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MEMORIES OF MY OVERDEVELOPMENT
DANIEL BORZUTZKY

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because the shit on one side of the border
smells just as bad as the shit on the other side
of the border we must privatize our bodies
in order to translate the voice that does the
translation of all the voices that are always
mistranslating the reasons that we will
decompose die or disappear

Murmur #1

this is for Patrick Durgin
with gratitude
for his friendship
and for the work he does
as the publisher of Kenning Editions

this is for Patrick Durgin
who invited me to make this book
after hearing me talk on January 10, 2014
at an MLA off-site event in Chicago he curated entitled “New
Translation”

on that evening
I spoke about what it means for me
as a person with Chilean roots
living in Chicago
to translate the great Chilean poet Raúl Zurita
whose poetry for almost four decades
has been in dialogue with
and in response to
the horrors of the Pinochet dictatorship
horrors that for Zurita
are intricately linked to
any number of hemispheric
and global atrocities
(e.g. Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Mexico 1968
and dictatorships throughout the Americas
among others)

on that evening I said something along the lines of:
to translate Chile is to translate Chicago

I talked about how neoliberalism translates across cultures
and hemispheres and continents

I talked about how our current economic inferno in Chicago
could not exist without the economic inferno
born in Chile in 1973 and that has thrived now

for 42 years
the permanent stamp
of dictatorship
in the era of so-called democracy

I talked about how Chile in the 1970s and 1980s
was the testing ground
for the disastrous neoliberal
experiments in privatization we are now currently
witnessing in Chicago:
of schools, of public resources, of health care
garbage water light
social security
the air
our skin
our tongues

I talked about how
the neoliberal austerity measures
developed by Milton Friedman
and the economists known as the Chicago Boys
from the University of Chicago
and tested out in Chile
are now being implemented,
Chilean-style
in Chicago

a movement
a continuum
from Chicago to Chile
and back to Chicago again

a thesis:
Chicago has itself become
a province of Chile

Chicago is a Chilean city

I talked about the privatization of public schools and how Chicago
has copied the Chilean approach to destroying its own education

system
I talked about the dual teachers' strikes of 2012 in Chicago and
Chile
with privatization at the heart of each of them

the dual privatizations of public resources

the dual destruction of the working class and organized labor

and the abusive, murderous
police and torture
practices in Chicago and Chile throughout the 1970s and 80s

(in Chicago the police abuse is still rampant)

in January 2014
when Patrick invited me to speak
I was thinking more about the economic
similarities shared by Chile and Chicago
and less about our
shared approaches to state torture
and violence

but now, as is appropriate, the economic violence
and the physical violence seem not-so-separable

and of course I recognize that Chicago
unlike Chile
does not have thousands of disappeared
and thousands murdered by the state
and that poverty in Chile
means something different than poverty in Chicago
etcetera
etcetera

nevertheless, a variety of news reports in 2015
make it clear that since the 1970s and 1980s
(during the years of the Pinochet dictatorship)
the Chicago police have been brutally and systematically
torturing our citizens in ways that for me evoke

experiences in Chile
on February 24, 2015
Spencer Ackerman of *The Guardian* published
an investigative article entitled:

“The Disappeared: Chicago police detain Americans
at abuse-laden ‘black-site’”

The article tells the story of Homan Square, a secret interrogation
facility on the west side of Chicago

Ackerman’s article
asserts that Homan Square is a secret police torture-chamber:

the trimmings of dictatorship
to be sure
and not of a so-called democracy

According to the article, Homan Square’s abuses include:

- Keeping arrestees out of official booking databases
- Beating by police, resulting in head wounds
- Shackling for prolonged periods
- Denying attorneys access to the “secure” facility
- Holding people without legal counsel for between 12 and 24
hours, including people as young as 15

Flint Taylor
a civil-rights attorney
interviewed for the article
links the origins of these practices in Chicago
back to the 1970s
(the beginnings of the Pinochet years in Chile)

*Back when I first started working on torture cases
and started representing criminal defendants in
the early 1970s, my clients often told me they’d been
taken from one police station to another before ending
up at Area 2 where they were tortured....
And in that way the police prevent their family and lawyers
from seeing them until they could coerce, through torture or*

other means, confessions from them
these are the words of Flint Taylor,
“the civil-rights lawyer most associated with
pursuing the notoriously abusive Area 2 police commander
Jon Burge”

the notoriously abusive police commander Jon Burge

just a few days ago
on April 14, 2015
it was announced that the city of Chicago
would pay out \$5.5 million of reparations
to victims of torture under Jon Burge

As *The Guardian's* Spencer Ackerman
Zach Stafford and Joanna Walters
report:

from 1972 through 1991
Burge and officers under his command
tortured more than 100 African Americans
largely in impoverished sections of Chicago's South Side
in a systematic regime of violence and intimidation

men in custody were subjected to electric shocks
burns and mock executions
among other brutal acts
predominantly in order to extract confessions

Burge ran a group of rogue detectives
known as the Midnight Crew who led the violence
there are allegations that officers used suffocation
on those in their custody and forced men to play “Russian roulette”

Burge was fired in 1993
but was never charged with crimes directly stemming
from the violence
before the statute of limitations ran out

he was convicted in 2010 of obstruction of justice and perjury
in relation to a civil lawsuit alleging

*that he tortured citizens
he subsequently served four and a half years in prison
before being released in 2014, and continues to draw a police
pension*

and the hemispheric comparisons go on

the torture and murder of the Pinochet dictatorship
have been well documented

and Chicago appears
to be on a similar reparations schedule
to Chile as well

both requiring 30-40 years
before beginning a course of legal “repairs”

and it’s safe to say
that in both places
the psychological traumas of living under a police state
are ongoing

since 2010
there have been legislated efforts in Chile
to systematically provide reparations for
victims of torture under Pinochet

and in November 2013
for example
there was a landmark case
regarding torture reparations in Chile

Leopoldo García Lucero
an 80-year old Chilean torture survivor
exiled to London
was awarded £20,000 in reparations
by the Inter-American court of Human Rights
he was arrested 5 days after the 1973 military coup
in Chile and
according to *The Guardian’s* Owen Bowcott:

*García Lucero was seized by police officers
who took him to a police station
his left arm was broken in several places
after being smashed with a rifle
he now walks with a stick and has never regained
full feeling in his hand
most of his teeth were knocked out
and he suffered cognitive problems due to being beaten on the head*

*after three days blindfolded and tied up in the police station
García Lucero was removed to the national stadium
where hundreds of opponents of the junta had been herded
at night he heard the rifle fire of executions
for nearly two years he was detained and mistreated
before being deported in 1975*

these parallels
these continuums of economic and political violence

and yet still I'm struck with the question of what it means
to say
that one place, one country, one city
is *like*
another

surely, one might say
Chicago is not REALLY like Chile

and there are plenty of counterarguments
to my argument
that one C is like another C
that one bag of shit is like another bag of shit
arguments
that I surely can't argue with

but the bigger point is
about continuums
the continuous inferno of murderous capital
and the ways in which neoliberal policies
are always using the rhetoric of individualism

to make individuals disappear
to make communities disappear
to centralize and standardize
the earth
into one global neoliberal project
that absorbs and subsumes us all

and here in Chicago
with our extreme privatizations of just about everything
we are mere impostors in the privatization game

which is to say that we have learned how to be
UnitedStatesian capitalists by studying the way
the United States has been imagined and created
in the shattered political and social structures
of South America

shattered by imagined versions of UnitedStatesian capitalism
and seasoned with a gag in the mouth
a gun in the mouth
a boot to the teeth
an electric shock to the heart the brain the skull

but maybe
I'm not really stuck with the question
of what it means to say that one place
is like another place

maybe
what I'm really stuck with
is the question of what it means to say
that one country, one city, one place
is *different*
from another

bags of shit everywhere
heat-seeking bags of shit
an economy of indistinguishable
translatable bags of shit
a continuum of moving bags of shit

(United Statesian customer service
call center staff
wait on the Mexican side of the border
to recruit Mexican-born deportees from the US
who speak perfect English

you can't live in your country
the country you have lived in your entire life
but since you speak our language so well
since you are a proud embodiment of our culture
we will punish you and pay you at the same time
you can do our dirty work in the prisons we built for you
we can beat you as we pay you and love you
we can hate you as we pay you and love you and deport you)

which brings us back to
translation
which all too often is talked about
as merely a problem of aesthetics
and not as a problem of politics
economics or violence
not as a problem of how to expose
and translate
the eternal translation
of the hollow wretchedness of
the devouring economies
of the borderless horrors
of nations

