissatisfaction with the "political miracle" that birthed the constitution has led to critiques and reinterpretations. A pretext of social peace earlier allowed political and financial elites to settle on a "democratic" power structure comprised of Franco's former ministers, the Francoist heir political party (the conservative People's Party (PP)), and a reformed socialist party (the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE)). However, today social peace is seen as another excuse to avoid a fundamental rethinking of the Regime of 1978's power and validity in contemporary Spain. Additionally, with the formation of two new political parties, the conservative Ciudadanos and the progressive Podemos, and new political publics that have

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1950's, the unsustainable national isolation faced by the state forced Franco to drastically reform economic policy. As it happened during the 1990's in Argentina, international monetary organisms—the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development—encouraged the modernization of the economy. The 1959 Plan "marked the beginning of a new era in the Spanish economy since the country rapidly entered a process of economic liberalization and international market integration" constituting an antecedent for the Washington Consensus (Villarroya, Escosura, Rosés, 2010). The 1960's were the years that saw tourism, property, and construction become the main areas of economic development as Spain was promptly transformed into a consumer society.

emerged as a direct response to the conditions generated by the crisis the constitutional text has been resignified.

PP and PSOE have invoked the constitution to uphold their guarantees to power following Franco's death or, alternatively, to justify the restriction of civil liberties and rights in the name of national unity. Since 2008, both political parties have used their power to eviscerate rights that protect the dignity of persons. For example, in 2009, ignoring popular opposition, three supposedly ideologically opposed political parties—PSOE, PP, and the Catalan CiU—passed the Sinde Law, which limits Internet freedoms. Some of the activist networks that would later converge into the 15M mobilizations began to organize against the political establishment at this point. The hashtag that structured the cyber campaign, #nolesvotes (#dontvoteforthem), gained traction across diverse publics and served as the foundation for multiple networks of political and cultural organizing. In May of 2011, at the outset of the 15M movement, the PSOE government attempted to criminalize the right to protest by ordering the forceful evacuation of a few activists that had camped at the central Sol square in Madrid (they were intending to stay there until the municipal elections of May 22). Ironically, the government justified its action by citing electoral law, which prescribes a "reflection day" (jornada de reflexión) before elections.

The cycle of political and cultural mobilization catalyzed by the 15M has stirred a public debate questioning the legitimacy of the Spanish democratic system. The vitality and widespread force of public mobilizations sounded the alarm amongst political elites, compelling the PP government to pass the Citizens' Safety Act in 2015, popularly known as the "Gag Law" (Ley Mordaza). With this legislation, the government shrank civil liberties by significantly limiting the right to protest and intimidating citizens by financially penalizing

a broad range of public demonstrations. Between its effective date on July 1, 2015, and December 31, 2017, an average of 80 sanctions per day amounted to 25 million in fines (Amnesty International, 2018). For the first time since the transition, though, the Regime of 1978 has been subjected to an all-encompassing critique for its lack of transparency and corruption-riddled institutions.

However, the discontent with the Regime of 1978 reached an unprecedented peak in August of 2011 when PP and PSOE introduced an "express" reform to the constitution. The authority and sanctity of the Carta Magna had often been invoked by the main political parties to quell social movements' demands for its revision; however, by these same political parties, it was changed in the middle of the summer without a referendum. The amendments to article 135, a requirement to access financial help to "save" the banking system, allowed Spain's economy to be rescued by the European Financial Stability Fund in 2012 with an aid package of $125 millions. With the changes made to the article, PP and PSOE legally sanctioned the severe austerity policies they had implemented since the beginning of the crisis. The new legislation also required strict budgetary monitoring of public institutions and the repayment of public debt as an absolute priority over any other expense, including social spending. This has translated to a systematic debilitation of the welfare state: cuts in public spending in order to pay back the acquired debt.

The economic austerity policies implemented by PP and PSOE are in direct conflict with the protection of human rights that are the backbone of the Spanish constitution: the right to quality health care and education, the right to dignified work, and the right to adequate housing. In 2013, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muiznieks, voiced his concern about the failure of the Spanish government to protect the

rights that guaranteed a dignified life for all groups of society. The retrogressive cuts in social spending have disproportionally affected the most vulnerable and an already impoverished and devastated middle class. Public opposition to austerity as well as dissatisfaction with the lack of democratic process triggered protests across the country, but it was not until the emergence of the 15M that resistance against austerity measures became coordinated and consistent. The movements resisting the state's violation of human rights have organized around protections enshrined in the constitution. The different "Tides" (Mareas) that emerged after the 15M have more or less successfully resisted governments' efforts to privatize the health care system (White Tide), to defund public education (Green Tide), and to privatize the management of water (Blue Tide). They have also actively changed the narrative about emigration (Maroon Tide) and have made visible the dismantling of the Welfare State[27]. Along with the tides, the movement for housing and against evictions, *Platform of those Affected by Mortgages* (PAH), has been extremely effective in stopping evictions and occupying empty living spaces across Spain.

Although the current political mobilizations that have spread across Spain are directly linked to the economic crisis, oppositional social movements are more concerned with the more foundational organization of life within Spain's neoliberal democracy. While the economic crisis has created the conditions for wide-ranging political protests and actions, the movements express a deeper discontent with the consumerist and individualistic values of Spain's society as well as with growing socio-economic inequalities. The Spanish Indignados or 15M have eloquently captured the general feeling

[27] The Mareas are self- organized civic movements that have mobilized in defense of constitutional rights that have been negatively impacted by the budgetary cuts in public spending. Each Marea has focused on a different right. For instance, the White Tide has defended equal, public, and dignified access to health care while the Green Tide has advocated for a high quality public education.

of disenchantment with neoliberalism in a number of slogans: "They call it democracy but it is not"; "We are not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers!"; and "We are not anti-system the system is anti-us." The 15M, says Miguel Arana, surfaces as an 'hartazgo'—a slang Spanish word that expresses the feeling of being fed up—with the impossible situation of a country in which politicians do not represent the desires and interests of citizens and private economic interests undermine the value of human life. The 15M, he continues, "aspira a revertir esa situación y devolverle a la gente el control para decidir qué tipo de sociedad quiere" [aspires to revert that situation and give back control to people to define the kind of society they want to live in] (2011).[28]

Miguel, a doctoral student in physics, was one of the first campers at the Plaza del Sol in Madrid. On May 15, 2011, he attended the protest organized by the collective platform *¡Democracia Real Ya!* (*Real Democracy Now!)*, but when it was time for everyone to go home, he felt that, if they did, nothing would happen: the PSOE government would ignore their demands and business would go on as usual[29]. At the end of the march, Miguel and other protesters were chatting at the Plaza del Sol as people started to disperse. Disillusioned with the pointless purpose of expressing dissent in a way that would not eventuate in results, they entertained the possibility of extending their protest by camping at Sol until the municipal elections in June. At first they felt like it was a 'crazy idea,' but the Arab Spring inspired them to stay. And the rest, as they say, is history.

[28] All translations are mine. The full interview with Miguel Arana can be access on the website 15M.cc, an online collaborative project whose goal is to create a space for everyone to participate in the narration of what the 15M and its subsequent civic movements are. http://www.15m.cc/

[29] The 15M has been a national movement but my main reference is Madrid. Although I reference other geographical locations, the experience of those who lived in Madrid dominates de narrative for several reasons. First, to historicize the 15M, one needs to attend to its origin in the Madrid's encampment. Second, the marches for dignity to which I attend later in the chapter converged in Madrid. Third, I also had to consider my limited resources of time and space for this particular project.

Forty people camped the first night and two hundred and fifty the second. On the second night, the police, following a government-issued order, violently evicted and detained protesters: an act that unleashed a massive movement of solidarity. On the night of May 17, disobeying the government's mandate, thousands of Spaniards occupied Sol and, the next day, the hashtag #takethesquare spread across the country. Major cities like Barcelona, Sevilla, Santiago de Compostela, Granada, and Tenerife, among many others, joined the movement by building encampments at the most centric squares in their cities. If the Spanish Indignados were inspired by the Arab Spring, their movement would later inspire Occupy Wall Street. On the fifth month anniversary of the 15M, October 15, the Spanish platform *Real Democracy Now!* called for people to take the streets. Millions of protesters from eighty different countries participated in demonstrations against global capitalism, growing social and economic inequalities, and corporate interference in democratic institutions. A few months earlier, on June 12, the Madrid camp was dismantled by protesters voicing the slogan, "We are not leaving, we are expanding". The decision to move to neighborhoods in order to address immediate and diverse needs, agreed upon during an assembly, was true to the question at the center of the movement: "What kind of life do we want to have?"

The answers to this question goes beyond simply restoring constitutional rights. While the 15M, PAH, and other Spanish movements for justice and liberation do demand that the state protects the rights that guarantee a life with dignity, a widespread lack of trust in the Spanish democratic system has driven many to reimagine their relationship with the state. If before the 15M, democracy meant voting every four years, after the 15M, it became impossible to leave the absolute power to organize everyday life in the hands of

political and financial elites. Just as in Argentina during the early 2000s, the resignification of dignity as something that is not granted by an authority, but constituted by the capacity to behave in 'a certain way,' becomes central in resisting neoliberalism.

Attending to this collective transformation that has taken place in post-2008 Spain, Luis Moreno Caballud argues in his latest book, *Cultures of Anyone: Studies on Cultural Democratization in the Spanish Neoliberal Crisis* (2015), that the cycle of protests initiated by the 15M has triggered a cultural shift from an individualistic neoliberal regime to what he calls the collective "cultures of anyone." He sees the emerging "cultures of anyone" as key to erode the hierarchical system of knowledge that has characterized Western democracies since modernity. In the first chapter of this book , Caballud contextualizes the emergence and consolidation of scientific knowledge in Western modernity and the subsequent devaluation of popular knowledge. In today's democracies repositories of knowledge are embodied in the figure of "the expert," who has been constructed as always "in the know" and better qualified to guide people "in the dark"—everyone who is not "an expert." In this system, knowledge that is not produced by experts is undermined and discarded.

This paradigm has been sustained by what De Certeau called the "creation of reality" with mass media as the main vehicle for the production of reality in the context of a consumer society. For Caballud, the organization of reality by mass media"reinforces another central custom of our contemporary Western societies: relating to reality as if it were a market of diverse possibilities to fulfill individual desires" (20). He points out that Spanish media has centered personal struggles during the economic crisis as completely

detached from familial, communal, and social ties-- in line with the individualistic model of neoliberal societies. However, the emergent “cultures of anyone” question these dominant representations of the crisis as an isolated, technical problem to be solved by experts or as the moral failure of individuals who have lived beyond their means[30]. When it became clear that the economic crisis was not an isolated error, but the consequence of a systemic problem, a culture founded on hierarchy, technocracy, and consumerism began to erode.

Caballud identifies economics as one of the fields that has undergone more technification with the subsequent “glorification of financial experts and markets” (29). Drawing on the work of Italian feminist economist Antonella Picchio, he reminds us that “classical political economics proposed as necessary the pursuit of a life with dignity melding culture and economics as two sides of the same coin” (30). It was later, with the publication of Lionel Robbins’ *Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science* (1935), that economics was separated from the cultural aspects of human life and the pursuit of a life with dignity turned into a solitary rather than social endeavor:

> The British economist [Lionel Robbins] strengthened the belief—still hegemonic in the field today—that economics is a technical matter that supposedly asks about the means and not the ends. His proposal actually gave, implicitly, the following response to the great ethical and political question about a life with dignity: a life

[30] Caballud is hinting to the PP’s cabinet comments that placed blame on individuals for spending on credit. For instance, in a 2012 the conservative newspaper *La Razón* published an interview with Mariano Rajoy, President of Spain at that time, in which he declared that the severity of the baking crisis of 2008 was due to “Spaniards living above their means”. In this way, the former President, redirected responsibility from the economic model to the individual attempting to justify the public bail out of the financial system and concurrent austerity policies.

> with dignity is whatever each individual wants to pursue within the rules given by the economic experts. (Caballud 30)

The cultural shift that Caballud describes overturns the belief that a life with dignity is an individual pursuit—like economic experts have suggested. In Spanish anti-austerity movements for justice and liberation, the collective nature of a life with dignity is key to resisting neoliberalism. Caballud argues that a society that aims to guarantee a life that is worth living for all its citizens should protect not only material needs—food, housing—but also other human necessities.

Feeling Love, Feeling Dignity: Decolonizing Love

On the first anniversary of the 15M, the media collective *Una línea sobre el mar* devoted a show to Spain's political climate after the Sol encampments. The show took the form of an informal conversation between acquaintances answering questions raised by Amador Fernández-Saváter, the moderator. The three guests—Álvaro, Beatriz, and Marcos—had participated or were currently participating in anti-austerity movements. The first question posed by Fernández-Saváter elicited an answer that I think epitomizes the new emotional culture engendered by the 15M. When asked, "What did the 15M give you?" Beatriz replied:

> El 15M fue un regalo en sí mismo. Fue un cambio en mirar, en ver, en observar. Fue, de repente sentirme acompañada y sentirme querida y no sentirme sola en una sensación, en unas emociones de la realidad que estaba viviendo que en aquel momento me parecían frustrantes, indignantes, incluso me atrevería decir, en aquel momento aterradoras, me regaló, en resumen y aunque suene un poco cursi, pero me regaló amor. (Beatriz)

> [The 15M was a gift in itself. It was a transformation in looking, in observing. It was, all of a sudden, feeling accompanied, feeling loved, and not feeling alone in the sensations and emotions of the reality that I was living, which to me was frustrating, outrageous, and, I'd dare to say, terrifying. And so the 15M gifted me, even if it sounds cheesy, love.] (Beatriz)

When Beatriz speaks about love as the most important gift the 15M gave her, she is articulating a cultural change as well as the new forms of subjectivity that have emerged with new conditions of possibility. Amador Fernández-Savater has brilliantly captured this transformation in Spanish society as the capacity for people to prove they are able to collectively "producir otra realidad. Y eso genera automáticamente alegría, un nuevo clima emocional" [produce another reality. And that automatically generates happiness, *a new emotional climate*]. For Fernández-Savater, the 15M symbolizes the "redescubrimiento del otro […] Hemos aprendido que el otro desconocido no es sólo un enemigo o un objeto indiferente sino que puede ser un aliado" [rediscovery of the other […] We have learned that the unknown other is not an enemy or an indifferent object, but that she can be an ally] (*Público* 2012 no pagination). The happiness collective power generates is not the normative happiness Sarah Ahmed critiques in *The Promise of Happiness* (2010). Rather, it is the kind of hope that Angela Davis speaks of in *Freedom is a Constant Struggle* (2015). For Davis, hope is located in the collective, in the joy of coming together as a community and feeling connected to others: a feeling that the neoliberal individualistic logic constantly suppresses by rendering individuals as competitive beings and, in so doing, breaking social bonds.

