

Politics, Space, and Participation in the Work of Juan Luis Martínez and the Neo-Avant-Garde

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Abstract

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Abstract:

This dissertation investigates the ways in which the poetic projects of the Chilean poet Juan Luis Martínez and other neo-avant-garde poets have intersected with the social sphere, specifically through their engagement with politics, space and participation. I highlight a facet of neo-avant-garde poetics through an analysis of the works of Juan Luis Martínez and other poets from this period in order to show how their artistic production moves beyond the page and into forms of social praxis aimed to encourage reader participation in the construction of the text, as well as civic participation in society. I argue that an important aspect of some neo-avant-garde forms is the implicit questioning of authorship and authority through the ludic subversion of the author and the solicitation of the reader as co-creator. This project places particular emphasis on the development of the “proposal poem”, a form of poetry produced by Juan Luis Martínez and the Valencian poets of Grupo Texto Poético at the end of the 1970s.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter explores the relationship between politics and poetry in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship and the ways in which the interpretations of the texts were altered by history, as well as how the publication of Martínez’s *La nueva novela* constituted a performance that resulted in duplicitous readings of his work. The second chapter focuses on the attempts of artists and poets, like CADA (Colectivo Acciones de Arte) in Chile, to spatialize poetry through various forms of street art, performance, and poetic

interventions, while positing that the origins of these tendencies can be located in the work of Martínez. The third chapter focuses on a theoretical framework for aesthetic participation in literature and the poetical forms that encourage creative participation as seen in Chile and Spain during the '70s. Part of the work is to construct a theory of poetic experience and participation from the texts and events themselves and from this constructive analysis to shed light on some of the paradoxes of poetry, in particular, to elucidate the nature of a linguistic experience that transcends the domain of language and leads to imaginative collaboration.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Thesis Objectives

This study focuses principally on the analysis of the work of Juan Luis Martínez and neo-avant-garde poetic forms regarding their relationship to spheres of social life, such as politics, performance, space, and the participation of the audience in the work of art.¹ In this way, the investigation aims to shed light on how poetry can overflow the linguistic domain, spilling into these other realms, and offering new approaches to view the synthesis of art and life in poetry. The unique artistic production of Chilean poet Juan Luis Martínez has provided a springboard for the discussion of these themes in avant-garde poetics, and an analysis of his work is at the heart of each chapter.

I aim to contribute to the growing field of Martínez studies with this project by developing the implications of his work in the above-mentioned spheres of social activity, as well as evaluating his unique poetic style in the context of other neo-avant-garde poets. In addition to the contributions to these areas of criticism, I also hope to shed light on some of the broader, but fundamental questions of linguistic experience, such as: What is the realm of the poetic? Is it limited to the experience of reading a poem or can it have effects on day-to-day life? Can poetry escape from the tendency of focusing on its own materiality (language) and transcend its linguistic nature to express something beyond words? Can it become an action, an object, a performance, an invitation? Or are words already actions, objects, and performances?²

¹ A discussion of the characteristics of the neo-avant-garde follows in the next section.

² An outline for how I understand “performance” follows on page 15.

I address these concerns by way of a particular investigation into the work of Juan Luis Martínez and similar neo-avant-garde poets. This thesis is organized into three chapters, each one a different perspective on the overflow of poetics into other realms - namely, politics, performance, and participation - which, in turn, I view as overlapping spheres. In addition to the work of Juan Luis Martínez, I also treat other poets from Chile, such as Raúl Zurita and the art collective CADA, as well as other parts of Latin America and Europe, like Noigandres from Brazil and Grupo Texto Poético from Spain, based on what I have found to be the most pertinent works to put into dialogue for each topic. Each additional perspective is meant to highlight coincidences with the themes in Juan Luis Martínez's work but also to show the divergences that help to define the various forms of political engagement, types of performance poetry, and reader/audience participation.

The objective of this study is thus to explore the expanding sphere of poetry in contemporary society as boundaries of genre blur and poets seek to incorporate their practice into other realms of life. An analysis of avant-garde and other experimental art forms of the 20th century help to provide a context and basis for the appreciation of the contributions of neo-avant-garde poetics. This study, however, is not meant to be an overview of neo-avant-garde artistic practices or experimental poetry in general, but rather focuses on a thematic treatment of these poetical forms centered on the topics that I have described above. Thus, the first chapter examines the ways in which a work of art can engage with politics through an analysis of the relationship that Martínez's work has had with the historical events in Chile. In the second chapter I trace the movements of experimental art in the 20th century in terms of their awareness of space and performance in order to show how the Chilean neo-avant-garde contributes to the development of spatial and performative practices. The third and final chapter seeks to explore

the notion of participation in art as well as propose a new theory for participatory poetics for what can be referred to as the “proposal poem” of the neo-avant-garde.

1.2 The Neo-Avant-Garde

The diversity of movements and theory surrounding the neo-avant-garde raises the question of whether one should talk about a singular movement or if it is better to refer to the neo-avant-garde as a plurality. Some examples of movements that have been included under the umbrella of the “neo” include, but are not limited to: Poesia Concreta in Brazil, Hora Zero in Peru, Nadaísmo in Colombia, Exteriorismo in Nicaragua, Infrarrealismo in Mexico, Escena de avanzada in Chile, and Neobarroco in Argentina.³ Two characteristics that critics agree upon are that the neo movements begin after World War II and that they constitute a return to the experimental practices of the historical avant-gardes. Beyond these two characteristics, there are many contradictory claims based on a plurality of practices that often seem at odds. Oscar Galindo, for example, notes the return of a difficult baroque style (“este gusto por lo oscuro, el esteticismo y la inasibilidad de los significados, la fascinación por el lenguaje sometido a fuertes tensiones de significación” [75]) in the Argentine neobarroso,⁴ but also the use of popular dialect (“el lenguaje barrial, popular y carnavalizador” [77]) in the work of the most well known

³ More examples can be found cited by Edgar O’Hara and Oscar Galindo, two critics that have braved a theory of the neo-avant-garde. See Edgar O’Hara, *Manes y desmanes de la neovanguardia: Poéticas latinoamericanas, 1944-1977*, Libros del Rojas, 2004, and Oscar Galindo, “Neovanguardias en la poesía del cono sur: los 70 y sus alrededores”, *Estudios filológicos*, 44, 2009, pp. 67-80.

⁴ In the second prologue to *Medusario: Muestra de poesía latinoamericana* (1996), Néstor Perlongher describes the neobarroso as a uniquely Argentine version of the neobarroque tendency, characterized by the mixing of the neobarroco with the muddy waters of the Río de Plata: “En su expresión rioplatense, la poética neobarroca enfrenta una tradición literaria hostil, anclada en la pretensión de un realismo de profundidad que suele acabar chapoteando en las aguas lodosas del río. De ahí el apelativo de *neobarroso* para denominar esta nueva emergencia” (30). See *Medusario: Muestra de poesía latinoamericana*, edited by Roberto Echaverren, José Kozar and Jacobo Sefamí, Fondo de Cultura Económica México, 1996.

neobarroso poet, Nestor Perlongher. This spirit of incongruency can be found summarized nicely in the words of the poet and critic Saul Yurkievich as he describes his poetic: “Así me muevo alternativamente y simultaneamente entre diversas prosodías y poéticas dispares. Contra toda fijeza preceptiva, contra toda normativa categórica, aspiro a una libertad que se complace en el ejercicio de todas las posibilidades poéticas” (*A través de la trama: sobre vanguardias literarias y otras concomitancias* 273). Another example of an apparent incongruity within neo-avant-garde movements is the tension between the attempt to suppress the author/speaking subject in the work of Juan Luis Martínez (and in the early Raúl Zurita of *Purgatorio*), and the messianic utopianism of the art collective CADA and later works of Zurita, all part of the neo-avant-garde “Escena de avanzada” in Chile.

Some of these tensions can be resolved, at least theoretically, if we take into account that heterogeneity, and more specifically generic, discursive and semiotic heterogeneity, are important characteristics of the neo-avant-gardes, as Galindo has proposed (79). And it is certain that many artists and writers of this period incorporate a variety of discourses, such as in *Monte de goce* by Enrique Verástegui, *La nueva novela* by Juan Luis Martínez, and *Purgatorio* by Zurita, which incorporate various literary genres and extra-literary models, such as those taken from science and mathematics, for example. According to Galindo, these tensions between the various languages and discourses present in the neo-avant-garde remain unsettled, “provocando un tipo de escritura caracterizado por la heterogeneidad, el relativismo y una textualidad tensionada que no llega a sintetizar los distintos tipos de discursos en juego” (79). Like the historical avant-gardes, there will always be a variety of theoretical approaches to describing the diversity of the neo-avant-garde, since “avant-garde practice is at its best contradictory, mobile, and otherwise diabolical”, as art critic Hal Foster claims (16).

Foster, in his book *Return of the Real* (which focuses on the neo-avant-garde movement in visual art), helps elucidate what is exactly new about the neo, in relation to the historical vanguards. For Foster, the “neo” is not a mere repetition that would have the effect of cancelling the transgressive aims of the avant-garde, but a critique, testing, and reworking of the problems of the avant-garde, which he proposes can only be comprehended in deferral. This happens, he argues, because “the avant-garde work is never historically effective or fully significant in its initial moments. It cannot be because it is traumatic – a hole in the symbolic order of its time that is not prepared for it, that cannot receive it, at least not immediately, at least not without structural change” (29). Thus, the “neo” is a reflection on the problems of the historical avant-garde, including “the ideology of progress, the presumption of originality, the elitist hermetecism, the historical exclusivity, the appropriation by the cultural industry” (5), which Foster notes, and to which we could add the important topic of the relationship between art and life. However, in processing these tensions, the neo-avant-garde does not propose a full comprehension or resolution, since “creative critique is *interminable*” (16).

From the above discussion, I would like to attempt an outline of the characteristics that best describe the neo-avant-garde in order to provide a working definition for the term in my analysis, keeping in mind that any generalizations will have the unintended effect of excluding some particular authors/artists from these diverse movements. Thus, I propose a definition of the neo-avant-garde as a postwar movement, beginning in the 50s and 60s, which proposes a return to the problems of the historical avant-garde, appropriating and expanding upon these experimental techniques with more heterogeneous forms, in order to complicate and not resolve said problems, to attempt to comprehend the tensions between art and life by testing their shifting boundaries. I concur with Foster that the avant-garde has not been a failure, since I see it

rather as a continuous project that will exist as long as artists of any discipline continue to test the boundaries and frames of their spheres by way of transgressive or deconstructive practices.

The objective of this investigation is not to show how Martínez pertains to the neo-avant-garde, since this can be seen in the works of Eugenia Brito and Nelly Richard,⁵ but rather to show what his contributions have been to this late avant-garde by focusing on the relationship that his poetry has with politics, space, performance, and aesthetic participation. And as his work engages with the boundaries of poetry, it also transforms the relationship between author, text, and reader, reducing the role of the author in favor of texts that solicit audience participation.

1.3 Juan Luis Martínez

As stated above, the primary focus in my study of the neo-avant garde is the enigmatic and somewhat obscure Chilean poet, Juan Luis Martínez. Often referred to as the initiator of the neo-avant-garde in Chile (or the “Escena de avanzada”), Martínez is becoming a more visible figure in Chilean poetry. Born in Valparaíso in 1942, the young Martínez was known for his wild and rebellious exploits, which earned him the nickname “el loco Martínez”. His turn towards poetry is often related in terms of an anecdote about an accident that left him in the hospital with nothing but time to dedicate to reading. Martínez himself narrates this transition in an interview given with María Ester Robledo in 1993: “En mi primera juventud fui un sujeto bastante rebelde, y llevé mi vida hasta los márgenes sociales. Buscaba algo que ni siquiera sabía bien qué era y la poesía me mostró otra vida que me permite la aventura en el plano verbal, y la

⁵ See Eugenia Brito’s *Campos minados: Literatura post-golpe en Chile*, Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1994, and Nelly Richard’s *La insubordinación de los signos: Cambio político, transformaciones culturales y poéticas de la crisis*. Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1994.

transgresión de los códigos de ese plano” (*Poemas del otro* 67).⁶ In summation, poetry allowed the young Martínez to continue to transgress norms, but now on the level of poetic discourse. It would be several years after the accident when his first works would come to light, and the poet is known for having kept unpublished materials closely guarded until they were completed. His first works are visual objects circa 1965 (titled *Su obstinado llamar nunca se apaga* and *Juan XXIII*)⁷, of a mixed media assemblage/collage style reminiscent of Braque, Picasso, Duchamp and other artists of the historical avant-gardes. Even in these early works, the poetic impulse is apparent, as has been noted by Chilean artist Hugo Rivera Scott in an article from 1972:

“Lentamente, encontrando y seleccionando meticulosamente lo encontrado, Martínez produce sus objetos de intención poética, tranquilo sin violencia, sin gesticulación. Los objetos son un mundo de silencio, un mundo de cosas inertes, en el que habitan las imágenes de algunos seres vivos, esas imágenes son también cada una: una casa” (“Objetos de Juan Luis Martínez”).⁸

The first appearance of Martínez’s poetry would also be in 1972 when five of his poems were included in an anthology printed in Buenos Aires by Martín Micharvegas, titled *Nueva poesía joven de Chile*. This anthology offers readers a rare glimpse at what some of the poems

⁶ “In my early youth I was quite a rebellious type, and I carried my life towards the margins of society. I was looking for something that I’m not sure I knew well what it was and poetry showed me another life that allowed me to adventure on the verbal plane, and transgress the codes on this plane” (67 my translation).

This interview with María Ester Robledo, “Me complace irradiar una identidad velada”, appeared in the *Revista de Libros* supplement of the newspaper *El Mercurio*, 14 of March, 1993, and is here cited in: Martínez, Juan Luis. *Poemas de otro*. Edited by Cristóbal Joannon, Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2003.

⁷ These works first appeared in the exposition “Objetos de Juan Luis Martínez” organized by Hugo Rivera Scott in the Instituto Chileno Francés de Valparaíso in 1972. An article written by Rivera Scott on this exposition is also the first one written on Martínez (Rivera Scott, Hugo. “Objetos de Juan Luis Martínez.” *Revista Compromiso*. Valparaíso, 1972). The above-mentioned objects and others from the poet’s catalogue can be seen at <http://juanluismartinez.cl/jlm/obra/obra-plastica>.

⁸ “Slowly, meticulously finding and selecting found objects, Martínez produces his objects with poetic intent, tranquil and without violence, without gesticulation. The objects are a world of silence, a world of inert things, in which the images of some living beings, those images are also, each one: a house” (my translation). In this quote, I am highlighting that the artist Rivera Scott recognized the *poetic* nature of Martínez’s extraliterary productions early on. But I would also like to point out that this quote also shows that very early on a critique of Martínez observed a house-like aspect to his work. This notion of the house forms an important part of my reading of Martínez’s poetic books, and the topic is addressed in Chapter 1, especially with regards to *La nueva novela* (1977) and *La poesía chilena* (1978).

that would be published in *La nueva novela* looked like before the coup of 1973. Martínez had submitted his manuscript of said book to be published by the Editorial Universitaria in Santiago in 1971 with the title *Pequeña cosmogonía práctica*, but the printing delay became an indefinite suspension following the military coup of September 11, 1973 and the subsequent disappearance of the manuscript.

It wasn't until 1977 that Martínez self-published *La nueva novela*, a work that could be called an artist's book or an object-book, but above all a work that transcends traditional generic qualifications.⁹ The text is made up of intertexts, images, riddles, tasks and various juxtaposed materials that constitute an exploration of poetic language through the incorporation of various discourses, including science, mathematics, philosophy, pop culture, and others, all of which contribute to further obscure an author who crosses out his name from the book, rewrites it as "Juan de Dios Martínez", and crosses it out again. It seems Martínez enjoyed disappearing from his own work and was pleased to convey an identity more literary than real.¹⁰ This book only saw 500 hand-printed copies in 1977, although it was followed by a reprint edition in 1985 of 1,000 copies.¹¹ The poet preferred to meet with anyone who wanted to buy a copy and thus the circulation of the book was at first limited to friends and literary circles.

A year after the first edition of *La nueva novela* Martínez self-published his second work, *La poesía chilena*, in 1978.¹² This book consists of a black box with text and images that opens

⁹ Martínez, Juan Luis. *La nueva novela*. Ediciones Archivo, 1977.

¹⁰ See the interview with María Ester Roblero, titled "Me complace irradiar una identidad velada", *Poemas del otro* (63-70).

¹¹ The 1985 reprint is identical to the original with a couple of minor differences with regards to the type of paper used. A third edition was recently printed in 2016 under the care of Pedro Montes (Galería D21) and Eliana Rodríguez, Martínez's widow, with 700 copies. The new edition is a facsimile of the 1985 edition, including the reference to Ediciones Archivo as the editorial.

¹² Martínez, Juan Luis. *La poesía chilena*. Ediciones Archivo, 1978.

to reveal a bag of dirt from Valle Central¹³ and a booklet with death certificates (of four of the greatest Chilean poets and Martínez's father)¹⁴ along with titles of poems about death and numerous little Chilean flags. The work balances contraries such as the personal and the national, life and death, tragedy and irony. Criticism has focused on the work as a gesture announcing the death of Chilean poetry, but it can also be read as an elegy to the passing of his father and an homage to the great Chilean poets.

Martínez's other works were all published posthumously. The poet asked for all of his unpublished writings to be destroyed after his death, and subsequent publications have tip-toed around this request. In 2003, *Poemas del otro*, a collection of various poems of an apparently lyrical tone, was published by Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales thanks to Eliana Rodríguez, the poet's widow. This work received the least amount of critical attention until recently when it was discovered that the section of the book also called "Poemas del otro" is actually a set of poems that Martínez translated from another Juan Luis Martinez,¹⁵ leading to a discussion of the poet's technique of appropriation and challenge to the notion of authorship.¹⁶ This was followed by *Aproximación del Principio de Incertidumbre a un proyecto poético* (Santiago, Ediciones Nómade y Galería D21, 2010, ed. Ronald Kay), an incredibly cryptic work made up of juxtapositions of various images following a permutational structure based on the trigrams of the

¹³ The Central Valley, or "Valle Central", is a "geological depression in central Chile between the western Cordillera of the Andes and the coastal range, extending for about 400 miles (650km) from the Chabuco Range in the north to the Biobío River in the south" ("Central Valley", *Encyclopædia Britannica*). It was the primary location of Spanish colonization and is therefore associated with the origin of the country. It is the most populous region of Chile, with fertile land and is the main wine-producing area. There is also a journal of poetry and criticism published from 1985-1987, titled *El Espíritu del Valle*, referencing Valle Central.

¹⁴ Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, Pablo de Rokha, and Vicente Huidobro. The juxtaposition of these four poets' death certificates with Martínez's father's certificate (Luis Guillermo Martínez Villablanca) suggests that these are the "father figures" of Chilean poetry (despite biological gender).

¹⁵ This Swiss-Catalan poet writes in French and spells his last name without a written accent on the "i" of Martinez.

¹⁶ See Scott Weintraub's *La última broma de Juan Luis Martínez: No sólo ser otro sino escribir la obra de otro*, Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2014.

I Ching, akin to John Cage's use of the uncertainty principle in music. And finally, the latest Juan Luis Martínez work to be released is *El poeta anónimo* (Cosac Naify, São Paulo, 2012), an enigmatic book made up of collaged photocopied texts and images, which is a facsimile of an incomplete manuscript prepared by the poet in 1985. According to Eliana Rodríguez, the text was published twenty years after the passing of her husband, in accordance with his wishes. Like *Aproximación*, this work also makes use of the *I Ching* trigrams, which are used to organize the sections of the book.¹⁷ The work features collages of materials from newspaper clippings, poems in various languages, cartoons, grammar exercises, photographs (of tombs), and of course a miniature Chilean flag, among other various materials. The work is a literary detective's dream, with so many items to investigate that it seems Martínez has produced an interminable labyrinth to rival Ts'ui Pen's infinite book in Borges' "El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan". What else Martínez may have in store for us, time will tell. According to his widow there are still more unpublished materials that may see the light of day.¹⁸

Although Martínez remains relatively unknown in North America, he has become an important figure in Chilean poetry, and Martínez studies are on the rise. Since I started writing this dissertation, the first monograph in English has been published on the Chilean poet, *Juan Luis Martínez's Philosophical Poetics*, by Scott Weintraub in 2015. And in 2016, *Martínez Total*, a collection of academic articles from Martínez scholars around the hemisphere (Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and the U.S.), was published by the Editorial Universitaria in Santiago, Chile, providing the latest discoveries on the enigmatic poet.¹⁹ His status remains,

¹⁷ Marcelo Riosco has noted that the romanization of the trigrams comes from the translation of the Scottish sinologist James Legge in his article, "Juan Luis Martínez y las intertextualidades orientales. El caso de la página en chino y los trigramas del *I Ching*" (284 *Martínez Total*).

