

# I am the surroundings I inhabit

Situational identity, somatic experience and more-than-human environment

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## **ABSTRACT**

Each territory has singular cultural, social, and ecological features. This research explores the relationship between identity and territory, and how territories affect identity. Looking at identity from a somatic perspective, this project examines that category through the lens of corporeality, discussing how our perception influences our connection and disconnection with our surroundings.

The primary site for this research is artistic practice through the creation of various objects, events, and experiential installations in galleries, theatres, and cultural centres between 2017-2022. The practice has been based on a compositional work that explores the creation of multisensorial and immersive atmospheres, with specific protocols and scores to generate a space of participation and collective experiences, highlighting the connection with the surroundings. Including different media; sculpture, digital collage, sound, video, performance, and storytelling, these practices are in a liminal field between performance art, therapy, and ritual.

Autotheory and cues from autoethnography accompany the practice research where I consider my history and situational identity, which is in transformation through displacements. The writing reflects on the influence of the surroundings, narrating my experience of inhabiting diverse territories, from my country of origin, Chile, in South America, to Europe, living in Paris and London and later, in the forest and rural villages around Valdivia in the South of Chile.

The research aims to expose the somatic experience and its connection and disconnection with the surroundings. From this potential, the project approaches non-Western knowledge around Tao and Mapuche philosophy, cosmology, and practice. Based on my autoexperimentation and theories related to the subject, the project examines how the approaches to non-Western epistemologies allowed me a process of reconnecting with the land and acceptance of my biography as a decolonial gesture.

The project does not give a fixed definition to identity. Its contribution is to contemplate the relationship between culture and nature from a South American ecofeminist perspective, opening up a reflection around non-Western epistemologies, and exploring how they operate through the feeling of interdependency and connection with ecosocial surroundings. Giving a sense of collective identity between humans and more-than-humans, the contribution is to expand the notion of identity towards a sense of togetherness.

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## PREFACE

### Problems and questions around the subject of identity

In this PhD project, I explore the concept of identity which encompasses somatic, cultural, and environmental factors, reflecting on how the cultural territories we are inserted into affect us. How does the social landscape mould us? To what extent do we accept being transformed by it, and how much do we resist these changes? How does the cultural perception and epistemologies we are educated into affect our connection, interconnection, and disconnection with nature? The subject of identity caused me to reflect on the influence of the place and culture of origin and how to relate to the “roots”, embracing non-Western epistemologies. How can that be a deconstruction and transformation as a decolonial process of acceptance? These are the questions traversing my research, concerning the feelings and thoughts of different ways of belonging that relate to the expanded ecologies field, through exploring the notion of being part of nature from a Western and non-Western perspective, traversing different epistemologies that concern distance and closeness with different territories, landscapes, species, plants, fungi, seaweed, and more-than-humans entities.

I have been studying the notion of identity under the conditions of displacement, which implies moving from diverse territories in Europe and Chile, from big capitals to rural contexts. The topic was manifested in the real experience of my reflection on embodiment, looking at the assimilation of changes that are produced by a somatic and cultural perception. This action implied exploring how the epistemologies we embody affect our connection with more-than-humans, reflecting on how the environment and context influences and affects us.

In this dissertation, I narrate my experience as an artist-researcher from Chile, reflecting on the notion of identity and looking at how it is moulded by perception, which is influenced by the culture and territories I have been inhabiting. While undertaking my PhD research, I approached different knowledge; non-Western knowledge such as Eastern Tao philosophy and practice as well as the Mapuche knowledge of the indigenous people from the South of Argentina and Chile. The research as practice implied a series of experiments and experiences including sculptures, sound, and video, activated by the practice of alchemy, exploring the interconnection and disconnection between humans and more-than-humans, and the relation between culture and nature.

The practice of auto-experimentation included my experience and reflection of being and residing in certain territories, cities, and capitals such as Paris, London, and Santiago, as well

as rural places such as Cutipay and Niebla in Valdivia in the south of Chile. The notion of identity is explored from a somatic and embodied experience, as a first mediator and receptor of perception where how we see the external world is influenced by our cultural background. This research looks at the connection with more-than-humans entities, energies, and lives, from a somatic experience. The trajectory occurs from living in an urban context, the city of London, accessing the Tao system and philosophy, botanical and alchemical knowledge, getting to know the Machi, a Mapuche healer, and receiving healing from her – a process that led me to the decision to live in the forest in the South of Chile, exploring the practice of non-Western epistemologies, and expanding my perception from the hegemonic Western knowledge where I was educated, as a decolonial process of recognising and perceiving the agency of multiple biotic beings, and exploring my connection with them.

### Research methods:

#### Autoethnography and autotheory accompany the practice

For this research, I have been developing a practice that integrates different medias and formats such as sculpture, visual images, photocollage, sound art, spoken word, and diverse organic elements that are usually present in my events. These events are composed as a multisensory frame that have a liminal character between ritual and performance experience.

My visual work includes sculptures, images, and installation. I have collected organic matter for my installations, different kinds of water, medicinal plants, flowers, herbs, algae, and lichens, among others. The sensorial dimension includes sound, vision, touch, smell, and taste, stimulating the audience to be sensitive and aware of their corporal sensations. I have been researching how the sensorial information activates the perception, memory, imagination, and emotional aspects in the participants.

My visual work includes the creation of digital photocollages through the collection of images and pictures of different species, especially from the forest. I composed landscapes that intersect images of the forest, botanic species, and the ice sculptures used in my installations.

Sound art and spoken word are medias I have been developing in collaboration with other artists, writers, and myself. My durational work proposes an assemblage of immersive sound landscape and storytelling, inviting the audience to navigate through different states.

The practice has been a space that pushes reflection and thinking, motivating new questions to develop my research. For this project my practice becomes a form of thinking and theory implies action. At the beginning, I completed the process of writing about the research in parallel with the practice. Later, I decided to explore two methods, autoethnography and

autotheory, which offer a way to delve into the different encounters that stimulate the research. Autoethnography accompanies the project and becomes almost a diary where I assemble other connections.

As a method, autoethnography combines characteristics of *autobiography* and *ethnography*. It amalgamates the personal with the cultural, social, and political. "Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experiences (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (Ellis, 2004; Holman Jones, 2005, 18)<sup>1</sup>. Autotheory brings theory back to life. We can describe it as an entanglement of research and creation; "Authotheory reveals the tenuousness of maintaining illusory separations between art and life, theory and practice, work and the self, research and motivation, just as feminist artist and scholars have long argued" (Fournier, 2021, 3).

My project goes through diverse experiences and practices connecting with philosophy to produce a theory that manifests the conflicts of living in the contemporary world. It incorporates the affective level and intellectual and sensorial topics, allowing the integration of theory with a subjective mode of writing. "Autotheory points to modes of working that integrate the personal and the conceptual, the theoretical and the autobiographical, the creative and the critical, in ways attuned to interdisciplinary, feminist histories" (Fournier, 2021, 7).

Both approaches allowed me to develop a personal discourse that exposes identity as a complex notion to define and describe. I have taken some cues from autoethnography to keep account of my artistic research without fully embracing its methodological framework. As previously remarked above, my work got closer to autotheory but both perspectives are combined and complement each other. Diverse sources of information have been supporting my investigation, such as bibliography, literature, documentation, films, exhibitions, and art shows. All the materials are in dialogue with my personal testimony, stories, conversations and interviews with the people who have been present in this project.

The writing has been approached as an academic work within an art practice where the humanistic, social, and ecological perspective that aims to be objective and descriptive is

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<sup>1</sup> An autoethnography narration such as *One River* (1996) by Wade Davis, inserts the reader into the story through a mode of writing that has the capacity to describe characters, actions, and places. In this way, the reader travels with the narrator who tells stories, narrates dialogues, and at the same time, considers other stories and traditions that relate to what the ethnographer is experiencing. In this text, Davis writes about his research in the 1970s where he was looking for the botanic secrets of the Coca in the Amazon, a sacred plant for indigenous people, but stigmatised for the rest of the world due to its links to cocaine production. Davis also mentions the influence of his teacher, Richard Evans Schultes, years before when he went to live in the Amazon in the 1940s and learnt the traditions of indigenous people from Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, and Colombia. His teacher, Evans, inspired Davis and that tradition becomes part of his way of researching and approaching the Amazon.

reflected in a personal dimension. The discourse is open to interacting with my intimate feelings, opinions and memories, and the language and exercise of naming becomes responsibly creative. In this sense, the autoethnography is at the same time process and product<sup>2</sup>. The experiences I lived as an objective action are half of the story. The other half is completed by the narration which exposes my intimate feelings and personal sensations that stem from the encounters with people, the connection with the landscape, and with earth beings.

For this project I initially used my mother tongue, Spanish (castellano), to develop a poetic and personal register, which allowed me to develop a subjective voice that can navigate through a spontaneous tone. I incorporated affections, interrogating myself and the reader. In this sense, the writing process becomes a creative practice in itself, opening a field that was not present at the beginning.

The first-person that articulates this discourse implies my voice as a reflective researcher, self-aware of my gender, origin, mother tongue, cultural information, and background in the field of arts and scholarly formation/deformation. I exercise and embody knowledge as a practice to become aware of how the somatic is present in everyday experience. This work implies a connection with my own corporeality as well as the context within which I am situated, implicating cultural relationships of distance and closeness, conflict and comfort, with territory and the surroundings.

Some of the questions that are constantly appearing in the narration are: What is our relationship with our territory of origin? What is the impact of our cultural understating in approaching other species? How does the environment affect us?

These questions also become points of conflict causing fractures in the potential to approach certainties because they do not have a solid shape when it comes to an answer, and they do not provide a solution to a problem. Those questions become a driving force that implicate and

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<sup>2</sup> An example of autotheory that engages with the transformation of the body is *Testo Junkie* (2020) by Paul B. Preciado, which is a hybrid form between an autobiographic discourse and a philosophical essay. From a biopolitical perspective, Preciado narrates their process of sexual transformation taking testosterone, using testogel as performative practice and political act. The writer describes their own experience in first person as a chronicle of experimenting with their own body-person, exploring and giving visibility by writing their corporal and sexual sensations. Preciado describes their text as a body-essay where the body experience is, in a radical way, taking the shape of writing. Autotheory moves between experimental writing and conceptual art, as Preciado does in their writing. Preciado, as a philosopher, dialogues with a wide heritage of philosophers and theories in their text, maintaining an activist position as a transexual, approaching the industry of sex, tecnosexuality, pharmacopornography, and other subjects related to the process of living in their transformation.

mobilise me and the reader.

My project explores the person as a whole, where the somatic element is fundamental to evidence the conflict of position, in terms of coming from South America, living in the West and North of Europe and studying cosmologies related to Mapuche culture — “*pueblo originario*” situated in the south of Chile and Argentina, and the Tao Eastern knowledge.

Placing the somatic and the importance of the body as a way of processing knowledge and culture entails questioning the kind of knowledge that is understood as legitimate or rigorous, and removing the assumptions that white-centric, patriarchal, colonial positions in academia has produced and sanctioned. My research aims to incorporate knowledge related to non-Western traditions, to ideas related to the secret and sacred, as well as esoteric, metaphysical, and spiritual beliefs, exploring how those fields, which are less present in academia, can mobilise research and experimentation. Texts and voices from an Eastern tradition such as Mantak Chia, and Lao Tse; women and South American activists and researchers from social sciences such as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (Bolivia) and Maristella Svmpa (Argentina); Mapuche writers such as Leonel Lienlaf and Elicura Chilhuailaf; and, Chilean poets and artists such as Cecilia Vicuña and Begoña Ugalde, among others, are present in this dissertation. From an auto theoretical perspective I am offering a critical viewpoint in conversation with those figures of anthropologists, philosophers, and biologists, embracing and connecting different knowledge, Western and non-Western, science, and ancestral traditions such as those advanced by Donna Haraway, Marisol de la Cadena, and Robin Wall Kimmerer, among others, which reflect on our relationship with nature in the crises of the present times.

The different voices in my dissertation explore the importance of opening alternative epistemologies to enrich the Western vision and Eurocentric way of living. I have been exploring somatic research and decolonial action, integrating different traditions as part of my South American imbrication, a melting pot of Western and non-Western ways of feeling and thinking in the world. This is approached especially relative to the feeling of being part of nature and dealing with becoming disconnected to that feeling because of the influence of a capitalist way of living. Inhabiting those contradictions becomes a space of frustration and anger, but also a place of friction that generates energy; a problem without resolution which activates new questions, that asks me how to navigate this world.

This research has a perspective of “ecology of knowledge”, as the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Portugal, 1940) describes for the epistemologies of the South that are linked to the social effort against capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. But as he mentions, this process implies thinking about questioning whether what is being learned is

valuable, or if it should be forgotten or not learned. In this way this research has a constant self-reflection around knowledge coming from different spheres; Western, non-Western, indigenous, Taoist, and scientific perspectives. Different visions somehow interact as an alchemical somatic process, which is embodied in the experience.

Accepting my own base of seeing the world through the hegemony of Western knowledge because I have been influenced by it from the beginning of my existence, this process of research enabled me to get closer to other epistemologies and to learn from them through my own experience. The autoexperimentation of this project reveals a supposition of different knowledge, aiming to decolonise my presumptions, not as Santos proposes: “The utopia of inter-knowledge is learning other knowledge without forgetting one's own” (Santos, 2011, 36). I am not trying to remember who I was and the knowledge that is inscribed in me from before this research. I was transformed by the process of learning and my lived experiences during this research, and through this I did not take control of the change. It was more subtle and, at the same time, radical because the knowledge infected my whole person. That process was much more complex - tainted and scrambled, very different to a clean and surgical operation that needed to be changed.

#### The somatic: embodied identity and the importance of the experience

I first talk about the enigma and mystery of the notion of body using the concept of corporeality that was advanced by Michel Bernard; as a mobile, unstable material, and energetic network. Corporeality is considered an open system where diverse structures are in constant transformation and interaction; somatic, perceptive, spiritual, psychic, and intellectual.

I expose myself as a South American artist and woman, looking to gain a non- hegemonic point of view. This is to put in dialogue my Western intellectual background with non-Western knowledge and practices; especially concerning Taoist and indigenous knowledge. This perspective of research that involves somatic, personal subjectivity and non-hegemonic knowledge interrogates and challenges the academic language, aiming to expand the boundaries of Western and European knowledge, validating other ways of learning; “writing autotheory is a method of using the body’s experience to develop knowledge” (Fournier, 2021, 25).

My project reflects upon perception, sensoriality, and the somatic, researching how to include the audience-participants in a somatic experience through the creation of specific protocols that incorporate sensorial stimulation. The practice research explores a therapeutic approach to liminal spaces between art and therapy. In this context, the work and practice of artist Lygia

Clark is a model of study; notions such as *vivências*, proposition, sensory object, relational object, and the concept of resonant body developed by Suely Rolnik, are important for the reflection of the project.

My research practice explores a multisensorial ambience through diverse protocols. In this context, I research the connection between microcosm and macrocosm, as the Taoist model does using correlations between the human body and elements on the planet; water, wood, fire, earth, and metal. Water becomes one of the important elements to explore through alchemy, looking at how water is manifested in the human body by various fluids and in the planet in diverse manifestations: sea, rain, fog, river, icebergs. In my practice, I carried out many experiments around alchemy involving ice sculptures and steam, using medicinal plants and different kinds of water that I collected from special places (springs, rivers, etc). The practice pushes the research and gives rise to questions around the relationship between humans, plants, species, natural elements, and forces. How can the ambience affect the state of the audience, allowing a space for reflection? How do the people react and behave when facing these matters and listening to the artist's stories? The work reflects on the agency of other species and their influence in our lives, integrating different visions, scientific, ethnobotanic, and spiritual understandings.

My research reflects on the connection between humans and the environment in the context of the planetary ecological crisis, exposing the importance of learning from non-hegemonic perspectives such as the Taoist vision and indigenous people, since both conceive human life immersed in nature, not separate from it.

My project installs the exchange of knowledge through different encounters as a way of researching and learning. Different people have been important in guiding the experimentation, practice, and experiences; Deborah Hay; Tao Master Mantak Chia, a Machi (healer and authority in Mapuche Culture), among others. Autoethnography provides a space for reflection around those encounters, offering a way to generate new perspectives and connections with other sources.

This research explores how the somatic experiences transform our identity, our connection, interconnection, and disconnection with the environment.

### The encounter with the Machi and the decolonial process

The Machi was a relevant encounter for my project, allowing me to explore and learn from other forms of knowledge. Seeking my exploration around the somatic and the connection between art and the therapeutic, I decided to receive a healing session from a Machi, a Mapuche authority and healer. After this first encounter, we decided to collaborate in support of the protection of the ancient forest in Valdivian territory. This exchange has been a frame of reflection around the notions of reciprocity, symbolic exchange, an economy that implies ethical dimensions, or the common good, as well as an exchange with human and non-human entities. A combination of debt, gifts, and caring factors has formed part of the sharing process that took place in this research. This particular encounter has been a door that opened and closed the access to knowledge, manifesting limitations that in Mapuche culture, medicine and spirituality, go hand in hand. The Machi has the responsibility to protect secret knowledge that must not be revealed to any Mapuche person, even more so to non-Mapuche people (winkas). It is very restrictive, hermetic, and only accessible to a few people within their communities. These conflicts have been part of my project, and instead of hiding them they are exposed. Autoethnography is a frame of reflection that shows my subjectivity, giving space to questions and difficulties, assuming they exist, and are also material for my project. That way, moments of vulnerability, fragility, and frustration are present in this writing.

My project manifests the process of becoming close to Mapuche culture in a territory such as Valdivia in the south of Chile where Mapuche people have been systematically oppressed. The territories have also been affected by exploitation and extractivism. In this context, problems of position, privilege, and race appear. I have to confront my own position as a winka living in Europe (white, non-Mapuche person) as well as evaluate the research itself as a project with a colonial character because I am working from an institution in England, a country that has an imperial history.

As a strategy for writing, I am integrating my personal feelings, reflections, and sensations in my professional work; the knowledge is produced by a complex reflective imbrication of experiences and theory. In this sense my project explores the wound of identity in a cultural dimension. I am using the term colonial wound, reflecting on how Chilean society manifests what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui calls *chi'xi*, a concept that refers to juxtaposition, the indeterminate, pastiche, and the union of opposites. I explore my own personal friction between colonial and decolonial forces, as a winka and South American mestiza, considering a biggest cultural frame. From within my global vision, I experience a process that aims to decolonise me and aims towards acceptance of my own origin and history.



After the encounter with the Machi, my project changed its direction, the research, and at the same time, me as a person-researcher. In that sense, the autoethnography had an influence on me. The experience highlighted the importance of addressing some questions regarding what my connection is with the environment.

The Machi highlighted the importance of this connection. Mapuche people have the concept of *Itrofil Mogen*, that can be translated as biodiversity and biosphere. It explains that human health and sickness is in concordance with the territories, this determines the balance. When we speak about healing in this cosmovision it implies the relationship with the environment becoming a central aspect to take care of. This experience transformed my way of life, this was manifested in my need to live for six months in the territory of the forest in the South of Chile. I felt the need to be near to the forest, a territory that teaches me in a subjective manner, to perceive and learn how more-than-human beings and species live.

As a consequence of staying in the forest in Valdivia, the reflection about my ancestors emerged because my grandmother, who is dead, was born in Valdivia and lived there until she was seventeen. Without planning this connection between death and territory, while I was living there, I felt the voice and presence of my grandmother. From a somatic sensation I could communicate with her and feel that she was talking to me through the territory. The dialogue with my ancestors opened up the possibility of revisiting my own family and cellular trajectory situated in the specific territory I inhabited, exploring what messages my ancestors were transmitting to me.

The integration of our dead ancestors as part of the territories is a conception present in diverse non-Western cultures. I had the experience of this connection with the dead as other-than-humans without expecting it. That was part of my somatic experience of inhabiting that territory.

### Interconnection and ecofeminism perspective

The fieldwork becomes an experience that allowed me the reflection on the interdependency between human and non-human, and the importance of protecting the territories. With an ecofeminism perspective, creating art contexts that can have a therapeutic potential regarding a social sphere has been present in my practice through diverse events that I made during my years of research, *Melting forms* (Santiago, 2019), *Melts* (London, 2019), *Transforming matters* (London, 2020), *In-fusion* (Chile, 2020), and *Humalga* (Chile, 2022). I made protocols and scores for my events, exploring social interaction, the emergence of subjectivity, and somatic information. In those events, the people could participate and interact with others. I

proposed forms of experiencing something together as a community, where reciprocity, complementarity, and cooperation are part of the dynamics I invite the participants to live. Within a logic of micropolitics, in a molecular context, the group is invited to participate, activating modalities of sharing and connection, expressing the need for interconnection that is present in nature. The different elements and matter are arranged in a way that invites reflection on other species, earth beings, and elements; the power of water, the plants, the forest, algae, lichens, among others.

In that sense, this project embraces different forces, knowledge, points of view, and voices that can sometimes be contradictory but that diversity expresses the complexity, indefinable and nature of openness of the notion of identity that this research seeks to explore. Assuming contradictions around identity to be a somatic process of transformation and friction, this research explores the importance of being situated in change and becoming through the connection with the cultural context and with more-than-human entities. Even if my voice narration can be charged by my subjective and emotional contents, this perspective is connected to a bigger problem that reflects a social and political context. It evidences the conflict of the way of living in the city, with a capitalist reality, and how these forces are present in daily life, expressed in the dependency on supermarkets, in the detachment to the earth regarding the cultivation of food, or collecting fruits and food from the ground and the earth. My project reflects on how the codes of capitalism, patriarchy, and hegemonic power are present in the transactions, economy, and relationships, looking at how those aspects are part of the cultural implication a person faces in each territory due to their qualities.

An ecofeminism point of view explores ways to take distance from these hegemonic forces in order to resist the patriarchal power and domination of women's bodies as well as the earth. The importance of self-care, as well as caring for the community and the earth are aspects this research pays attention to, looking at how we take care of ourselves and each other, as well as the environment that surrounds us. My project reflects upon the logic of protection, which is also taking the shape of a legal perspective towards the consideration of rivers, zones, mountains, and other entities as a "subject of rights", looking at them as a subject rather than an object. The work of Alberto Acosta and the Montecristi Constitution of Ecuador (2008), was the first nation to incorporate nature as a "subject of rights" - an initiative that was considered by Acosta to be a process of miscegenation. As the Bolivian activist and diplomatic, Pablo Solon, says: "There are no rights of nature without indigenous rights. There are no indigenous rights without rights of nature. All rights are interrelated. However, each one has its own specificity." For indigenous people the "pacha mama" is the mother, not as a metaphor, it is the actual mother, because for them "we are nature". The Western notions of "rights and law"

in this case operate to protect an indigenous conception about the relationship between culture and nature that are interrelated. With that vision Acosta, as other thinkers and activists, proposes to exit an anthropocentric society regime that looks at nature as an object to be appropriated, dominated, exploited, and subdued, and transit to a sociobiocentric society.

My practice research manifests a close relationship with the other-than-human, a component that expresses the subjective perception in the encounter with other entities that are not human; lichens, algae, seaweed, trees, fungi, water springs, and diverse plants are present in the visual components as well as the poetic writing. I explore establishing a personal connection, which is part of my process of reflecting about how those earth beings perceive and feel and how they get into a transformative process and communicate with each other. In this paradigm, the richness of biodiversity becomes a model of social diversity.

This research is situated in a liminal spectrum around the field of performing art, ritual, experiential art, and therapy. I began by exploring the model of the somatic that installed a connection with therapy and healing, from there I explore non-Western knowledge. While approaching an intercultural perspective, I encountered the Machi who showed me the connection with the environment and especially the forest as a source of life. Later I decided to stay closer to the Valdivian Forest and experience inhabiting that territory.

I experimented with my own person, with diverse healing practices, and the experiences I embodied shaped my decisions around composition in the creation of events, protocols, and scores of encounters. In those events, people can experiment a regime of perception that is influenced by states of meditation, ideas of magic, and walks in the forest. All those experiences are manifested in the materials and elements that are present in my work as well as the process of guiding the audience through an immersive experience. My project has been taking direction by way of the practice that activates the research through new questions and spaces to explore.

This project doesn't provide a fixed proposition about embodied identity. However, it is a reflection on the conflict of different modes of belonging, approaching diverse forms of knowledge and cultures which, in a way, can generate contradiction, contrapositions, sometimes complement each other, and in other cases, create friction. Ecology and ecofeminism are connected around the subjects of care, healing, and therapy, looking at cosmologies and knowledge coming from South America and Eastern tradition.

In this dissertation I begin by presenting the first territory as corporeality. The first chapter exposes experiences and theories around my understanding of the concept of somatic and

corporeality, influenced by my background as a dancer and choreographer, the Tao, artist Lygia Clark, and Deborah Hay, among others. I reflect on the notion of perception in relation to culture and education. I narrate how those ideas and experiences support my practice around hydroalchemy.

The second chapter enquires into the cultural surroundings as a second territory, where I open up my experience of displacement living in diverse territories, reflecting on the juxtaposition of Western and non-Western epistemologies on the conception of identity. In this section I also tell the story of my encounter with the Machi and how that experience transforms me, my identity, and the direction of this research project. My practice moves from the studio at Goldsmiths and the creation of events, towards the direct encounter with the forest.

The third chapter is situated in the forest of Valdivia and explores the connection with more-than-humans. It reflects on my transformation in this ecosystem, living close to more-than-human entities and earth beings, expanding the notion of identity towards a sense of togetherness, where I become a whole with the surroundings I inhabit.

## Chapter 1

### FIRST TERRITORY

#### CORPOREALITY

« A leaf a gourd a shell a net a bag a sling  
a sack a bottle a pot a box a container. A holder. A recipient.  
container I am a leaf a gourd a shell a net  
a sack a bottle a pot a box a container. A holder. A recipient.  
I am a recipient I am a recipient  
what do I keep in my bag? »  
URSULA K LE GUIN

How do I refer to the matter and non-matter that constitutes who I am?

A system, a network of connections, membranes, liquids, water, blood, air, veins, organs, tissues, bones, nails, holes, hair. A list of visible presences and matter, others more invisible, the air I breathe, the smells that enter my nostrils, the flavours that embrace my tongue, the temperatures and the words that make me cold or warm. Energy.

Where a body begins and to where it expands, my limits resemble those of cell walls and expand to the life of my ancestors, who perhaps have become part of the earth.

When is a body born?

Will it be the continuation of other bodies?

The transformation of other lives that precede us.

I was born from my mother's womb, from blood that comes from other eggs and sperms. I am biology and so many other things. The liquid blood running through my veins, my ovules. There is so much unknown information in this anatomy that governs me.

I am the bearer of a story that was gestated...when? In my mother's womb? In my grandmother's womb?

And beyond the limits of my story, my skin is so close to other beings, to the humidity of the air, to the surface that my feet touch, to the volcano, to the mountain, to the sea, to the river

that is around me. The buildings, the buses, the supermarkets, and even the taxis that are around me. Am I in that environment or am I that environment?

Do I separate myself from it? Do I get contaminated? Do I get oxygenated? Everything that is around me. Everything that is touching me, I am listening to everything, everything is listening to me, I am touching it. Is it all of it part of being who I am too?

Sometimes it seems to me that I disintegrate and dissolve into the forces that surround me. Sometimes I see myself in algae, soft, moving with the tides. I imagine that it separates, divides, perhaps multiplies and is constantly reborn in a different way. My walls absorb that totality that is around me, I am not alone, I am with all of you.

Being a shape yet feeling shapeless. Having a wall yet feeling that I go beyond. I have tried to know what inhabits me, without being able to control it, and knowing that I am perhaps over thirty trillion cells. I am inhabited by trillions of tiny beings, whose names I do not know and chemical compositions I do not understand.

It seems as if I have known her for 41 years, and in that idea of being an adult, she feels like a child and a grandmother.

The atoms continue to stick together, irresolutely united, and that stability has the appearance of being a body.

I'm not going to call it body anymore, I want to call it corporality.

I don't know how to grasp this mass; I have searched for so many names... I have decided to name it corporality so as not to fix it, not stop it and frame it as something stable.

“What do you bring there?

What do you bring?

How much does it weigh?

What do you carry?

Why do you care, why do you care, why do you care, why do you care, why do you care, why do you care, why do you care, why do you care.

What have you got there, what have you got in your bag?

What have you got there?  
What have you got?  
What do you carry?

Why do you care?  
What is the importance of what matters to you?

What is your story?  
What is the story you need to tell?  
What do you need to tell?"

Begoña Ugalde

Are we talking about something empirical, fixed, and permanent? Is the body defined as a category that can be a possible object of science? In 1990, Michel Bernard established the proposal of corporeality as 'anticorps' with the aim of subverting the category of the body. In 2014, I read his proposal and adhered to his critique. His words resonated in my sensitive and thinking matter, enunciating themselves from the undefinition and difficulty of grasping and cataloguing the constant transformation. I will share some of his ideas that still make sense to me and that led me to experiment further in this research.

He critiques this category as it designates an objective reality, the one that refers to its referent; that is to say, to the culture and history from which it emanates. Furthermore, Bernard explains that while researching he realised this terminology does not have the same meaning in every language. For instance, in Chinese it is a term that entails mobility is used, integrating states or situations: "there isn't any term that denotes the existence of a body as an identifiable autonomous substance, but only ones that designate states or situations" (Bernard, 1991, 18). Understanding that I am situated makes sense to me, it is as evident as the fact that I can breathe, and that air is new and different every time. A substance that is changing and passing through states is closer to what I feel as my reality.

The term corporeality, as described by Bernard, is engaging with a sense of aliveness and the transformation of matter. It is a mobile, unstable material and energetic network, driven by the interference of disparate forces and crossed intensities (Bernard, 1991, 18). In other words, it understands us as a field of intensity, a connection of multiple forces and heterogenic non-meanings.

As a dancer, choreographer, performer, and artist who works with herself and others, I have constantly asked myself about corporeality, and "presence" has been my object of study. By using theory, conceptualisation, and somatic practice, I have been able to understand and

experience corporeality as an open system that considers diverse structures: somatic, perceptive, spiritual, and psychic. Each one of these dimensions is constantly interacting and transforming.

The polymorphic meaning of my experience of living in different parts of the world has guided my choreographic and creative vision, as well as my way of feeling and experiencing the soma. Through this sensitivity that goes inwards and outwards, I have decided to explore corporeality as an energetic field that is constantly evolving. This perspective has gone beyond my own experimentation by being in various territories with others; human and non-human.

A geography felt from within, self-perceived in the exercise of proprioception, and which in turn is seen and felt by the exterior. It goes from the inside out and from the outside in. In its double or multidirectionality, it exceeds limits no matter how hard it hides in the armpits, on the back of the knees and in the folds. It is a geography that extends through touching, kissing, and exhaling scents. It whispers and merges into a mechanism of circularity. It recycles itself in that coming and going, it regenerates, it recreates itself.

Our sensoriality becomes a complex field that we cannot simplify as a stable and close totality, the process of perception supposes multiple sensations that are at the same time passives and actives and participate in a game of exchanges. It always involves a double operation; to see and be seen, to touch and be touched, to smell and to be smelled. This game of exchanges informs us that we are always in an interaction, between the inside and the outside. Merleau-Ponty refers to this sensitive condition and paradox of the self in his text "Eye and Mind", stating:

The enigma derives from the fact that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognise, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. It is a self, not by transparency, like thought, which never thinks anything except by assimilating it, constituting it, transforming it in to thought - but a self by confusion, narcissism, inherence of the see-er in the seen, the toucher in the touched, the feeler in the felt - a self, then, that is caught up in things, having a front and a back, a past and a future. (Merleau-Ponty, 1993, 124)

I think that not only sensitive information generates confusion. Since thinking can also be activated through the body, it possibly develops an inseparable path of emotional and psychological feel; thus, becoming a single skein that is difficult to unravel. In my



choreographic experience, the interconnection between the mind, perception, emotions, organs, and physical reality creates an amalgam that has allowed me to find different paths, links, and frames which not only give way to creativity, but also to an instance with therapeutic potential.

Within this understanding of corporeality, I approached the work of choreographer Deborah Hay (United States, 1941), whom I had studied. I got to know her work in 2017 when I had the opportunity to attend a workshop at Independent Dance (London, March 2017). This instance allowed me to live in my own experience, to be a participant and a witness of the specificity of her practice based on instructions and questions. Through her methodology, Hay activates perception, corporeality, and the entirety of the person where, as she points out, all the cells of a person are present while carrying out the practice.

Deborah Hay is a choreographer who was part of the New York scene called Judson Memorial Church in the 1960s, inventing the precepts of what is known as Postmodern dance. From the late 1970s, she oriented her work to choreography as a practice, which has been evolving and changing throughout the years.

Her work is related to diverse paths coming from spiritual spheres, techniques of meditation, and internal martial arts based on energy and conscious movement such as Tai chi and Chi kung, and somatic practices such as Feldenkrais, Body Mind Centring. All these practices focus on the connection between body and mind.

Hay's creative practice has a particular methodology where performers move following a set of instructions. The instructions are based on hypothetical unanswerable questions, rather than on the execution of solutions or the idea of performing them effectively. This approach shifts the attention of the dancer towards the process of becoming and the transformation and continuous changes of the dance.

Her work concerns the soma, which can be described as the first-person experience of corporeality from the within as opposed to a third-person objective view from the outside (Shuterman, 2008). My training in contemporary dance was focused on somatic work, which highlights the feelings, sensations, and perceptions around an embodied experience, always generated from the subjective, personal point of view of the person involved. This considers the combinations of the different senses in an internal dimension connecting to the nervous system. The somatic experience articulates the emergence of proprioception, meaning self-awareness, in which we perceive the position and movement of our body that exists even when there is no motion. This act implies turning the senses inward, emphasising the fact that the

self is acting, perceiving, and witnessing their own perception at the same time.

Through my experience of attending Hay's workshop I was able to see that her methodology develops an organisation of perception, which includes the sensorial experiences of perception and consciousness, and an awareness that they are in constant movement and transformation. The practice of dancing becomes a site of interrogation without resolution, there is no right or wrong; it is a space of reflection triggering an ongoing transformative process that expands consciousness preventing regression into patterns of movement. From a professional perspective, in dance these patterns can be part of a technical formation or kinetic manners with long periods of repetition of steps and forms of movement. The way in which Hay trains this change in habit is through the reflection of a modification in the process of thinking and placing importance on attentiveness during the act of dancing.

Hay's approach consists of experimenting with language in order to penetrate the consciousness and unconsciousness agendas within the dance art form. As performer, it was fascinating to carry out Hay's practice. When you dance, you can feel the somatic experience and how the mind is present in the entire body, the sense of corporeality; the connection between mind and body, feeling both as a single and whole experience, without splitting them.

Due to Buddhist influences, Deborah Hay's work takes a meditative approach. Her chants establish an inner work that encourages states of mindfulness and is based on being present.

For me, dance has been a way to experience the present and a state of being that is not part of the logic of everyday life. It has the potential to transform me into other architectures, sensations, and perceptions. It is a space of experimentation on a sensory level, in which I have felt that my personal territory has expanded. From a more abstract (and even technical) approach, dance and the creation of body languages allows us to take off the garments of our histories and cultural limitations to open ourselves to other ways of being in the world where intellectuality does not prevail. The brain still commands, but other intelligences open. The ability to perceive and to make decisions expand, which are perhaps more intuitive. It is also where the association of elements is manifested in a different way than in everyday life and the way I communicate.

Although experiencing these capacities of understanding and human expression have been fundamental in my artistic work, currently the focus has not been on exposing myself in terms of my body, but on trying to know, uncover, recognise, and transform my inner corporeality; that is to say, putting the focus on internal movement. This has been manifesting itself in a search for wellbeing and the good life, which has implied experiencing corporeality in a

therapeutic dimension.

The year 2017 was a turning point in my life due to the break-up of a relationship that had been very important to me. After living in France and England with L, when we broke up, I was left without family in Europe. This change, aside from the emotional aspect of grief, stirred many parts of me. This crisis raised questions about the meaning of living in a territory where I have no blood ties. Far from my country of origin, the experience of home and family were questioned, opened to reinvention, and have since formed a space for creativity.

During this period, my emotional life was quite unstable and difficult, considering the process of adapting to life in England under these new conditions that I had to undergo. In this context, my corporality was assumed as a source of energy to be experienced. I approached my own materiality to investigate the transformative dimension of energy within myself.

With this driving force, I practised various therapies; from the more traditional psychological order, to energetic work and therapies considered "alternative". My corporeality became a kind of vessel that stores energetic conditions, emotions, and life force.

A few years back, I had encountered Chi kung when I was in Paris and my partner was working in London. We lived in two different countries separated by a two-hour train ride. We were jumping hoops so I could obtain a visa for the UK. My visa had been rejected once, so we had to wait for three months to reapply. In the past, I had already had visa problems and facing this situation again was resurfacing trauma. It led me to wonder what the point of living in a territory that rejected me was. Where should I be? The waiting process involved the uncertainty, the instability of losing my home, going from house to house, couch surfing with bags scattered everywhere. This situation led me into states of anguish, depression, and anger against the immigration system. What was the point of continuing in Europe?

In these emotional circumstances, and in view of my state of mind, my girlfriend's mother introduced me to Chi kung and talked to me about energy practices. She invited me to the Chinese Centre in Paris 'Le temps du corps'. I started to practice and to hear for the first time about the energy of the organs and their relation to our emotions. In this context, practising Chi kung had a completely therapeutic meaning for me. It was an active meditation that softened my mind and calmed my anguish, and produced a different effect to practising yoga or dance.

Later, when I was able to settle in London, I got to know the Taoist practices from the master Mantak Chia (Thailand, 1944), a renowned master who founded the Universal Healing Tao System.

Taoism is the 5000-8000 year old foundation of Chinese philosophy and medicine. The Tao you have has been described as natural ace “law” or “natural to order”, “the constantly changing cycle of the seasons”, “an art”, “to method”, “power”, and “to path of direction”. With the Tao, I discovered the healing system, philosophy, technology, path, the chi, and energy — all of which affected me.

From a more practical viewpoint, it is important to mention that Tao is the foundation of Chinese medicine, the mother of acupuncture, and the inspiration for modern body-oriented therapies such as Acupressure, Rolfing, and Feldenkrais. From 2017, I attended a series of workshops with Mantak Chia who teaches and transmits his knowledge around Eastern and Western (Europe and United States) hemispheres. The Tao system imparted by Mantak Chia is oriented to increasing vital energy or chi through techniques and physical exercises. This life-force energy is then circulated through the acupuncture meridians of the body and channelled into health, vitality, balanced emotions, and creative and spiritual expression (Chia, 2009). It includes both mental (meditative) practices, and physical disciplines. While it is true that this system has a spiritual foundation, the Universal Tao is not a religion.

I decided to delve into this system created by the master Mantak Chia because of its integrative approach to knowledge of Chinese medicine with meditation practices, cosmic healing, astrology, and internal martial arts - a complex and diverse methodology that connects body, emotions, mind, and spirituality. It articulates very pragmatic, concrete content in relation to organs and anatomy, also taking into consideration current research from Western science combined with ancient Taoist beliefs.

Inquiring into this area of knowledge allowed me to enter a system of thought and spirituality that expanded beyond my Western rationality. Until then I had always believed more in poetry than in religion, and more in art than in dogmas. I had not delved into 'spirituality' outside of the Catholic religion in which I was educated and with which I did not identify. Opening to non-Western views of the world, of feeling and understanding my corporeality, was something completely new to me. The influence of Western European and United States culture had had too strong a bearing on my way of looking at life and explaining emotional life.

While inquiring into Taoist philosophy I discovered Lao Tse who lived in the sixth century B.C. His cosmovision was influenced by his historical context, which is an antipode of the current world conception in the West. Lao Tse's teachings showed me a universe full of questions and unfinished spaces between two polarities. The synthesis of the positive and the negative, the value and balance of these two poles is the foundation. In this way I became aware of the physical and metaphysical aspects of my research. I also began to realise that experimenting with energy can be abstract and at the same time, concrete:

The Way is infinitely high, unfathomably deep. Enclosing heaven and earth, receiving from the formless, it produces a stream running deep and wide without overflowing. Opaque, it uses gradual clarification by stillness. When it is applied, it is infinite and has no day or night, yet when it is represented, it does not even fill the hand.

It is restrained but can expand, it is dark, but can illuminate; it is flexible, but can be firm. It absorbs the negative and emits the positive, thus manifesting the lights of the sun, moon, and stars.

(...)

Thus, the Way effects the movement of the heavens and the stability, turning endlessly like a wheel, flowing incessantly like water. It is there at the beginning and the end of things: as wind rises, clouds condense, thunder rumbles, and rain falls, it responds in concert infinitely.

(...)

The natural constant Way gives birth to beings, but does not possess them, it produces evolution but does not rule it. All beings are born depending on it, yet none know to thank it, all day because of it, yet none can resent it.

(...)

It is so ungraspable and undefinable that it cannot be imagined, yet while it is undefinable and ungraspable, its function is unlimited. Profound and mysterious, it responds to evolution without form; successful and effective, it does not act in vain. It rolls up and rolls out with firmness and flexibility, it contracts and expands with darkness and light.

Lao Tse, *Wen -Tzu*

The world of oppositions, of indefinite, unfathomable and unlimited formulas. Beyond the physical, similar to the visible but immaterial.

The Chilean philosopher, musicologist and aesthete, Gaston Soublette (Chile, 1927) is an expert in Eastern philosophy. He is a Taoist and has analysed the book by Lao Tsé *Tao, Te King*, in depth.

This book has a structure of eighty-one poems, writings, and short texts. It was written during the decadency of the civilisation created by the Tchu dynasty (1122-255 B.C), a very rich and well-governed Empire. The Taoism ancient conception considered the universe to be an order governed by an invisible power in dissidence to the official sage of the Tchu dynasty, which defended a civilisation perspective.