Lake Michigan Merges into the Bay of Valparaiso, Chile
Scene #4321.49a30-9c

the reasons for which our blood is drawn in the prison camps of Lake Michigan are not communicated to us

the reasons for which we are imprisoned are also not communicated to us

it is often said on the shores of Lake Michigan, which is the bay of Valparaiso, that we will die for reasons we do not understand

we do not understand why we do not understand why we will die

we do not understand why we do not understand why we are imprisoned

we do not understand why we do not understand why we are paid or beaten or loved

we do not understand why last night the authoritative bodies loaded up four ships with prisoners and why those boats are half a mile away from the beach, booming dance music, baking in the summer sun

we do not understand why the authoritative bodies don't sweep the carcasses of the dead pets and washed up animals off the beaches on which we walk and sleep

we do not understand our relationship one body to another

at times the authoritative bodies tell us to touch each other

at times they tell us to feed each other

at times they tell us to beat each other

at times they tell us to pay each other

at times they tell us to protect each other

at times they tell us to kiss each other

at times they tell us to probe each other with forceps, needles and wooden skewers

at times they force us to force each other to drink dirty purple milk and to eat rotten bread and vegetables

at times they tell us to stick juicy oranges into each other's mouths

at times they tell us to kick each other and call each other offensive names

at times they tell us to chew and swallow everything

at times they tell us to curse and laugh and hiss

at times they say: pretend you are an immigrant and hiss for us

at times they say: pretend you are not an immigrant and speak as if you are not a communist

or they say: your faces are organs of emotional communication: smile or frown or cry

or they say: pretend you are a machine and that you do not have a soul

or they say: you are nothing more than a piece of data to be aggregated, to be disaggregated, to be sliced and diced into the most minute units so that we can understand how the body and the city and the nation whir and wallow and tick

or they say: you are a human machine and you must explode

there is good money, they say, in emotional responsiveness

and at times they pay us when we laugh or snarl or cry

or they say: there is nothing to be gained from emotional responsiveness

so they beat us when we laugh or snarl or cry

and they say: you have shame in your eyeballs, you have love in our eyeballs, you have pain in your dimples, you have guilt in your mouth, abjection in

your lips, joy in your nostrils, anger in your cheekbones, love in the bags
under your eyes, passion in your eyebrows, fear in your chin, disgust in your
forehead, disaster and promise and despair in the furrows of your face and in
the murmuring economies on your rotten carcass tongue

translation and the continuum of decomposition by way of
introduction to the idea that translation is a thing that decides
when it is to be done but since it is never done we are always
repositioning ourselves as subjects in the worlds we imagine and
the worlds we occupy and since we can't really tell the difference
between those worlds we engage in translation as a primal force
that comes before everything else which is to say that because we
cannot scream we translate

because we do not know how to interpret the screams of others

we translate

because the broken bodies and the broken nations and the broken
institutions that are always breaking us cannot be understood

we translate

we howl and we shriek and we translate

talk to me about translation
a broken introduction

1. A lot of people want to talk about translation.
2. I don't know why a lot of people want to talk a lot about translation.
3. I think people want to talk more about translation than they want to read or promote or publish translation.
4. I only get accepted on AWP panels whose titles include the word "translation" or "Latino."
5. One year, I thought it would be funny to host a panel that had both the words "translation" and "Latino" in the title.
6. The panel was called "Translation/Trans-Latino: Writing Across the Borders."
7. This was the description: "For many reasons, it has become common to place Spanish-language writing from Latin America in a separate category from English-language US Latino writing. While we recognize the context and importance of this split, this panel seeks to start a new dialogue about writers who skillfully navigate both categories. In the process, we will discuss how a multilingual, multinational, "Trans-Latino" vision has shaped our writing, translating, editing, and teaching in productive and challenging ways.
8. This paragraph is making me laugh.
9. The adverb "skillfully" is making me laugh.
10. The word "productive" is making me laugh.
11. I guess I wrote this thing.
12. I'm going to spend this sentence making fun of myself for using words like "skillfully" and "productive."
13. But despite the pseudo-professional barf words, something important happened in this paragraph.
14. I was starting to formulate a position, a poetics, and maybe even an ethics.
15. And by ethics I mean where I want to stand in the world, how I want to understand myself in relation to others, how I want to understand myself in relation to the problem of myself.
16. Which is to say that I was starting to understand something about continuums.
17. Continuums of language, on one level.
18. But more than that what I was starting to articulate something about why I translate, or what it is that translation actually translates.
19. At the time of this panel, I had just published *The Book of Interfering*

Bodies and I had just published my translation of Raul Zurita's
Song for his Disappeared Love.

20. When I started writing *The Book of Interfering Bodies*, I had been trying to write a novel about a guy who was obsessed with watching online videos of people from around the world committing suicide.
21. But I couldn't write the novel.
22. Shit kept appearing in characters' eyes.
23. A television screen kept appearing in the protagonist's eyes and inside the television screen was the carcass of a dog, and then a man in an expensive suit falling out of a window, then a baby lifting her head out of the desert sand, then a disembodied arm, then a starving body sleeping on a cold street, then an African war, an Asian war, a European war, an American war, then radiation poisoning, polluted baby formula, children with missing limbs.
24. I was starting to understand something about continuums.
25. How was it that there was a South American war happening in the streets of Chicago?
26. How was it that there was a UnitedStatesian war happening in the streets of Santiago?
27. How was it that, in Raúl Zurita's words, "Nagasaki and Hiroshima were passing before the Chilean sky?"
28. The nation-state was collapsing as the unit of measure for how I was understanding experience.
29. The continent was collapsing as the unit of measure for how I was understanding experience.
30. In my nightmares, African slaves were being transported by helicopter along the river Danube.
31. European Jews were being slaughtered by Spanish colonists in the Caribbean.
32. The Mapuche of Southern Chile were being shot in the streets of Chicago.
33. A refugee from Hiroshima was caught in the Liberian civil war.
34. These were my nightmares.
35. Boat people. Train people. Desert people. City people in the purgatory of exile.
36. Slaughtered lands on a continuum of borderless slaughter.
37. What started as a translational *translatinidad* became something bigger.
38. Which is to say that I was starting to understand something about translation and continuums.
39. Continuums of language in one way.

40. Continuums of culture in another way.
41. And continuums of violence in all the ways.
42. I was starting to understand that my life as a Chilean and my life as a Chicagoan were inseparable.
43. Pinochet's portrait, in my dreams, was projected on the John Hancock Tower on North Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago.
44. Mayor Richard M. Daley held a gun to his own head and committed suicide in *La Moneda*, the Presidential palace in downtown Santiago that was bombed on September 11, 1973.
45. Everything, writes Gertrude Stein, is the same except composition and time, composition and the time of the composition and the time in the composition.
46. The children in my dreams were screaming: everything is the same except decomposition and the time of the decomposition and the time in the decomposition.
47. Someone must have once said something like: nationalism is the belief that the shit on one side of a border smells better than the shit on the other side of a border.
48. Maybe I said it?
49. I must have copied it from somebody.
50. And all over the world immigrants come to the United States to seek refuge from violence fomented by the United States.
51. Roberto Bolaño, from "Literature and Exile": "Of course, a refrain is heard throughout Europe and it's the refrain of the suffering of exiles, a music composed of complaints and lamentations and a baffling nostalgia. Can one feel nostalgia for the land where one nearly died? Can one feel nostalgia for poverty, intolerance, arrogance, injustice? The refrain, intoned by Latin Americans and also by writers from other impoverished or traumatized regions, insists on nostalgia, on the return to the native land, and to me this has always sounded like a lie. Books are the only homeland of the true writer, books that may sit on shelves or in the memory."
52. I love this little essay by Bolaño, though I'm not sure I actually agree with all of it.
53. My parents, who left Chile when they were in their 20s, were not nostalgic.
54. I don't really have memories of them ever having said that they missed Chile.
55. I remember my father talking about his trips to the beach when he was young, and how he would swim so far out into the Pacific

Ocean, even though the water was icy cold.

56. Other than that, I don't have memories of my parents saying that they missed Chile, that they were nostalgic for their childhoods, or that they felt a loss that was defined by location or nation.
57. I finished this last sentence and wrote: "I'm sure they did feel this loss, in some way or another."
58. But I'm not so sure I should say that.
59. Nevertheless, I'll accept Bolaño's disdain for nostalgia, yet his assertion that one shouldn't feel nostalgia for the land where one nearly died seems reductive in its confusion of nation with home.
60. In his formulation, is there a difference between what you miss and what you feel nostalgic for?
61. I can feel nostalgic for a person, a corner, a smell, a house, a sound, etc...
62. Nothing complicated about this. Nothing hard to understand. And it's not hard to understand that one can feel nostalgic about experiences that are independent of the corruption and barbarism of the politics of the nation-state.
63. I was invited here today to talk about translation.
64. But what I really want to talk about is continuums.
65. Continuums of violence, of fear, of shame, of language, of terror, of slaughter, of broken bodies, of pollution, torture, ethics and power.
66. I want to talk about what translation does in the context of the bodies of who survive this.
67. These gurgling little things called love.