¹⁸ "Tengo mucho material más de Juan Luis, pero me conviene publicarlo a mi modo" Eliana Rodríguez said in an article in *El mercurio*. See Leonardo Robles, "Tengo mucho material más de Juan Luis", *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, 4 April 2010.

¹⁹ See *Martínez Total*, edited by Braulio Fernández Biggs and Marcelo Riosco, Editorial Universitaria, 2016.

however, that of a cult artist, highly admired by those who are familiar with his work, but largely unknown by the general public, even in Chile. In 2009 the *Oxford Book of Latin American Poetry* called him “the best-kept secret of Chilean poetry – according to almost all present-day critics” (452).

The first book of criticism to be put forth on Martínez’s poetry was a small 10-page essay written by the well-established Chilean poets Enrique Lihn and Pedro Lastra, and oddly enough, printed by Martínez’s Ediciones Archivo (1987). These circumstances of editing and publication may lead us to believe that Lihn and Lastra’s interpretation of Martínez’s work has received the author’s stamp of approval, and thus may hold clues into how he viewed his own work. If this is at all true, it is interesting to think of Martínez as the co-initiator of many of the topics of analysis that critics have endeavored to treat in his work, since Lihn and Lastra put forth many themes from *La nueva novela* that would be taken up by others, including but not limited to: 1) orientalism (Labraña 1999); 2) genre-blending (De los Ríos 2009, Ayala 2010, Suárez 2011); 3) authorship and erasure of the writing subject (Fariña 2001, Brito 2001, Gómez Olivares 2006, Vásquez Rocca 2007); 4) bricolage technique and intertextuality (Brito 1990, Herrera 2007); 5) philosophy (Brito 1990, Weintraub 2010 and 2015); 6) scientific-mathematic approach (Jackson 1996, Rioseco 2010, Weintraub 2015); 7) disappearance and politics (Kirkpatrick 1999, Herrera 2007, Nómez 2008, Polanco Salinas 2009, Ayala 2010, Rioseco 2013, Weintraub 2015, Villavicencio 2016); 8) semiotics (Brito 1990, Rosas Godoy 2006); 9) inversions, reverses and contradictions (Cordua 1993, Margarit 2016), 10) creation of the reader (Brito 2001, Gómez Olivares 2006, Herrera 2007), 11) the crisis of (empty) language (Cussen 2009), 12) the space of the house and the labyrinth (Ayala 2010); and others. This may seem to be a fairly exhaustive list of topics to be found in *La nueva novela*, but there have been other, equally important themes

that were not mentioned in Lihn and Lastra's book, such as Marcelo Riosco's analysis of the ludic aspects of Martínez's work.²⁰ Moreover, Martínez studies have developed far beyond the first conjectures of early criticism, yielding detailed studies of these themes (and others for his subsequent books) that have greatly expanded upon our knowledge of the enigmatic labyrinth of his oeuvre.

Martínez is still very much understudied given the novelty of his poetic production. Nevertheless, his work has reached far greater dissemination than one would have imagined given the humble origins of his early self-published materials. Even today obtaining a copy of an original publication is nearly impossible and the difficulty in accessing his works has added to the myth of an author who originally was speculated to be an invention of Enrique Lihn and Pedro Lastra²¹, and who enjoyed the idea of being confused with a literary persona (as he told María Ester Roblero in the aforementioned interview). What makes Martínez's work the springboard for this project, however, is not primarily his cult status or the need to share his work with a broader public, but the unique poetics that he developed that led to the formation of the Chilean neo-avant-garde and continues to draw readers' attention to essential questions about the nature of poetry. In fact, it might seem surprising so few have questioned his status as poet since there's very little in his oeuvre that constitutes a conventional poem. What was once thought of as a collection of lyric poems, *Poemas del otro*, for example, was recently discovered to be a collection of poems from another Juan Luis Martinez (as the title indicates), translated from French to Spanish by the Chilean Martínez. Since Martínez claimed "Yo no me siento autor de nada" and "quiero escribir un libro en que nada me pertenece", we are left to wonder

²⁰ Riosco, Marcelo. *Maquinarias deconstructivas: poesía y juego en Juan Luis Martínez, Diego Maquieira y Rodrigo Lira*. Cuarto Propio, 2013.

²¹ Luis Vargas Saavedra. "El iceberg donde cantan los pájaros" *El Mercurio*. 27 Nov. 1988, E3.

about his published texts that have not yet been attributed to someone else. What did Martínez write? What does “authorship” mean in his work? Ever since Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” we have been left wondering what the role of the author is in the post-modern era. Recent publications on experimental poetry suggest that the new form of creativity is recombinatory poetics²², which has been an important strategy in Martínez’s works since the seventies. Not only is his first book, *La nueva novela*, a labyrinth of citations, false citations, jokes, translations, tasks, images and objects, but his most recent book, *El poeta anónimo*, looks to be entirely the work of a poet with a photocopier. And yet, despite the heavy use of intertextuality, the result is original, one-of-a-kind books that challenge readers to solve the hidden web of associations that lie beyond often times disparate materials and obscure clues.

1.4 Theoretical Approaches

My primary aim here, however, is not focused on the detective work of solving Martínez’s riddles and puzzles, but rather to examine the impact that these have on the reader’s experience and on our understanding of poetry in general. In order to do this, I have chosen to look at the ways in which poetry overflows into politics, performance, and participation, which are the topics of each chapter. But before proceeding to describe the objectives of each chapter, perhaps is best to explain what I mean by each of these areas and how they are interconnected.

The first area is politics. Aristotle places the essence of the political in the word. Speech (*logos*), he argues, is what distinguishes human beings from the rest of creation, making us a

²² See Marjorie Perloff’s *Unoriginal Genius* (2010) and Kenneth Goldsmith’s *Uncreative Writing* (2011). Perloff speaks of “the language of citation”, using Antoine Compagnon’s notion of *réécriture*, to describe the process by which authors recycle materials to create new works.

“political animal”; thus, we would suspect that poetry and politics would be harmoniously related, since both focus on a particular use of language.²³ Plato, at least, would disagree, since he viewed poetry as a misrepresentation of nature, promoting aesthetic pleasure to the detriment of ethics and living together in a political body.²⁴ However, what these discourses have in common –both politics and poetry– is the activation of the power of *logos*, since they are both professions in which “speaking well”, and more specifically, the use of rhetoric, is fundamental to the art. Yet do these discourses strive to achieve the same ends? They could be seen as opposites, since in politics one strives to gain power through the use of the word, while in poetry one allows the free play of the power of words. It is likely for this reason that dictators have looked to suppress artistic expression or bring it under control of the ruling political body. Stalin, for example, sought the obedience of the great Russian poets of the time – for fear that their words would outlast his.²⁵ Or, on the other hand, is this division between the poetical and the political too facile? Are not poets trying to convince us of something as well, as Shelley calls them “the unacknowledged legislators of the world”?²⁶ And what of so-called political poetry?

In a way, all poems have a political aspect since they challenge the dominant “distribution of the sensible”. With this phrase, Jacques Rancière refers to aesthetics in general,

²³ “That man is much more a political animal than any kind of bee or any herd animal is clear. For, as we assert, nature does nothing in vain, and man alone among the animals has speech...[S]peech serves to reveal the advantageous and the harmful and hence also the just and unjust. For it is peculiar to man as compared to the other animals that he alone has a perception of good and bad and just and unjust and other things of this sort; and partnership in these things is what makes a household and a city” (Aristotle 1253a8).

²⁴ *Republic*, book X.

²⁵ See “Osip Mandelstam and the Stalin ode” essay in J.M. Coetzee’s *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (1996). In the introduction to the book, Coetzee describes dictators’ fear as arising from their lack of defense against imitation: “Simply by virtue of their prominence, the powerful become objects of imitations which mock or seem to mock them, and which nothing but force can suppress” (6-7).

²⁶ “The most unfailing herald, companion, or follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is poetry...” “Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” (Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *A Defence of Poetry*. Harvard College Library, 1926, p. 90)

but we could easily apply this description more specifically to poetry as well. According to Rancière, the distribution of the sensible is key in “determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of space and time, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience” (*The Politics of Aesthetics* 13). For Rancière, politics and aesthetics are linked since they are two forms of distribution of the sensible (*Aesthetics and its Discontents* 26), proposing that art is not political because of the messages it contains, but because of the distance it takes from the political method (Ibid. 23). Still, there is sufficient diversity among different species of poems to warrant distinguishing different levels of political engagement. I find, for example, that the difference between Rubén Darío’s “Sonatina” and Pablo Neruda’s *Canto General* is enough to differentiate them in terms of their political content, and establish different categories of political poetry.

Since there are some poems that take an open political stance and others that can take on a political reading, I would like to distinguish between at least three levels of political poetry: 1) the level at which all aesthetic production challenges the distribution of the sensible, 2) works that overtly take a stance on a political situation, and 3) works that become politicized by the intervention of historical events. For this investigation I am primarily interested in examining the interplay of the two latter types, the overtly political and that which becomes political unwittingly. In the first chapter of this project I compare these types of political engagement by looking at the way in which the coup d’état of 1973 in Chile has affected the publication and interpretation of Juan Luis Martínez’s *La nueva novela*. I argue that historical events affected the political interpretations of his work, creating new possible ways of reading it. In this sense, I

look at the importance of the political not only as a primary quality of a text, but as a secondary quality, one that can be perceived depending on the readers' cultural and historical context.

The second approach that I take on neo-avant-garde poetry is to look at how it can constitute a performance and, more specifically, a spatial practice. Instead of trying to isolate a singular definition of performance, I utilize insights from various theorists to provide a broad perspective on the ways in which poetry can be understood as performative. For instance, on the anthropological approach, performance is understood as something set apart from the events of ordinary life, while drama theorists might emphasize the self-awareness of repeated behavior, and how in actuality much of our everyday actions can be seen as performances. Instead of trying to resolve these apparent paradoxes, this investigation combines them with the paradoxes of poetry. Some of the primary characteristics of performance that I would like to emphasize for my poetic analysis include: an awareness of acting out behavior for someone, a realization of exploring a different self, a ludic and defamiliarizing use of diverse cultural elements, the physical presence of a performer who embodies the contents of the performance, and the creation of a unique space for the performance. Of course, not all of these elements will be present in the same poetic project. The act of appropriating and performing the poetry of an "other" by Juan Luis Martínez is examined from the perspective of twice-behaved behavior,²⁷ while his books like *El poeta anónimo* and *La nueva novela* have much more to offer in terms of the ludic and subversive character of recombinations of diverse cultural elements.

The aspect of performance that I most strongly emphasize in this investigation is the awareness and intervention of poetry into space. I approach the topic of space as a way of

²⁷ Schechner defines twice-behaved behavior, or "restored behavior", as "Physical or verbal action that are not-for-the-first time, prepared, or rehearsed. A person may not be aware that she is performing a strip of restored behavior" (*Performance Studies: An Introduction* 22).

understanding a work's production of unique spaces that may challenge, or offer alternatives to, dominant conceptions and productions of social space. I argue that poetry becomes performative in a new sense with the development of spatial poetics that creates an awareness of and activates the space of the page, but I am also interested in the neo-avant-garde's interventions into social space by way of poetic actions, such as CADA's aerial bombardment with poetic texts, or transforming the walls of the city of Santiago. These texts were not only poetic actions in themselves, but also encouraged citizens to participate, either by amplifying their spatial boundaries, or by participating in the production of poetry.

This leads me to the third and final theoretical approach: participation. Like politics and performance, there are different levels on which poetry can become participatory. On one hand, any and all art requires someone to view it and understand it as art in order for it to exist as such. I follow here John Dewey's theory that art is an aesthetic experience that must be minimally made up of a subject and an object.²⁸ We find a further development of aesthetic participation in the notions of the *obra de arte aberta* or *Opera Aperta* by Haroldo de Campos and Umberto Eco, respectively²⁹. On these theories, certain modern works of art leave the text open, by means of empty space, silence, or ambiguity, so that the reader must undertake the completion of the work of art. Finally, participation in poetry can refer to a work that actively seeks the involvement of the reader/spectator through proposals, questions, riddles, activities, and other direct means of demanding a concrete response from the audience, which is the kind of participation that I discuss in the final chapter in the works of Juan Lu  s Mart  nez and the group Texto Po  tico.

²⁸ In *Art as Experience* (first published in 1934), Dewey writes: "the basic condition is felt relationship between doing and undergoing as the organism and environment interact" (Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. Berkeley Publishing Group, 2005, p. 221).

²⁹ See Haroldo de Campos, "The Open Work of Art" (1955), translated by Maria L  cia Santaella Braga, in *Dispositio: Revista Hisp  nica de Semi  tica Literaria*, 6, no. 17-18, Summer-Fall 1981, pp. 5-8, and Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Exploration in the Semiotics of Texts*, Indiana University Press, 1984.

1.5 Chapter Summaries

The first chapter, titled “Socio-historical Translation: A Look at Political Connotations in the Works of Juan Luis Martínez before and after September 11, 1973”, examines the shifting relationship between poetry and politics due to the Chilean *golpe de estado* of 1973. In effect, the changes wrought by the sudden inversion of the political scene led to the suppression of most alternative artistic discourses, creating the need for new modes of expression. Some artists went into exile, while others experimented with avant-garde style forms of poetic and linguistic experimentation. The coup also had the effect of drastically altering the possible interpretations of texts that had been written prior to 1973. In this chapter, I examine the impact of the historical events as a sort of intervention that modified subsequent interpretations of Juan Luis Martínez’s work, in particular *La nueva novela* (which, as I have noted, was mostly written before the coup). I call this intervention on the text a socio-historical translation because of the way in which the transformation of society by historical events produced not only alternate readings but also a new context of enunciation for the book when it was published. As the military dictatorship appropriated symbols like the Chilean flag, giving them new significance, so too artists re-appropriated these symbols to challenge the dominant discourse, as seen in Martínez’s *La poesía chilena* and Elvira Hernández’s *La bandera de Chile*, both of which employ the national flag to question what has become of nationalist sentiment in a totalitarian society.³⁰

³⁰ In a personal interview with Elvira Hernández on July 10, 2013, she related to me the experience of seeing *La nueva novela* for the first time and the impression it made on her to see the Chilean flag in Martínez’s work. She said this was part of the inspiration for her book *La bandera de Chile*, written in 1981, published ten years later by Libros de Tierra Firme, Buenos Aires, 1991.

This chapter addresses the issue of how to interpret texts from *La nueva novela* when we believe that most of them were written before the coup but have potent political connotations given their date of publication. Should we read them as premonitions of events that were yet to come or as texts that were released to the public with the intent to comment on the socio-political situation? Or both? Martínez's enigmatic works do not lend themselves to facile interpretations, and so there has been a lacuna of analytical work that explores the political connotations of his oeuvre that this chapter hopes to address. Several critics of Chilean poetry have mentioned the tragic tone latent in Martínez, but most extensive studies have focused on the ludic, pataphysical and philosophical side of his work without looking at the impact of how the unstable socio-political conditions have created alternate readings. In this chapter I examine his poetic production in terms of several themes that lie beneath the labyrinth of his works; most notably, the concept of unity and dispersion through the use of metaphors of the house, the nation, being, the book, to show how these usually safe spaces have been violated, disrupting the integrity of family circles, the body politic, subjects, as well as texts and symbols.

The second chapter, "Poetics beyond the page: the space and performance of poetry" follows this analysis of the relationship between textual space and social space with a wider panorama of poetics that consciously attempt to integrate the concepts of space and performance as part of their signifying structure. Historically, French symbolist poet Stephane Mallarmé occupies a central place in the development of spatial poetics so I examine the impact of his work in particular and later avant-garde artists on Martínez and other neo-avant-garde poets. As a bridge between the two avant-gardes I look at the development of conceptual and spatial poetics in Brazilian concrete poetry, as well as the growing awareness of the active role of the reader/spectator in the realization of the text.

The chapter begins with a focus on the use of the space of the page with some historical examples followed by a detailed study of the unique use of space in the Chilean neo-avant-garde. Space is not only a theme but also a structural agent for participatory poetry in many of the works of Martínez, like *La nueva novela*. This book is a veritable labyrinth of intertexts, citations, poems, images, problems, translations, characters, objects, and spaces. My analysis looks at the dangers that threaten the safe spaces of the book as a metaphor for the home, in particular the threats of the abstract space of capitalism and the suppression of private and public spaces by the dictatorship. I use the work of Henri Lefebvre to analyze the construction and propagation of social space as well as the idea of the palimpsest in the idea of reclaiming space. The second half of the chapter is focused on social space and how poets and artists of the Chilean neo-avant-garde have intervened and proposed participatory interventions that affect social spaces. In particular I examine the poetry of Raúl Zurita and the group of artists that he participated in, CADA (Colectivo Acciones De Arte). In Zurita's work I emphasize the exploration of spatial poetics of the page compared to Martínez, as well as his sky and land art interventions in geographical space. Zurita uses some documents of authoritative discourses in his publications, such as texts from his medical examination diagnosing him with schizophrenia, writing poetry over them to reappropriate the texts. This gesture can be seen as parallel to his acts of bodily mutilation and land art that also inscribe spaces of national/political significance with signs of torture and trauma as well as hope for a new life. The artist group CADA would also inscribe spaces with art work that challenged the dominant discourse through a series of interventions. I examine these artistic actions as performances that occupy particular spaces to resignify them as well as invitations for the public to participate in the reclaiming of their social spaces. Two such examples are the bombing of Santiago with poetry and writing on the walls

“No +”, which was completed by citizens to form phrases such as “No more dictatorship” and “No more disappeared”. In a similar way, the poetry bombing included a text proclaiming that anyone who works to amplify their spaces of life is an artist, showing the group’s commitment to involving the populace in the creation of the work of art and in the political intervention.

The third and final chapter takes a closer look at what audience participation means in a work of art. I begin by looking at the development of reader-response theory and reception aesthetics as a means of approaching the work of neo-avant-garde artists such as Martínez and a group of poets from Valencia known as Grupo Texto Poético. Reader-response theory covers a wide range of formulations of the reader’s role, from the notion of the open work of art to transactional and phenomenological approaches. However, most of these theories describe the reader’s participation without differentiating between different levels of engagement depending on the type of art form and the artist’s conception of participation. Without wanting to imply any kind of notion of progress in artistic development, I argue that the 20th century has seen an evolution of forms in terms of the type of participation rather than the degree.

The next section of the chapter looks more closely at this development of 20th century art, from the historical avant-gardes of the ‘20s, the happenings and groups of the ‘60s, to the neo-avant-gardes of the ‘70s and ‘80s in order to analyze the different forms of participation in art. The avant-garde shows varying positions with regards to the posture towards the audience, but in general the movements show an antagonistic or aggressive stance, trying to unsettle and provoke the public, inciting change, like Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre and Antonin Artaud’s theatre of cruelty. In poetry these tendencies are manifested in militant sounding manifestos and aggressive fragmented verses that challenge bourgeois placid enjoyment of art. By way of these shock tactics, avant-garde artists revealed the institution of art, making audiences aware of the

dynamics of the aesthetic experience in a way hitherto undeclared. In contrast, the participatory art of the '60s tends to be based on the creation of an ephemeral community and the artwork that emerges from the interplay of participants. Although these activities were sometimes directed by an artist, they were open to the forces of improvisation in terms of the end result.