According to Gaston Soublette, the idea of the 'invisible power' constitutes an order that is perceptible in the sense of what occurs in the universe. Tao considers that the order coming from human inventiveness cannot substitute the pre-existent divine order. A very important concept is the sense of the world present in each thing and each event. The 'invisible power' is present in humans, every event, and the environment.

The idea of transformation and change is a very relevant concept for the understanding of the self and environment; "The sense of the world is captured through movement, in the mutations of everything that happens in the world. This movement, that in nature has infinite variety, however, has a structure, an internal law, which could be captured, discerned, understated in its direction, developed, and assumed" (Soublette, 1990,10).

### Twenty-One

The greatest Virtue is to follow Tao and Tao alone.

The Tao is elusive and intangible.

Oh, it is intangible and elusive, and yet within is image.

Oh, it is elusive and intangible, and yet within is form.

Oh, it is dim and dark, and yet within is essence.

This essence is very real, and therein lies faith.

From the very beginning until now its name has never been forgotten.

Thus, I perceive the creation.

How do I know the ways of creation?

Because of this.

Lao Tse, *Tao you ching*

The readings, thoughts, and ideas in relation to Taoist philosophy, as well as the practices and sensations of energy work, gradually shaped my rational, academic, western mind and I began to open myself to other ways of thinking, feeling my body energy, and connecting with the environment.

It is then that the model of the connection between the microworld and macroworld arises. What is the connection with our environment? Are we affected? And do we have the capacity to affect the energy of our environment?

The process of understanding the Tao and the work with energies led me to appreciate that we are not isolated from the cycles of nature, and that the seasons of the year influence our organs and moods. The Taoist technology created by Chia is based on a series of analogies between certain elements of nature, our organs, and energetic qualities.

Moreover, the Taoist system links each organ to one of the five elements in nature: metal, water, wood, fire, and earth. It also connects them to a season of the year, a colour, and a quality in nature (e.g., wet, dry, windy, etc.), and positive and negative emotions. This relationship often describes the characteristics of that organ. For example, the heart is linked to summer, fire, and red; a healthy heart is associated with excitement and warmth. The season of an organ is the one in which the organ is dominant or working the hardest (Chia, 2009).

Body, mind, and spirit are totally integrated in the Taoist view. The Tao system brings attention to the inner body, specifically to the organs and channels of energy. This knowledge is related to Chinese medicine, the meridians of acupuncture in relation to the nervous system, the connection and balance of the two sides of the brain, the sympathetic and parasympathetic system, among other topics, connecting anatomic and neurological functions.

Furthermore, this system considers energy to be a field of emotion; different emotions are located in different organs and they function as energy channels. As previously mentioned, this system also proposes a correlation between microcosms and macrocosms, using analogies around the different organs (corporeality) and diverse aspects of nature (environment). Those relations can be seen through the symbol of Pakua. The Pakua is a symbol of eight trigrams used in Taoist cosmology to represent the fundamental principles of reality, seen as a range of eight interrelated concepts. The trigrams have correspondences with different aspects, they are related to the five elements; fire, metal, wood, earth, and water;

each one is connected to an organ, part of the body, seasons, colours, among other parameters.

This technology that allows the association between the human body, the organs, and diverse elements of the planet started influencing me, not only in the way I felt, but also in the way I observed my surroundings and how I belonged to them. I observed our dialogue with our surroundings, how the temperature alters my mood, how we interact with the cycles of nature, the change of colour of the leaves, the growth of fungi, the precipitations, the blooming of flowers.

In this context, the water element became a point of observation and research. Water constitutes about 70 percent of our corporeality and, in turn, 70 percent of our planet. The correlation between microcosm and macrocosm led me to understand the plastic and transformable character of our first territory, our corporeality. Water circulates through our body in our blood, urine, tears, saliva, sweat, and other fluids. The water from the planet manifests itself in diverse forms and states, the ocean, rivers, lakes, wetlands, icebergs, rain, snow, clouds, fog. Ice is solid, when heated it melts, it becomes liquid and if it gets warmer it evaporates, if it cools down again it condenses and becomes liquid again. Rain falls on the earth, some of this water is stored in the groundwater, some of it flows into rivers, continues to the sea, and then evaporates, condenses into clouds and turns back into liquid rain. These transformations within us are sometimes immaterial or invisible. How do we make these transformations visible?



Fig.1 *Ice stones*





Fig.2 *Ice stones*

*Ice stones.*

In situ Installation.

Paris, Canal St. Martin

December 2017

Masaru Emoto studies this in his research on water. Considering that we are 70 percent water, this liquid also alters according to the information we receive (Emoto, 2003). In other words, the characteristic of our water is modified. The information we give to the water changes its characteristic. This is also why words change us and we are influenced by them. Emoto asserted that “water understands words”, and in his experiments he tried, for example, to put contrasting words into different containers of water. When he showed water the word ‘happiness’, crystals formed with beautiful shapes and diamond-like cuts. On the other hand, when he put the word “unhappiness” into another container of water, the crystals were broken and imbalanced. Continuing this research, he carried out several experiments with opposing words (well done/no good, like/dislike, power/powerless, peace/war). The water seemed to correctly understand the essence of what was shown to it, i.e., the shape of the crystals was its response to the written words.



Fig.3 *Ice stones*

The essence of the human being is water; thus, we are affected by the information we receive and the quality of our water can deteriorate or improve. This also explains that the mental information we give or receive can heal or make us sick, altering the quality of the liquid matter in our organism.

The first practice experimentation I did around the element of water was *Ice Stones*, in the context of a residency at the Art Centre La Centrale in Paris in December 2017 where I performed infusions with flowers and herbs and transformed them into ice sculptures. I decided to situate the “ice sculptures” in a public context, doing a site-specific action that took place at Canal St. Martin, Paris. I spread out the “ice stones”, then I made a kind of tower and at the end I let them melt into the canal. The final action was a way to connect the ice stones as “water fragments” with a bigger body of water situated in the world; the river/canal, connecting the microbody with a macrobody. This action revealed the fluid matter of water, where the block of ice becomes liquid while it’s melting and, at the end, disappears into the current of the canal.

With this first approximation of the matter of water in its different states, I turned my attention to the capacity of transformation of this element. Their plasticity gave me the opportunity to create forms from a liquid base, which then became almost a solid material as a block of ice. I also developed a desire to experiment with the influence of temperatures in this process of transformation - water reacting to heat to become steam, ice when it freezes and also melts if heated again. I reflected on how this element is present in our body and how these ice sculptures were an external projection of human corporeality.

I decided to continue researching the element of water in other scales and contexts, generating experiences with participants.



Fig.4 *Ice Stones*  
In situ Installation.  
Paris, Canal St. Martin  
December 2017  
Video documentation:  
<https://vimeo.com/688869531>





Fig.5 Ice Stones

*Ice Stones*

In situ Installation.  
Paris, Canal St. Martin  
December 2017

Alongside Taoist meditation practices I began to discover the transformation of energy, emotional states, and life force. I also experienced the transformation of physical and visible matter through water. In this sense, my alchemical experiments were a way of materialising my physical experiences of energetic transformation in my corporeality. I have named 'hydroalchemy' the exercise of making visible through ice, water, and steam, the changes of matter through temperatures, and the information that begins to become part of these liquids. I was doing the latter through the transmission of knowledge and stories that I was collecting from medicinal plants. In this way, the words I was directing at each concoction or ice sculpture contained the meaning that I orally shared with the audience.

Another aspect I developed further was the connection of sound stimuli using water as a propagation surface. Understanding that we are water and that sound can be propagated through this medium, the invisible sound material became a fundamental aspect of touching

the participants' corporalities. Sound waves affect the water inside us, that's why we are so sensitive to sound. Songs can alter our mood and emotions, they can make us irritable, emotional, happy, or melancholic. In musical terms there are certain technical principles regarding how harmony can achieve an emotive quality. And from a more therapeutic point of view there is currently a mass of work with sound baths and quartz bowls to "massage the body" through sound.

Emoto also conducted an experiment in which he used different containers of water and stimulated each one with different types of music. In the images he took, he shows the difference between the crystals and the diverse shapes he produced according to the sound information. We vibrate, we resonate, what we hear enters our waters and affects us emotionally.

In this therapeutic area, liminal between art and therapy, I encountered Lygia Clark's work (Brazil, 1920-1988). I became captivated by her work in Paris. The artist had lived in the city whilst exiled between 1968 and 1976. Her work was well recognised in France and in the Department of Dance of Paris 8; she was a fundamental reference in the discussion on corporality and perception. In the beginning, I was attracted by the perceptual challenges posed by her proposals in terms of being a manifestation of the influence that external stimuli may have and how they have the potential to trigger our mental information and alter our energy. This can be seen especially in Clark's recent works, which can be described as a practice that intersects clinical, aesthetic, and political aspects (Rolnik, 2007) that put corporality and experience at the centre of experimentation. Objects become instruments to activate bodily sensations, which consecutively activates the subjectivity and unconscious memory of the subjects involved. The information that is transferred through relational objects exerts an influence on the corporality of people in which the limits of the body are also put into question, generating a confusion between the inside and the outside.

From the beginning of the 1970s, while Clark was exiled in Paris, she oriented her art research under influences informed by psychology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, and phenomenology. Her latest creations such as *Corpo Coletivo* [Collective Body] (early 1970s) and *Objetos Relacionais* [Relational Objects] (1970s-1980s) are on the border between art and therapy and create collective, small group or pair experiences. In *Estruturação do Self* [Structuring the Self] (1976-1988) the experiences she created became more radical, consisting of one-to-one sessions between Clark and her clients.

Through the term "vivências", Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica refer to their art experiences. "Vivências" can be described as the body's heightened sensory presence as authentic,

immediate, and resistant to ideological capture (Bishop, 2006). Furthermore, Michele Williams Gamaker expresses that *vivências* refers to knowledge through direct experience, as a means to offer the spectator the opportunity to become an active, semantically engaged participant (Williams Gamaker, 2012).

The experiment of generating experiences is a more radical twist from a somatic perspective by placing the participants at the centre of interest. Rancière has pointed out that the spectator is an emancipated being for whom seeing becomes an action and therefore acquires an active role, and positions are distributed with respect to the author/issuer. In line with this, the positions of the student and the teacher are involved in an active role. The students are not understood as passive beings but as someone who interacts internally with the information and stimuli they are receiving. The person has the capacity to observe, select, compare, and interpret (Rancière, 2011). Relating and storing information is part of the perceptual and interpretative activation that involves spectators. In Clark's case, this operation has to do with corporeality in the context of the process of interaction with matter. This implies a rational or mental exercise that has its origin in a somatic experience, providing singularity to the experience of each participant. Sometimes this experience cannot be put into words, thus being untranslatable into oral or written language.

In the letters between Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica (1968-69), the artists reflect on authorship in the context of participatory art. They argue that through the process of participation, the person becomes an author, and the role of the artist who conceives the work, is less relevant than the experience of the participator. For Oiticica, the artist cannot preview the participation because each person has their own way of behaving and experiencing, which is something that the creator will never access. Clark values the authorship of the participator and celebrates the fact that they can create their own interpretation and that the experience speaks to the person. In this way, she takes some distance from her authorship, giving more importance to the proposal itself, affirming that the work must be reconstructed many times. She highlights the idea of openness, which allows many forms of participation and interpretation:

True participation is open, and we will never be able to know what we give to the spectator-author. It is precisely because of this that I speak of a well, from inside which a sound will be taken, not by the you-well but by the other, in the sense that he throws his own Stone (...) And the more diverse the lived experiences are, *the more open is the proposition* and it is therefore more important (Moma [ed.], 2014, 114).

The viewers become "participators" in the field of experience. When their action takes place, the proposition is completed. In Clark's work, she is part of the *vivências*; the artist researcher,

the person who participates and the objects that allow the proposition to take place. More than an author, she calls herself a "proposer" and her art become a proposition where the sense of aliveness and sensing the present moment are fundamental. The idea of transformation, of constant change, is the difference between an act and an object. Clark "managed to redefine art not as a static object but as what she coined a *proposicao* (proposition), tied to the act of making something, an event taking place in the now. 'The only thing that matters,' she wrote, 'is the act-in-progress'" (Moma [ed.], 2014, 254).

The mobile and transformative character of an act makes the difference with the consideration of a static and fixed art in an object. The object is always in relation to an act, to feeling perceived by the person who is receiving the stimuli. There is always a sense of variability, according to how the person is feeling and thinking that day and in that specific moment. As Clark expresses, each experience at each time occurs in an unrepeatable way. She wants to avoid schematising anything "for me it is not about the moment of chance but the 'fruit' of the moment. Fruit in the fruit sense, such as the flavour and the sensuality of eating, of living this moment" (Moma [ed.], 2014, 110).

In Clark's work, the importance of considering sensuality and sensoriality explains the non-dichotomous separation of body and mind. She describes action as involving thinking, sensing, and feeling. Specifically in her last period of work related to *Estruturação do Self* [Structuring the Self] which she developed in Rio de Janeiro between 1976 up to her death in 1988, her work shifted. The device and objects she used ventured to the idea of *proposition*. She aimed to highlight the feeling of the participator or client: "All these things are only propositions. They are not a work of art; it is the moment of the act of feeling that is important, nothing more" (Clark, in Moma [ed.], 2014, p. 243).

In this period the objects she used shifted from being "sensory" to being "relational", this intention functioning "as part of a true therapeutic treatment aimed at structuring the self" (Moma [ed.], 2014). In this context, the use of the object has a therapeutic intention by becoming a healing prop. The field of perception is at the centre of Clark's research concerning the relationship between corporeality and objects. The participant becomes an agent of a perception defined by the act (Moma [ed.], 2014). Regarding the configurations and role of this triangular structure, Clark's position functions as a mediator between her *Objetos Relacionais* and the clients. As Williams-Gamaker expresses, this position as a mediator moves away from the category of performance artist "towards the artist as a catalyst to enable participants' intangible experiences to be articulated" (Williams Gamaker, 2012, 6).

The *relational object* interacts with the living body of the participant, the object activates human

perception producing memory, subjectivity, thinking, feelings; all these materials constitute part of a healing process.

The implications of this practice make us remove certain parameters of the perceptible. Our corporeality is shaped by cultural parameters that condition our way of perceiving. As we become adults, our ways of interpreting the world become increasingly pigeonholed. It is even more limited when we find ourselves in a closed environment where the familiar can restrict our possibilities of considering what is around us.

In my case, from a more general perspective, the estrangement of the familiar and the shifting of perceptual parameters has been mainly explored by inhabiting different territories. The notion of experiences proposed by Clark and Oiticia in an aesthetic context also makes sense to me when facing and being part of new contexts or ecosystems, composed by the interweaving of different human cultures as well as the encounter and exchange with other species and other-than-human entities. Living in unfamiliar places stirs diverse areas that go through the somatic, psychological, emotional, and mental realms.

Urban landscapes and rural geographies have such different qualities that affect us; moreover, they propose different rhythms, schedules, speeds, and different ways of travelling and of going from one space to another. Variables can be as basic as temperature, climate, the quality of the air we breathe, the water and the source that hydrates us, the proximity or distance to a mountain, a park, a forest, a river, a canal, the sea. What do we hear, what sound do we wake up to? That of the buses, the horns, or that of the movement of the trees with the wind, the singing of the birds? Darkness and light affect our energy as well, like plants. These characteristics, when modified alter us. We are not indifferent to these changes, they determine our feeling of the world. Then, from a more complex sensory level, experiencing a new territory offers us smells, condiments, and local foods which constitute the cultural characteristics of that environment. Therefore, we start becoming part of that place; we are what we eat, what we breathe, the water that we drink.

By confronting other cultural spheres, I have been able to recognise a greater plasticity in my levels of adaptation, situating myself in a new context activates a play of perceptions that transforms me and widens the field of the possible. A more explicit way of understanding the dynamics of perception in the interaction of the known with the unknown is what Hubert Godard describes through the distinction between "le regard subjectif" (the subjective gaze) and "le regard objectif" (the objective gaze). The subjective gaze refers to when the person melts in the context; the sensorial information circulates not necessarily as consciousness and interpreted material, in contrast to the objective gaze, framed by the history of perception of



the individual, their biography, and cultural apprehensions.

As Godard says, when we become adults it is more difficult to develop this subjective gaze due to the history of our perception. We have fixed associations to things in the world and we project the same interpretation each time in relation to the filter of our history. Coming back to the work of Clark, her work can be seen as a kind of revolution for this subjective gaze, allowing the imagination to be activated.

A dynamic between the two gazes operates in Clark's work; objective and subjective, where the objective gives a certain security associated with what is known, and the subjective opens new ways of perception. There is a going back and forth between these two gazes. The subjective gaze is situated in the experience itself and related to the proprioception, which differs from a regime of interpretation based on words responding to the logic of language. Through the subjective gaze, the perception could go into unknown places/otherness, detached from the named understanding. This could be described as a space of suspension and emptiness that has the potential to be filled by something new. The different senses, including the proprioception, participate in the experience and the combination of them allows for a more complex state towards what Suely Rolnik calls the 'resonant body'.

While it is possible to extrapolate the concepts surrounding Clark's work to a broader context such as changing habitat and the stimulation that comes with that feeling, Clark's work operates in a given context, with a protocol of participation and following a specific sensory regime that considers a separation from the everyday habitat. Suely Rolnik proposes the notion of resonant body, which dialogues with the aforementioned subjective and objective gaze.

Rolnik especially considers the term 'resonant body' in the practice of *Structuring the Self*. Through it, Rolnik determines two capacities. The first capacity is often seen as "polysensorial experiments" where the perception and sensorial plays an important role, whereas the second capacity is considered the 'resonant body' acquiring a "live existence that runs through our bodies, integrating its sensible texture and pushing us toward a becoming-other (...) it is the whole body which has the power to be receptive to the forces of its otherness, to be vulnerable to them" (Rolnik, 2007, 8).

Rolnik argues that Clark's experimental practices went beyond a physical and sensorial research; "Though it is true that they also muster up all our sense organs, it is more in order to mobilise the two capacities that they embody as well as the unavoidable paradox that underscores their relationship" (Rolnik, 2007, 29). The first capacity has to do with perception, where we create representations related to the relationship between forms and meanings. This

capacity is associated with language, with a need to understand the exterior world through objective communication. This is shaped by our history and familiar surroundings that allow us to feel we live in a known context. Rolnik described it as a cartography of forms that can be associated with available representations, projecting the latter onto the former to objectify them and give them meaning. It is this capacity of the sensible that enables us to maintain the current map of representations in such a way that we can move about in a known landscape, where things remain in their place, with a minimum amount of stability (Rolnik, 2007).

The second capacity corresponds to the forces of sensations that we experience in a somatic way. This is not codified by words and it is not related to the person's history and understanding of meanings. In this second capacity, the subject melts with the object, their separation with the surroundings dissolves and the otherness becomes part of the corporeality. This way the person feels, in the form of sensations, the intensity of the forces of the other and is vulnerable and receptive to this force. This capacity is linked neither to the history of the subject nor to language and thus, what is apprehended is neither interpreted nor charged with meaning. "Thus, the other acquires a living existence that runs through our bodies, integrating its sensible texture and pushing us toward a becoming-other. In this case, the figures of subject and object dissolve - as does everything that separates our bodies from the world" (Rolnik, 2007, 32).

The relationship between these two capacities is paradoxical. Due to them being modes of apprehension of reality, which take different directions, there is friction which is not negative. On the contrary, it has generative consequences, it mobilises and drives the power of the creative imagination (Rolnik, 2007).

The concept of resonant body refers to the complex articulation that occurs when perceiving multiple sensations in an environment that is dissimilar to one we consider familiar, and how this phenomenon allows a friction between the known and the unknown to be unleashed. By stepping away from the recognisable, a creative mental process occurs in terms of the expressions that can result from translation of this experience into language. This renewal on a bodily level accommodates forms of expression that put into crisis the references and associations previously known, thus inscribing new ways of naming.

From Rolnik's perspective, the new sensations that are embodied in our sense-based texture need to be expressed, and it is not possible to express these new sensations that emerge through the familiar representations available in the first capacity, which is related to language and words. The discomfort of the unnamed and the crisis of references have a force of action; "to which that compels us to invent new forms of expression" (Rolnik, 2007, 32).

While Clark's work has therapeutic consequences and takes place in a particular organisation set, I consider that situating ourselves in territories, human and non-human landscapes that differ from our familiarity may also lead to expanding and transforming our notions of the perceivable and interpretable. The geography of the comprehensible and the feelable is alterable, the friction of our corporeality with the environment puts our considerations in crisis and has the creative potential to reinvent us.

My artistic intention to create installation as environments relates to my desire to offer a space that has the potential to transform our perception and expand the imagination and interpretation of the people who participate in them. After I completed *Ice Stones*, I made a couple of installations in small format at Goldsmiths University (December 2017, March 2018) where I continued experimenting with the element of water in its different states, as well as developing research on medicinal plants and herbs. At the beginning, I was more focused on the capacity of the herbs, flowers, and plants in transforming the colour and smell of the water. Later on I decided to approach their healing capacity for human health.

In these experiences, I also began to experiment with the relationship and interaction with those who were invited to the installation. At the beginning I didn't reflect much on our positions (me as the guiding person and the participant) and the participation in itself. My method of approach was ludic and spontaneous but also a bit naive and sometimes not very caring. That is how I realised the relevancy of the subject that I needed to give more attention and direction to.

After these two small events, I decided to work in more detail on these aspects: the power of medicinal plants, and the relationship with the participants.

Regarding the area of medicinal plants, I approached the subject of alchemy, which is a wide field and has been studied and practiced by many authors from Western and non-Western approaches for a long time. Alchemy, in a general sense and from a Western viewpoint, is associated with the quest of the Philosopher's Stone, which transmutes base metals into gold but is also associated with the art of holistic medicine. In my research I didn't work with metals, but with medicinal herbs and flowers, looking at their healing properties, creating potions, as well as creating matter that can transform from liquid state into ice or steam.

Due to the many texts and currents that discuss alchemy, I decided to focus my research on two aspects. Firstly, the relationship between alchemy and medicine, which is the creation of healing potions. Secondly, the metaphysical proposal of alchemy, seen from a Jungian perspective through the relationship between physical and metaphysical aspects in alchemy.

When I create the infusions or potions, the alchemical process occurs when the herbs and flowers are absorbed into the water as infusions or tisane. This ancient healing knowledge is understood as the property that each medicinal flower and herb holds of containing subtler energies that are released through the connection with water and which have the potential to affect corporeality on different levels; the power to strengthen and tone certain organs; as systems that can be used as medicine for any illness; and, their capacity to balance humours and restore equilibrium.

Alchemy and medicine are closely connected. The definition of the word Alchemy (äl' ké mi) in the *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* says:

The derivation of this word is obscure: *al* is the Arabic article the, and *kimia* the Arabic form of the Greek *chemia* which seems to have meant "Egyptian art"; hence "the art of the Egyptians". Its main objects were the transmutations of baser metals into gold, and the search for the PHILOSOPHER'S STONE, the universal solvent or ALKAHEST, the PANACEA, and the ELIXIR OF LIFE. It was the forerunner of the science of chemistry.<sup>3</sup>

As the alchemical researcher, writer, and practicing alchemist Guy Ogilvy says:

One of the main subjects of the Hermetic<sup>4</sup> is medicine, and in a series of texts Hermes instructs Asclepius, the semi-divine healer of Greek mythology (...). Thus all alchemists, as "Sons and Daughters of Hermes" consider themselves healers and often refer to the stone itself as the Universal Medicine (Ogilvy, 2006, 16).

The holistic medicine used by the alchemist concerns the study of medicinal herbs and plants, which considers the whole process of transformation of this plant but from the very beginning takes into account the plant in itself. Ogilvy comments:

The first thing to be healed by the alchemist is the very thing from which a medicine is made. In making a medicine from rosemary, for example, the alchemist seeks to perfect

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<sup>3</sup> *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. E. Cobham Brewer (Ebenezer Cobham), Ivor H Evans (Ivor Henry), Centenary edition. Publisher London, Cassell, 1970. P.20

<sup>4</sup> The term Hermetic is from the medieval Latin *hermeticus*, which is derived from the name of the Greek god Hermes, who was the emissary and messenger of the gods, he is described as moving freely between the worlds of the mortal and divine. Hermeticism, also called Hermetism, is a religious, philosophical, and esoteric tradition based primarily upon writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus ("thrice-greatest Hermes"). These writings have greatly influenced the Western esoteric tradition and were considered to be of great importance during both the Renaissance and the Reformation.

Much of the importance of Hermeticism arises from its connection with the development of science during the period 1300 to 1600 AD. The prominence it gave to the idea of influencing or controlling nature led many scientists to look to magic and its allied arts (e.g., alchemy, astrology) which, it was thought, could put nature to the test by means of experiments.

the plant itself. While a chemist might consider the resulting potion simply a combination of purified compounds from a dead plant, to the alchemist it represents the very idea of the rosemary (Ogilvy, 2006, 16).

This is to understand the importance of each plant, their characteristics, and their family and then consider the terrain within which they grow, how much it has been watered, and the specific care that each plant requires to then be collected and used with the purpose of healing. In order to gain a deep understanding of the plants' properties it is necessary to see, not just their chemical components, but also the metaphysical principles upon which the alchemical philosophy is based.

I have been reflecting, experimenting, and researching the connection between medicine and the plants and their energy as beings growing from the earth, with specific conditions. A plant that grows in the city is not the same as one that grows in the forest. The water that waters them is not the same. The plant changes according to their surroundings, the way it grows, and the caring process that surrounds it.

I have used diverse plants for the different events. The alchemical matter I created have different plants origins. Some were purchased from shops, others from a special place such as the forest, the mountains, or a community garden, and some from my garden. These plants were from different territories and soils. Each had their own history that charges the matter, I am creating with energy and medicine. I have taken into account the origin of the water and of each plant in the creation of matter.

For my practice I have been using alchemical principles, working, at the same time, with the material and immaterial, physical and metaphysical, chemical and philosophical. Regarding the relationship between physical and metaphysical aspects in alchemy, this area of research involves the basis of alchemy, which is the union between philosophy and chemistry. In my research I have been looking at Jung's perspective and interpretation of alchemy, considering the union between these two forces, the matter, the physics, and the empiricism of chemistry with the metaphysical and the mystical philosophy content. From Jung's perspective, the alchemists, in their alchemical process and labour, dealt with the projection of psychic contents into the matter.

In this context it is important to mention the union between Hermetic philosophy and chemistry, which is the basis of alchemy. In the course of the eighteenth century, this union became very fragile; causing the separation of philosophy and natural science and thus the art of alchemy began to decay. This division is associated with the rationality of modern Western thinking and

the spirit of enlightenment of this historical period. Alchemy, as Jung explains, perished into its own obscurity:

Its method of explanation - "obscurum per obscurius, ignotum per ignotius" (the obscure by the more obscure, the unknown by the more unknown) - was incompatible with the spirit of enlightenment and particularly with the dawning science of chemistry towards the end of the century (Jung, 1980, 243).

The union between these two forces, the matter, the physics and the empiricism of chemistry with the metaphysical and the mystical philosophy contents, was the central characteristic of the alchemical process, giving space to a projection of the psychic contents of the alchemist into the matter. In the pinnacle of the practice of alchemy:

The mind of the alchemist was still grappling with the problems of matter, when the exploring consciousness was confronted by the dark void of the unknown, in which figures and laws were dimly perceived and attributed to matter although they really belonged to the psyche. Everything unknown and empty is filled with psychological projection; it is as if the investigator's own psychic background were mirrored in the darkness. What he sees in matter, or thinks he can see, is chiefly the data of his own unconscious which he is projecting into it. In other words, he encounters in matter, as apparently belonging to it, certain qualities and potential meanings of whose psychic nature he is entirely unconscious. This is particularly true of classical alchemy, when empirical science and mystical philosophy were more or less undifferentiated (Jung, 1980, 243).

The description that Jung provides, relating the way of projecting unconscious with matter in classical alchemy is not my method of exploring alchemy. The relationship between material and immaterial, physical and metaphysical in my practice has to do with connecting to matter metaphysical content related to the Tao system and ethnobotany. I have been researching stories and legends on plants and water from different traditions; Western, non-Western, popular, and indigenous stories. At my events I share these contents with the participants through storytelling, the use of words, and soundscapes.

Using alchemical principles within a context and frame of art experience, my aim was to return to this foundation of connecting metaphysical content with matter, giving it certain qualities and potential meaning that opens up imagination and association amongst the participants.

In January 2019, I created the installation experience, *Melting Forms*, in Casa O de Lastarria

in Santiago de Chile. Continuing with the alchemical phenomenon of transforming the element of water into different states - solid, gaseous, and liquid - I delved deeper into the alchemical process of exploring with medicinal herbs and flowers. For this event I looked at the metaphysical capacity of plants to balance humours and restore equilibrium, looking at the connection between the emotional and psychic systems with the energy coming from the environment, manifested through the flowers and herbs as beings growing from the earth.

I made an alchemical table with different infusions, and the sculptures on ice were made with diverse infusions and plants. Exploring the possibility of "sculpting" the water through ice, I created a special cast. Two large sculptures were placed in the centre of the room, and I gave those attending small sculptures to place in a structure that was installed in the space.

For this event, I combined different media such as sculpture, storytelling, sound, and light. Regarding the connection with the audience, I was very conscious to offer a multisensorial experience by integrating temperatures, odours, and tastes that stimulate a wide range of perceptions in the audience. I wanted to create a space where my participation and the elements I placed in the space activate the audience, and the audience, in turn, activate the experience. Proposing an environment where the articulation of the relationships between the people who were part of this experience, framed the event as a social practice. The device functions as an active environment that allows the participants to navigate different states, disparate forces, and crossed intensities. It was a hot summer day and participants were happy to have ice in their hands and they touched, smelled, and sucked the sculptures with great pleasure. I knew many of the people who participated. The ambience was distended and friendly, people participated easily.

I framed a set of rules; forming groups, giving tasks to the participants to activate the installation, and proposing that they experience the smell and taste of the matter. I also integrated spoken words, talking about the power of plants to heal our emotional imbalance. The storytelling and the work with words was focused on the element of water in connection with the colour blue and the feeling of fear that is part of the Tao system. During the event I mentioned and highlighted the emotional influence of the following plants. Dandelion - this herb is useful for emotional stagnation, turning depression into expression and self-empowerment; Elderflower: - this will help to remove fear and bring clarity, easing worries and night fears; Lavender - this brings relaxation, a deeper state of meditation, trance states; Lemon balm - this drives away all troubles and cares, lifts the spirits, and eases depression, opening the heart and increasing mental stamina; Marigold - this will bring comfort to the spirit. It has a soothing effect following shock, trauma, and anger; Yarrow - this protects the aura. During the event, some of these phrases were mentioned and the reflection was on the connection

between the herbs and the magic of alter emotional and psychological states.

With this event I realised that my practice research opened up a space of community, experimenting bringing together a space and time that depends on the participation of each person in the room. It opened up an experience with the potential to heal, in relation to diverse aspects; the connection with medicinal plants and diverse kinds of water, the reflection around organic matters, a space for community, and from a personal experience, the words and texts invited the opening up of memories and imagination. In that sense, I became more aware of the potential to offer an experience that can transform the state of the person as the ice sculpture melted during the installation.

The combination of matter that constituted the installation were dissimilar; organic plants, different kinds of water, and integrated plastic materials; inflatable plastic receptacles and silicone. In this way the event was a combination of natural and artificial elements, plastic and other cheap materials as well as herbal healing plants. This juxtaposition, contrast, and even contradiction was a gesture of an extension of the culture I live and the planet that accumulates plastic with the many packages we consume. I used the same receptacle for the next event, *Transforming matters*, with the intention to recycle and reuse the same elements and matters in different versions.



Fig.6 *Melting Forms*  
Installation, art experience  
Santiago, January 2019





Fig.7 Melting Forms





Fig.8 *Melting Forms*

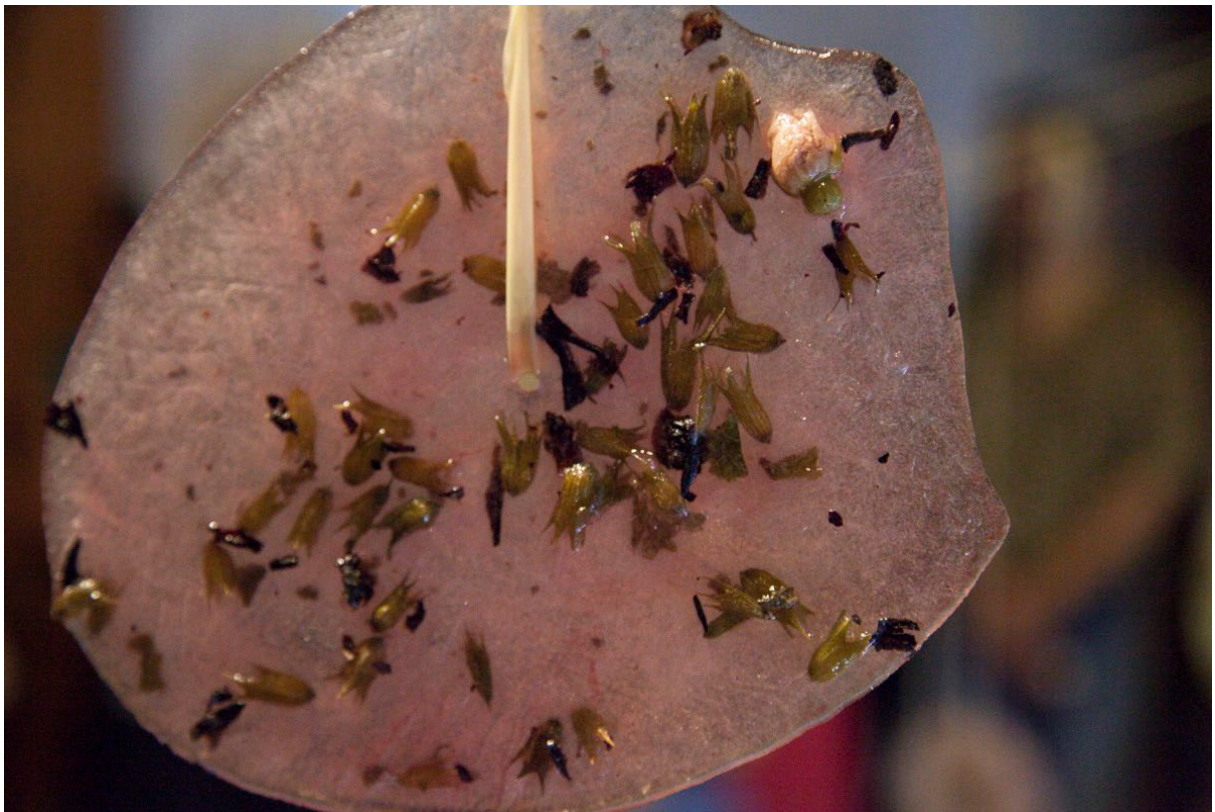


Fig.9 *Melting Forms*  
Installation, experiential event  
Santiago, January 2019



Fig.10 *Melting Forms*



Fig.11 *Melting Forms*



Fig.12 *Melting Forms*





Fig.13 *Melting Forms*

*Melting Forms*  
Installation, experiential event  
Santiago, January 2019

### ***Melting Forms***

Was an installation - experience made in the context of the art cycle PARALEL-O at the gallery of the Cultural Centre Casa O de Lastarria in Santiago de Chile, in January 2019.

More information: <http://josefinacamus.com/project/17/melting-forms/>

Video invitation to the event: <https://vimeo.com/310568382>

Short video of the experience: <https://vimeo.com/339322363>

Long video of the experience: <https://youtu.be/rX4lel166TY>

Images: Lorena Ormeño and Mila Ercoli



Fig.14



Fig.15

Experiential Installation  
Goldsmiths University  
December, 2017



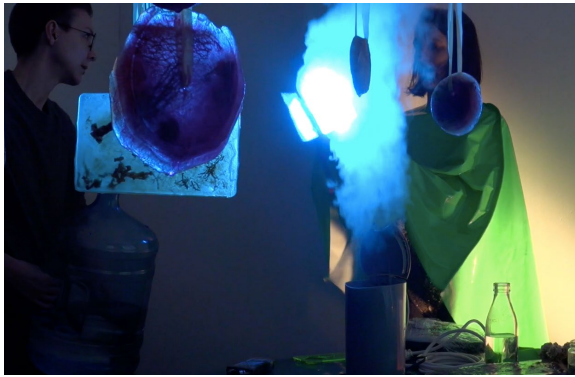


Fig.16



Fig.17

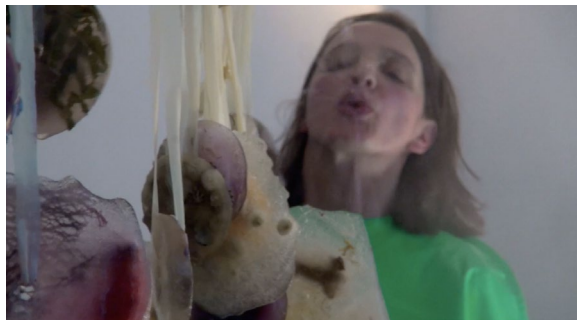


Fig. 18



Fig. 19

*Panacea*, Experiential Installation  
Goldsmiths University, March 2018

## Chapter 2

### **SECOND TERRITORY**

#### CULTURAL SURROUNDINGS: HYBRIDITY, DISPLACEMENT, DISLOCATION.

South American, Latin American, is what I am. It is a filter that has been present in my life in Europe. My first years in Paris (2013-14) were marked by the cultural adaptation that learning a new language entails. Accepting the awkwardness of not making myself understood, my personality wrapped in a forced shyness and insecurity, in a silence full of imagination and, as the Chilean poet Enrique Lihn would say:

"I never left the horror of Chile  
my trips that are not imaginary  
late, yes —moments of a moment—  
they didn't uproot me from the terrain  
remote and presumptuous  
(...)  
Other languages inspire a sacred resentment:  
the fear to lose the mother tongue  
all the reality. I never left anything

Enrique Lihn, *A partir de Manhattan*

I was constantly comparing and observing the differences between a poor country such as Chile (which, before the social crisis of 2019, seemed like the richest country in Latin America) and the comforts of a rich country in Europe; the social benefits, the way of life, the policies of "social justice" as well as the interculturality manifested in the diversity of races, smells, colours, privileges, political refugees, and education systems. At the time I was studying my master's degree in Paris 8. I commuted from my bourgeois bohemian gentrified neighbourhood of the IX arrondissement in Couronnes near Belleville by taking the metro line 2 to Saint Dennis. When you travel on line 13, you must make peace with boarding the carriage and being trapped like a sardine until you get to the last metro station. In Saint Dennis you are no longer in the bourgeoisie/aristocracy of the Eiffel Tower, nor in the Île de Saint-Louis crossing the Seine, but rather in a more diverse context, more popular. Paris 8 is a public university that has basic infrastructure, broken toilets, and no toilet paper. There, you pay 250 Euros in annual fees, something unthinkable in Chile as most students get into debt to access higher education.

During the first months in Paris, I felt I was behind a glass looking through the veil of my culture, my history, and my curious desire to discover the world. What was beyond the horror of Chile? So many stimuli were circulating around me, and I enjoyed immersing myself in this perceptual disorientation.

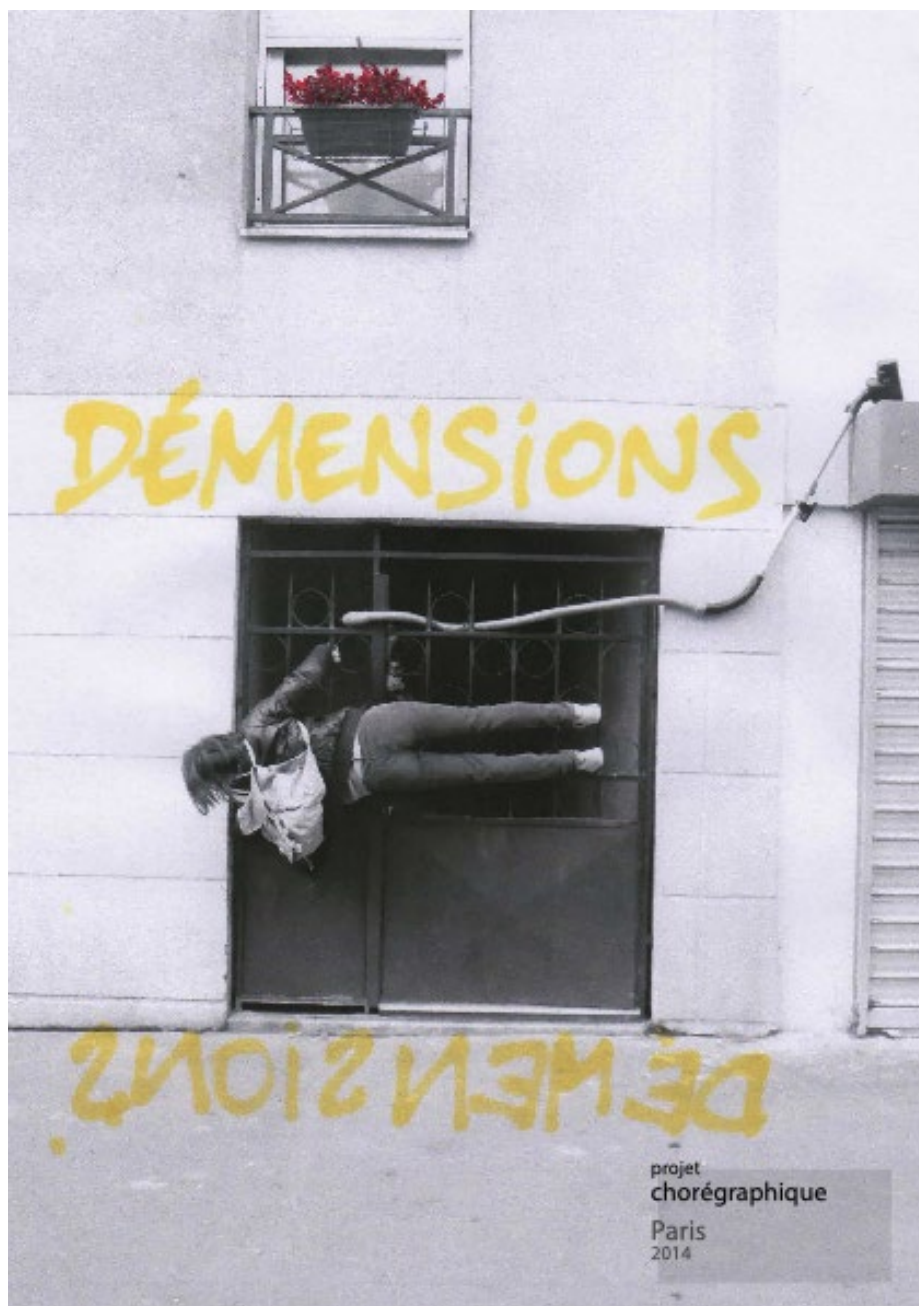


Fig. 20 Logbook *Dimensions*



# LIDIAN-DO

LUTTER

[LUTTER]



Rue des Pyrénées (Paris 19e)  
Sortie collective 1er février 2014

DEALING WITH THE  
LIMITS (OF MAN MADE  
SPACE)  
[LIMITS]

Dealing with the limits (of man made space) - (LIMITS)  
Gordon Matta Clark  
Fichas de arte  
1970 - 1978

# CON LOS LIMITES

[AVEC LES LIMITES]

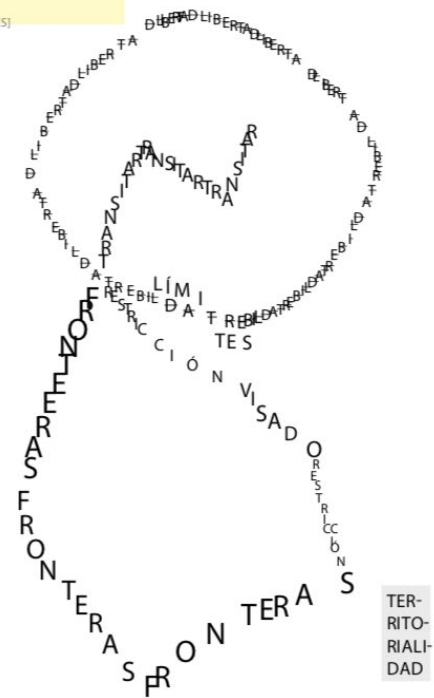


Fig. 21 Logbook Dimensions

La tristeza de no poseer este idioma.