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pinochet and the chicago... Memories of Underdevelo...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37P90A_0h8c

Google Weather Consuming Affects in ... New Manifesto AOC realtime art manifesto onto Mann Rag Anthropocene visually Books Shockley Conceptual

YouTube

Since "El Encanto" burned down Havana is like a country town.

14:21 / 1:37:05

Memories of Underdevelopment - Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (1968) FULL MOVIE

denffldtd

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- PELÍCULA Los sobrevivientes by El Boboel

(****translation as collective secretion
in the commons and the continuums
who is authoritative and who is telling
whose story
do you remember my overdevelopment
hi you get to write my history
here is my borderless body
give it to me in all the ways you want it to appear
I am a good subject you can translate me in as many different
languages
as you like
I am here today to talk about translation
but what I am really discussing
is the friction of the borderless body
as it crosses the translation-less monopoly
of transient
borderless continuums****)

The El Encanto Fire (WIKIPEDIA ENTRY)

The **El Encanto fire** was a terrorist attack in the form of an arson fire that destroyed a department store in central Havana on 13 April 1961, 4 days before the Bay of Pigs Invasion

History[edit]

El Encanto was the largest department store in Cuba, with five retail stores, originally built in 1888, and situated on the corner of Galiano and San Rafael in Old Havana. Before the Cuban Revolution, it had been privately owned, but in 1959 it was nationalized. In 1961, it had about 930 employees. On 9 April (SIC – should be 13 April) 1961, a bomb exploded outside the store, near the main entrance, resulting in broken windows of several stores in the same street.[1]

Incident[edit]

At 6:00 pm on 13 April 1961, the store closed as usual. At about 7:00 pm, two incendiary devices exploded in the tailoring department. The next day, the charred body of Fe del Valle was found in the rubble, other casualties being recorded as 18 people injured. Fe del Valle had been a supervisor in the children's department, and had evidently been attempting to recover money donated to the Federation of Cuban Women for the construction of a day care center for children of store employees; she had become trapped, and was overcome by dense smoke.[1]

Police investigation[edit]

At about midnight on 13 April 1961, in the district of Baracoa Beach, west of Havana, militiamen observed lights being flashed from land towards the sea. Nearby houses were searched, and Carlos González Vidal was recognized by an officer as an employee of the store, in its record department. He was arrested and transferred to State Security, where colonel Oscar Gámez identified him as a principal suspect. Carlos González confessed to the action of setting the two incendiary bombs, and provided details of the devices, events and people involved in assisting him. He recounted that Jorge Camellas (aka “Cawy”), a CIA agent, had been infiltrated into Cuba

with a consignment of C-4 plastic explosives from Miami. Mario Pombo Matamoros, chief of the Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo (MRP, or People's Revolutionary Movement), outlined the arson plan to Carlos, who had been recruited by his uncle Reynoldo González, CIA agent and a leader of the MRP. At about 2:00 pm on 13 April 1961, via Dalia Jorge, Arturo Martínez Pagalday supplied Carlos with two sets of C-4 explosive in packs of Eden cigarettes. After the store closed at 6:00 pm, Carlos planted the devices within bolts of cloth in the tailoring department, then departed with the intention of escaping by boat that night. Carlos González Vidal was later tried, sentenced to death, and executed by firing squad.[1][2]

Murmur #2

In January 2014, just a few days before speaking at the off-site MLA event organized by Patrick Durgin

I was walking through Havana with a Cuban friend who asked me if I had ever seen Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Memories of Underdevelopment*

Yes, I said

He then asked me if I remembered the following lines from the film:

“Since *El Encanto* burned down, Havana is like a country town”

No, I said

He then pointed to a corner, a building, and told me this was where *El Encanto* used to be

And I said:

Where am I?

And then I was in Chicago with this same friend and I pointed to a corner, a building and I said

Since *Marshall Fields* burned down Chicago is like a country town

And he said:

Where am I?

I don't know, I said

Where are you?

And so we asked my smart phone

Where are we?

And my smart phone said:

You're on 3801-3809 N. Seeley Avenue, Chicago, IL

But really, I said, where can we possibly be?

Where are you now?

Chicago/Havana, January 2014

I am in another land or am I in my own land, having a translational encounter in an office dedicated to the processing of immigrants. I have been here for several hours. There is no system to determine when I will be called next. I am on an outdoor patio, or I am on the 37th floor of a highrise. There are rows of seats in multiple directions. I am in line behind one man sitting in a chair facing forward who is behind another man sitting perpendicular to this man in a side facing row. I am here to give the office money. I am here to give the office money so that they will mark something in my passport that will allow me to sleep in a certain bed that does not belong to me. We sleep in beds that are much too small for our bodies, wrote Thomas Bernhard, in one of his plays (a line later transformed on stage by the great Chicago-based performance group Goat Island), and I think of this line whenever I see a certain very tall friend who I am sure cannot travel without sleeping in beds that are much too small for her body. I think of her feet dangling off the end of the bed. I think of Thomas Bernhard entering her body and complaining in the most beautiful way about how her feet cannot fit on the bed and how this inability to sleep in a bed that fits her body is an inability to fit into a world that is only out to devour those whose bodies are not able to fit in the beds that the rest of us must sleep in. These foolish beds. These institutional rejects. These foolish feet. These institutional rejects. I am waiting and waiting and finally I am called into a room and asked to sit in a chair. The woman behind the desk is wearing beige. She wears a starched beige button-down shirt and a matching starched skirt. I say: I need to give you this money so that you can mark something in my little book that will allow me to sleep in a certain bed. She asks: will others be sleeping in the bed with you? I hesitate. Yes, others will be sleeping in the bed with me. Because I cannot mark certain words in your little book unless others are sleeping in the bed with you. Or unless others are watching you sleep. I say: but who will watch me sleep? She says, if you want me to mark certain words in your book then we must have guards who will watch you sleep. I say: there are guards who will watch me sleep. They will come from the East and they will carry poems and they will read their poems at my body as my body attempts to sleep. But then she looks in my little book and tells me that this is out of her hands. I have no authority to put anything in your little book, she explains. But sister, I say, if you don't mark something in my book then I will not be able to participate in the cultural activities that have officially been designated by

the authoritative bodies who control my entrance and exit from the country. She calls her boss. Her boss says, we must confiscate his identification.

This has happened to me on more than one occasion. It happened to me recently. I put my identification card under the laser as I entered a building in downtown Chicago but because my identification card had the wrong numbers on it I was stopped before I could go into the elevator. The security officer said, Daniel, Daniel. I walked to his desk knowing that my card had the wrong numbers on it. He was sitting at the border between the inside of the building and the outside of the building. He said, I must confiscate your identity. I said, sir, you cannot confiscate my identity. He said, I have no choice but to confiscate your identity. I am thinking about this confiscation of my identity as I am being told by the woman at the office for immigrants that she cannot mark anything in my little book. She sends me to see the cultural attaché. At the office of the cultural attaché they are playing video games. They are playing a video game where you pretend to play tennis, and later they play one where they dance and play the guitar. I ask them if they will accept my money and mark some words in my book so I can sleep in a bed that does not belong to me. They say: this is not our business. I say, whose business is it? They say, it is the business of those who carry special designations that cannot be known by the public. They say, if we mark these words in your book, we will have to privatize our body parts in order to pay next month's rent. I say, I am trying to obey the law here. They say, we are trying to obey the law here. They say, why did you bring the child here? What good did you think would come from bringing the child here? I say, the child is an extension of my body; its presence in these quarters cannot be controlled. I sit down on a bench and watch them play video games for hours and hours and hours.



General Augusto Pinochet and the Chicago Boys

Are We Latino: Memories of my Overdevelopment

1

I want to begin by unpacking a fixed idea about transnational movement and influence. We tend to think about global influence as moving from the United States outwards. In other words, the stereotypical position here is that the US affects the policies of the rest of the world and not the other way around. Yet I can't help but see this differently. After all, I'm a falso-Chileno living in Chicago, a Latin American city who has re-imported its extreme neoliberalism from Chile, the testing ground for the privatization shock treatments (as Naomi Klein calls them) first dreamed up by the economists, the so-called "Chicago Boys" at the University of Chicago, which are now being re-enacted, Chilean style, in Chicago. Witness the recent, simultaneous Chilean and Chicagoan school strikes, with privatization at their cores, as proof of our shared vulgarity.