The final sections of this chapter focus in on the neo-avant-garde in Chile and a group of experimental poets from Spain of the same time period in order to articulate the type of poetic participation involved in the proposal poem. For a definition of a proposal poem I expand on the ideas put forth by Félix Morales Prado and Josep Sou;³¹ Morales Prado emphasizes that the proposal poem presents a project that will be carried out in a unique way by each participant, while Sou describes some of the formal aspects, such as the use of imperative forms, second person pronouns, the incorporation of material supports, as well as a hint of absurdist humor. To these characteristics, I add that a proposal poem has a dual nature – as a poetic object as well as a proposal to create a poem – and it often employs a sort of pataphysical humor that delegitimizes the speaking subject. I find it useful to distinguish between absurdist and pataphysical humor in order to describe the projects of the poets in question. Pataphysics, “the science of imaginary solutions” (as defined by Alfred Jarry), provides an excellent angle to approach the kinds of poetic proposals that are journeys into reciprocal profundity and absurdity, using logical constructions to examine illogical situations. Furthermore, I argue that these methods ironize the author who gives the instructions of the proposal poem, undermining his/her authorship/authority.

The proposal poems that I analyze in this section come from Martínez and a group of Valencian poets known as Grupo Texto Poético. The chapter revolves around the uncanny

³¹ Félix Morales Prado is a Spanish poet and poetry critic. Josep Sou is a Spanish poet and performance artist who participated in *Texto Poético* 9.

coincidence of the emergence of poetic forms so similar yet apparently unrelated by direct influence. For instance, Martínez's first book, *La nueva novela* was published the same year, 1977, as the first issue of *Texto Poético*. Although the proposal poems are similar, I differentiate their techniques in the last section. The work of Grupo Texto Poético oscillates between light-hearted imaginative proposals (like those of Yoko Ono and Fluxus)³² and more pataphysical humor, while Martínez's poems are generally much more patently pataphysical, following the style of Jean Tardieu.³³ In fact, Martínez dedicates the first part of *La nueva novela* to answering some of Tardieu's absurd proposals as well as reciprocating with some of his own.

This final chapter tries to elucidate the evolution of poetic forms of the 20th century while eschewing the notion of progress. Although different types of poetic participation are apparent in distinct historical time periods, there isn't a sense in which any of these are meant to be seen as better than any others. The contribution that it offers is an insight into the ever-evolving relationship between author, text, and reader.

Thus, this project explores the unique ways in which Juan Luis Martínez and similar neo-avant-garde poets have shaped the aesthetic and political experience of poetry by making readers aware of their agency in constructing the works of art and society. The dream of the avant-garde to unite art and life is revived in the late 20th century through new manifestations that challenge not only the notion of the work of art, but also the notion of the author as sole producer of the text. Poets like Martínez undermine the authority of the speaking voice through parody and

³² Yoko Ono also participated in Fluxus, an international group of artists that produced experimental and conceptual art during the 1960s and 70s. The name "Fluxus" was coined by co-founder George Maciunas to emphasize the "flow" and fusion of their diverse projects. In the 1963 *Fluxus Manifesto*, Maciunas writes, "Fuse the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action."

³³ Jean Tardieu (1903-1995) was a French poet, dramatist, artist and musician whose poetry is a fundamental inspiration for Martínez's *La nueva novela*. His dramatic oeuvre is often associated with Theatre of the Absurd, but some of his poems, in particular the ones referenced by Martínez, employ a species of pataphysical humor akin to Martínez's project.

absurd humor, thus calling into question the validity of authoritarian voices in literature and society. In doing so, these movements create a place for the reader to emerge as participant in the construction of the work, and by way of analogy (sometimes explicit, as in the case of *CADA*), come to see their role in constructing their spaces of life.

Chapter 1. Socio-historical Translation: Political Connotations in the Works of Juan Luis Martínez before and after September 11, 1973

2.1 Chapter Introduction

The work of Juan Luis Martínez has come to resonate for some as an expression of the trauma experienced during the military dictatorship from 1973 to 1990. This political reading of the Chilean poet's work is evinced by the fact that recently one of his poems was integrated into an artistic work outside of the *Estadio Nacional* to commemorate the 40-year anniversary of the *golpe de estado*. Below is a photograph taken during the event, which shows the end of the poem, "Desaparición de una familia" with corresponding imagery on display at the commemorative event on September 11, 2013:

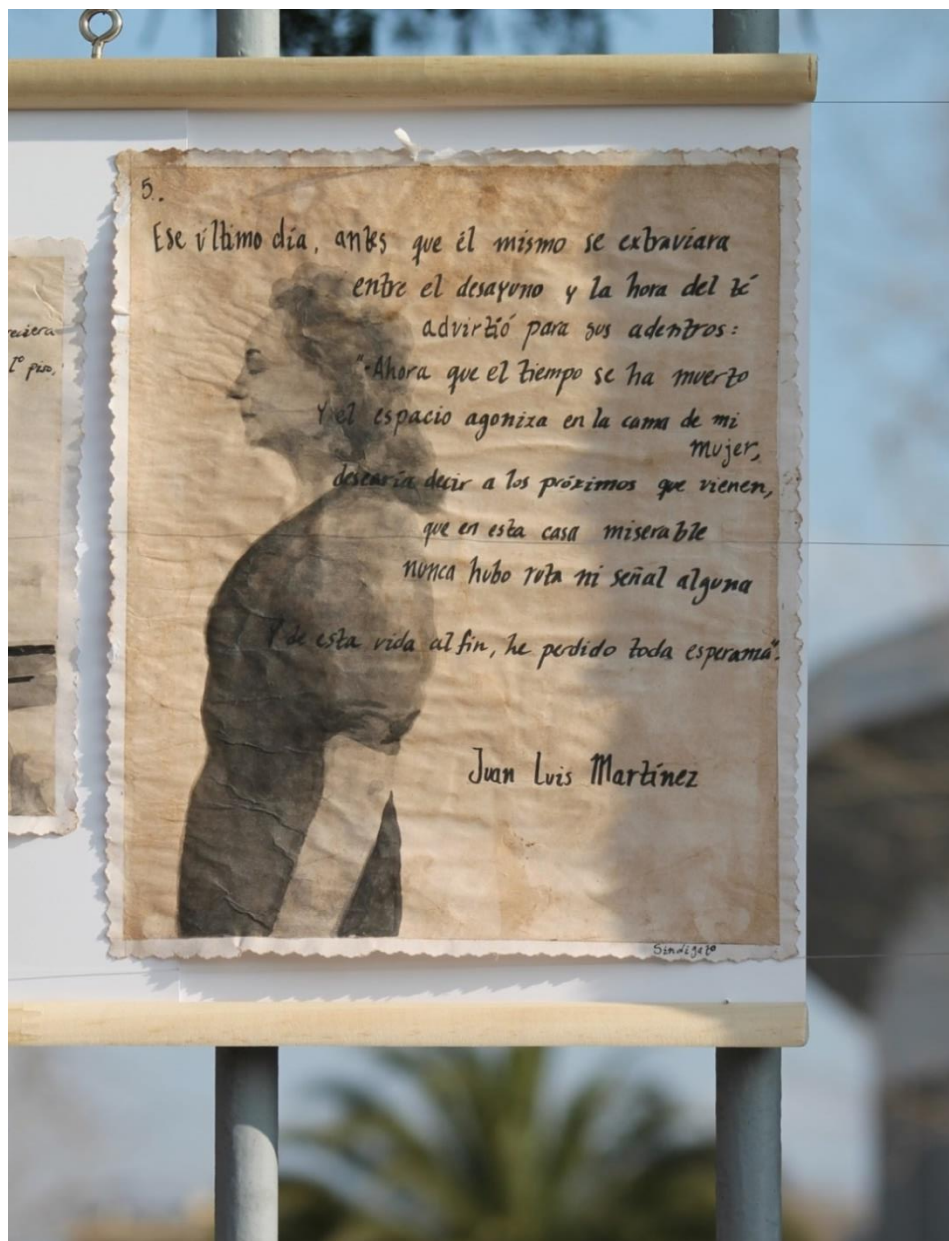


Photo by Jorge Isaac Zeballos (September 11, 2013)

[Ese último día, antes que él mismo se extraviara entre el desayuno y la hora del té advirtió para sus adentros: "Ahora que el tiempo se ha muerto y el espacio agoniza en la cama de mi mujer, desearía decir a los próximos que vienen, que en esta casa miserable nunca hubo ruta ni señal alguna de esta vida al fin, he perdido toda esperanza."]

This display was located alongside images of disappeared people and was accompanied by a candle light vigil at dusk. The presentation of the poem within this elaborately constructed context of commemoration suggests that the text was written about the *desaparecidos* during the dictatorship, especially because the content of the text describes the disappearance of a family from their own house, person by person. This poem was published in Martínez's first book, *La nueva novela*, in 1977, which would place it during the early years of the Pinochet dictatorship and the disappearances. However, most of the poems from Martínez's first book were composed before the *golpe* even happened, and thus were not intended to be written with the Chilean *desaparecidos* in mind.³⁴ How, then, should we read these poems that seem to reference events before they happened? Did they foreshadow things to come? Should we assume that the poems altered before publication to include political references? And finally, should we read them as enunciations from before the coup or after, according to the date of composition or according to the date of publication?

The idea that there is a connection between the poems of Juan Luis Martínez and the political context is not without basis. In an interview with Felix Guattari, Martínez mentioned that living in a society with a dictatorship stimulated his poetic production: "Yo creo que mi trabajo habría sido más difícil en una democracia que bajo dictadura. Me es mucho más incitante y estimulante un sistema totalitario que una democracia. Lo que no significa que yo me quede con una dictadura" (92). Moreover, the coincidence of a poem (and a book) about disappearances at a time in which *desaparecidos* was becoming a familiar term suggests a

³⁴ Chilean literary critic, Marcelo Ríos, notes the paradoxical nature of this phenomenon in *Maquinarias Deconstructivas*. He writes, "La desaparición de una familia' ha sido considerado como uno de los textos más notables acerca de la desaparición de los prisioneros políticos de la dictadura en aquel período. Así como César Vallejo escribió el libro más vanguardista sin proponerse ser un miembro de la vanguardia, Juan Luis Martínez es, paradójicamente, el autor de uno de los poemas más políticos escritos bajo la dictadura" (236).

political theme to the poems, as noted by Marcelo Riosco³⁵. Although the Martinez interview does not indicate that he decided to write specifically about the dictatorship, at least he acknowledges that it provided him with a provocation for his writing.

First a word of caution about trying to interpret the works of Juan Luis Martínez: in much of his work, and in particular in *La nueva novela*, the ambiguous nature of the text makes it difficult (and perhaps a mistake) to attribute a specific political message to the texts. Even what seem to be the most overtly political statements prove to be elusive in meaning given a closer look. When Martínez mentions, for example, the “dense and tragic” psychological climate in Chile, it is unclear whether he is referring to a pre- or post-golpe Chile. This statement found on a dedicatory page of *La nueva novela*, reads: “El clima psicológico que envuelve a Chile es denso y trágico. Una fuerza irresistible tira hacia el abismo e impide que ningún valor...” (6). Matías Ayala, in his book *Lugar incómodo: Poesía y sociedad en Parra, Lihn y Martínez*, notes that the multiple contexts of suggestive texts like this one makes it difficult to argue for a single interpretation. He observes how this quote about Chile’s dense and tragic climate could easily reference the building sense of crisis before the *golpe*, and so he concludes, “Por lo tanto, cualquier lectura políticamente simplista se encuentra socavada, o al menos, puesta en duda” (153). In accordance with Ayala, isolating a particular political message for his work is neither desirable nor feasible, since the nature of Martínez’s poetic production tends toward an oblique and cryptic criticism of dominant discourses, evading references to concrete events.

³⁵ Riosco comments that, “El poema se escribe en el momento en que la palabra ‘desaparecidos’ comienza a popularizarse en el Cono Sur a propósito de las dictaduras militares. Es imposible no ver su connotación política y contingente como una lectura más desprendida del contexto de *La nueva novela* que no pareciera estar permeada por el presente histórico” (236). He then clarifies that this text “accepts” a political reading in the margin of its signifying context.

One of the oblique methods of (political) criticism apparent in this work is the questioning of authoritative voices. From the very cover of the book, in which the author writes his name in parenthesis, crosses it out, writes it again, this time as (~~JUAN DE DIOS MARTINEZ~~), crossing it out again, the notions of authorship and authority are questioned. This *tachadura* (a crossing-out, but not a complete erasure) perhaps conforms with a post-structuralist notion of the author, reminiscent of essays from Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault³⁶. It undermines the authority of the author as the producer of the text, a strategy that is reinforced by the large quantity of citations and other intertexts. Part of Martínez's authorship is to organize the words of others into collages, in addition to providing the reader with questions and room to respond. Rioseco notes the subversive element in this strategy of undermining authority. He writes "De ahí su carácter subversivo, el texto de Martínez como un texto contra la autoridad es también un discurso contra el poder, una 'forma de resistencia'" (201). Since "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148), as Barthes notes, the reader fills some of the void left by the absence of a unified writing subject. This solicitation of the participation of the reader in the physical space of the text may be a game, but it might also make participants aware of their capacity to challenge authorities by inscribing their ideas onto a space reserved for authors/dominant voices.

Although texts such as "Desaparición de una familia" may have been written without any intent to reference the socio-political context of the 1970s in Chile, historical events have impacted the reception of the texts in such a way that new readings have become possible through a socio-historical translation of the work. The very language of the text has taken on new meaning as the Chilean lexicon shifted due to tumultuous socio-political upheaval. Words

³⁶ "The Death of the Author" (1967) and "What is an Author?" (1969), respectively.

like *desaparición* become charged with new meaning from 1973 and on. *Desaparecer*, for example, becomes a transitive verb: to disappear someone. Publishing *La nueva novela* in 1977 means that the author would have been aware of how these texts could be interpreted with regards to a new political and linguistic context. As readers, I believe we must take both contexts of *La nueva novela* into account. Every text of *La nueva novela* is duplicitous, or doubled: it references the socio-political climate before and after the coup d'état. On one hand, the poems have come to take on a foreshadowing aspect, since many were written before events that would concretize certain political interpretations. Also, these poems can be read as taking a more direct engagement with the political environment, since they were published (and hence, officially enunciated) during the period of the dictatorship.

Again, I would like to emphasize that the political interpretations that follow should not be considered the primary message of the texts. According to most standard readings the book converses with the literary tradition before any treatment of political themes. *La nueva novela*, however, is consciously open to political readings. Although there is a strong ludic vein in Martínez's work, as analyzed in Rioseco's *Maquinarias deconstructivas*, I will focus on the tragic sense underlying these games that he also mentions:

Detrás de la broma y el absurdo, una nota punzante lleva a reflexionar sobre la cara más oscura de ciertos postulados del pensamiento contemporáneo posmoderno: la desaparición del sujeto, la muerte del autor y la descentralización del significado adquieren otro significado en una situación de desapariciones de la que no se puede hablar. (182)

I analyze poems that have these political connotations, perhaps more so because they have become susceptible to a political reading due to history's intervention on the text. Because of the changes that Chilean society underwent in the 1970s, *La nueva novela* suffered a sort of translation, à la Pierre Menard. Just as the *Quijote* undergoes a semantic transformation in the

fictional work of Borges, so does *La nueva novela* become transformed by a temporal displacement that alters its place of enunciation and corresponding socio-political context.³⁷ Borges' fictional character recreates a few lines of Cervantes' work, word for word, in the 20th century, causing the narrator to marvel at the rich subtleties that the words take on in the new context. Martínez, on the other hand, reproduces his own writing (which is made up of intertexts, and thus, the words of others) by publishing the work a few years later than it was written, but these years have a decisive impact on the connotations of the work, since the coup and its consequences have transformed the meaning of the words and texts³⁸.

Although it is not possible to isolate a singular message with regards to its political context, I believe there are a set of overarching themes that can be read within this context. One such theme in *La nueva novela* that is tainted by political connotations is the theme of unity and dispersion. In this work, the unity of the self, the family and the nation are confronted by opposing forces of disruption and dispersion that threaten to annihilate subjects and places. Behind the enigmatic labyrinth of intertextuality that problematizes succinct interpretations of his work, I believe that Martínez uses a set of analogous metaphors of the house, the nation, being, and the book itself, to show how sacred spaces are violated by extraneous elements, which disrupt and dismantle the integrity of subjects, family circles, and protected spaces.

In this chapter I examine the above-mentioned themes of unity and dispersion while outlining a potential reading of the works of Juan Luis Martínez that speaks about these themes within the socio-political context of an unstable political situation and in the context of

³⁷ Another relevant commentary on literary theory in one of Borges' short stories appears in "Kafka y sus precursores". The notion in this story is the reversal of literary influence, which is generally perceived as operating from the past to the present, as when an author from the past influences future authors. Borges suggests that contemporary authors alter our perspectives of past authors by reinventing them. Similarly, in the work of Martínez, publishing in 1977 has come to alter our perception of the texts from 1971, reinventing his own work.

³⁸ Another effect of the coup was the delayed publication referenced here. The reasons for the delay will be explained in the next section of this chapter.

dictatorship. I hope to address several questions, such as, to what extent have the poems been translated by time and history? What poetic techniques does Martínez employ to convey political themes? How are we to read and interpret these poems today? I begin chronologically with Micharvegas' anthology of Chilean poetry and *La nueva novela*, his first published book, dated 1977, and ending with *El poeta anónimo*, which he was working on when he died, and was published posthumously in 2013.

2.2 Comparing Poems from the Micharvegas Anthology to *La nueva novela*

In part, a political reading of *La nueva novela* is complicated by the dates of composition of the work. Martínez submitted a manuscript of the book, at the time titled *Pequeña Cosmografía Práctica*, to the Editorial Universitaria in 1971. The book was accepted with enthusiasm by Pedro Lastra, but its publication was delayed for two years because of the difficulty involved in the process of printing a work that surpassed the means of most publishers of the time.³⁹ A detailed analysis of the work's material structure will be given later; for now it should suffice to say that it contains small objects, such as a flag and fish hooks, as well as transparent windows and other unique pages that complicate facsimile reproduction. In addition, Martínez was averse to any changes, even in the slightest detail of page size, or font, which also may have delayed publication. Regardless of the specific causes, the book had not been printed by September 11, 1973, and after the *golpe de estado*, the manuscript submitted for publication

³⁹ Martínez describes this situation in the aforementioned interview with Roblero as follows: "El año 1971 me acerque a la Editorial Universitaria. Pero en septiembre de 1973, echaron todo para atrás. Seguí escribiendo, para autoeditarme, pero había otras preocupaciones que me consumían" (*Poemas del otro* 65).

was never found again, likely having been destroyed in the book burnings and other purges of “unacceptable” materials.

This book that was ready for publication in 1971 was delayed until 1977 when it was published by the author himself. Little is known about how the book evolved or changed during nearly six years and how it may have been affected by the socio-political context of those tumultuous times. Chilean critic Roberto Careaga C. has noted four changes: 1) the title change, to *La nueva novela*, 2) the cover image of the houses in Alaska in disarray from an earthquake, 3) the inclusion of the two fish hooks on page 75, and 4) the addition of the miniature Chilean flags to the “Epígrafe para un Libro Condenado (La Política)”.⁴⁰ We also know for certain about five poems from *La nueva novela* that existed before 1973 thanks to an anthology of Chilean poetry, entitled *La nueva poesía joven en Chile*, which was composed by Martín Micharvegas in Buenos Aires and published in 1972. These five poems are “LA REALIDAD (averiguaciones)” (found on the flap of the inside front cover of *La nueva novela*), “EL OÍDO” (108), “EL CUERPO HUMANO” (74), “EL GATO DE CHESHIRE” (78), and “LECCIONES DE AMBIGÜEDAD” (79). In addition, one can find in this anthology a poem that would not be included in its entirety in *La nueva novela*, called “OBSERVACIONES”; although this poem was not published until *Poemas del otro* in 2003, one stanza can be found in *La nueva novela*, in the poem “LA CASA DEL ALIENTO, CASI LA PEQUEÑA CASA DEL (AUTOR)”.

One notices only slight modifications of these poems in the 1977 edition of *La nueva novela*, which supports the claim that the book did not undergo major transformations from 1971-1977. For example, the poem entitled “LA REALIDAD (Averiguaciones)” in Micharvegas’s anthology is renamed “LA REALIDAD I” in *La nueva novela* and occupies the

⁴⁰ Roberto Careaga C., “Huellas que borró Juan Luis Martínez”, *Revista 2010*, no. 1, 2009, pp. 165-173.

space of the front book flap, while a complimentary poem, “LA REALIDAD II” occupies the back flap. “LA REALIDAD I” is identical to the anterior version, except for the title, the layout, and of course, the placement of the text outside of the typical textual space for the work.