La alegría que sienten las palabras al coincidir con su lengua,  
Ese despliegue de la voz como la cola de un pavo real  
después de extrañar todas sus plumas.

Alojado en una lengua extranjera como en un hotel al que justo  
se llega a ocupar el más pequeño cubículo  
las palabras que no llegan nunca en le momento oportuno  
sino algunas horas más tarde pero sin efecto retroactivo  
y nunca para evitar la decepción de una cita.

Enrique Lihn  
París, situación irregular - 1976

Extracto de "ESPEJOS SOJEPES"

TODA LENGUA ES SIEMPRE EXTRANJERA

Mas allá de una relevante descoordinación entre lengua y paladar,  
una garganta insonora,  
y la imaginación alojada en el pequeño cubículo de mi francés

la orquesta idiomática en el metro de París  
la palabra = materia sonora

A P A R T E

de toda comunicación  
oído sin entendimiento  
chino, árabe, japonés, dialectos africanos, alemán...  
saboreo el ritmo mientras le robo un verso a Lihn:

"Toda lengua es siempre extranjera"

Fig. 22 Logbook Dimensions

At the time, I completed a project called *Demensions*, which was a six-month residency at Le 6B in Saint Dennis. Throughout this period, I walked the streets of Paris, especially around my neighbourhood. I undertook a practice - the premise was to collect abandoned objects in the streets, reorganise them, and relocate them in the public space by making ephemeral micro-installations. The passers-by reacted, interacted, conversed, got angry, laughed, were disconcerted, asked questions. To dislocate, to re-do. Throughout this process my French was precarious, I could not engage in conversations with people. For this reason I was exploring communicating beyond words, challenging perception, the limits of the recognisable and the new, the non-decodable, observing reactions without everything being translated into the logos, leaving that space for play which, in turn, has a political dimension as it occurs in public space, giving rise to questions such as what is public and what is private? Actions such as occupying the pavement outside a shop, interrupting passage with an object, and creating a tower with books and abandoned objects start causing friction in the limits between understanding and not understanding; thus changing the references of the perceptible and sensible, as Rancière would say.



Fig.23



Fig.24



Fig.25

*Démensions*, Paris 2014

More about the Project:

<http://josefinacamus.com/project/10/demensions-dans-la-rue/>

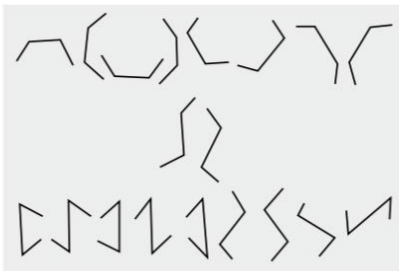
This practice was a mirror of my own sensitivity to this new environment where I was inserting myself, in which what is known ceases to be such, opening a range of possibilities to interact with a new reality.

## DEVENIR

EL DEVENIR  
IR

DE LA I MPRO VISA CIÓN  
DE L' I MPRO VISATION  
PRE S EN TE  
PRE S EN T

ICI ET MAIN TENANT  
TENIR AHORA  
HORA



## D E M E N - SIONS



Square Samuel de Champlain (Paris 20e)  
Sortie du 23 octobre 2013 avec Francisca Crisostomo

THE STATE OF BECOMING  
CONDITIONS ...  
THE TRANSFORMATION  
FROM TWO TO MORE DEMENTIONS

The state of becoming conditions... the transformation from two more  
dementions  
Gordon Matta Clark  
Fichas de arte  
1970 - 1978

Fig. 26 Logbook Dimensions

The Paris that I experienced shifted between being a babysitter of St. Luis Island, rehearsing at le 6B, Mains d'oeuvre, Micadanses, going dancing at the Ménagerie de Verre, studying at Paris 8, going to the gay parties of the 11th arrondissement, and having picnics at the Saint Martin canal in spring and summer. Moving between different neighbourhoods, cultural centres, and educational centres meant discovering the complexity of Parisian society and the diversity, which did not necessarily imply mixing. You could be in different countries crossing from one neighbourhood to another, from one street to another, from one metro station to the next. It also evoked a feeling of being alien, exotic, migrant.

When I moved to England after living in France, I perceived new changes but the cosmopolitan and multicultural European culture was already more familiar to me. By the time I settled in London, my English accent was strongly influenced by the years I had lived in France. At the time, it was easier for me to speak in French than in English. I felt I was perceived more like "the Chilean who came from France" than just the Chilean. There were people who took for granted that I was French because of my accent and probably my way of dressing and gesticulating. This was also because my girlfriend was French and we had a tendency to influence each other and share the clothes we used to buy in the markets at the weekend.

My South American roots were always present in my rationality and relationality with the world in a more unconscious way, in my way of expressing myself spontaneously, in the proximity of human contact, in embracing and touching bodies, saying tender things almost excessively, but I did not know that a wound, related to identity, was forming.

Use of the term 'colonial wound' is in reference to the Bolivian sociologist, historian, and activist, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (La Paz, Bolivia, 1949) and her proposition that the biography is very important in order to explore the internal colonialism, to begin to recognise the moments where the colonial wound is infringed or received (Cusicanqui, 2018). My story is an accumulation of many contradictions that, in this research, I have been reflecting on as a means of increasing self-awareness, especially in situations where I have been in a place of privilege as well as others where I have felt oppressed by my gender, South American origin, non-Western knowledge, beliefs, and practice. This project caused me to reflect on the epistemologies that influence my education and perception, reflecting as well on the story of my family and ancestors. Seeking a decolonial position as an emancipatory option of acceptance of my history, this project reflects on the confrontations of Western and non-Western knowledge and practices, especially in relation to a somatic experience of encountering the territories.

When I reveal my contradictions, the moments of frustration, of conflict, of grief in this difficulty of acceptance, I am unveiling my history as a wound, not as something simple and easy to tell in this dissertation, but, much like Cusicanqui expressed. Opening up on my intimacy is exposing this wound.

Before I arrived in London, I had been in the city three times and had collaborated with my choreographer friend, P, who had lived in London for more than ten years. We did several residencies in Paris and London. With P, we practised yoga and meditation and she introduced me to Gong Bath. It seemed to me that the artistic culture of London to which she introduced me had a more evident approach to non-Western spiritualities than in France. I thought this was due to the influence of Indian culture in England, and French culture being hyper-rational, with everything entailing the word and the logos. Also, because at the Paris 8 art school, the dance department where I studied was totally theoretical. I was rigid with so much theory to understand the arts and life, this extreme intellectuality clashed with my Piscean sensibility, somewhat anarchic, artistic, South American, magical, of rituals and secret pacts, amulets, and energetic stones; so many beliefs and feelings that could not be structured in the intellectuality of the Western scientific European academy.

An identity cracked by the force of a tremor, an earthquake, a tsunami. In Chile, our geography, our history is marked by earthquakes, the instability of the earth and tremors are part of our life. In the same way, my sense of belonging was cracked by the transplants and structures I was trying to access. The encounter with Europe, where my small self becomes deformed, merges into the indeterminate, deconstructs and reconstructs itself by confronting the heterogeneous forces in which I transit, interact, surround myself and am a part of.

Chile is a young country, tremendously diverse in its landscape, from the north to the south, from the desert to the cold of the glaciers, from the Andean culture to the Mapuche and Kawésqar lands in the far south. We endure the heat, the dryness of the desert in the north and the cold, rain, and humidity of the south. We are so different. Germans and Swiss in the South of Chile; Frutillar, Valdivia, Puerto Varas, so many settlers came to cultivate these lands, to make beer, kuchen, sausages, industries. Races, skins, colours, languages, and histories crossed. The American model, the dictatorship and its neoliberal brick, an economy for the elites so they can have their big cars, shopping malls, avenues, and huge houses to live in like the gringos.

Moving throughout different sectors, letting myself get carried away by different rhythms, in a mixed society, a *ch'ixi* society, as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui would say. Cusicanqui proposes a decolonial vision of Bolivian identity. Her approach exposes the contradictions and difficulties of inhabiting a territory where the whitening European forces are in tension with the way of thinking and living of the ancestral and indigenous culture of the Abya Yala [the name given to America by its inhabitants before the European invasion].

Cusicanqui proposes the concept - metaphor *ch'ixi*, a word of Aymara origin, to refer to Bolivian identity, to her own identity, and to all those who identify with this word that does not designate a fixed category, but rather a state of becoming. As she states in her book *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible* (A *ch'ixi* world is possible) she learned this concept from Victor Zapana, a Copacabana-born Aymara sculptor who associates the *ch'ixi* with powerful animals which are both black and white or spotted. That is what their indeterminate condition does, it is what gives them their explosive force. *Ch'ixi* designates a grey colour product of the juxtaposition of white and black, it is a kind of vibration of visual perceptions that makes you think of a third colour but in reality they are two opposite colours that, from a distance, are seen as a third colour. Cusicanqui uses this term as a metaphor for the indeterminate, for an identity that accounts for stained, mixed, impure people.

*Ch'ixi* refers to a decolonised miscegenation, a contradictory juxtaposition of elements, it is neither black nor white, it is a variegated mixture, a union of opposites, which is and is not at the same time, an encounter without fusion where the parts do not lose their form or their powers. In this sense, Cusicanqui highlights a departure from the official way of talking about miscegenation, the essentialist forms of identity that have been functional to capitalism that seek to erase the conflict. Her proposal invites us, in my case South American women, to look at the contradictions that we live and perceive in ourselves. Each subjectivity navigates to conflicts, and she invites us to work on them so that their friction has sparks and the capacity to generate energy - that is it's a strength; a rebellious subjectivity.

*Ch'ixi* is not the comfort with which you receive and tolerate the aporias, the flagrant contradictions that are lived. It is, rather, the discomfort and the questioning that allows us to remove everything superfluous, the fallen leaves that are obstructing that shock and that almost electric, reverberant energy that allows us to coexist and inhabit with the contradiction (...) And that for me would be to recover those other ways to know, so that they coexist in the midst of their tensions, without fate being that one always has to beat the other<sup>5</sup> (Cusicanqui, 2018, 152, 153).

In my case, discomfort is an important word that is connected with a process of "dislocation" in relation to the movement of territories. Coming from South America and living in Europe, through this experience I have perceived my South American roots and I was not completely confident or comfortable with that; in part because of my accent, or because I didn't understand the language in its totality, but also because I was confused, I was in a state of vulnerability, fragility, and in a way, I felt minimised. I was a South American women migrant artist, but I was studying, I had a bursary, so I had some basic support and I was in a position of some "privilege" as immigrant, but in any case, I felt apart.

Cusicanqui states that in the official proposal of the mestizo, the bleached side always wins. Therefore, the author questions the official ideology of miscegenation that seeks to erase the memory of the colonial wound, forget the contradiction, and thereby postulate a harmonious confluence of the two poles; the Spanish, and the indigenous. Cusicanqui affirms that this process has taken place as a mode of whitening, criticising that "the elites cannot imagine or tolerate the reverse process, or perhaps they would despise it even more, because it would be

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<sup>5</sup> Original version: "*ch'ixi* no es la comodidad con la que recibes y toleras las aporías, las contradicciones flagrantes que se viven. Es mas bien la incomodidad y el cuestionamiento que permite sacar todo lo superfluo, la hojarasca que esta obstruyendo ese choque y esa energía casi eléctrica, reverberante, que permite convivir y habitar con la contradicción (...) Y eso para mi sería recuperar aquellos otros modos de saber, para que convivan en medio de sus tensiones, sin que el destino sea que uno tenga que ganarle siempre al otro".

a kind of voluntary regression”<sup>6</sup> (Cusicanqui, 2018,143). The *ch'ixi* means elevating the indigenous, oppressed and denied hidden side. Cusicanqui expresses that the Eurocentric culture in which we have grown up forces us to strengthen our European side and leads us to erase the indigenous side. In her proposal, she invites us to recover the Aymara and Quechua prominence of the cultures of the original peoples of Abya Yala. She even proposes to radicalise the indigenous aspect. According to her proposal, the feminine would also be under this European and patriarchal oppression, emphasising that the feminine is the suppressed, hidden side of our subjectivity.

Reading and listening to Cusicanqui (she highlights the importance of the oral transmission), I have been empowering my South American side and valuing it. Looking at my one story and the feeling of belonging to something that can be reached, that is a wound, is a contradictory feeling of fragility and empowerment. The same applies regarding feminism and my voice as a women artist, feeling less valued, less strong than my male colleagues, all of which was present in the way of speaking, of referring to things. I began to recognise my insecurity, not just as a personal situation or my personality or shyness, but as a political history in my somatic system. My South American condition, race, blood, history, as well as my feminine side, becomes not a space to hide, but a space to open up and delve deeper.

Is being South American a race? One day I went to a talk about racism at Siobhan Davies Studios in London. When the talk ended I greeted my European friend, Tamara, and she asked me if I considered myself to be a person of colour. I was not sure how to respond, because until that moment, for me my skin colour was white but my heritage wasn't white European. In that moment I realised that how people perceive me is not the same as how I perceive myself. If race can be understood as a social and cultural characteristic as well as ancestry, my race or ethnicity characteristic is South American.

As Cusicanqui mentions and as this dissertation explores, “being yourself is an important task” (Cusicanqui, 2018). Sometimes the mestizo feels very white, and in other situations “a gringo watches you and sees you as very cholo<sup>7</sup>, very black, and think that one is indio/a” (Cusicanqui, 2018) so you have complexities on both sides.

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<sup>6</sup> Original version: “las elites no pueden imaginar ni tolerar el proceso inverso, o quizás se lo despreciaría aun mas, porque seria una especie de regresión voluntaria”.

<sup>7</sup> The definition of "cholo" from the Dictionary of La Real Academia Española is: 1. Mestizo of European and indigenous blood. 2. Said of an American Indian that adopts Western uses.

Although I do not have a direct ancestral line that accounts for my indigenous mixed race status, belonging to the landscape and the land of the south of the continent results in me being mixed race insofar as it is situated in a culture and way of life that is expressed in everyday life. I feel the complexity and conflict of being white in Chile and not white in England and Europe.

The conflict of race has to do with the coloniality of power. As Anibal Quijano expresses, race is not a question of biological nature, it is an episteme produced by dominant groups, and it is anthropocentric.

When I reflect on my colonial wound, I am searching for alternative epistememes that can help me to allow a process of acceptance, which empowers me to navigate my cosmopolitan vision integrating those uncomfortable feelings.

The *ch'ixi* does not claim a reconciliation of opposites "it is not synthesis, nor is it hybridization, much less fusion. Opposites remain"<sup>8</sup> (Cusicanqui, 2018,148). The *ch'ixi* gesture arises from the recognition of the colonial fissure, of the internal rupture, realising the conflict of having a divided soul crossed by indigenous and European elements, and the difficulty of the weird mixture that is inhabited in these territories where both cultures are present.

In my case, I needed to connect with the internal fissure of not being an indigenous, and not being an European, and to realise that I am not white in Europe, because I am South American, and at the same time, in Chile I am a *winka* in the context of the Mapuche culture, so I am white in an indigenous context.

Feeling the *ch'ixi* has to do with inhabiting those contradictory "identifications". Cusicanqui uses this term to metaphorically account for the current process of miscegenation in the south of the so-called American continent where the indigenous are mixed with Western whites, a territory of juxtaposition characterised by the pastiche, where the feminine principle and the masculine principle are interwoven organically and there are no polarities. "The epistemology of the *ch'ixi* concept is an effort to overcome the historicism and binarisms of hegemonic social science, making use of concepts-metaphors that at the same time describe and interpret the complex mediations and the heterogeneous constitution of our societies" (Cusicanqui, 2018,

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<sup>8</sup> Original version: "no es síntesis, ni es hibridación, mucho menos fusión. Se mantienen los opuestos".



17)<sup>9</sup>. This heterogeneity expresses a complex process, a discontinuous and boiling cultural framework which is renewed, which is neither fixed nor permanent, but rather, formless and kaleidoscopic. Cusicanqui gives an account of the influence of the landscape and the land in her mestizo life experience: “we are the result of the *ch'ixi* mestizaje that (re)knows its inner indigenous and is firmly located in the here-now of its land and its landscape” (Cusicanqui, 2018). In my case there was a different feeling in terms of the land and the surroundings because it was more about the friction between the territory and my somatic system, the connection, disconnection, and that encounter. It was an energising exercise of transformation, of becoming-with.

Recognising the situated experience and the connection with the environment was expressed in the question of how cultural territories affect us. Does the social landscape, the information of the people who make up the social fabric, their histories, traditions, customs, mould us? Do we allow ourselves to be moulded? Do we resist? What are the limits, the frontiers that we establish in our personal being in order to be and in order to be in the territories we find ourselves in, where we live? Of those we are a part even if we want to “fly under the radar”, go unnoticed, in secret, they still feel us.

The heterogeneity that Cusicanqui speaks of is a complex process, a discontinuous and boiling cultural fabric that is constantly renewing itself and is neither fixed nor permanent, but rather, formless and kaleidoscopic.

My self-experimentation of inhabiting different continents and participating in different spheres of South America and Europe has influenced my global vision of facing the world and of making art. My position is mobile, it dances, it transits through heterogeneous forces where the colonial and the decolonial are in constant friction. These clashes also have a creative potential that invites and challenges me to redefine my limits and reinvent my territory, me as a person.

The categories of Global South and Global North are not completely clear in defining the complexity of the diverse epistemologies and ways of knowing and living that circulate in different territories. They are concepts that go beyond geography and hemispheres. As Sousa proposes:

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<sup>9</sup> Original version: “la epistemología del concepto *ch'ixi*, es un esfuerzo por superar el historicismo y los binarismos de la ciencia social hegemónica, echando mano de conceptos-metáfora que a la vez describen e interpretan las complejas mediaciones y la heterogénea constitución de nuestras sociedades”.

The Global South is therefore not a geographical concept, even though the vast majority of these populations live in countries in the Southern hemisphere. Rather, it is a metaphor for the human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism on a global level and the resistance to overcome or minimize it. That is why it is an anti-capitalist, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist South. It is a South that also exists in the Global North, in the form of excluded, silenced and marginalized populations such as undocumented immigrants, the unemployed, ethnic or religious minorities, victims of sexism, homophobia and racism (Sousa, 2011, 19)<sup>10</sup>.

Even if the geography is not something that defines these categories, my perception living in Europe and UK was much more influenced by the hegemony of Western and scientific (social Western sciences) knowledge. In this way, for me it was difficult to accept my background as dancer, as someone that thinks and feels the world from the corporality as something legitimate - especially in academia where words and intellectual thinking is almost the unique knowledge that is validated. And with that I am referring to this dissertation. I am saying that it is frustrating, even if my practice can open up ways of perception and epistemologies, this writing is the only way of validating my contribution to the field.

With this research I am reflecting on how I want to create a written contribution. With autotheory I am writing from my intimacy, from a voice that I normally keep away from academia, to push myself to go beyond what is supposed correct and valid knowledge, allowing me to open up my somatic subjectivity as a valid way of creating knowledge. Connecting thinking and doing as a political gesture, I explore an expression that emanates from my corporeality and intuition, exposing a voice that seeks emancipation from the oppression of Western thinking.

Western knowledge and thinking that emerges, not from Europe and the UK, but voices that come from Chile - such as the voice from my father, a Chilean engineer who has worked his whole life to raise and educate his five children. When I was twenty-one and studying literature, I wanted to leave my studies and change my career to study dance. My father, who was paying for my studies, told me- "Josefina do you know that humans have a mind in addition to a body? We are not as animals, we also think."

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<sup>10</sup> This text was translated from an original version: "El Sur global no es entonces un concepto geográfico, aun cuando la gran mayoría de estas poblaciones viven en países del hemisferio Sur. Es más bien una metáfora del sufrimiento humano causado por el capitalismo y el colonialismo a nivel global y de la resistencia para superarlo o minimizarlo. Es por eso un Sur anticapitalista, anticolonial y anti-imperialista. Es un Sur que existe también en el Norte global, en la forma de poblaciones excluidas, silenciadas y marginadas como son los inmigrantes sin papeles, los desempleados, las minorías étnicas o religiosas, las víctimas de sexismo, la homofobia y el racismo".

That was not just discrimination against other species, but was a patriarchal way of insulting an art discipline that highlights corporeality. This Cartesian conception of the separation between body and mind is Western thinking that is deeply rooted, and I had to defend to the contrary. I find myself defending the need to respect somatic knowledge all of the time, from the micro space of my family, to the biggest social spheres. Western knowledge, from a capitalist viewpoint, separates body and mind, culture from nature, and places as opposite the civilised and the savage. The binarism of the modern illustrated project is a form of oppression that circulates in life through formal and informal spheres.

Sousa explains that the understanding of the world is much broader than just the Western understanding of it. Reflecting around the epistemologies of the South, Sousa notes:

The diversity of the world is infinite, a diversity that includes very different ways of being, thinking and feeling, of conceiving time, the relationship between human beings and between humans and non-humans, of looking at the past and the future, of organizing life collectively, the production of goods and services and leisure (Sousa, 2011, 19).<sup>11</sup>

Even if it is confusing and contradictory to move through diverse epistemologies, my research reflects on the process of navigating those questions as a territory of conflict where disparate forces converge, as an alchemical exercise, as a geography that is constantly becoming within and with the environment.

Being from South America and living in Europe and the UK. To inhabit London with the memory of Santiago. To inhabit Chile with the influence of London and Paris. To be, to inhabit. Belonging —being, inhabiting, activating a presence in the present of inhabiting, moving the being through heterogeneous territories and landscapes.

Amid a transient habitat, I decided to embark on this research. Writing this PhD also meant accepting the challenge - the project of living in the UK, alone, far from Chile and with the contingency of the transition to Brexit which underlined a political situation of not belonging.

the pre-Columbian peoples  
masters of the ear

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<sup>11</sup> This text was translated from an original version: “la diversidad del mundo es infinita, una diversidad que incluye modos muy distintos de ser, pensar y sentir, de concebir el tiempo, la relación entre seres humanos y entre humanos y no humanos, de mirar el pasado y el futuro, de organizar colectivamente la vida, la producción de bienes y servicios y el ocio”.

they are not the ones from before  
 that's the invention  
 no  
 they are not the ones who were  
 the pre-Columbian peoples are now  
 it's me and you  
 the ones who are here  
 pure  
 mixed  
 combined  
 even tuning the ear to a dissonance  
 to that abyss  
 between sound and sound  
 that's what I say  
 it's there  
 peasant singers and Chinese poets  
 not from China  
 who knows that *Chinese*  
 in Quechua means servant?  
 servant of the Pachamama  
 earth server  
 of life and death  
 because when you cross  
 that crossing  
 I talk to  
 because crossing is crossing into a hearing  
 to attend to this multidimensional abyss  
 at the bottom of our own voice.

Cecilia Vicuña, *Future Sweat*

Cecilia Vicuña (Santiago de Chile, 1948), Chilean artist and poet based in New York, creates installations, performances, songs, paintings, films, written work, books, lectures, and sculptures. *Future Sweat* is a transcription of one of her performance in Viña del Mar on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2006, in the context of an event around the poetry of Violeta Parra. "Sudor de future" (Future Sweat) reflects on topics that are present in Vicuña's work that is attentive to earth, history, and gender. In this text the artist talks about pre- Columbian people, a relevant subject in her art, which recovers and shows indigenous knowledge and sensibility. She assumes and values the influence of South America in her way of living. Even though she left Chile when she was twenty-four, she says that her connection with the Chilean territory is strong: "My soul has never been apart"<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Cecilia Vicuña, original in spanish: "Mi alma nunca se ha separado". Meeting at the MNBA Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile with the artist and the curator, in the context of the Exhibition "Dreaming the water. A retrospective of the future (1964-)". It had the participation of Cecilia Vicuña, Miguel Á. López, curator of

From very young Vicuña was influenced by the vision of indigenous people and her art reflects on the connection with entities of the territory as well as elements of ancestral culture such as the quipu, which is connected to the memory of ancient civilisations. Quipu signify “knot” in quechua, and is an ancient system of information encoded through knots and twists that are a version of an alphabet used within this culture. Her quipus are dyed wool and fibres inspired by the complex Andean record-keeping system of sets of knotted cords. Her work is in dialogue with Amerindian stories, language, and ways of living:

Vicuña values the ritual, medicinal, healing and shamanic aspects of art whose function is not to colonize or possess, but to foster modifications in structures at levels both microscopic (non-visible phenomena) and macroscopic (perceptible physical experience) (Lopez, 2020, 30).

The quipu is recurrent in Vicuña’s work, taking different forms, and has been situated in diverse locations as installations as well as a performance. For example, “Beach ritual” is an event she held in Documenta 14 at Coastline, Athens in 2017 that included a “quipu colectivo” (collective quipu), with a ritual dimension as an offering – that has the sense of delivering vital energy with the intention of regenerating the Earth. This event was a site-specific, participatory ritual where the wool (unspun dyed wool) was an object that made possible the connection between the people and the landscape. There were two big spools of wool - one red, and the other white: the red one symbolised the menstrual blood, and the white symbolised the foam of the sea and the semen of the mountain. With this ritual she invites unity between the two. With the participation of the people, the wool is connecting them and the landscape, reactivating the energy that, as she says, we as humans have been destroying. My Chilean friend, Natalia Ramirez, participated in this performance and told me how the experience was for her. She reports that it was comprised of a group of around 40 people and that it wasn’t easy to get to the point of the ritual. That day there was full moon. Cecilia spoke quietly in Spanish and proposed a sound ritual “with bird language”, and with that image they began to do a “sound mantle”. She also spoke about Concon, a town close to the sea in Chile where she lived when she was young before leaving Chile. She said that the world has the capacity to clean the sea.

The collective and the position and location of landscape are relevant in this ritual; many of Vicuña’s performances are in public spaces and in relation to entities that are present in the landscape such as rivers, the sea, or a mountain. I have been undertaking most of my practice in closed, private spaces within an “institutional” context (art centre, cultural centre, gallery,

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the exhibition; and José de Nordenflycht, art historian, researcher and academic at U. de Playa Ancha. (12/05/2023)

Goldsmiths university, etc). I have completed one event in my research that has been site specific in the Canal St. Martin, and it was not a public ritual or performance as an invitation. It has the intention to offer to the canal “Ice stones” (2017) that were somehow “medicine”, and it was a way to connect a microbody of water with a bigger body of water, which was the scale represented by the canal, in the city of Paris. At that time, I was exploring the connection with the other-than-human in an intuitive way.

Vicuña’s work connects human and other-than-human with an ecological dimension, she manifests in her work their relationship to the forces in nature. The connection with the sea, the water, the mountain, birds, the wind, among others, is very relevant. She manifested that her art was born as an act of recognition. In January 1966 when on the beach of Concon she suddenly felt that the light and the sea saw her the same way she saw them, in an act of acknowledgment. That experience was fundamental to understanding the connection she establishes with more-than-humans, and this is in relation to what Peruvian anthropologist, Marisol de la Cadena (Peru, 1959), has translated with the Quechua word “*Tirakuna*”, “tira” (earth) kuna (plural), as *earth-beings*, that “had a presence that blurred the known distinction between humans and nature” (De la Cadena, 2015).

Marisol de la Cadena has been researching the relationship between Andean Peruvian people in Los Andes, with the territory and with the entities that inhabit the territories, looking at the different perspectives that emerge due to multiculturalism.

In the lecture/panel “Cumbre Aconcagua. Part Three. La memoria del agua” (The Memory of Water) organized by MOMA<sup>13</sup>, the curator Camila Marambio moderated the conversation with Cecilia Vicuña and Marisol de la Cadena. This conversation exposed the vision of both and connects their research, art creations, rituals, and understandings. Marisol de la Cadena explains how she had to break her perspective as an anthropologist, looking at the other as an informant of other cultures with their beliefs, and in order to collaborate with Mariano and Nazario Turpo, two runakuna (Quechua: runa /people, kuna/ plural) intermediates, she became an “apprentice”. The translation process of Quechua was not about the language but about the concepts, the ontological complexity of those terms, and, she says, paraphrasing Strathern “it matters what concepts we use to think of other concepts” (De la Cadena, 2015). She explains that she learned that Ausangate, the highest mountain of Cuzco where she was doing her research, was conceived for them “not only” as a mountain, but it can be an

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<sup>13</sup> This online event took place on the 9th September 2020. For more information about the panel and the video of the conversation : <https://www.moma.org/calendar/events/6682>

articulation of a “sacred -mountain”, an “earth-being”, *and* a “mountain”. That way, tirakuna exceed the word “mountain” which becomes reductive through this lens.

In the case of Vicuña, she explains her acknowledgment of the realisation of feeling that she was seeing by the sea and the light, and that fact explains that her work is solidly grounded in their relationship with non-humans, as well as humans and different species. The social and political aspect is situated in an environmental world in difficult conditions:

The concept of common or shared experiences that permeates Vicuña’s work does not refer exclusively to human society. Her work deflates the anthropocentric and heteropatriarchal fantasy that anoints humans as the dominant species on our planet (above plants, animals and other organisms) by suggesting symmetrical, symbiotic relationships between different species and elements. She responds to environmental devastation and the extractive economies of global neoliberalism from an emotional, rather than solely rational, perspective (Lopez, 2020, 40).

The connection with other-than-human species was part of the process of learning in this research, from my way of being in the world and paying attention to diverse beings surrounding me, to the matter I use in my practice. The work of Vicuña is related to that connection with diverse earth beings, the water, the mountain, the sea. In my case, I approached diverse organisms - at the beginning water and plants through alchemy, later on, different species and organisms from the forest as I describe in the course of this dissertation. This process was related to a somatic need to achieve physical closeness with other beings and feel them from their corporality, perception, and sensations, exploring how they change my state of being. I had explored the external world from a somatic perspective and that included a cultural, epistemic way of approached knowledge, imagination, and memory. My research includes different kinds of knowledge, specially integrating non-Western epistemics from a somatic perspective.

The different intercultural experiences of South America and Europe were lodging in my corporality as an exercise in cultural alchemy in which the various hemispheres are mixed, some beliefs evaporate, worldviews condense and deform, some also evaporate, and new elements enter that alter those previous. The internal transformation responds to an alchemical logic that is nourished by human, non-human biodiversity, and the planetary stimuli that each culture delivers.

As already manifested, one of the first practices I wanted to develop with the water element was alchemical experimentation with plants and herbs. Observing the organic qualities of each plant, I paid attention to the transformation of the nature of the different materials. At first, I was struck by something as simple as an infusion, the ability for plants to change water; the state of their colour, their flavour, their smell, that is, their ability to become another matter. The healing dimension of plants and their medicinal powers have been gradually gaining interest, so I decided to delve into this topic.

I began to research the work of Australian artist Janet Laurence (1947) and the way she explores a relationship with the natural world. While the artist avoids the term 'environmental artist', and her work is informed by more sources than this term indicates, she is "making propositions through works by creating spaces of perception that can bring us into contact with the 'life-world'" (Janet Laurence, 2012). The artist's work echoes architecture while retaining organic qualities and a sense of instability and transience. She occupies the liminal zones or meeting places of art, science, imagination and memory, while being profoundly aware of the interconnection of all life forms. Alchemical transformation, history and perception are underlying themes in her pieces.

When I explored alchemy and the relationship with plants, living beings, and organic matter, I related to the way Laurence approaches the living world and alchemical work, focused on changing the nature of materials; through the transformation of matter she accents the state of becoming. Her interest in alchemy is at the same time a reflection of the sense of art, as Ingrid Periz states "we do yearn for a form of alchemy, for the power of enchantment and transformation. Her work reminds us that art can provoke its audience into a renewed awareness about our environment" (Periz, 2012).

The artist uses different objects that are part of the alchemical laboratory as well as plants and botanical knowledge in her pieces. An example that called my attention is her work *Elixir* (2005), which was a permanent installation for Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial, Japan, consisting of research and plant processing made in collaboration with the local community. It preserves and offers ancient traditions and knowledge of medicinal plants and an intimacy with the natural environment of the region. The artist created a medicinal garden in a wooden interior lined and layered with glass veils and vessels inscribed with plant names and stained with plant fluids, creating a laboratory-like space echoing an old apothecary or a tiny botanical museum. The viewer, immersed and reflecting within this space, is served the plant "elixirs"/juices, mixed with shochu (Japanese liquor distilled from various ingredients, including sake dregs) as potions/drinks.



This work, related to the alchemical process, resonates with my work, reflecting a sense of materiality and immateriality, of presence and absence, a crucial aspect considering that one of the most important characteristics of alchemy is the union of chemistry and metaphysics. I also found the connection she establishes with the land and local plants to be very relevant, which is a means to connect with territory in a social, cultural, and a non-human sphere. We have different approaches to exploring alchemy and plants, as well as the connection with community.

In the example provided, I demonstrated the artist creating a relationship with the local community, and recollecting botanical knowledge related to that region of Japan. In my case I began to recollect stories of different plants and diverse cultures of the world. Through that research I become closer to ethnobotany, looking at how the stories and uses that humans give to plants varied depending on the culture.

The alchemical practice integrates the physical characteristics of plants, their properties, and powers that, according to studies, involve physical healing in the human body at the same time as psychological and emotional healing, thus reaching a metaphysical dimension that varies depending on the culture. Words such as shamanism, healing, witchcraft, magic, alchemy, and herbalist, surrounded my research project.

One day I was talking to G, my Chilean therapist of the Jungian and bioenergetic line. I was telling her about my research on energy and she, being a great connoisseur of the Mapuche culture, recommended that I study more about their culture as there were points in common with the Taoist philosophy and energy work. In fact, healing through plants is also present in Mapuche medicine.

I started reading books and watching interviews and documentaries. Given the importance in Mapuche culture of orality and storytelling as a way of transferring knowledge, I began to realise how important it would be to meet a Machi (Mapuche healer). In this search, I was talking to my friend N, a native of Valdivia who grew up in Temuco which is Mapuche territory. She told me that she had read an interview in a magazine about a Machi who lives in Valdivia. I started to find out more about this woman, reading several articles where she was interviewed. I then discovered she was of Mapuche Champurria origin; that is to say, a Chilean-Mapuche, mixed race. She had married a Swiss man and had lived with her husband in Switzerland for a long period of time — about 10 years. While she was there, she got an illness that led to her becoming a Machi. Illness is one of the ways in which the news that a person

should become Machi is manifested, and it may also appear in dreams. When the Machi became ill she came to Chile where she was seen by several healers until one told her and her mother that P should become Machi. This news was not only very difficult for her mother, but also for P because to be Machi is to give oneself completely to this task, which is very difficult: "(When you are Machi) you give up your life. You stop being you forever. You give up yourself because you give yourself to healing others. This is complex because from one day to the next your life breaks down: everything you had created is disassembled" (Machi P, 2016).

Once she found out that she had to become a woman of medicine, which comes from her maternal grandmother's side, she divorced her husband. Moreover, she renegotiated her employment in Switzerland where she worked as a social worker, requesting to live in Switzerland for six months and in Chile for six months. With that job in Switzerland, she was able to build her medical centre in Valdivia where she has been living permanently since 2010 and has three tourist cabins.

I thought it was a good idea to go and meet her, so I decided to stay in the cabins and receive her healing.

On 7 October 2019 I went to Valdivia in the south of Chile with my friend, J. The Machi told me that I had to take food with me as there were no shops or supermarkets nearby. We shopped in town and then made our way there. As we didn't know the dirt road and it was raining, it took longer than expected. When we arrived, the Machi was angry because of the delay and she scolded J, saying that she was busy with patients. From the beginning she showed her strong character. She quickly showed us the hut, how the fire in the *bosca* (modern fireplace) worked, and she let us settle in. We spent a quiet day, both J and I, affected by the scenery and the cabin's view of the Valdivian Forest and the wetlands in the distance. The calm and the birdsong submerged us into a state of contemplation as the hours passed and our state was calming down, leaving behind the speed of the city. The rain, the fog, and the humidity was outside behind the windows, our refuge inside through the fire and the heat allowed us to change rhythm, the sensations were charged, the time warped, and were able to perceive, to reflect, to be.



Fig.27

The Machi came to see us in the afternoon. She apologised for being angry and showed a jovial, smiling, girlish side. She explained that it was "the spirit" that entered her and made her react angrily (as if she were someone else). She felt a little ashamed of her reaction. We confirmed that she would do a separate healing session for J and I the following morning, as we had arranged weeks before we arrived.

Following that first night, at about six in the morning I was woken up by the voice of the Machi singing with her kultrun. The kultrun is the drum of the Machi. It has a sacred dimension, and its drawings have a complex symbolism. A cross divides it into four, marking the four elements: "the four spaces of a real existence. The kultrun connects us from this concrete reality to the infinite circle of the absolute. Of the whole. The circle is the ten: mari. And four is meli: reality. Existence involves time and space. And the four elements; earth, water, air, fire show us the reality in which we exist. From this existential reality the kultrun helps us to move

into this absolute circle" (Sierra, 2010, 54). The concentric spirals represent the two serpents Kai Kai and Tren Tren: evil and good, symbolising the negative and the positive. In some kultruns there are also symbols such as the moon, the sun, and the morning star. The purpose of the use of the kultrun is to induce trance through its sound. In this way, the Machi seeks to get in touch with the absolute.

That powerful, shuddering sound made me get out of my bed to go and see where it was coming from and what was happening outside. I quickly wrapped myself up and went out. I looked from behind the trees, I didn't want to interrupt the Machi with my presence. I saw her singing with her kultrun going around in a circle in front of her *rewe*. The Mapuche *rewe* is a tree that is normally an *araucaria*, or a tree trunk that is carved with seven steps. It is decorated with tree branches, usually *canelo*, which is the Machi's tree; also with laurel and wild apple trees. All the trees are sacred, but these, the ones that accompany the altar, are especially sacred. Rites and ceremonies take place around the *rewe*:

"This ceremonial trunk is a vertical map of the Mapuche universe: the Tree of Life. The Machi climbs it to the highest of the heavens where *Chao Ngenechén*, the Supreme Being, dwells (...) The *rewe* translates as a place of purity. Through this axis the Machi raises the voice of the people and also lowers the *Fileu*: the spirit of Wisdom" (Sierra, 2010, 75).

I had the impression that the Machi had her eyes closed. It seemed to me that while praying she was in a kind of trance. The strength of her singing moved me, and I could not stop contemplating her rite.

We had agreed that at eight o'clock in the morning she would do the healing session, so I arrived a little earlier to avoid making her angry again. She told me that she was a little late with the previous patient, so I walked around outside the *ruka* in front of her *rewe*. The *ruka* is the traditional Mapuche dwelling, the centre of community and family activities. With the aim of facilitating intergenerational communication, it has no windows or direct light, nor does it have interior divisions.



Fig.28 Machis de fieltro



Fig.29 Medicinal garden

I enjoyed the first rays of the morning sun and I did my Chi kung practices, breathing the southern air charged with dew that evaporated at that time of the morning. I absorbed the energy of the environment around me, letting the heat and sunlight touch my serene face, feeling the present. Reaching that place and moment I had longed for was materialising.

The Machi showed me into the healing centre, asked me to wait in a room with a library, and told me I could look at the books while I waited for her. I picked up a scientific book on energy, the first chapter contained a quote from Albert Einstein that said, "I maintain that cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest of the incitements to scientific research". Everything was preparing me for what was about to happen. Finally, the Machi called me and showed me into the healing room. I was dazzled by the beauty of the space; its circular architecture, the large wooden windows, and a stretcher in one corner with two chairs facing each other. The place was luminous, cosy, and harmonious, but it did not make me think of a ruka. I had envisioned Mapuche architecture to be more rustic, and this seemed more like a western way of organising the space, with noble materials and a level of comfort that made me think that its construction required a lot of resources.