I am stuck with the perception that the bag of shit on one side of the border smells just as bad as the bag of shit on the other. In fact on each side of every border the bag of shit smells pretty bad. There's something about borders. Everywhere they are dividing everything into rancid bags of shit. And I am stuck with the impression that Chicago is a Chilean city and that our Mayor would privatize, Chilean-style, our kidneys, our bones, our skin, our sidewalks, our air, our trees, and our children if he were given the chance. Emanuel has not quite yet adopted the Chilean policy of privatizing water, but he would if it were possible. In fact, as *Chicago Reader* political writer Ben Joravsky has reported, Emanuel has "made good on campaign promises to save money by privatizing city services...by laying off the 34 workers from the city's water billing center. He would then pay NTT Data, a company based in Japan, to run the operation." So, if you can't privatize the water, you can at least privatize the workers who run the call center for the water billing center. Close enough, for now I guess.

I live in Chicago, a Chilean city in the United States, which is a Chilean nation. George Bush, when he sought to privatize Social Security, turned to Chile's disastrous policies as a model. Rahm Emanuel, Chicago's mayor, dreams of converting Chicago's public school system to the Chilean model, where public education has been radically depleted and replaced with a voucher system, a former love-child of the so-called school reformists in the US. In Chile, these school privatizations have had the greatest effect on those who can afford it the least.

Almost half of all students in Chile, rather than attending municipal public schools, attend privately operated voucher-schools. All parents receive vouchers and then they pay additional fees because the voucher does not cover full tuition at the better schools. Lower income families cannot afford to make the payments and therefore their children attend public schools, bastions of economic segregation. According to Stanford Professor Martin Carnoy, 72% of low-income Chilean students attend the municipal public schools. In Chicago, meanwhile, according to Chicago Public School data, 87% of its students are low income. As Carnoy points out, Pinochet's plan to destroy public education began by "eliminating the teachers' union as a bargaining union," so that schools "could hire and fire teachers without regard to tenure or a union contract."

This of course brings to mind Wisconsin Republican Governor Scott Walker's creation of {Chilean} laws to eliminate public workers' collective bargaining rights. But it is silly to think that the Democrats don't reap a similar destruction on workers' rights and the working class when given the opportunity. Last year, Chicago's democratic mayor Rahm Emanuel, who has gone far out of his way to antagonize the Chicago Teachers Union, closed 55 neighborhood public schools and privately run charter schools are being established in their place. Those charter schools employ poorly paid, non-union faculty members, who, like in Chile, can be demoted and fired at will.

In Chile, Pinochet's privatization efforts led to cronyism and corruption, with Pinochet's friends and family members often being given top posts in newly privatized businesses. Likewise in Chicago, the corruption and cronyism among the leaders of Chicago's UNO Charter School network have been well documented (in *The Chicago Sun-Times* and other publications), as exemplified by the recent scandal involving UNO leader Juan Rangel, an Emanuel buddy, who was caught giving \$8.5 million of state-granted money to businesses run by his top aide's brothers.

Of course, Chicago's destruction of public education is merely one example, albeit an extreme one, of larger US policies that seek to destroy public education as swiftly as it was destroyed in Chile. Whether he knows it or not, Rahm Emanuel dreams of the efficiency, the brutality, and the inhumane austerity that is part and parcel of the Chilean bureaucracy. Rahm Emanuel is a perfectly privatized Chilean.

2

In his essay “Literature and Exile”, Chilean novelist Roberto Bolaño begins by developing the idea that exile, rather than an idea determined by relationship to nation, is instead “an attitude towards life.” The exile, he writes, doesn’t “believe in countries and the only borders he respects are the borders of dreams, the misty borders of love and indifference, the borders of courage and fear, the golden borders of ethics.” But really the best part of the essay is an anecdote he shares about the great Chilean writer Nicanor Parra’s contributions to the never-ending debate among the Chilean literati about who Chile’s greatest four poets are. Bolaño writes, “There are those who say that the four great poets of Chile are Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, Vicente Huidobro, and Pablo de Rokha; others, that they are Pablo Neruda, Nicanor Parra, Vicente Huidobro, and Gabriela Mistral; basically the order varies depending on the source, but there are always four chairs and five poets, when the logical thing would simply be to talk about the five great poets of Chile, instead of the four great poets. Then came the poem by Nicanor Parra, which goes like this: ‘Chile’s four great poets/are three: Alonso de Ercilla and Ruben Dario.’”

There’s lots going on here. The four greatest Chilean poets are only two (though Parra says there are three); and neither is from Chile (one is from Spain, the other Nicaraguan). Through this poem, writes Bolaño, Parra teaches us “that nationalism is wretched and collapses under its own weight. If the expression ‘collapses under its own weight’ doesn’t make sense to you, imagine a statue made of shit slowly sinking into the desert: well, that’s what it means for something to collapse under its own weight.”

Which is to say that the most influential United States presidents of the late 20th century are three: Augusto Pinochet and Fidel Castro.

Which brings us to the imagined community called the nation state. There’s a 2012 article in the “Latino Voices” section of *The Huffington Post* that someone recently brought my attention to, entitled: “Salma Hayek: I hardly had any memories of what it is to be Mexican.” I’m a bit obsessed with the nationalistic underpinnings of this gossipy article about Salma Hayek, who, as you will recall, played Frida Kahlo in a movie where a bunch of great Mexican artists speak to each other in English. The *controversy* that this article alludes to is about a comment that Hayek made about her experience playing a Mexican drug cartel leader in Oliver Stone’s “Savages.” In *Vogue Deutsch*, as translated from German into English, Hayek comments on what

she learned about herself from participating in the making of the movie. She says, “Honestly, I hardly had any memories of what it is to be Mexican. My life is completely different now.” (She lives in Europe and is married to a millionaire, etc.) *The Huffington Post* article goes on to document the mini-furor that erupted after Hayek admitted to having forgotten and then remembered what it was like to be Mexican; there was even speculation, in fact, that her words must have been Robert Frost-like lost in translation, as how could Hayek possibly have said such a thing?

Like most good internet journalism, the important stuff here is in the reader comments.

“She’s forgotten because she’s not Mexican, she’s an Arab, look at her name and no, mixed people are not Mexicans even if they are born in Mexico but let us not forget she’s not American either no matter how long she’s lived in the US. She is not American nor is she Mexican American because we are not Mexico born either. Her accent proves that.” And then: “i think chicanos are more worried about a mexican identity than native Mexicans.” And: “Mexicans are only indigenous people and nobody else.” And: “No, she has lived affluently for so long, she just cannot connect with the ordinary people. She can play a part, but that is all”

Poor Salma. *Pobrecita Salmita*. She was *just* stating that the UnitedStatesian film director Oliver Stone made her remember what it was like to be Mexican by giving her the opportunity to perform the role of a “cold-hearted drug queen” in a Hollywood movie (Duh, that’s what it’s like to be Mexican!). But what did she remember about what it was like to be Mexican? And could she really have said such a thing? Clearly, according to some readers, if you forget that you’re Mexican then you were never Mexican to begin with; and plus can she really be Mexican? She’s Lebanese. She’s not “indigenous,” or “ordinary.” Which according to the commenters is what it means to be Mexican.

Which is to say that whatever the hell this thing is called “Mexican” or, more broadly, “Latino,” when it gets into the mouths and minds of the other, it becomes a shit storm of people telling you what you are and what you aren’t. And while the consequences for Salma Hayek may not be so substantial, I’d venture to say that for the rest of us, this discussion of whether or not we are actually Latino comes with real actual harassment and real actual consequences.

3

To simplify my own messy life, I teach at a public, urban college, and for years there was a (non-Latino) Dean who took a disliking to me and who went far out of her way to make sure that everyone I worked with knew that I was not a ‘real Latino,’ not a real Chileno, not enough of a magical realist to claim that I might be from South America. She hung a figurative sign around my neck that said FALSO-LATINO! And it was easy enough for her to do this, because, apparently, one of the many powers that white, college administrators levy: is the power to assign you an ethnicity.

And to be honest, I suppose I didn’t go around telling people that I was “Latino,” though I certainly wouldn’t have denied it, and I publicly spoke in Spanish to certain colleagues and students. This administrator claimed to my colleagues to have dug through my genealogical history and determined that I am not actually Latino (she knew something about my grandparents’ parents’ origins); she also, according to reports, went back and read my job application and discovered that I hadn’t checked the box marked Latino. The motives here were ugly, obvious, and not at all hidden. The point she was making was that: a) I was not Latino and b) because I was not Latino I failed to properly qualify as an affirmative action hire; and c) according to this person my Latino status was the only reason I was given the job to begin with, though in her estimation I did not even deserve this act of charity. I was, in her mind, an imposter. In short, my authenticity, as a true Latino was being questioned, and because I was inauthentic I was not qualified for my job. In a conversation about me with one colleague, she went so far as to state something to the effect of: we need to hire some real Latinos around here, and not fake ones, like Daniel...