On the book flaps one would typically expect to find material that references the work, such as biographical information, critical acclaim, or citations from the text. Instead, Martínez presents us with two poems, or perhaps two sides of the same poem, which enclose the work within the theme of a questioning of reality. The original poem is formatted as follows, with the version from *La nueva novela* below it:

LA REALIDAD (Averiguaciones)

a-

Pregunta: ¿Qué es la realidad? ¿Cuál es la realidad?

Respuesta: Lo real es sólo la base, pero es la base.

Respuesta: Lo real es aquello que te chocará como realmente absurdo.

(1971)

LA REALIDAD I

A.

PREGUNTA:

¿Qué es la realidad? ¿Cuál es la realidad?

RESPUESTA:

Lo real es sólo la base, pero es la base.

RESPUESTA:

Lo real es aquello que te chocará como realmente absurdo.

(1977)

The formatting changes do not appear at first glance to affect how the text functions, although the horizontal presentation of the original poem versus the vertical presentation of the latter affects how we perceive the speaking voice. The poem from 1971 is presented to us as “Averiguaciones”, or inquiries, into the question of the nature of reality, whereas the 1977 version takes on a vertical presentation, which may represent a vertical organization of power and hence more of an authoritarian voice. These changes to the text may reflect a change in the environment, from a society in which inquiries and discussion were possible, to a closed society, in which one voice questions and answers from privileged place.

The topic of the poem may be summed up as challenging the readers to reevaluate their understanding of reality. In fact, the interrogation includes two similar, but distinct questions. “¿*Qué es la realidad?*” asks the reader to give a definition of what is reality. In contrast, “¿*Cuál es la realidad?*” asks the reader to select which one is the reality, as if there were a variety of options to choose from. Instead of letting us respond, we are given two answers, perhaps each answer refers to one of the questions, or perhaps these answers respond in general to the set of questions. The first answer tells us that what is real is only the base, but it is the base, which is a translated quote from Wallace Stevens.⁴¹ This implies that reality is not a coherent finished product that we all consume equally, but rather a starting point, a launch pad for our experiences, which tend to diverge from this origin, although it is all we have to go on.

The second answer tells us that what is real is that which will truly strike us as absurd. This message functions most apparently on a philosophical level, as a statement about the fundamental nature of reality. If we could strip away our subjective framework which we use to interpret reality, we would be left with something absurd, and meaningless. If we read the

⁴¹ “The real is only the base. But it is the base”, from “Adagia” in *Opus Posthumous* (160).

statement as a message about the reality of the times, there may be several things that would strike us as absurd. The political turmoil and ascending sense of crisis and violence between radically opposed political sectors in Chile may be part of the absurdity regarding the time of composition. While, within the timeframe of the works' publication, the text can be read to reference the absurdity of violence, done in a clandestine manner by the military government, the truth being something that may have struck the average citizen as absurd. After the section cited above, the next part of the poem reads, "El ser humano no soporta mucha realidad".⁴² Perhaps the tragic reality of what was going on behind closed doors may have been too much for some to believe.

The second poem from the Micharvegas anthology, "EL OÍDO", is identical to the version in *La nueva novela*, except for a dedication, to "L. v. B. / (Study for a conversation piece)" which has been added to the latter. This poem also fits within the topic of disordering the senses, and is located in a section of the book with this same title, "EL DESORDEN DE LOS SENTIDOS". We learn here that our ear is actually "un órgano al revés" (108) that perceives silence, instead of sound. Martínez tells us that if we truly could hear sound, the deafening noise of the galaxies would make it impossible to hear anything else. Hence, all of the sounds, noises and words that we hear are actually "burbujas de silencio" (108). This poem can also be read in multiple ways, being a philosophical reflection on the nature of communication, or even a reflection on the empty discourse of authoritarian governments or neoliberal capitalism. In an interview⁴³ Martínez commented that he felt that people had lost their confidence in language.

⁴² A translation from T. S. Eliot's poem "Burnt Norton", in which he writes, "Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind / cannot bear very much reality."

⁴³ This interview, titled "Me complace irradiar una identidad velada", was given with María Ester Roblero and can be found in *Poemas del otro* (2003).

“Se perdió la imagen sólida del mundo. Los conocimientos acumulados sólo han servido para la confusión. Nuestra confianza en el lenguaje también se ha perdido. ¡Cosa terrible!” (67).

The next poem that was published before 1973, “¿EL CUERPO HUMANO, ES MÁS LIGERO QUE EL AGUA?” is an investigation on the topic of how different bodies float in water. The poem is divided into six parts, each of which treats the way a different animal floats until arriving at the human being in part six. The formatting is almost identical to the original published in 1972, and the syntax of one of the sentences has been slightly altered without much effect. Like the other poems, it could be read as a general sort of investigation into the topic, but this poem has a particularly sinister tone at the end. In part six, the speaker begins discussing the human body, but ends up describing the way a human cadaver floats in the water. The final line, “En el mar y aun en el agua más ligera de los ríos, el cadáver de un hombre sobrenada como un pez muerto” has an asterisk that directs us to a footnote. Ironically, the footnote, which would typically function to clarify or expand upon an obscure idea or reference, only repeats the exact same words as the final sentence, emphasizing the importance of the shift from body to cadaver. The original composition may or may not reflect the idea of cadavers being disposed of in the rivers and ocean, but being published in 1977, it could posteriorly lead one to think of disappeared people having their bodies thrown into the sea, the rivers or the mountains in order to hide the evidence of torture and murder authorized by the state.⁴⁴

The next poem from the anthology, entitled “EL GATO DE CHESHIRE”, is a logical investigation into the problem of whether one can or cannot behead the Cheshire cat, since he

⁴⁴ During the weeks following the 1973 *golpe de estado*, bodies were disposed of in the Mapocho River, according to various sources, including eyewitness accounts recorded in the *Report of the Chicago Commission of Inquiry into the Status of Human Rights in Chile*.

appears to the king and queen as a floating head, without a body⁴⁵. The text of the poem is the same in *La nueva novela* with a slight alteration in formatting. For example, the first edition has some of the phrases struck out in white, while the second has a black line through certain phrases. The latter edition also has a quote from T. S. Eliot as an epigraph, while the original puts this quote, “El Nombrar a los Gatos es un asunto difícil”⁴⁶, in a footnote. The development of the logical argument in the poem shows how logic and linguistics fail to serve as an accurate measure to resolve an apparent paradox. The failure of language and logical discourse may be further evidence of the difficulties of communication as seen in “EL OÍDO”. It may also be read as a parody of the authoritarian logic of the state that tries to eliminate apparent subversive elements in society since it references the argument of the rulers and executioner about whether it is possible to decapitate an animal that only has a head and no visible body. Thus, Martínez’s poem may be seen as a parody of the discourse of the authorities who are fooled by their own language problems, while the Cheshire Cat uses a form of discourse characterized by poetic riddles (much like that of Martínez) and therefore is viewed as a subversive. Finally, the poem might also be read with reference to disappeared people, given how the Cheshire cat disappears from space like many other persons and animals in *La nueva novela*. In the poem, “LA PROBABLE E IMPROBABLE DESAPARICIÓN DE UN GATO POR EXTRAVÍO DE SU PROPIA PORCELANA”, for example, a cat and a porcelain item must continue observing themselves in each other in order to remain in existence. This is perhaps the same cat that

⁴⁵ Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* figures as one of the most important influences in Martínez’s work. The author’s voice in Martínez’s work often takes on the form of the Cheshire cat in the way it appears from time to time to present us with riddles, leading us through the labyrinth of his text.

⁴⁶ Actually, this is the translation of the first verse of the poem “The Naming of Cats”, found in T.S. Eliot’s *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*.

disappears in the poem, “DESAPARICIÓN DE UNA FAMILIA”, along with a fox terrier, two children and a father figure.

The final poem from the anthology that also appears in *La nueva novela* is “6 LECCIONES DE AMBIGÜEDAD CON LAS PIEZAS ANATÓMICAS PARA ARMAR LA MITAD DE UN ELEFANTE”. The title of this poem is slightly altered in *La nueva novela*, and reads, “6 LECCIONES (NO LOGOCÉNTRICAS) DE AMBIGÜEDAD SURREALISTA CON LAS PIEZAS ANATÓMICAS PARA ARMAR LA MITAD DE UN ELEFANTE”. The poem has also undergone a significant alteration with regard to its visual layout. The first version reads in a conventional fashion, from left to right and top to bottom, each of the six lessons separated into an enumerated block. In *La nueva novela*, however, the text is dispersed, each lesson turned upside down or slanted at an angle without apparent regard to the order or legibility of the poem.

The topic of these six “lessons” is the mistaken identification of different parts of an elephant, similar to the story of the blind men and the elephant, from which it undoubtedly proceeds⁴⁷. In this story, the description of what each person has discovered varies drastically from the others as they discuss what they have encountered. The blind man who touches the tail believes he has found a rope, while the one who grasps the leg thinks he has found a pillar, for example. Since they all disagree about the essential nature of what they have encountered, this story is often used to describe how each person’s limited subjective view of reality is insufficient. One such application of the parable is the Hindu version, which is used to discourage dogmatism by claiming that individual religions or religious perspectives of

⁴⁷ Two of the many references to this parable are found in *Tattvarthaslokavatika* of Vidyanandi (9th century) and *Syādvādamanjari* of Ācārya Mallisena (13th century).

individuals are always incomplete and fail to comprehend God since they only capture one aspect of the divinity.

The version in *La nueva novela* is perhaps closest to the Jain version, or the poetic interpretation by John Godfrey Saxe, if only for the fact that these versions coincide in that there are six people. Martínez's version, however, is unique in that none of them are blind, nor are they all men. A five-year-old boy observes a serpent that turns out to be just the shadow of a pathetic and curved trunk. An elderly lady receives a letter that informs her that her fan "con problemas atmosféricos" is actually "una oreja sin preocupaciones" (79). In this revision of the tale of the blind men and the elephant, the observers of the elephant are not physically blind, but yet they seem to suffer from a form of hyperopic vision which prevents them from seeing what is right in front of their eyes. The elderly lady doesn't realize that her fan is actually an elephant's ear until she reads it in a letter. This form of "blindness" may resonate with a political reading of the text that comments on the lack of perception of certain classes in society to acknowledge the escalation of violence, while it may have been obvious to others.

The final poem from the anthology is "OBSERVACIONES" and appears only in part in *La nueva novela*. This poem is a series of somewhat disconnected observations on topics such as language, death, unicorns and parents. On language, for example, he writes, "En el estricto plano del lenguaje / nada más triste que un Lámpara de Lágrimas" (46). The stanza that also appears in *La nueva novela* and plays a fundamental role in the poem "LA CASA DEL ALIENTO, * CASI LA PEQUEÑA CASA DEL (AUTOR)" of said book is that which treats the topic of transparency. The lines from "OBSERVACIONES", "Interrogar a las ventanas / sobre la absoluta transparencia / de los vidrios que faltan" (46) appear on page 90 as an epigraph to the poem "LA CASA DEL ALIENTO." This poem plays with the concept of persistent existence

through time, using paradoxes such as “En esa casa que aún no conocemos / sigue abierta la ventana que olvidamos cerrar” (90). One notices the emphasis on the window of the house, which is the topic of two of the three stanzas of the poem. The final stanza reads, “En esa misma casa, detrás de esa misma ventana / se baten todavía las cortinas que ya descolgamos” (90). It seems that this poem is an expansion on the verses taken from “OBSERVACIONES” but it could also be taken from T.S. Eliot as the footnote indicates.⁴⁸ Part of the problem with the quotation from Eliot is that it is a “casi” citation, which I have been unable to locate, and hence may be an invented quote by Martínez, inspired by Eliot’s *Four Quartets*.

This poem seems to be more ambiguous in terms of its political connotations than the other poems analyzed above since the reflections are more ontological in nature, regarding existence through time. The poem does, however, directly relate to one of the most important themes of the book, the instability of the safe space of the house. The invasion of private family space by an external danger that threatens to make family members disappear is a fundamental topic that this poem treats from an ontological investigation into the paradoxes of continuous existence through time. All of the actions of the past, present and future are all perceived simultaneously in the present and can be ordered in different succession. The causal nature of time is disrupted, effects happen before actions, the curtains are still fluttering that we have already taken down. Since space and time are intimately connected, this disruption of time implies a disruption of the space of the house as well.

⁴⁸ The footnote of the poem is an “almost” quote from T.S. Eliot, which reads, “Quizás una casita en las afueras / donde el pasado tiene aún que acontecer / y el futuro hace tiempo que pasó” (90). The closest reference that I am able to locate is from the poem “Burnt Norton” in *Four Quartets*. Eliot writes, “Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past. / If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable. / What might have been is an abstraction / Remaining a perpetual possibility / Only in a world of speculation. / What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present. / Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose-garden. My words echo / Thus, in your mind.” Martínez’s poem bears a striking resemblance to Eliot’s poem, and the “almost” citation is probably a reference to Eliot as the inspiration of the poem.

Transparency is another important topic in Martínez's work that this poem treats via the intertext from the Micharvegas anthology "Interrogar a las ventanas / sobre la absoluta transparencia / de los vidrios que faltan" (90). *La nueva novela* also plays with the idea of transparency with little "windows" cut out of the pages. One page has a plastic window, while another page contains a window without any sort of "glass" and is entirely transparent. The transparent plastic window has a set of questions for Jean Tardieu, asking him to explain, for example, why he cannot observe transparency being observed. These paradoxes are philosophical in nature, but the theme of transparency is also a very suggestive political topic during a time in which the government conducted its operations in secret and tried to produce a coherent narrative of order and safety by obstructing transparency, thus producing what Steve Stern has called "make-believe" truth.⁴⁹

2.3 *La nueva novela*

Beyond these six poems one can only speculate about how the book may have changed from 1971 to 1977 since earlier manuscripts were destroyed by the author, according to his wife⁵⁰. Some of the speculation surrounding the poem "La desaparición de una familia" would seem to indicate that the poem was composed before 1973. In interviews conducted with Pedro Lastra and Raúl Zurita, both poets remember having read this poem before 1973, although the former believes that the epigraph by Francis Picabia was added to the 1977 edition⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Stern, Steve. *Battling for Hearts and Minds*. Duke University Press, 2006 (73-80).

⁵⁰ According to a personal interview with Eliana Rodríguez Martínez on July 5, 2013.

⁵¹ These interviews were given on July 8, 2013 and July 3, 2013, respectively.

Any information regarding this poem is illuminating in regard to the work's political connotations since the content of the poem seems to allude to the actions of the dictatorship in making people disappear. Although the quote from Picabia is a citation, or "found" text, most of Martínez's work consists in making collages of intertexts, and this operation of composing the book re-contextualizes each extraneous element within a new framework, opening up a series of new meanings. The found poems also take on new meaning simply by being published in Chile in 1977, under the military dictatorship of Pinochet. Thus, the intertextual and extratextual contexts of the work expand the semiological possibilities of the original texts, providing us with trail markers to guide us through the labyrinth of Martínez's work.

"La desaparición de una familia" is found in the final section of *La nueva novela*, entitled "Epígrafe para un libro condenado: la política". This section is dedicated to Daniel Theresin (a pseudonym for Jean Tardieu) and contains a highly suggestive epigraph at the bottom of the page by Francis Picabia, which reads "El padre y la madre no tienen el derecho de la muerte sobre sus hijos, pero la Patria, nuestra segunda madre, puede inmolarlos para la inmensa gloria de los hombres políticos" (135). Covering the title of the section, and located between pages 134 and 135, a Chilean flag made of wax paper is situated. The opacity of the wax paper allows one to read part of the title through the white portion of the flag: "a un libro condenado: la política", which makes it sound as if this section were dedicated to the book itself.

Turning the page, one encounters an image of a rabbit on page 136, whose mouth is covered by a black rectangle, situated in the bottom right corner of a grid, which is the same as the grid on the back cover. The instructions are also the same as the back cover, "Dibuje el contorno de cada cuarto incluyendo puertas y ventanas. Marque dos rutas de escape para cada miembro de su familia" (136), but the ratio of the grid is different. We are told that each little

square equals two kilometers on page 136, while each square on the back cover is equal to two centimeters. In either case the task turns out to be impossible because the scale is too large or too small to be able to draw a house. This coincides with many of the other tasks and ludic games that the author gives us, which are impossible to complete and often border on the absurd. Nevertheless, the message is clear: we are not safe in our own houses.

This theme is reflected on the following page where we encounter the poem “La desaparición de una familia”. The content of the poem can be summarized as follows: A father warns each member of the family that they must take great care because with the slightest slip they could easily lose the path markers of life and disappear from space and time: “-Esta casa no es grande ni pequeña, / pero al menor descuido se borrarán las señales de ruta / y de esta vida al fin, habrás perdido toda esperanza” (137). Despite the warnings, his five-year-old daughter, ten-year-old son, two cats and a fox terrier disappear from the space of the house, followed by the father who disappears in time. The son disappears between the dining room and the kitchen, the daughter between the bathroom and the playroom, the cats in the living room between some couch cushions and a porcelain Buddha, the fox terrier on the seventh step of the staircase, and finally, the father, between the hour of breakfast and tea time.

It would be imprudent to analyze this poem in isolation when it has so many explicit connections to other parts of the book. Not only this poem, but every aspect of *La nueva novela* functions as a part of an entire book-poem, making it impossible to publish separate poems in an anthology without losing a plethora of intertextual connections and thus reducing the significance of each poem. As we have seen, this poem is spatially juxtaposed to an image that remits us to the back cover. This poem, however, is also connected to a note from the sections “Notas y referencias”, which precedes it in a linear reading. Since this is our first contact with

the poem, this text on page 121 sets the tone for our reading of “La desaparición de una familia”. The text is made up of three quotations and a note that directs us to another poem, “Adolf Hitler Vs. Tania Savich”, which also precedes it, just like this note precedes “La desaparición de una familia”. Thus, the different texts in *La nueva novela* function as a set of links, or proto-hyperlinks as Juan Herrera⁵² has suggested, remitting us to different pages which function as semiological supports for our reading of an individual poem.

The quotations on page 121, the note for “La desaparición de una familia” are as follows: “La casa que construirás mañana, ya está en el pasado y no existe”, cited from “Anónimo”, “El hombre nace en la casa, pero muere en el desierto”, from “Proverbio del Gran Lama Errante, oído por S. –J. Perse en el desierto de Gobi”, and “Cuando la familia está hecha viene la dispersión; cuando la casa está construida, llega la muerte”, attributed to José Lezama Lima. By encountering these quotations before reading the poem, the destruction of the family is foretold, as well as the disruption of space and time, here in the house that existed before it was built, as well as in the relation between house–desert, unity-dispersion. This text also remits us to a previous poem, “La casa del aliento” in which we encounter the same text, “La casa que construimos mañana / ya está en el pasado y no existe” (90). This text is juxtaposed with an image that appears to be the same as the one on the front cover, of disheveled houses, apparently disrupted by an earthquake or similar catastrophe. These links create a sort of reverse reading of the book in which we jump backwards in an analeptic manner.