The pre-15M culture in Spain has been described by those who suffered uncertainty and loss as one of fear and isolation, in Beatriz words: "reality was terrifying." This terrifying reality corresponds to what Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval call the "way of life of neoliberalism." For Dardot and Laval, neoliberalism "defines a certain existential norm in Western societies" (8), which makes it not only a destructive force but also a productive one. The neoliberal subject, they argue, governs him or herself by ascribing to the rationality of a culture that prescribes norms, beliefs, values, behaviors, and affective economies. For Laval and Dardot, Western neoliberal culture

> enjoins everyone to live in a world of generalized competition; it calls upon wage-earning classes and populations to engage in economic struggle against one another; it aligns social relations with the model of the market; it promotes the justification of ever greater inequalities; it even transforms the individual, now called on to conceive and conduct him or herself as an enterprise. (8)

Laval and Dardot's assessment astutely describes the culture that Beatriz finds so terrifying, for it has reduced life to market logics, created subjects isolated from others, and rendered individuals responsible for the failures of the system. This productive capacity of neoliberalism enabled, in the aftermath of the 2008 economic collapse, the reinforcement of neoliberal rationality in the form of austerity measures across Europe.

In the sections that follow, I want to think about love as a political emotion that has the capacity to undo neoliberal subjectivities and produce new ones. In so doing, I draw on what political-cultural theorist Michael Hardt has called the "corruption of love as a political category." In a 2007 lecture at the European Graduate School, Hardt identified five

ways in which love has "gone bad." In his view, the first manner in which love has gone bad is in its reduction to identitarian forms of love or love of the same because it restricts love to the family and the heterosexual couple; the second, in the separation of Eros and Agape, which translates into the separation of the personal and the political; the third has been in describing love as unity or as the elimination of difference both in the secular tradition (traced back to German romanticism) as well as in Judaic and Christian religious discourses that conceive love as merging with the divine; the fourth, in the translation of love as an act of charity towards the poor, for it not only separates the personal and the political but it reduces the poor to the object of love while denying them the possibility of becoming subjects of love; and, lastly, love is corrupted as a political category because it is conceived as a powerless emotion; as a feeling that happens to us and therefore lacks creative and productive force.

Although Hardt suggests that it is difficult to reclaim love as a political emotion , I want to consider what it might mean to think and practice love in radically different ways. To this end, I have chosen to map the genealogy of love that is attached to the heterosexual family to show how this form of "love gone bad" has served to uphold and reproduce neoliberalism. If this kind of love has anchored capitalists values through the heterosexual couple and the family, in contrast, I explore how radical love has structured movements for justice and liberation. Second, I articulate this notion of love by tracing the narratives of PAH and MTD/ERT activists whose experiences resignify love's hegemonic uses and understandings. At this point I think it is useful to circle back to Karin Fierke's argument, once again, since love, as I define it, is an emotion connected to the protection of human dignity. Fierke's work focuses on human dignity in the context of a global culture of

resistance. For her, humiliation is the behavior that most damages human dignity, injured when political systems make individuals feel shame, fear, and loss of self-worth. While Fierke focuses on how injuring dignity might consequently trigger the emergence of movements for justice and liberation, I pay attention to love as an emotion that grounds human dignity and sustains movements over time. However, love is a tricky emotion that needs to be interrogated and even "decolonized," as it has served to secure normative practices and institutions like the heterosexual nuclear family. Additionally, love has been wielded to uphold systems of oppression like patriarchy and capitalism.

In contemporary Western-centric cultures, love has become synonymous with romantic love, and tangled up with attendant normative ideas about happiness and self-realization. We are socialized to desire love and, consequently, to search for it. The love we are taught to want is located in another person who, if found, holds the promise of magically restoring our lost wholeness. But, as Martha Nussbaum notes, love is a passion that has presented an irresolvable dilemma for philosophers due to its seemingly antithetical relationship to ethics. Perhaps for this very reason Nussbaum turns to literature, specifically to Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, to describe the structure of this emotion. By recalling Marcel and Albertine's relationship, she identifies three distinctive features of erotic love. First, there is "partiality," which she describes as the subject's intense obsession with the object of love, an obsession that eliminates general concern for others. Second, "passivity" and "lack of control," override the subject's ability for "rationality." Finally, "desire for retribution" is triggered by the pain the subject experiences in her failure to control the object of love (459-62). For Nussbaum, these

aspects of erotic love turn individuals into obsessive beings whose desire to possess the object of love alienate them from any kind of social concern.

In spite of the threats love poses to moral life, very few Western philosophers have recommended its "complete extirpation," for "although it is evidently one of the most dangerous of the emotions, it has also seemed one of the most necessary, even to philosophers who hate the emotions extremely" (Nussbaum 468). The tension between jeopardy and necessity that romantic love has come to embody in Western thought has been resolved by attempting to tame this passion into an acceptable moral emotion. Immanuel Kant, for instance suggests that it is through marriage that the "immoralities" of love can be contained. However, I would argue that the potentials ascribed to love, whether oppressive/dangerous or positive/transformative, are not inherent to love itself but to our ideas about love in Euro-Centric cultures: their evolution through Western thought and the systems born out of these processes. In making this argument, I follow Sara Ahmed's theorization of "contact" as central to shaping our emotional lives. Drawing on Descartes's work *The Passions of the Soul*, Ahmed contends that perceptions of objects as "beneficial or harmful" depend on how the subject is affected by her contact and subsequent relation to the object, not by any intrinsic characteristic of the object. She writes: "Whether something feels good or bad *already* involves a process of reading, in the very attribution of significance. Contact involves the subject as well as histories that come before the subject (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 6). Emotions are about subject-object relations. Thus, I do not argue that the heterosexual couple and the institution of marriage are inherently undesirable; rather, I suggest that our normative ideas about love have limited the transformational capacities of this emotion for collective movements.

Love restricted to the heterosexual couple and the family form has also contributed to hegemonic ideas about happiness and self-realization. Although one cannot claim a singular idea of love in Western culture, the myth of achieving human completeness through romantic relationships is a dominant narrative. The "happily ever after" story abounds in Hollywood cinema, television, and literature, particularly in romance genres. In this way, romantic love becomes intertwined with the "promise of happiness," exerting enormous power over us all.[31]

In her exploration of love's genealogy in Western philosophy, Martha Nussbaum recalls Aristophanes' account of love, which figures in Plato's *Symposium*, as an early account of the human need for completeness. Aristophanes' story takes the form of a myth that evokes a time when humans inhabited a spherical form, each person a being composed of two heads, four hands, four legs, and so on. In this ontological form, humans were whole, powerful, and self-reliant. Moved by a sense of invincibility, they defied the gods and so invited divine ire. As a punishment for human arrogance, Zeus cut the rounded shapes into two, consequently sentencing humans to an eternal search for completeness in another. Nussbaum further reminds us that the foundational desire for wholeness is also central to psychoanalytic thinking. Aristophanes' myth, she notes, "taps a memory of infantile wholeness that is likely to lie deep in many, if not most, lives" (483). Apart from tracing a genealogy of the myth for completeness, Nussbaum's recollection draws attention to Western philosophy and psychoanalysis as metanarratives that have ordered our current ideas about love. By attaching wholeness to romantic love, Western thought obscures other ways of understanding and practicing love.

[31] I borrow the phrase 'the promise of happiness' from Sara Ahmed. In her book *The Promise of Happiness* she describes heterosexual marriage as a normative institution that promises to fulfill people.

But love is also an emotion that can tear apart one's sense of self-worth. When love does not fulfill its promises, a prolific self-help book industry offers practical step-by-step approaches to *Getting the Love You Want* (1988) or understanding *Why Men Love Bitches* (2000). The typical self-help book relays techniques to undo the psychological traps we might find in romantic relationships or gives advice for discovering self-worth—advice often aimed at the "submissive" woman. And dispensing with relationships that no longer provide pleasure is part and parcel of learning how to find the "perfect love." In *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (2003), the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman paints a dire picture of contemporary romantic attachments. For Bauman, in a consumer culture like ours, loving partnerships have turned into commodities we use to satisfy our personal needs: "A relationship, the expert will tell you, is an investment like all others" (13). If the investment does not produce the expected returns, it is discarded, for there is always the promise of a better model. In "liquid modernity," then, in which relationships are no different from other commodities, individuals have unlimited opportunities to satisfy their desires. In this love economy, romantic bonds follow the neoliberal rationality that encourages individuals to manage their relationships as all other enterprises. Thus, love in consumerist cultures becomes both a principal desire and an impossible commitment.

If romantic love is vital to shaping our desires and attachments and it is indeed a life-organizing emotion, the problem with this type of love is its reductive sphere of influence, its focus on individualistic aims, and its uncritical appraisal as a "good" emotion. Romantic love has traditionally been confined to the realm of the private: the heterosexual couple and, subsequently, the family. Love understood in this manner has upheld systems of oppression and discrimination by limiting women to the domestic work and barring

LGBTQ persons from socially accepted forms of love. In fact, marriage equality has become a site of tension for feminist and LGBTQ activists and academics. Feminist scholarship has produced significant theoretical and political critiques of marriage and the nuclear family as institutions born out of patriarchy and capitalism, while many mainstream activists have advocated for gay marriage.[32]

In her classic piece, "The Main Enemy" (1980), Christine Delphy provides an analysis of the materialist bases for women's subjugation by showing how the family functions as the locus of female economic exploitation. Relegated to unpaid reproductive labor, such as child-rearing and domestic work, women remain financially dependent on men. In this way, men accumulate power not only through their paid labor but also through their appropriation of the profit generated by women's work in the home (4-6). Further, the equal distribution of reproductive labor has not attended women's entry into the workforce. Instead, women have taken on the "second shift" (Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung 1989) and "invisible work" (AK Daniels 1987), important notions that feminists have developed to describe the gender-specific ways in which women are exploited. Some feminist theorists have argued that it is precisely in romantic relationships that women continue to inhabit subordinate positions in formally egalitarian contemporary Western societies (Ann Ferguson 1988, 1991, 2017; Eva Illouz 2012). Drawing on Marx, Anna Jónasdóttir has theorized love as a dialectical concept "containing both care and erotic/ecstatic power" that is "comparable but not reducible to human labor" (2014 13-14).

[32] Gerda Lerner has argued that the origin of male domination over women is in the appropriation of their reproductive capacity. By mapping a series of historical processes, she shows that patriarchy preceded private property as a gendered system of oppression, and that the patriarchal family arose as the key institution to protect it (*The Creation of Patriarchy*, 1986). In this way, material feminists have found in marriage one of the specific forms in which women continue to be oppressed in capitalist societies.

She identifies “love and love power as a creative/productive—and exploitable—human capacity, comparable in significance to labor or labor power” (2011 45). For Jónasdóttir, the expropriation of women’s love power is at the center of the persistence of male domination.

Traditional notions of love not only serve to subjugate women or those in female positions in the couple form, but they also uphold neoliberal values. In her recent book, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and New Social Conservatism* (2017), Melinda Cooper looks at the intimate relationship between conservative family values and neoliberalism. In so doing, she challenges scholarship that has seen capitalism and neoliberalism as antithetical to the preservation of love and family life. Although she focuses on tracing policy and structural changes in the United States, her argument can be extended to other contexts to understand the neoliberal logic under which Western democracies function. For Cooper, “neoliberal economists and theorists wish to reestablish the private family as the primary source of economic security and comprehensive alternative to the welfare state” (9). From conservative rhetoric, neoliberalism borrows an idea of the family as the unit responsible for the well-being of its members. With the replacement of state welfare programs and services, the heterosexual nuclear family becomes the only site of care. Thus, individualistic neoliberal rationality is sustained by the elevation of the heterosexual, nuclear family to the principle site of social responsibility, love, and supportive relationships.

But if the institution of marriage has served to subjugate women and exploit their labor in various ways, why have LGBTQ activists focused on fighting for recognition through the right to marry? Alyssa Schneebaum has noted that one of LGBTQ activists’

central claims has been the right to marry for love, a strategy that Schneebaum among others finds problematic as "it limits people's expression of sexuality and desire, squeezing them into traditional notions of what loving relationships 'ought to' look like—i.e., heteronormative marriage" (2014, 134). It is precisely this fantasy of wholeness that can only be fulfilled by finding *the one* that produces the conflation of romantic love with happiness in the collective imagination.

It may be useful to return here to the work of Sarah Ahmed to challenge the equation of love and happiness. Taking happiness as a category of study, Ahmed explores the various ways that we are oriented towards and assign meaning to objects prior to our encounter with them. She writes: "the judgment that some things are good not only precedes our encounter with such things but directs us towards those things" (*The Promise of Happiness*, 28). The associations we create between feeling good or bad and particular objects shape social norms and desires, which direct us, in turn, towards those things that have been previously determined as good:

> Certain objects are attributed as the cause of happiness, which means they already circulate as social goods before we "happen" upon them, which is why we might happen upon them in the first place. We anticipate that happiness will follow proximity to this or that object. Anticipations of what an object gives us are also expectations of what should be given. (*The Promise of Happiness*, 28-9)

The directionality of happiness guides us towards socially accepted moral and affective behaviors, and labels those who do not find happiness in the same objects as disruptive and deviant. Interestingly, Ahmed traces the figures of the "feminist killjoy," the "unhappy queer," and the "melancholy migrant," subjects who are perceived as unable to attach

themselves to happy objects. The unhappiness of these figures emerges in relation to the family as the presumptive "happy object," which is spoiled by these subjects who, failing to align properly to the family, "convert good feeling into bad" (49). The happy family is an important segment of the genealogy of love I have been mapping. Romantic love carries with it a series of attachments to other objects—like marriage and family—promising happiness. To question our beliefs about what love is and where love resides, it does not suffice to remove love from the realm of the private. This line of questioning requires that we interrogate how love functions in intimate relationships. How love is practiced matters[33].