(But we are all Chileans, I wanted to tell her. Our college just got millions of dollars from a private foundation to replace math teachers with “computer-based instruction.” It doesn’t get more Chilean than that. We Chileans are not magical realists, I wanted to tell her. We are, what the real Chilean novelist Alberto Fuguet calls, “Magical Neoliberalists.” I wanted to tell her that I eat Taco Bell when I visit my family in Santiago. It’s across the street from what used to be Blockbuster video, right around the corner from TJI Fridays. But I think she wanted a little more folklore with her salsa verde, a little more spice on her rice, etc.)

If there’s any silver lining to this, I guess we can say that Chicago is better than Arizona. I guess it means something that an administrator in Chicago

at least wants “real” Latinos while Arizona is enacting its preposterous bans on ethnic studies programs, specifically designed to eliminate the Tucson high school Mexican–American studies program, under the auspices that it might “promote the overthrow of the US government, promote resentment for a certain race or class of people, and advocate ethnic solidarity instead of recognizing students as individuals.” Or, as Tucson Unified School District Board Member Michael Hicks candidly said in a perfectly serious interview on *The Daily Show*, in addition to protecting the US Government, he is trying to keep the Mexican–American studies teachers from “going out every week and buying burritos” to feed their students, an act which might cause an ethnic bonding that Hicks apparently found threatening to “a certain race or class of people.”

On the other hand, I once picked up a really nice part time teaching job that I loved, where I was invited to teach Latin America Literature precisely because, in the words of the person who hired me, I am “authentic” and the last person who taught the class was not. Here it might be important to point out that “authenticity” is context-specific. At my full-time job in a public college, the majority of the students are Latino. There are very few Latino faculty members yet there is always a nominal shout-out about the need to recruit faculty members who are Latino and who can personally relate to the backgrounds of our students. I say nominal, because no actual effort is made to recruit Latino faculty members. Nevertheless, at my full-time job, I am surrounded by Latino students. Which reminds me of something the Chilean consul in Chicago said to me when he came to a reading I gave with the great Chilean poet Raúl Zurita (the consul didn’t offer to help pay for or to promote the event, though he brought a few bottles of wine to the after-party). He inquired about my last name—Borzutzky—and my mother’s maiden name, Talesnik, and he said: “*no tienes algunos Gonzalez or Rodriguez en tu familia*” (aren’t there any Gonzalezes or Rodriguezes in your family)? The Chilean consul apparently had never heard of a Chilean Jew and this was his way of telling me I was inauthentic. Which is what was going on at my full-time job. On the other hand, at the part-time job at a private college there were very few Latino students and hardly any Latino faculty. Thus, in one context, I am inauthentic because I circulate among an excess of Latinos; and in the other context, I am authentic because I circulate among a dearth.

4

This is my bio on the website of the Poetry Foundation: “Daniel Borzutzky grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, of Chilean heritage. He has published a collection of fiction, *Arbitrary Tales* (2005), a poetry chapbook, *Failure in the Imagination* (2007), and two full-length volumes of poetry, *The Ecstasy of Capitulation* (2007), and *The Book of Interfering Bodies* (2011).“

I don't mind this bio. It's true, after all. But I didn't write it. I must have mentioned somewhere in the literary world that I have Chilean parents, and it's not a secret. It's true, after all. But I didn't write this bio, and I wouldn't have chosen to identify myself this way (perhaps all the Chicago poets have Chilean heritage?). And yet I don't exactly mind that I'm identified this way. I just didn't make this choice. Someone else made it for me, and while I don't think of myself as having any importance in the literary world, I think it's fair to say that there was some cultural capital involved in this decision, some idea that the Poetry Foundation will look more diverse if it opts in to claiming my heritage.

Which is to say that I am Latino not because I say I am Latino; I am Latino because my boss tells me I am not Latino, and because the Poetry Foundation tells me I am Latino. I perhaps have little opinion about what I actually am.

5

“Illegal immigrants are taking our jobs,” I wrote in a poem I published in 2007. “Soon they will take our employers, electrocute their genitals, and eat their children.” This poem later appeared in the anthology *Malditos Latinos, Malditos Sudacas: Poesia Iberoamericana Made in USA*, edited by Mónica de la Torre y Cristian Gomez O. And this line has strangely found its way into a few critical articles written in Mexico on UnitedStatesian immigrant poetics.

I think my invitation to be a part of this anthology was the first time I had ever been invited to be a member of a community of Latino writers. I'd been dubbed “in-between” before, but this was maybe my first entry into full-fledged Latino outside-identification. And since I actually have no idea what or who I am, I was happy to be included, and am genuinely grateful to the editors for the world which they have opened up for me, for the community they invited me to belong to, and for the recognition that I actually deserved to claim this community as my own, which was something I'd never really believed.

And yes, I realize that some would find a privilege in not having a body and a last name that identifies me as Latino, which I may or may not be.

Around the time the anthology invitation arrived, I had just published a translation of a book of poems called *Port Trakl* by Jaime Luis Huenún, a Mapuche writer from Chile, whose previous book was very much about indigenous issues and traditions. Huenún's poetry in *Port Trakl* was written under the influence of and in dialogue with Georg Trakl and Herman Melville, among others. And this engagement with canonical western masters, according to Huenun, evoked a sense of suspicion among the literati for whom, "the emergence of an ethnic poetry has generated a series of extra-literary expectations, one of which seems to suggest that a writer of indigenous origins can only sing about the natural world, his ancestors, his gods and mythologies. And it's all the better if he does this in his native language." Lest you have any illusions that the stench of ethnic identification smells less bad in country A than country B. I haven't asked him, but I imagine that Jaime Luis Huenún might say that Georg Trakl was Chile's most important poet.

To return to *Malditos Latinos, Malditos Sudacas*: this great anthology is, among other things, multilingual, and includes Falso-Latinos like myself who write in English alongside of Spanish-language writers who were born in Latin America but who now live in the US. But then it gets mixed up, and we have poets like Rodrigo Toscano, Roberto Tejada and Urayoán Noel writing in Spanish (though they are better known as English-language writers); and we have Gabriela Jauregui writing poems entirely in English, entirely in Spanish, and sometimes in both languages: "*No sabes si ser masculino o femenina / Ya ni yo sé tampoco, maricón*." The speaker in Jauregui's poem doesn't even know if he/she is masculine or feminine. So how the hell should I know if I'm Latino?

Which is to say that like a good theoretical objectified body, my identity was created not by me but by the various desires and beliefs of those around me. Which is to say that I didn't become a Latino at work until an administrator went around telling everyone that I wasn't Latino. I'm not sure I cared up until that point, but the moment she began to question my authenticity I felt the need to roll my Rs and address her with a friendly 'hola' every time I saw her in the hallway.

Which gets me to Chicago poet Paul Martinez Pompa, and his great "Abuelita Poem," first published in his book *My Kill Adore Him* and later

reprinted on the website of the Poetry Foundation. Addressing what he takes to be the expectations that Mexican-American writers include words like “tortilla” and “abuelita” in their poems, Martinez-Pompa writes: “Before she died I called my abuelita/*grandma*. I cannot remember/if she made corn tortillas from scratch/but, O, how she’d flip the factory fresh/El Milagros (Quality Since 1950)/on the burner, bathe them in butter/& salt for her grandchildren./How she’d knead the buttons/on the telephone, order me food/from Pizza Hut. I assure you,/gentle reader, this was done/with the spirit of Mesoamérica/ablaze in her fingertips.” It’s a double-twist here: Martinez Pompa is both adhering to the expectation that he perform Latino-ness in his poems, and mocking it at the same time.

Which is to say that the outliers, those of us who are affiliated with a certain ethnic identity but who don’t feel as if we are official members of this group’s official literary culture, are much more commonplace than is probably acknowledged.

But what the hell do I know. I hardly have any memories of what it’s like to be the only member of the Western Pennsylvanian School for Chilean-Jewish Poetics.

It’s now defunct. We lost our accreditation. But we are open to all impostors.

Now I write about immigration all the time. Now I write about borders and the bags of shit on both sides of them all the time. I don’t really care whether or not my boss or the Poetry Foundation think I’m Latino. I am whatever the hell they say I am, and I guess that’s fine by me.

Now, as a falso-Chileno living in Chicago, I write as if Chicago and Santiago are the same places, as if Chicago and the US are the same places, and as if Augusto Pinochet and Fidel Castro were the three most important US Presidents of the 20th century. As if Richard Nixon and Fidel Castro were Chile’s three most important presidents. As if the Atacama and the Arizona deserts are inextricably linked by disappearance.