Fig.30. Healing room

The Machi invited me to sit in one of the chairs and the first thing she asked me was: What can I do for you?

By way of introduction, I told her that I had wanted to meet her for quite some time, that a friend had told me about her, and that I had also read some articles where she was interviewed. She asked me what I did and I told her that I was an artist, a dancer, and I told her what I was doing regarding the artistic experiments of my doctorate. I explained that I was creating experiences where I experimented with medicinal plants. I told her about the metaphysical and healing dimension to my work.

She told me about the concept of Itrofil Mogen; the diversity that comes together, explaining that the Machis raise their prayers and connect with the forces in the mornings. She said that the forest is not only a material space, the forces or spirits of the animals, the insects, the water, and all the beings that inhabit this territory create this diversity. Then she explained to me that she was defending the cause of protecting the ancient Valdivian Forest and told me about all the forces present in the Itrofil Mogen.

I have been reading about this concept from the Mapuche writer, Elicura Chihuailaf Nahuelpan (1952), born in Quechurewe, Araucania Region. He studied journalism at the University of Concepción and has published various books of poetry and essays. His essay, *Recado confidencial a los chilenos* (1999), is a fundamental text to understand Mapuche culture and tradition, and to gain some awareness of the political conflict between the Chilean government and the Mapuche nation. As he says, Chilean citizens often do not know much about Mapuche culture and cosmovision. He declares himself an “oralitor”, a writer who stays close to the source of his writing and the oral culture of his people. In Mapuche cosmovision, their spiritual respect for other-than-humans presents itself in the *Nag Mapu* (the earth we walk on), and relates to their concept of *Itrofil Mogen*<sup>14</sup>. As Chihuailaf says, this “is equivalent, in contemporary scientific terms, to biodiversity. Considering the etymology of the expression, we can distinguish three parts: Itro, totality without exclusion; Fil, integrity without fracture; and Mogen, life, and the living world.” (Chihuailaf, 2009, 65, 66). In this way, Itrofil Mogen refers to the living world, emphasising its unity.

In complement to Chihuailaf’s vision, Jorge Weke, one of the founders of the Koyagtun Koz koz (Mapunche Parliament of Koz koz), of which he is werken - messenger in Mapuzungún, analyses the concept and makes the translation to Spanish language defining:

Itro as ‘composition of many lives that simultaneously share the same space’, which could be translated as multiversity. Fil means that they all have their own life but that they interact with each other and are interdependent, and could be translated as pluriversity. Therefore, there are millions of tiny lives maintaining all of life, which in sum is one great life. To exemplify, our physical bodies are made up of many lives (and Western science itself confirms this, we are true clusters of bacteria), each depending on the others, which allow us to feel, think, do, and maintain survival of the Being<sup>15</sup> (Weke, 2017).

As Weke describes, the *Itrofil Mogen* has its place in the Mapun or mapu, a space composed by diverse living beings and energies; flora, animals, water, birds, as well as spiritualities. It is

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<sup>14</sup> The Mapuzungun language is oral, so this concept has different written versions. I will use different versions as I have been reading it from various authors.

<sup>15</sup> This text was published in Spanish on the website « Endemico » a magazine that has print and digital publications. The original version in Spanish is: «En el idioma castellano, podemos definir itro como “composición de muchas vidas que comparten simultáneamente el mismo espacio”, se podría traducir como multiversidad. Fill quiere decir que todos tienen vida propia, pero que interactúan entre sí y son interdependientes, se podría traducir como pluriversidad; por tanto, son millones de pequeñísimas vidas manteniendo toda la vida, que en suma es una sola gran vida. Para ejemplificar, nuestros cuerpos físicos se componen por muchas vidas (y la misma ciencia occidental así lo confirma, somos verdaderos cúmulos de bacterias), cada una de ellas en función de las otras, que nos permiten sentir, pensar, hacer y mantener la pervivencia del Ser.».

a space “that has the conditions of life, sociability, and mutual collaboration between families, and it is the socio-natural context” (Weke, 2017). This relates to the conservation system, organisation, nourishment and communication. In this sense Mapu is not just land, it is territory as I described that includes all beings and lives, including the spiritual and energetic dimensions. Mapuche can be translated as ‘people from the land’, but Weke reflects that it would be most accurate to say “people who come from the territory, water, air, forest, sea, mountains, energies that come from the entire cosmos and spirituality” (Weke, 2017). The socio-natural aspect is fundamental to understanding what *Itrofil Mogen* means, because they do not separate their themselves from nature, they are part of it. *Itrofil Mogen* includes the social and culture spheres:

For our communities, this concept is both biodiversity and biosphere, and is not limited to the natural world - it includes the social and cultural spheres - because we Mapuche people consider ourselves to be an integral part of nature. This urges us to establish and adopt development strategies that are sustainable, communal, and participative (Chihuailaf, 2009, 66).

This vision is in direct relation to the need for protection of native forests, in opposition to large-scale planting of exotic trees and the greed of postmodern capitalism; “regarding the Development Option contained in the Az Mapu, our communities also apply the concept of *Itrofil Mogen*, according to which society’s driving force isn’t the search for maximum growth or yield, but a balanced growth that can only be provided by considering economic, cultural and social elements” (Chihuailaf, 2009, 66).

It is a fundamental concept to understanding the balance between health and disease of animal species, humans, and other beings. The Mapuche poet, Leonel Lienlaf, speaks of the principle of *ixofilmogen* in accordance with the function of all beings that inhabit the territory. This interaction must be in balance. Any alteration to this order entails diseases, plagues, and a bad situation for the life of the territory. In this sense, another associated term is “Küme Mogen” (good living), which is located inside the *Itrofil Mogen*. The good living is a notion that is being used by people from Los Andes as well as other communities from non-Western cultures in their respective languages and contexts. “Küme Mogen proposes a life in balance between society, nature and spirituality. It is a right of all lives. Particularly, Küme Mogen Mapunche refers to the good life of the person who belongs to a group of other people and places: “pu che.” This idea is reflected in the personal presentation of the Mapunche<sup>16</sup>:

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<sup>16</sup> Weke writes Mapunche, referring to the notion of mapun in the term that we usually refer to as “mapuche”, he reinforces the connection with the territory.



“Iñche mapunche ngen” translates simply as, “I am Mapuche”, which has greater depth in mapuzungun language. “Iñ” is the plural; “che” is person. Thus, “iñche”, living together is like all species that live in a community, descendants of a common origin that come from the mapun where they reside. So, “iñche mapunche ngen” could be translated as “I/plurality cohabit and take care of this territory from which I come” (Weke, 2017).<sup>17</sup>

The notion of “take care” relates to a plural recognition of the self, it is not an individualist vision of a person but is having the consciousness of being part of plural territories with different beings, and that anyone is no more important than the other, humans are not superior to other-than-humans. Respect for all kinds of lives and taking care in the social and natural spheres, is promoted. In this sense the balance related to the *küme mogen* (good living) is connected to the notions of illness and healing. Mapuche people consider the environment, the beings around human life. Affective family social relationships, as well as the characteristics of the physical environment, the living conditions, the relationship of respect and care, will all influence the state of an individual as well as the territories.

Through the same vision of respect, care, and responsibility, Robin Wall Kimmerer explains the notion of land for their indigenous people, making a distinction between their vision and that of the settlers:

In the settler mind, land was property, real state capital, or natural resources. But to our people, it was everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our non-human kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us. Our lands were where our responsibility to the world was enacted, sacred ground. It belonged to itself; it was gift, not a commodity, so it could be never bought or sold (Kimmerer, 2013, 17).

Kimmerer highlighted the capitalist vision of the project of modernity where land is property and a source of exploitation, quite far from the meaning of the idea of *Itrofil Mogen* that is closer to the notion of identity because human people are not separate from the land, it is actually the territory.

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<sup>17</sup> Esta idea, se refleja en la presentación personal del mapunche: “iñche mapunche ngen” traducido en castellano simplemente como “yo soy mapuche”, tiene una profundidad mayor en nuestra propia lengua. Iñ: pluralidad de nosotros, che: persona “iñche”; el convivir, es como todas las especies que viven en comunidad descendientes de un origen común y que provienen del mapun en donde residen. Entonces, “iñche mapunche ngen” podría traducirse como “yo/pluralidad cohabito y cuido este territorio del que provengo”.

The Machi spoke about the notion of *Itrofil Mogen* related to healing, to the importance of all lives, the totality. At that time I knew a little bit about that concept, and I wanted to get to know more about their culture. When I told the Machi that I wanted to know more about Mapuche culture and she found out I was doing it in the context of a PhD research project in the UK, she seemed interested in my project and said she would support me in whatever I needed so that we could work to protect the forest. This made me feel very happy, and I thought about how quickly and easily things had come together.

Then we talked about what I wanted to heal. I explained to her that at times it was very difficult to live abroad and that I didn't understand whether it was a question of identity, nostalgia, or homesickness. She spoke to me very openly about her years living in Switzerland, how difficult it had been at first to learn the language, the difficulty of coping with the weather in the long winters, the feeling of missing her loved ones, and she told me about the jobs she had done to survive financially. She had her professional degree as a social worker, which she had studied in Chile. Once she had learned German and could communicate in the language, she began to work in her area. In the last few years she had a very good job from which she also earned a lot of money. It was when she was in this comfortable and favourable situation that she became ill and had to become a Machi.

She told me that one is part of the whole earth and all the lands, that we are spirits, that we can interact with other beings (besides humans), that we must learn to tame ourselves in all aspects of life in order to create balance and coexist harmoniously in all the lands.

She said that part of the resistance requires absolute detachment. Living in Chile means it is easier to experience attachment, but being outside one exercises detachment and that requires courage; leaving a place that one likes, where one feels good, for a greater good.

Then she used a metaphor as a comparison with the plants, telling me about the act of "transplanting". When the root of a plant must be transplanted to live elsewhere, a plant takes at least two cycles of moons to take root, she told me. Therefore, according to her calculations, in a person's case, it would take about two years to take root and to begin to gain strength and bloom. In my case, I had lived in Europe for more than five years, but it made sense to me that a plant can be rooted and grow perfectly in a new place, or it can wither and not adapt to the new site.

The healing I received was aimed at connecting me to all the lands, so that wherever I went I could feel part of it, while knowing that I belonged to the land where I was born. After explaining to me where the healing would lead me, she told me to lie down on a stretcher. Before starting, she told me once again that she would support me with my project. She began to sing while playing her kultrun, her voice sounded strong and intense. I could feel the vibration of the drum reverberating in my chest, the sound entered my body, and the meaning of her words (she sang in Spanish) were also touching me, affecting my emotional and physical state of presence. The vibrations made me cry, the sound in my chest was transforming the blocked air into tears, bringing out the stagnant sadness, making "the roads open up" as her song said. I could perceive how the healing activated the energy of the air in my breath, in my liquid being the "waters" began to flow and transform.



Fig. 30 Kultrun

She used several sound instruments and objects to heal, going through different stages. Her song was present most of the time. At one point she grabbed two knives, grinding them

together, colliding with each other. Seeing these objects gave me the impression that she was cutting something, some negative or sick energies. She also spat liquid at me from her mouth that seemed to be water with herbs or something that smelled herbal with some kind of medicine, and she performed a cleansing by passing smoke around me. Everything happened round and round, around the stretcher and I had my eyes closed for most of the time. She never stopped singing with her kultrun and other percussion instruments, which I remember were seeds or bells of some kind.



Fig. 31 Stretcher

Once the session was over, the Machi gave me a bowl of flax seeds and told me to leave them in the forest, to listen to the forest because it also spoke, and to leave the seeds as a form of gratitude and retribution. This was the first time I had experienced reciprocity with non-human beings. There, I also understood that the medicine came from the forest, that it was those beings, those forces that had allowed this healing to take place.

In Mapuche medicine the payment for healing refers to an intention of gratitude. Illness is understood as an external entity that makes a person sick due to an imbalance. In order to re-establish their equilibrium, the person must also receive payment. In the past, the sick person



paid in goods, for example with birds or animals. The understanding of healing and illness are linked to the natural world, and to an interdependence, for Mapuche medicine women:

"Life is a cycle, everything must be in contact with nature, in fact for us all the elements that exist in nature are our siblings. Hence, in our code of ethics, when we go to collect the plants, we must know how to talk to them, we must know how to reach them, and we must know how to leave them payment, which shows the gratitude we have for the ñuke mapu, the mother earth, because she provides everything" (Ñaña Mapuche Lago ranco, 2006).



Fig.32

The awareness of the generosity of the earth is present in the Mapuche culture in everyday life. It is present in the way people treat each other and other beings, and this logic is also part of healing and medicine.

That night we went to get some medicines that the Machi had prepared for us. She made us go to her kitchen. It had a typical wood cooker in it from the south of Chile. She gave us two large bottles each; one bottle was medicine to drink, and the other to take baths. She gave us a mixture of dried herbs for cleansing for when we returned to our respective homes. She also prescribed some herbs for me: plantain and pichi pichi rosemary, which I took three times a day for the next two months.

After giving us the medicines, she asked me how we were going to collaborate and explained that she was very busy and needed us to plan. Her main interest was to protect the ancient Valdivian Forest. She explained to me that there was a coastal road project that involved the destruction of the forest and that through my work we could give visibility and support. I suppose she was attracted by the international character of my work, and from her perspective it would have a wide impact. She did not want to make this cause known from the political struggle of war, she was drawn to defending it through creative means, through the arts.

I told her what I knew about Mapuche culture so far, things I had learned through books and documentary sources, but that I would like to know more about medicinal plants through experience and oral transmission. I explained a bit more about my installations, the ice sculptures with medicinal plants, the stories about the medicinal plants.

She was looking to do something educational, something large scale that would have wide repercussions, that would make noise in the press and mobilise the masses. I thought that since she had been involved in education because of her work as a social worker, she thought that my work could fit into that context. At that point, my friend J interrupted and said that she thought my work was more subtle and had a more poetic sense, not necessarily didactic or literal. I then had to explain that I worked with small groups, that I was exploring affecting people on a sensory and somatic level. I talked to her about my work explaining that the materials also touch and interact with the audience their animated potential activates. I explained that I was creating forms of participation that invite people to encounter other human and non-human energies, especially regarding the power of water and plants, to reconsider and feel their visual, olfactory, gustatory, imaginative, and evocative possibilities.

I wanted her to understand the micro-political dimension of my artistic work; I was not looking to have a mass impact. Even if it wasn't what she was looking for, I needed to be honest otherwise she would be disillusioned when she understood how I worked. I spoke to her about the importance of the experience of corporeality, of feeling the materials and experiencing them. In this line, my work is part of exploring micro-political mobilisations that dialogue with

Cusicanqui's approaches, moving away from the logic of success, with an impact on a scale that moves away from the macro:

It is not within my reach to think about what is possible to do on a macro scale. The only thing I can do is to carry on with what I believe in, do what I do, put my body into it, do it in an environment of communities of affection, which perhaps radiate outwards and connect with other forces and initiatives, far from competition and the strategies of 'success' (Cusicanqui, 2018, 73).

In the micropolitical sphere of my projects I am exploring the notion of community, I seek to create a gathering that allows an exchange that is not necessarily via word, but by experiencing together where new rules of sharing are created. Incarnate thought is made reality through action as I expose myself and participate by inviting others on a microscale, and from that sphere potentially achieve transformations.

This aspect also resonates with Felix Guattari's theoretical proposal under the concept of molar and molecular, drawing an analogy between macropolitics and micropolitics. Rolnik and Guattari in *Micropolitics, cartographies of desire*, reflect on micropolitical activation as a dynamic of forces of resistance and creative order for the invention of new realities, different from the hegemonic and repressive force described as Integrated World Capitalism. While IWC is an enormous force and it is a huge task to generalise my creative desires under this motivation, I share the need to generate a cartography that opens possible horizons, expanding the sentient, ways of sharing, inhabiting corporeality, and interpreting the environment: "The invention of strategies for the constitution of new territories, other spaces of life and affection, a search for ways out of dead-end territories" (Rolnik, Guattari, 2006, 24).

The format of my facilities and live events arises from a need to bring together a human group with the aim to attend to community emotional needs, being configured as a reflection device where local aspects and cultural components are recognised. Considering that one dimension touches the first territory, that is, corporeality — the person, and a second dimension encompasses the social territory, a social body, through the creation of protocols that allow the creation of new logics of gathering, participation, interaction and experience of the sensitive.



Fig. 33



Fig.34



Fig.35

*Melting Forms, January 2019*



I tried to explain to the Machi the sensory part of my work so that she could access this corporal dimension. I showed her the video of the event I held in Chile in January 2019, Melting Forms. She was surprised; I don't think she had pictured it this way. She said she thought it was very innovative, she had never seen anything like it. I told her that the ice had odours and colours and that people could touch and feel them. She was very impressed that the ice melted during the event, she thought it was very creative and after seeing it she was excited to do something together.



Fig 36

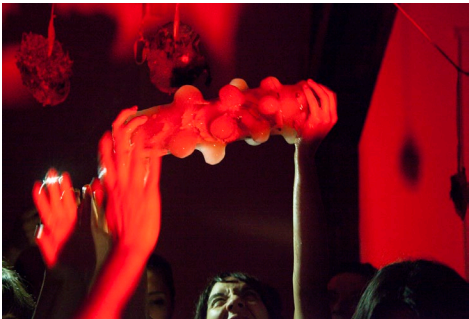


Fig. 37



Fig .38



Fig.39



Fig.40



Fig.41

*Melting Forms, January 2019*



Fig.42



Fig.43



Fig.44

*Panacea*  
Experiential Installation  
Goldsmiths University  
March 2018

After, we talked about diverse topics. I told her about the Taoist healing practices, meditations, and Chi kung exercises that I was learning with my teacher, Mantak Chia. I told her that it seemed to me that philosophically there were several points in common with the Mapuche worldview or way of life; we are energy, and we are connected to the whole, the relationship between the micro-world and the macro-world, the importance of polarities for balance. I had

read Elicura Chihuailaf, who explained how the world of dualities worked in his culture which made me think of the yin and yang of Taoism.

Mapuche cosmovision is based on the concept of duality, positive and negative forces are present in nature and the universe as well as in the human being. They divide the universe into three different dimensions or spaces, and each is charged by different forces; the *Wenu Mapu*, the Earth Above is charged by positive energies; the *Nag Mapu*, the Earth we Walk on, contains a duality of positive and negative energies; and, the *Miñche Mapu*, the Earth Below, where negative forces come from. As Chihuailaf explains, "our life in the *Nag Mapu* (the earth we walk on), under the influence of the positive and negative energies, cannot be imagined without its connection to Her, the Earth, because our life belongs to Her. Mapu nuke choyun iñchiñ, we are the shoots of mother earth, they are telling us - in a relationship of equality with its other components, and of respect and gratitude towards its immanent celestial duality: Wenu Mapu (Earth Above)" (Chihuailaf, 2009, 44).

Chihuailaf spoke about mother earth as a she, as many other ancestral cosmologies do to attribute this feminine charge: a generous and nutritive mother. From an ecofeminism perspective there is also the identification between women and natural world where both are oppressed by the hegemonic power of patriarchy and capitalist exploitation.

In the Mapuche vision, feminine energy is also attributed to many beings in nature, and Taoism also speaks of mother earth and father sky. Mother earth recycles and, for example, in the case of emotional cleansing, in a practice of detoxification of organs and emotions, the "accumulated toxins" are oriented towards the earth as organic waste with the intention that "mother earth" can receive this energy as compost, transform it, and thus become fertile soil again. In this sense the Taoist, ecofeminist and Mapuche visions dialogue, brush against each other, and meet at various points.

While the separation of energies at these high, medium, and low levels of Mapuche culture is not present in the same way as in Taoist ideas, the balance of these dualities is a fundamental part of their technology, philosophy, and spirituality.

Mapuche's spirituality and cosmovision is linked to this duality of energy forces and to the search for their balance and reciprocity with the respect and awareness that living in the Earth we Walk on, or *Nag Mapu* is due: "Az Mapu is the way in which the Mapuche people, the various territorial groups, understand, give impetus to, and develop their organisation. It is our 'ought to be' in the *Nag Mapu*, the Earth we Walk on, the space on the Earth that reproduces

the Wenu Mapu, the Earth Above. It's the norms that govern reciprocity, the space where it's possible to achieve the mutual exchange that will give continuity and equilibrium to the great dualities: day and night; health and sickness; the positive Energies: kume newen, good strength; kume kuruf, good wind; kume neyen, good breath; kume pullu, good spirit; and the negative Energies: weza newen, ill strength, weza kuruf, ill wind; weza neyen, ill breath; weza pullu, ill spirit" (Chihuailaf, 2009, 63).

With the Machi we discussed and shared the commonalities between the two visions, and again she spoke to me about the concept of Itrofil Mogen, stressing the importance of water and saying that in the wetlands there is a lot of life, strength, and biodiversity.

She talked to me about lawen, which means medicine/ remedy in Mapuzungun. Medicine can be the water of a wetland, of rain, of a river, of a waterfall, or even a stone. I thought that medicinal plants were the remedies, but I started to understand that the notion of lawen was not limited only to medicinal plants, it encompassed different beings which started to modify and expand my way of seeing and experiencing healing.

This more extensive approach to the notion of lawen was complemented when I met other healers. For example, a few months later I met P, a Mapuche lawentuchefe. Lawentuchefe can be translated in Spanish as health agents, doctors, or doctors and herbalists. Their role within the Mapuche culture is to heal through the lawen and they can also dream the correct remedy for each person. Talking with P, she told me about different ways of healing, and we talked about fire. She told me about a woman healer she knew who was a guardian of fire, and that her healing was based on it. The healing power of fire can be expressed as something that "contains, shelters, heals". This made me connect with the big rocks of the mountains, those rocks that are also called "grandmothers". They have inhabited the territory for so many thousands of years and in fact they form the base of some mountain ranges, such as the Andes.

One evening we met with P at a campfire at the foot of the Andes mountains in Santiago. Sharing a fire in a social context without being ritualistic, she told me that everything is medicine, the fire, the wine, the food, the music, everything in balance. Listening to her, I perceived the medicines as ingredients that heal us and provide what we need when we have a deficiency, a factor that comes to complete a state close to being well, to living well.

The various approaches to understanding healing have broadened my vision and understanding of this concept and state. Putting things in context, I have understood that

matters of diverse natures can affect the mood, alter the state of the soul, always considering the sense of balance.

The meeting with the Machi allowed me to get to know her notion of lawen and understand the connection with various beings and their spirits. In turn, I also shared with her my Taoist learnings and my own reflections. It seemed to me a genuine exchange which at the time I did not categorise in any way. I gradually came to understand the intercultural ground of our sharing of knowledge, a symbolic exchange. Until then I was not too aware of the economy at play between us.

That last night, after a long conversation we were closing our deal with an invitation that she extended to me to participate in the harvest in the forest. As she explained to me, the medicine was harvested in spring-summer, thus I could go with her to know the forest, collect plants, and draw water from the waterfalls. To harvest it was necessary to ask permission, to explain to the plant what it is going to do before cutting it, and consider that you always take out what you are going to need and leave something in reciprocity to the land. One also speaks to the remedy once done, one asks it to heal.

We decided that we could come back in March 2020 to carry out our collaboration. We talked about reciprocity where both parties would benefit. Our collaboration would consist of a sort of exchange where through my art I would make known the importance of the forest. It would be something symbolising bringing the forest to the people through my installations to raise awareness of its importance. I had to consider that this had to have value both in a national and international sphere. For reciprocity, I would come to harvest the forest with her. Our union was founded on supporting the forest.

Our union was based on a common cause of planetary care. She was interested in the international impact that my work could have since my research was carried out in a European institution in England. She told me about her contacts in Europe through which I could make exhibitions. She also wanted it to be broadcast on a wide spectrum in Chile, through education or other activities. Although my artistic work was in dialogue with the cause of the forest, I wanted to be honest in explaining the scope that I aspired to. She valued the style and intention of my art and there was a connection to collaborate.

The deal we managed to agree on responded to an economic logic of exchange based on the ethics of the common good. In this sense, I feel interpreted through Cusicanqui's model of community economy. It responds to a healthy and humane logic of doing things, which in this

case has a purpose of resistance to the market interests that are destroying the forest in order to open a road. The ethical and ecological axis operated as the foundation of the encounter between her, a Mapuche authority, and me, a white winka artist with an academic study history in European universities.

I was very happy after this first meeting with the Machi, in fact it exceeded my expectations in terms of my desire to receive her healing and to live this experience. I had no other intention in wanting to meet her, I had not expected that the possibility of collaboration would open up to me.

In January 2020, I got back in touch with Machi. We had a dialogue via WhatsApp on several occasions to confirm the date of my trip to Chile and to visit her, as we had arranged. At the beginning she did not give me a precise date because she told me I had to wait until the change of the moon to tell her about spiritual work. Later, she told me to arrange transportation for the beginning of March, and so I did. In February, she told me that this date was complicated for her because her family was visiting and she was planning to go with them to Chiloé (an island in the extreme south of Chile). Due to her family commitments, she proposed a postponement. She didn't have much availability and her schedule changed daily. However, she could dedicate three or four days to me: "I would prefer that when you are there, we do specific things, go out and harvest and that you learn something. I'm already doing that".

I would have to be attentive for when she had a free moment, and it would be for a short time. I didn't want to insist too much so as not to bother her. I didn't want the plan to collapse and for her to change her mind. I felt as though I was "stepping on eggshells". I organised everything to go to Valdivia on the dates she proposed. When I arrived in Chile I greeted her and asked her if everything was still fine for me to visit her on the agreed dates and she answered me with an audio saying: "I pewmatuque you, I dreamed of you so you are going to have to come super soon here to accompany me to Kalfvgen. We have a long job to do, so as my beautiful already arrived from London to Chile, you must come here as soon as possible. Pewkayal talk to you soon". I was very touched to hear her audio, I felt so honoured that Machi had dreamt of me and that she needed me.

The pewma (dreaming) is very important in Mapuche culture. There is the figure of the "pewmatufe" who is the dreamer, or dreamer who receives premonitory dreams and helps to interpret dreams. The healers, lawentuchefes, Machis, and health agents also receive messages about the choice of lawen for the sick person through dreams, the medicinal plants they need, or other elements that can help to heal. For the Machi, dreams also come to inform

about different matters, medicinal, for the protection of a territory or to make decisions in a certain situation.

The lawentuchefe, Maria Quiñelen, says that there are some plants that are regulators of sleep, and that the Mapuche believe that we are first in dreams and then in reality. She considers it very important to decode and understand the meaning of one's dreams. For Juan Nanculef, dreams have their own interpretation, they are not seen as hallucinations but as the transcendence of the spirit in a deep state of the umag (sleep) in which the love or soul together with the pu (fight or spirit), transiently leave the body, travel to hyper-space, and observe things that in the natural dimension cannot be seen (Nanculef, 2016).

Listening to the Machi's message and considering the value of dreams in her culture, I felt that I was taking on a more relevant role for the Machi, something I had not felt before. Although, when she had given me the healing session in the previous year, she had been enthusiastic about collaborating and it was she who had offered to support my project, from a distance she had not shown much interest and I did not know if she wanted me to come and work with her. I was happy with her call, and given the urgency she expressed, I cancelled some commitments I had scheduled in Santiago and took the bus that night to arrive as soon as possible.

I was completely surprised with the audios she had sent me. She had previously told me that she would only give me three or four days to go to harvest, now it seemed that I would perform a role similar to that of an assistant and that she needed me urgently to carry out a mission. Under these circumstances and my great motivation to learn with her, I told her that in case it was necessary I could change my return ticket to London and stay longer in Chile working by her side. Even before I took the bus to Valdivia, she asked me if I could change my ticket and stay longer; "I want us to get into the subject of Mapudungun. You with your acquired order there in the European lands, we can sit down every day to study Mapudungun so that you can support me in that, and through that I am going to teach you because with Mapudungun one is opening the spirit also because it is a spiritual language. That's why I need more time, because I feel that you would otherwise have to leave on the 30th of March and that's very soon, there's not much time left, that makes me nervous. So, if you change the tickets, we can take it from there".

Although I didn't know any Mapuzungun and it was a huge challenge, her tone was affectionate and her words made me think that she really wanted to teach me and that she was really waiting for me. After all the communication, miscommunication, and changes of plans, I finally



travelled by bus on the night of Friday, 6 March 2020 and arrived in Valdivia in the early hours of Saturday, 7 March 2020. It was just days before the pandemic was declared worldwide.

I was faced with all the changes of plans and not knowing if I would stay for a month or longer, noting that our last conversations indicated that my stay would be longer. I was overwhelmed. The Machi had offered to pick me up at the station, but then she changed plans because she told me she had an emergency. She told me to take a taxi and that she would be waiting for me to have breakfast. Because of the bags, I preferred to go to her house and then buy food or contribute in some way to the grocery costs. So I set out to her place, and after all stages of this journey I managed to get there.

I got out of the taxi and the Machi quickly greeted me without giving me any attention. She seemed stressed out and was arguing with some people. Then I found out that a dog had bitten P's mother (P being the Machi's ex-husband who lives next door to her, i.e., they are neighbours).

Much like the first time I was there, the Machi was stressed and angry when she greeted me. I was excited to meet her again and I thought she was waiting for me, but she was not. I felt the weight, the tiredness, and the effort of taking a 17-hour plane ride, a 12-hour bus ride and a 30-minute taxi ride to be there. Deep down, the least I had expected was a welcoming smile and at best, a hug to greet me. Through her messages I felt a closeness, her desire to meet me, her almost need for me, but when I arrived once again she was distant and I felt uncomfortable and did not know what to do. At the time, she was busy talking to someone, so I moved aside with my bags and waited.

There was a man waiting on the side just like me. He started talking to me, introduced himself, and we greeted each other and exchanged a few words. He asked me how my trip had been, and seemed to know that I had come from far away. Then the Machi approached me, greeted me in a friendlier way and explained that P's mother, who was her neighbour, had been bitten on the leg by a dog. The bite was minor, but they were going to vaccinate her and take her to the doctor.

Referring to P's mother, she said that she was a woman from Europe. When she visited, she did not like to stay where they lived, so she booked a hotel room in the city because she needed more comfort and was a city woman. Describing this city woman, and me getting off the plane a few days ago from England, I felt that I was not so far away from that image of relying on the comforts of a city. Of course, the Machi knew this. I was the "Chilean artist who

lives in Europe", also embodying a place of privilege, coming from the north of the hemisphere and from a cosmopolitan city like London.

The Machi showed me into the house, we entered through the kitchen. Towards the left wing was the Machi's room, which I never entered, and another room where her cousin slept. Towards the right side of the kitchen was the medical centre which was a semi-circular room with large windows. Continuing to the right of the centre there was a corridor. The first door led to a small bathroom that had a toilet and sink but no shower, and then there were two bedrooms. In the first one Don D slept and I slept in the second one. The Machi asked Don D to guide me to the room, he helped me to carry my bags and we left the things there. When we returned the Machi asked us what we wanted to have for breakfast, she prepared a fruit juice for Don D and for me she prepared a mate infusion to help me wake up. I was very tired as I had not slept much on the bus the night before.

We sat outside on a patio by the kitchen. The Machi brought some fresh bread, manjar (a caramel-like sauce, typical of Chile), and jam. We had breakfast. Then came the moment of the introductions. At that time, I didn't know that this was happening. Later Jimena Jerez, a Valdivian anthropologist and expert in ethnobotany in the region, explained to me that in the Mapuche culture the protocol of greeting and introductions is very specific. According to what Jimena told me (which is exactly what happened to me) each person takes the floor, one after the other. It is a very long introduction where the person talks about their origin, their ancestors, and the place where they were born and raised. Nobody should interrupt the story and when one person finishes then the other person begins.

The Machi spoke first, talking about the time when she got sick to become a Machi and came from Switzerland to this land where she now lives. She said that a Machi always continues to learn until the end of her life. She explained she was currently learning Mapudungun with Don D. When she was a child and her family moved from the countryside to Santiago, they were not taught Mapudungun. The adults wanted the children to speak only Spanish because if they spoke Mapudungun they could be discriminated against as Mapuche. She told us how in her family, when her mother and uncles were speaking Mapudungun in a room and she came in, they switched languages and started speaking in Spanish. A similar story had been told to me by my Mapuche friend M, a resident of London.

She said that she needed to recover her language, and that Don D was Ngenpin, that is, the owner of the word in Mapudungun. She said that he is the only person who can perform ceremonies and the only one authorised to speak about spirituality in Mapuche culture, he is

the knower of the word. Some time ago he was helping her to study. She, as a Machi, needed to learn the language because there are expressions that do not exist in Spanish, she felt that she lacked words to express herself and that only Mapudungun has them. Also, for the ceremonies, there is a lot of content that is in the language itself and that is untranslatable. As Mauricio Meliñir Antimir states:

Grandparents used to tell children and young people stories so they would record them in their minds. Then they had them repeat them back to them to see if they had internalised them.

This effort to preserve Mapudungun guarantees the survival of the principles that structure culture. Especially important is the ritual language, which with archaic terms always recalls with the same words, the inheritance that comes from before. The verb is creator (Sierra, 2010, 101).

Then, in a rather solemn and almost distant tone the Machi stated the reason why I had been called. She said that they had received the signal through a dream she had, that the forces spoke to her about me, that it was not that she had chosen me, rather she had received that information, and that it was an order - that it was not her will to invite me to help her study the language. She said that because I had discipline, European discipline, I could help her review the language and do exercises three times, or something along those lines.

I listened to her very attentively and did not know whether to feel happy or scared because I was beginning to understand that this invitation was part of a kind of divine design, and that my task involved quite a lot of responsibility. Within my activities as a researcher, I had not considered studying Mapudungun. Although it motivated me, this was not part of our "initial pact" where we would go to harvest and I would support the cause of defending the ancient Valdivian Forest. I did not feel qualified for this task, but since she had received this signal, I was beginning to adapt to the idea that it was what I had to do.

Then Don D spoke. He gave a very long speech. He explained where he came from in the south of Chile, he spoke of his people and his childhood. He told us he had had a very poor childhood, he said that he could not study because he got sick. When he was a child, he had to walk for a long time to get to school, as it always rained, he got wet, and then he remained wearing his wet clothes at school. At one point in his childhood, he became very ill so he had to interrupt his studies. One day he fell from a horse, punctured a lung and for two years they poked him with needles to give him the medicine that allowed him to breathe. He could not finish school because his mother was very poor, so he had to start working. From a very young

age he worked as a houseboy where they gave him food and housing in exchange for his service.

He claimed to have suffered a lot of discrimination because he was a huacho, that is, his father had not recognised him. During the dictatorship, some scholarships to go to Sweden to study were offered and he was accepted to go. He would have liked to study and travel but because he was an illegitimate son, he was denied it. This was the experience where he had been most discriminated against. In telling this story of discrimination he became emotional, his voice broke, and a few tears rolled down his face. I was very sorry to hear it and I told him that thanks to him Mapuche knowledge can be transmitted and that if he were not here it would be a great loss. We had met so recently, and it seemed to me that he was sharing something very intimate with me. Then he explained how he became ngenpin, a role that is transmitted by lineage. He told us that his mother was a weaver, a gift and skill that is also transmitted by lineage. In the Mapuche culture there are weaver families. It entails safeguarding the knowledge since the fabrics have a great value in their culture. The Mapuche culture has an ideographic writing in which through its symbols, concepts and ideas are transmitted. The writing is done through the textile garments; the trarihue (girdle), the makuñ (blanket), and jewellery. Garments are always individual or personal since the symbols that go into the fabrics have messages for each person. They describe the person, their origin, their family, and their most relevant psychological characteristics.

Don D shared with me the testimony of a Mapuche person with a precarious rural childhood who had also suffered a lot of discrimination because he was a huacho. His life was obviously very different from mine, but also from that of the Machi P, who is more culturally mixed, with Western experiences and a life story in Europe. In this sense, my distance with Don D was even greater, but his language was closer, the space of intimacy that he opened up seemed closer to me than the Machi's story which was quite general, without very personal emotional aspects. I also felt that it was oriented towards an objective, the work proposal that she made to me; her discourse seemed more controlled.

Then it was my turn to speak. Since I did not know the codes of the presentation and it seemed to me that both had spoken about their illnesses and healing work, I spoke about that too. I explained how being in Europe I had experienced the process of illness and healing, the states of adaptation, depression, my approach to the energetic practices of Taoist healing, Chinese medicine, Chi kung, medicinal plants, and the healing I received from the Machi. When I spoke about the learning I received from the master Mantak Chia they asked me some questions to which I answered openly, telling them about the five elements, their connection with the organs

and the seasons of the year, and I explained how meditation could have effects on our physical health. They were very curious, and we made some comparisons between Mapuche and Taoist philosophy, the yin and yang, the non-existence of good and bad, the notions of balance, and the relationship with the environment; we are not separate from nature and its cycles, but we are part of that unity. Considering how they had expressed themselves I took the liberty to expand and let my story take a more personal and philosophical tone, opening the discussion to beliefs and spirituality. Then the Machi, wanting to keep control and the direction of the conversation-presentation, interrupted me and told me to talk about my scholarship and my studies. I told them about my research project and the Machi said very seriously "don't beat around the bush, what do you want, what do you want from us". Then I understood that our meeting was not a friendly collaboration of trust, that I was perhaps being naïve in thinking that she was welcoming me into her world. In reality, we were both there with certain interests and "we had to put our cards on the table".

I said that I wanted to know more about Mapuche culture and cosmology which I had only studied from books. I also told them that, as we had planned the previous year, I wanted to go harvesting and learn more about medicinal plants and Mapuche healing. The Machi didn't seem to like this second interest related to healing and said, "ah no, we are more 'quisquillosos' (fussy) in that aspect". The word "quisquilloso" means to have misgivings, to consider the subject delicate, and more precisely in this case she did not seem to like it. She explained to me that in the Mapuche culture, teachings of healing are given by lineage and that it's not about just learning it like Chinese medicine or like the people who travelled to Peru because they wanted to become shamans, and that shamanism schools are in fashion. Here she said, it's not like that. It's not taught as a method or a school. She said that hippies like to take a term in Mapudungun to create a product and that this is theft of Mapuche knowledge. As she said this her tone became harsher and I could tell she was upset.

I was then invaded by emotions of fear, grief, and worry. I was honest but I realised that I had said the wrong thing related to learning Mapuche medicine and it was not a good way to collaborate. I told her that I would only learn what she wanted to teach me, that I thought it was good that we talked frankly about what our interests were and that we should "draw a line under the sand"; that is to say, that we should define what we could and could not do. She told me clearly that with her I cannot and will not learn to heal. She said that this is not what I was there for, that I could learn about cosmology, about the forest as a pharmacy, that I could transmit and make this knowledge visible by doing my thesis, but that I should concentrate only on that because otherwise the forces and the energies could make me sick. She also told

me that if I wanted to learn about medicinal plants, I could learn it from a lawentuchefe or from other people who know about plants.

At the time, I felt that trust was broken, that she looked at me with suspicion, and that she did not want to share her knowledge with me. Although she was determined to get my help to practice and study her Mapudungun, the relationship now had a conflict of interest. It made no sense for her to want something from me that I could not offer her; how could I become any sort of Mapudungun governess when I knew nothing of the language? Moreover, I found Mapudungun very difficult. On the other hand, I wanted to know more about her role as Machi, I wanted to live the process of harvesting and she was not willing to open that world to me.

Then the Machi went to get some study guides and exercises to learn Mapudungun, showed them to Don D, they discussed them, and he agreed that I could study with them in the first part of the lesson and that she could go over exercises with me when he left. We finished the conversation.

I tidied up my things in the room and later we met in the kitchen for lunch. In addition to the Machi and Don D, a cousin of the Machi was also there. He was in his fifties and worked for her doing various construction works in Kalfvgen. During lunch a woman arrived offering smoked sierra, a typical local fish. The woman was upset because she had fallen out with family, she sat at the table and began to tell us all of her problems. She explained that she had separated from her partner, and she had fallen out with his family who were her neighbours. She was a baker, she got up at 4am daily to make bread and she had a very hard life. She said she was tired of her life and her family and that she wanted to sell her little house, buy a truck and work on the road. The Machi offered her a plate of food which the woman gratefully accepted and continued to tell her story. She explained that they were making her an offer on her house for a very low price, and as she wanted to change her life radically, she was very close to selling it. The Machi advised her not to sell it, that money would run out very quickly and she would be left with nothing. She also told her not to make such important decisions in a state of emotional distress and impulsivity. The woman was crying, gradually calming down and finding comfort, the Machi bought her some smoked sierra fish and then she left.

When the woman left, the Machi told me that people always came to ask for help and advice, that sometimes people are very passionate, and that in that family they fight a lot. She said that in Mapuche culture there is always reciprocity, when the woman came, she ate, she threw away all her sorrow but left nothing, she didn't offer the sierras. So, she had not complied with the logic of reciprocity.

At the time, her words were directed at me: What had I brought to Kalfvgen? The logic of reciprocity envelops the material and immaterial world. I remembered that I had not gone to the supermarket when I got off the bus, although I had already explained to her that I wanted to buy food, and she told me not to worry that we would go to the market later. I felt that my contribution in material terms had not been clear. I had asked the Machi before how much she wanted me to contribute with money for the accommodation but she hadn't answered me.

a way of hearing creates the ear  
hearing is the music of interaction  
between hearing and what is heard  
what is there  
he and the ear  
and he *it*  
the noun and the adjective  
this is him.  
the live verb  
the exchange  
which is the creation  
the reciprocity  
not what our *compadre* was talking about here  
but other reciprocity  
the mutual exchange  
among all the forces of life  
which is the signal and sign  
po-ethics  
the poetic ethics of these lands of America  
poo-ethos, poo-ethics

Cecilia Vicuña, *Cold Sweat*

Reciprocity is not a barter, it has to do with the idea of balance, and it covers different areas, ranging from respect, care, and commitment, to the environment, to the importance of the redistribution of wealth, and the demonstration of affection with family, friendships, and people who are part of the community. Reciprocity encompasses a human and non-human protocol.