The poem itself also contains links to other sections of the book. The ten-year-old girl may well be Tania Savich, who witnessed the disappearance of her family circle on page 114, and who is also ten years old. The fox terrier in the poem is named “Sogol”, an unusual name,

⁵² Herrera, Juan. “*La nueva novela* de Juan Luis Martínez: Poesía protohipertextual en el contexto de la videósfera” en *Acta Literaria*, no. 35, II Sem. (9-27), 2007 (18).

which spells “Logos” backwards. On pages 80 – 83 we already witnessed the disappearance of a fox terrier named “Sogol” at the intersection of the avenues Gauss and Lobatchewsky.⁵³ This disappearance of Sogol, and hence logos, is suggestive of Martínez’s affirmation that humanity has lost its confidence in language as well as the project to deconstruct language and logical discourse. Finally, the two disappeared cats remit us to a number of intertextual and extratextual references. One immediately thinks of the cat and the porcelain from “La probable e improbable desaparición de un gato por extravío de su propia porcelana”, in which a cat and a porcelain – vase or Buddha? – must remain vigilant looking at each other in order to keep each other in existence (a possible allusion to George Berkeley’s idealism in which our existence is sustained by God dreaming us). One is also reminded of “El gato de Cheshire”, a poem that presents a pseudo-logical argument about whether it is possible or not to decapitate and thus kill the Cheshire cat since it only has a floating head not attached to a body. Lastly, we are directed to page 77, “Bibliografía general sobre los gatos” where we read the last entry, “Zakani, Ubayd., Mūsh u Gurba (Rats against Cats), Trans, mas uud e farzàad, London, 1945” (77). These are the same names that we find in the poem “La desaparición de una familia”, which are spelled “Musch” and “Gurba”. Thus, we are not altogether shocked by these disappearances since we have already witnessed some of them previously.

Since this poem probably existed before 1973, it is most likely that it was not composed with the *desaparecidos* of Chile in mind. It was produced, however, during a time of great socio-political instability, in which these events would soon become reality. Although at first glance it seems to be a highly unlikely coincidence that an author would write about people disappearing a few years before it actually happened, this is not entirely unlikely since he was

⁵³ Two of the mathematicians associated with the invention of non-Euclidean geometry.

living in a culture where these events were possibilities in the cultural imaginary of a society on the brink of a catastrophe. One is immediately reminded of *Lobos y ovejas* which was written before 1973, but which can be read as an allegory for the theme of betrayal of the early dictatorship.⁵⁴ A keen observer may have noticed the social unrest and political upheaval and have foreseen an imminent crisis, as Martínez seems to have predicted the invasion of the sacred family space and the strange disappearance of family members.

This is a tenuous reading of *La nueva novela* that must keep in mind that the texts are highly suggestive of a number of interpretations. Since much of the work is literally the words of others (through the use of citation and collage), these texts are already politically charged with the contexts in which they were written and to which they refer. Upon being published in this book, however, within the context of Chile in 1977, they immediately enter into dialogue with the socio-political context of the military dictatorship and its violations of human rights. Although many of the texts were probably composed by Juan Luis Martínez before 1973, by publishing the book in 1977 he would have been fully aware of the connotations and connections to the current circumstances of its enunciation. Since this is the date of publication, this is when the work truly enters into dialogue and is received. A political interpretation (as I hope to outline here) that refers to events from 1973-1977, therefore, is entirely reasonable, as long as one is aware of the duplicitious nature of these texts.

“La desaparición de una familia” also engages the socio-political context through its treatment of space, a theme that I believe to be one of the most important in the work of Martínez

⁵⁴ In 1977, Grínor Rojo published an article in which he says about this work, “Reinstalada en sus derechos, la poesía surge con toda la fuerza revelatoria que le es propia, pero con esa fuerza orientada hacia la consumación de la más urgente y crucial de las tareas, la del descubrimiento de la realidad de verdad” (189-190). See Rojo, Grínor. “Manuel Silva. *Lobos y ovejas*.” *Literatura Chilena en el Exilio*, no. 2, April 1977.

and that is further discussed in the following chapter. In this poem one can observe space used in three distinct senses: the spatial arrangement of the text, space as a theme or topic of the poem, and the space of the book as a means for expanding the signification of separate pages through the use of playful, non-linear readings.

As regards the first of these uses, the poem treats the theme of space in terms of the secure space of the house and the insecurity of the outside world, inverting these conventional conceptual relations. Here it is the interior of the home that threatens to swallow up the family members. Since this poem is spatially paired with the graphic of the grid and rabbit, where one is told to draw two escape routes for each family member, one has the impression that it is safer to flee the house than to remain inside. In a sense, the topic of this poem reflects the anxiety of losing the safety of one's home because of the invasions of the DINA into people's houses. Not only did the dictatorship affect the public space of the city, but also the private space of the home, through raids and kidnappings. Hence, this poem can be read as a testimony of the destruction of the secure space-time of the home, as suggested in verses, such as, "por las ventanas de esta casa entra el tiempo, por las puertas sale el espacio" and "el espacio agoniza en la cama de mi mujer" (137). Warnings of these disruptions of space-time are given right before a family member disappears.

The visual structure of the poem can also influence our reading of it. Each disappearance is separated in a block of text, similar to a stanza, but each block is numbered, 1 through 5.

LA DESAPARICION DE UNA FAMILIA

1. Antes que su hija de 5 años se extraviara entre el comedor y la cocina, él le había advertido: "Esta casa no es grande ni pequeña, pero al menor descuido se borrarán las señales de ruta y de esta vida al fin, habrás perdido toda esperanza".
2. Antes que su hijo de 10 años se extraviara entre la sala de baño y el cuarto de los juguetes, él le había advertido: "Esta, la casa en que vives, no es ancha ni delgada: sólo delgada como un cabello y ancha tal vez como la aurora, pero al menor descuido olvidarás las señales de ruta y de esta vida al fin, habrás perdido toda esperanza".
3. Antes que "Musch" y "Gurba", los gatos de la casa, desaparecieran en el living entre unos almohadones y un Buddha de porcelana, él les había advertido: "Esta casa que hemos compartido durante tantos años es bajita como el suelo y tan alta o más que el cielo, pero, estad vigilantes porque al menor descuido confundiréis las señales de ruta y de esta vida al fin, habréis perdido toda esperanza".
4. Antes que "Sogol", su pequeño fox-terrier, desapareciera en el séptimo peldaño de la escalera hacia el 20 piso, él le había dicho: "Cuidado viejo camarada mío, por las ventanas de esta casa entra el tiempo, por las puertas sale el espacio; al menor descuido ya no escucharás las señales de ruta y de esta vida al fin, habrás perdido toda esperanza".
5. Ese último día, antes que él mismo se extraviara entre el desayuno y la hora del té, advirtió para sus adentros: "Ahora que el tiempo se ha muerto y el espacio agoniza en la cama de mi mujer, desearía decir a los próximos que vienen, que en esta casa miserable nunca hubo ruta ni señal alguna y de esta vida al fin, he perdido toda esperanza".

Martínez employs this technique in several poems, including “El gato de Cheshire”, “El cuerpo humano”, and “Fox terrier desaparece en la intersección de las avenidas Gauss y Lobatchewsky”, to name a few. In these three poems, it is evident that the structure is used as a sort of logical proof, or pseudo-logical proof; observations are given, propositions are made, and sometimes a conclusion is drawn from these statements. Although these poems often employ a ludic and ironic use of logic, there are sometimes pseudo-conclusions as well. In each of the first four sections of “La desaparición de una familia”, we are warned not to be careless or we will lose the path markers and all hope. In the final stanza, not only does the father figure lose all hope, but he also realizes that there were never any path markers to begin with. This realization concludes by showing us that all of his warnings were essentially in vain, since he was unable to save anyone, even himself.

Finally, the poem utilizes the space of the book similarly to the way a web page uses a web site to connect it to other web pages within the site⁵⁵. As mentioned above, the poem is connected to the ten-year-old girl who lost her family, the disappeared cats from earlier poems, the disappeared fox terrier named Sogol, the front and back covers, and the reference note that links it to several other poems. There are probably connections to other parts of the book not noted here. In a sense, this web of internal references and interconnections functions as a set of “señales de ruta”, or path markers, which guide us through the space of the book. If, as some critics have suggested ⁵⁶, the book is a metaphor for the house, then there is even a stronger

⁵⁵ Although this could be seen as anachronistic, perhaps it is another way in which Martínez’s book foreshadows something which was yet to come. For a reading of this text according to its hypertextuality, see Juan Herrera’s article, “La nueva novela de Juan Luis Martínez: Poesía protohipertextual en el contexto de la videósfera” in *Act Literaria*, nop. 35, II Sem. [9-27], 2007).

⁵⁶ Oscar Galindo in “El alfabestiarío” and Marcelo Rioseco in *Maquinarias deconstructivas*, and suggested to me in an interview with Hugo Rivera-Scott on July 9, 2013.

connection between what the poem says and what it does. It tells us to pay attention to the path markers in our house, while it creates a set of path markers within the house of the book.

I decided to begin with an analysis of this poem because of its central location in the web of interconnections, being linked to the front and back cover, as well as several other important poems of the book. It is also linked to one of the most overt political statements of the work, the quotation from Francis Picabia, which reads, “El padre y la madre no tienen el derecho de la muerte sobre sus hijos, pero la Patria, nuestra segunda madre, puede inmolarlos para la inmensa gloria de los hombres políticos” (135). The use of the epigraph in *La nueva novela* seems to be directly related to those who lost and would lose their lives in Chile, since this page also contains an insert of a small Chilean flag, but it is also connected to a European context. In addition to the Chilean flag, the text directs us to a set of pages about Tania Savich and Adolf Hitler. These pages are entitled, “Adolf Hitler y la metáfora del cuadrado” and “Tania Savich y la fenomenología de lo redondo”, this last title referencing the final chapter of Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space*, “The phenomenology of roundness”. Below the title of the poem is a quote from Karl Jaspers, which also appears in Bachelard’s book, “Das Dasein ist rund” (“Existence is round”). Below this quote is a picture of Tania Savich inside of a circle. Tania, on page 114, is located on the backside of page 113, where we find a picture of Hitler inside of a square. These images are opposed within the same physical space of the book, thus emphasizing their metaphorical opposition.

Here we have a fourth use of space in *La nueva novela*; geometrical representation as metaphor. The circle that encloses the portrait of Tania Savich may be representative of her family circle, since below the picture we read, “Tania no sabía que El Círculo de la Familia es el lugar donde se encierra a los niños, pero sí sabía que en ese mismo Círculo hay también un

centro de orden que protege a la casa contra un desorden sin límites” (114). The circle is also related to the protected space of the house, which should shelter children from the “desorden sin límites”, but is also invaded by catastrophe, like in “La desaparición de una familia”. We read that she witnessed the disappearance of her family circle and learn that all that is left to her is the delicate circle of her own existence, since “Das Dasein ist rund” (being is round).

What is the connection, then, between Tania Savich and Hitler? If existence is round, then death is rigid, sharp, rectangular. Below the title “Adolf Hitler and the metaphor of the square” the author places the quote from Paul Celan, translated from German to Spanish, “La muerte es un maestro de Alemania.” A portrait of Hitler occupies the center of the page with a square enclosing his image. Below the portrait, a text tells us that the photograph and the blank space of the page are about to become inverted, exchanging their hostility. Instead of the metaphor of the circle that protects family members from disorder, the square has a sharp, painful surface. This shape may be suggestive of how Hitler’s hostility can puncture the round protective bubble of Tania Savich. One worries about the effect that this overlapping and transgression of space will have for Tania, who is found on the other side of this same sheet of paper.

In the section “Notas y referencias” we learn the precise consequences that Hitler’s hostility had on Tania Savich and her family. In the note that corresponds to this poem we learn that Hitler prolonged the siege of Leningrad longer than any other city in the world: “Cercada la ciudad en un despiadado asedio, careció muy de pronto de alimentos, de electricidad, de medicinas y así sus habitantes se vieron desprovistos de toda salvación” (132). And below this taciturn description of the brutal siege we find the diary entry of a little girl, describing the death of her family. She concludes by saying “Los Savich han muerto, todos están muertos. / Sólo me

quedo a mí misma” (132). And in case we weren’t certain that this little girl was Tania Savich, a final block of text tells us, “Cuando todo hubo pasado, más de un millón había muerto. Como sea, la ciudad donde vivió Tania Savich, se manejó para sobrevivir al más largo asedio de la historia moderna” (132).

The case of Tania Savich exemplifies the theme of the disruption of the integrity of subjects, families and spaces. Her physical space in the book is threatened, as well as her family circle and the roundness of her being. This story is related to a historical context, the siege of Leningrad, but through the use of spatial metaphors, can be projected onto other contexts. Martínez suggests, by publishing this work in 1977, that there may be a parallel between the story of Tania’s family and many Chilean families. He may also be suggesting, by inviting us into his book/house and giving us certain instructions, that we also must protect ourselves from forces of dispersal.

2.4 *La poesía chilena*

La poesía chilena (1978) can also be seen as a sort of house, but instead of a temporary living space, it is the definitive house, the final resting place. This work looks more like an artistic object than a book, and bears a striking resemblance to a tomb, as several critics have pointed out.⁵⁷ It is a small box, mostly black, containing death certificates and even includes a

⁵⁷ In “Para una lectura interpretativa de la *Poesía chilena* de Juan Luis Martínez” Andrés Morales writes, “Es como si el autor delimitara el tema de la muerte a la gran creación poética chilena, pudiendo leerse que esta literatura no solo se encuentra franqueada e inaugurada por estos grandes nombres de las letras, sino también cerrada por los mismos (en una caja, metáfora de un ataúd)” (111). Roberto Merino also comments on the book/object as a sort of tomb in the article “La constelación de los gemelos”. He writes, “La poesía chilena misma, en estado de defunción y contenida dentro de una caja que recordaba a una urna, podía sentirse igualmente incomodada” (4 *El Mercurio*).

little bag of dirt (from the Valle Central), presumably to throw over the bodies of the deceased. The work is a strange combination of both national and personal heritage. On one hand, the title of the work, the numerous Chilean flags, and the names and works of the major Chilean poets all speak to Martínez's cultural inheritance on a national level. On the other hand, the book is also intimately tied to the passing of his father, and represents one of his only works that may be first and foremost a personal expression of sentiment. Although my analysis in this chapter focuses on the possible political meanings in Martínez's poetry, this work obliges one to take into consideration the affective dimension as well.

La poesía chilena is a work that delicately balances opposites. Personal and national, life and death, tragic and ironic, these contraries are juxtaposed in a similar fashion to the paradoxes in *La nueva novela*. Most critics have read this work as a gesture announcing the death of Chilean poetry. This seems a plausible interpretation, since in appearance it is similar to a casket; the box is labeled "*La poesía chilena*" and contains copies of death certificates of Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, Pablo de Rokha and Vicente Huidobro, the four major poets in the Chilean tradition. However, as Hugo Rivera Scott has pointed out, the book may also be read as a statement about the life of Chilean poetry; following the death certificates are *fichas de lectura*⁵⁸ with titles of poems written by the deceased poets, encouraging the reader to turn to poetry in the wake of mourning the loss of a loved one.

Death pervades *La poesía chilena* in a similar fashion to how the theme of disappearances pervades *La nueva novela*. These are similar but not identical concepts. The *desaparecidos* who never returned may have been presumed dead in many cases, but loved ones

⁵⁸ In the *Biblioteca Nacional*, as well as in several other libraries in Chile, one would present a librarian with one of these *fichas* in order to check out a book. The librarian would then search for the requested book and brings it to the patron.

could not bury their grief in the same way that one can who has a body for burial. The theme of *La poesía chilena*, therefore, is a continuation of the ominous and tragic climate of *La nueva novela*, but is treated from the other side of the definitive limit (between life and death). This theme is both personal and national, since the work deals with the death of the father, in addition to the death of the father figures in Chilean poetry, and perhaps the fatherland, as well.

Similar to *La nueva novela*, the work is entirely black and white, and contains a mixture of images, text and objects. The cover of the box bears the title, *La poesía chilena*, as well as a collage of images and texts that are arranged in a similar shape as a flag. The left-hand image is a bird's eye view of a man with a buzzed haircut and a star shape shaved on the top of his head. This star is placed in a similar location to the star on the Chilean flag.⁵⁹ On the left is a picture of a sink with two faucets, presumably for hot and cold water. Around the images are clippings of text that are difficult to read at times because they are partially covered by the pictures. Behind the title, *La poesía chilena*, the reader can distinguish the top half of the Latin phrase "AB IMO PECTORE". The phrase is followed by a star that directs us to a footnote. The footnote is mostly covered up by the same Latin phrase, but the reader can still make out the words "Loc. Lat.: (Desde el fondo del pecho)". Above the images one can read, "Existe la prohibición de cruzar una línea que sólo es imaginaria", partly obscured by the image of the man with star, while below the pictures, the text reads, "Ya en ese límite, mi padre muerto me entrega estos papeles." Finally, in between the images is another text that is mostly illegible because of how the pictures overlap it. The only part that is legible is "de" and "violen".

⁵⁹ Scott Weintraub notes the allusions of this imagery to Man Ray's photo of Duchamp with a star-shaven head and to Chilean artist Carlos Leppe's use of Ray's star image situated within a Chilean flag in the performance "Acción de la Estrella" (*Juan Luis Martínez's Philosophical Poetics* 112).

Lifting the top off the box, the reader finds a little post-card sized book with the same picture of the man with the star shaved in the top of his head. On the first page, the author's name appears as Juan Luis Martínez Holger, although on the title page it is written as “(~~JUAN LUIS MARTINEZ~~) / (~~JUAN DE DIOS MARTINEZ~~)”, in parenthesis and crossed-out, as it is on the cover of *La nueva novela*. Also on the publisher's page we learn that the photograph of the man is credited to James King, at the Institute of Experimental Art in Dallas, Texas. The second photograph is attributed to the author and is titled, “Lavamanos”. The title page also bears the name of the publisher, Martínez's own Ediciones Archivo, as well as the hallmark fox terrier, the guardian of the book/house/tomb.

On the following page is a reproduction of the fragments of text that cover the top of the box. Here we learn that the illegible fragment that is almost entirely covered by the two images on the front cover reads, “(La última posibilidad de franquear este límite se concretaría mediante la violencia):”. This text is inserted between the two others, so that the order of the phrases is: 1) “Existe la prohibición...”, 2) “(La última posibilidad...”. 3) “Ya en ese límite...”.

What are these documents that his father gives him? It would seem that they are the documents inserted in the following pages – the death certificates, Chilean flags, and *fichas de lectura*. The *fichas* indicate a poem or series of poems on the theme of death for each of the four renowned Chilean poets: “Los sonetos de la muerte” by Mistral, “Solo la muerte” by Neruda, “Poesía funeraria” by Pablo de Rokha, and “Coronación de la muerte” by Huidobro. Following these documents are a series of blank reading slips, 34 in total, accompanied by small Chilean flags, like the one in *La nueva novela*. Finally, tucked away at the end of the book (which resembles a post-card booklet, more than a book) is a copy of the death certificate of Luis Guillermo Martínez Villablanca, father of Juan Luis Martínez. The corresponding *ficha de*

lectura cites the text “Tierra del Valle Central de Chile”, the same as the inscription found on the small plastic bag of dirt in the box.

Like *La nueva novela*, these strange juxtapositions often leave us with more questions than answers. Why the insistence on the national theme in the work, on Chilean-ness? What is the connection between the death of the author’s father and the deaths of these renowned poets? Are these poets father figures for Martínez? What relation do the texts have to the images on the cover of the box? And why are there so many blank slips following the texts of the four poets? Do future Chilean poets already carry a death sentence? What is the relationship between official discourse and poetry?

To begin, I’d like to look at the national/political theme of the work. In contrast to Martínez’s first publication, this work is almost entirely dedicated to Chilean poetry. *La nueva novela* contains dozens of quotes and references to European literature and eastern literature, yet it is hard to find a single reference to a Chilean author. With his second publication, it’s as if Martínez has turned his gaze directly upon Chile and his national literary tradition. In Spanish, the term for homeland/fatherland is “*patria*” which is etymologically and phonologically linked to “*padre*”. Perhaps this explains the connection between the personal theme of his father’s death and the national theme of Chilean poetry. The book combines the themes of the death of his father, and death in the fatherland.⁶⁰

One element that is repeated in both *La nueva novela* and *La poesía chilena* is the Chilean flag. *La nueva novela* contains one miniature flag, while *La poesía chilena* is filled with

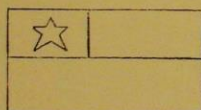
⁶⁰ One could argue that the four Chilean poets presented in this work, are the “father figures” of Martínez in a literary sense. Although Martínez typically references his influences from abroad, these are the “strong” poets of Chile with whom he must struggle to carve out his own place, as in the theory of Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence*. In the preface of this work, Bloom clarifies, “I never meant by ‘the anxiety of influence’ a Freudian Oedipal rivalry” (xxii). Nevertheless, his theory has often been interpreted thus, and it is tempting to apply psychoanalytic theory to this “death of the father” question in *La poesía chilena*.

little flags, thirty in total. What does the Chilean flag represent within the context of these works? Do they flags represent the same ideas in both books, or does the symbol undergo a transformation in *La poesía chilena*?