A New Love for a New Culture

The cultural transformation the 15M occasioned in Spain illuminated the social mobilization that had already been happening in Barcelona around the right to dignified housing. The *Platform of People Affected by Mortgages* (PAH) was born in February of 2009 in Barcelona, but the 15M lent it greater visibility, more strength, and wide popular support. It continues to be a highly active movement across Spain. Housing insecurity was

[33] Love as a topic of feminist academic interpretation has seen a revival in recent years. Feminist scholars are advocating for retrieving love as a transformative political emotion and, hence, a public one. In the span of three years, two important edited volumes have emerged that explore the question of love, *Love: A Question for Feminism in the Twenty-First Century* (2014) and *The Radicalism of Romantic Love* (2017). In the first, Anna G. Jónasdóttir argues that the emergence of what she calls the field of "love studies" across several academic disciplines is due to novel notions of love as "*a creative power, a productive force with (at least a potential) positive value*, conceptualized and theorized beyond constraining power of a(n assumed) delusion or ideology called "romantic love" (12). In the second volume I mentioned, Ann Ferguson argues that redefining the ways in which we understand our ideas and experiences of love is essential to "challenging ongoing systems of social domination" (10).

exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis, but it had plagued Spanish society for years. As early as 2006, Miloon Kothari, UN Special Rapporteur, visited Spain to assess the fulfilment of the right to dignified housing and other related rights. Although he recognized the "positive steps" the government had taken to secure adequate housing, he also expressed his concern for the most economically vulnerable populations —women, youth, migrants, people with disabilities, Roma (*gitanos*) communities, the elderly, and the homeless.

In his report, Kothari writes: "economic and financial factors, including widespread speculation, have had negative impacts on the right to adequate housing in Spain. Affordability and the lack of public housing stock, in particular rental housing, has affected large sectors of the population" (no pagination). During the government of José María Aznar, PP Prime Minister between 1996-2004, parliament passed the Liberalization Land Law (Ley 6/1998 'Ley de Liberización del Suelo'), which gave *carte blanche* to real estate developers, making land speculation cheap and easy. In *Vidas Hipotecadas* (*Mortgaged lives* 2012), Ada Colau and Adriá Alemany explain that between 1997 and 2007, "España se entregó durante años a la fiesta inmobiliaria. Se construyeron más viviendas que en Alemania, Italia y Francia juntas" [Spain indulged in a real estate party for years building more houses than Germany, France, and Italy combined]. Paradoxically, they continue, "esta superproducción no se tradujo nunca en una mayor accesibilidad. Al contrario. Desmintiendo el dogma neoliberal, los precios no dejaron de aumentar, lo que convirtió a España en uno de los países de la Unión Europea donde el acceso a la Vivienda resultaba más caro"[this overproduction did not translate into greater accessibility, Rather, contradicting neoliberal dogma, housing prices kept rising turning Spain into one of the European countries where buying a house was most expensive] (28). With the 15M, the

work that the Barcelona PAH had been doing since 2009 was amplified, creating a massive movement of solidarity between those at risk of losing their homes or already homeless. Since 2008, more than 721,000 families have faced eviction, which amounts to 173 evictions per day. The direct actions of multiple PAHs across Spain have successfully stopped many of those evictions and further have recovered empty buildings for homeless people to live in.

In December of 2001, Argentina underwent a similar process of broad cultural change with the *cacerolazo*, which marked the beginning of widespread popular support for the *Unemployed Workers Movement* (MTD) and the *Enterprises Recovered by their Workers* (ERT) as well as the political mobilization of the middle classes. The *cacerolazo* was a spontaneous form of protest that followed President De la Rúa's imposition of the *corralito* and the state of Siege. On the night of December 19, after Fernando de la Rúa, then President of Argentina, imposed the state of Siege, thousands of Argentines demanded that the president resign. A few weeks before that, on December 2, Domingo Cavallo, Minister of Economy, had announced the "corralito," an economic policy that restricted the withdrawal of funds to 250 pesos per week. This measure attempted to regulate the flight of capital from the banking system that had begun in March of 2001 after three years of grave economic recession. As Pablo, a participant in the protest, says, on the night of December 19, after years of economic recession, people began to demand fundamental changes in the management of the country. Until that moment, the middle class had been affected and slowly impoverished by the recession, but for the most part, it had remained politically

inactive. In fact, they saw the MTD or *Piqueteros*[34] as interrupting the normal course of urban life.

Ana C. Dinerstein has noted that the individualistic mentality advanced by neoliberal policies during the 1990s co-opted the middle class, who initially benefited from the convertibility plan.[35] Argentina's social fabric was fractured and solidarity bonds across class differences were severely damaged. During the 1990s, while the middle class was entrenched in gated communities, a powerful workers' movement flourished, the *Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados*. The *piquetes* was one of their most unique forms of political resistance to the neoliberal policies of President Menem. Argentina's middle classes had traditionally seen "the poor" as responsible for their own condition: dependent on state subsidies and ill-fitted for life in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires. This viewpoint was partly based on the liberal myth of the self-made Argentinean descended from European immigrants. (Mónica Farías 2016). However, this hegemonic middle class imaginary was shattered in December of 2001. If before, they saw "the poor" as undeserving, after the *cacerolazo* the middle classes began to slowly grapple with the structural nature of socioeconomic inequality in Argentina.

The MTD/ERT and PAH have shaped a collective political culture that resists neoliberal rationality and, in so doing, the movements have reformulated the subjectivities concomitant with it. In these movements, love emerges from the practice of *horizontalidad*.

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[34] Piqueteros is another way to refer to the Unemployed Workers Movement (MTD) that emerged during the 1990's in Argentina. The name comes from the road blockage's tactic (piquetes in Spanish) the movement used to denounce the chronic unemployment caused by Memen's neoliberal polices.

[35] The convertibility plan was introduced by Domingo Cavallo, Minister of Economy, in 1991 to address hyperinflation and stimulate economic growth. The plan established the parity of 1 Argentine peso to 1 American dollar.

Marina Sitrin defines *horizontalidad* as "a dynamic social relation" wherein new subjectivities and relationships are created. For her, *horizontalidad* "is not an ideology or set of principles that must be met so as to create a new society or new idea. It is a break with this sort of vertical ways of organizing and relating, and a break that is an opening" (2015, 8-9). By engaging in *horizontalidad*, participants reject hierarchical systems of class, gender, race, sexuality, and nationality that organize neoliberal societies and co-create new subjectivities and communities:

> If you don't see that *horizontalidad* is a relationship between different people with the same quantity of rights, we won't understand each other (…) We're different…we're all different. The issue is how each person is thought of and how each sees him or herself inside a community, how each person is integrated, how that produces community, and how that community creates collective thought. That's *horizontalidad*. (compañera, MTD Allen qtd. in Sitrin, 56)

Horizontalidad is a practice of building capacities to become active members of a collective. While it aims to problematize social differences that create systems of discrimination, it also recognizes that community members *are* different. This somewhat abstract definition is quite straightforward in practice. The popular movements that have organized against the precarious life conditions generated by neoliberalism reject representative democracy. This rejection obeys a simple logic: representative democracy in Spain and Argentina has proven to be a defective political system incapable of giving voice and equal rights to all. Something that became clear in the MTD/ERT and PAH from the very beginning was the necessary rejection of representative leaders as well as the requisite ridding of hierarchical

ways of organizing. All decisions are made via assembly and consensus-building so as to work towards radical inclusion. This new form of organizing defines itself against representative democracy: "This is what the assemblies and direct democracy are all about: that all of us can share opinions about something, have a meeting, and work together to find a solution that everyone feels okay about, something that all of us can be a part of" (Compañera, MTD Allen, qtd. in Sitrin 47). For those who participate in the movements and become part of a community, including everyone while attending to differences is at the core of *horizontalidad*.

Horizontalidad, as I understand it, is also an affective, embodied practice that fosters the formation of new relationships with one's self and others. To bring people in, meet them where they are, and build their capacities demands a commitment to nurture and respect others in their processes of personal growth from the moment they arrive to the moment until they are able to become a source of support for others. The emotional energy invested in organizing direct action events to avoid evictions—of a home or a recuperated factory—along with the work of being with others is what compels me to name love as the reigning feeling that sustains these movements. Love is, in this sense, an affective and political organizing capacity in the MTD/ERT and PAH that is understood as a promise to engage in activist practices that fight for the right of a life with dignity of 'unknown' others. Although the movements emerge as responses to economic precarity and extreme vulnerability, they are transformed into communities of care in which participants acknowledge the imperative of fighting against social divisions and internalized oppressions through *horizontalidad*.

Understanding love in the context of these movements takes us beyond popular notions that characterize love as a feeling restricted to the couple and the family. It is the commitment of sustained care that generates the space for people to begin undoing internalized oppressions while creating new subjectivities and communities. I prefer to use love, not solidarity, because love is an emotion that binds people through conflict and over time. My own conceptualization of love informed by MTD/ETR and PAH envisions love as a whole set of practices, not simply a bodily feeling. In what follows, I analyze some representative quotations describing the shared experiences of many participants that have helped me flesh out this notion. Together, these accounts illustrate the delicate work that goes into building community and organizing collective action in the midst of increased precarity. This work involves attuning to people's complex feelings of loss, shame, and guilt, and love plays a vital role in it.

In "How to Stop an Eviction" (2013), Ada Colau, Barcelona PAH activist and now mayor of Barcelona, describes her initial astonishment when meeting with people impoverished by the 2008 banking crisis and on the verge of losing their homes. "Nosotros esperábamos" [We thought], she writes,

> Encontrar a personas cabreadas con un sistema abierta y obscenamente injusto, que sobreprotege a entidades financieras y deja a miles de personas en la calle, endeudadas y condenadas a la exclusión social de por vida. En cambio, en las reuniones regulares con centenares de personas afectadas por el fraude hipotecario que venimos realizando desde 2009, encontramos sobretodo a personas deprimidas, con fuertes sentimientos de culpa y fracaso personal, y sin ningún horizonte de posibilidad. (1-2)

[that we were going to find people furious at a system that's openly and obscenely unjust, that overprotects financial institutions and leaves thousands of people in the streets, in debt and condemned to social exclusion for life. However, in the regular meetings we have had since 2009, we have seen hundreds of people affected by the mortgage fraud who are deeply depressed and who have strong feelings of guilt and personal failure without any hope for the future.]

Colau aptly describes how the internalization of neoliberal rationality detracts from collective movement building. The feelings of personal responsibility and failure, she says, were not only a surprise but also a significant obstacle to overcome. This unexpected hurdle pushed activists doing anti-neoliberal organizing to reorder their priorities and goals. In the documentary *La Plataforma* (Jon Herranz, 2014), Adrià Alemany explains that "de los retos mas difíciles que tiene la plataforma es transformar esa problemática que se vive de manera individual en una problemática colectiva" [one of the most difficult challenges for the Platform is to transform the individualized feelings of personal responsibility associated with the housing crisis into a collective problem] (0:35). To be successful, the PAH has had to emphasize the structural nature of the unjust real estate system, protected by law. In contrast, official narratives constructed by politicians and circulated through mainstream media have placed blame on Spaniards for living beyond their means and on the Argentine unemployed for not properly training themselves and adjusting to the needs of the market.

Drawing on Foucault's notion of governmentality, Laval and Dardot remind us that the success of neoliberal forms of subjectification inheres in producing subjects that conflate "obligation" with "freedom to choose": "The individual chooses 'in complete

freedom' what he must necessarily do in his own interest" (190). The hegemonic imaginary of the homo economicus has had a profound impact on how individuals perceive themselves as entrepreneurs who must constantly engage in self-improvement:

> I thought that if a neighbor did not have a job it was bad luck or it was because s/he had not known how to take care of their job, they had not prepared for it. In contrast, I never missed work, I always worked extra hours. Workers have to improve themselves, they have to learn new technology because electronics are the future. So, if workers can properly train themselves, they can have a job in a good company and prosper. (Juancho, MTD Aníval Verón. Qtd. in Sitrin)

This notion of the job market—an arena of competition between individuals who are conceived as marketable commodities—worked to dissolve solidarity bonds in Spain's and Argentina's neoliberal democracies. Juancho's memory of holding neighbors responsible for losing their jobs illustrates a culture in which the risks concomitant with the whims of the market have been recoded as the individual's inability to effectively satisfy the demands of the job.