It involves practices of economy and balance, a sense of ethics, justice, and spiritual balance, not only among humans, but also other beings and territories. It is not a barter in the sense that one tries to equate one thing with another in material terms.

Anthropologist and anarchist activist, David Graeber (1961 – 2020) from the United States, conducted research on the topic of economic anthropology. Some of his books, *Debt: The First*

*5,000 Years* (2011), *Bullshit Jobs* (2018), and *The Dawn of Everything* (2021), are very relevant sources on reflecting how economy works in different societies, ethnic groups, and historical periods. He had a leading role in the “Occupy movement” with his participation and activism gaining significant recognition around the world and in the context of anthropology, as well as in left-wing political activism. In his major monograph, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, Graeber reflects through an historical and anthropological approach on the concept of debt, the origins of money, and forms of cooperation that cannot be assimilated to exchange. In this work, Graeber is responsible for dismantling some myths defended by economic theorists, such as those that have to do with the emergence of barter and money, according to the author, much more linked to violence and war than we thought. The work delves into the ancestral reasons that have led us to the current situation of economic and values crisis, constituting an alternative history of the economy from the point of view of debt, which could be at the root of what today we understand by freedom. In this text Graeber makes a study of the economy with an alternative historical perspective - anarchist, from a critical vision of the capitalist system, addressing the market, debt, money, barter, and exchange, among others.

I am addressing the concepts of barter, exchange, and reciprocity that the author develops<sup>18</sup>. He will also consider the questioning of the historical debt of territories with colonial history, and the repercussions of Eurocentrism on the world economy. Graeber addresses economies of social interaction based on a more generous vision, with a sense of justice and balanced exchange, integrating the concept of reciprocity. The author approaches the moral aspect of debt, “in the secular world, morality consists largely of fulfilling our obligations to others, and we have a stubborn tendency to imagine those obligations as debts” (Graeber, 2011, 12).

Without idealising a system, Graeber realises the complexity of these agreements because unfortunately the other side of justice can lead to settling accounts meaning that the two people implicated can separate:

All human interactions are not forms of exchange. Only some are. Exchange encourages a particular way of conceiving human relations. This is because exchange implies equality, but it also implies separation. It's precisely when the money changes hands, when the debt is cancelled, that equality is restored and both parties can walk away and have nothing further to do with each other (Graeber, 2011,122).

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<sup>18</sup> Specifically, I want to address chapter 5 of this book, “Brief treatise on the moral bases of economic relations”.



The critical vision that Graeber develops in his research so as not to fall into the tendency of romanticising economies of fair exchange, hold relevance; justice can also include separation and conflict. In this sense, from a symbolic perspective, my research and work address the problem of cultural appropriation in my cultural exchange with the Machi. Considering that there is some knowledge that cannot be bought or shared, my experience demonstrates the difficulty of accessing some information.

Graeber's proposal exposes the complexity of the idea of exchange, where concepts such as fair economy, mutual benefit, and taking advantage of the situation are questions that we might need to address in this research. My experience resonates with the ideas raised by Graeber in the context of the problems of instrumentalisation and cultural extractivism which can occur from one party to the other, and when notions such as hierarchy and power relationships are elements we need to reflect on.

Coming back to my collaboration with the Machi, I was thinking that we were in a process of barter, because I thought that she was drawn to my ability to make art and reach various audiences in national and international spheres to share the message of the forest. And from my side I felt the desire to learn from her. "A barter system requires a double coincidence of a desire for trade to take place. That is, to effect a trade, I need not only have to find someone who has what I want, but that person must also want what I have" (Graeber, 2011, 22).

Later, she showed attentiveness to me, seeing me as a kind of helper to learn Mapudungun. The spheres of exchange mutated over the course of the collaboration process. Although we did not operate under the logic of barter, reciprocity consisted of giving and taking under a logic of balance, both in the cultural and symbolic aspects of sharing knowledge. This double coincidence of desire sometimes does not come to be, and the economy of favours changes along the way.

Reciprocity is oriented towards the symbolic - for example, when taking a plant out of a territory. In this context, the plant is spoken to and permission is sought, it is considered, it is explained why it will be used and why it needs to be taken. Something is left in return which can be a gesture, like a seed, a ribbon, a song, or water.

When we talk about reciprocity with nature it relates to the commitment to care for the earth if it is inhabited, but it also encompasses the relationships between humans, giving and receiving is constantly present in culture. In the same way my arrival as a winka to seek or receive

certain wisdoms entails me giving knowledge, in this way a balanced symbolic exchange can be achieved.

In material terms I felt uncomfortable, it seemed to me that there was an imbalance. I did not have confidence, I did not feel welcome enough, I felt that there was something lacking. If the Machi gave me food and lodging, what did I bring materially to the table in return? Although I had invested resources in physically getting there and there was a great effort and organisation on my part to be present, I did not know what she expected.

As part of my winka culture when you are invited to visit a house for a few days you give a gift to the homeowner. Considering that our collaboration integrated a friendly aspect, my gift was a gesture of affection and gratitude for welcoming me to her home. I had brought her a nice case with flower embroidery, she was very happy when she received it and she liked it very much and she said she would put her stones there. I also offered her a bag with a variety of teas and herbs from England.

Our exchange had many layers, symbolic, of wisdom, knowledge, abilities, and there was also a material dimension and effort that we were each giving to carry out this collaborative project. Within that exchange the material things also had value, I was very grateful for the meals I had received and the Machi appreciated my gift too, I felt indebted because I had not brought food to contribute although we had agreed to go to the market. Will it be as Graeber points out that every time someone gives a gift, the act involves a debt and whoever receives it must make up for it? "Sometimes gifts are offered in order for the giver to be able to make such a demand: if one accepts the present, one is tacitly agreeing to allow the giver to claim whatever he deems equivalent" (Graeber, 2011, 108). In my case, the offer did not have this intention, but in some sense, I also wanted to mitigate my guilt/debt for not having brought food to contribute. There was a kind of compromise in this bond that we were forming and whether we wanted it or not we were both morally committed. The problems of the exchange economy can also generate debts: To the extent that human relationships involve debts, they are all morally committed (Graeber, 2001).

My gesture, although voluntary, did not have an interest beyond offering an object in the form of a thanks for the hospitality, also for having supported my project and for having invited me to work with her. In this sense, different intentions can be attributed to a gift, when analysing it could be seen in the context of Mauss, as a spiritual transaction of a voluntary nature, and that, according to my winka or Western culture, is part of a cultural tradition and a symbol of gratitude and hospitality for welcoming me as a guest.

Gifts are also part of reciprocity in Mapuche culture. So, for example, gifts are made to the gods, to the land above. In some rituals and ceremonies you can offer different types of water, for example from rain, a river, or a spring. Also, as I mentioned earlier, when I received the healing session from the Machi she indicated to me to give the forest some flaxseed seeds as a sign of gratitude. This allows us to question the relationship of exchange between human and non-human entities. Are offerings to the earth and other living beings as gestures of gratitude part of our Western rationality? Do we give gifts to non-human entities? As an aside, pets and domestic animals can usually receive gifts from their caregivers, but when it comes to the extraction of the land; to extract minerals, to tear down forests for the construction of houses and roads, of huge monoculture plantations, is anything left in exchange? What is to be offered to them?

In the afternoon, after a break I saw that Don D was in the therapy room reviewing the mapudungun study guide that the Machi had shown us that morning. I sat next to him while he continued silently looking at the guides. I spoke to him, and he took his time to respond without speaking much. There were a lot of spaces of silence. I didn't know if I was interrupting him, or if he just had a very calm pace. The silence bothered me a little, I did not know if it was appropriate to ask him something, or if it was better to leave him alone and just be by his side. Sometime later, I learnt that silence is very important to the Mapuche. They do not like to interrupt their silence, talking only due to the discomfort of being silent. In that context, when I didn't know how to react with the silence between us I suspect that my clumsy ways expressed that I was just saying words to make some conversation.

*"Conversation implies creation (whose first link is silence); an art that is given by the willingness to listen, which is the most difficult thing to learn, they tell us".*

Elicura Chihuailaf

Don D explained to me that had been working in public health for years in the CESFAMs (Family Health Centres). Years ago, he had worked in the area of intercultural health, that is to say, allowing hospitals and public health centres to provide care with Mapuche medicinal practices, with Machis and other healers.

Later we discussed the material in the guide, and he began to teach me Mapudungun. We saw the personal pronouns, the numbers, the ways of naming children, women, men, according to their age and gender. He explained the greeting "mari mari". Mari is the number 10, he told me that the traditional Mapuche greeting used to be with both hands. Each person greeted

with both hands. He showed me the gesture that was made by crossing the arms and joining each person's two hands. It was a very beautiful moment. Practising the ancient gesture with our hands became a very choreographic moment where our hands danced. I remember it was a joyful and affectionate moment, always with a lot of respect. For me, Don D inspired affection and at the same time great respect, he was about 70 years old, he seemed to me so wise and at the same time, humble. Although his role had an esteemed hierarchy in the community, he was also a person of age and had a lot of wisdom. He did not behave arrogantly and his manners were gentle. The Machi, on the other hand, generated a different emotion in me. I was afraid of her, her mood changed, sometimes affectionate and cheerful, other times stern, imposing her hierarchical position in an obvious way.

Suddenly the Machi came in, she greeted Don D in a very effusive and affectionate way, and me in a more distant manner. She told me to stay with him a little longer while she finished doing some things in the kitchen, then it would be her turn to study Mapudungun with Don D. Tidying up the kitchen, she explained to me that everything must always be left clean and put away, because cleanliness and order in the spaces are very important for balance. This was a rule in her house.

She asked me if I knew how to make bread, and I said no. In a scolding tone she said: "But how come you don't know how to make bread, you have to learn how to make bread, it is the minimum for survival. This is to become decolonised. The same as planting your own seeds and collecting vegetables, knowing where food comes from, having contact with the land. To decolonise oneself is to have independence from supermarkets." I totally agreed with her. What did I know about decolonising? Decolonising my habits, my way of making family, my way of loving, of living my corporality, of living between one city and another. Always in cities, always in capitals; Santiago, Paris, and London. Supermarkets, yes, my life depended on supermarkets. I felt like a winka girl, an intellectual artist who knows little about the practice of surviving in a place outside of the city.

A wound opened, the colonial wound, along with a universe of questions about identity and everyday practices, with these phrases challenging my urban self that had little connection to the land. As Cusicanqui says, we live in a culture where the official ideology of miscegenation wants to erase the memory of the colonial wound, which means forgetting the contradiction between the cultures of the Abya Yala, the indigenous, and the Spanish. The direction of whitening has influenced my decisions around education, getting far for a culture that teaches me a way of reconnecting with the land. For sure you grow food wherever you are in the world, but this conversation with the Machi made me feel the extent of the energy I had put into

intellectual questions, which made me take distance from the practice of being in a direct relationship with the land. In the garden of my house in Deptford in London there was sage, rosemary, lemon balm, and mint that I greeted, watered, and harvested to drink and cook daily, but my food came from a market, sometimes organic, sometimes from the open-air markets, corner shops, and sometimes from big supermarkets.

Coloniality has so many layers, a decolonial gaze tries to observe these layers, to confront them and in this process to remake them through less hegemonic paths. How conscious am I of my diet; what I eat, consume, discard? What are the processes that make up this journey, who, which companies, people, territories, forces, do I favour or harm in this chain, and how is the planet affected in this journey?

For example, Walter D. Mignolo's use of the term decolonial as a concept appeared in the 1990s in the Third World, from a connection between the body and the mind. That is, from the experience of the subjects who created this term, it is not a concept that comes from the European world which is understood as the culture that controls using coloniality. Coloniality can be understood as a modern process, modernity linked to Capitalism which addresses not only the economy but many other aspects, permeating everything, understood as a colonial matrix of power; mass appropriation of land, mass exploitation of labour in these territories, human life as dispensable (enslavement, genocide), the psychological and mental consequences of the impact that this process has had on the populations and inhabitants of this territory.

The notion of matrix of power, "patron colonial" in Anibal Quijano's (Peru, 1928) terms is a complex of concepts that can be presumed in three areas that are interconnected, as Mignolo proposes; coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge, and coloniality of being. The coloniality of power relates to authority and economy in relation to the natural resources and the exploitation of work. The coloniality of knowledge has to do with the control of education, the forms and norms of production and distribution of knowledge. In this aspect the knowledge of science has been disqualifying myths or other non-Western knowledge, because it contradicts or fails to coincide with the propositions of science. The coloniality of being is connected to the control of subjectivity, gender, and sex through norms that regulate roles to women and men, primacy of heterosexual relationships, and the control of subjectivity, among other aspects (Mignolo, 2006, 7). For Quijano, these three spheres are articulated through the notion of racism in relation to Eurocentrism, that it is not a biological thing but rather it is an epistemic problem that ascribes hierarchy and classifications to people, languages, and cultures of diverse regions of the world.

Listening to the Machi using the decolonial concept applied to something routine that entails survival, such as food, allowed me to update and concretise the use of the term decolonial which I had only used academically until then. Repositioning the concept to this territory of the south of Chile, considering that Valdivia has a colonial history and has suffered the colonial matrix of power, the plundering of lands from indigenous peoples, the genocide, the loss of their mapudungun language. We cannot erase its history, which is an open wound that manifests itself in bread, in language, in the cultural vision with the forest and in the actual struggle against the police forces of the Chilean state.

I will not explain the whole history of how the Mapuche people have been suffering oppression from the Spanish people as well as the Chilean state. That could provide material for a whole thesis, however, I can relay a few aspects that I want to highlight about the discrimination these people have permanently lived under the hegemonic power of European supremacy responding to modernity and colonialism. The concept of barbarism in contrast to civilisation has been central to this vision. The Argentinian lawyer, Vicente Fidel López, who wrote “Manual de la Historia de Chile” in 1845, asserts:

We speak Spanish and live in a civilized way because we are children of the Spanish who landed in America three centuries ago, and forcibly removed the places where we were born from the Indians (...)The Indians whom the Spanish took away from these lands were barbarians and not civilised like their enemies; as they were not, for this very reason, capable of understanding all the benefits that were going to result for this country, since it fell into the power of the European warriors and inhabitants, they resisted terribly, they fought with heroic tenacity to prevent the Spanish race from which we descend: but in the end they were defeated by our fathers and forced to retreat with their barbarism to the deserts of the South, leaving the civilized race free to raise on this earth all the wonders created by industry, enlightenment and laws; wonders that savages cannot produce (Correa, Mella, 2009, 6) <sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> The original version in old spanish style is: “Nosotros ablamos español i vivimos civilizadamente, porque somos hijos de los españoles qe ora tres siglos desembarcaron en América, i qitaron a los indios por la fuerza los lugares en que emos nacidos (...) Los indios a quienes los españoles qitaron estas tierras eran bárbaros y no civilizados como sus enemigos; yo como no eran, por esto mismo, capaces de comprender todos los beneficios qe iban a resultar para este país, desde qe cayese en poder de los guerreros i abitantes europeos, resistieron terriblemente, pelearon con tenacidad eróica para evitar qe se estableciese a su lado, en este territorio, la raza española de qe des cendemos nosotros: pero al fin fueron vencidos por nuestros padres i obligados a retirarse con su barbarie a los desiertos del Sud, dejando a la raza civilizada en libertad para que alzase sobre esta tierra todas las maravillas qe cria la industria, la ilustracion i las leyes; maravillas qe no pueden producir los salvajes”(Correa, Mella, 2009, 6).

These words are the foundational thinking of the state of Chile that promotes an identity of whitening, ignoring the indigenous people, and in the name of the notion of progress has been promoting the exploitation and depredation of the land. That vision has been advancing abundant stories of violence that are still happening in the land, the ecosystems, and the people, humans and other-than-humans, who live in the south of Chile<sup>20</sup>.

The story of colonisation of Valdivia is also vast. The port of Valdivia was inhabited long before the arrival of the European conquerors by the ancient people of the “Ainil”. For some authors, they would have been at the northern limit of the Kunko territory, the Mapuche identity of the current communes of San Pablo and San Juan de la Costa, in Los Lagos region. Explored by the Genoese navigator, Juan Bautista Pastene in 1544 by order of Governor Pedro de Valdivia, in the ships Santiaguillo and San Pedro, together with Jerónimo Alderete and Rodrigo Quiroga, they describe an extensive town with crops, the names of rivers, and islands. It was founded by Pedro de Valdivia on 9 February 1552. Valdivia was a strategic port of economy with many resources, that is why it was significant for diverse European people; the French, the English and the Dutch<sup>21</sup>. The resistance of Mapuche people is very relevant in this territory, a key event was the Battle of Curalaba in 1598 in which the Mapuche managed to expel the Spanish from the region. After the withdrawal of the Spanish, the Spanish Crown attempted to regain control of the southern region of Chile. In 1645, Governor Martín de Mujica y Buitrón managed to retake Valdivia, rebuilding the city.

There are many other moments of conflict and colonisation where other European cultures had been part of this territory, especially with the process “Colonización alemana” (German colonisation) that took place in three sectors of the south of Chile; Valdivia, Osorno and Llanquihue from 1823 to 1910. German immigration has been described as a process where:

An important transformation of the natural landscape, ecology and climate of the territory was carried out, as the native forest was cut down and endogenous animal and plant species were reduced as a result of their predation, and a large part of the colonized lands were dedicated to agriculture, the introduction of foreign species and livestock, mainly sheep and cattle, whose production was complemented by the industrial and commercial activities carried out by the settlers who, due to the lack of

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<sup>20</sup> There is an extended bibliography related to this subject. For more information around the story of removal see the work of Martin Correa and Eduardo Mella *Las razones del illkun / enojo*, Lom ediciones, 2010, Chile.

<sup>21</sup> For more information about the history of Valdivia see this article written by Jimena Jerez: <https://www.museodenebla.gob.cl/historia-de-valdivia>

land, subsequently moved to Llanquihue, Osorno and the rest of the southern area to the Chacao Channel and the Reloncaví Estero.

In the last two decades of the 19th century, the settlers managed to develop a productive commercial centre in the area and distributed their products in the rest of the country and in some European ports. In Valdivia, a sector dedicated to beer brewing, tanneries, industrial inputs, shipyards, and sawmills was established; On the shores of Lake Llanquihue and on the plains of Osorno, agricultural activities developed based on local and national consumption and from Puerto Montt, trade with Hamburg and other European ports prospered (Memoria Chilena) <sup>22</sup>

The conflicts related to the predation of indigenous lands and the influence of colonisation in the ecosystems were and are currently a subject of dispute in Valdivia. The concept of colonisation and decolonisation is enormous in regard to the length of time, history, and geopolitics. I will focus my research on the stories I have experienced with the people I encountered in my work, and from there I will open up more expanded contexts.

My own decolonisation was connected to the experience I had with the Machi, to situate the cosmovisions in the everyday, in the practice of food, the care of spaces and coexistence. In terms of the micro-political sense that is made manifest in daily life, Rolnik and Guattari also give an account of this need for a practice that is made concrete everywhere, as a way of life that is expressed not only in theory but also in action; "in our stereotyped relations of personal life, married life, love life and professional life, in which everything is guided by codes" (Rolnik, Guattari, 2006, 157). I am re-thinking my codes and actions from a subjectivity that allows mutations in my way of being winka, South American, woman, researcher, in my own corporeality and everyday practices, responding to a practice that recognises the colonial, the presence of capitalism, patriarchy, hegemonic power, but that through this awareness awakens a desire for transformation, a potential micro-political manifestation.

I told the Machi that I wanted to learn how to make bread. She told me that I had a good disposition and that it was a very good thing, so she taught me how to make her recipe, the ingredients, the measurements, the timings. She gave me the tasks to prepare the "once". The once is a meal that is eaten in Chile, like an afternoon tea in the UK. It can be served between lunch and dinner, or instead of dinner, in which case you have a more substantial once.

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<sup>22</sup> This text is a source written by the site « Memoria Chilena ». Memoria Chilena is a digital resource centre that presents research based on digitised documents belonging to the collections of the National Library of Chile. It offers original documents and content related to key themes of Chilean cultural identity that are part of the collections of the National Library of Chile and other institutions of the National Cultural Heritage Service. This text was updated in July 2023: <https://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-676.html>



Normally you drink tea, coffee, or mate, and eat bread with something, it can be with egg, avocado, pate, butter, jam, ham, cheese, depending on what you have available. She explained to me the ingredients that need to be put on the table and told me to serve it in a way that looked dignified. She told me that even if there are few ingredients, the way it is served gives dignity to a table. She closed the door and began to study with Don D.

I prepared the bread, set the table, and made sure the once was ready. The Machi didn't want to interrupt her study, so it wasn't until about 10 pm that the four of us sat down to eat; the Machi, Don D, the cousin, and I. Everyone liked the bread I made, which was a relief.



Fig.44 Bread and firewood kitchen

When we were having once I wondered if she wanted the chili sauce she had prepared herself. She talked about the importance of the preparation process: making bread, jam, chili from the harvest, and how long it takes to prepare and take care of it. She explained that people do not realise when they arrive and eat or when they buy the food, the provenance of the food and all the effort that is put into making it.

Then the Machi and her cousin had an argument. The cousin told the Machi that P (the Machi's ex-husband) said that the only thing wrong with her was that she was always late. The Machi got angry and said that she was always busy and had a lot of things to do. Between all the

construction work on her medicinal centre and the cabins, she had to take care of everything; such as the accounting and answering calls from people who wanted to book cabins. Also, as a Machi, when she goes to the market people talk to her and tell her they have ailments or tell her their problems and she must listen to them and give them advice. This is not a play," she said, "I don't put the Machi costume on and the acting starts; I had to be a Machi all day, all the time, non-stop. She then referred to her Swiss ex-husband, saying that she did not have P's privileges of having a pension, she will not have a pension and will have to continue to work, so, she said, he should not be saying that.

She was very angry; she raised her voice and the cousin was listening. He spoke again and told her that the last time he had made her wait at the bus terminal in Valdivia for about two hours to pick him up. She was still angry and replied that next time he would have to manage to get there by hitchhiking because she had a lot of things to do and didn't have time to pick him up.

Also, at one point in the discussion, the Machi said something to the effect that neither P nor he could criticise her, that only Don D was on her level. She clearly pointed out a hierarchy, which is very evident in her treatment and attitude.

The Machi is an authority in Mapuche culture, a man, or women who fulfils a healing and a religious role and has the responsibility of watching over the continuity of the *Az Mapu*. Moreover, the Machi has comprehensive knowledge of their culture and "is a chosen person dedicated by vocation to healing, he or she mediates between the visible and the invisible worlds. The Machi goes into a state of trance – called Kvymin - and communicates with positive and negative forces. The Machi knows all the lawen, natural medicines, and their uses" (Chihuailaf, 2009, 95 -96).

The Machi in the Mapuche culture not only deals with medicine and knows the uses of different remedies, but she is also an authority that mediates between the world above and the world in which we live. Therefore, she is not the same as other humans. Her different roles within her community as a healer and taking charge of the tourism space and the cabins, were expressed in her speech. By her way of justifying herself and imposing herself she made her power known.

I listened silently. Don D also kept silent, the discussion was intimate and showed how her relatives saw her as a person, and how she saw herself as a Machi. It was interesting that the cousin, as well as being family, also worked for her. At the time, I was witnessing a family

conversation where the privacy of her relationship with her ex-husband and her cousin became a public discussion linked to her public role in the community as Machi, and her role as the cousin's employer. She was exposed as a person in terms of her economic fragility; not having a pension to retire, which contrasted with her role of authority as a Machi, in which she did not give space for others - who were not on the same level of authority - to express an opinion on the management and use of her time. This discussion revealed her status as champurria (half Winka, half Mapuche), that western crossroads of thinking about her "pension", her economic needs, in terms of being a modern woman with economic independence, and who is afraid of reaching old age in precarious conditions. This is added to the context of the Chilean social system where the state does not ensure the dignity of the elderly, where the pension system is unjust and unworthy. Therefore, a person who works independently without a contract, without impositions, will reach their old age without any kind of help. Instead, P symbolised the "European privilege" coming from Switzerland, a country with a completely different economy and where state support, as well as living conditions, are much more favourable than those of an average Chilean. The economic mention in the Machi's speech expressed her difference from P. She had to take over the job of managing this pseudo "tourism company" which meant managing the cabins, which in turn meant they were not under equal conditions.

The once ended with a lot of tension. The Machi dominated the conversation most of the time and although the cousin tried to defend his idea a couple of times, she always had the last word. It was late, around midnight, when the cousin and Don D went to sleep. The Machi and I stayed up tidying the kitchen and washing the dishes. In that intimacy, she asked me, as if we were friends, if I thought she had been too hard on her cousin. It seemed to me that she had, but I was confused with the conversation, with the idea of authority and authoritarianism, with her role as a Machi, with her human empathy in front of her cousin, and above all, after seeing her so angry, I did not dare to say anything that could stir anger again because there was already a lot of tension. I was also afraid that it would backfire if I expressed something she did not want to hear. I told her 'not so much' and she again defended her ideas stating that her time was more important than other people's time, and he was not on her level to come and tell her how to manage her time. I listened to her and cleaned without daring to give my opinion. I was like her winka cousin, a person without authority, and my time could be moved and adapted to the Machi's schedule. I changed the dates as many times as she wanted, I hurried to come to her at the last minute, I cancelled my plans because she asked me to, I was also willing to change my ticket back to London if necessary, so I felt empathy towards her cousin. From my Western, winka view I was confronted with the complexity of what it means that one person's time is more important or valuable than another's. The sense of empathy also challenges me in human relationships.

In the Mapuche culture the positions and roles of political and religious authorities are, among others, the *genpin*, *lonko* and *Machi*, as well as the elders of a community who also have a rank of authority. In the case of the *Machi*, as a religious authority of the Mapuche people, it is very important to understand that the *Machos* never choose to become one. The spirit, *Fileu*, appears in these people's lives and after this occurs, they must give their life to this work and their community.

Moreover, the *Fileu*, the spirit of wisdom and healing is manifested in the person in two ways. The *Fileu* is different for each person, it takes possession of the chosen person when he or she is in the mother's womb, as a child, or as an adolescent, or sometimes, less frequently, as an adult. The spirit is announced by a *Pewma* (dream) or by a *Kutran* (illness).

If announced by a dream, it takes the form of "the chosen persons ascending to or walking on the Land Above and greeting a *Machi* who is no longer in the visible world. She teaches the possessed person the knowledge of illnesses and their cures, and the art of playing the *Kultrun*. Or the spirit is announced by a dream in which the chosen person is talking with a *canelo* (Mapuche sacred tree) or with white and blue flowers" (Chihuailaf, 2009, 96).

The second way in which the *Fileu* spirit manifests itself is through illness, *Kutran*. In the case of *Machi P*, she was in Switzerland when she began to have many symptoms, physical and emotional ailments that made her cry and suffer a lot. Once I asked her how and from what she got sick. And she said, "I got sick of everything, I got sick from everything".

Chihuailaf says that the *Kutran*, sickness "takes the form of a *Perimontun* or vision of a serpent, horse, bull, white sheep, or shining medicines coming towards him or her from a flash of lighting or a peal of thunder. The vision generally appears when the *Machi* is next to a spring or a waterfall. Mapuches can call that "sickness" *Machi kutrun*. The possessed person then undergoes one or more *Zatun* or *Machitun* with the purpose of healing. However, he or she does not heal until a *Machi* determines which spirit has possessed that person. The *Machi* tells the possessed person that the remedy is to obey the call of *Genechen* – the spirit who supports the Mapuche people, which determines if he or she must become a *Machi*. The *Machi* informs the family about this, and a family council is summoned" (Chihuailaf, 2009, 96 -97).

During my stay in *Kalvgen* I heard the *Machi* say many times that she did not choose to be a *Machi*, that she would be happier if she could sleep in and not have to get up every morning at six o'clock. However, this is her role and she must connect with the ancient spirits through

prayer on a daily basis. Such a committed way of life, not by choice but by obligation which entails a grievance, seems to also be presented as a way of justifying a character that from my Western, winka judgement (and without having any other Machi reference) was very difficult to understand.

A Machi cannot disengage from her role, she cannot abandon that plan which is her task on this earth. It is said that the spirit takes over her in such a way that if she does not give herself to her role as a Machi, she can become more ill and even die. Nanculef explains that even "the Machi regrets having been selected by the spirits to carry out this role. The Machi complains every time she can to the deities that have chosen her because she did not choose to be a Machi. Therefore, by complaining, she states that these spirits must accompany her now, they must guide her, help her to demonstrate the capacity to be what she is told to be, whether in the rituals to fulfil her role as Machi or in the nguillatun, or on every occasion that it falls on her to act" (Nanculef, 2016, 98).

That night when the Machi and I stayed in the kitchen, without giving me details she told me that the next morning she and Don D would do their activities with their rewe and I was not invited to participate. She told me to make breakfast and gave me instructions on how to prepare it. We said farewell fondly.

I went to sleep full of thoughts and feelings, all scrambled by a trip I had planned and hoped for. My illusion of going to harvest the forest with the Machi and learning from her wisdom was a fragile project at the time. She provoked fear in me, I felt that our collaboration was quite delicate, the expectations and desires of exchange with one another was in crisis. At the same time, we had said goodbye that night with a certain tenderness and fraternity, so there was hope that things could turn out well. This made me anxious and worried, at times I just wanted to observe and be invisible, but my presence was not invisible, I was the stranger, the winka. Although the Machi's cousin was also a winka because he was a cousin on the non-Mapuche side, he was a relative, I was a stranger, the doctoral student and artist who came from England, from Europe. I did not go unnoticed, no matter how silent I was.

The next morning, I made breakfast and the Machi, Don D and I had it together. We ate breakfast in silence. Again I felt a little uncomfortable because we were not talking. I interrupted the silence by asking something, they both paused, the Machi looked up while eating and made a gesture of affirmation with her eyes. I could understand from her gesture that my question was impertinent and that it was better to keep quiet. There was a cultural barrier and

little by little I had to adapt to understanding what I could speak about and what I could not, when I could speak and when I could not.

*"We do not hear silence, making love with  
sound.*

*Because the system we live in is a system of not hearing.  
The key is to hear neither the inner being nor that of the other"*

Cecilia Vicuña, *Future Sweat*

My distance from the Mapuche world was evident. Talking with people who know their culture better, they explained to me that it is very important to respect not asking questions. Not only because it can be impertinent, but because they share when they want to, and there are things that are learned and said at certain times. Then the Machi asked me about my friend J, with whom I had visited the year before and we talked about her and her family. Suddenly the Machi told me to speak in Mapudungun. She asked me about the pronouns, and we went through them, iñche (I), iñchiw (the two of us; first person dual personal pronoun), iñchiiñ (we plural), eyimi (formal you), eyimuvn (you plural). She and Don D started speaking in Mapudungun and I could not follow the conversation.

At that moment I felt anguish and realised once again that the task the Machi had given me, to help her study this language I didn't know, was very strange. I felt that she had the wrong expectations of me, as if I were a gifted person or that I would learn everything very quickly because of this supposed "European" discipline. It was normal that I did not understand anything, but I still felt frustrated with the plan she had assigned to me.

I listened to them in silence, when the Machi suddenly spoke to me again in Spanish and told me that she and Don D wanted to ask me a favour. That night they were having a ceremony with another woman who was coming from Valdivia to work with them, and they needed me to look after that woman's daughter. They asked me to spend that night in Valdivia at the woman's house looking after her daughter.

Was this just another test? What was my role? Why had she summoned me? What was our collaboration? Again, I did not understand what my presence there was about. I guess we were getting to know each other, and I had to earn her trust. So far there had been no mention of any plan to go and harvest in the forest, nor did she want to include me in her activities. I had arrived the day before and they were already asking me to leave again, leave my things, and

stay in an unknown house taking care of a girl I didn't know. It felt like another test, and although it was hard for me, I accepted it.

After agreeing to do the favour I felt entitled to ask her when she was planning to travel to Santiago. She had asked me to bring forward my trip to Valdivia because she would be travelling to Santiago. I had to rent a room in Valdivia for the days she would be in Santiago. The Machi replied that she did not know and that she would let me know but "you know what I said last night with my cousin about the weather, time is relative, and I want my freedom". Then I told her that it was out of respect for the person who was going to rent me the room that I had to confirm. I told her that I was flexible with her, that I had changed the dates, and that I took the first bus to come when she called me, I just asked her to be a little flexible with me because I needed to confirm these dates. She told me: "Look, nobody needs you here, I don't want you to be telling me your problems, out of respect for other people that I don't know, that's not my problem, I only need to be with my rewe and Don D, everything else for me is a nuisance".

I felt rejected and that I was being thrown out of that place. The hard Machi from the other night appeared, and again the hierarchy of her time was imposed. She put me in the position of being the winka who came to meddle where she shouldn't. What were our positions? In a friendship there is empathy for the needs of the other person. My time and my needs did not have the same importance. I felt manipulated by her words; I appeared in her dreams, "come as soon as possible, we need you". I ran to catch a bus, I arrived, I was her friend, then her enemy, now a hindrance. A hindrance because I didn't know Mapudungun and she wanted to practice with someone who had no idea of the language. The plan was absurd, I could not contribute with my skills.

She told me that she and Don D believed that I was kind of ethereal and thought I needed to become stronger. In the context of conversation about Taoist meditation practices the previous day, I suppose my spiritual ideas may have seemed abstract, albeit linked to Chinese medicine, perhaps too philosophical. Moreover, my soft and even submissive energy next to hers certainly contrasted. They defended sacred spaces, they came from a culture that had been constantly dispossessed, a human and non-human territory that was currently at war with the Chilean state. Real fights, where philosophy and spirituality are anchored to concrete problems; you must read the laws, know the clauses, get up at six in the morning to pray, take to the streets with banners, and defend the forest. I was the ethereal, the intellectual, the one who sought peace, healing, creating instances of care.



But at the time I could not take distance, I was not strategic, rational or polite, and I let myself get carried away by my emotions, I felt the urge to defend myself, to mark my territory. My discomfort had to do with the feeling of having to submit to all the things the Machi asked of me. I told her that I had to work for things too, that I had not been given everything on a platter and that I had made many sacrifices in my life. When she saw me for the first time bringing out a stronger personality and setting limits, she told me: "No, if you are going to be like this, let's leave things here". I listened to her and understood that there was no more space for conversation so I kept quiet and accepted it.

On the one hand I was angry, I had made so much effort to get to her. Then, not only did I not feel welcome, but I never understood what she expected and wanted from me. Before, she had wanted me to spread awareness about the forest in Europe and in Chile. Now, she wanted me to help her study the language. She was not interested in my art, she did not want me to learn about plants or healing, she did not want to share her knowledge. Tension and lack of confidence were becoming more acute on both sides. Maybe she needed me to pass certain tests and that wasn't possible.

By making my intentions of wanting to learn about healing transparent, I had only managed to generate distrust, resentment, and distance. I also wanted to clarify that I was not there to steal information, commit biopiracy or anything along those lines. This is indeed a delicate issue in the territory and there have been problems of cultural appropriation in terms of the medicines of the Valdivian Forest. Given the great medicinal value of the Valdivian Forest, it has attracted international pharmaceutical industries that have stolen information and have occupied it to patent medicines and profit from them. These groups extract this knowledge and the medicines and do not deliver anything to the communities from whom they take the knowledge, which increases the discontent of the indigenous population. In this sense, there are reasons for distrust towards the people who come in search of this knowledge. Considering that the survivors of the native peoples have suffered numerous losses of their people, their ceremonies, and their territories, it makes sense that the risk of loss of intellectual property is a threat. Faced with this dispossession in my position as winka created an uncomfortable situation. I came from a UK university and given that the UK has been a global empire that represents colonialism, I was also a threat.

The issue of cultural appropriation in my encounter with the Machi became explicit in her fear of sharing her wisdom with me, which echoes the cultural dispossession that Mapuche culture has suffered along with the threat of biopiracy.

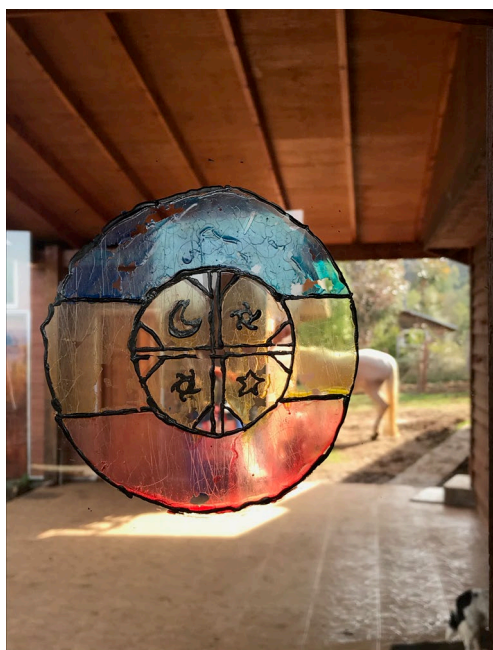


Fig.45 Symbol of Mapuche flag

After this rupture, I realised that the subject is more complicated than the medicinal or chemical information of a plant - that knowledge is only a fraction. We are talking about the indivisible particularity of the medicinal and spiritual world in the Mapuche culture. Mapuche medicine is not learned as I did with my teacher, Mantak Chia, it is not taught through workshops, books, videos, and online classes. Access to Mapuche knowledge is limited and the barriers to access it are very high. Mapuche knowledge and spirituality is marked by lineage. Not anyone can access it. Our exchange and willingness for reciprocity succumbed to cultural possibilities, the disagreement showed the other side of justice which in this case, as Graeber would say "settling the score means that the two people can be separated" (Graeber, 2011, 121).

Until that moment I was ignorant of the difficulties of the terrain in which I intended to investigate. Then, I realised that the desire to access this knowledge could result in theft, an appropriation of something that not only did not belong to me, but could also hurt me to attempt to learn it. While I shared with them the wisdoms I had learned about Chinese, Taoist, and energetic healing, that was not enough to expect reciprocity.

Our intentions were colliding, a feeling of fear and discomfort had also unleashed in me which did not allow me to be myself in the sense of opening up and feeling accepted. I felt criticised and I suspected that there was some sort of resentment. Once again, I was the winka. I had no reason to pretend to smile if I really felt afraid, so when the Machi told me to leave things there and go for a walk, I opened the kitchen door and the air hugged me, I breathed freely and I felt great relief.

My chest was tight with the thought that this plan would fall apart at any moment. Our collaboration was not based on the trust and affection that sustains a more mature and sustained relationship. It was a young relationship, and this conflict demonstrated that under the logic of exchange there is a risk that "the whole relationship can be cancelled and either party can terminate it at any time" (Graeber, 2011, 135). I always felt a certain insecurity in dealing with the Machi, I didn't know if the plan was going to materialise. We each dreamed of the other differently. The dream came face to face with reality.

Just as I felt relief, I also felt great sorrow and frustration. Before leaving I went to say goodbye to the Machi. She was in the kitchen with Don D studying Mapudungun. I thanked her for the healing she had carried out for me the previous year. She said goodbye in a loving way telling me that it was nothing personal, that she did not have anything against me specifically but that it was her spirit that felt it and that she must listen to it. When she talks about her spirit it seems to be someone different from her identity as a person, it is as if there were two beings, a being that could be called a "person" who has a first name and is more like all people, and another being, where her Machi spirit is, or where the ancient spirits that inhabit her are.

This cosmic aspect is difficult for me to understand in my Western logic: "The Machi is the Mapuche person who has been called by the cosmic dimensions and the Mapuche conception of God to fulfil a role that she has not sought. The Machi is a person chosen by the Mapuche God, the cosmic energy and the tutelary divinities of the earth, to carry out the task of mediator between the Mapuche natural and supernatural world" (Nanculef, 2016, 98).

I do not belong to that space limited to a few and the best way to respect it is to accept the invitation to leave and let other doors open; the doors of the forest. The Machi told me when she said goodbye that she has to protect this secret knowledge which is millenary, from a very ancient culture, I cannot access it and we must mark the barrier, that their spirits protect this knowledge. They don't want to share it and they can't share it but rather, they have to protect it. While she was talking to me, she drew a picture in her notebook automatically. She didn't seem to pay attention to it, but I was looking at her drawing while she was talking to me. With the pencil she drew two circles, one inside the other, she filled the inner circle with the ink of the pen becoming increasingly darker. The second circle was a line around the smaller one, I thought that the line of the big circle was like a barrier that should protect the inner circle, which was the secret Mapuche knowledge. This told me that cultural balance has to do with the fact that there are some that should not have access to this knowledge.

All the Machis claim to have been educated, prepared and trained in language, secret phrases, special wisdom, medicine, doses of natural medicine, the meaning of life and death, and how to conduct a nguillatun. They say that everything was taught to them in the cosmic dimension of the Wenu Mapu, literally, the lands above, and that through contact with the Spanish and the introduction of the Catholic religion, it was changed to the Christian concept of 'heaven'. Of heaven we know very little, but of Wenu Mapu we know that it is another land just like this one, but in a different cosmic dimension. There one can enter a special state, with body and soul (to put it in Spanish) and that is what happens to our Machi. They claim to have been taken to the Wenu-Mapu and to have been placed there on a special pedestal of secret knowledge. This has led us to affirm precisely that many parts of Mapuche knowledge correspond to a specialised sector that is handled under secrecy, forbidden to spread for the sake of spreading, since there always had to be a spiritual or cosmic reason for it to be spread (Nanculef, 2016, 99).

I told her that I embraced her decision, that it was part of her wisdom and that I respected it, that I was grateful for everything I had received up to that point. She told me to concentrate on my thesis, not to get involved in the other subjects because the spirits could harm me and I could get sick. We hugged and then I said goodbye to Don D, who never expressed his opinion about the decision taken by the Machi.