The Chilean flag was used as a symbol of patriotism and support of the military government during Pinochet's regime. Children were made to sing the national anthem to the flag every Monday morning, rain or shine. Also, the flag was used in the 1978 plebiscite to garner support for Pinochet's government.⁶¹ Due to international pressure from the United Nations in December of 1977, the government called a vote in order to legitimize its authority. Below is an image of a copy of the voting form. One of the most obvious uses of visual rhetoric is the use of the Chilean flag as a symbol of patriotism in defense of Chile.

⁶¹ Thanks to Marcelo Casals Araya for calling my attention to this 1978 plebiscite. In a newspaper article titled "Chile schedules a meaningless plebiscite" from 1980, Oregon journalists Dan Todd and Robert Guitteau Jr. call the plebiscite "a form of voting that appears democratic but, in reality, serves only to make dictatorships appear legitimate" (15A, Eugene Register-Guard, Sept. 10, 1980). Steve Stern writes that "the ballot conflated patriotism with government legitimacy and its announced institutionalization..." (141).

Frente a la agresión internacional desatada en contra del Gobierno de nuestra Patria, respaldo al Presidente Pinochet en su defensa de la dignidad de Chile, y reafirmo la legitimidad del Gobierno de la República para encabezar soberanamente el proceso de institucionalización del país.



— **SI**



— **NO**

The verbal text is thick with rhetoric as well. International pressure from the United Nations to respect human rights is referred to here as “international aggression”, and supporting

Pinochet is associated with defending the “dignity” of Chile. Finally, the Chilean flag is used as a symbol of patriotism, as if voting against Pinochet signified an unpatriotic act and were only worthy of a black rectangle instead of a flag. The official result was 75% yes (Stern 141). A country’s flag is most commonly used as a symbol of patriotism, but what does it mean to be patriotic in a totalitarian society? Expressing support for Pinochet’s regime is either to be ignorant of or to choose to ignore an institutionalized repression of a sector of the citizenry. In appropriating this patriotic expression and repeating it in an artistic work isolates and accentuates the signifying power of the national flag. The fanatical repetition (page after page) of the Chilean flag in *La poesía chilena* brings the gesture of flag waving to the point of nausea as each successive repetition erodes the sense of meaning, in the same way that repeating a word over and over will eventually reduce the sense to its arbitrary signifiers, like in the section “El lenguaje” from *La nueva novela*: “Repite una palabra tantas veces que sea necesario para volatilarla. Analice el residuo.”⁶²

This gesture of patriotism must be ironic in the work of Martínez. Just as Martínez parodies authoritarian discourse in *La nueva novela*, here he criticizes an inappropriate patriotic sentiment that doesn’t make sense in a society in which the government persecutes a sector of its population. Martínez’s *banderitas* are actually a secondary reappropriation, since he appropriates the flag which had already been appropriated by the government. As seen in the example above, the military government had used the flag as a support of the regime, signifying the defense of Pinochet and the Chilean government against foreign aggression.

By simply leafing through the book, it becomes apparent that the Chilean flags begin to take over the space of the work, eliminating the literary space through the imposition of a

⁶² *La nueva novela* (24).

political symbol. The first four pages are dedicated to Chilean poets, followed by four empty *fichas de lectura*, before the flags begin. Once the flags begin to appear, poetry begins to disappear. It's as if the flags blanket the pages which should be dedicated to literature, supplanting poetry with politics. This is perhaps parallel to the "*apagón cultural*", or cultural blackout, which occurred due to forms of repression in Pinochet's Chile. As poetry became more and more of a marginal activity, Martínez foresaw the death of Chilean poetry, covered up by thousands of senseless waving flags of empty, enforced patriotism.

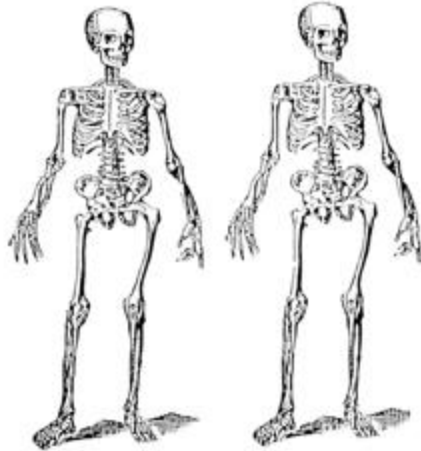
Parallel to the *apagón cultural* is a form of self-censorship that Martínez may have placed on himself. After his early works, such as poems from the Micharvegas anthology, *La nueva novela* and *La poesía chilena*, it is worth inquiring into the question of whether he ever wrote poetry (traditional verse) again. The dominant trend in his publications is away from the concept of lyrical poetry as the expression of one's emotions or subjectivity towards a poetic of appropriation and collage. Both *Aproximación a un principio de incertidumbre* and *El poeta anónimo* seem to be made up entirely of photocopied and collaged materials. This is not to say that these are not incredibly original works, but it is apparent that they are a departure from more traditional forms of poetry. This theory of self-imposed silence⁶³ also resonates with the influences of Martínez, since two of the most present poets in his work are Rimbaud and Baudelaire. On the one hand, Rimbaud made a similar gesture when he decided to leave behind

⁶³ One issue is that the posthumous publication of *Poemas del otro* lacks dates of composition for many of the poems. In a recent publication, *La última broma de Juan Luis Martínez: no solo ser otro sino escribir la obra de otro*, Scott Weintraub reveals that the majority of the poems in this book are actually translations from a Swiss-Catalán Juan Luis Martínez (without accent). This revelation seems to confirm that Martínez had little interest in writing traditional lyrical poetry and was more interested in the appropriation and collage method of writing. These poems long remained an anomaly in his writing, but now seem to confirm, as Weintraub says, that "Martínez es aún más Martínez por haber traducido un libro escrito por un autor del mismo nombre y hacerlo pasar por 'suyo' durante más de una década" (54). The other poems in this book, the "Poemas dispersos" have a much more similar style to the poems found in the Micharvegas anthology (from which one of them is taken) and differ greatly from what he was working on towards the end of his life. For these reasons, I think it is reasonable to posit that the "Poemas dispersos" are not from the time of *El poeta anónimo*.

writing poetry at a young age. Baudelaire, on the other hand, is considered to be the last great poet of subjective experience by Martínez. “Después de *Las flores del mal* ningún poeta moderno pretende hacer su poesía de su experiencia personal. El poeta se vuelve instrumento para que el lenguaje hable o se escriba. La afirmación analógica del lenguaje con el poeta hecha por Rimbaud, de ese ‘Yo es otro’” (*Poemas del otro* 101).

Martínez repeats this gesture of erasure by crossing out his name on the work, as he did in *La nueva novela*, but it is the death of the father, not the death of the author, which takes center stage in *La poesía chilena*. The death of the father may be interpreted as the death of his biological father, the literary “fathers”, or the *patria*, Chile. Again, it is his father who gives him these documents, according to the text on the cover of the box. Referring to the site of enunciation of his father, Martínez speaks of a limit, an imaginary line that can only be crossed through violent means. Paradoxically, his father is dead when he carries out the action of giving the documents. It seems that somehow he crosses this imaginary line between life and death to deliver his son this message. This may not seem so impossible when one realizes that Juan Luis Martínez carried out a similar action after his own death (by saving work to be published post mortem). Below is a text that he gave to his daughter, Alita Martínez, to publish after his death.

Estoy doblemente tranquilo



EL "YO" Y EL "NOSOTROS"

{Juan Luis Martínez}
{Juan de Dios Martínez}

**MANO A MANO QUE
ES MEJOR OLVIDAR**

In the end, Martínez crosses the imaginary line between life and death through language. It is the word, and more specifically, the poetic word, which is able to cross the boundary and communicate beyond the duality of life and death. Perhaps this is the meaning of the inclusion of the famous Chilean poems referenced in *La poesía chilena*; it is poetry that allows us to transcend the silence of death. This is also paradoxical because Martínez's body of work is largely built around a mistrust of language. Many of the language games in his poetry reveal the

inherent instability and arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign. Many of his poems point out the imaginary connection between signifiers and signifieds, in the same vein as Magritte's *La trahison des images*. As Foucault suggests in his analysis of the famous painting⁶⁴, the work is a sort of unraveled calligram, revealing the false assumptions behind the links of representational language and images. In a similar way, Martínez often challenges his readers to decipher the connections between word and image. This play between image and text is even more apparent in the most recent work of Martínez, *El poeta anónimo*. But first, to continue chronologically, I would like to take a look at a different work that was also published after the death of the author. This book, *Poemas del otro* (2003), brings us back to the topic of translation and publication, but sheds light on how these practices can be seen as (political) performances.

2.5 *Poemas de otro*

First, a preliminary observation: *Poemas del otro* is not technically one of Juan Luis Martínez's works. In order to attribute a book to Martínez, it must fulfill certain requirements due to the unique nature of his self-publications in which every element of the work participates in its signifying content. The posthumous book, *Poemas del otro*, does not evince this design since it was not published by the author (although it does contain some of his texts). Within the book, there is a series of poems called "Poemas del otro" (the same as the title of the book), which also participate in the game of belonging and not belonging to the Chilean poet, since they were not originally written by him⁶⁵. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest a way in which these

⁶⁴ See *This is Not a Pipe* (2008) by Michel Foucault, translated by James Harkness.

⁶⁵ I use the title "Poemas del otro" in quotations to refer to the section of poems with the same name as the book *Poemas del otro*, which I write in italics.

are his poems, and what we can learn about otherness from analyzing this unique kind of translation/borrowing.

In large part due to recent scholarship, *Poemas del otro* has become a central work in the hermeneutic project of Martínez studies. However, how has a book that was not produced (and in some instances, not even written) by the author come to have such an impact on how we understand his poetic? I would argue that the collections of poems “Poemas del otro” and “Poemas dispersos” do pertain to the Chilean author, without constituting one of his publications⁶⁶. In order for a book to be considered Martínez’s in all senses would require the presence of certain aspects that are lacking in *Poemas del otro*. Martínez practiced the art of the total book: a book in which every element participates in the meaning of the text, including the book flaps, the cover, the back cover, the font, the layout; in other words, the book in its entirety. Every aspect of the book participates in the greater signifying structure. *Poemas del otro* does have texts written by Martínez, but in contrast to the idea of a total book, this one lacks many of the aforementioned aspects: the book flaps contain a biographical note and information about other books published by the publisher UDP; there’s an image of the poet on the cover; the back cover has a short bibliography and an explanation for the publication of the book; moreover, it has a bar code and an ISBN number. All of these elements, typical of a commercial book publication, are absent in Martínez’s self-publications and go against his explicit desire to suppress the connection between author and text. *Poemas del otro*, therefore, presents a fundamental problem in the Martínez canon, and its classification is yet to be fully resolved.

⁶⁶ To be more specific, I would argue that “Poemas del otro” was thought of as a collection of poems by the author, while “Poemas dispersos” is actually the result of the editorial labor of assembling various poems published in different places, but not together as a collection until the 2003 book was published. I base my assertion of the intentionality of “Poemas del otro” on the poem by Martínez titled, “No sólo ser otro sino escribir la obra de otro”, as well as various interviews in which he expressed the intention to become an other or write as an other.

That being said, I argue that the collection “Poemas del otro” found inside the book with the same title pertains to the author in a particular, perhaps peculiar, manner, despite the recent discovery of the original source of these poems. In *La última broma de Juan Luis Martínez* (2014) Scott Weintraub reveals that the lyric poems of “Poemas del otro” that had been attributed to Martínez for at least a decade, were in fact translations from French of poems written by another Juan Luis Martinez, a Swiss-Catalonian poet⁶⁷. It was already difficult to classify the works of the Chilean Martínez, but the fact that “Poemas del otro” is a translation raises a new set of questions about his work. What seemed to be a relatively simple set of lyric poems now is seen to participate in game of pretending and double identity, complicating the simple lyric interpretation. I would like to examine here how these poems reshape our conception of Martínez’s poetic, employing texts and words of other to speak as the other, as well as to speak from the self from a particular socio-political context.

Martínez’s poetic technique may seem at first glance as a simply a form of translation and plagiarism. Nevertheless, the use of intertexts pertains to a recombinatory practice of appropriation and recontextualization of the words of others, and so I will call it a form of “playgairism”. In order to explain this strategy, I would like to use the analogy of the ventriloquist. Ventriloquism is the art of mobilizing the voice of the other inside of oneself. One acts as two people simultaneously. The ventriloquist gives us the impression that there is another voice that speaks from a separate entity/identity: the puppet. Of course, most of the audience is aware of the ruse, although they allow themselves to be tricked in order to enter into the spectacle. The terminology of ventriloquism helps to highlight an element of Martínez’s poetic of intertextuality and translation. Martínez mobilizes the appropriated intertexts as a

⁶⁷ The last name of the Swiss-Catalonian Martinez does not have an accent in the “i”.

ventriloquist mobilizes the puppet, discretely putting his own voice behind the façade of the other. Although it seems that in “Poemas del otro” we see an inversion of these roles: the Chilean poet gives us the impression that the other is speaking through him (in other words, that the puppet produces the discourse of the puppeteer). Martínez appropriates the words of the other, and even entire poems of another Juan Luis Martínez, producing them as if they were his own⁶⁸. This technique is a radicalization of Martínez’s poetic (and of the literary art in general), since the author is not a subject that produces his/her own words, but rather reproduces the words of others. Despite the fact that many of the texts in the Chilean poet’s works come from other sources, is it the manner in which he selects, organizes and combines these discourses to produce a new object that constitutes his poetic. In the case of “Poemas del otro”, he translates, word for word, the poems of an other (with a few exceptions)⁶⁹, but in such a way that certain poems coincide with his own context of enunciation and can reach new meanings. Again, I refer to the act of reading and/or publishing the poems during the lifetime of the poet and not the publication of the book *Poemas del otro*, since said book does not constitute a publication by the author.

I believe that the act of reproducing the words of another in a distinct historical moment can be understood as a form of translation. This type of translation is somewhat different from the *temporal* translation mentioned above with regards to *La nueva novela*. While *La nueva novela* became “translated” due to the passage of time and the new historical circumstances, “Poemas del otro” additionally constitutes a shift in the speaking subject. For this reason, I will call it a *paradigmatic* translation, since it means a total shift in paradigm, to a different time,

⁶⁸ Despite the fact that Martínez published and read some of these poems during his lifetime as if they were his, we said they were from the other: “Cuando se le preguntó a Martínez por el origen de estos poemas, él dijo que no los había escrito él, sino ‘el otro’” (Joannon 109).

⁶⁹ Weintraub notes a few changes in the translation process, such as the change of name in “Carta poema a Joseph Delteil”, in which Martínez substitutes the name of Delteil with his own (J.L. Martínez).

place, and subject. This is in fact closer to what happens to Cervantes' text in Borges story, "Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*". Nevertheless, the idea is the same: the reproduction of a text from an earlier time can enrich the original by adding a new context and new connotations.

If we accept the above reasoning, then "Poemas del otro" contains two forms of translation: a literal translation from French to Spanish, and a paradigmatic translation from one place, time and speaker, to another. Additionally, the poems from the collection "Poemas del otro" are unique in the way the author presented them as if they were his (although saying they were from "the other"), since they do not contain references to the other Juan Luis Martínez, and the coincidence of the names allows for a sort of ambiguous "playgairism". On one hand, this is reminiscent of the kind of feigning done by Fernando Pessoa, in which the Portuguese poet employs pseudonyms to speak as if he were another. In "Un libro escrito por nadie", Alejandro Zambra describes the poetic of *Poemas del otro* as a radicalization of Pessoa's procedure, but Weintaub rejects the idea of the multiplication of identities of the subject-author due to Martínez's effort to avoid the mythification of the figure of the author and to disappear as such (*La última broma* 46). Therefore, it is preferable to describe Martínez's procedure as the inversion of Pessoa's technique: instead of inventing a new identity for his own poetry, Martínez finds poetry of his other with the same name. Instead of pretending that another is speaking, he pretends that the *I* is speaking. Nevertheless, this is also a double-feint, because the words of the other can also be the source of a certain lyricism in which the *I* speaks from the other, despite the fact that the words were not originally written by him.

With regards to the lyric aspect of the poems from *Poemas del otro*, Cristóbal Joannon characterized these poems as "poesía lírica" in the introduction to the book (11). These poems and their style were a surprise for readers acquainted with his more well-known works, such as

La nueva novela and *La poesía chilena*, for the drastic change in style. So Joannon articulated what many were thinking: “Si se compara con *La nueva novela*, difícilmente podría inferirse que Juan Luis Martínez es el autor de ambos libros” (11). And his intuition served him well, as we now know. The poems, or at least the majority of them, were not written by the Chilean Juan Luis Martínez, but by another Martinez. This revelation came as a surprise to many, but at the same time, the technique was not entirely novel in his work, since books like *La nueva novela* and *El poeta anónimo* contain many “playgairisms” – playful intertexts and translations. In fact, Cristián Gómez Olivares discovered that part of *La nueva novela* was a direct translation of some poems from Jean Tardieu’s *Petits problèmes et travaux pratiques*. However, Martínez does expound upon Tardieu’s texts, providing his own answers to Tardieu’s questions and posing questions to the French author in return⁷⁰. This is somewhat different than the appropriation of texts by Martínez in “Poemas del otro” since these texts do not highlight their source, as the poet does in *La nueva novela* by titling the section “Respuestas a preguntas de Jean Tardieu”. In this sense, “Poemas del otro” reveals a more deceptive or misleading form of feigning authorship, in which the original source of the poems is obscured by the coincidence of names. Due to the discovery of the authorship of these poems, “Poemas del otro” no longer stands out as an anomaly due to their lyricism, but rather have shifted towards the center and demonstrate a radicalization of Martinez’s poetic; or, as Weintraub has written, “Martínez es aún más Martínez” for having performed this gesture of translation and appropriation.

⁷⁰ Gómez Olivares also explains in his article (2006) that some of Tardieu’s texts have been transformed into visual poems by Martínez. In a footnote he writes, “Este tipo de estructura, en la citada primera parte, no es otra cosa que la traducción casi completa de los ‘Petits problèmes et travaux pratiques’ del arriba citado libro de Tardieu. Martínez introduce sólo algunos cambios en el orden de los poemas y, magistralmente, convierte los textos originariamente de Tardieu en los poemas visuales de J.L. Martínez (aspecto ausente en el poeta francés)” (106).

To what extent was this appropriation deceitful and to what extent did the Chilean poet make it evident that he was borrowing from his homonymic other? In a sense, Martínez presents himself as an impostor, since he reproduces the words of another without clarifying the original source. He did, however, leave some hints for his readers. In fact, the poem “No solo ser otro sino escribir la obra de otro” expresses exactly that, starting with the title. In this poem he even calls himself an impostor: “La gran impostura / el gran Impostor / desvelado / develado / el nombre verdadero / su nombre / el mismo nombre” (*Poemas del otro* 51). In hindsight, Martínez could not have been clearer in revealing the nature of his poetic appropriation; he even goes so far as to say that he has the same name as the one he is mimicking. However, most readers understood this poem in a figurative sense, along the lines of Rimbaud’s famous declaration that “Je est un autre”. Additionally, in an interview Martínez expressed his desire to disappear as an author (*Poemas del otro* 75), and in practice he crossed his name out on his books as well as using a poetic of pastiche to undermine the concept of the writer as producer. The type of authorship apparent in works like *La nueva novela* could be likened to the Cheshire Cat, a nebulous or unstable speaking subject who presents riddles and then disappears, leaving us with more questions than answers.

One final question I would like to address about these poems is whether they can still have a personal meaning, and if they can speak to the Chilean poet’s historical situation, considering they were not originally conceived with this purpose. Can these translations still be read as lyric or political for the Chilean context or are they just a joke?