These are the first lines of a May 20, 2013 *New York Times* article entitled “Arizona Desert Swallows Migrants on Riskier Paths”: “In the Pima County Medical Examiner’s Office here—repository of the nation’s largest collection of missing-person reports for immigrants who have vanished while crossing the United States-Mexico border—774 sets of remains awaited identification

in mid-May, stored in musty body bags coated in dust.” I choose here to read this alongside Chilean filmmaker Patricio Guzman’s 2010 documentary *Nostalgia de la Luz*, which, among other things, documents the experiences of Chilean women who for decades have searched in the immensity of the Atacama Desert for bone shards and pieces of their loved ones who were anonymously discarded, like heaps of worthless trash, by the Pinochet dictatorship. Discussing the experience of finding the remains of her brother in a mass grave, one amazing woman states: “It’s incredible to me that my final moment with my brother was with his foot that I had at my house.... That night, around three in the morning, I got up and went to tenderly stroke his foot. It had a smell, like decomposition. It was still in a sock...I took it out of the bag and looked at it on a couch in the living room..... The next day my husband went to work, and I spent all morning with my brother’s foot. We were reunited.....and only then did I understand that my brother was dead.”

Chile and the United States: rotten carcass economies both of them. There is slaughter everywhere, and the shame and guilt and horror of militaristic, neoliberal violence transcend the imaginary boundaries of nation-states.

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Let Light Shine Out of Darkness

I live in a body that does not have enough light in it

For years, I did not know that I needed to have more light

Once, I walked around my city on a dying morning and a decomposing body approached me and asked me why I had no light

I knew this decomposing body

All that remained of it were teeth, bits of bone, a hand

It came to me and said: there is no light that comes out of your body

I did not know at the time that there should have been light in my body

It's not that I am dead

It's not that I am translucent

It's that you cannot know that you need something if you do not know it is missing

Which is not to say that for years I did not ask for this light

Once, I even said to the body I live with: I think I need more light in my body, but I really did not take this seriously as a need, as something I deserved to have

I said: I think I need for something blue or green to shine from my rib cage

Other times when I am talking about lightness I am talking about breath and space and movement

For it is hard to move in a body that is so congested with images of mutilation

Did you hear the one about the illegal immigrant who electrocuted his employee's genitals? Did you hear the one about the boy in Chicago whose

ear was bitten off when he crossed a border he did not know existed?

I want to give you more room to move so I am trying to carve a space, with light, for you to walk a bit more freely

This goes against my instincts, which are to tie you down, to tie you to me, to bind us by the wrist the belly the neck and to look directly into your mouth, to make you open your mouth and speak the vocabulary of obliteration right into your tongue your veins your blood

I stop on a bridge over the train tracks and consider the history of the chemical-melting of my skin

Once, when I poured a certain type of acid on my arm I swore I saw a bright yellow gas seep out of my body

Once, my teeth glowed sick from the diseased snow they had shoved into my mouth when they wanted me to taste for myself, to bring into my body the sorrows of the rotten carcass economy

Once, I dreamwrote that I found my own remains in a desert that was partially in Chile and partially in Arizona

Was I a disappeared body, tossed out of an airplane by a bureaucrat-soldier-compatriot or was I a migrant body who died from dehydration while crossing the invisible line between one civilization and another

I was part of a team of explorers we were searching for our own bodies

In the desert I found my feet and I put them in a plastic bag and photographed them, cataloged them, weighed and measured them and when I was finished with the bureaucratization of my remains I lay down in the sand and asked one of my colleagues to jam a knife into my belly

She obliged

But when the blade entered my skin it was as if my belly were a water balloon

The water shot into the air

My skin ripped into hundreds of pieces and I watched as the water covered the feet of my colleagues who were here to document their disappearances and decomposition

It was at this moment that I saw light in my body not sun over the sand but a drip of soft blue on a piece of skin that had fallen off my body and dissolved into its own resistance

What the Neoliberal Policy Labs Shit and Eat: Horrific Fables for a Specific Universe

“My translational intent has nothing to do with personal growth, intellectual exercise, or cultural exchange, which implies an equal standing of some sort. South Korea and the U.S. are not equal. I am not transnationally equal. My intent is to expose what a neocolony is, what it does to its own, what it eats and shits. Kim Hyesoon’s poetry reveals all this, and this is why I translate her work.”

—Don Mee Choi, *Freely Frayed*, *≠q*, & *Race=Nation* (Wave Books, 2014)

1

Thinking about the US reception of translated Chilean poems of historical horror, a useful starting place is the following book review on the amazon.com website for Jack Schmitt’s translation of Raúl Zurita’s *Anteparaiso*. The review is written by the US poet David Kirby and it was first published in *Library Journal*. Kirby writes:

Perhaps first-hand experience of Chile is necessary before the reader of these poems feels anything close to the translator’s reaction to them. When he was first introduced to Zurita’s poetry, Schmitt writes, it “haunted me, even gave me nightmares,” but the emotions that affected him so strongly may not be felt by others... {he recommends it} for libraries with large Latin American collections only.

Reception: Kirby’s reading is one where there is a distinct “here” (the US) and a distinct “there” (Chile). The two do not intersect, and, as Kirby would have it, the book cannot be understood without “first-hand experience” of the nation. He cannot access the poetry, he claims, because he cannot access or imagine the national context in which it is written. For Kirby, the poetry is too specific, too specifically tied to nation.

On another hand, some critics argue that poetry in translation should not be used to draw conclusions about a nation and its cultural and political histories. I am thinking of a recent review in *Bookforum* of Don Mee Choi’s translation of the great Korean poet Kim Hyesoon’s new book *Sorrowtoothpaste Mirrorcream*. The reviewer, Mia You, laments the way in which previous reviewers have depended on Korean history and politics in order to situate Hyesoon’s poetics. Mia You concludes:

In reading the criticism on Kim's poetics, I've been struck by how often the same bullet-point history of South Korea is recounted: the Korean War, the military dictatorships, the Gwangju Massacre, the nuclear race. The implication is that Kim comes from a bloody culture, so how can she help but write bloody poetry?...—I would say that Kim is no more predisposed by her context to such violence than Billy Collins or Charles Bernstein. After all, we could say that their context comprises of over 30,000 gun violence-related deaths each year and a president who announces on television, "We tortured some folks." Kim is a singular poet in Korea, just as she is in America, but we can only fully appreciate this when we see that, for her, such violence is not the end but a means.

Here we have two problems regarding reception of dissident, translated poetry. Kirby, on one end, can't understand Zurita's poetry without knowledge of the historical and political context through which he writes. While Mia You tell us that it is *wrong* to read Hyesoon through the historical and political context through which she writes. We make a mistake, Mia You argues, when we read her poetry as something that helps us understand the culture. Or, perhaps more accurately, we make a mistake when we conclude that Korea's culture and its history tell us something about Hyesoon.

Thus, if Kirby's argument is that Zurita's poetry requires specific historical or cultural knowledge in order to be understood, then Mia You's argument is that it's dismissive to frame Hyesoon's writing within the specifics of history and culture. At first, these positions seemed like binaries to me, but now I think they more or less lead to the same place: we should not turn to poetry, and specifically translated poetry, to understand, analyze, or critique historical, political and national events. Such specificity either alienates readers (Kirby) or it misguidedly turns the poet into a mouthpiece for her culture (You).

Mia You's essay on Hyesoon is provocative, and I don't think she's wrong to say that a poet translated into a foreign language can easily become a sociological specimen whose poetry becomes subsequent to her nation-based identity. But on the whole I find neither position particularly compelling, and I'd argue that Zurita's writing offers a counterargument to the aforementioned positions in regards to specificity vs. universality: it asks us to occupy both positions: it asks us to position him as a Chilean within a given context while also asking us, especially in his recent poetry where, "the plains of Hiroshima and Nagasaki pass before the Chilean sky,"

to consider the Chilean dictatorship as just another moment in a violent universe whose history does not allow us to distinguish one atrocity from another. For Zurita, then, the Chilean dictatorship sits within a global continuum of international and transhistorical violence. Its specificity, he might say, is both fundamentally important and fundamentally irrelevant. As he has told me in conversation, it could have happened now, or it could have happened a thousand years ago.