One consequence of this mentality is the affective universe it generates: individuals experience guilt and shame in response to losing their jobs and eventually their homes. As Judith Butler explains, the marketization of every aspect of human life categorizes individuals as either efficient or inept at earning enough wages to sustain themselves. But "the minute one proves oneself incapable of conforming to the norm of self-sufficiency (for instance when one cannot pay health care or take advantage of privatized care), one becomes potentially disposable" (14). This idea of disposability—the assessment of human worth according to wage earning potential "under conditions where life has become

unlivable" (16)—legitimates feelings of guilt and shame and hinders the possibility of collectively sharing and organizing:

> Sí entras con un sentimiento de culpabilidad, vergüenza. Estuve cinco semanas yendo, asistiendo a las asambleas, me quedaba en un rincón, además era un lugar bastante pequeño, atiborrado de gente con el mismo problema que tenía yo en aquel momento y ya digo, me costó cinco semanas poder hablar. Hasta que me decidí porque la cosa se me iba cada vez complicando más. (0:28, *Ley de vivienda PAH: salud y vivienda* (Silvia Pérez Cruz, 2017)
>
> You go to the meetings feeling guilt, feeling ashamed. I had been going to the assemblies for five weeks but I would always stay in a corner in a place that was quite small, packed with people with the same problem I had at that moment. But, like I said, it took me five weeks to be able to share until the day I decided to speak because my situation was getting more and more difficult. (0:28, *Ley de vivienda PAH: salud y vivienda* (Silvia Pérez Cruz, 2017)
>
> Guilt was the ultimate obstacle for the unemployed to collectively organize and find a solution to our problems. Guilt made difficult for us to identify that unemployment was a social problem. It was guilt what time and time again convinced us that "we were useless" that "we were not good at anything" that "we suffered that misery because we wanted". (Toty Flores, MTD Matanza, Qtd. in Sitrin, 75)

To feel disposable and unworthy is to feel humiliated and devoid of dignity. Resisting neoliberal rationality means opposing a system in which the worth of a human life is defined in relation to productivity. The power of neoliberalism hinges on circulating affects like guilt and shame that suppress people's capacities to organize. An important insight

shared by participants in the MTD/ERT and PAH is that what begins as a movement in reaction to specific forms of violence, e.g., unemployment and housing insecurity, might evolve into a space to reimagine new forms of being and belonging.

To build a movement that not only addresses a concrete problem but also aspires to transform life, individuals and collectives must grapple with the all-encompassing nature of subjection under neoliberal capitalism. Neka, one of the early participants on the MTD Solano, brilliantly captures the connection between capitalism, gendered oppression, and the lack of dignity:

> We're not going to entrust our individual dignity to someone else who might do things well, but instead, we're going to reconstruct our dignity from within ourselves, utilizing our capacity for self-definition, self-determination, and self-valorization (…) One of the things that capitalism rob us of, is precisely this possibility. It converts us into objects, it thing-ifies us. I think all systems of domination converts us into objects. So, to recover our dignity is to recover our capacity to feel like people. For me, that's to feel like a woman with possibilities, able to choose how I want to live, and feel what my role is in relation to others. It's not for someone else to explain to me, no (…) It's very difficult because we live in a very macho society. I believe that machismo is also a product of the domination of capital, and to break with this is also a part of …that is to sat, we don't speak of machismo only to the difference between men a woman. We speak of machismo as a culture we, as women, also contribute to. For example, when we speak of our role as women in the movement, as women in creation, we need to reflect upon how much

we might also produce a macho culture of domination, and we need self-criticism. (Neka, MTD Solano, Qtd. in Sitrin, 145-47)

For Neka, undoing internalized, intersecting forms of oppression is inseparable from the agentive process of imagining what it means to be human. In her reflection, Neka identifies sexism and capitalism as *felt* forms of dehumanization. To recover humanness is to recover the capacity to feel connected to one's self and others in an organic, ongoing process that un-makes and re-makes the present. Action must follow analysis of how intersecting oppressions work—what bell hooks calls "a love ethic." For hooks, "Embracing a love ethic means that we utilize all the dimensions of love— care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge—in our everyday lives. We can successfully do this by cultivating awareness" (94). Like Neka, many MTD/ERT and PAH participants also attest to the transformational power of awareness. It is in and through collective organizing that people gain greater consciousness of how they are impacted by systems of oppression as well as how they contribute to upholding these same systems.

In a patriarchal system, who you are supposed to care for and to love is clearly delineated and dictated. So, too, neoliberalism privatizes care so that the family becomes the only unit of responsibility. To claim that love is not limited to heterosexual relations and/or the nuclear family is to extend care and concern to unknown others. For this reason, we must place love at the center of resisting the neoliberal logic of individualized care. But, as I have already noted, love cannot be reduced to unmistakably *good* feelings, for it is an emotion that also involves conflict and conciliation. I think it is important to stress the tension between 'good' and 'bad' feelings contained in love if we wish to challenge

popular notions of love as either bringing happiness or suffering. Love can *feel* good and bad simultaneously. Tony describes this dichotomy inherent to loving others:

> We can have really difficult conversations and disagree, but we all stay part of the organization. We try to love each other. It's difficult. Imagine being in a neighborhood like La Matanza, which is full of really tough men—men who have lived, and still live, a violent, macho life—we're talking about new, loving relationships. No, it isn't easy—not to talk about or even practice. This is part of our changing culture, and as we change we notice how much we really need to. There is a huge desire to all be together in the movement and to continue to creating together. (Tony, MTD La Matanza, Qtd. in Sitrin, 64)

For Tony, toxic masculinity stands in the way of love. But what I like about this quote is not only his association of patriarchy with lovelessness, but also his emphasis upon love as a transformative emotion: as a capacity that must be learned. And a large part of this learning means addressing internalized oppressions. "Undoing Empire" Montgomery and bergman tell us, "also means undoing one's self. This is never a purely negative undoing, because it also means becoming capable of something new" (25). Love as a capacity is not a one-dimensional feeling; it is a complex set of practices that must be learned. And by cultivating the capacity to love through ridding oneself of internalized oppressions, movements are sustained over time.

Conservative notions of love repudiate care and affection for those who suffer abandonment by their families of origin. According to neoliberal rationality, single mothers, elderly persons, displaced migrants, and victims of domestic violence are not casualties of a faulty economic and political system but responsible for making the wrong calculations.

Those whose lives are deemed disposable have found new forms of belonging through participating in movements that recode who counts as family:

> Bueno, yo llegué porque me separé por violencia de género. No estoy casada. Me vine de Toledo para Móstoles con el padre de las niñas y luego ya al separarme me vi en la calle con mis dos hijas. Primero estuve en casa de mi madre hasta que me echo, a mí y a mis hijas. Luego estuve en casa de mi hermana hasta que me echo, a mí y a mis hijas, y me vine para acá al bloque. Pedí ayuda y me ofrecieron. Y Bueno, gracias a mis compañeros he salido adelante. Sin su apoyo y su cariño y todo no hubiera podido hacerlo. Y ahora estoy muy bien y muy feliz. (00:41:44, Vanessa *La dignidad*)
>
> [Okay, I arrived here because…I am not married. I separated due to domestic violence. I came to Mostoles from Toledo with the father of the girls and then I separated and I ended up on the street. I was in my mother's house until she kicked us out. And then in my sister's house until she kicked us out. I came here to the building to ask for help and they gave it to me. Thanks to my friends here, I've been able to get back on my shoes. Without their support, affection, and everything they've given me, I wouldn't have been able to do it. I am doing really well now and I am very happy.]

Without family ties, Vanessa was vulnerable to becoming a social exile. The *Obra Social PAH La Dignidad* took her in, gave her a home, and nurtured her. This community of strangers became her support system, and Vanessa became capable of not only receiving but also extending support as a result. At the end of the documentary, *Dignidad/Dignity* we can see

her as an active member of *La Dignida's Building* weekly assembly, arguing to shelter an undocumented mother.

It is also telling that in the MTD/ERT movements, the meaning of work is no longer defined by productivity and efficiency. In horizontally managed spaces, work is a process of collective elucidation that resists neoliberal logic by centering community members' capacities:

> There was a person who had a heart operation, so we decided (in assembly) that he would still get his salary and work as much as he can as he waits for retirement, but he no longer has to work in the factory. This is one of the small differences between a recuperated factory and any other type of workplace. We take care of each other, and make decisions together. (Candido, Chilavert, a recuperated workplace, qtd. In Sitrin, 62)
>
> These workers helped my sister who used to work with them…my sister is ill, she has breast cancer and cannot work…look how terrible they are. While the Brukman's bosses discounted the day when my sister had to go to the hospital to get a chemo or radiotherapy treatment, these are the people that will make this country better, these are the people we have to support (…) these are the people who did not forget about their coworker and count their pesos to put aside for my sister's treatment. (1:15:00, *The Take*)

Illness is not perceived as a weakness of the body that negatively impacts production and profit, but as an opportunity to reimagine everyone's role in the community. In opposition

to neoliberal rationality that differentially assigns value in relation to productivity, these emergent cultural formations forge alliances based on capabilities and love.

Much of Judith Butler's recent work has focused on theorizing the possibilities of building alliances that emerge out of conditions of precarity and vulnerability. In *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), she beautifully argues for the need to reclaim "responsibility" as a socially informed category. For her, responsibility has been coopted by neoliberal discourse. "The more one complies," she writes, "with the demands of 'responsibility' to become self-reliant, the more socially isolated one becomes and the more precarious one feels" (15). What would it mean to then rethink responsibility towards others in terms of love? And, what role does love play in collectively holding everyone's right to a livable life? What does it mean to build loving relationships in resistance to neoliberal rationality? I have been moved by the work MTD/ERT and PAH have done, the home they have provided to the homeless, and the love they have given to those deemed unlovable by neoliberal standards. What I have learned about *horizontalidad* as a practice that opens up spaces to rethink love has also been immensely helpful in my work as a cultural organizer and public scholar in the prison and as peer mentor to other graduate students in Imagining America. In this chapter, I have begun to map these connections and ask these questions to which I have only incomplete and partial answers, as I think it should be.

To be in crisis is not to have the privilege
of the taken-for-granted: it is to bear an
extended burden of vulnerability for an
undetermined duration.
Lauren Berlant

Chapter Three

"Precarious Adrift:" Post-Fordism, Affect, and the Lived Experienced of the Precariat

Introduction: Precarity and Precariousness

Among the affects generated by the economic crisis, precarity is perhaps the lived experience that has received the most attention. On the one hand, *precarity* is conceived as intrinsic to neoliberal capitalism and the socio-economic inequalities it produces (Lauren Berlant, 2011). On the other hand, *precariousness* is theorized as an ontological condition of the subject and as an inescapable inevitability of human interdependence (Judith Butler, 2004). In *La imaginación hipotecada* (2016), Palmar Alvarez-Blanco and Antonio Gómez L-Quiñones explain that each of these theoretical paradigms develops out of distinct events. If the term precarity is connected to the 2008 neoliberal banking crisis, the notion of precariousness was conceptualized after 9/11 and the "war on terror" that followed (2-3). However, as Alvarez-Blanco and Gómez L-Quiñones note, and as I shall show below, precarity and precariousness are inextricably interconnected, despite their distinct genealogies.

The notion of precarity describes the living conditions caused by flexible, contingent, and insecure forms of labor in post-industrial societies. Although the concept has been part of the vernacular of anti-globalization activists since at least the 2001 EuroMayDay protests, it was not until the banking crisis of 2008 that the term gained prominence in academic discourse. Since then, precarity has not only been used to refer to the negative consequences of flexible labor but also to the existential risks of neoliberalism as it dismantles the welfare state, and in the process, produces more poverty and social exclusion. The British public scholar Guy Standing has argued that the gradual precarization of labor since the 1970s has given rise to a new class: the precariat. He defines the precariat—a neologism that combines *precarious* and *proletariat*—as a heterogeneous class in formation that lacks a work-based identity and experiences labor-related uncertainty and insecurity (7-13). To understand the precariat, Standing argues, one must attend to the process of precarization that permeates contemporary life: "To be precariatized is to be subject to the pressures and experiences that lead to a precariat existence, of living in the present, without a secure identity or sense of development achieved through work and lifestyle"(16). This infiltration of precarity into all arenas of life raises an important question: what characterizes the lived experience of precarity today?

Drawing on his own experience as a psychiatric nurse, jobseeker, warehouse operative, trainee teacher, and writer, Ivor Southwood reflects on the perpetual crisis of the contemporary worker and designates fear as the core emotion structuring precarity (*Non-Stop Inertia*, 33). Southwood is not alone in identifying the centrality of fear in precarity:

> I believe that fear is a diffuse feeling, characteristic of our epoch. It is a fear in which two previously separate things become merged: on one hand, fear of concrete dangers, for example losing one's job. On the other hand, a much more general fear, an anguish, which lacks a precise object, and this is the feeling of precarity itself. It is the relationship with the world as a whole source of danger. (Paolo Virno, 2004)

As Virno notes, the location of fear is vague. In some ways, fear is connected to the labor uncertainty that organizes post-Fordist neoliberalized economic regimes in which the securities attached to waged labor, permanent work, and self-realization through career aspirations are fading away. However, fear has a more generalized, imprecise location and meaning, as neoliberalism's ambient anguish is punctuated by a discourse reframing the disappearance of the certainties of post-war Fordism as endless opportunity, freedom, and choice[36]. In this culture that repackages labor insecurity as positive flexibility, fear cannot attach to anything logical or concrete. Further, because the transition to this new culture "appears like a law of nature rather than something human-made" (Southwood, 13), it feels inevitable, if unpredictable: like a natural disaster. Threat is everywhere: "out there," but also inside the individual, who is now responsible for adapting to the ever-shifting desires of the market. Entrepreneurial buzzwords like self-branding and self-promotion, flexibility and adaptability, off-the-job-training and networking increase the sensation of fear. "Making it" depends not on subscribing to a set of norms but on quickly adjusting to the constant rewriting of these norms.

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[36] Fordism is a manufacturing philosophy based on social economy characteristic of industrialized, developed economies during the 1940s-1960s. Under Fordism, mass consumption combined with mass production produced sustained economic growth and widespread material advancement. My interest is on the social implications of the economic model which could be summarized as respect for workers who had waged-labor secured contracts with, and social benefits. However, Fordism should not be perceived as an idealized labor system.

While fear under neoliberalism is individualizing, it is also individual in another sense. In considering fear as an organizing feeling after 9/11, Brian Massumi argues that although the nation "fell into affective attunement," individuals "inevitably express their attunement to the affective modulation in their own unique ways" (32-3). Thus, the feeling of fear might spur multiple possible actions or inactions. The ubiquitous sense of threat that has taken hold of life under neoliberal forms of governing—particularly with the rise of the austere state—does not make the fear associated with precarity a uniform feeling. As I shall show in my close readings below, the lived experience of precarity cannot be reduced to the emotional paralysis oftentimes associated with fear.