Part of the problem with the term “lyric” is that today it functions as sack that fits a little bit of everything. In *Teorías de la lírica*, Gustavo Guerrero suggests that we think of the lyric primarily as a name, a denomination: “como un signo simple que denota a esos objetos

complejos que son los textos literarios, como una etiqueta descriptiva que, al subrayar ciertos rasgos o características, los agrupa en clases de recepción o de producción” (10). Guerrero also comments that the name of Borges’ essay, “Historia de los ecos de un nombre” would be a good description of the lyric, since it draws our attention to how historical processes have transformed our idea of it. He writes, “Interrogamos el pasado con la lengua del presente para saber lo que el presente puede decirnos del pasado” (11).

In the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Virginia Jackson points out that, “In Western poetics, almost all poetry is now characterized as lyric” (826). Nevertheless, she provides a description of many of the traits central to our modern conception of the lyric: brevity, subjectivity, passion, sensuality, expression of personal sentiment (Hegel), harmonious design (Poe and Coleridge), and addressed to a private reader (Wordsworth and Mill). For the purposes of this analysis, I will refer to the lyric in this general sense, albeit with a slight modification.

The modification I refer to is from Joel Fineman’s conception of the lyric in his analysis of the Shakespearian sonnet. Fineman analyzes the importance of the sonnet in the lyric tradition and proposes that in Shakespeare’s sonnets challenge earlier models of lyric subjectivity by replacing it with “the subject of ‘perjur’d eye,’ a poet who, because he speaks, is poised between a visionary and a verbal self” (25). Fineman explains that the new subject is situated between his ego and his ego ideal. In *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye* he writes: “The subject in Shakespeare’s sonnets experiences himself as his difference from himself. His identity is an identity of ruptured identification, a broken identity that carves out in the poet’s self a syncopated hollowness that accounts for the deep personal interiority of the sonnets’ poetic persona” (25). This strange realization – namely, that the externalization of one’s interiority can strike one as otherness – highlights how writing can separate the self from one’s self, making it appear as other. I believe

that this idea of lyric subjectivity is particularly interesting when applied to Juan Luis Martínez's appropriation of the other. The operation that he undertakes, however, is almost the opposite: he carves out or suppresses part of himself (his voice), but instead of putting this on display as a written text, he replaces it with the voice of the other at his site of enunciation, producing his otherness from his self, albeit in a different manner. The effect, though, is very similar; both operations result in a poem that highlights the otherness within the self, or the discovery of the self as other.

According to the theory of Mikhail Bakhtin, the context of enunciation forms part of the meaning of the words, even when these are the reproduced words of others. Bakhtin, in fact, puts more emphasis on the context than the text with regards to the meaning of a declaration. In his theory of heteroglossia (which unfortunately does not take into account poetry), he writes: "The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention [...] when he appropriates the word, adapting his own semantic and expressive intention" (293). Since language is a social construct and does not belong to any individual, everything that we produce is essentially the words of others, yet this does not reduce language's value as a means of self-expression. It's easy to see how this also applies to Martínez's work; he uses various citations and photocopies, but the meaning of these intertexts corresponds to their use within the context of enunciation. Or, as Lawrence Venuti explains in his work, *The Scandals of Translation*: "The study of translations is truly a form of historical scholarship because it forces the scholar to confront the issue of historical difference in the changing reception of a foreign text. Translation [...] is a reminder that no act of interpretation can be definitive" (46). Thus, Venuti reminds us that translation is always contingent to the present and local context, and in turn, this understanding of translation helps us

to see that the final meaning of a work is always indeterminate, dependent on the context of reception and enunciation.

Borges analyzes this unlimited transformation of a text through time due to various sites of reception and enunciation in the already cited short story, “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*.” The narrator of the story tells us that Menard’s *Quijote* is an even richer text because of the subtle transformations it has undergone. When Menard repeats the phrase, “la verdad, cuya madre es la historia” in the 20th Century, it sounds strange and unlikely, due to the changes in historical studies since Cervantes’ time. Likewise, the poems by the Swiss-Catalonian Martinez take on new meanings in the context of Chile, and can become enriched with different connotations. The critic Matías Ayala, believing that the poem “Quién soy yo” was penned by the Chilean poet, said that it referenced the political situation in Chile, since it was published four days before the 1988 plebiscite and contains possible indirect references to the situation, such as, “Mi patria está sin nombre, sin tachas / hay una verdad en la subversion / que nos devolverá nuestra pureza escarnecida” and “Mi amor lo doy al hombre o a la mujer / quién me acompañará en este periplo incierto / donde velan la angustia y la soledad. / No cerraré los ojos, ni los bajaré.” Ayala characterizes this poem as “lyric and civic” with a voluntary projection towards the future of Chile (216). This makes sense since the poem references a country in dark times, anguish and solitude, but with hope for a return to purity after this uncertain moment. The allusions match perfectly with a country on the edge of decisive moment, possibly emerging from a repressive dictatorship. In contrast, Weintraub writes, “la lectura alegórica que propone Ayala es algo problemática, ya que él analiza los poemas como si fueran escritos por Martínez. Sin embargo, no anula completamente los aportes de la lectura política” (*La última broma* 47). Weintraub recognizes that Ayala’s reading still has value since the gesture of publishing the

poem at that precise moment before the plebiscite would carry political connotations. Following Bakhtin's theory cited above, I believe that the meaning of the poem does not change significantly since the meaning depends primarily on the context of enunciation, reinforcing the political and personal reading of the poem as articulated by Ayala. This is similar to the way Martínez appropriates and translates Francis Picabia's quotation for the epigraph of *La nueva novela*: "El padre y la madre no tienen derecho de la muerte sobre sus hijos, pero la Patria, nuestra segunda madre, puede inmolarlos para la inmensa gloria de los hombres políticos" (135). Since the quote is situated with a little Chilean flag, it is apparent how the quote enters into dialogue with the context of the Chilean dictatorship. Although it occurs in a more subtle manner, I believe that the poem "Quién soy yo" undergoes a similar translation/transformation when it is published in the context of the plebiscite.

The critic Carla Cordua writes that "La desaparición de una familia" from *La nueva novela* "es la excepción que interrumpe el bloqueo lírico" (25) and "la sola y gloriosa excepción a la manera predominante del libro" (24). In accordance with Cordua, there are few lyric moments in *La nueva novela* (and in Martínez's work in general), and up until now, *Poemas del otro* was the greatest exception. However, is it too rash to discard the lyric interpretation of these poems now that we know they are translations and not original works of the Chilean poet? Ayala has proposed, for example, that the verses, "Espero que la sombra me separe del día / y que fuera del tiempo, bajo un cielo sin techo / la noche me acoja donde mayor sé morir", refer to premonitions of death due to the poet's poor health (who passed away due to complications from kidney disease). We know that the poem was not originally conceived of with this context, since it was first written by the Swiss-Catalonian Martínez. Nevertheless, I do not see why this is not a valid reading given the context of enunciation by the Chilean Martínez. I believe that Martínez

was clever enough to know that his “playgairism” would carry connotations of irony and humor, as well as lyricism.

Perhaps most of Martínez’s appropriations are carried out with ludic intent, but there are certainly moments when his poetic touches on the tragic, personal or political. These poems may appear to be lyric in a traditional sense, of a text that expresses the author’s subjectivity, such as the interpretation of “Quién soy yo” which emphasizes the foreshadowing of the poet’s early passing. Nevertheless, due to Martínez’s poetic of feigning, I believe it’s more accurate to describe them as lyric according to the sense expressed by Fineman: a divided subjectivity in which the poetic voice encounters itself as other. I believe that Martínez explores this notion of the lyric, seen in Shakespeare and developed by Rimbaud, in which a subject discovers its other and incorporates the other’s voice in its poetry. In the case of “Poemas del otro”, Martínez encounters a real life other, his poetic double, who comes to represent the otherness of the self in his poetry. Could this be “la verdad en la subversión” to which both Martinez poets refer to in “Quién soy yo”? Despite the subversion of a true subjective expression there may still be a sort of truth or authenticity within this feigning. Perhaps this is a truth that is feigned, like in the poem “Autopsicografia” by Pessoa: “O poeta é um fingidor. / Finge tão completamente / que chega a fingir que é dor / a dor que deveras sente” (54). Pessoa’s poet confuses his feigning with his authentic feeling to such a degree that he comes to feign something that he truly feels. With “Poemas del otro”, Martínez shows himself to be the master of the ventriloquist art, feigning a truth through the other’s voice in himself.

2.6 *El poeta anónimo*

Published twenty years after the passing of the author and ten years after *Poemas del otro*, *El poeta anónimo* (2013) represents the latest but hopefully not final book of poetry in the brief collection of works by Juan Luis Martínez. The book was published in São Paulo by the publisher Cosac Naify with the trusteeship of Luis Pérez-Oramas, curator at the MoMA, and under the direction of Pedro Montes Lira, director and founder of the Departamento 21 art gallery in Santiago, Chile. The book looks different from previous works of Martínez, since it was not self-published by Ediciones Archivo. The work has a slip-off cover that contains typical elements of the publisher: ISBN, copyright, an explanation of how the book was printed – elements that are not given in *La nueva novela* or in *La poesía chilena*. The removable cover suggests that this part of the book is not part of Martínez's unpublished manuscript, since it can be separated from the rest of the book. It seems to me that this approach allows the publisher to include the extraneous elements of publishing without modifying the original manuscript.

On the back of the removable cover, there is a text in Portuguese that reads, “Edição fac-similar à edição chilena de 1985.” If this is indeed an exact reproduction of the book as Martínez would have wanted it published, there are a couple of peculiar differences from his previous books. The cover of the book has the title “EL POETA ANONIMO (O EL ETERNO RETORNO DE JUAN LUIS MARTINEZ)” without the author's name crossed out. Would Martínez have drawn a line through his name before publishing the book as he does in his other works? Also missing from this work is Sogol, the iconic fox-terrier of Ediciones Archivo, and guardian of his works. Is this a conscious omission on the part of the author? Perhaps it is, since in this book Martínez has transitioned from disappearances (*La nueva novela*) and death (*La poesía chilena*), to the discovery of tombs and unmarked mass graves. Sogol no longer has to protect the house or the grave, since this work focuses on the rediscovery of tombs.

The work contains several specific references to politically charged events, such as the discovery of the bodies of *desaparecidos* in Lonquén and Yumbel. These events of “La noche chilena” are a radical departure from the subtle allusions in *La nueva novela* to the “dense and tragic climate of Chile.” In this work Martínez presents newspaper clippings that evince the calamities of the dictatorship. Although I will again be focusing on the political implications of the work, this book is similar to his others since it is also a labyrinth-like adventure into the intricacies of language, culture, philosophy, and poetry.

One of the most striking features of the work is that it appears to be designed almost entirely by the technique of photocopy and collage. One wonders whether there are any original texts at all, or if all of the elements of the book have been taken from other sources and placed together to make suggestive arrangements. These arrangements are themselves strikingly original and provocative. The organization of material into chapters creates associations between temporally and geographically disparate historical events which affects our reading of Chilean history, specifically of the Pinochet era. Martínez also uses the spatial organization of the page to create connections between images and texts, sometimes analogically and other times to create humor. The work combines humorous and tragic tones, in a similar fashion to *La nueva novela*.

Martínez also continues his journey into Eastern philosophy and literature by structuring this work around the eight trigrams from the *I Ching*. The cover shows the eight symbols along with their names vertically, alongside an image that is difficult to decipher, but appears to be a group of helmets strewn across the grass. Each chapter corresponds to one of the trigrams, in addition to a chapter title that probably has a cryptic connection to the corresponding trigram. The book begins, for example, with *Khien*, a symbol that is related to the creative force, the

father, the head, and heaven in the *I Ching*, and in Martínez's book "LA TUMBA DE BAUDELAIRE" is the name of the chapter. There may be a connection between the symbol and the title since Baudelaire is sometimes referred to as the father of modern poetry. The election of the trigrams to certain chapters seems not to be arbitrary, but rather a planned thematic arrangement. If we jump to the last chapter, the title "VEINTE AÑOS DESPUÉS" is accompanied by the trigram *Khwan*, which can signify for the receptive, the mother, the belly, and the earth. This may be a metaliterary reference to the book itself, since its publication/birth was to happen twenty years after the passing of the author. The chapter, however, abounds with references to twenty years, such as the book with that name by Alexander Dumas, and images of poets, like Baudelaire, at age twenty, and twenty years later. These speculations about how to interpret the trigrams are not meant to indicate that the trigrams are employed as monovalent symbols, e.g.: *Khien* = Baudelaire, or *Khwan* = gestation. Instead, each trigram is inherently polyvalent and takes on additional connotations when used as organizing symbols for the various chapters of *El poeta anónimo*.

In the third section, "EL PROFESOR DE HISTORIA", Martínez has scattered a series of Chinese poems (translated to Spanish), throughout the chapter. These poems date from the second century B.C. to the thirteenth century A.D. Although they are from various authors, the topics focus on war, death, the destruction of the family and the house, people who never return, and individual sacrifice for the greater good of the state. The first and oldest poem, "CANCION DE LA DINASTIA HAN", treats the story of a soldier who left home at age fifteen, to return and find it abandoned, with wild plants taking over. The second poem, "POEMA DE LA DINASTIA HAN", tells the story of a young couple, who, although recently married, must separate since the young man must go to war. He only asks that he may have a long life in her

memory if he does not return. The next poem, “EN EL FOSO DE LA GRAN MURALLA ABREVO MI CABALLO”, by Tchen Lin, conveys the perplexity of a soldier who sees the Great Wall being constructed on the bones of the dead and asks why so many must die for this wall. He also writes home to his wife to tell her she should marry another, although she denies this request. Several poems similar in nature follow, ending with “CANCION DE LA FRONTERA” by Lu Yeu:

Con gritos ásperos y tristes se levanta la Gran Muralla,
La Vía Láctea y la luna parecen bajas ante ella,
pero si no retirasen la osamenta de los muertos,
tendrían la misma altura de la Gran Muralla.

These poems are similar in tone and topic despite their temporal differences. The voices lament the dispersion of familial unity and question the validity of the war and the wall in light of the mounting tally of lives that have been sacrificed.

These poems are interwoven with each other and with the other texts that make up this section, “El Dolor de los Héroes”, creating a series of echoes and resonances throughout different epochs and cultures. There are images and texts of revolutionaries, political figures and literary artists who resisted fascist governments such as Jean-Paul Marat, Karl Marx, Hans and Sophie Scholl and Federico García Lorca. Much like the Chinese poems interspersed among the images and texts, these individuals seem to be considered heroes because of how they gave their lives to a greater cause. Most of them sacrificed their lives for this cause, often times fighting against injustices within their own country. These texts set the stage for the section in the following chapter called “Textos de la Noche Chilena” in which the author highlights a series of newspaper clippings and other evidence referring to the *desaparecidos* and the discovery of mass graves.

The following chapter is called “EL HONOR DE LOS POETAS”, a title that recalls the themes of the previous chapter with its reference to a book of French poetry, *L'Honneur des poètes*⁷¹. Although the chapter begins with this reference to French writers who resisted Nazi German occupation, the focus quickly transitions to the Chilean stage. The texts and images of the *Noche Chilena* reflect themes similar to the previous chapter, in the portrayal of individuals who sacrificed or were sacrificed for a “greater good”. Most cases deal with the latter theme, but there is also a reference to José Manuel Balmaceda⁷², who is presented here perhaps as a historical echo to Salvador Allende. The poem, “Balmaceda” by Heraclio Acuña, presents the image of a heroic president who worked for the good of the poor and who died in a rebellion. One cannot help but think of the *golpe de estado* that deposed Salvador Allende reading these lines:

I los revolucionarios
una vez que así vencieron
llevaron por todas partes
el pillaje i el incendio;
los fieles al presidente
fueron perseguidos, presos
muchos de ellos desterrados
atormentados i muertos.

Un hombre se suicidó
mas su recuerdo nos queda
fué nuestro gran Presidente
José Manuel Balmaceda.

Acuña speaks of a bloody rebellion that wasn't satisfied with merely taking control, but rather felt it necessary to pursue, take prisoner, torture, and kill any remaining supporters of the

⁷¹ This book features the works of four French writers who resisted German occupation: Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, François Mariac and Albert Camus, and was published by Les Éditions de Minuit in 1943.

⁷² José Manuel Emiliano Balmaceda Fernández was president of Chile from 1886 to 1891, whose liberal reforms may have been a factor in the civil war which concluded in his suicide before surrendering to the new government.

former president, all of which echo the actions of the military dictatorship of Pinochet. And of course, the reference to the President who took his own life before giving himself up to his enemies, but whose memory will live on, reminds us of Allende.

There are more examples, however, of individuals whose lives were taken by the state in order to achieve a supposedly greater good. The first text of the section is an anonymous poem written from the perspective of a parent who is searching for a lost son. The poem originally appeared in an anthology, *Los poetas chilenos luchan contra el fascismo*, published in 1977. The text, therefore, alludes to the case of a *desaparecido* whose story reminds the reader of the poems in the previous chapter in which young men never returned from the wars in China. In a way, these juxtapositions between famous historical figures who died fighting Fascism and the somewhat anonymous examples of disappeared people from Chile and China elevates them to the status of heroes.

Anonymity and world renown: why does Martínez bring these two opposites together in order to articulate the similarities of these tragic events? Figures like Marx, Marat and Lorca offer almost universally recognizable images, while the anonymous subjects of the Chinese and Chilean tragedies were almost swept under the rug of history. Perhaps this highlights the role of the poet in contrast to the role of the historian. Recall that the first of these chapters is called “EL PROFESOR DE HISTORIA”, while the latter is “EL HONOR DE LOS POETAS”. The historian treats the lives of the great figures that are center stage in historical accounts, while the poet allows anonymous voices to be heard. These chapters, then, present the two sides of history, and the poet, “El poeta anónimo”, according to the title of the book, affords us a view of the underside of history.

This is not to say that he speaks *for* these anonymous voices as the poetic voice in “Alturas de Macchu Picchu” by Neruda seems to imply about himself when he declares: “Yo vengo a hablar por vuestra boca muerta.”⁷³ Martínez, rather, seems to speak behind the texts, as if his message is encoded in the words of others. He uses citation and photocopy to produce arrangements that, when viewed together (contiguously and synchronically), suggest a new meaning.

In the following pages of the book we find a couple of articles explaining the discovery of cadavers at Yumbel after their disappearance from Laja. Of the 21 detained, the skeletons of 19 were found in a mass grave at the cemetery of Yumbel, according to the article. The prisoners were mostly laborers who were supposedly associated with labor unions or socialist groups, but there was also a skeleton of a minor found. Representatives of the Catholic Church, while condemning the event also asked for the bodies to be returned to the families. Cited from the 1979 article in Martínez’s book, the council wrote, “podemos esperar que...no ocurra lo acontecido en Lonquén, sino que los familiares puedan disponer de los cuerpos de sus seres queridos.”

This reference to Lonquén remits us to the beginning of the book where we find the images of the upside-down lambs. The bodies at Lonquén were discovered in limestone ovens in 1978, roughly a year before Yumbel. The remains of 15 individuals may be reflected in *El poeta anónimo* by the appearance of the first image, “EL DURMIENTE DEL VALLE”, and by the successive 14 lambs on the following page that make up the sonnet called “LOS DURMIENTES DEL VALLE” (Lonquén, Chile). The following page has 19 upside-down sheep, the same number as the amount of bodies found in Yumbel, but is also labeled as “(Lonquén, Chile)”.

⁷³ See Pablo Neruda’s *Canto general*.

The section “Textos de la noche chilena” contains other, less readily decipherable images and texts. How these elements, such as an advertisement from Credit Suisse, an anonymous note to Pushkin, an ad for the *Compañía Sud-Americana de Vapores*, a flock of geese, and an article about a plane crash, are related to the discovery of the bodies of *desaparecidos* is often times obscure and requires a profound level of research that would have been nearly impossible before the advent of the Internet. I am convinced, however, that the diverse elements are connected in subtle ways to the themes of the chapters. Credit Suisse, for example, was involved in a sort of money laundering for the former dictator, who was able to live off of a fortune that he acquired from unknown sources⁷⁴. Or, the article included in the book about a plane crash of a 727 off the coast of Florida⁷⁵, which seems completely unrelated, perhaps hides a common theme. What is particularly striking about this article is that after mentioning the death of three passengers aboard the plane, the writer concludes by commenting on the event as a new “treasure trove” for divers to search for “booty”. Doesn’t it seem odd that the take-away message from this catastrophe is that it turned out to be fortunate for treasure seekers? This juxtaposition of financial gain and negligent treatment of the loss of human lives seems to echo the actions of the military regime in sacrificing certain individuals while promoting the economic advancement of the country.