*"Religion and healing always go hand in hand"*

Malu Sierra, *Un Pueblo sin estado*

I realised the complexity of the subject I am researching given that in Mapuche culture everything is spiritual, religious, political, and social. It is a hermetic culture, the cultural meaning is hidden, the words are ancient, and when it comes to the spiritual and healing it belongs to a closed, elitist, vigilant and secret knowledge. Even in the Mapuche communities themselves, only a few have access to this knowledge and they guard it with suspicion.

The authorities of the Mapuche culture, such as the Lonko (Head in Mapudungun), who is the chief or head of a community or family group (*Lof*) and the Machi are appointed from childhood. It is given by a lineage, and the lineage can come from the eight surnames, i.e., from the ancestors coming from the eight grandfathers and grandmothers of previous generations. The Mapuche belief of the cyclical world is that the same spirit rotates through the cycles. It is said that the Machi will be born again as a Machi in one of her grandchildren or later in one of her great-grandchildren. This cyclical process is fundamental to understand.

MVLEN (I am)

"I am the vision  
From the ancient spirits  
That slept in those pampas.  
I am my grandfather's dream  
Who fell asleep thinking  
That one day he would return to this beloved land.

He went on a journey  
beyond  
the horizon of dreams"

Leonel Lienlaf

Getting to know the Mapuche culture allowed me to question my own culture, my capacity to live in a decolonial consciousness, to approach a path of acceptance of my European influence, my mestizaje, my South American roots from the winka perspective. It also invites me to ask myself about my ancestors and my relationship with the land, with the forest: What do my ancestors tell me through the forest? What can I hear through the trees and living things that inhabit that place?

I came to that place to live an experience with the Machi and that was a stage that put in conflict my position regarding inhabiting that territory. It was necessary to return to myself to what I needed, to find my own way there, to be my own guide and to listen to other voices, other songs, sometimes untranslatable, but that I could feel regardless.





Fig.46 *The Forest*

*The Forest*  
Digital collage, digital printing  
2 x 1,2 metres  
January 2020

This work was inspired by the Valdivian Forest in the south of Chile, by the concept of Itrofil Mogen, biodiversity and the botanical riches.





Fig.47

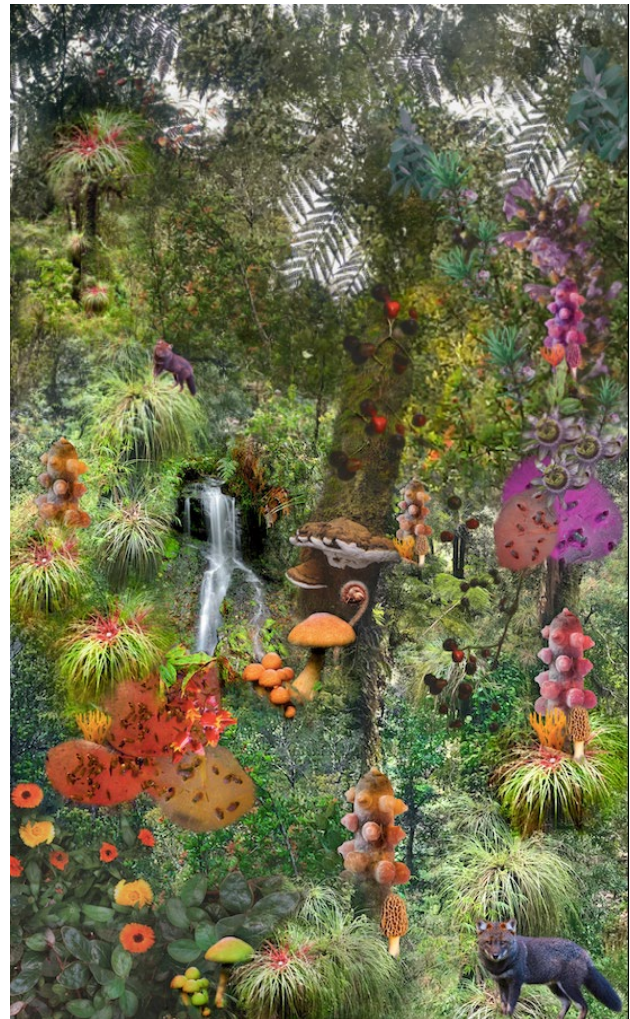


Fig.48

***Transforming matters,***

Installation - experience made in the context of the Upgrade of this PhD research  
Goldsmiths University of London, January 2020

Short video of the experience: <https://vimeo.com/501942058>

Long video of the experience: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGYmsNKamzE>

This event took place in the installation room of the Deptford campus at Goldsmiths University. In the frame of my upgrade (Transfer of registration from Mphil to PhD), I wanted to do a live experience, this time integrating stories related to my experience of visiting the Machi for the first time; the healing session I received, as well as the conversations we had.



I also had the need to integrate the concept of *Itrofil Mogen* in a visual and concrete sphere. I wanted to have the forces of the forest present in the room and a means by which I developed that was by making a photo collage of the pictures I took in the Valdivian Forest with other images I collected from the internet and that I scanned from the book of Jimena Jerez, *Plantas mágicas, guía etnobotánica de la región de los ríos*. I also somehow alchemized my pictures of the ice sculptures - medicinal sculptures with those of the forest. This textile piece was exhibited in a big format as a digital print.

For this installation I also integrated a “medicinal sculpture” that was the remnant of the medicine that the Machi recommend to me; plantain and pichi pichi rosemary that I took over a two month period. I also collected diverse kinds of water originating from different sites and springs in the area of Somerset, England.

Prior to this event, in June 2019, I had a residency called *MELT* at CASA Festival, London that took place at Arcola Theatre. In this frame, I invited producer DJ Raff to collaborate with me on the music in the creation of an immersive soundscape, exploring the impact of sound in a somatic way. We explored the qualities and options held by the different objects and matter I used; water, glass, laboratory tools, and voice. Working with live and recorded sounds I noticed that sound was an important tool to influence the state of the room and to create an ambience. Sound travelled into the water corporeality of the participants as well as my own presence as a performer and guide of the experience. Part of the process of my own transformation during the event was partly due to getting involved in a sound state. In this event I use the sound of the objects and matter, but also my voice in telling some stories of plants and their properties.

Regarding the texts, words and concepts I produced, this time I decided to connect the plants and the Tao healing system related to organs, so I not only talked about the emotional balance that plants help humans with, but also about their proprieties related to organs and systems. Some of the plants, organs, and systems I refer to were: the circulatory system; hibiscus flower; the heart organ; respiratory system; mauve flower; elderflower; rosemary; lungs; the sexual organs; the skin; marigold and sage; nervous system; lavender and lemon balm; lymphatic system; dandelion; and, the kidneys. In this event I integrated botanical knowledge regarding the properties that plants have to heal the human anatomy as well as what I have done previously regarding the emotional and psychic capacities, including some stories I collected about the magical properties of plants.

From that experience, I decided, for *Transforming matters*, to select a number of plants and organs/systems to do the sculptures and guide the storytelling, and as a continuation of the

event, *MELT*, I also integrated sound into this experience. That was also because in the healing experience with the Machi, the sound aspect, when she used her voice, singing and calling the forces as well as using the kultrun drum, were very strong as a somatic sensation and I really felt the trance and healing with the power of sound. For *Transforming matters*, I began to create soundscapes, this time by myself, with voice, samples, storytelling, and immersive music bases with different technologies. I created different sound moments that attempted to affect the audience; moving their internal water and at the same time proposing stories and discourses that had the potential to interpellate the participants. The narrative had an ethnobotanical approach, collecting information about the influence of plants in the system and organs of the human body, as well as an emotional remedy and magic knowledge.

Some of the plants I chose this time were those I had in my garden; healers say that the plants you have close can be the medicine you need. I had rosemary, sage and lemon balm. This time I created three different kinds of sculptures with a combination of herbs that were focused on three organs; the kidneys – the plants were sage, chamomile, and dandelion and the principal emotional feeling is fear and trauma; the heart and circulatory system - the plants were rosemary and hibiscus and are connected to the feeling of joy happiness, and activation. I also invited audiences to collectively sing or call the magic phrase “romero romero que salga lo malo que entre lo bueno” (rosemary, rosemary, let the bad get out, let the good get in); for the respiratory system and lungs, the plants were mauve, lavender and elderflower, and the connection with breathing also brought relation to the spiritual understanding meditation that lavender allows.

The plants normally influence more than one organ and system but I focused on one of them regarding the storytelling and the connection with the ice sculpture I created that people interacted with. I decided to choose some plants and organs to connect the Tao knowledge, herbalism, and ethnobotanical knowledge.

The audience relationship changed from one place to another, depending on the culture, the type of event, and guests that participate. When I did MELT at Casa Festival there were a lot of people, very diverse and mostly young, the audience was very attentive and participated but it wasn't a very immersive event because it was a short moment and it was part of a night of performances, so different performances were held in the same event.

When I did *Transforming matters*, I decided to create an experience with people from different backgrounds, locations and nationalities, with the aim of ensuring diversity. Many of them didn't know each other beforehand. At the beginning, people interacted shyly but little by little

somehow it became a more distended ambience opening up some communication between those in each of three groups. In this context I could recognise that some people were engaging with the proposition but others had more distance and were analysing, more than living, the experience. These levels of distance and proximity also reflect the kind of rationality that people have and how open they are to magic, immersive, sensorial experiences. How much do they believe in plants in Tao and Mapuche knowledge? For me it was more difficult to keep the group engaged than the experience in Chile where I felt more support, but I continued my proposition, relaying and showing what I had prepared, and responding in the present moment. Then I noticed that some were really touched by the different elements; sound, smells, stories, images, and maybe they were not as expressive as Chilean people, but in their way some people connected with my proposition. I realised that everyone has their own manner of expressing and living the connection or disconnection with what I propose, and I can't control that process. I offer, but the reception depends on each person and their own history and curiosity with the themes and materials I deliver.

## Chapter 3

### THIRD TERRITORY

#### THE FOREST, CONNECTION WITH MORE- THAN-HUMAN

That forest I carry inside  
That fog is my thirst

My maternal grandmother, Sofía Urrutia, was born in Valdivia on 28 November 1919. When I was twenty years old, I was studying literature at the Gómez Millas Campus of the University of Chile, which was very close to my grandmother's house. I often had lunch at her house in Doble Almeyda and some days I stayed overnight. During those lunches she always told me stories of her childhood in Valdivia, her walks on the Cruces River, the summers on the cold Valdivian coast, the sea of Niebla where she learned to swim, her visits to the island of Corral where her cousins had a house. She also told me about tragedies such as when their house burned down and they lost everything. My grandmother used to tell me that one shouldn't get attached to material goods.

I imagined that great wooden house that burned down where her whole family lived, her sisters, brothers, cousins, and aunts. Her mother, Angelina Asenjo, died when she was only five years old and her younger sister was only three, and her remaining six siblings were raised by her mother's sisters, her aunts Leontina and Rita, and her grandmother. The entire family lived in my maternal grandmother's house. Her father, Luis Alberto Urrutia, was a member of parliament and due to his work he travelled by train constantly to the congress in Santiago - a long trip of 18 to 20 hours. My uncle Rafael, my mother's brother, says that Grandpa Luis was in charge of protecting the Mapuche families who always brought him gifts in gratitude and were very fond of him.

Since Sofia was a young child, she had been her father's secretary, she underlined his newspapers and had great admiration for him. At the age of sixteen, she decided that she wanted to study law in Santiago. At the time, women in Chile did not study or go to university but rather, they stayed at home as mothers and wives. When my grandmother decided to go to study in Santiago, her aunt Leontina, with whom she shared a bedroom and in a certain sense played the role of mother, got angry with her and did not speak to her for several years. Sofia still persevered with her decision, although at great cost because the professors, all men, made her life impossible and, as she told me, instead of asking her about the subjects and the

content of the classes, they would ask her if she was attending university to find a husband. Although they made the road very difficult for her, she made it, and was one of the first women lawyers of her time, working in the comptroller general's office for most of her life. Sofia was a very intellectual woman, she would talk to me about history, the news, current affairs, her stories of working in the national audit office, and she was also a plant lover. She would spend hours watering her plants, pruning them, caring for them. As a child she would give me the task of picking up the dry leaves in the garden and the prize was an ice cream at the corner shop.

My mother first visited Valdivia when she was 20 years old. I visited as a child as I could see from the photos that were in my house, but I had no memory of it. Then in 2013 a little before leaving for France, I went on tour to dance at a festival where we danced in a square in the city and on the waterfront. With the company, we went on a day trip to Niebla where we visited the traditional market and the beach. I knew little of these territories when I went to see the Machi in 2019. However, I had some images and memories that made me connect with the place; I could smell the rainforest, feel the thick rain from the south, the smoke from the chimneys, and the cold sea of the Pacific Ocean.

When I returned to Valdivia in 2019 to meet the Machi, I also visited the Valdivian Forest for the first time. Ancient forests, whose roots contain so many stories, like those of my grandmother, Sofía, and my great-grandfather, Luís. Five-hundred-year-old roots, like those of the trees in Oncol Park. So, I ask myself and my cells, where do my cells come from? Which are my roots?

There is a depth to the skin and the earth, the subcutaneous and the subterranean. Sometimes you must dig to understand the surface, to heal a wound, let the layers overlap one by one to perhaps know who we are a little more.

"The forest is not only  
its trees  
nor its treetops  
nor the birds that nest in them  
mycelium under the ground  
connects the roots  
makes them  
an underground network of fungi and spores  
silent news  
of life or death

under our skin  
there is also an invisible network  
that conducts nerve impulses  
the important messages  
inside and out",

Begoña Ugalde, *Zahorí*

When the project of collaboration with the Machi broke down, I had many questions, and cultural, political, social, and emotional conflicts. Sometime after leaving her house, and well into the pandemic, we heard from each other. In June 2020, she sent me a message that was also addressed to other people, which read like this:

"I convey the message of my rewe and ihna Mongen. The call of my rewe is to cultivate ourselves through spiritual union with the great mother who is mountain, river, wetlands, sea... to merge into a great plea of medicine with the old women of the waters and all the lawen of the sacred spaces of this earth who are the spiritual connectors that link us with the newen of other lands in each dawn...today it is time to merge into those energies that sustain the balance of this earth maintaining the balance of the human being separated from these ixrofillmongen is impossible. We must root the heart with the various spiritual blue lands that flow from the high mountains to the sea, that flow is the medicine of return to the unification of the being with the ancient spirituality that must awaken to our ancestral memory... Today we must only remember what our ta kuifikecheyen ancestors did, in times of imbalance, let yourself be sustained by these spiritual forces that are harmonious, powerful, and wise... There we lie on the mother and let ourselves be sustained, so she takes care of us, sustains us, and strengthens us.

Newentuleymün pu lamngen"

The experience with the Machi allowed me to know a little more about the Mapuche culture and to experience the ixrofil mongen<sup>23</sup> beyond intellectuality and theory. Being in the forest made me feel the connection with the beings that live there, appreciate them, and realise that we are together in this land, that I am one more piece of this landscape, that I am this geography, that we need each other and can take care of each other.

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<sup>23</sup> The Mapuzungun language is oral, so this concept has different written versions.

Although I had studied the concept of ixrofil mongen in books before meeting the Machi, she made it very present in our conversations when I visited her for the first time. Precisely in the light of caring, the idea of collaborating around the protection of the ancient forest arose. Sharing with the Machi, I learned that her role on the one hand is to heal diseases and ailments of different kinds of people, of a community, but also to protect the territories and sacred places. That is why taking care of the ancient Valdivian Forest was a fundamental task:

Our call is to restore or maintain balance on earth. And the problem today is that balance is so threatened that we must raise awareness about the protection of sacred spaces, which maintain balance on earth. There is one step from the spiritual to having to get involved in legal or political issues because it is an urgent need of the earth. That is where technology also comes in, as a diffusion to reflect on how we want the country and land where we live (Machi P, 2017).

In this sense, although healing has a medicinal and spiritual foundation, the work to safeguard the balance of the territories integrates ecological, political, and social elements. Wellbeing includes the human and other-than-human spheres. "Protecting the earth is an art," the Machi told me. The cause of protecting the ancient Valdivian Forest was a call that immediately resonated with me. At the time, I was informed that the loss of these spaces also meant the loss of medicine, but by being in the forest I began to develop greater awareness of the source of life; these spaces are for all beings who live there.

To stop working for this cause by the hand of the Machi was very difficult and sad for me. It made me question my history, my skin colour, and my passport with stamps that go from London to the Valdivian Forest. This break did not mean that I was abandoning the cause of defending the forest. It did mean that I became faithful to my own needs for connection with these other forms of life, with a universe outside the city, beyond the books, the flags and the ecological concepts in academy. Is the forest calling me or am I looking for the forest?

"You do not become an environmentalist by choice, but by obligation, from the acknowledgement of the struggle for the defence of life and territory" (Svampa, 2015). My obligation was perhaps the call of my grandmother, of my great-grandfather, the call of the roots of the earth, the call to be and let myself change, to be affected by the energies that inhabit those territories. The call to return to Valdivia, to the forest, to inhabit it, to take care of it, to know the life that is there, to be with those beings, was the first obligation that I had to attend to and then let that materialise in my art as perspiration, as tears, as mucosa, viscosity, of what I digest and expel, of what I am and what I am transmuting.



In February 2020, I reached the Cutipay sector, where the Cutipay River passes and where there is a hill that has forests that are about a hundred years old. My friend, K, asked me to take care of her three dogs, a male cat, a female cat, the garden, and the plants, while she and her boyfriend, J, went on vacation for a month. Her house was located on the hill in the middle of the forest, overlooking the Cutipay River. To get there from the city, you had to take a bus from the centre of Valdivia that took twenty minutes, then you had to get off at the entrance of a dirt road where you then had to walk for a kilometre until you reached the house. There was very poor internet connection, so I was quite disconnected from technology and there were few humans.

It was summer and it was hot. In the forest I was surrounded by wild fuchsias, myrtles, Chilean firetrees, hazelnuts, Chilean bell flowers, quilas, birds, blueberries, blackberries, strawberry myrtles, rosehips, ferns, and flowers. I spent hours looking at the corporealities of these beings around me, their architectures, geometries, patterns, colours, textures, and particularities. I was able to get to know the corporealities of many beings, especially the plant world and fungi, their habits, interactions, and interdependence. What is inside that corporeality? What are the chemical, energetic interactions that give life and death to these beings? What makes them change their colours, what nourishes them, and what makes them decompose, lose their vigour, die, and then transform into another life? Like a fungus that allows the creation of new nutrients and the birth of new beings.

Being in the geography of the forest made me change my orientation of how I perceived space and perceived myself in the midst of that context, a kind of double direction intersected me. On the one hand, I am closer to myself, without the overstimulation of the city, the screens, the saturation of information. On the other hand, I am in coexistence with other beings of the earth, and in that connection, I cease to be me and I become a collective.

Feeling like a being in the middle of the forest somehow, I also forgot about myself or what my mind rumbles and I connected with this environment. My limits become more porous, more open to being and being with others. That dual direction may seem contradictory, but it operates in the form of a balance, and I think that balance allows for the emergence of a state of calm and harmony.

My friend, M, came to visit me the third week. M has not eaten fruit since she was three years old. She has something like a "fruitphobia" that arose at an early age, at the time she lived with her family in Venezuela where there were many fruits. She never knew the cause of her phobia, but she still can't eat them. It coincides with her parents' separation.

M and I went out to walk in the forest and there were many wild berries and while I was walking, I picked them and ate them straightaway. One day she, with a little fear, encouraged herself to try them and told me they were nice: "this is the first time that I like blackberries, I like them like this, bringing them straight to my mouth".



Fig.49. *Blackberry*



Fig.50. *Murta*



Fig.51. *Rosehip*

How, in our modern world, can we find our way to understand the earth as a gift again,  
to make our relations with the world sacred again?

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding sweetgrass*

Fruits are colourful, odorous, and tasty to attract beings; birds, humans, animals, and insects approach them to eat them, digest them, and in this way their cycle goes on. The seed can move, fall back to the ground, and allow another similar plant to grow.

I feel a lot of satisfaction and gratification in the act of taking the gift that is there, without owner or property, that is not quantified in monetary terms, that is lovingly presented so that I can take it, feel it, eat it. It can transform into energy when interacting with my liquids and micro-beings. In the forest there were several species, some more wild than others; I ate from apple trees, plum trees, blackberry bushes, and murta shrubs. I felt these gifts with gratitude, as a gesture of tenderness, protection that comes from the earth. These manifestations are not there just for us, nor are the medicinal plants there just for us humans to take and heal our illnesses. These beings have their own lives, they don't depend on us, but we can take their lives, harm them, annihilate them, use them, exploit them. We can be a threat. When I take some fruit, I leave it so that other beings can also taste and feed. I take what I need, what I'm really going to consume. But I still wonder what I'm giving in return. I have a feeling of debt, like I owe it something. I can leave a gift; water, some nutrients, seeds, a few words that can give it happiness, I can do a little meditation next to it so it can feel my energy. Anyway, I wonder how I can reach a relationship of reciprocity? How, as a human, can I contribute to this chain? The energy of those foods, those fruits and medicinal plants, is loaded with all the beings that inhabit that space, loaded with the water that has fed them without the pollution of the city. I feel this when it comes into contact with my palate, my fluids and digestive system.

In a more general sense as a human species we depend on other organisms for food and air consumption. Plants are necessary for humans, they provide us, not only with vital energy, but have various other documented uses. The neurobiologist, Stefano Mancuso, specifies that there are 31,000 recognised species of plants for human use, of which 18,000 are for medicinal purposes, 6,000 for food, 11,000 for textile fibres and/or construction material, 1,300 for religious purposes and/or drugs, 1,600 as a source of energy, 4,000 for animal feed, 8,000 for environmental purposes, and 2,500 as poisons (Mancuso, 2017). They are living beings, they feel, they have other capacities to perceive and pick up signals from the environment, its physical and chemical parameters, light, gravity, minerals, temperatures, gas compositions in the atmosphere. A plant can move without muscles, its motor capacity is infinitely slow and sophisticated, its movements are hydraulic, based on the transfer of liquid water or vapour in and out of its tissues. The behaviour of plants is completely in tune with their environment, they can pick up signals from other living beings around them.

What about us? Are we able to pick up the signals of people and beings around us? Are we too invested in our individuality? What is our sense of collectivity? I wonder how to build a more conscious sense of collectivity to understand that we do affect each other and that we can take care of one another. Letting individuality dissolve in the collective can be very liberating, just as I can dilute my individuality by entering the forest and interacting with others. I want my actions and my practice to invite or manifest a sense of collectivity, a feeling that we are together, that our differences are the diversity of the forest, and that biodiversity is wealth; we need each other.

Plants give us so much, or we exploit them so much, we take advantage of them and sometimes we make excessive use of them. My approach to medicinal plants has been the gateway to discovering a huge world. In this process of research around plants I have discovered that there are different visions that refer to them; to their properties, their uses, beliefs, and characteristics in a framework that incorporates perspectives of the first nations, popular, and scientific knowledge. While plants have characteristics or properties that are then synthesised by pharmaceutical plants to be transformed into drugs, plants do not have these compounds for human use. We are not the centre of the earth. What is my rationality regarding these beings, to the forest, to a cup infused with a plant? What are our beliefs? That's my cultural perception.

From an anthropological perspective, Jimena Jerez also argues the importance of rescuing the cultural approach that does not have a utilitarian or instrumentalist sense of plants, placing special interest in the Mapuche culture from Los Ríos Region (where Valdivia is located). She refers to the communities that generate ethnobotanical knowledge, explaining that plants possess attributes that are not part of the properties described by science, and that any exclusively utilitarian or instrumental vision represents an imbalance or distortion of the interactions between human beings (users or makers of healing agents), ecosystems, and spiritual forces.

The ethnobotanical approach in artistic creation is part of the interests of my research. In this line, the work of the Chilean artist, Patricia Dominguez (Santiago, 1984), caught my attention since the artist integrates an ethnobotanical and anthropological vision in the materialities that she occupies. Dominguez is interested in the histories, qualities and cultural characteristics of the objects, materials, and especially the beings of the plant world that are part of her work. I remember seeing Dominguez's work, *Green Irises*, for the first time at Gasworks gallery in London in 2019. On that occasion the artist had a residency and then an exhibition. In that context, there was a short talk where Dominguez explained how she had arrived at the themes

she was working on, she explained the influence of her grandfather, who used to collect various objects in the north of Chile, and with them built a museum. Her grandfather had influenced her interest in science and anthropology in her artistic approach. I was struck by how Dominguez's biography, the relationship with her ancestors, especially the figure of her grandfather and the places where she had lived, had affected her artistic themes and conceptions of both the materials she used and her closeness to the world of plants.

Dominguez is also director of Studio Vegetalista, a platform for producing experimental ethnobotanical knowledge and research through interdisciplinary practice that combines art, ethnobotany, and healing cosmologies that speaks about the importance of getting to know the plants. While she was trained as a scientific illustrator at the New York Botanical Garden and has had a career as an illustrator for years, her perspective has been integrating diverse knowledge. With a Western background, coming from the north in the United States, the artist has integrated knowledge from an ethnobotanical vision that does not only focus on the morphological and scientific part, such that the cultural aspect of the plant becomes relevant. Dominguez has researched, through travels in South America, the qualities of plants, collecting stories from conversations with many healers. Her work explores the emotional interaction between human-plant:

Ethnobotany is much broader than the scientific part that I teach because it also integrates emotion, spirituality, and use. It is like thinking about life through plants: how do the evils of the contemporary world accompany fatigue and anxiety? The way a plant influences a person's life interests me much more than the plant itself (Dominguez, 2019).

The artist integrates these visions and is concerned with the medicinal aspect of plants, as well as in the experimentation of states with power plants. From a shamanic perspective, her art also demonstrates the need to step out of utilitarianism. From her point of view, "to study plants exclusively from a scientific perspective is too Eurocentric. It is a very utilitarian vision because plants are much more powerful. When you work with master plants you discover that there is enormous potential that we are just beginning to understand " (Dominguez, 2019). Her contemporary perspective encompasses a vision from the South, decolonial and complex, which is the encounter of diverse knowledge, spiritual, shamanic, and folkloric manifestations in the South of the American continent.

Although Dominguez makes ancestral knowledge visible, she assumes that her lineage does not come from native peoples, and she is aware of appropriation and the "clumsiness" that exists in this assemblage of visions. In this context, she problematises Chilean culture:

In Chile we live in a capitalist country where there is a very strong clash between the American-European cosmology and the ancestral cultures. We are people raised without roots in a place where roots have been erased. My work tries to connect with this from the clumsiness. I can't take ownership because I don't belong to a native people, but these are the cosmologies that make the most sense to me. Underlying my work is a cosmological thought that is not free of contradictions (...). All of this, in the end, has a lot of fiction, fiction saves me (Dominguez, 2019).

Dominguez's words resonate with my practice which also intersects scientific visions, the medicinal properties of plants, and the cultural dimension which has been taking on greater relevance, integrating emotional, magical, and spiritual aspects. Like Dominguez, my lineage does not come from indigenous peoples. Their ancestral knowledge is of great value, but I do not want to appropriate it for my art as speaking directly of the Mapuche People. The sense of magic and fiction come to consider my own ways of relating to others, affecting me with those visible beings and matters.

The notion of magic can certainly be understood in various ways. The RAE (Spanish Royal Academy dictionary) states that it is as "an art or occult science with which it is intended to produce, using certain acts or words, or with the intervention of imaginable beings, results contrary to natural laws". While this condition of the supernatural and impossible is an aspect that defines the magical, as also pointed out by Cambridge dictionary: "special powers that can make things happen that seem impossible." The essential aspects that you want to rescue to talk about my notion of magic have to do with "special powers" and as "a quality that makes something or someone seem special or exciting" (Cambridge dictionary). In this sense, this attribute of special power has to do with the attractiveness that these beings generate for those who face them. It does not refer to an objective or visible manifestation, precisely that mysterious, indefinable, secret character that I am looking to rescue - that which science cannot define, pigeonhole, or explain. My desire to materialise "the invisible energy" accounts for a contradiction, an intention, a belief, which only becomes present to those who are sensitive to those mysteries. In this sense, the subjectivity of each individual and their cultural perception will carry the content of the forms that I invite to live through my art. In that direction, I'm in

dialogue with what artist Deborah Hay considers to be magic: "Magic became not the object experience of my seeing, but the sensual experience of my perception" (Hay, 2001,12).

This perceptual subjectivity is fundamental to my experience of the magical. In this sense, how I "look, feel, smell, listen" is what I attribute to these beings, according to my cultural vision, my emotional and affective sensitivity to plants, fungi, algae, lichens, waters, tree barks, and thus the various beings, forces and energies that are presented in my practice.

In my work the healing capacities of plants for human beings has been a topic and source of study that has taken a lot of my attention, it has manifested itself in my need to connect with plants from an energetic, spiritual, and magical level. The fact of living in the forest opened the spectrum of vision and connection with other beings, not only with medicinal plants, but many trees, mosses, lichens, and fungi caught my attention. In this way, my sensitivity ceased to be on the utilitarian side of going to the forest to "harvest plants to make medicine" and it was rather to be in the forest, to share with those beings with a rationality that does not have a merely utilitarian objective of using plants for the service of humans. This way of meeting the plant world invites you to open horizons of meaning and that is why I saw the potential to tell stories where I can talk about the sensitivities and ideas that these beings awaken in me, as well as in different cultures.

March 2021

I am here Sofia, in your lands, you are in me, in my cells, in my memory, that day you entered me when you took a deep breath to leave for unknown territories, when you stopped being present on this plane. On the day of your departure, we gathered the whole family at your side, you waited for each of the members to arrive, even from distant countries, and the whole family made a circle holding hands around you and we accompanied you until the last sigh, dear Sofia. I dressed you, accompanied you in the departure ritual with so much love, admiration, and respect. I inhabit your lands; I feel the roots as the territory invites me to stay here. The rain and the harsh winter of these latitudes in the south of Chile frighten me, they frighten me like the cold of England, but the forest speaks to me and little by little it gives me its wisdom, my city skin becomes a little more rural, it breathes in the time of the living beings that live around me and accompany me. We share the water with the animals and plants that I take care of. It is enough for everyone, the water of this thick fog, of the clouds, of the underground world of the forests, the rivers, the rains that are going to end up in the sea and then it condenses again, and it becomes cloud, fog, and rain, and it follows its cycle. These wetlands

of your childhood, Sofia, circulate in my winka blood, which carries your blood, to awaken the memories that I do not know yet.

March arrived and the Valdivian coast and the forest told me to stay living there, they told me: there are things that are not learned in books, there is knowledge that is based on experience, in practice, in being, living, and above all it told me; we have to love each other, to appreciate each other, we have to know each other, be with each other, as if suddenly it told me to be friends, and I accepted.

Love is built on the process of connecting with the source, in becoming aware by appreciating the water that comes from the slope, and then valuing it because it allows me to take a shower, cook, drink, live. The oxygen, the clean and fresh air that transforms trees, seems so invisible and basic, but it is a lung that generates friendly living conditions.

Me from London, me from Santiago, me from Paris, the capitals, the theatres, the museums, the galleries, the asphalt, the flats, me supermarket, me amazon, me the library, me on the ground, me in the river, me in the trees, me in the fog of Niebla, me to chop wood, me to make bread, me to be with these beings, to see them beyond the viewfinder of the camera. What are the times, the changes, the textures, the smells, the colours, the human solitude and the vegetal company of the hills, the rivers, the sea, the birds, the algae?

Being in a habitat as diverse and fertile as the forest made me reflect on the behaviour of plants and their qualities, thus I wonder more about their mysteries. Do they feel? Do they think? Do they perceive? Can they connect with humans? The plant model says Mancuso does not foresee the presence of a brain that exercises control over the organs, gives orders and commands the rest of the functions. Instead, plants have a modular, collaborative structure, without command centres, which allows them to withstand catastrophic situations. Since we humans have the brain that commands our organs and functions, I am looking at the plant model as a way to expand our capabilities, or at least decentralise brain function, for example, by paying attention to our organs or the lower Tan Tien area. As the Taoists say, our second brain, which is considered the centre of our body, is the main generator and storage of energy (chi), and an important centre of consciousness. Listening to our physiological symptoms not only with a desire to have good health, but to incorporate the internal anatomy, the biology that composes us as something more than a machine that accompanies who we are. Perhaps understand myself as a set of living beings, as a set of energies acting within me, and that the self is a set of selves. Knowing my corporality and paying attention to it is also to



feel my emotions, to value what I feel and perceive defying cultural parameters. What capacities do we humans have?

Being there allowed me to open myself to a new perceptive possibility, which makes me feel part of a wider totality and encompasses humans and other species. Feeling the valorisation of the relationship of interdependence, the need for a relationship of mutual care that includes an eco-dependence; and with the other beings of nature (Svampa, 2020). The experience of having to isolate during the pandemic has generated the exacerbation of the individualism of the capitalist system. Distance and separation fragment the logics of care. I believe that friendly relationships such as accompanying, supporting, and collaborating are extremely important for our daily lives and for the feeling of happiness. This belief, based on my experience, concerns human relationships, but also expands into the other-than-human spheres, i.e., involving shelter, affection and companionship that can be given by an environment of beings from the earth, the sea, the forest, and by connecting with creatures that have diverse corporealities, expanding our encounter beyond the human species. That also includes the connection with the dead, or with the “no longer human”, in this case with my grandmother Sofia, that for me was present in that territory and was talking to me through the land.

If we come back to the proposition of *ch'ixi* identity, it integrates aspects of the indigenous episteme, which means recognising the agency of the non-human, the *dialogue with* and *the recognition of non-human subjects* such as plants, animals, or immeasurable material entities such as the stars. This implies the understanding that animate or inanimate beings are subjects, just as subjects are humans, although according to Cusicanqui, they are subjects of a very different nature. This recognition of other lives also has to do with the fact that “the dead live, return from their world to our world, protect us or punish us, they are not inert and forgettable beings” (Cusicanqui, 2018, 150)<sup>24</sup>.

I didn't plan to go to Valdivia as a trip to reconnect with my roots, or to going where my ancestors came from as a healing process to repair a wound. That happened as a random product of the circumstances that I didn't take control of. The order of things was less arranged, more guided by my intuition and more than anything, the need to inhabit the forest, to be in that land and connect with the life over there. Without thinking it through before I connected not just with the life, the dead also came to me as part of the other-than-human that inhabit a territory. A community intertwined with species, with the ancestors, and with spirits.

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<sup>24</sup> Original version: “los muertos viven, vuelven de su mundo a nuestro mundo, nos protegen o nos castigan, no son seres inertes y olvidables”.

The communality it is not just an intellectual idea, it is related to living it and feeling it as an embodied experience. As Cusicanqui proposes, the community, communality, is part of the indigenous episteme that is directed towards "decolonising is doing", considering the union between intellectual work and manual work, theory and practice. She criticises the divorce between thinking and doing, repudiating the separation between academic thinking and daily reflexivity or the daily thinking of people, "this thinking that arises from interactions and conversations in the street, from the collective events experienced with the body and the senses"<sup>25</sup> (Cusicanqui, 2018, 86).

Cusicanqui affirms that this sensitive and embodied aspect of thinking, even though its geographical condition is fundamental in the decolonial vision of thinking-feeling, "thought that is not nourished by life ends up sterilizing itself and sterilizing the word it bears"<sup>26</sup>(Cusicanqui, 2018, 88). Feeling the collective in an expanded way, with humans, with no longer humans, and with other- than-human, my practice integrates the somatic through the creation of collective experiences, which for me is a way to promote the possibility of being together, not of going to see something together. I invite and I am hosting a frame to live something where the distribution of participation and the roles of making "the experience happen" depends on each one of us. Each presence is perceived and affects the environment, vitality is given by the set of lives that congregate and unite. The energy that each person brings and expresses becomes manifest: laughter, comments, attitude, collaboration, and help are part of the interrelationships. If a person is indifferent and distant it is noticeable, seen, perceived; if a person is excited and participates that is also manifested. I am highlighting the fact that we are collective. We make up a whole, we are as Lygia Clark would say, a collective body.

In this aspect the performative work of Cecilia Vicuña has also a sense of collectivity towards ritual, the artist manifests that joining people together connects our collective body and listens to it. Her collective, improvised, and participatory performances are an invitation to co-create as a way of advancing many points of view, and reconnect with a sense of caring for the planet but also having a fun and joyful experience. The participation of the people and invitation is to be part of an experience, not to "watch a show". My events also have this configuration where I propose activities and people can choose to take part or not but mostly the invitation is to try out what I'm offering.

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<sup>25</sup> Original version: "ese pensar que surge de la interacciones y conversaciones en la calle, de los sucesos colectivos vividos con el cuerpo y los sentidos".

<sup>26</sup> "el pensamiento que no se nutre de la vida termina esterilizándose y esterilizando la palabra de la cual es portador" (p.88)

As Haraway stated in 1998, Canadian, M. Beth Dempster, suggested the term sympoiesis for “collectively-producing systems that do not have self-defined spatial or temporal boundaries. Information and control are distributed among components. The systems are evolutionary and have the potential for surprising change” (Haraway, 2016, 61).

I offer an art experience also to demonstrate the need to connect, to look at each other and share micro-sensations together. Proposing a context, an organisation of reality that can open interactions outside of everyday life, that give space to a magical dimension of the matter, which is not only physical matter. There is something more indescribable, indefinable, metaphysical that everyone speculates on in their own mind, according to their sensitivity and emotional capacity. Perceivable concrete manifestations such as smelling, tasting, appreciating different temperatures and sounds give us access to the movement of subjectivity.



Fig. 52 *Transforming Matters*



Fig. 53 *Transforming Matters*

Together we inhabit this universe. I propose the protocols to activate logics of interdependence to show us that we are not meant to survive alone under the ideas of competition and individuality.

Haraway talks about string figures saying they:

Require holding still in order to receive and pass on. String figures can be played by many, on all sorts of limbs, as long as the rhythm of accepting and giving is sustained. Scholarship and politics are like that too – passing on in twists and skeins that require passion and action, holding still and moving, anchoring and launching (Haraway, 2016, 10).

I use string figures as a way to connect people around a structure that gives us the opportunity to figure out how to hold something that is precarious, fragile, as the ice sculptures are, and have a moment to help each other to put our attention into something that is outside of us but at the same time is an extension. I propose this first action as a means of getting into a mode of togetherness, of become a collective.

Sharing can be lived as a ritual to remember that we are corporealities and that identity can also dissolve in the collective. This collective also proposes to connect with non-human materials, waters of different origins, and plants with histories and energetic charges according to their place of origin and ethnobotanical properties. Sharing these stories is a way to generate connection with other beings and territories that live in the forest, in the hills, and in the sea. Through matter or the word, through the stories, they come to visit us and remind us that we are nature.

Matter can have the meaning we give it to it, or the relationship we establish with it. Thus, facing these spaces loaded with diverse lives is also a way of understanding where things come from, energy, raw material, source. Goods that are nature are not for humans, they have their own agency, their life does not have to be at our service. This is something that I have been able to appreciate in my closeness to these living beings, with lives that are very different to those we lead in the city, and a life that they need to continue living. How to compensate for grey surfaces, garbage, and pollution? We need these lives.

Exploitation and extractivism are based on a mechanistic vision to nature, technology, and science. In some cases, it has damaged this pact of respect which is expressed in disasters that have affected social contexts and the sometimes-irreversible loss of natural assets. The defence of the territory is part of the daily discussions in this geography of rural areas where

the way in which the space of your neighbour is organised and the machine that is heard from a hundred metres is directly affecting the territory. Whenever human life, housing needs, or the desire to extract and take advantage of the environment on a larger scale arises, it affects and damages the life that is there and immediately the question about care is installed.

Living in the territory of the Valdivian coast has allowed me to better understand the complexity of the uses of these territories by real estate companies, the problem of water, the damage caused by cellulose companies, and how entire territories have been taken over by timber companies. The landscape is inscribed with this trauma of capitalist usurpation; therefore, the environmental interest is very present in human communities. A large part of the people who live in this place unite in caring for and respecting these "sacred sites", understanding from an intercultural perspective the importance of these ecosystems.

Mapuche cosmovision is certainly present in the territory. Currently, there are communities installed in various areas of the Valdivian coast, and more towards the area of Curiñanco and Bonifacio, land which belongs to Mapuche families and communities. The Mapuche perspective respects the spaces without taking exacerbated economic advantage of the territories.

The need to protect native forests, in opposition to large-scale planting of exotic trees and the greed of postmodern capitalism, is fundamental. Malu Sierra explains the concept of sacred space in Mapuche culture, not understood from a theological point of view, but rather of respecting beings that are not human and in this sense are also considered to have a spirit and rationality. "The sacred is seen from a perspective of looking at the world, of relating to the other as a living being that also has its own rationality. A tree has its own spirit, its own way of being, it is a plant. That has to do with medicines. When the Machi says that she needs her medicines, the agronomist comes and suggests that she should plant them in her garden. But the power of the plant is not in the cultivation of the garden, but in the specific location. Plantain is not the same if grows in the garden or grows around a waterfall with certain properties. It may have the same physical or chemical properties, but there are other spaces that are not present" (Sierra, 2010, 21).

The need for protection of native forests is fundamental for the intercultural communities that inhabit the territory of the Valdivian coast. Attempts to contain it through legal and cultural instruments (which would be the responsibility of the state) are being made. The proposal is to treat, as national heritage " sacred sites ", forests, rivers, wetlands and seas, which are currently in danger of being destroyed and contaminated by timber, forests, cellulose, salmon, roads, and real estate projects (Jerez, 2017).