To clarify: in understanding precarity as an existential condition of the present, I am not suggesting that it is a new experience. Precarity has always been a defining experience of capitalist relations of production. Angela Mitropoulos has persuasively challenged the idea of the precariat as a recent post-Fordist phenomenon that positions the creative-cultural-worker as exemplary. Precarious work, she argues, has always been a constitutive of migrant, domestic, retail, agriculture, construction, and sex work. "In many respects", she writes, "what is registered as the recent rise of precarity is actually its discovery among those who had not expected it" (2006). What used to be financial insecurity for the least fortunate is now a perverse reality for most, even subject positions that used to enjoy higher levels of security. Indeed, it is important to question the attribution of precarity solely to the financial meltdowns and recessions that followed the 2001 crisis in Argentina and the 2008 crisis in the West, including Spain. For this tendency fixes the attention of public opinion on the singularity of the event, thus obscuring the ongoing process of precarization characteristic of neoliberal societies. As Lauren Berlant insists:

> the 2008 banking crisis congeals decades of class bifurcation, downward mobility, and environmental, political, and social brittleness that have increased progressively since the Reagan era. The intensification of these processes, which reshapes conventions of racial, gendered, sexual, economic, and nation-bases subordination, has also increased the probability that structural contingency will create manifest crisis situations in ordinary existence for more kinds of people. (11)

In Spain and Argentina, the neoliberalization of society that took place during the transitions to democracies paved the way for the dissolution of the socio-democrat promises executed by the austere state.

If *precarity* is essentially connected to the ways in which global capitalism produces and expands socio-economic inequality for more populations, *precariousness* suggests an ontological condition of human interdependence. Judith Butler has developed the concept of precariousness in her reflections on the contingency of life, our inevitable exposure to violence, and our shared vulnerability. In *Precarious Lives* (2004), published as a series of deliberations on the US war on terror that followed 9/11, Butler considers the potentials of using shared human vulnerability as the starting point for a progressive politics:

> That we can be injured, that others can be injured, that we are subject to death at the whim of another, are all reasons for both fear and grief. What is less certain, however, is whether the experiences of vulnerability and loss have to lead straightaway to military violence and retribution (…) One insight that injury affords is that there are others out there on whom my life depends, people I do not know and may never know. This fundamental dependency on anonymous others is not a condition that I can will away. (XII)

If, for Butler, recognition of our inevitable exposure to others could serve as a point of departure for cultivating solidarities, it follows that we must move away from any kind of universal humanism. Butler reminds us that in order to build an egalitarian culture we must account for the differential allocation of vulnerability that arises as a consequence of normative delineations of the human. In this sense, to acknowledge the uneven distribution of the resources necessary to sustain life is to account for long histories of racial oppression, inequality, and genocide. "Precarity", Butler writes, "designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (2009, 25). Rather than thinking about precarity and precariousness as different, then, we must think of them as mutually constitutive and intertwined.

The intersection of precarity and precariousness is at the core of the social struggles of oppressed groups whose unique experiences tend to be obscured in the context of larger movements for justice and liberation. A case in point is the recent emergence of the feminist collective, *Precarias a la Deriva* (*Precarious Adrift*), whose conceptualization of the different dimensions of precarity has informed my own thinking for this chapter. In the aftermath of the EuroMayDay protests in Europe, the main Spanish unions organized a general strike on June 2002 to protest changes to labor legislation. During the organization of the strike, members of the feminist organization *La Eskalera Karakola* expressed their dissatisfaction with universalist claims about the nature of precarity in the workplace. For feminists in the group, the unions instantiated a tradition of labour struggle that has historically obscured the specificity of women's lived experiences. Thus, instead of joining the picket lines during the day of the general strike, women from *La Eskalera Karacola*

spent the day asking other women why they were protesting, and as importantly, whether they felt represented within the general parameters outlined by the unions and their requests to the Spanish state. The conversations paved the way for *Precarias a la deriva*.

In 2002, *Precarias a la deriva: Adrift Through the Circuits of Feminized Precarious Work* emerged as a combined initiative of research and activism, the main objective of which is to fully represent women's experiences of precarity. As a central methodology, the collective deployed the *deriva*, which literally means "wanderings." Members of the collective wander the city mapping circuits of highly feminized workplaces—amongst them, communication, translation, education, domestic work, food service, social assistance, and sex work. As they learned from women in these fields, women from *Precarias a la deriva* traced a continuum between the public and the private, work and life, highlighting how precarity affects some social groups more than it does others. The idea was not new, they recognized, but what was new was the expansion of precarity "to include more social sectors, [and] not in a uniform manner" (158). In 2004, *Precarias a la deriva* released a collective statement with a preliminary outline of precarity and precariousness as interrelated experiences. "We know," they wrote,

> that precariousness is not limited to the world of work. We prefer to define it as a juncture of material and symbolic conditions which determine an uncertainty with respect to the sustained access to the resources essential to the full development of one's life. This definition permits us to overcome the dichotomies of public/private and production/reproduction and to recognize the interconnections between the social and the economic. (Feminist Review, 158)

This conceptualization suggests a constant complementarity between precarity and precariousness. In this sense, in addressing the uneven expansion of precarity, *Precarias* underscores the differential allocation of vulnerability and exposure to injury. Additionally, in their focus on the specificity of women's lived experiences of precarity in the present, *Precarias* highlights the experiences not of women in general, who have always endured more precarity in all its dimensions, but women from social classes who have traditionally enjoyed higher levels of safety and certainty. In other words, *Precarias* illuminates the increased exposure to vulnerability and heightened risks of poverty for more groups of women.

The novels I analyze in this chapter were published during radical cultural transformations that threatened precarity for young, educated, middle class women. Here, I explore how precarity surfaces as a structure of feeling in *El trabajo* (Aníbal Jarkowski, 2007--Argentina) and *La trabajadora* (Elvira Navarro, 2014--Spain). "Structure of feeling" was coined by Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature* (1977) to describe the emerging meanings, values, and practices in any particular time in history. In conceptualizing this idea, Williams problematized the tendency of cultural studies and the social sciences to describe cultural activity and human experience as "finished products" rather than "a formative process" (129). The social experience of a given structure of feeling is then concerned with the "specificity of present being" within embryonic social formations, which "give the sense of a generation or period" and are distinguished from codified hegemonic ideologies and institutions. According to Williams, the arts and literature provide the "very first indications that a new structure is forming" (128-34). Published after the neoliberal disasters of 2001 and 2008 in Argentina and Spain, *El trabajo*

and *La trabajadora* are exemplary cultural sites to consider how precarity becomes the quintessential experience of children of the middle classes as certainties bound up with the promises of the good life fall apart.[37]—particularly educated, young women. I argue that the characters grapple with precarity as an emerging structure of feeling as they struggle to adjust to transformations in the urban space, labor organization, and other aspects of the rapidly changing world around them.

Beyond capturing the emergence of precarity as a new structure of feeling, both texts problematize the idea of crisis as temporal event with a definite end. To conceptualize this second aspect of my argument, I have drawn from the work of Lauren Berlant, whose theorization of the historical present conceives of crisis not as exceptional but as ordinary. "A traumatic event," she writes, "is simply an event that has the capacity to induce trauma. My claim is that most such happenings that force people to adapt to an unfolding change are better described by a notion of systemic crisis or crisis ordinariness" (*Cruel Optimism*, 10). Moving away from the general discourse of the exception, Berlant sees in crisis the inherent and constituting feature of a historical present organized under the auspices of neoliberal capitalism. In this reading, crisis does not represent a temporal phenomenon after which life can return to normal; rather, crisis is an ordinary emergence of a new—though continuing—structure of feeling. In the anti-cathartic, unsettling narratives of the novels discussed below, the sense of crisis that precarity occasions in the lives of Diana and Elisa—the female protagonists—does not conclude. Rather precarity materializes as the

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[37] In *Encountering Affect. Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions* (2014), Ben Anderson explores the question of how structures of feelings "have effects and become part of the social" (117) and illustrates his point by alluding to precarity. I am indebted to Anderson's theorization of precarity as a public feeling and a structure of feeling, particularly, as I note later on, to his understanding of precarity as a disposition that it is connected to work but also separate from concerns of work (130)

new structuring regime of their historical present. In this sense, the novels problematize post-financial crises' official narratives that suggest a temporal logic in which there is a defined beginning and end to the challenges posed by the dismantling of labor regulations, the welfare state, and other forms of social protection.

In the section that follows, I pay attention to Jarkowski's perception of the progressive materialization of precarity in Diana's world and her attempts to resist it. After analyzing *El trabajo*, I look at Navarro's *La trabajadora* to map Elisa's strategies to adjust to uncertainty as she struggles with her mental health. By bringing these two texts together, I seek to highlight that precarity is not felt homogeneously; conversely, it is lived very differently. As my reading of these novels will show, "what characterizes precarity and other structures of feeling is that they are forms of affective presence that disclose self, others and the world in particular ways" (Ben Anderson, 106). I suggest that these disclosures take many forms—anxiety, numbness, depression, restlessness, and even anger at injustice—and that in some cases, they can work as catalysts for the cognitive appraisal of conditions of precarity. While both *El trabajo* and *La trabajadora* are situated in the context of the neoliberal disasters that have accelerated the materialization of precarity as "the new normal" for more populations, how the characters feel and, consequently, what they *do* with precarity is radically different. In *La trabajadora,* precarity is a devastating and paralyzing feeling. However, in *El trabajo*, Diana's experience of precarity spurs political action.

Precarity, Female Vulnerability, and Gender Violence in Aníbal Jarkowski's El trabajo

One of the central themes of Aníbal Jarkowski's *El trabajo* is the disarticulation and impoverishment of the Argentine middle class. Although the novel circumvents some of the narratological conventions of realism by avoiding specific temporal and spatial referents, the reader can easily identify that Diana's struggles take place during the 1990s, when Carlos Menem's neoliberal policies pushed the nation into disastrous globalization. When the novel was published in 2007, Argentina had already come to terms with neoliberalism's broken promises of economic prosperity, but the material consequences were still a gloomy reality for the majority of the country. In a recent book that investigates Argentina's violent past and present, Carolina Rocha and Elizabeth Montes Garcés look at representations of violence in contemporary Argentine film and literature. They identify two trends in cultural production that explore different forms of state-led violence. One trend examines the extreme brutality of the Dirty War and the military dictatorship that followed, while the other focuses more on the violence generated by neoliberal capitalism. For Rocha and Garcés, literary and cinematic texts that investigate neoliberal capitalism's violence, like Jarkowski's novel does, tend to pay attention to the years of menemismo and the structural violence its uneven development generated in the 1990s. For them, the most persistent legacies of menemismo are unemployment, job insecurity, the pauperization of the middle class, and the concentration of income in the hands of a privileged group (xix-xxi).

In *El trabajo*, the connection between violence and increased precarity during menemismo takes the disturbing form of a system that forces women to accept sexual abuse as a tacit condition of job offers and continued employment. In an interview with the journal *Transas*, Jarkowski shares that he was interested in centering women's struggles during the 1990s, as job insecurity impacted them in specific ways. "A las mujeres se les planteaban no solamente los problemas de tener que ir a pelearse por un puesto, sino que también eran las que eran más exigidas desde un punto de vista de objeto sexual" [for women the problem was not only fighting each day for a position but, in addition to this, they also had to deal with being sexualized] (no pagination). He describes going to work in the morning and seeing long lines of young women dressed in miniskirts, blouses, and high heels, waiting to interview for a single position. Further, he observes hundreds of the classified advertisements for prostitution in the daily paper. Disconcerted by the blatant patriarchal violence that was taking shape during menemismo, Jarkowski underscores the intersection of sexual violence, economic insecurity, and female vulnerability in *El trabajo*[38].

The text is organized into three sections: "Diana," "Yo," and "Los dos" ["Diana," "Me," and "Both of us"], each of which is narrated by the same character—an impoverished male writer. Diana and the writer are the main characters in *El trabajo,* although we never learn the writer's name. In the first section, the reader is warned that the story was told by Diana to the writer, who sees himself as a mere conduit. The narrator communicates that he used to work as a journalist until the publication of his first novel, which was considered

[38] The failure of the state to combat the staggering number of feminicides in Argentina, one of the highest in Latin America, has recently sparked the forceful feminist movement #NiUnaMenos (not one less).

obscene and thus kept from distribution. With his reputation tarnished, the narrator is let go from his position at a women's magazine, right at the peak of economic recession in Argentina. Unemployed and broke, he starts working in a burlesque theater owned by an old friend. As the writer is unable to afford a place, a friend offers his father's unoccupied office to the him until he can get back on his feet. It is from his new living space that the narrator first sees Diana in an office across the street, where she works as the secretary of a multinational firm.