2

In the US, poetry and translation generally operate in a border-contained isolation. We like to use the rhetoric of how translation is something that makes the world a bit smaller, but we don't really want to see translation through the lens of transnationalism, where the work in translation can dialogue with, can critique, can shed light on, several national identities at once. One notable exception comes from critic Michael Dowdy in his 2013 book: *Broken Souths: Latino/a Poetic Responses to Neoliberalism and Globalization*. And one big mission of Dowdy's book is to connect English language Latino writers in the US with Spanish speaking writers in Latin America. To this end, Dowdy writes specifically about Martin Espada's poem "Not Here," which is dedicated to, and in dialogue with, Raul Zurita:

*The other poets tell me: electricity was involved /7 years later, Zurita
blinked to save his eyes, and wrote:/in the name of our love let even the steel-toed
boots/that kicked us be loved...*

According to Dowdy, what Espada is up to here is the creation of "radical intersubjectivities between North and South among Latino and North and Latin American poets to contest official narratives of the coup.... And if Zurita reconstructs the imaginary community of the Chilean nation, Espada makes Chile the site for launching an imaginary transnational 'republic.'" Furthermore, Dowdy calls attention to the image of electricity flowing through Zurita's body to illustrate how Zurita's "poetic project is grounded in sensory experience and the strength to withstand the 'shock treatment' also figuratively given to the Chilean state and body politic by the Chicago Boys."

In other words, the broken body of the poet is the container for the physical violence caused by the Chilean government and the economic violence born in my hometown of Chicago.

I come from a Chile and Chicago that have both been labeled as “neoliberal policy labs”; a Chicago that copies Chile’s “hypermarketized governance that denigrates collective institutions” which, according to University of Illinois at Chicago Education Policy Scholar Pauline Lipman, involves:

gutting social welfare and privatizing public assets as the new urban dogma. {privatizing} bridges, parking meters, public parking garages, schools, hospitals, and public housing, while driving down the cost of labor through deregulation, outsourcing unionized jobs, {and} casualized and contingent labor. To deal with the contradictions produced by neoliberal policies in Chicago and nationally, the privatizing state is also a punitive state that polices and contains immigrants, homeless people, the dispossessed, and low-income communities of color, particularly youth, and their political resistance. Chicago is notorious for its police torture scandals and brutal policing of African American and Latino communities. In short, neoliberal urbanism has set in motion new forms of state-assisted economic, social and spatial inequality, marginality, exclusion and punishment.

These are policies designed forty years ago at the University of Chicago, tested out in the neoliberal policy lab created under the smoke screen of murder and torture by the Pinochet dictatorship, policies that included mass privatizations of education, health care, public services, which destroyed the labor unions and created a brutal financial dictatorship where the consolidation of wealth and power destroyed the working class, destroyed the environment, caused massive poverty and homelessness. These were policies that began in Chile 40 years ago, and these police thrive in Chicago today. We could in fact take Pauline Lipman’s paragraph above and, with the exception of the discussion of race, replace Chicago with Chile. And while some might say that my comparison of violence in Chile and Chicago is hyperbolic or inaccurate, to understand the discussion more broadly, one need only look at the numbers of people tortured and abused by the police in Chicago, the numbers of people killed on the streets each year, the literally hundreds of thousands of poor children left to struggle in impoverished public schools that lack the most basic of resources. And the recent reporting about police torture centers in Chicago, where unregistered prisoners are disappeared, only further justifies this point. I know, of course, that there are differences between the two places. But I’m sick of comparisons, of playing the which apocalypse is worse game. All the brutal neoliberal policy labs are murder zones. And someone tortured or killed by

the Chicago Police is someone just as dead or tortured as someone tortured or killed by the Pinochet regime.

Or, as Dowdy writes, the economic policies of the Chicago boys “were designed to erase specificities of places and to displace socialist as well as Keynesian versions of economy and society.” An erasure that, in my view, traveled from Chicago to Chile and now back to Chicago.

4

I want to conclude by mentioning three works of poetry which are unabashedly specific in their discussions of local violence while inviting us to view the same violence along a global continuum: Valerie Martinez’s 2010 book length poem *Each and Her*; Juan Felipe Herrera’s poem “Señorita X: Song for the Yellow-Robed Girl from Juárez”; and Mexican poet Maria Rivera’s “Los Muertos” translated by the inexhaustible poet and activist Jen Hofer.

In *Each and Her*, Martinez documents with facts, names, and narratives the deaths of hundreds of young Mexican girls and women along the U.S.-Mexico border. Many of these women worked in the maquiladoras; they were murdered, tortured, raped and mutilated.

Here is one section of *Each and Her*:

*the number of girls and women
working in the post-NAFTA
maquiladora industry*

472,423

*while they can't be hired legally
at the age of 16, it is common for these girl-women
to get false documents
start work at 12, 13, 14*

And here is another section from *Each and Her*:

*Jessica Lizalde Leon (3.14.93)
Lorenza Isela Gonzalez (4.25.94)*

Erica Garcia Morena (7.16.95)
Sonia Ivette Ramirez (8.10.96)
Juana Iñiguez Mares (10.23.97)
Perla Patricia Sáenz Diaz (2.19.98)
Bertha Luz Briones Palacios (8.2.99)
Amparo Guzman (4.2.00)
Gloría Rivas Martínez (10.28.01)
Lourdes Ivette Lucero Campos (1.19.02)
Miriam Soledad Sáenz Acosta (3.28.03)

In *Each and Her* there is love for the dead communicated through an inferno-rendering poetry that always brings us back to the ways in which the abstractions of bureaucracy and government and capital destroy real, actual, human bodies. We have the names of those who died, but we don't have the names of their killers. The absence of the names of the killers perhaps amplifies the presence of the names of murdered women. In doing this, Martínez forces us to confront the names, the individuals, the lives obliterated at the conjunction of the military-police state, narco-trafficking juntas, border and immigration politics, and the exploitative practices of international capitalism.

To name the names of the dead and to write them as poetry is not to aestheticize them, but rather it's to force the reader to witness the dead. It is to prevent the dead from disappearing permanently. It is to ask us to consider what it means for our bodies to live knowing that these other bodies have been slaughtered, knowing that our own bodies are complicit in their slaughter, knowing that are own lives, if we care enough to think about it, are intricately connected with their deaths.

And this approach to naming the names of the dead in Juárez is also used by Juan Felipe Herrera in his poem "Señorita X: Song for the Yellow-Robed Girl from Juárez"

This report, writes Herrera, has been filed in accordance with the proper policy for identifying the dead

Who's the killer Brenda Berenice Delgado?

Who's the killer Alma Chavira?

Who's the killer Verónica Martínez Hernández?

Who's the killer Esmeralda Herrera Monreal?

Who's the killer Mayra Reyes Solís?
Who's the killer Guadalupe Luna De La Rosa?
Who's the killer Griselda Mares?

Herrera's poem names the names of the dead, perhaps, so that we might look for their lives, so that we might understand them as individuals, as girls and women whose lives and deaths ought to mean something to us. The first name on Herrera's list is Brenda Berenice Delgado, who according to the website of *El Universal Nacion*, was only 5 years old when she was found murdered and sexually abused in 2003. Words fail me here. It's a darkness I can barely consider.

Admittedly, I am engaging with the poem in a way that most readers wouldn't. But in reality I am doing no more than accepting an invitation the poem offers.

One way, then, of understanding the naming of the names is as a means of maintaining a public record, of giving the dead more respect than they were given by the state, by their employers, and by their unnamed and anonymous murderers. It honors the people that were disposed of. It's a memorialization and a condemnation. A record of an atrocity, a communal and horrific failure that is at once both local and global.

And to conclude I want to look at a few lines from Mexican poet Maria Rivera's great poem "Los Muertos" translated by Jen Hofer, and published in *Jacket2*.

There they go
María,
Juana,
Petra,
Carolina,
13,
18,
25,
16,
their breasts bitten,
their hands tied,
their bodies burnt,
their bones polished by desert sand.

*They are called
dead women nobody knows nobody saw being killed,
they are called
women who go to bars at night alone,
they are called
working women who leave their homes at dawn,
they are called
sisters,
daughters,
mothers,
aunts,
disappeared,
raped
burnt to ashes,
thrown away,
they are called carne, flesh,
they are called carne, meat.*

*There
with no flowers
with no gravestones,
with no age,
with no name,
with no tears,
they sleep in their cemetery:
It is called Temixco,
it is called Santa Ana,
it is called Mazatepec,
it is called Juárez
it is called Puente de Ixtla,
it is called San Fernando,
it is called Tlaltizapán,
it is called Samalayuca
it is called El Capulín,
it is called Reynosa,
it is called Nuevo Laredo,
it is called Guadalupe,
it is called Lomas de Poleo,
it is called México*

What can be said?

What can be said?

In one way, nothing at all.