A forest is not just a forest  
A forest can be another forest  
A forest can be all forests

Begoña Ugalde, *Zahorí*

Part of the valuation of the forest lies in its understanding as an ecosystem, in its organisation and the relationship established between the different beings that inhabit it. "A forest is not a collection of different trees, but a community of individuals. The trees are connected by complex root networks, through which they exchange everything they need. A magnificent example of mutual support" (Mancuso, 2021). Being in the forest and studying the forest has led me to understand the meaning of living together in the same territory, especially valuing the collaboration and mutual support among the beings that inhabit it. Forest succession is an account of the internal logic and life cycles of a forest. In conversations I had with Patricio Méndez, who works for CONAF (National Forestry Corporation) in Valdivia, with Yessenia Aedo, a natural resources conservation engineer, and with Ximena Vergara, a geographer, the latter two of whom were my neighbours in Niebla, I came to understand how there is an order, a sense of care and protection among the trees, where there are younger and older species within the same forest.

To better illustrate the above, I will give an example of how a forest with the species of the Valdivian Forest would be populated in a space such as a meadow, a plot, starting from scratch with a native forest matrix around it. First the birds begin to arrive and defecate the processed seeds. With the water and the earth the pioneer species begin to emerge and can grow with little water and with a lot of sun in soil with few nutrients. Thus, species such as the maqui and the notro can grow. They grow relatively fast and begin to fix and prepare the soil, the substrate, giving it more nutrients, and creating shade. The Notro is a plant that generates food for the species that will come later. These pioneering plants shelter and nourish the following species, which live longer, such as Arrayan and Luma. Later, when it is an adult forest of greater biodiversity, trees such as Ulmo, Laurel and Olivillo, which are centuries-old trees, emerge.

The undergrowth also emerges, the vegetation of bushes and shrubs that grow under the trees of a forest, closer to the ground. It is almost like a mattress that gives shelter to other animals and to ferns, and thus the ground begins to thicken. There are many species that inhabit the forest becoming a great home that gives shelter to many beings. There are different heights in

a forest and according to the different heights, there are also species that inhabit the trunks of the trees, allowing other species, insects, and animals to climb up the trees.

The forest is a possible  
habitat  
Even if you were not born among its trees  
A sudden home  
First possibility of shelter  
  
Fractionated species in many species  
Species that are basically the same  
species

Begoña Ugalde, *Zahorí*

The forest can become a den when you need to get out of the fever of being human, of excessive rationality and intellectuality that is detached from corporeality and the environment. Walking in the forest can be a reminder to realise that humans are not the centre of the earth and that we spend too much time within our thoughts. When I am there, breathing that air and being amid other bodies, other dimensions and characteristics, I am part of everything and I feel accompanied. My thoughts are diluted in that encounter, I become part of the collective. I can feel my insides becoming lighter and at the same time I direct my attention towards that environment, towards other energies that alleviate my over-intellectuality, my separation from physicality, my blurred vision due to the asphalt and the tiredness of overthinking.

In this sense, I agree with Leonel Lienlaf who states that entering the forest can be considered a healing process. In order to respect the beings and spirits that inhabit the forest, according to the Mapuche poet, it is very important to enter in silence and to listen to the other beings, the water, the wind, the animals, birds, and insects. This respect for silence is very difficult for westerners who are always talking, making noise and hardly consider other forms of life.

Observing the way of being and living of those strong, solid, stable trees, I asked them to teach me to live in that tranquillity, strengthening my roots and learning stillness from the infinitely slow movement of plants. My life is on the move, dancing from one country to another, from one city to another. It was time to develop a movement towards the earth where my roots grow underground, to feel the dance of the forest making me understand that there are other cycles of life and death, of transformations, a conjugation of stability, change and resilience that can be a model. When the wind blew strong in the storms, thunder, lightning, and rain made the

earth sound and the trees move chaotically from side to side. I was scared that a tree would break, break the windows, but no, the stability of its roots allowed them to continue standing holding the balance of that habitat.

In the underground world the roots provide foundation. The forest sustains us without prejudice, there I am who I am, not the artist, not the Chilean, not the winka, not the woman, I am a being of the human species and I am transforming like all those who live there.

Because the forest doesn't  
ask for anything  
In exchange for transit  
in a forest we are not  
the same, we are not  
the name given at birth  
For a forest we are not  
more than a way to get around  
No, a forest doesn't  
ask  
for anything in return  
Maybe just the crackle of our step  
the hidden force of that crunch  
the hidden force of our footstep  
Barefoot when needed  
To enter little by little in its paths

Begoña Ugalde, *Zahorí*





Fig. 54 *Olivillo's Forest, Curiñanco*



Fig. 55 *Olivillo's Forest, Curiñanco*

Walking through the forest is witnessing the change and transformation of matter; something springs up, something dies, something detaches, something changes colour, what it was yesterday it is not today and will be different tomorrow. Being close to the transformative process and cycles of the ever-changing forest is also a way of understanding human cycles with distance and comparison. Understanding life, the different types of life and energy that inhabit plant corporality, the world of fungi, insects, and microorganisms. In the autumn and winter, with the humidity I could observe the appearance of fungi, the Valdivian Forest has a huge diversity of these living beings that are fundamental to the transformation process. They can break down matter and transform it into fertile soil and nutrients, becoming fertilizer for the new life that is born. In turn, the mycelium that is oriented towards a deeper and more underground plane inside the forest generates a connective network that through the delivery of information allows the protection between the various lives and beings that inhabit the forest.



Fig. 56 *Fungui*

The forest is incessantly transforming death and life. Death and decomposition are vital processes, they are part of the dynamics and cycles that allow the birth and regeneration of life. The energy is transformed and changes taking different corporalities, appearances, bacteria, and microorganisms that we can then recognise as beings. In this way, the forest is populated by a life that appears and disappears.



Fig. 57 *Fungui*

When does life end? Can this stage of matter be called death? One of the things that struck me most about the work of the artist Daniel Lie (Brazil, 1988) was how he manages to express and give visibility to these manifestations. His projects echoed my research, and I was captivated by his sensitivity when it came to materialising cultural concepts, assembling the sacred perspective with organic matter.

In the exhibition *The Negative Years* (2019), in an installation they did at Jupiter Artland (Edinburgh), Lie approaches non-human materials offering multiplies ways to interpret them. For this exhibition, they used diverse organic entities, mainly raw materials from Scotland such as sacred plants, wood, clay, wool, soil, and flora to evoke a non-binary ecologic future. In this work, Lie highlights the transformation of the organic sculptures and from this process the idea of life and death is questioned, the decay or rot is part of the birth of bacteria, fungi, and many organisms that emerge. Lie attributes a sacred character to this development; spirits and deities are active agents of change, transformation, and destruction.

Their work challenges and points out the global environmental crisis, calling into question the relationship between human and other-than-human species. Specifically, they also consider the composition of these materials in terms of energy as living organisms. Lie expresses:

How does a non-human being make energy, how does a non-human being make ambience, make food, smells, aesthetics, and senses? How does a non-human being make emotions? What are the non-human beings, they can be plants, animals, fungi, ancestors, spirits, the four elements? Everything is alive, there are smells, the materials are in constant transformation (Lie, 2019).

Giving value to other-than-human entities speaks of a worldview that respects other species and organisms, acknowledging that they have spirits or emotions. My work with plants also considers subtle energies of plants and their ability to balance and generate emotions. In this regard, my work speaks about the transformative power of plants in relation to human entities.



Fig. 58

The spirituality and sacredness that Lie installs in their work has to do with the observation of the transformative cycles of these entities and the energies attributed to them. I have been observing how the artist works with these materials, the atmospheres produced, and how they affect the spectators.

I consider Lie to have a careful sensitivity in choosing and treating the materialities that are part of their installations. The way of generating encounters with these beings resonates with me as an artist when it comes to integrating living beings into an artistic context. Lie assumes the cultural burdens that influence them, their Eastern ancestry from Indonesia, as well as his approach to the wisdom and cosmologies of peoples originating from the Amazon and Brazil





Fig.59 *In-Fusion*



Fig.60 *In-Fusion*

IN-FUSION online event, sound and storytelling,  
during the lockdown in Chile and England, June 2020.  
More information about IN-FUSION: <http://josefinacamus.com/project/19/in-fusion/>  
Short video installation experience: <https://vimeo.com/451940634>

In my durational work the materials are also transformed and the capacities of the plants act as other-than-human entities charged with healing, energetic and transforming forces. This implies a co-dependent relationship between humans and plants which means, on one hand, that humans can benefit from plants due to a transformative process that takes place in an emotional or physical dimension. On the other hand, this co-dependency exchange between humans and non-humans implies a responsibility and respect from the side of humans' in terms of the need for good conditions to share water and care for their conditions of life. It also implies growing the plants, taking care of them, and valuing their healing power.

During my practice I have reflected on the properties and human uses of plants. Plants do not have medicinal powers for humans, their characteristics have other functions aimed at their own organisms. However, we have discovered that they can heal us, that they are medicine, that they can be synthesised to make medicine and that, ultimately, we depend on them.

In the different events I held during my research I have been exploring various approaches to sharing knowledge about the properties that vegetable organisms have to help human balance. I have collected knowledge about the influence of plants in the emotional, physical, and magic aspects.

In the beginning, I saw the relevance of researching around the emotional area, which was more abstract and mysterious for me, then I wanted to see a kind of scientific perspective looking at how the components of the plants affect the organs, systems, glands, and specific parts of the human organism. The magic aspect allowed me to open up my rationality and provide space to believe in my intuition, in secret knowledge, and to experiment with it.

This approach was expanded little by little. The last event I did in relation to plants and water with an alchemical perspective was *(IN)FUSION*. This took place during the first year of the pandemic, in June 2020 when I had to stay in Chile because of the lockdown, after my second visit to the Machi. For *(IN)FUSION* I decided to try an online format, which was a bit contradictory with my research which is very focused on sensoriality and the transformation of matter and the participants during the live events. Due to the limitation of the pandemic to be able to congregate people physically, I had to expand my practice and create strategies to connect with people and offer a participatory event within those limitations. For this experiment, I invited the people to do an infusion at home with the plant they chose using one kind of water (for example from the river, the rain, the tap, etc). I proposed an online event where just ten people were allowed to participate. People from different parts of Chile participated and each person told me in advance which plant they chose, that way I designed the event with the

plants the people selected and had at their home. I got all the plants that the people proposed and I collected different stories from each plant and I also proposed a few. The plants I worked with for this event were: Rose, mauve, mint, sage, lavender, dandelion, lemon verbena, ruta or rue, and boldo (endemic from Chile). I collected different kinds of water as well and charged them (with the moon, stones, and intentions).

I also focused on the sound aspect of the experience. I did several tracks with samples of water alchemy, recorded some instruments and voices, and I did a lot of sound experimentation.

People participated online which was bizarre to not feel the copresence and the live cycle of giving and receiving different stimuli and energy, but it was a challenge and at the same time gave me the opportunity to get deeper into the research around the storytelling and expand my tools of sound creation.

With *(IN)FUSION* I realised that I can connect with people not just by allowing a sensory environment but with word composition, storytelling, and sound. In that way, I also put more attention onto the stories around the plants, the ethnobotanical aspects, and my own subjectivity in the encounter with those earth beings and forces.

Alongside my practice I realise that there are many ways of interacting with the audience through matter, through sound, through storytelling, through asking them to connect with some matters at distance from home.

The practice research become in movement, the encounter with the Machi moves my attention from the medicinal plants, to an understanding of healing in a big frame, where *Itrofil Mogen* becomes a relevant concept and my need to become closer to natural forces started to call me to develop a connection with the forest and more-than-humans that I had not realised before. My practice unfolds the cultural exchanges that I got from the influence of different sides of the world, in terms of healing, of ethnobotanics, of ancestral knowledge, and art making. The experiences and art practice I have been creating during my research moves from the ephemeral, sensorial, to sound, writing, storytelling and videoart. The last period of my art practice has been connected to the experiences of being in the forest itself and I learn from the connection and observation of other kinds of living beings. My practice becomes more passive in terms of manipulating or taking this earth beings for the human benefit, moving towards writing and taking pictures, making photocollages, connecting with different species of the coast and the Valdivian Forest, especially with the algae, fungi, and lichens.

The practice involves the auto experimentation including displacement and highlighting the conflicts and reflections of being part of nature. In this sense, the last period I had been close to the coast and forest became a somatic experience that transformed my person from a somatic level as well as being a conscious and reflective process. Due to that experience, the practice became more intimate and I have expanded my artwork towards writing and using the voice as storytelling with sound. My research has explored writing in a more literary aspect and I have been researching the potential of words and discourse from a narrative, poetic voice. Spoken words and writing have been taking an important place as a tool for touching the bodies, minds, and perceptions of the participants and the audience in the events I create.

The project *Humalga* has diverse associated art pieces; graphic, visual, installations, sound, writing and storytelling. I created *Humalga as performance/installation* in the context of a Cycle of “Ecofeminism and Dance” in NAVE Art and residency Centre at Santiago de Chile (14 April 2022). In this piece I installed diverse objects and organic matter, and I read stories as well as inviting people to listen to soundtracks I made in collaboration with writer, Begoña Ugalde, and musician, Silvia Vivanco. Later I did a videoart *Humalga*, collaborating with Paula ESP around the same material I had completed for a live event. I presented this videoart in London at Iklectik art lab in the context of “POSTGRAD Iklectik” (26 July 2022) an evening of performance & current PhD research (practice-based) organised by Leslie Deere with the participation of Anna Nazo, Leslie Deere, and me. With this work I explored the creation of narrative and literary pieces in connection with visual and sound art.

Coming back to the case of Cecilia Vicuña, she has a poetic work that is independent of her visual art practice, but she also has a body of work that is linked to various formats, techniques, and artistic media; video, installation, graphics, and performance. This link is something that has occurred in Chile with various poets and writers throughout history. Some examples dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century are from the poet Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948) who, influenced by the European avant-garde, created poems classified as “visual poetry”. In 1912, in the magazine *Musa Joven*, the poet published his first calligram, titled “Triángulo armónico” (Harmonic Triangle), which is considered the first visual poem published in Chile. With this he began an experimental literary path through which he established links with the visual arts, music, and fashion.

After that, we can see the case of the group C.A.D.A Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (1979 – 1985), made up of Fernando Balcells (sociologist), Diamela Eltit (writer), Raúl Zurita (poet), Lotty Rosenfeld (visual artist), and Juan Castillo (visual artist), who during Pinochet’s military



dictatorship over six years carried out a series of works where art and politics were articulated. These were works that appealed both to the modes of production and aesthetics, as well as to the dimension of censorship and violence that Chile went through during that time. These actions operated under collective authorship with an interdisciplinary approach. A very relevant action was the NO+ action (1983) where the word and sign is located as an installation in the public space with a political emphasis and was situated in various places in the public space: one on one side of the Mapocho river, another on the Santa Lucía hill, also in closed places and expanded to various other locations. For the writer Diamela Eltit (Chile, 1949), this was one of the most relevant actions of the collective which expanded the limits of authorship, moving towards an unimagined participation of citizens:

We propose No + as a sign to be filled out by citizens. But the striped ones began to grow in an impressive way. People began to demonstrate through the striped “No + hunger”, “dictatorship”, “political prisoners”, “torture”, and then the political parties took over. “No +” was the great emblem, the slogan, that accompanied the end of the dictatorship. Of course, if you ask anyone, no one would say that No + was made by us. We as managers of that work lost all control, all authority over that particular work. In that sense I find it amazing. I have never seen a job that overrides its managers in that way. The parents, which were us, were completely murdered by our own piece.<sup>27</sup> (Eltit, 2017)

At that time Diamela Eltit gave a performance<sup>28</sup> called *Zonas de dolor* (Zone of Pain, 1980) which took the form of video (videographer: Lotty Rosenfeld, video editors: Diamela Eltit, with Lotty Rosenfeld). In this piece she cuts and burns herself and then goes to a brothel where she reads part of her novel, *Lumpérica*. This action in a way expresses that her mortified body is a form of embodying the wounded national body, that it can be seen as a connection

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<sup>27</sup> The original in Spanish: “Nosotros planteamos No + como signo para ser llenado por la ciudadanía. Pero los rayados empezaron a crecer a crecer de una manera impresionante. La gente empezó a manifestar a través de los rayados “No + hambre”, “dictadura”, “presos políticos”, “tortura”, y después lo tomaron los partidos políticos. “No +” fue el gran emblema, el eslogan, que acompañó el fin de la dictadura. Claro, si tú le preguntas a alguien, nadie diría que No + fue hecho por nosotros. Nosotros como gestores de ese trabajo perdimos todo control, toda autoridad sobre esa obra en particular. En ese sentido yo lo encuentro alucinante. Yo nunca he visto un trabajo que anule de esa manera a sus gestores. Los padres, que fuimos nosotros, fueron completamente asesinados por nuestra propia obra.” In Arcadia Magazine “Especial mujeres radicales. Un mecanismo de resistencia: Diamela Eltit”, by Vivian Lavín Almazán <https://www.semana.com/periodismo-cultural---revista-arcadia/articulo/arte-importante-de-chile-contemporaneo-de-mujeres-diamela-eltit/66201/>

<sup>28</sup> Eltit says that performance was coming from the notion of “art action”: “Llegué a la palabra performance desde otro término que era ‘acciones de arte’. Ese fue mi punto de llegada a estas prácticas menos formateadas, más interdisciplinarias, más, en cierto modo, no diría confusas pero sí multisignificas, ¿no? Mi primera aproximación al performance fue en el sentido de producir ciertos actos estéticos y artísticos ocupando multidisciplinas desde el gesto, la ciudad, la voz, es decir, el cuerpo y toda su puesta en escena con otro espacio y especialmente con una función política”. In Arcadia Magazine “Especial mujeres radicales. Un mecanismo de resistencia: Diamela Eltit”, by Vivian Lavín Almazán <https://www.semana.com/periodismo-cultural---revista-arcadia/articulo/arte-importante-de-chile-contemporaneo-de-mujeres-diamela-eltit/66201/>

between the individual and the collective and the private and the public. In the latter part of this video Eltit's voice accompanies her action of washing the pavement in front of the brothel, collapsing the boundaries between her novel's words, her body, and the space inhabited by 'public women'. Eltit not only disrupts the space of gendered sexual transaction, but also proposes a powerful reflection upon where the 'zone of pain' might be located in a historical moment marked by sorrow and injustice<sup>29</sup>.

At that time the poet Raul Zurita (Chile, 1950), also from the C.A.D.A collective, wrote a poem in smoke in the sky of New York. The poetry-action, *La vida nueva* (The new life, 1982) consists of five planes that drew white smoke letters silhouetted across a blue sky of the verses of the poem "La vida nueva", published in the book *Anteparaíso* (1982). It was performed at more than 4,500 meters of altitude, on 2 June 1982. The poem was written in Spanish as a form of recognition for all the minority groups all over the world. The piece also became a video documentation (27') of the action that records the writing in the sky of New York. Each sentence measured between 7 and 9 kilometres in length. Later on, in 1993 Zurita took an opposite action - a poem that can be seen in the sky, *Ni pena ni miedo*, (Neither sorrow nor fear), a 3 kilometres long by 0.4 kilometres wide geoglyph in the Atacama Desert at altitude from Antofagasta, of the verse "Neither sorrow nor fear", a piece that corresponds to the writing on land of the last verse of the book *La vida nueva (The New Life)*, 1994, by the same author. From the height of nearby hills or from the air you can read the text "Neither sorrow nor fear". It was written with an excavator, each letter reaching an approximate length of 150 metres. The art piece became a series of photographic records of a geoglyph.

There are more examples of writers and poets that connect poetry and visual arts or other medias; as is the case with Nicanor Parra's *Artefactos* (Artefacts), Juan Luis Martinez, Enrique Lihn, and Carmen Berenger, among others. In 1971, Cecilia Vicuña held the exhibition *Pinturas, poemas y explicaciones* (Paintings, Poems and Explanations) at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago, in which she had the audacity, unusual for that time, to subvert expressive means, presenting her paintings as poems, in the same way. She proposed as a sculpture her poetic intervention, *Salon de otoño* (Autumn salon, 1971), which consisted of filling a room in the Museum with dry leaves.

Vicuña writes poems but also paint poems, install poems, sing poems, makes videoart poems, her work putting poetry in connection with different art medias. In this sense, her work expands

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<sup>29</sup> "Zona de dolor" Video performance: <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/es/hidvl-additional-performances/diamela-eltit-zona-de-dolor.html>

the notion of poetry<sup>30</sup>. She also publishes books that she performs by visual creations, such as her book *PALABRARmas* (1984). This book (Word)weapons plays with the deconstruction of meanings and experiments with the visuality of the poem. It is a visual space that reorganises and evolves the signs towards new meanings, languages, and definitions recreating the words.

I have been developing writing in connection with poetry, narrative and voice, spoken word and sound. In the events and experiences around alchemy I have been developing the use of words in order to guide the attention of the participants towards the creation of relations; making questions, filling the atmosphere with an immaterial and metaphysical ingredient that connects with the matter I install in the room, establishing a dialogue, opening up relationships, but without the intention of explaining the matter through words. Words become matter that provide relations to interrogate, to ask how we connects with plants, with different kinds of water, with alchemy and ethnobotanics, among others subjects that integrate the experiences. I have been working with words telling stories that I have been experimenting with or stories I had collected about different knowledge/beliefs related to plants, water, the forest, and the diverse matters that are present in the room.

As Haraway says, quoting Strathern, “it matters what ideas we use to think about others’ ideas”. The words and stories that I invite to imagine, think, and reflect on through telling, using voice has been a “matter that matters” in my research practice, which doesn’t mean that taking things seriously can’t be fun. I take my practice seriously but having fun, even if is during a ritual, if I exercise due care in what I am doing it can be spontaneous and fun, taking what is happening into the present, bringing an aliveness to the experience, and living it with joy, but at the same time with awareness that I have an intention, because what I am saying in my research matters: “It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories” (Haraway, 2016, 35) .

In my latest work, *Humalga* (2022), that I completed after my experience gained living in the forest and coast of Valdivia (Niebla and Cutipay) I have been writing and developing a voice that is situated from that environment, close to other non-humans. I also wrote about some messages I felt I have been receiving there. The videoart was an assembly of diverse materials and formats; visual, graphic, installations, performance, matters, algae, lichens, words, and

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<sup>30</sup> For more information about the notion of « poetry in expansion » see in the Catalogue : “Poesia en expansion” : [https://www.surdoc.cl/sites/default/files/library\\_file/1.poesia\\_en\\_expansion\\_con\\_tapas.pdf](https://www.surdoc.cl/sites/default/files/library_file/1.poesia_en_expansion_con_tapas.pdf)

sounds. The words that are in voice format are somehow weaving, not explaining, but in a way framing the different matters that co-habit in *Humalga*.

The storytelling in my latest work relates to opening up and making public a space of subjectivity about my autoexperimentation in connection with other-than-humans, algae, lichens, and different species of the forest as well as with my dead ancestors. These stories reflect my need to get closer to the environment of the forest, to more-than-human, in a physical–somatic way. It is a thinking that emerges from the concrete experience of closeness with the territory and from that I externalise my feelings, reflections, and connections with the land. In this sense those texts express the practice of the epistemologies I have been learning in this research, about the agency of more-than-human; the community experience including not just humans, but also the land and my ancestors that are dead.

The exercise of care is related to the telling of stories, following Robin Wall Kimmerer's assertion that it is "to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depend on it" (Kimmerer, 2013, 9), I started to feel the living beings around me and that changed my perception, as she says, in a material, tangible way in relation to the way I see matter, as well as a spiritual feeling.

The orality and the use of the voice become a very relevant subject in my work. It is not just about the meaning of the words, but how you say them, the tone, the energy, and the presence that generates my voice affects the corporeality that receives it. I have been exploring in my research the influence of sound in the body, as we are 70 percent water, and the sound travels through our body of water, and that changes our state. The sound scores I make are a combination of elements, sounds from nature such as the sound of the river, the birds, frogs, bees, and other critters. I record and then sample them with sounds of synthesizers, music, and voices I sample. I use technology, machines, and software to distort and recreate the sound scores. They are in combination with my voice and the sound I make in the moment, with the objects, the water, the air, and the words. I have been exploring making sounds in collaboration with music producer DJ Raff, and the use of voice with singer and musician, Silvia Vivanco. Both approaches were looking at the concepts I was working with, the exploration was not just from a technical approach, but was also looking at the intentions that are driving the music, sound, and voice.

The importance of orality is present in Cecilia Vicuña's poetry. She values the orality of the indigenous culture, the importance of the voice, singing, and making sounds with the voice. The culture of poetry is demonstrated through the voice, and the connection with other voices

such as the birds, animals, the sounds of the wind, the sea, etc. I saw a concert with her and the pianist-composer Ricardo Gallo, in the context of the launch of the album “La niebla vital, Wiraqochan” “The vital fog” (Hueso records, 2022) in December 2022 at Persa Victor Manuel in Santiago de Chile. In the concert, Vicuña used her voice in different dimensions in relation to words, but also in a way the sound became a landscape where she was almost channelling the water, fog, and the wind with her voice and her texts were in alignment with the stories of those landscapes.

It was a very performative concert and wasn't participatory in the sense that the audience was part of the action and ritual. It was a show where Vicuñas used the voice in many different ways, as a landscape, reading poems. The words were signs and sounds and at the same time, she used very different tones. Even if the concert was written with a partiture and it was recorded on a record (that I also got), it was visible throughout the performance that she enters into a state of transformation where she connects with the energy of the entities and landscapes she relayed.

My performative approach is also in that connection where, even if I have a score, my presence is affected by all the elements, people, and energies that influence my state of being in the present moment. That is also related to ritual, both aspects are part of the experiences I propose where I invite participation through materials and immaterial stimuli; objects, plants, different kinds of water, sound, voice, and words. Those elements become a way to connect with people, the space, and the community that is present in the room. I create this tentacular structure in latex where the people are invited to hang the ice sculpture I gave them. Each person has in their hands an ice sculpture with plants, they can feel them, smell them, feel the temperature, even as the sculpture melts in their hands. Throughout the events I show plants, different kinds of water, telling stories about them, and while I'm activating the plants, the matter, the sculptures, the infusions, I come into connection with everything that is happening in real time, and my actions are in connection with that present, with people, but also with the matter and the agency they have. My voice and text emerge from that process, I can have a written text and score but it will change depending on the connection of everyone and everything. In that sense, my work is related to Vicuña's processes calling for collective participation, as curator Miguel A. Lopez says: "Cecilia's art is anchored in the social and exists through the experience of others"<sup>31</sup>. My work resonates with that need, where the art proposal

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<sup>31</sup>Miguel Á. López, original in spanish: "El arte de Cecilia esta anclado en lo social y existe a través de la experiencia de otros". Meeting at the MNBA Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile with the artist and the curator, in the context of the exhibition "Dreaming the water. A retrospective of the future (1964-)". It included the participation of Cecilia Vicuña, Miguel Á. López, curator of the exhibition; and José de Nordenflycht, art historian, researcher and academic at U. de Playa Ancha (12/05/2023).

is complete through social interaction, as well as with the connection with more-than-human species, elements, and forces. We use different materials, sound work, and protocols of encounter for people and we connect with them, but we are both proposing work that invites a rethinking of the relationship with the earth and the water. This is in relationship with ancestral knowledge from the Tao and from indigenous people, in the case of Vicuñas, indigenous people from the world. She has developed those interests from the seventies, but at that moment not many people were moved by her voice and art. Today, in the context of climate warming and the urgency of it, her vision has become more valuable.

Vicuña integrates diverse elements and objects in her installations, her object making includes "*Precarios- precarious works*", composed of fragile materials (sticks, feathers, leaves, stones, bones...) that disappear, and as I mentioned previously, major large-scale installations of *quipus*, dyed wool, and fibres.

Her "precarious work" begun when she was living in Concon: "Her first assemblages, produced in 1966 were swept by the waves and sea breezes (...) Vicuña made small assemblages out of things she found on the beach and placed them on the sand" (Lopez, 2020, 29). As Catherine de Zeghers says: Her work "is responding to a sign, it is not imposing a mark. Being a 'non-site' piece, it is not about appearance, but about disappearance." (Lopez, 2020, 30) Those pieces are part of an ephemeral logic, they live and achieve change through the conditions of the environment, the wind, and the sea, including, as well, that they disappear. She uses materials that are not objects to sell in the commercial sphere of the art world, they are collected in raw conditions, and they can be almost considered waste materials, as in the process of assembling and making connections with different objects and matter, where it becomes an artistic object. The decision about the materials she uses had a political intention:

Vicuña's use of the concept of the precarious and her thoughts on the relational dimension of precariousness (inherent to both non-human and human beings) foreshadows the leading role this concept has played in the last two decades in discussions about working conditions in neoliberal economies and how security issues are used by governments for purposes of control and domination (Lopez, 2020, p.39).

Her precarious works are made from the remainder of objects that came from the sea, forgotten objects that "are not important" and didn't have value in itself, but she creates the context where the tiny and simple becomes relevant. That is the conceptual intention of her work,

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putting things together and in that gesture, somehow she gives life or resurrects those dead objects. This has a political and ecological perspective of interpretation. As curator Miguel. A. Lopez mentions, her pieces had a:

Willingness to dignify rubble, tiny particles and the things we throw away focuses the question on how to reconnect the scattered parts of what we might now call ecological justice – an assembly of many worlds and multiples forms of awareness. In that awareness lies the poetics of the enlightened failure, the possibility that the ordinary can become an event (Lopez, 2020, 39).

My installations combine very different matter, plastic, cheap objects as inflatable receptacles, latex structures, in combination with chemistry that I found in Deptford market one day I was there. I use tentacle fingers I found in a children's plays store, those in combination with organic matter such as plants, different kinds of water, algae, and lichens. They live together, assemble, and conform a contradictory unit. We live in this juxtaposition of time - plastic, fast, cheap with the clean spring water, with the water that has been charged by the moon, with marigold, sage, rosemary, and ancient medicinal plants. My work makes explicit this stained reality, polluted by plastic, where both live together as a contemporary gesture.

Another element that can be seen as a connection between the precarious work of Vicuña and my sculptures on ice, has to do with the material and metaphysical aspect of the matter and its ephemeral condition: the ice melts during the events and the transformation of it expresses the state of changing of our corporality and our surrounding, that everything is in constant movement. Vicuña's precarious work and the installations in situ she creates are in conditions of transformation, with the friction of the movement of reality and the forces that interact with the matter she installs. In that sense our installations are different in their materiality, but both are not perennial, they live what they can and they are durational, they don't pretend to stay forever in a gallery or in the house of someone as an object to be sold.

We both transmit an awareness of the need for connection with ourselves as nature in relation with other entities. She develops this connection with the light, the sea, the water, and the mountain through the consciousness of feeling them as a live presence. In my work, I have been developing my consciousness and sensibility of feeling the agency of other-than-human beings throughout my research through the power of the plants, the water, and the diverse forces that are part of the biosphere. When I moved to live in the forest, that experience became more relevant.

Our difference relates to the distance and proximity of our connections with territories. Vicuña has been living in the United States, away from Chile since the 1980s. My research practice explores a somatic relationship and performs the necessity of physical proximity. That is why I decided to live in the region of the forest, to feel the *Itrofil Mogen*, the connection with the land in a very special place which is a “hot spot of biodiversity” with its confluence of diverse kinds of lives as well as the energy and history of my ancestors. That wasn’t a trip to “return home”, but rather to explore in a somatic way the complexity of identity with the land and more-than-humans. I had the need to get deeper into that exploration that at the beginning, when I visited the Machi for the first time, was quite touristic. The experience of living there for six months provided that possibility to get deeper into those reflections.

The work of Vicuña is more elastic, she gets close to the landscapes through an in-situ installation but then she moves away to New York. I decided to install myself in Chile, not as a return to the roots or home, and conclude the notion of identity in relation to a geography. This research doesn’t resolve the problem. I am still not really at home, and the question of belonging permanently remains a question more than a response.



Fig. 61 *Melt*





Fig. 62 *Melt*

*Melt*

CASA Festival  
Arcola Theatre, London  
June 2019

Video residency at Casa Festival: <https://vimeo.com/373799340>  
Short video installation experience *Melt*: <https://vimeo.com/501320821>

At least 80% of the weight of everything that lives on earth is composed of plants (Mancuso, 2017). My love for plants is generated from various impulses and intuitions, from the beauty of the geometry, architecture and design that gives them structure, to the pleasure of their aromas and flavours and the diversity of their colours. In other words, their corporealities. Then, from a more healing vision, I felt attracted to their caring and medicinal capacities for our species. In my thirst to understand, study, know and learn, I found and met several people who have a connection with plants. This is linked to the recovery of popular and ancestral knowledge often handed down through female lineage. I listened to many stories, learned how to prepare infusions, tinctures, syrups and various medicines. Although we cannot explain how this relationship between humans and plants (or other animals) was designed, we can say that their capacity to remedy physical and mental health problems shows a deep connection with our species and in this sense, following the logic of reciprocity, we could also do something for them.

Humans are not the centre of the earth. What role do we play in this relationship?

The exchange and benefit should be mutual, so if plants can heal or balance us, we have a responsibility to take care of them. For me, humans are in debt in this connection, the balance is constantly benefiting humans. The current planetary crisis questions the paradigm of Modernity, the instrumentalist logic towards natural goods in pursuit of the expansion of capital makes the relationship between society and earth beings more and more critical. The social and human sciences have exposed the need to address the environmental vision as an urgent necessity. The separation of our species from nature aggravates this utilitarian approach. Other Eastern visions, such as the Taoist or that of indigenous peoples, conceive human life as being immersed in nature and not detached from it. This integration explains the visions of movement, dynamics, and the becoming of living beings.

The city distances me. It distances me, even though I can intellectually understand that we are connected with other living beings. The habitat distances me; the asphalt, the screens, the constant generation of plastic waste, the prepared food that the supermarkets distribute. Rural life brought me closer not only to the forest, but also to processes that are closest to the environment, which allow things to be generated. It was necessary to dirty my shoes with mud, to cut wood, prepare fire, and make food at home to feel that I am part of the environment, that I am an agent in the production of my own needs and that not everything is given through a service. I am at the most conscious of the consumption scale since waste must also be dealt with by me.

Once again, the proximity to the rural world shows me where I come from, how far I come from, the closeness to the raw material, to the ability to solve the most basic needs of survival. All this is connecting me with the environment. The beings of the earth told me to stay and there I was for six months listening to their secret languages, learning through doing. We are so detached at times that it is difficult to understand but by getting closer it becomes possible to perceive the interaction between living beings and to understand that we are part of that exchange, and thus the call of care also arises.

In this research, I have realised that the rescue of the culture of care crosses the various planes of healing, from corporality itself as the first territory, self-care, and self-cultivation, to a greater human sphere; considering the respect for the various cultures and their differences. From there, the need to erase the separation with nature, and assume ourselves inserted in it, is presented. The construction of a healthy and balanced world is oriented to the care of the environment, to the beings of the earth and non-human entities. Ecofeminism is a central inspiration for me to think about a sustainable society, providing insight into social needs

through values such as reciprocity, cooperation, and complementarity. These values are present in ecosystems, and in forest life as described above.

An ecofeminist perspective is installed from women's struggles for the defence of the environment, making a parallel between women and nature as a nourishing mother and exposing how it has been enslaved and dominated from a patriarchal perspective. This idea of domination is present both in the patriarchal power over women and in the idea of modernity, which has led to the usurpation of natural assets affecting ecosystems and social environments (Svampa, 2020).

Through my artistic practice I have developed the culture of caring involving a public as well as a private sphere. Care is related to a task that has been culturally associated with the female gender, in terms of the care of children, the sick, the elderly, people with different abilities. We have this capacity in the human species, but historically this work has been attributed to women who are mostly unpaid. In this sense, both domestic work and care work/roles are tasks that have been associated with the feminine including those that are remunerated. In my practice, the experiences I make and the materialities that move me around caring and healing have taken a leading role to install in the public, cultural and political sphere. This, to ask us how we take care of ourselves, how we are corporalities and how that vision, that feeling also affects our social and cultural environment, and in a greater sphere the environment in which we are located, involving non-human entities.

I think that if we are geographically close to different species we feel their presence more directly, therefore the need for care becomes more urgent. This is how voices have also emerged to address care from the legal point of view. Considering the importance of interrelation, alternatives to development are installed where visions are opened, which propose that spaces such as mountains, lakes, rivers, forests have life or are living spaces (Svampa, Viale, 2020). Under this logic of protection and care is the matrix of the rights of nature "which postulates new forms of relationship of the human with nature and with his fellows, and therefore claims the passage from an anthropocentric paradigm to another of a sociobiocentric relational character" (Svampa, Viale, 2020, 202).

The rights of nature come to propose an avant-garde model of protection against the anthropocentric model and exploitation of the earth, and this entails making a transition from no longer seeing nature as an object and assuming it as a subject. This implies guaranteeing a legalisation and a jurisprudence that favours the entities that allow our existence and provide us with sustenance. This proposal casts a check on the hierarchical ideas of the human being

about other living beings, allowing equality and respect to be recognised, demanding, on the part of nature, to be a subject of law.

Environmentalism, from this need, expands to a scale that it considers an ecosocial and political activism. Respect for the diversity of lives, of both human and non-human ways of life, is at the heart of the interests of ecofeminism. The relational approach is based on our link with nature, but also integrates the importance of defending social diversities, marginality, minorities, and dissent; "We live in a world where ontological plurality is based on the idea of multiplicity of worlds or multiverses and feeds on interculturalism, respect for other ways of understanding culture and organising life" (Svampa, Viale, 2020, 214).

In this sense, as a woman, I feel that I reflect Latin American feminisms, which are linked to the defence of health and territories. Understanding that marginality is consolidated in terms of ethnic issues, my white and Xinka quality is not such. However, I was able to perceive the difficulties of geographical marginality, which shapes a vision based on the same experiences of survival. Living in Niebla gave me an insight into rural life and the complexities of survival, especially in the winter as I understood that in the coastal sector there are very few schools, there is no water cleaning system, there are many precarious situations, and that care also crosses this social sphere, involving association through social networks of mutual support.

My experience gained living abroad, as a migrant woman, artist, and Latin American in Europe has connected me with a marginality and spirit of survival, which I can appreciate in other social sectors linked to my gender, as well as in the threat suffered by certain territories; there are solid links between gender and environment, women and environmentalism, feminism, and ecology (SVAMPA, VIALE, 2020). Within this context, the notion of the body as a territory becomes fundamental, oppression over women and over nature are connected, our fertile bodies suffer from constant oppression, from the domination of patriarchy and the modern-western neoliberal system. Lorena Cabnal, a Guatemalan Xinka feminist, argues that historically the corporality of popular women of the Latin American south have suffered violence linked to colonial oppression, currently "the earth territory is being violated by the neoliberal economic development model and that is why we have assumed the defence of the Earth territory as a space to guarantee life" (Svampa, Viale, 2020, 216). The body lived as a territory and in connection with the territory ceases to be so individual and becomes a geography that connects, that transmits messages, that communicates, just as water circulates from the mountain, by the river towards the sea, and in that passing of different beings we find ourselves and we become part of that flow.

Believing in the community, with a relational perspective, rescuing interdependence and eco-dependence is a path that can create awareness to repair and heal the damage already caused. Enhancing cultural diversity and with the environment, there is a door of hope to embody knowing nature.

Human corporality as a territory, as a force of nature, female power, and connection with the earth. "We could hardly understand the human body without the environment around it, even more, it is part of it. According to the thought of some indigenous people we are the territory, we are being it permanently (without moral categories of good and evil)" (Baeza Pailamilla, 2021) says Mapuche artist and performer, Paula Baeza Pailamilla. Feeling like territory, feeling our connection with people and other beings is an exercise in awakening a sleeping sensibility. Sometimes I can experience it, but other times I am so alienated in my blind humanity that I do not see beyond my mind. Therefore, it helps me to visit those who live in the forest, when I am and I recognise that it exists, that there is so much more, and that we can feel those forces and presences as an interconnected network.

Elisa Loncon, an academic of Mapuche origin, talks about the feminine force linked to the energy of the earth: "Mapuche women have a paradigm where we place ourselves from the feminine aspect of nature and we identify feminine energy in everything that exists in nature." (Loncon, 2021). From my own experience of the feminine, my corporality goes through an identification and admiration towards the Earth, as fertility, giver of life, it can be shelter and it can welcome. While the feminine force may have many forms, and that does not mean that a woman does not have masculine energy, rather it is a balance between ying and yang (Ying/feminine energy; Yang/masculine energy), I think it is necessary that the balance of the feminine can save the Earth, because it is a refuge and home to so many species. A home that protects, as Loncon would say:

Nature as the great mother who can also protect us, who can also take care of us, make a call to dialogue with the women of all the native peoples, of all the native nations to integrate another way of being feminine together with the femininity of the earth, the femininity that we also represent in history from the different territories. The call is to strengthen ourselves as women and as the feminine energies of the Earth (Elisa Loncon, 2021).



Fig.63 *Big Lichen*

My encounter with the forest allowed me to appreciate diverse ecosystems on the Valdivian coast; between the sea and the forest, in the symbiosis of being South American, white and mestizo winka, from the south and the north. Like a lichen, symbiosis between fungus and algae, fungus of the earth, seaweed. This symbiosis is given by the influence of the territories. I wonder if an alga moved into the woods, or a fungus ate an alga that made it walk into the woods.

Coral, along with lichens, are also the earliest instances of symbiosis recognized by biologists; these are the critters that taught biologists to understand the parochialism of their own ideas of individuals and collectives. These critters taught people like me that we are all lichens, all coral (Haraway, 2016, 72).

I have been resonating with this thought-feeling, we are all lichens, corals, in an anthropological and biological way, because both are intertwined, our perception, nervous system, our bacteria, our fungus, are located, situated in a context that generates symbiogenesis connections.

Sometimes I am a strange, indefinable, contradictory geography. I am not in a territory, I am the territories in which I live, and I eat them, I swallow them and sometimes I get sick, I get



intoxicated, other times I can assimilate them. Different structures and organisms come together and merge into my liquid, porous, fertile architecture. My geography lies within a larger geography, and our bacteria circulate from side to side.