Diana's life, we learn early in the novel, has been completely disrupted by the country's economic transformation. As the only child of a middle class family, she grows up with the comforts of a stable home; she also finishes school and studies contemporary and classical dance. Jarkowski beautifully describes the intimacy of Diana's bond with her parents, the sense of care and protection that surrounds her life, and the soothing contentment of a life ordered by the rhythms of the family business. Diana's family owns a small lingerie store that caters to the needs of residents in the Buenos Aires district where they live[39]. In the store, Diana's love for art and literature is nurtured every day after school; there, she completes small chores to help her parents and develops a deep sense of belonging. But the store is also the place where, as a young woman, she witnesses the bankruptcy of the family business, she grieves the death of both of her parents, and she

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[39] In the interview with *Transas*, Jarkowski explains that he consciously chose the lingerie store to be the family business to show the contrast between the old and the new in a rapidly changing Buenos Aires. He writes: "Ahí se compraba de todo, desde ropa para los chicos, los botones, las cintitas, la ropa interior" al mismo tiempo, "empezaron a aparecer casas de lencería en Acoyte y Rivadavia, y también en microcentro; y no eran tienditas, eran casas de lencería bastante sofisticadas" [You could buy anything in there (the lingerie store) from clothes for boys, buttons, ties and lingerie" at the same time "bigger lingerie stores were being opened in Acoyte, Rivadavia and the microcentro; and they were not small but very sophisticated lingerie stores] (no pagination). For Jarkowski, it was important to show the dichotomy between these two worlds in which small businesses characteristic of Buenos Aires went bankrupt as a direct consequence of the globalization of the economy.

mourns the subsequent loss of the home in which she grew up. Using the lingerie store as its focal point, Jarkowski's novel draws attention to the gradual devastation brought about by global capitalism as it slowly alters a family's routines, absorbs their livelihood, and breaks their community ties. Thus, I read the store as telling a powerful fable about the violence of globalization:

> Después de la muerte de su madre, cuando Diana terminaba el colegio secundario, continuó leyendo novelas en la tiendita, pero su padre ya no seguía los argumentos y pasaba largos ratos ensimismado, mirando a la calle sin prestar atención a nada. Más tarde, a medida que se fueron abriendo las casas de lencería de lujo en la Avenida, las horas en la tiendita y cualquier cosa que hicieran fue perdiendo sentido. Las clientas del barrio, que antes entraban aunque más no fuera para saludarlos, conversar un rato, comenzaron a pasar de largo o cambiaban de vereda para ir a comprar a las casas de la Avenida. A la luz del sol las telas se desteñían en la vidriera, los elásticos de las bombachas y las medias perdían tensión y las deformaban, hasta que no había más remedio que lavar las prendas y tratar de venderlas como saldos o regalarlas a las mujeres que entraban a la tiendita con sus hijos a pedir limosna. (15)
>
> [After her mother's death, as Diana was finishing high school, she continued to read novels in the family store, but her father no longer followed the plots and spent most of the time absorbed by his thoughts, looking outside without paying attention to anything. Later, as the luxury lingerie stores were opening on the Avenue, the hours in the family shop, and anything they would do started to lose meaning. The neighborhood clients, who used to walk in to just say hello, or talk for a while,

> started to walk by or cross the street on their way to shop at the new stores on the Avenue. In the sunlight, the fabrics in the storefront faded, the panties' elastics bands lost tension deforming them until there was no other alternative than to wash them and put them on sale or give them away to the women who would walk in to beg with their children][40]

The store tells the story of globalization's negative impact on non-dominant cultures and small businesses. Thus, in the novel's representation of Buenos Aires, the new order configured by a globalized economy not only dismantles the welfare state, but also communal relationships. Additionally, the death of Diana's parents, along with the accompanying loss of the assurances that had governed her life up to this point, sharply materializes the sheer precariousness of life. As Jarkowski carefully underscores, however, her grief is aggravated by the viciousness with which globalization sweeps away the world she has known. Diana's mother dies of an illness before the decline of the store, but the reasons for her father's passing are only insinuated. As readers, we never know why he dies; we are only privy to a brief passage in which Diana confides in a friend later in the novel—the receptionist—that he passed away alone in his sleep. However, the text implies that his health deteriorates as a result of the emotional toll of losing his wife and livelihood. The day after her father's funeral, when Diana opens up the store by herself for the first time, she finds out that it has been operating on loans that her father frequently refinanced. Unable to pay off the debt, the bank forces her to auction off the store as well as the home where she grew up.

[40] All translations of *El trabajo* are mine.

In the year that passes between the auction and the day when she is hired in a multinational firm, Diana's routines are marked by the constraints of economic insecurity. Contrary to the idea of precarity as a phenomenon "defined by erratic and uncertain rhythms as well as by a necessitated short-termism" (Ella Harris and Mel Nowicki, 389), the protagonist of *El trabajo* moves through her days as an automaton that performs pre-determined and programmed functions. Each day, Diana gets up before sunrise, warms up some milk, sneaks out of her apartment to borrow the neighbors' paper, and writes down job offers for secretary positions. She then takes a shower and, before getting dressed, unfolds the few formal clothing items she owns before choosing what to wear. Before leaving for a day full of interviews, she returns the paper to the neighbors and calculates the money she will need for that day's transportation. After returning home in the evening, Diana meticulously washes her outfit, lays it out to dry for the following day, eats a frugal dinner while listening to the radio, and goes to sleep. In the novel, time works as the only resource of precarious lives, whose survival hinges on the balancing act of carefully economizing and tenaciously pursuing work.

But Diana's belief in the promise of full employment locks her in an economically insecure present. In the year she spends looking for work, Diana "había imaginado que con el primer sueldo compraría una entrada para ver ballet" [had imagined that, with her first salary, she would buy a ticket to go to the ballet] (50), a modest dream that sustains her as she unfruitfully navigates the bleak job market. Her investment in the promise of a reciprocal labor relation mediated by a fair contract, as well as her faith in full employment to restore financial stability, is reminiscent of the world in which she grew up—namely, the Argentina of the strong welfare state, with its unions and social protections. However, the

role of the regulatory state disappeared during Menem's neoliberal era, something Diana learns after earning her first salary, when she is forced to recalibrate her expectations:

> Antes de acostarse despejó la mesita y fue apartando la plata del sueldo; a un costado la de los servicios y el alquiler del departamento, al otro la de los viajes del subterráneo y en el medio la de la comida del mes. Un pequeño resto le quedó en las manos. (50)
>
> [Before going to bed, she cleared the table and divided her salary; on one corner she set aside the money for utilities and rent; on another corner, the amount she needed for the subway; and in the center, what she spent in food. She was left with a small amount in her hands.]

The temporality of precarity is supported by what Berlant calls cruel optimism. The attachment to the fantasy of a better future—a future that never arrives—keeps the precariat hanging on the promise of the good life[41]. The prospect of "the plan" thus becomes the site of possibility that prolongs the unrelenting present. As Diana learns, the conditions of precarious labor are not temporary. On her first day at work, Diana meets the receptionist—as with the writer, we never learn her name—who soon becomes her closest friend and source of support. As the two of them are chatting, the receptionist confesses to Diana that she is engaged to be married to someone she met in college. However, they are still saving for the wedding, as they cannot afford to rent an apartment yet, even with their combined salaries. As Diana recalls this conversation soon after, the receptionist "hizo una pausa, sonrió con melancolía, y le dijo que su novio trabajaba también los fines de semana y apenas se veían. Se habían acostumbrado a vivir haciendo planes" [paused, smiled

[41] Look at Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (2011)

melancholically, and told her that her boyfriend also worked on the weekends and they barely saw each other anymore. They had become accustomed to living making plans] (39). The temporality of precarity that sustains the unendurable present with the promise of a phantasmagoric future is inhabited not only by Diana, then, but by other precarious workers in the novel. When the time comes to decide what to do with the remainder of her salary, Diana resigns herself and decides against the ballet.

El trabajo explores the relationship between sexual violence and patriarchal capitalism by centering female vulnerability, in particular, under neoliberalism in Argentina. For Jarkowski, there is a clear link between menemismo and the overt sexualization of women: “En la novela hay muy poco trabajo, pero además ese trabajo está muy asociado con una especie de glamour financiero que fue el menemismo. Fue un mundo muy de objetos sexuales el menemismo” [In the novel there is very little work, but, in addition, that work is associated with the kind of financial glamour that Menemismo was. It was a world of sexual objects] (*Transas*, no pagination). The theme of sexual exploitation that runs through the novel has been read as symbolic of increased precarity during the 1990s in Argentina[42]. However, I’d like to scratch beneath the surface of this reading and propose that what the novel critiques is not sexual violence per se but the power structures that allow for the differential allocation of vulnerability. Thus, the growing vulnerability to which the female characters are exposed in *El trabajo* cannot only be read as a consequence of precarity during menemismo, but also, and perhaps more importantly, as inherent to the power structures that sustain patriarchal capitalism. Understanding this

[42] See “Cuerpo, resistencia y género en *El trabajo* de Aníbal Jarkowski” Julia Kratje (2010); “Sometimiento y explotación del cuerpo femenino en *El trabajo* de Aníbal Jarkowski” Mariela Toresan; “Suspensión de los derechos en *Le viste la cara a Dios* de Gabriela Cabezón Cámara y *El trabajo* de Aníbal Jarkowski” Paula Daniela Bianchi (2015).

difference is important because sexual exploitation is not symbolic of menemismo but a particular form of precarity for women.

In the decaying world of the novel, women's bodies are consumed as sexual commodities. Their lives are not only controlled by unjust labor relations but also by the permanent disposability to which they are constantly exposed in an economy characterized by the desperation women feel in their implacable search to be employed. After looking for work for a year, Diana has learned the tacit rules of gaining employment in waiting rooms. "Es como en todos lados, le dijo, quédate tranquila. Acá también se caen las cosas del escritorio a cada rato" [Don't worry, it is like everywhere else, she told her. Everything falls off the desk here too.] (25), a friendly woman confesses to Diana as she holds her arm while leaving an interview. Women looking to work not only have to dress provocatively, but, during the interviews, they must also indicate they are willing to be subjected to unwanted sexual advances. In the end, Diana's young age and provocative dress are not enough to secure her a job and, in an act of desperation, she decides to go further. Minutes before the last interview of a long and unfruitful day, she goes to the ladies' room and takes off her panties, hoping she will be offered a position when the pen drops and she opens her legs.

During the interview in the conference room, the manager explains that he has been hired to find creative and unexplored ways to increase the company's capital. Thus, he tells Diana that he needs someone who, "sobre todas las cosas, le impidiera pensar en lo que hacía y lo llevara hasta el punto donde el contenido de la mente eran puras visiones sin lenguaje" [above all other things, prevented him from thinking in what he did and took him to the point where the mind's content was pure visions without language] (34). The manager has read in Diana's résumé that she is a contemporary and ballet dancer and, as

an artist, he suggests, she might be able to fulfill that role for him by performing erotic numbers. However, the manager is not looking for someone who can satisfy his capricious sexual desire, but who can help him increase benefits for the company. In other words, Diana's education sets her apart from the rest of applicants and it is not her desperate gesture that ultimately gets her the job, but the skills she has. Through erotic dance performances, she is commanded to inspire the manager to "vaciarse de lenguaje metódicamente, caer en el trance visionario de los místicos de los poetas" [methodically empty himself of language, fall into the visionary trance of mystics and poets] (34-5). Diana's responsibilities as a secretary are erotized, but not as way to sexually please the manager who observes her from his office without ever getting close to her. Thus, in the dystopian world of the novel, gender violence takes diverse forms, each of which share an objective that is not, as other critics have suggested, sexual gratification. Thus, while the nature of the relationship between Diana and the manager is one of gender exploitation, the goal, as I read the novel, is less sexual pleasure than the capitalist gain of the company as well as the assertion of patriarchal power.

In making this argument, I have drawn from the work of Argentine academic Rita Laura Segato who has theorized an "etiología de la violencia" [etiology of violence] (2003, 17) in Latin America after decades of research and ethnographic work. Segato's main argument is that comprehending gender relations should play a central role in the conceptualization of violence in the region. The problem of women's subjugation, for Segato, is "cimiento y pedagogía elemental de todas las otras formas de poder y subordinación" [is the foundation and basic pedagogy of all other forms of power and

subordination] (2016, 98)[43]. According to Segato, the motive behind the extreme sexual violence perpetrated against women in Latin America—she mentions Ciudad Juárez, Recife, and Cipoletti as paradigmatic sites—is not sexual gratification or pleasure but the affirmation of patriarchal power. The ritual of access to what she calls "fraternidades mafiosas" [mafia-fraternities] (2003, 255) is governed by the assertion of male power that grants admission to it: "es el sujeto que ve el mundo desde esa posición de poder en la coordenada de estatus quien se ve compelido a proteger, reforzar o restaurar cíclicamente su lugar en el orden en tanto relación con sus otros" [It is the subject who sees the world from that position of power who is compelled to cyclically protect, strengthen, or restore his place in relation to others in that order] (2003, 258). Thus, in the ritualistic practice that constructs masculinity and patriarchal capitalism's control, the *other* is the subject position inhabited by women whose bodies become objects to be dominated by men. In what Segato calls "fase apocalítica del capital" [apocalyptic phase of capitalism] (2016, 91) in which wealth accumulation is in the hands of the one percent, women's bodies are used as commodities. During this phase, the advancement of women's rights in Latin America is perceived as a threat and, according to Segato, sexual violence works to discipline them while restoring the order of patriarchal capitalist power.

Argentine cultural critic Gabriel Giorgi has argued that at the core of the 2001 crisis there is a redefinition of subjectivity in which the function of the welfare state as a central arbiter in the ordering of reality is replaced by neoliberal precarity. For Giorgi, subjectivity in this new cultural context "cannot be understood as a defense or immunization against precarity, but a 'work' through it, a relation with that which is left once the structures that

[43] All translations of Segato's work are mine.

provided social protection and symbolic recognition are dismantled" (70). How subjectivity is shaped by precarity and neoliberalism is thus a result of that working through to which Giorgi refers. Central to the development of the character is the transition from a world characterized by known assurances to a world hollowed out of those assurances. But, Diana's work through precarity reflects a growing political consciousness as she gains awareness of the social reality around her. Determined to assert her value, she becomes less troubled by the fear of precarity than by the injustices of the world she inhabits. Her transformation starts when she learns to appreciate her significant role in sustaining the multinational firm for which she works, and asks for a raise. When the raise is denied, she resigns from her position performing for the manager. When Diana decides to leave the firm and work at the burlesque theater with the writer, her closest friend in the novel, the receptionist, also leaves her job—but not by choice, as she is let go. Ashamed of her inability to contribute to the savings fund she shares with her boyfriend, she hides her unemployment from her family and starts to work as a sex worker. Diana's subject formation takes shape as a result of her experience of precarity but also through her exposure to the pain of others.