And in another way, for these poets it's the poem's job to attempt to say as much as possible, and to do it with a horrific and brutal specificity

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Memories of my Overdevelopment

There was a time when I wore a suit and a tie to pick my mother up at the airport

We waited near the runway and waved at the planes as they took off into the sky

We lived in the tropics, but we wore fur hats and wool suits and on the bus the ladies looked glamorous as they wrapped their heads in scarves like Jackie Kennedy

Let me show you everything in my room: here is a cage with two tweeting birds, here is a vanity table, a bed with my various white shirts and dark coats stretched across it

I look out the window and into the sea and compose a suicide note on my typewriter

I need more time to write a shorter suicide note

Instead I write everything, blame everyone from my mother to my wife to my sixth grade soccer coach who cut me from the team to Mr. Valtzer my seventh grade teacher who picked me up by my tie and shoved me against the wall to Mr. Baylin the English teacher who used to stick his hands in my pants to tuck my shirt in and his fingers would linger for far too long on my ass to Robin who I accidentally knocked over in the 9th grade and who got a concussion and who could not speak for six weeks to the therapist who told me that I was afraid of every emotion in the universe to the girl who broke my heart in college because I was too stupid to understand that I was not supposed to call her the day after she kissed me or the next day or the next day and to the doctor who nearly operated on my penis in order to fulfill his quota of monthly operations, etc...

I take a break from my suicide note and drink coffee and smoke a cigarette and eat hard, tasteless bread with butter as I stand on the balcony in my undershirt

I step out onto the balcony and look through my binoculars and the city looks exactly the same every day

It's a city of cardboard and everyone inside of it wants to float across the ocean until they land in the wastewater plant of some other nation, some other dream inside of some other body that did not change along with me

The bodega stayed the same and the skyline stayed the same and the sea stayed the same and my relationship to the void stayed always and impossibly the same while I kept moving from one world to another

Who was the beast I plucked out of the cage

Who was the beast I dropped over the balcony and onto the sidewalk as I yawned and thought about all of the disasters occurring inside of my body

There is a wound moving inside of my body, an original wound, moving slowly, as if through a magnifying glass (tell me more about this, doctor)

Oh I like to see you struggle: between decadence and virility, between virility and femininity, between masculinity and clairvoyance, between godlessness and transparency

I don't know how to measure this:

I have run out of all the imperialist shampoos

I only pay \$6 for my shampoo when I used to pay \$60 for my shampoo

I look vulgar lately

I wear my wife's lipstick as I put on my white shirt and tie and slick back my hair in the style of every other man in every other city in every other office in every other corner of this stupid fucking world

Natural beauty, I write on the mirror with your lipstick, is not nearly as desirable as artificial beauty

I slip on your pantyhose, love, I slip on your panties, I wear your lipstick as I put on my white shirt and grey tie and set out to destroy myself once more in this city that is like a staircase that winds up my body, a staircase that starts in my toes and slips up my leg and through my groin and through my intestines and up my neck and I vomit it out into the cage where you lock me up when you need to use me for the replaceable services I provide

Oh it feels so cool to stick these pantyhose over my face

Is this the right word, pantyhose?

I don't know the right words for the things you put on your body

I slip your pantyhose over my face and stare at myself in the mirror, at my contorted nose and I am like the Golem of Prague only I live in the tropics which are in the middle of a crumbling midwestern city where I will be buried under a mountain of ice

I have nothing to do except look into the eyes of women who do not love me

I have nothing to do I want to suffocate myself in the most painless way possible

Since they burned down the department stores, Chicago looks like an atrophied little village in a province

Love and loneliness fill you with different types of illusions

Loneliness fills you with the desire for people to tell you how you should live your life

Love, on the other hand, fills you with the desire for everyone to see you living your life

We went to the store to buy coffee and there were so many types of coffee and I wanted to beat the crap out of the guy who insisted on hearing the story of every type of coffee, of where it was roasted, how it was roasted, was it locally roasted or was it roasted in Italy, what flavors was it infused with, so many stupid fucking questions about the coffee that it was almost impossible to believe that just a few days before I had been in a city where there was no coffee

They had run out of coffee

No one knew when they would get more coffee

18,000 children die every day because of hunger and malnutrition and 850 million people go to bed every night with empty stomachs

(how does that make you feel, compadre)

Here we eat flesh we splash around in buckets of milk we slurp up the intestines of the oversized ladies and gentleman whose bodies are like raw meat encased in the tubing of a sausage

Sometimes we laugh when we see them starving in their cages and sometimes we bring them little nibs of salamis and sometimes we bring them the horrendous crackers you wanted me to have a whole bag of the first day I visited your city

I doused them in jam so as to forget that this was your life: a bag of tasteless crackers you were actually excited about

You could not afford jam

You had a starving child in your arms

His chin sunk into your chest and he begged your body to give him a spasm so as to shake him out of his flesh so he could move more swiftly from deathfulness to lifefulness

But at least my hands are clean

I doused them with hand sanitizer

The hand sanitizer was in an enormous container in the waiting room of my therapist's office

My therapist assured me it is not my responsibility that my neighbors are suffering

She assured me that it is not my responsibility to respond when X wants to know where I am who I am with what I am doing who I am doing it with what she is wearing what she is thinking who she is touching what she is reading what she is smelling but of course it's all my fucking fault

To be alive is a spiritual mission in which you must get from birth to death without killing yourself

That's okay

It's not my fault that you are sick and you are dying because I am also sick and I am also dying

It's just that my death is preventable and yours is inevitable

And unlike you my ignorance keeps me from being implicated in the system in which I am involucreated

I could list all the ways I might possibly die but it would be more useful to spend the time telling you that it is not my fault that your life is so fucking miserable

On the other hand, it is absolutely my fault that my life is so fucking miserable

I touch myself nightly just so I can make sure my organs still work

And there is no one here to make my life feel any less mediocre than it already is

I want to talk, today, about my overdevelopment

But instead I pay someone to wipe the dust from my bookshelves and tables

Every body I look at looks exactly the same as myself

This is what's it like to be a defenseless animal

You die because you have installed the necessary equipment into your body

You die because you are a counter-revolutionary stuck in the body of an angel

You live because it's too hard to not survive the torture and the interrogation

First your feet start to live, then your legs starts to live, then your hands and arms and mouths and buttocks, and the whole stinking body decides that it will refuse to die

The wind on your face is brutally absent

You can't get back your body anymore

You have sacrificed it to the gurgles, the murmurs, the mountains of foam and dirt that haunt every word I ever write

You are the god of hunger in a cage that grows as you get smaller

Death is a mechanic at Jiffy Lube, Juanita

Death is a sales clerk at Target, Little Sally

There's a dead Floridian in your hair, Juanita

There's a dead Nebraskan in your Revloned hair little Sally

Your Revloned hair, Juanita

Your horse-hair wig, little Sally

There are 400 mutilated bodies that destroy my sleep, Juanita

It's bed-time, Little Sally

It's Clonazepam time, Juanita

It's time, Little Sally, to drink the warm, purple milk they sell at Target, Juanita

We drink it with our Xanax, Juanita

We drink it with our absinthe, Juanita

We drink it with our Wellbutrin, Juanita

We drink and drink, Juanita

We drink it with our Trazadone and Seroquel, Juanita

The sales clerk from Target pisses all over our purple bodies

She digs a hole in the aisle where they sell linens, Juanita

She takes a belt from the men's wear section and ties it around my neck

My spume is on everything in the entire store, Juanita

This is my capitalist fantasy, Juanita

Enrich my body with uranium, Juanita

Enrich my body with purple milk, Little Sally

I have ungovernable feelings and they are like sanitary napkins

I shove them inside of me when I discharge purple milk, Little Sally

Death is a salesclerk from Target, Juanita

She swallows us in the fruit of the vine

She buries us on time

Frogs fly out of her mouth, Juanita

It won't end, Juanita

This poem won't ever end, Juanita

Your psoriasis-covered skin, Juanita

The worms in your ugly mouth, Little Sally

The mouth in your ugly mouth, Juanita

The mouth in the mouth of your mouth, Little Sally

The mouth in the mouth in the mouth in the mouth in the mouth in the
mouth in the mouth in the mouth in the mouth in the mouth of your
rotten, carcass mouth, Juanita

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Ordinance, a critical series, issues nonfiction writing in the areas of contemporary poetics, philosophy, politics, and technology. Ordinance as in coordination, ordinal points, and incendiary potential with greater stamina than yesterday's feed. These books will also be available to read on screen via Kenningeditions.com

1. Daniel Borzutzky, *Memories of my Overdevelopment* (June, 2015)
2. Julietta Cheung (August, 2015)
3. Daniel Spangler (October, 2015)
4. Andrew Durbin (December, 2015)
5. Cassandra Troyan (February, 2016)
6. Margit Säde (April, 2016)
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.