*Symbiogenesis brings together unlike individuals to make large, more complex entities. Symbiogenetic life-forms are even more unlike than their unlike "parents". "Individuals permanently merge and regulate their reproduction. They generate new populations that become multiunit symbiotic new individuals. These become "new individuals" at larger, more inclusive levels of integration. Symbiosis is not a marginal or rare phenomenon. It is natural and common. We abide in a symbiotic world.*

Lynn Margulis, *Symbiotic Planet*

I am the blood of my grandmother, the blood of my veins, the animal blood, the blood of my eggs, algae colour, soft as an algae that travels through the waters, that is not torn by the force of the tides, is ductile, and when it dries it becomes fragile, brittle, changes, transforms, it is no longer the same, or it is the same as before but different. I'm a seaweed, humalga.



*Fig. 64 Lichen*  
Digital collage  
2021

## Conclusions

In this thesis I have been researching, exploring, and experimenting with the notion of identity. My first method of studying this theme was from a somatic perspective, this is to say from my subjectivity in terms of perception, sensorial, and real experience. Due to my background as dancer and choreographer, corporeality was the first territory I wanted to look at to explore its relationship with identity. In this search I learned the Tao system and philosophy, I got closer to the work of artist Lygia Clark and to the notion of corporeality through the work of Michel Bernard.

I learned the Tao system and technology with the Tao Master, Mantak Chia, and from the Tao philosophy I learned the connection between the microcosms- corporeality- and the macrocosm -the world in which we live. This perspective that proposes analogies from one to another made me realise that human life is immersed in nature and is not separate from it, understanding that from the Tao as well as Chinese medicine, the environment, seasons, and elements affect our emotional state as well as our organs. This technology made me reflect on the corporeality as a complex system that is in relation to our emotions, and that our environment affects us in terms of health and balance.

What the Taoists call “The Way”, gave me a notion of the sense of aliveness and movement of the human being as well as other species and the environment:

“The Way effects the movement of the heavens and the stability, turning endlessly like a wheel, flowing incessantly like water. It is there at the beginning and the end of things: as wind rises, clouds condense, thunder rumbles, and rain falls, it responds in concert infinitely” (Lao Tse, *Wen -Tzu*).

From the analogy that we humans are composed of 70 per cent water and the planet earth has almost the same proportion in relation to all the bodies of water as well as the clouds and rain that is present in the atmosphere, looking at the connection between microcosm and macrocosm I decided to explore the element of water. I have been experimenting with ice, steam, and liquid states of that matter. From that model I saw the potential to introduce alchemical concepts around the transformation of matter, connecting metaphysics with physics, exploring organic matter and living beings as plants and different kind of water.



### Somatic and perception

The work of artist Lygia Clark and the reflection around her practice that develops from Suely Rolnik was very relevant to examining a system that generates art tools in order to experiment with perception. Clark developed objects that can be considered instruments with a therapeutic intention, becoming a healing prop, proposing a “vivência” that opened up a liminal space between art and therapy.

My practice explored the creation of events, polysensorial experiences, through the creation of potions, ice sculptures, smells, tastes, and touching matter (ice sculptures) stimulating the participants to be sensitive and stimulated in a sensorial way. For me it was relevant to create an art experience that highlighted the relationship with corporeality. I was looking to create, not only a conceptual and intellectual art, but an art that can touch in a haptic way, and remind us that we are corporeality, and what we perceive and feel from our senses is relevant.

The work of Clark showed me a form to create tools to make people connect to themselves and their perceptions, having a therapeutic effect. In my work I wanted to go beyond a sensorial and somatic personal experience, exploring a collective body, the connection with others; human and non-human, looking at the relationship between culture and nature, experimenting on our link with the environment.

The sensorial materialities allow me to experiment and reflect on how the sensorial information activates the perception, memory, imagination, and emotional conditions of the participants. Even if the materialities I proposed had a concrete perception: everyone can watch, smell and touch the ice and matter, they were water in different states, with medicinal plants and specific characteristics and what they produce in the persons is always different, personal, and subjective. And with that I also realised that I cannot have control over the whole situation I am creating because it changes depending on the reaction of people. How they behave each time is singular and dependent on the group of people who create a special dynamic.

I realised that my work had therapeutic potential based on the work of perception. These experiments allowed me to explore the transformation of my own corporeality during the events as well as those of the participants and the matter that was part of the experience. The notion of becoming and transformation was something I learned from the different events I created, through the reactions of the humans, the matter, and the environment.

My research practice explored protocols where I researched different ways of participation, exploring the connection between the corporeality and the mind. As the choreographer, Deborah Hay, creates a set of instructions allowing the practice of dance to become a site of

interrogation in order to expand consciousness and not fall back into patterns, I decided to include other medias, working with words and sound in order to guide the experience, exploring the boundaries around meditation, storytelling, spoken word, and dj concerts.

The use of words and sounds also become a tool to penetrate on a somatic level and beyond that, to the consciousness and unconsciousness of the people, allowing the experience to become a context of interrogation.

Through those experiments I realised that the somatic level is the first mediator and reception to process the connection with the world we live in. Exploring perception, I realised that the way we perceive and signify things, matter, other beings, and our relationship with people, was mediated by our culture. Our perception is not an objective reality, the world it is not separate from us, it is mediated by our education, the culture we grow up in, and the one into which we are inserted. The perception is cultural, and we are affected on a somatic level by it. With that understanding I was looking to push the boundaries of perception, challenging my own precepts as well as those of the people that were involved in my events.

#### Alchemy; material & immaterial, cultural & physical transformation

Through that search, I began to study alchemy, a knowledge that has been considered “hidden or secret” and has even been forbidden in some periods and places. The symbolic aspect of alchemy was something that caught my attention, especially in the relationship between chemistry and metaphysics where this last aspect had a relationship with its secret feature.

Alchemy has to do with the capacity of transformation of matter, and, looking at it from a somatic and cultural perception, I reflected on my own matter. A human corporeality as a water being that is changing, resonating with the corporeality as an open system where diverse structures are in constant transformation and interaction; somatic, perceptive, spiritual, psychic, and intellectual (Michel Bernard).

Connecting the practice of alchemy with the question about identity, the project researched alchemy in a material and physical way and at the same time it becomes a conceptual frame to explore interculturalism, looking at how to operate Western knowledge and non-Western knowledge in my own biography as a South American woman artist living in the UK. This process had to do my self-reflection on the contexts and environments I have been living in, the education I have received, and my experimentation of different cultures in Europe, the UK, and South America. The process considered the physical impact that a culture, a social sphere, a political context, and ecological features can have on the somatic system of a person, in their perception and connection with the environment, with other beings.

The questions that I proposed in my events were present in my life as autotheory, indicating there is no separation between art and life, theory and practice, work and the self, research and motivation; my research was based in my auto-experimentation.

This exploration made me question my connection with the different environments I have lived in, acknowledging that the perception is influenced by our cultural understandings. The way we perceive our environment is moulded by the stimulus and ideas we receive from our family, education, territory, city, country, and politics into which we are inserted. The cultural and social spheres, as well as the physical, ecological surrounding and energetic conditions, influence our perception.

The notion of identity becomes expanded through the relationship we establish with the environment, how it affects us, and how we influence that surrounding. The practice of experimenting with organic matter made me question my relationship with that matter and how I perceive it? Especially in the connection I establish with water and plants.

At the beginning I worked with tap water, and later in my research on alchemy, with the work of Masaru Emoto, Mantak Chia, and other sources, I realised that water can change through diverse conditions. It is not the same water collected from spring water, from the rain, and charged by the moon, by words, by intention. The research around alchemy and medicinal plants through the creation of potions, opens up the subject of medicine in the alchemical experimentation.

My project has been looking at Western and non-Western models of alchemy. Regarding the connection of physical and metaphysical on alchemy within the tradition that Jung and artist Janet Lauren proposes, the alchemical research that I experimented with had to do with the intention, reflecting on the power of enchantment and transformation, and that is why the stories of the plants in the different traditions become a relevant subject in my work. I recollected different stories and beliefs around the power of plants, related to their chemical properties to heal human physical and emotional diseases, as well as their power to bewitch. In that sense the ethnobotanic perspective was a place for studying the relationship that diverse cultures have had with plants along different geographies and histories.

I have explored simple matter such as infusions and sculptures from ice that are a combination of water and plants that you can make at home, but I realised that the way I present and tell stories about them gave them the metaphysical power, and in that way a common matter becomes something special, charged by sense. I was seeking to produce matter that can transform and expand the perception of the participants, activating memories and subjective

connections. The diverse elements and matter that were part of the atmospheres I created made possible a space of reflection about the living world and how we relate to plants, to water, and to the stories that circulate around them, opening up a context of interrogation around their power, agency, and energy.

From that engine of research and examining non-Western approaches to connect with our surroundings, I became closer to Mapuche culture.

Understanding that the world we live in is not an objective fixed reality and it changes through the filter of our understanding, the exercise of alchemy was not only a chemical approach to plants, I was not looking exclusively at their medicinal proprieties for human beings. The practice of alchemy introduced me to ethnobotanic knowledge where culture and nature coexist, not separate as two different zones. I learned that the way we perceive, feel, sense, and understand a plant is connected to the stories we know about them, and the respect we have for them as living species with energy and spirit.

In the experiences where I was invited to live in communities I shared this knowledge, stories, and my reflections around this change of perception I was going through in my research.

#### Decolonial process, friction between Western and non-Western epistemologies

Reflecting around identity within auto-experimentation from living in different territories made me examine our relationship with the environment and the living world. Through the study of bibliographic sources, as well as having the healing experience with the Machi, I got closer to Mapuche culture and cosmology.

The healing in itself provided a very strong somatic experience. I got to know the Mapuche's tools for healing and I had a treatment with medicinal plants that the Machi recommend to me. The first encounter with her brought me closer to the forest of Valdivia, becoming closer to an ecosystem that I was not previously familiar with. Coming from London to the forest in the South of Chile was a completely different surrounding that made me reflect on my connection with the land and with other species. I realised that I was very distant to those other beings, living in a big city environment with an urban lifestyle that is detached from the ecosystem of the forest and the people who live close to them. I also expanded my comprehension in relation to *lawen* medicine, getting to know from the experience within that particular territory, the *Itrofil Mogen* the diversity that comes together, biodiversity, totality without exclusion, integrity without fracture, the living world, pluriversity, and multiversity. The notion of *Itrofil Mogen* that I have learned from theory in books were now in the practice, in the experience of the connection

with that territory which is inhabited for many kinds of life, and humans are just one of them. The environment within which I was situated made me question my way of living.

The second encounter I had with the Machi was a moment of conflict. I expected to collaborate with her, working together for the protection of the Valdivian Forest, but that project was interrupted after she put distance between herself as a Mapuche Machi, and me as winka coming from a university in England. Confronting my position with that of the Machi made me realise my privilege as a Chilean winka living in UK. The problem of position was a conflict that showed me the limits of learning from the Mapuche world and the distance I have to respect in order to keep the social balance they need to protect their culture. This struggle made me question my own culture, and I became aware of my contradictory identity and positionality that changes depending on the context. In the UK I was a South American women artist not considered white (white European), and in Chile, to the Mapuche people, I was a winka living in the UK.

This episode of conflict and frustration was a space to auto-reflect on my capacity to possess decolonial awareness. These contradictions around identity made me resonate with the concept of *ch'ixi* developed by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. *Ch'ixi* is a word of Aymara origin that does not designate a fixed category, but rather a state of becoming referring to a grey colour product of the juxtaposition of white and black, a contradictory juxtaposition of elements, a metaphor for the indeterminate, for an identity that accounts for stained, mixed, impure people. Cusicanqui addresses some aspects of the indigenous episteme to *ch'ixi* identity, meaning to recognise the agency of the non-human, the *dialogue with* and *the recognition of non-human subjects*, which include the dead.

Beyond intellectual and theoretical ideas, my project pushes me to explore those epistemologies. After the encounter with the Machi, my project changed direction. When I met the Machi I wanted to learn with her about medicinal plants and healing in relation to alchemy from a non-Western vision. That was not possible and I realised that my instrumental vision of plants as medicine for the human was not the central point of my research. I learned from the Machi about the *Itrofil Mogen* which suppose that when we talk about medicine and care it includes different spheres, social and more-than-human relations, balance, and respect for all living beings as well as dead energies that constitute the territory.

I realised that living in the city I have been at a remove from the other-than-human entities that live in the forest, and I had the need to be there (the forest). I saw the need to explore the forest's surroundings and look at how that context influenced me from a somatic practice that

transformed my experience of identity. I felt the need to get closer to the forest, this time that process was guided by me without any explanation of what I should feel, it was just my persona with other beings where my background, education, and cultural perception was in interaction with an environment far from the city, and close to other-than-human beings. In a mix of sensations that were sometimes difficult to process, I began to accept my Western life with my European influence from my years of living in London, Paris, and my mestizaje as South American winka. The Mapuche cosmovision shows me my difference and interrogates me about my way of feeling myself to be part of nature and my distance from it. How can I feel that I am part of nature? With my life with commodities, depending on the services of the city. I realised that my way of experimenting with culture was distant from nature, that frustration was something I wanted to repair through staying close to the forest, and feeling from my own experience how it was to stay close to it.

In this sense my research around identity has been moving from a social and anthropological perspective towards a posthumanism and post-anthropocentric vision, influenced by the connection I decided to establish with other-than-human beings. I realised that I am inscribed in a context. I am a family, a neighbourhood, a city, a country, a continent, a forest, a street, a collective. Wherever I move the environment transforms my identity, and I am the surroundings I inhabit.

Learning and auto-experimenting with non-Western epistemologies, my relationship with more-than-human entities expanded to a closer relationship where I began to see those beings as subject with agency. When I began to work with plants, I used to have a functional or instrumental vision, looking at them as “medicinal plants”, helpers of humans, but that perspective changed during my research. Comparing my way of seeing the other-than-human before my thesis and after was very different, and I realised that I have multiplied way of living my humanity, and it depends on the epistemologies that influence my vision of how I will be human with other-than-humans, and that my position of hierarchy and respect would change. As Robin Wall Kimmerer says:

“In the Western tradition there is a recognized hierarchy of beings, with of course, the human being on the top – the pinnacle of evolution, the darling of Creation – and the plants at the bottom. But in Native ways of knowing, human people are often referred to as “the younger brothers of creation” (Kimmerer, 2013, 9).

With this research my position as human changed, and I became more aware of the wisdom of plants, in this sense I become closer to a post-anthropocentrism vision that proposes that

the human is now redefined in its relationship with the environment as a mutual relationship. Where the notion of identity is responsible and includes an awareness of interconnection, of the collective, and the importance of togetherness. Recognising that humans (not all humans, because some human people are not included) had a direct impact on the environment, the biosphere, the planet we inhabit, and other species, insisting on the relevance and need to decentralise the human from the centre of the discourse.

This project contributes to the reflection of the notion of identity, highlighting the importance of the somatic experience in the construction, deconstruction, and transformation of the self. A self that is not separated from their surroundings, is in interconnection with the environment in a reciprocal relationship.

Through this research I have been integrating and embodying non-Western knowledge with an awareness of how to develop a non-hegemonic way of living, looking for alternatives from a decolonial perspective. This attitude transcends this research, it doesn't provide a solution, and it keep questioning me on how to continue. How to integrate into practice the theory and experiences I have been living through this research? With the hope that my research can be a valid contribution to build a better society, reverting to what Sousa critiques about theories and concepts of the global North:

This immensity of alternatives for life, coexistence and interaction with the world is largely wasted because the theories and concepts developed in the global North and in use throughout the academic world do not identify such alternatives and, when they do, they do not value them as valid contributions to building a better society. Therefore, in my opinion, we do not need alternatives, but an alternative thinking of alternatives (Sousa, 2011,19)<sup>32</sup>.

My work explores the imbrication and complex association between knowledge coming from the global North and the global South, Western and non-Western knowledge, as a friction, a complement, a contradiction, a difficult a relationship, where the different forces fight and live together. My artistic practice amalgamates varied universes, and I am looking to contribute to the North with knowledge coming from the South and to the South with what I have been learning from the North, as a reflection of how I have been walking both territories, with doubts, fragilities, uncertainty, sadness about injustice, but with the hope that a micropolitics position

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<sup>32</sup> Spanish version: "Esta inmensidad de alternativas de vida, de convivencia y de interacción con el mundo queda en gran medida desperdiciada porque las teorías y conceptos desarrollados en el Norte global y en uso en todo el mundo académico, no identifican tales alternativas y, cuando lo hacen, no las valoran en cuanto contribuciones válidas para construir una sociedad mejor. Por eso, en mi opinión, no necesitamos alternativas, sino un pensamiento alternativo de alternativas" (Sousa, 2011,19).



and activation can change the order and state of things. This inner feeling about identity, perception, and its cultural effects has been taking the form of an alchemical space where diverse elements come together, are changing form and getting transformed. In my events I had explored and experimented with ways to externalise these sensations of discomfort and conflict, with the union of different universes and knowledge.

### Situational and expanded identity

Exploring the notion of identity from a somatic experience within a process of auto-decolonisation, influenced by ancestral epistemologies from the East and South, I developed an awareness about the connection with our environment, the living and dead spiritualities and energies. The notion of identity in the last period of my research opened up a series of interrogations related to my relationship with the land and my territory of origin.

The response was not based on the premise of “coming back to my roots”, but from the decisions I have been making in this research. It guided me to reflect on where I come from, the culture, history and geography of a living world that is related to a territory, and how that has been affecting me. Those questions mobilised me to an unexpected space; the forest, but not any forest, a forest situated where my grandmother come from, a place where I had not been before this research. Why did I get to that place? A mystery, a coincidence with the place where the Machi lives, a call from my grandmother, a call from the forest. For me it is a mix of all of those, and I felt the energy of my grandmother in those surroundings. I also experimented with the challenge to inhabit that space in order to explore how the environment influenced me from a somatic perspective. This research challenges me to leave my urban way of living and to become situated in a different ecosystem in order to learn from that environment.

The experience of living in the forest made me realise that we are not dissociated beings from our environment, that everything affects us, and we influence everything around us. It made me understand from an embodied identity that we are the land, that I am one more species of this landscape and we all constitute a geography.

What I call situational identity relates to the transformation of the self in connection with the environment, conceiving identity as an open system in permanent becoming, what resonates from the idea of “opening up the notion of identity to a multiplicity of other axes or entities” (Rossi Braidotti), always becoming and in transformation. My contribution with this dissertation is to propose a practice and autotheory based on the auto-experimentation and self-reflection of situational identity, where the collective becomes fundamental, and where the limits between humans and other-than-humans become mobile and symbiotic. That is visible at the last stage

of my work where the symbiotic relationship with other species is expressed through an identity becoming other with: an identity that is human, algae, fungi, trees, and others. My work *Humalga*, as the title refers, is an ensemble between human and algae. This project took different forms and medias, where I have been exploring the limits between myself and other earth beings, specifically from the Valdivian Forest and the coast.

In this project I have been investigating the relationship between identity and the territories and through that search I have encountered unexpected geographies such as the forest, looking at more-than-human species, the dead and entities that go beyond a social and anthropological sphere. This research made me reflect on the relationship between nature and culture, questioning my position as human. My work proposes a contribution to the field, establishing a somatic position of reciprocity on the interconnection with more-than-humans. A position that is not fixed, is it still interrogating where and how to live? What should we do or not do to contribute to the balance? My artistic practice considers these questions, reflecting on the impact I have in the territories and how I can offer an art that can bring this relationship between culture and nature closer. I have been experimenting with strategies for composition in combination to storytelling, where different medias come together to construct the possibility to provide an experience of reflection and encounter, where the notion of a closed and fixed identity becomes porous in communication with others with a sense of togetherness.

My practice reveals my trajectory as a dancer and choreographer, where I have trained in somatic practice with a sensitive and specific understanding, in relation to body awareness and inward and external perception. With this research I have looked at the notion of identity in connection with the environment, and I have investigated, from the Taoist system and philosophy, the notion of energy (chi or qi) that is present in our corporeality and the environment, looking at their interconnection. I have been exploring alchemy, the water element and their different features in our human body as well as the bodies of water present on our planet. I have explored ethnobotanics, making potions and ice sculptures, connecting water and plants, reflecting on their power, energy and capacities to heal and modify human mood and disease. Exploring the relation between humans, culture, and nature I got closer to Mapuche culture, integrating non-Western knowledge, and expanding the notion of identity to the territory and the collective. Through the different episodes of this project, field work, and experiences with the territories, I have been developing an awareness of being a collective between humans and other-than-humans, this way the contribution of this research explores how Western and non-Western epistemologies are in contest and dialogue, enriching the notion of identity.

The project contribution consists of elaborating art practices that expand the notion of identity from a somatic perspective integrating the collective, the territory, and more-than-humans. With different medias and practices such as participatory events, visual devices, spoken word, sound, storytelling, and written material, my work engages with offering a frame for feeling and reflecting around our connection, interconnection, or disconnection with the environment. The research doesn't offer a solution to connect with the environment, it expresses the contradictions, limitations, and difficulties in the relationship between nature and culture, and how the different epistemologies (Western and non-Western) come together navigating the notion of identity.

Even if the project is personal and subjective, within a methodology of autotheory that integrates some cues of autoethnography, it opens up a bigger context that implies social, ecological, and political spheres, where I contribute with an ecofeminist perspective with a South American vision that amalgamates knowledge coming from different territories and cultures, in order to expand the notion of identity and explore its connection with culture and more-than-humans.

The project does not provide an answer to the problem of identity. Its contribution is to open up a reflection around non-Western epistemologies, exploring how they operate as a way to feel the interdependency and connection within ecosocial surroundings. It offers a proposition of collective identity between humans and more-than-humans, expanding the notion of identity towards a sense of togetherness.

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- BERNARD Michel «De la corporéité comme « anticorps » ou de la subversion esthétique de la catégorie traditionnelle de « corps » dans *De la création chorégraphique*, Paris CND, 2001, P.17-24. In this text, Bernard proposes the term corporeality from a philosophical vision that engages mobility, instability, and the movement of different forces with a sense of aliveness. Using some concepts from Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, the author shows the transformation of matter as a central quality of corporeality, with a mobile, unstable material and energetic network, driven by the interference of disparate forces and crossed intensities. In my research, I am exploring the potential of corporeality as an energetic and polymorphic becoming, considering it as an open system where different structures (somatic, perceptive, spiritual, and psychic) are in constant interaction and transformation. In my research I highlight the corporeal experience of the members of the audience and myself as performer, experimenting with polysensorial stimulus.
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of this method, stating the importance of different dimensions present in autoethnography; research, writing, history, and methods, that connect the autobiographical and personal with the cultural, social, and political.

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In this text, Chihuailaf explains Mapuche cosmovision, which is characterised by a non-anthropocentric perspective. It entails a reciprocal relational exchange between humans and non-humans, manifested in their understanding of the forces and energies present in the world. They use the concept of *Itrofil Mogen* to refer to the living world as a whole, emphasising its unity. Since they do not separate themselves from nature because they are part of it, *Itrofil Mogen* includes the social and culture spheres. This concept is both biodiversity and biosphere and is not limited to the natural world; it includes the social and cultural spheres because Mapuche people consider themselves an integral part of nature. I am examining Mapuche's ecological rationality and their understanding of corporeality. This is the foundation for the understanding of their connection and co-dependency with the living world. In my research, I have explored the connection, disconnection, and interconnection with more-than-humans and the environment from a non-Western perspective.
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- CUSICANQUI Silvia Rivera, *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible, Ensayos desde un presente en crisis*. Tinta Limon ediciones, Buenos Aires, 2018

In this text the Bolivian sociologist, historian, and activist, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, has been thinking and reflecting on the problem of the persistence of colonial ideas and practices in the regions of Latin America that were formerly colonised by Spain and

Portugal. In this book she invites us to think about the possibility of a *ch'ixi* world above all that of Bolivia, the society where she lives and which she knows best. The four essays and the interview that make up the book refer fundamentally to the social, cultural, and political history of that country, particularly its Andean world; Likewise, they contain elements that may be valid for the study of other Latin American realities and other parts of the world.

She describes the concept of *ch'ixi* as a decolonial practice that opens up the idea of identity towards a notion where opposite forces are in friction and constant transformation. The author reflects on Andean epistemologies in order to question how the colonial forces and Western hegemony have affected our current societies in Latin America, proposing ways of emancipation through *ch'ixi* practice.

My research reflects on the notion of identity from an embodied perspective in relation to territories, from a South American and ecofeminist perspective. The concept of *ch'ixi* becomes a highly relevant subject, describing the relevance of including non-Western epistemologies to practice the connection and interconnection with our surrounding and more-than-human entities.

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In this text, Lauren Fournier extends the meaning of the term "autotheory" that has been described as books in which memoir and autobiography fuse with theory and philosophy, applying it to other disciplines and practices. The author provides an account of autotheory, situating it as a mode of contemporary, post-1960s artistic practice that is indebted to feminist writing, art, and activism. Investigating a series of works, she considers the politics, aesthetics, and ethics of autotheory.

Fournier argues that the autotheoretical turn signals the tenuousness of illusory separations between art and life, theory and practice, work and the self—divisions long blurred by feminist artists and scholars. The author formulates autotheory as a reflexive movement, connecting thinking, making art, living, and theorising.

My dissertation has an autotheoretical perspective that traverses writing and creation. Practice and theory, life and art are imbricated, and I am permanently reflecting on my auto-experimentation in dialogue with different voices, authors, philosophies, traditions, and epistemologies that are present in my research.

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- HOFFMAN Adriana, FARGA Cristian, LASTRA Jorge, VEGHAZI Esteban, *Plantas medicinales de uso comun en Chile*, Ediciones Fundacion Claudio Gay, Santiago 1992
- JEREZ Jimena, *Plantas Magicas guia etnobotanica de la region de los rios*, Ediciones Kultrun, Valdivia 2017
- JUNG Carl Gustave, *Realidad del Alma*, originally published in German as *Wirklichkeit der Seele* translated by Fernando Vela y Felipe Jiménez de Asua. Editorial Losada, Buenos Aires, 1999.
- JUNG Carl Gustave, "Nature Was Once Fully Spirit and Matter." In: *C.G.Jung on Nature, Technology & Modern Life, Edited by Meredith Sabini*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, California, 2008.

- JUNG Carl Gustave, *The Collected Works Alchemical Studies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979
- JUNG Carl Gustave, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung volume 12, Psychology and Alchemy*, originally published in German as *Psychologie und Alchemie* translated by R.F.C. Hull, Bolling series XX, Princeton University Press, 1980.  
In this text, Jung examines the basis of alchemy, which is the union between philosophy and chemistry. Jung's perspective and interpretation of alchemy considers the union between these two forces, the matter, the physics, and the empiricism of chemistry with the metaphysical and the mystical philosophy contents. From his perspective, the alchemists, in their alchemical process and labour, deal with the projection of psychic contents in matter. In my research, I am using alchemical principles within an artistic context, with the aim of going back to this foundation of connecting metaphysical contents with matter, giving it certain qualities and potential meanings of interpretation.
- KE WEN, *Entrez dans la pratique du Qi Gong*, Editeur, Le Courrier du livre, Paris 2009
- KINDRED Glennie, *Herbal Healers*, Wooden Books, Chine, 2002  
Kindred describes the alchemical process of using medicinal plants. This occurs when the herbs and flowers are absorbed into the water as infusions or tisane. This ancient healing knowledge is understood as the property that each medicinal flower and herb has to contain subtler energies that are released through the connection with water, and which have the potential to affect corporeality on different levels; the power to strengthen and tone certain organs, as systems that can be used as medicine for any illness; and also their capacity to balance humours and restore equilibrium.  
I have studied the relationship between alchemy and medicine through the creation of healing potions, using medicinal plants. This takes place through matter, by creating sculptures from ice, infusions, and steam with their aromas; I also expose the process of transformation of the state of the water. Furthermore, I have used spoken word to share notions related to the healing proprieties of medicinal plants and stories of the plants.
- LAO TSE, *Tao Te Ching*, Wildwood House Editions, 1973
- LAO TSE, *Tao Te King, libro del Tao y su virtud*. Version Castellana y comentarios de Gaston Soubllette. Cuatro Vientos editorial. Santiago de Chile, 1990  
In this text, Lao Tse develops the idea of transformation and change, which is a very important concept for the understanding of the self and the bio-environment. Moreover, Gaston Soubllette comments that the sense of the world is captured through movement, in the mutations of everything that happens in the world. This movement, that in nature has infinite variety, however, has a structure, an internal law, which can be captured, discerned, and understood in its direction.  
In my research, I am looking at Taoist philosophy to study the process of transformation of the self and its relationship with the biophysical environment, considering the resonance and connection between the microcosm and the macrocosm.
- LAO TSE, *Wen-Tzu La comprension de los misterios del Tao*, Edaf ediciones, España, 2000.
- LARS Bang, ROLNIK, Suely, "Suely Rolnik on Lygia Clark", *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 01 April 2007, Issue 15, pp.24-34.  
In this text, Rolnik explains the concept of "resonant body", looking at the importance of a polysensorial situation, where the somatic experience and the proprioception plays a fundamental role in the creation of subjectivity, reaching a therapeutic dimension.

My practice research also seeks to affect the audience on a somatic level, creating an experience that involves a change in the regime of perception of the audience in order to connect the physical level with the psychological and emotional level. I have researched how sensorial matters, spoken words, and healing tools have the potential to activate and transform the state of the audience.

- LEE Christina Feeling and healing: Anna Halprin's dance as healing art. King's College London. Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices Volume 9 Number 2. © 2017 Intellect Ltd Article.
- "Le geste et sa perception" in Michell Marcell, Ginot Isabelle, *La danse au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Bordas éditions, Paris, 1997, p. 224-229  
LEIGH FOSTER Susan, LEPECKI André, PHELAN Peggy, *Move: Choreographing you*. Editions: Stephanie Rosenrhal. Butler & Dennis, UK, 2010.
- LEPECKI André, "Affective geometry, immanent acts: Lygia Clark and performance", in Catalogue *Lygia Clark*, The Museum of Modern Art Edition, New York, 2014.
- « Le regard aveugle. Entretien avec Hubert Godard ». By Rolnik Suely in *Lygia Clark de l'œuvre à l'évènement. Nous sommes le moule. A vous de donner le souffle*, Editions du Musée des Beaux Arts de Nantes/ Les Presses de Réel, 2005 (p.73-78).  
Godard describes the process of perception, drawing a distinction between "le regard subjectif" (the subjective gaze) and "le regard objective" (the objective gaze). The subjective gaze refers to the moment the person melts in the context; the sensorial information circulates not necessarily as consciousness and interpreted material, in contrast to the objective gaze, framed by the history of perception of the individual, their biography and cultural apprehensions. A dynamic between the two gazes operates in Clark's work, objective and subjective.

In my research, I am also operating at these two levels, selecting and composing matter that have a sense of aliveness and a force of transformation. The physical matter operates as an objective gaze, giving a certain security associated to what is known, and at the same time, these physical sensations have a metaphysical association, connecting with each person in a unique manner corresponding to the subjective gaze that opens up new ways of perception.

- LÉVI-STRAUSS Claude, *Tristes Tropicos*, Paidós, Madrid, 2006
- LIENLAF Leonel, *Pewma Dungu Palabras Soñadas*, Editorial Lom, Santiago, 2003.
- LIENLAF Leonel, *La luz cae vertical*, Editorial Mumen, Santiago, 2018
- LIHN, Enrique, *A partir de Manhattan*, Editorial Universitaria, Santiago, 1979
- LOPEZ, Miguel.A. in "Cecilia Vicuña veroir el fracaso iluminado (Seehearing the Enlightened Failure)". Ediciones Museo de arte contemporaneo UNAM, 2020, México, Ciudad de México.

In this text the curator Miguel A. Lopez, bring texts from many authors to reflect on the work of Vicuña

This book accompanies the Cecilia Vicuña retrospective exhibition of the same name, *Veroir el fracaso iluminado* (Seehearing the Enlightened Failure). The book brings together texts by curators Miguel A. López, Lucy R. Lippard, Valerie Fraser, and Cecilia Vicuña, among others, with a selection of photographs and representative works. The exhibition *Veroir el fracaso iluminado* gathered more than one hundred works developed in different parts of the world by the poet and visual artist Cecilia Vicuña. This volume has an important number of pieces and documentation that is present in the exhibition.

Vicuña develops varied and multidisciplinary work which is built from words, images, environments, and a combination of languages, media, and techniques. These texts written by different writers, art historians, and curators, develop some of the themes that are present in the work of the artist; eroticism, colonial legacies, emancipation, feminism, indigenous thought, and environmental devastation.

My practice research has some elements in common with Vicuña's work. In my dissertation, I develop a reflection around the points of convergence and difference that are present in my work concerning her practice; performance, ritual, writing, storytelling, and indigenous wisdom, among others.

- MACEL Christine, "Lygia Clark: at the border of art", in Catalogue *Lygia Clark*, The Museum of Modern Art Edition, New York, 2014.
- MANCUSO Stefano, *Sensibilidad e inteligencia en el mundo vegetal*, Galaxia Gutenberg, Barcelona, 2015.
- MANCUSO Stefano, *El futuro es vegetal*, Galaxia Gutenberg, Barcelona, 2017.
- MANCUSO Stefano, *La planta del mundo*, Galaxia Gutenberg, Barcelona, 2021.
- MANTAK CHIA, *The Six Healing Sounds*, 2009<sup>[SEP]</sup>
- MANTAK CHIA, *Wisdom Chi Kung*, 2008
- MARGULIS Lynn, *Symbiotic Planet (A new look at evolution)*, Basic Books, United States, 1998
- MAUSS Marcel, *The gift*, Routledge, United States, 1990
- MERLEAU-PONTY Maurice, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Éditions Gallimard, collection « Bibliothèque des Idées ». Paris, 1945<sup>[SEP]</sup>
- MERLEAU-PONTY Maurice, "Eye and Mind" in *The Merleau-Ponty aesthetics reader: philosophy and painting*, translation Editor Michael B Smith, Publisher, Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1993
- MERLEAU-PONTY Maurice, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Éditions Gallimard, collection « Bibliothèque des Idées ». Paris, 1945<sup>[SEP]</sup>
- MERLEAU-PONTY Maurice, "Eye and Mind" in *The Merleau-Ponty aesthetics reader: philosophy and painting*, translation Editor Michael B Smith, Publisher, Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1993
- MIGNOLO Walter D. On decoloniality: second thoughts. *Postcolonial studies* [1368-8790] Mignolo, Walter Year:2020 Volume:23 Issue:4 Pages:612 -618. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2020.1751436>
- MIGNOLO Walter D. "La opción decolonial: El pachakuti conceptual de nuestro tiempo". UNAM, Instituto de investigaciones sociales. Agosto 2006.

This article describes what its author understands to be the decolonial epistemological theory. Mignolo accomplishes an initial criticism of the subsumption of history by a European Eurocentric historicism, he also revives Quijano's concept of the decolonial matrix of power, or coloniality, as a fundamental category for the decolonial theory. Mignolo compares one side of decolonial thinking to the disciplines that follow the modernity/postmodernity theory with the goal of vindicating the usefulness of the decolonial option.

He analyses the perpetuity of the struggle for domination over the colonial matrix of power in the current New Global Order, to which the decolonial project adds new perspectives.

My research reflects on a decolonial practice and thinking in the context of my South American origin, the subject of Western and non-Western epistemologies. The perspectives

and categories developed by Mignolo, as well as Quijano, are highly relevant to the conceptual discussion of my research.

- MINDELL Arnold, *The Shaman's Body*, Harper San Francisco, 1993
- MILLAS Marcial, *Karü: El uso de los Vegetales por el Pueblo Mapuche*, Editorial Libros del amanecer, Santiago, 2020
- NANCULEF HUAQUIÑO Juan, *Tayin Mapuche Kimün Epistemología Mapuche-Sabiduría y conocimientos*, Publicaciones Universidad de Chile Departamento de Antropología, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales. Santiago, 2016
- OGILVY GUY, *The Alchemist's Kitchen*, Wooden Books, Chine, 2006
- PÉREZ-OROMAS “Lygia Clark: If you hold a stone”, in Catalogue *Lygia Clark*, The Museum of Modern Art Edition, New York, 2014
- PRECIADO Paul. B, *Testo Yonqui sexo, droga y biopolítica*, Editorial Anagrama, Barcelona, 2020
- POUILLAUDE Frédéric, « Scène et contemporanéité », Rue Descartes no44, juin 2001, p.8-20
- Turn your f^\*cking head: Deborah Hay's Solo Performance Commissioning Project. Documentary by Becky Edmunds. Commissioned by Independent Dance. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. 2015
- RANCIÈRE Jacques, *The emancipated spectator*, Verso, London, 2011
- RANCIÈRE Jacques, *Le Partage du sensible*. La Fabrique, Paris, 2000 [1] [SEP]
- ROLNIK Suely, “Lygia Clark and the Art/Clinic Hybrid” in *Practice*, Edited by Marcus Boon and Gabriel Levine, Whitechapel Editions and The MIT Press, United Kingdom, 2018 / [1] [SEP]
- ROLNIK Suely, “Políticas del fluido híbrido y flexible. Para evitar falsos problemas”, *Nomadas* (Colombia), Oct 2009, Issue 31
- SETH Sanjay, *Beyond Reason* Postcolonial theory and the social science, Oxford University Press, New York, 2021.
- SIERRA Malu, *Un pueblo sin estado, Mapuche gente de la tierra*, Editorial Catalonia, Santiago 2010
- SHUTERMAN Richard, *Body Consciousness: A philosophy of Mindfulness and somaesthetics*. 2008. [1] [SEP]
- SONTAG Susan, *Against interpretation, and other essays*, Penguin Books, London, 2009
- SOUSA SANTOS Boaventura de, “Epistemologies of the South”. *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana* / Año 16. No 54 (Julio-Septiembre, 2011) Pp. 17 – 39. *Revista Internacional de Filosofía Iberoamericana y Teoría Social* / ISSN 1315-5216 CESA – FCES – Universidad del Zulia. Maracaibo-Venezuela.

In this text Sousa Santos reflects on the fact that the Eurocentric logos have imploded on their own sources of political and economic development, highlighting that the danger of this crisis includes its hegemony as well as humanity and nature. It refers to another historical-cultural episteme that recognises the exosystemic relationship of humans together with the existential diversity of the living beings that populate this planet. This other epistemology has its genesis in Critical Theory and it is recreated in Latin America from the South.

This text looks at emancipating logos that fracture the hegemonic limits of capitalism and colonialism, exposing the ancestral wisdom carried in the thought of these original peoples, expressed by their traditions. This text highlights the importance of including other epistemologies from the South to rethink this crisis.

In my research I have been looking at Mapuche culture as well as other non-Western epistemologies. These texts offer a wide context of reflection around epistemologies of the South in the context of the current ecological crisis.

- SVAMPA Maristella, "Paradigma del cuidado", Columna en Red la Diversidad, Bolivia. Available from: <https://losmuros.org/1381/paradigma-del-cuidado-por-maristella-svampa/>
- SVAMPA Maristella, "Feminismos del Sur y ecofeminismo". Revista Nueva Sociedad No 256, marzo-abril de 2015, ISSN: 0251-3552, Available from: [www.nuso.org](http://www.nuso.org).
- SUZUKI Shunryu, *Zen is right here*, Shymbala Publications, United States, 2019
- SVAMPA Maristella Viale Enrique, *El colapso ecológico ya llegó*, Siglo veintiuno editores, Buenos Aires, 2021

Maristella Svampa and Enrique Viale have written this book that maps global struggles and especially socio-environmental conflicts in Argentina in the 21st century. They review a serie of socio-environmental impacts as the political dispute after the Glacier Law and the possibilities of lithium: a sign that both progressive and neoliberal governments have been caught in the same ideological and cognitive traps. They propose that is time to seriously debate the models of (bad) development in Latin America, instead of insisting on solutions that delve into more of the same. *El colapso ecológico ya llegó* asserts a clear direction: an ecosocial and economic pact that articulates social justice with environmental justice. This book guides us to understand where we are and with what resources we can sustain hope. My research addresses an ecosocial perspective, and this book reflects on that problem in Latin America, developing an ecofeminist vision, the relationship with the territories, and its difficulties in diverse communities in South America.

- TAUSSIG, Michael. 1998. "Viscerality, faith, and skepticism: Another theory of magic." In *In near ruins: Cultural theory at the end of the century*, edited by Nicholas B. Dirks, 221–256. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- TRIVERO Rivera Alberto, *Trentrenfilu, el mito cosmogónico fundamental de la cultura Mapuche*, Ediciones Tacitas, Santiago de Chile, 2018
- UGALDE Begoña, *Zahori*, Edición Ayuntamiento del Valle de Hecho, España, 2020
- VARELA Francisco, E. THOMPSON, E. ROSCH, *L'inscription corporelle de l'esprit*, Edition Seuil: Paris, 1993
- VICUNA Cecilia, *Sudor de Futuro*, Editorial Lluïa, Barcelona, 2020
- VICUNA Cecilia, Cruz del Sur, antología, Editorial Lumen, 2020
- WADE Davis, *El río*, Editorial Nomos sello Critica, Colombia, 2017

In this text, Davis writes an autoethnography narration, inserting the reader into the story through a way of writing that has the capacity to describe characters, actions, and places. He writes about his research in the 1970s where he was looking for the botanical secrets of Coca in the Amazon, a sacred plant for indigenous people but stigmatised in the rest of the world due to its links to cocaine production. Davis also mentions the influence of his teacher, Richard Evans Schultes, years before when he went to live in the Amazon in the 1940s and learnt the traditions of indigenous people from Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, and Colombia. His teacher, Evans, inspired Davis and that tradition becomes part of his way of researching and approaching the Amazon.

- WALL KIMMERER Robin, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants*, Penguin Books Random House group, Great Britain, 2020.
- WATTS Alan, *Zen*, New world library, Canada, 2019
- WEBER Rebecca « Anna Halprin's Parades and Changes: a harbinger of ritual



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