Diana's restlessness with the ubiquitous patriarchal violence around her moves her to do something. At first, she starts to perform political numbers at the burlesque theater but later, working alongside the writer, she turns a barn into a theater where all the performances sharply criticize gender violence and the impunity in which it thrives in neoliberal Argentina. In telling the story of women who suffer abuse that goes unpunished, the plays start to draw media attention and female lead organizations' support. The growing public recognition the plays gain also draws the unwanted attention of those who

benefit from the system Diana is set to unsettle as the increasingly political edge of the shows are also read as a threat. In one of the final scenes of the novel, after a successful performance, Diana barely makes it back home alive: She has been beaten, her blouse ripped. Her body is dumped, abandoned, and, later, found at the side of the road by a theater-goer who helps her get to her apartment. The rape at the end of *El trabajo* advances the reading I have suggested. The aim of this brutal act is not sexual gratification, but to restore patriarchal capitalism's order by silencing those who risk its survival.

Precarity and Mental Ailments in Elisa Navarro's La trabajadora

Like *El trabajo*, *La trabajadora* explores the emergence of precarity as a structure of feeling by foregrounding the disarticulation of the middle class. Navarro's text, however, approaches the topic not by looking at sexual violence but by focusing on the generation most negatively impacted by the 2008 neoliberal crisis: youth, or "the generation of crisis." When Navarro's novel was published in 2014, youth (ages from 18 to 35)unemployment in Spain was at 55% for its fourth consecutive year (El País, 2014). Today, youth unemployment is at 32.7%, a modest improvement that offers, if anything, a false sense of recovery. In the years that have followed the recession, Spain's labor regulations have become more flexible, encouraging the proliferation of "contratos basuras" (garbage contracts) that far from addressing work insecurity have effectively legalized exploitation and uncertainty. Elisa, the main character in the novel, epitomizes the ethos of the 'generation of the crisis': She is well-educated—with both undergraduate and postgraduate education—speaks two languages, and has experience working abroad. Her career as editor of a publishing house starts with an unpaid intern position, until she is eventually

hired. Her qualifications, however, do not secure her a stable job and, in the span of a couple of years, her short-term contracts give way to an even more insecure status as an independent contractor.

The changes in title go hand in hand with changes in compensation, which precipitate a linked series of adjustments. Elisa is forced to move from her apartment in the centric neighborhood of Tirso de Molina to a neighborhood on the periphery of Madrid, Aluche. As much as she desires to protect her independence, Elisa is forced to rent the small room in her apartment to an eccentric woman, who both attracts and repels her. The work schedule at the publishing house is replaced by never-ending days during which Elisa struggles to be productive and maintain some semblance of work-life balance. As Elisa transitions from a life she chose to a life she abhors, the "dramas of adjustments," to use one of Lauren Berlant's phrases, occasion panic attacks, heightened anxiety, and depression, mental health conditions that become central to the experience of the character. Thus, while Jarkowski's interest in *El trabajo* is the sexual exploitation of women in a labor economy of extreme precarity, *La trabajadora* delves into the relationship between precarity and affective ailments.

La trabajadora is organized in three uneven sections narrated by Elisa, who may be read as a somewhat unreliable narrator, as she is heavily medicated. We learn about her medication in the first part of the novel, "Fabio," during which Elisa tells the story of her roommate, Susana, who battles with mental health. The reader accesses Susana's journey to mental stability through Elisa's perceptive. In the Madrid of the 1980s, Susana is misdiagnosed with schizophrenia and treated accordingly, until a psychiatrist detects that she suffers from bipolar disorder and eventually prescribes the right medication. Based on

the stories Susana has told her, Elisa also narrates her roommate's non-normative sexual desires, which are satisfied by a gay-dwarf-lover named Fabio. This story is punctuated by brief, bracketed comments conveying Elisa's suspicious reactions to her roommate's past. How can she not be skeptical of such a peculiar account by someone who has struggled with mental illness while being on the wrong medication? However, Elisa's narrative may also be misleading, for over the course of her observations, we also learn about her own mental state: "[Escuchado desde mi nube: consistencia de los sueños, pero juraría que no soñaba. Creo que no he aclarado que era la mezcla de antidepresivos y el ansiolítico lo que me llevaba a dormirme]" [*Heard from my cloud: the consistency of dreams, but I'd swear I wasn't dreaming. I don't think I've made it clear that it was the mixture of antidepressants and anxiolytics that made me very sleepy]* (18, italics in the original). By juxtaposing the characters' struggles with mental health and medication early on in the novel, *La trabajadora* casts a shadow of doubt over the reliability of the narrator—a constant in the text. Ofelia Ros has argued that in using this metafictional technique, in which the main character is the one writing the story, Navarro "se acerca a la autoficción" [is close to autofiction] (4).

In the last part of the novel—a mere three pages—the reader learns that Elisa has been journaling about her life as an exercise designed to access her past. Learning that she is not only an editor but also a published writer, Elisa's psychiatrist advises her to use writing as a way to interrogate the root of her depression and panic attacks. Thus, the second part of the novel—also the longest—can be read as a fictionalized memoir in which Elisa reflects upon the emergence of precarity in her life as well as her tactics and strategies for managing the anxiety of uncertainty. Titled "La trabajadora," the second

section opens with a short story (written by Elisa) that explores the vulnerabilities experienced by a young editor whose precarious working conditions threaten her chances of thriving in Madrid. Printed in capital letters at the end of it, we read "SHORT STORY PUBLISHED IN A DEFUNCT SPANISH NEWSPAPER." The chapter that follows is the first of Elisa's reflections on her struggles with mental health as precarity takes hold of her life. For Elisa, writing becomes a strategy to access her fragmented memories—the source of her depression and anxiety that she hopes to understand, and ultimately, heal.

The experience of urban space occupies a central role in Elisa's perception of precarity as an emergent reality in her life. As such, much of the fictionalized memoir records her conflicted attachment to the city as both the location of her comfort as well as localization of her fears. The very first sentence of the short story, "La trabajadora," alludes to Elisa's feelings of displacement when her uncertain economic situation forces her to move from the city center to the periphery: "Mi situación económica no era buena. Había tenido que cambiar mi apartamento de Tirso por otro en Aluche, en lo alto de una cuesta con un gran solar" [My financial situation wasn't good. I'd had to exchange my apartment in Plaza Tirso for another in Aluche, at the top of the hill where buildings were set amid a wasteland of sites awaiting development] (45/50)[44]. Having to move to the southern—and more impoverished—part of the city is unsettling for Elisa, and her preoccupation with place as a sign of her class status is at the core of her anxiety. In the character's imagination, Madrid South is a 'wasteland,' a marginal space of half-constructed buildings abandoned and forgotten by capital. In opposition to Aluche stands the historic city center

[44] All translations are from the English edition of the novel translated by Christina McSweeney and published with the tittle *A Working Woman* (2017). In this chapter I include the pagination for the original text first and that of the translation second.

with its well-manicured buildings, stores, cafes, and cultural centers that continue to attract high volumes of investment to stimulate tourism—one of the industries, along with construction, that has sustained Spain's economy since the dictatorship. For Elisa, moving to the marginal neighborhood of Aluche is equivalent to the diminishment of her class status.

Distressed by her new living arrangement, Elisa associates her current situation with the time she spent, as a student, in Paris, when she could only afford to rent an apartment on the outskirts of the city. The isolation of the peripheral communes from the wealthier areas of Paris, the growing distance between those segregated areas and the Paris of postcards, and the sensation of a fractured urban fabric, she recalls, made her feel "poor" for the first time (67). Housing is a social marker for Elisa, and so she fantasizes about returning to an apartment located in the "real city," where she will regain access to entertainment, culture, and endless consumption—essentially, the good life:

> En cuanto ganara el mismo dinero que antes finiquitaría el piso de Aluche y volvería a Tirso para observar muy quieta la calle, los movimientos de quienes iban y venían de madrugada, la efervescencia de las mañanas, con el fulgor del tráfico y las flores y todas esas plazas cercanas con bares y tiendas y edificios conformadores de una ciudad sólida en lugar de una ciudad hecha con cascotes, aunque era probable que la solidez ya no existiera. (105)
>
> [As soon as I was earning as much as before, I'd give up my apartment in Aluche and return to Tirso to quietly observe the street, the movements of the people who came and went in the early hours, the glow of headlights in the morning traffic, the flowers, and all of those unoriginal neighborhood squares with the bars, and the

stores, and the buildings of a city that was not made of rubble, but solid, however much that solidity might no longer exist.] (127)

For Elisa, poverty is not a social problem but an individual one. Thus, she holds onto the fantasy of returning to a city available only to those who can afford it. Unlike Diana in *El trabajo*, the character's increased precarity does not occasion reflection upon the socio-economic inequalities and exploitation upon which global capitalism relies. Elisa's fear is that the city for which she longs might no longer be a 'solid' place—that the world she once knew will fall apart before she can go back. More important than Elisa's feeling of entitlement to the "real city," however apparent in the text, is her sense of detachment from the social world that surrounds her. Elisa is completely lacking in historical memory, rendering her ironically unaware of her own responsibility in gentrifying the historically working-class neighborhoods of Madrid center.

Urban sociologists Jorge Sequera and Michael Janoschka have recently published a study that addresses the processes of gentrification that have occurred over the last few decades in the historic center of Madrid. They focus on two neighborhoods, Lavapiés and Triball, to explain how "urban neoliberalization" (377) accumulates capital in specific city districts while disinvesting in others. Although their cases studies are only Lavapiés and Triball, the same logic applies to the surrounding areas of Malasaña, Tirso, Fuencarral, Chueca, and La Latina, where revitalization policies have reconfigured traditionally working-class neighborhoods into hip locations for a young, educated, upwardly mobile demographic. Sequera and Janoschka identify two distinct processes whereby the center of Madrid is being transformed: the institutionalization of cultural production and the promotion of commercial branding (375-78). These state-led policies that stimulate public

and private investment have turned neighborhoods like Lavapiés into cultural hubs, which has "an important impact on the configuration of identities, the symbolic dimensions of cultural segregation, and, of course, the potential of the neighborhood to be gentrified" (382).

In post-industrial Madrid, the commodification of culture is a state-driven strategy to fuel the engine of capitalism and "clean" the city center of "undesirable" populations. Under neoliberal capitalism, poverty and marginalization have expanded in the city to include those subject positions who were once securely in the middle classes. The precarization of life includes not only the loss of labor security but also the loss of all the guarantees, like access to desirable housing in attractive locations. Elisa's perception of herself as the rightful resident of the revitalized city center blinds her. Aligning herself with the ideology of neoliberal individualism, she is unable to see her participation in the capitalist system of exploitation that has ultimately expelled her from the comforts of financial security.

Elisa runs compulsively. She uses the city to escape her thoughts and soothe her anxiety after long days of sitting at home, proofreading galleys. In her analysis of *La trabajadora,* Susan Larson argues that "the characters move through, write down (in the case of Elisa), and remake the map (literally, in the case of Susana) of Madrid's periphery" (95). Drawing on the work of Michel De Certeau, she suggests that Elisa's urban practices (running as a tactic to ease her anxiety) "realize the radical possibilities of refashioning the urban spatial order (the network of streets, for example), in the same way that a speaker or an author uses language to articulate meaning" (95). Elisa's nightly runs through the city boost her mood and allow her to regain a sense of agency, if only a false and fleeting one.

For Larson, running has the potential to be an emancipatory practice that permits Elisa to reimagine her place in an increasing hostile urban space: "Tenía una rara capacidad para orientarme" [I had an unusual knack for orienting myself], writes Elisa as she remembers her jogs, "regresaba por calles y avenidas distintas a las que me habían llevado hasta allí, lo que reforzaba la certeza sobre mi capacidad para orientarme (…) creía estar yéndome lejos, lo cual no impedía que siguiera" (73) [I'd return by different streets or avenues, which reinforced my confidence in my ability to orient myself (…) I'd feel I'd already gone a long way, but that didn't stop me from continuing, 84]. Reshaping the city through movement is therapeutic for Elisa. While running outside, she is able to momentarily shed her depressed moods and gain a feeling of self-reliance.

However, as the narrative progresses, the emancipatory potentials that Larson identifies in Elisa's uses of the city start to fade away, and the urban space simply becomes a material reminder of the ubiquitous presence of precarity in post-2008 Spain. During one of her nocturnal runs, Elisa suddenly notices "la cantidad de casas allanadas que había en el barrio" (75) [how many houses in the neighborhood were squats, 85]. Interestingly enough, what used to be a therapeutic practice for Elisa, calming her growing anxiety, eventually forces her to come face to face with the social realities of the crisis. "Siempre pensé que estos proyectos fracasados estaban en mitad de páramos, o a unos reglamentarios kilómetros de la línea de costa. No imaginaba que tal cosa sucediera en la ciudad" (76-7) [I'd always thought those failed projects were located in the middle of bleak high plains or at the distance from the coast specified in regulations. I'd never imagined such things existed in the city, 87]. The sight of half-built apartments complexes occupied by homeless families disrupts the spatial dichotomization of what happens somewhere else

(the beach) and here (the city). From this moment on, the nearness of the crisis awakens Elisa to other signs of economic devastation turning Madrid into a landscape of lives wrecked by the financial crisis:

> Pocos días después, en la calle, tuve una suerte de pálpito, un presentimiento desbocado, un desbarajuste absoluto de mi sistema nervioso. Me fijé en que habían cerrado la tienda donde hacía un año encargué una bicicleta estática. Los negocios clausurados, pensé, eran detalles mínimos de un organismo cuyo corazón aún latía a pleno rendimiento y no debía alarmarme. (83)
>
> [A few days later, when I was on the street, I experienced a sudden sense of foreboding, a runaway premonition, an absolute chaos of my nervous system. I noticed that the store where the year before I'd ordered an exercise bike had closed. Bankrupt businesses are, I thought, minor details in an organism whose heart is still beating at full capacity, and shouldn't alarm me.] (98)

Although Elisa has, up to this point, remained oblivious to the consequences of the economic crisis in the rest of the city, her inevitable exposure to others' pain ultimately fractures her fragile mental stability. Despite her efforts to remain calm and to reassure herself of the health of Madrid's economy, Elisa starts to read the city as a failing, injured organism. Reading the nation, or in the case of *La trabajadora* the city, as an organism takes us to the metaphor of the body politics in which the nation-state is conceived as an organic system similar to the human body. Just like the human body, the city is composed of several connected organs necessary for the apt performance of the whole organism. In other words, the failure of the economy to perform its function will inevitably lead to an undesirable diagnosis for the whole system. Bankrupt business, homeless families,

squatted buildings are all images that suggest a failing organism and Elisa senses the inevitable outcome for her.

The body politics metaphor is also suggestive to read neoliberal society as a fractured organism. Drawing on cultural and literary studies traditions that read the body as an analogy of social formation, Alissa G. Karl argues that "neoliberal novels name the body and national and state collectivities as broken at the same time that they expose the bases of the liberal, able body's formulation in the broken promise of social-and economic-systemic reciprocity under the wage labor system" (69). She suggests that liberalism's conception of the state as an organic entity that only exists on the basis of the connection between the whole and all of its parts—an idea she traces back to Immanuel Kant and his *Critique of Judgment*—was dependent on a relationship of "fundamental reciprocity"(69). Liberal economics, she goes on to say, also relied on an organicist metaphor, offering an idea of the economy as a self-regulating organism whose health relies upon the mutually beneficial relationships between all of its parts. However, "intervention into the bodily parts of the poor," she writes, was also prescribed under liberalism "to cure the ailing parts for the well-being of the whole" (68-9).

This reciprocity between labor, autonomy, and the individual body within liberal societies becomes fractured in neoliberal capitalism with the disappearance of the Keynesian welfare state, the power imbalance between state and market, and the disregard for the laboring body. Karl proposes: "where the liberal social body justifies measures to police and interfere with its sick and weak parts, neoliberal practice amputates unnecessary parts and replaces them with others deemed more relevant" (70). She argues that the aesthetic mode of the neoliberal novel registers this rupture through characters

whose ailing, injured, and sick bodies serve as metaphors for the disintegration of the social body. However, I would go further to note that the very absence of reciprocity between the parts that make an organism function also generates actual illnesses that register the uncertainties of this new labor economy in the body itself. Karl's compelling argument leads me to the last point I'd like to make about *La trabajadora*, namely, that in this representative neoliberal novel, the rise of mental ailments is a consequence of larger cultural shifts. In the novel's representation, the transition from a regulated Keynesian economic system to an unrestrained neoliberal economy is correlative to an increased incidence of anxiety and depression.

Navarro plays with mental illness narratives from the very first pages of the text. In the beginning, she misleads the reader by juxtaposing Susana's and Elisa's lived experiences of mental ailments, implying an equivalence between the characters' conditions. As mentioned before, the first section of *La trabajadora* relays Susana's story of mental illness. In the second part of the novel, Susana attempts to bond with her new roommate and opens up to Elisa. It is in this section that the reader learns that Susana's psychotic episodes were triggered during her years as an international student in California, when she witnessed the murder of her friends during a mass shooting on campus. Simultaneously, the text starts to contextualize Elisa's breakdowns, which are due to the ruthlessness of the economic system, not to genetic predisposition. Juxtaposing the characters' struggles with mental illness allows Navarro to problematize the origin of such ailments and, in this way, she also introduces one of the central themes of the novel: namely, that contemporary mental ailments like anxiety and depression have their root in social and cultural phenomena.

In connecting anxiety, depression, and psychosis with the violence generated by neoliberal capitalism, *La trabajadora* problematizes the idea that such conditions are solely the result of biological imbalances. Nonetheless, the novel draws a distinction between Susana's psychotic episode and Elisa's panic attacks that I would like to underline before continuing. In the case of Susana, the text suggests a preexistent disposition to mental illness that gets triggered by the traumatic experience of watching the murder of her friends (though one might ask whether Susana would have developed bipolar disorder in the absence of this horrific event). Elisa's depression and anxiety, on the other hand, are linked to the simultaneous growth of economic insecurity and the loss of agency over one's life. In any case, the novel's account of both women's ailments presents them as appropriate human responses to a world of incessant change and uncertainty—not the result of genetic determinants.

In *Depression, a Public Feeling* (2012), Cvetkovich explores depression not as a medical disease but as historical and cultural experience. By taking the category of political depression as an analytical tool, she asks what feeling depressed might be telling us about how we are living our lives. To explore depression in this way is to take despair, numbness, and anxiety as sources of knowledge that can assist us in elucidating habits, vulnerabilities, socio-economic inequalities, and other traumas of the everyday that are wearing us down. In investigating sources of "feeling bad," Cvetkovich depathologizes depression as a set of symptoms that need to be treated with pills so that life can be "restored." Instead, she shows the ways in which "forms of hope, creativity, and even spirituality are intimately connected with experiences of despair, hopelessness and being stuck" (14). Although her aim is not to negate the validity of the medical and pharmaceutical models to treat

depression, she is nonetheless skeptical of these models in the context of a neoliberal culture that constantly says "you are only as good as what you produce" (19). Cvetkovich views the heavy medicalization of Western therapeutic cultures as another manifestation of capitalism's emphasis on production.

Widespread anxiety and depression have become signs that contradict the neoliberal dogma that individual liberty and free markets will inevitably produce the best society. However, to be read as ill is to be read as weak—as failing to adjust to the promise of flexibility. At the height of her anxiety disorder, Elisa needs to meet a deadline. However, her capacity to produce is inhibited by the strong medication prescribed by her psychiatrist. Concerned about what her boss might think of her if she submits paperwork for medical leave, she opts to hire another translator to finish her work. In other words, she elects to adjust to her new conditions like a good neoliberal subject. At the end of *La trabajadora* Elisa is in session with her therapist. After reading the journal he advised her to write, the inevitable question is raised: why does she not mention job insecurity as the trigger of her crisis? To which she responds: "La situación se normalizó, o más bien se estabilizó en lo precario" (The situation settled, or rather it became normalized in precarity) (153)[45]. With this uneventful yet discouraging ending, the character of *La trabajadora* accepts that her value is measured by what she can produce.

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[45] This last translation is mine because I believe the translation I have been working with does not fully capture the meaning of the original.

Epilogue

Reading *El trabajo* and *La trabajadora* through a critical framework that emphasizes the relation between precarity and precariousness highlights the uneven distribution of vulnerability under neoliberal governance. Central to the emergence of precarity as a structure of feeling for middle class women, in particular, is the increased risk to which women are exposed. But my main claim is not that neoliberal capitalism relies on the expansion of risk and exploitation of minoritized populations for its survival. On the one hand, I have argued that the felt experience of precarity shapes subjectivities, and shapes them differently: the feelings of precarity are as distinct as the actions that proceed from them. Elisa experiences paralysis in the face of uncertainty while Diana rebels against the injustices she sees around her. On the other hand, I have suggested that both texts problematize the temporality of crisis as an event with definite edges. And this is precisely what drew me to these two post-financial crisis narratives. How are we to read their unsettling endings? One devoid of feeling, the other marked by the cruelest violence. Both endings, radically distinct, share an uncanny similarity: the oppressive sense of defeat and unresolved conflict. I see these endings as symptomatic of a larger cultural shift, in which fantasies of security are just that: fantasies.

Afterword

John Koenig describes the governing purpose of his *Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows* in the following way: "to fill all the holes left in the language of emotion and give names to experiences that we all have but that we don't usually talk about because we don't have the words to do it" (TED Talks, 2016). While I don't believe Koenig will be able to fill *all* the language gaps of our emotional experiences, I also find his project to be quite compelling. For the last seven years of his life, Koenig has created words that give shape to his affective experience of the world, and, in so doing, he has connected with others who find themselves reflected in the experiences he names. Indeed, Koenig's new vocabulary often takes on a life of its own. Let's consider *sonder*, one of his first "made-up" words:

> n. the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own—populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness—an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you'll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk. (Koenig 2012)

Sonder is now listed in Urban Dictionary, and the entry provides usage examples such as this: "I felt deep sonder thinking about all the people who looked up this world along with me" (2013). *Sonder* has its own etymology—from the German sonder "special" and the French sonder "to probe"— and its own entry on Wiktionary. On Reddit, *sonder* elicits heated debates. On the one hand, some users express rage at the "stupidity" of the made-up word, claiming such a beautiful experience does not need to be named. Other users care

less about the “realness” or origin of the term—“aren’t all words made up, anyways?” asks one. What matters to them is what it captures: a feeling they have not been able to name until now.

While reading this online conversation, I could imagine how it might play out in a more academic register. A Spinozian-informed approach on the one hand, would not be invested in codifying this affective experience in language. By distinguishing between affect—pre-social, pre-discursive, and pre-ideological—and emotion—a linguistic, social category, Spinozians affirm the Cartesian mind and body divide. A cognitivist conception of the emotions, on the other hand, would not be bothered by designating an affective response prompted by “the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own” as *sonder*. What is at stakes in this approach, in fact, is foregrounding that emotions and reason do not belong to different orders. Rather, emotions are conceptualized as essential to human reasoning processes.

Imagine this: One day you have the intuition that each and every life is as immeasurable as your own. The feeling, for which you have no word, registers in your body as an experience of wonder or awe. Later you come across the *Dictionary*’s entry for *sonder* and you find yourself moved, because you simultaneously remember the feeling, recognize your experience, and have now a word to name it. At least, that was my own experience when I first learned definition of *sonder*. Sometimes we have concepts for our emotional experiences; sometimes we do not. Naming our feelings is an important aspect of how we relate and understand the world.

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One of my favorite episodes of the NPR show *Invisibilia* is entitled, "A Man Finds an Explosive Emotion Locked in a Word" (June 2017). It tells the story of anthropologists Renato and Shelly Rosado's work in the rain forests of the Philippines. In 1967, the couple left their home in California to study the culture of an under-researched tribe, the Ilongot. After living there for months, Renato felt ready to start writing about the emotional lives of the Ilongot, which, in his opinion, was the most elusive and complicated feature of the culture to grasp. As an anthropologist, he was aware that cultural translation is never exact, but he thought he could recognize and describe the emotions experienced by the tribe—all but one: *liget*. At first, Renato assumed that *liget* was a good feeling attached to positive experiences. For instance, he had heard how an energetic young man cutting down ten trees was described as possessing *liget*. However, one day, several members of the tribe listened to one the many recordings he had gathered, and the positive connotations he had associated with *liget* ceased to make sense in light of what unfolded. While listening to the tape, the men and women heard the voice of a member of the tribe who had recently passed, and as Renato observed, the mood in the room significantly shifted. "The room went suddenly silent," he explains to the *Invisibilia* journalist, "and I saw men's eyes all turned red. And they said turn off the tape. They couldn't stand it. And then they were talking about that this makes our hearts feel *liget*." He was puzzled and no longer felt confident about his understanding of *liget*.

After that day, Renato discarded his notes on *liget* and began to inquire more about the mysterious emotion. He asked every member of the tribe to explain the word to him using different examples so that he could better comprehend what it was. Based on this research, he crafted an initial definition of, *liget* as

> the communal feeling of being unmoored and out of control. Different things could bring it on—a death or painful reminder of it—but then the feeling would go viral, spreading to everyone in the tribe. One way they expressed the feeling was to gather together and wail. But the primary way that liget was relieved—at least in the tribe's history—was through the communal act of headhunting.

This description does well to highlight four important aspects of the emotional experience of *liget*: bodily sensation, memory, community, and ritual. However, despite the development of this working definition, Renato left the Philippines without fully grasping this unique feeling—as he did several years later.

In the fall of 1981, Renato and Shelly travelled back to another part of the Philippines with their two sons. The day after their arrival, one of the children fell ill. Renato stayed back to care for the children, while Shelly decided to carry on with the hike they had planned. In a tragic accident, she fell off a 65 foot-cliff to her death. Renato describes being overcome by an unfamiliar feeling when he saw the dead body of his wife lying in the riverbank. In the journalist's recapitulation of the story, "an alien emotion he had never experienced began to grow inside him." When the family returned to the US and attempted to reestablish some semblance of their previous life in Palo Alto, Renato could feel this unnamed feeling growing stronger, ever more powerful, though it was still difficult to grasp. One afternoon while driving, he was overwhelmed by an impossible pressure in his chest, he pulled over, and he started to howl. Renato "felt this feeling in his body was *liget*. And he finally had English words for it […] High Voltage—those are the English words that most closely approximate the feeling of *liget*."

When I first listened to this episode, I had an instant reaction: I connected *liget* to one of my own experiences—the death of my mother. I remembered the night my dad returned home from the hospital with the news. I understood we were losing my mom and there was nothing I could do to prevent it. I felt this "high voltage" in my body. I felt the intense need to scream, to cry, to purge the feeling with some kind of action (though I can say for certain that beheading someone did not cross my mind). It is a memory that has been sealed in my memory since I was seventeen, a feeling for which I had no words, until now.

*

Both anecdotes speak to some of the concerns I have outlined in *Landscapes of Survival*. Like my dissertation, these examples move beyond the mind-body, the linguistic and non-linguistic, affect and emotion dichotomies to embrace feelings as forms of knowing the world. And, they heavily underscore the cultural politics of emotions, that is, how emotions shape and are shaped by culture. Still, I have chosen to end with these two anecdotes less because of their resonance with the central concerns of my project—the cultural politics of emotion in the aftermath of neoliberal crises—and more because they are beautiful testaments to the *power* of the emotions—and our will to understand them. What I find most arresting in *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows* and *Invisibilia*'s episode is not that they have given me names for some of my felt experiences. Rather, I am drawn to how they exquisitely capture the human drive to find meaning in affective experiences of the world.

I have sought to find meaning in the experiences of loss, love, and precarity in the context of neoliberalism. While there are other affective economies that are surely central

to the politics of neoliberalism in Spain and Argentina, I hope that *Landscapes of Survival* can serve as a point of departure for others who wish to explore the emotions in contemporary Spanish and Argentine culture.

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