The anonymous letter to Pushkin may also provide us with an example of an obscure parallel that Martínez suggests to his readers. This is the first of several anonymous notes that Pushkin would receive regarding a possible affair that his wife was having. In this letter, the author invites him to join the “sérénissime ordre des Cocus”. This incitation led to a duel

⁷⁴ “Ejército chileno ocultó información bancaria sobre Pinochet.” *Prensa Latina*, Santiago de Chile, 4 July 2006, <http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/corru/doc/riggs4.html>

⁷⁵ According to the photocopied clipping taken from *Time Magazine* (May 22, 1978) in *El poeta anónimo* the National Airlines jet made a “perfect landing” in which “only three others drowned”.

between Pushkin and his brother-in-law, accused party, Georges-Charles de Heeckeren d'Anthès. The duel resulted in Pushkin's death, and subsequently we may view this first letter as the beginning of the end for Pushkin. This denouncement may be related to the denouncements of Lonquén and Yumbel, which were among the first discoveries of the cadavers of disappeared people, and hence the beginning of the formal discrediting of Pinochet. In addition, the letter to Pushkin is another example of how an anonymous voice came to affect the course of history. *El poeta anónimo* is an intolerable book, from the perspective of the Pinochet regime. It is probably the "libro intolerable" to which Martínez referred in his interview with Félix Guattari. Denouncement of the regime echoes throughout the work and sometimes appears explicitly, such as the references to Lonquén and Yumbel. In this sense, it is a slight departure from the obscure references in *La nueva novela*. This latter book, however, was published in 1977 and therefore could have caused the author trouble if it contained more explicit references. One wonders to what extent self-censorship may have played a role in more oblique approach of *La nueva novela*. On the other hand, *El poeta anónimo* is an equally, if not more enigmatic than his previous works. The quantity of intertextual references is dizzying, in addition to the mysterious juxtaposition of images and texts within sections and chapters of the work. Deciphering the connections between the diverse elements of the book will be an ongoing work for scholars for years to come.

2.7 Chapter Conclusion

The different works of Juan Luis Martínez breach the sphere of the political from different angles. *La nueva novela* provides an interesting example of a book that became more

politically charged because of the way history unfolded after it was written. Texts such as “Desaparición de una familia” seem to be related to disappeared people, but were in fact composed prior to those events that have come to define them. This strange temporal translation did not only occur passively, but became an active translation when the author decided to publish the book during this political context. Thus we can consider the political interpretations as part of the signifying elements of the text and disappearance as one of the primary motifs, although this reading is tempered by the fact that the texts may have been mostly written before these events, and are therefore duplicitous in nature. Disappearances abound in *La nueva novela*, combining with the theme of the destruction of the unity of the family and of the sacred protected space of the house. These themes, along with the reference to the dense and tragic climate of Chile, lead one to a critique of the political situation that was dismembering elements of Chilean society, before and after the coup.

With *La poesía chilena*, Martínez shifts his attention from disappearances to death and burial. Often heralded as a statement about the death of poetry in Chile, this work certainly comments on the *apagón cultural* which took place during the dictatorship. The enveloping silence that obscured artists and their works is here referred to with a book/tomb that buries the poets of Chile along with the father of the author. This grandiose gesture at once commemorates the life of his father as a poetic work and criticizes the official censure of artistic production in Chile.

Finally, *El poeta anónimo* treats the subject of rediscovered tombs as it unearths histories from forgotten anonymous voices. It is perhaps the most direct political condemnation of the dictatorship, yet also manages to be one of the most enigmatic of his works. Martínez uses the poetics of the photocopies and the artistic technique of collage to craft a web of interwoven texts

that dialogue with each other, creating a series of parallels through diverse periods of space and time. However it is the poet, in the end, and not the historian, who has the final word.⁷⁶

Martínez continues practicing the dissolution of the notion of authorship in this last work by making a book of intertexts that contains very little, if any, of his own words. Beginning with his first book, *La nueva novela*, the poet undermines the concept of the author as the creator of meaning by crossing out his name and allowing the readers to participate in the text. This relegation of the author to a reduced role and the elevation of the reader as co-participant will be the focus of the third chapter.

In this chapter I have focused on the political interpretations of Martínez's work with special emphasis on the role of space with regards to the theme of unity and dispersion. I have shown how the notions of the self, the family and the nation are threatened by forces of disruption and dispersion within a duplicitous context. Martínez uses a set of analogous metaphors of the house, the nation, being, and the book itself, to show how spaces are punctured, causing the dissolution of integrity of subjects, family circles, and protected spaces. The next chapter will take a closer look at the role of space in Martínez's work as well as how poetry moves beyond the space of the page through performative actions.

⁷⁶ With regards to the issue raised in this section as to whether history or poetry will have the final word I am reminded of J.M. Coetzee's essays in *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship*, and in particular his essay on "Osip Mandelstam and the Stalin Ode". In this text Coetzee purports that Stalin was worried that poetry would have the final word regarding his legacy and so ordered writers to declare themselves for Stalin in their works (104-116).

Chapter 2. Poetics beyond the page: the space and performance of poetry

3.1 Chapter Introduction

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendants of time and the determined inhabitants of space.

- Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces"

Foucault was one of many philosophers to participate in the relative prioritization of historical analysis over spatial, but he was also aware of the shifting of paradigms in the latter half of the twentieth century to reevaluate the importance of a spatial hermeneutics. I borrow the term "spatial hermeneutics" from Edward W. Soja, who describes the shifting paradigms in *Postmodern Geographies* thus:

For at least the past century, time and history have occupied a privileged position in the practical and theoretical consciousness of Western Marxism and critical social science. Understanding how history is made has been the primary source of emancipatory insight and practical political consciousness, the great variable container for a critical interpretation of social life and practice. Today, however, it may be space more than time

that hides consequences from us, the ‘making of geography’ more than the ‘making of history’ that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world. (1)

A spatial hermeneutics, then, attempts to analyze the hidden simultaneities, such as the manner in which space and social forces are organized, which are equally important as the temporal factors in explaining socio-historical phenomena and which complicate a linear account of events. While the historical narrative and the Hegelian dialectical are not immune to empirical criticism, the rediscovery of the importance of spatial analysis is not a denial of history. It is, rather, a reassertion of the necessity of spatial hermeneutics to understand the social forces at play in historical accounts.

To a certain extent, literature sometimes anticipates the discoveries of other disciplines of knowledge, and I believe this can be seen with regards to the spatial turn as well. An example of the literary exploration of the idea of simultaneous space can be found in Jorge Luis Borges’ short story “El Aleph” (1945). The tale describes a man who stumbles upon the paradoxical microcosm of the cabalists, the single place that contains all places, the ultimate example of contingent simultaneities. The writer tells us that to describe the limitless Aleph in words presents an insurmountable task, yet he provides us with an astonishing description of this “unimaginable universe”:

The Aleph was probably two or three centimeters in diameter, but universal space was contained inside it, with no diminution in size. Each thing (the glass surface of a mirror, let us say) was infinite things, because I could clearly see it from every point in the cosmos. I saw the populous sea, saw dawn and dusk, saw the multitudes of the Americas, saw a silvery spiderweb at the center of a black pyramid, saw a broken labyrinth (it was London), saw endless eyes, all very close, studying themselves in me as though in a mirror, saw all the mirrors on the planet (and none of them reflecting me), saw in a rear courtyard on Calle Soler the same tiles I'd seen twenty years before in the entryway of a house in Fray Bentos, saw dusters of grapes, snow, tobacco, veins of metal, water vapor, saw convex equatorial deserts and their every grain of sand, saw a woman in Inverness whom I shall never forget, saw her violent hair, her haughty body, saw a cancer in her

breast, saw a circle of dry soil within a sidewalk where there had once been a tree...
(129-27)

As is typical of Borges' style, the human experience of trying to comprehend reality (and in this case, the awesome nature of the interconnectedness of space) reaches the point of absurdity by introducing the finite mind with the infinite. The insight gained, however, suggests a radical form of knowledge based on the juxtaposition of simultaneous spaces, instead of linear events.

This *acumulatio ad infinitum* of Borges' Aleph might remind one of Haroldo de Campos' posterior project, *Galáxias*, a series of microcosms in words, which looks to take the poetic word beyond the constraints of linear progression. De Campos' work accumulates words and images into a veritable linguistic vortex:

e aqui está san rafael el arcangel san rafael
em seu triunfo motocicletas e namorados o domingo ocrecobre do guadalquivir
e a ponte entre a puerta del puente e la calahorra e o rio sob a ponte
azuda a azuda remoinhando e córdoba vista da ponte no poente cobreocre mire usted yo
soy el único arabista de córdoba... (no page number given, fifth poem)

Both of these projects are also reminiscent of an earlier impulse: Mallarmé's dream to unveil the correspondence between the universe and the poem, representing the attempt to write a text that would be the double of the cosmos. Mallarmé's seminal poem, *Un Coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard*⁷⁷ resembles the cosmos in its construction. Octavio Paz describes its form in *The Bow and the Lyre* thus:

[*Coup de dés*] ceases to be a linear succession and thus escapes from the typographical tyranny that imposes on us a longitudinal vision of the world, as if images and things presented themselves one after another and not, as actually happens, as simultaneous moments and in different areas of the same space or in different spaces. [...] the phrases tend to be configured in more or less independent centers, like solar systems within a universe (250).⁷⁸

⁷⁷ First published in the May 1897 issue of *Cosmopolis*. Henceforth referred to simply as *Coup de dés*.

⁷⁸ For this and those that follow I use Ruth L.C. Simms' translation: Paz, Octavio. *The Bow and the Lyre*. University of Texas Press, 1973.

According to Paz, Mallarmé never achieved his grand poem of the cosmos, but he did accomplish something perhaps as important: “Our legacy is not Mallarmé’s word but the space opened by his word.” (254). Within the Western tradition, the projects of Mallarmé, De Campos and Borges can be seen as literary predecessors to the idea of spatial hermeneutics. They are attempts to spatialize language, to create a geography of simultaneities, and thus to break away from the linear narrative inherent in most forms of discourse, be they literary, social or historical. Nevertheless, it is impossible for us to completely escape the successive dimension of experience and language; Borges describes this “writer’s hopelessness” as follows: “What my eyes saw was simultaneous; what I shall write is *successive*, because language is successive” (129). In describing the Aleph, Borges uses narration, just as I must do, ironically, in writing about spatialization in literature.

To clarify, when I speak of space in literature, I am not referring to the concept put forth by Maurice Blanchot in *L'Espace littéraire* (1955), but rather to the awareness and incorporation of physical space as a thematic, semantic and/or structural component of the text.⁷⁹ In the texts that I examine, space is a leitmotif as well as part of its signifying structure. The space of the page is understood as part of the semiosis of the text, part of its semantic structure. For this reason, my analysis focuses on works that consciously incorporate the physical space of the page as part of the signifying text. I am not interested in works that employ space in a representational mode, using the words of the text to outline a picture of an object or reality, since I find that this use of space is at best a facile mimetics. Instead, I will focus on the

⁷⁹ Blanchot explains: “The work is a work only when it becomes the intimacy shared by someone who writes it and someone who reads it, a space violently opened up by the contest between the power to speak and the power to hear” (37). The notion of space in literature for Blanchot is the space that the work establishes with regard to itself, a deferral which allows it to be filled up with meanings and yet subsist by remaining elusive in its essence.

conceptual use of space that explores the semantics of language through the use of their organization into visual structures. This use of space creates multiple readings and interpretations, allowing for various performances of the text. In my analysis I also explore the relationship between space and performance: how the use of space can be performative and how it can solicit audience participation.

The principal scope of this project is poetic production in Chile during the Pinochet regime, so I will be focusing on the spatialization of poetry during this moment. This time period provides a rich field of examples, especially as regards CADA's poetic actions and Zurita's inscriptions of poetry into geographical spaces, taking poetic expression and reception beyond the page. I believe, however, that these movements may owe something to the antecedent spatialization of language on the page via Mallarmé, the historical avant-gardes, Brazilian Concrete Poetry, and in the case of Chile, the work of Juan Luis Martínez.

The works of the group of authors and visual artists known as CADA (Colectivo Acciones De Arte) are often viewed within the series of movements in the latter half of the twentieth century known as the *neovanguardia* or *posvanguardia*, showing their connection, linguistically at least, to the original avant-gardes. The poetic actions of this group are important to this study because they not only took poetry beyond traditional forms of production and reception, but they also mobilized the population to participate in forms of subjective/artistic expression in order to reclaim public spaces. These works can be interpreted as a reiteration and expansion on experimental poetics from the historical avant-gardes. Since the topic of this chapter is spatial hermeneutics, I wish to provide more than a narrative of the development of spatial poetics by examining poetic production in Chile during the '70s and '80s within the context of the social forces at play simultaneous to said production.

In this chapter I utilize one of the most important theorists of social space, Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* provides a theoretical lens from which to view the work of CADA and the Chilean poets in terms of their impact on the organization of social space. Part of the novelty of this work is the idea that space is a social product, created and maintained through practices and perceptions, related to political ideologies. In particular, capitalism relies on the production and sustention of a certain kind of space in order to survive and reproduce itself. Since the Pinochet regime imported neoliberal capitalism from the U.S., it altered the organization of social forces. Taking into consideration this capitalistic restructuring is necessary for this analysis, since capitalism's effects are far-reaching and remain part of Pinochet's legacy that still survives in Chile today.

Finally, I hope to show that the works of Juan Luis Martínez, Raúl Zurita and CADA helped open up a new space for individuals to express themselves artistically, opening up a breach for the expression of critical thought and action in an otherwise closed society. The goal of this chapter is not to provide a panorama of spatial and performative poetics of the period, but rather to examine the development of a particular aesthetics of poetry as it emerged as a form of performance into the social space of Chilean society.

3.2 Conceptual Poetry and the Active Reader

As discussed above, Juan Luis Martínez is not the first to use the space of the page as a signifying agent in poetical expression. There are many examples of spatially oriented poems,

dating as far back as Antiquity, with the poems of Simmias of Rhodes.⁸⁰ In modern poetry, it is perhaps best to start with Mallarmé, since his poetry precedes and anticipates experimental poems of the historical avant-gardes. In turn, many of these experimental practices would be renewed in the *neovanguardia* (or post-avant-garde) of the latter half of the twentieth century. In between these two movements lies the emergence of Concrete poetry, which I would like to focus on as a sort of missing link in the development of the vanguards that helps explain the arrival of conceptual poetics and active participation as seen in the latter vanguards. Brazilian Concrete poetry, sometimes categorized as the last avant-garde, or the first neo-avant-garde, took the spatialization of language beyond mimetic representation. In particular, by looking at their work and the work of Mallarmé I would like to briefly analyze some of pertinent but often overlooked predecessors (although not necessarily influences) to performative and spatial poetics in Chile under dictatorship.

In addition, there is a powerful strain of poststructuralist thought in the Chilean post-avant-garde, especially in the work of Martínez (as has been noted in the previous chapter), which privileges the processes of language over the ideas of the author (i.e. his/her subjective intentions). This is apparent, for example, in the erasures of authorship from Martínez's books, in the collaborative poetics of CADA, and in the deconstruction of the poetic subject in Zurita's works. Paz comments on this movement in modernity to reestablish the agency of language in *The Bow and the Lyre*: "The general movement of contemporary literature, from Joyce to Cummings to the experiments of Queneau and the combinations of electronics, tends to reestablish the sovereignty of the language over the author (255)". In this sense, poetic

⁸⁰ Dating back to approximately 325 B.C., poems like "Wings", "Axe", and "Egg" are among the oldest conserved visual poems, exhibiting a calligrammatic style. Décio Pignatari comments on this work in his essay "Ovo novo no velho", in *Teoria da Poesia Concreta* (1975).

experimentation is about more than randomly combining words, since it attempts to break with the author's control over language. We can see this perhaps as early on as Mallarmé, who opened the door to chance, to *le hasard*, in a way that has transformed poetry ever since. The poem becomes a system of correspondences, akin to the universe, open to the possibilities of random associations and chance. This is accomplished by opening up a spatial syntax, allowing linguistic signs to interact in extra-linear forms. Some poetry of the historical avant-gardes expanded upon this notion, but it wasn't until the Concrete Poetry of the 1950s that a non-mimetic spatial syntax was fully realized.

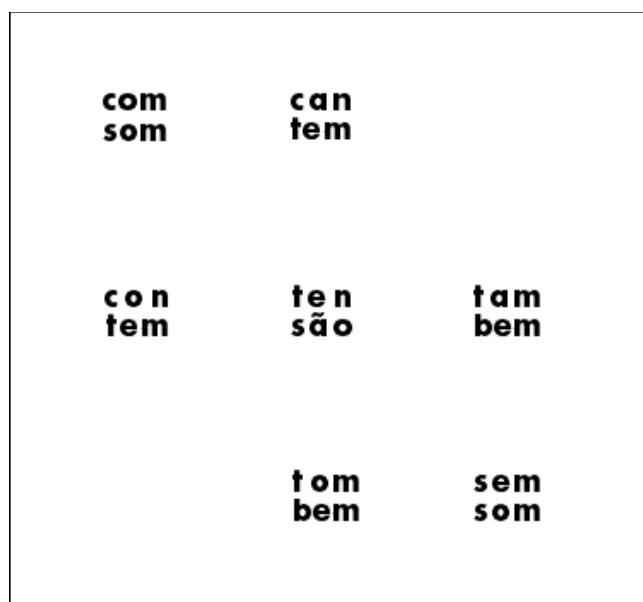
Octavio Paz has noted the relative failure of the historical avant-gardes to produce a novel use of spatialized poetry: "Perhaps my opinion would be different if Apollinaire [...] had invented real poetic ideograms instead of calligrammes" (257). Paz has taken issue with the fact that writers like Apollinaire used the space of the page to imitate objects in reality to which the poems were referring, instead of creating something entirely unique. I believe that if Paz had been aware of the Brazilian Concretists when he wrote *El arco y la lira* (1956), he would have seen that these poets embodied part of the unrealized dream of the avant-garde.⁸¹ They accomplished what Paz wished the avant-garde had been able to do by creating a unique spatial syntax, based on concept and not image, for each poem.

There are several points of interest that I would like to compare between the Noigandres group and Juan Luis Martínez. I do not purport that Martínez was directly influenced by the Brazilian Concretists because there seems to be no explicit reference to them in his work, nor is there any obvious imitation of their style or forms. Nevertheless, I believe there is a certain alignment with the projects of the Concrete poets in the following ways: 1) a conceptual, not

⁸¹ Paz would discover Concrete Poetry in the '60s after publishing *El arco y la lira*. It is in the revised edition of 1967 where he adds the epilogue that privileges the spatial poetics of Mallarmé.

mimetic, use of space, 2) a common Mallarmean influence (especially regarding an emphasis on the blank space as an expressive support and the theme of probability or chance), and 3) the solicitation of a more active reader/participant who can think outside of literary and societal conventions.

The first of these, conceptual space, can be observed through an analysis of a typical Concrete poem like “Tensão”, by Augusto de Campos.⁸² The poetic word in Concrete poetry is linked to other parts of the poem through sets of overlapping relations – visual, phonic and semantic. In the poem “Tensão”, the words are arranged into a spatial syntax that is characteristic of the concrete poem design. The word “tensão” occupies the site of intersection where the two square forms come into contact, thus representing graphically part of the concept of tension – that of being pulled in two different directions (here by participating in two different word images):



⁸² This poem may also be read as an example of the Concrete poetry manifesto in which Augusto de Campos concludes, “POESIA CONCRETA: TENSÃO DE PALAVRAS-COISAS NO ESPACO-TEMPO” (*Teoria da poesia concreta* 44).

Tension in the poem is also seen in the struggle for autonomy that each three letter pair undertakes. When *tensão*, for example, splits into two separate words, *são* is the third-person plural of the verb “to be” (they are), which can separate from *ten* to create new phrases. Some of the three letter words seem to mingle well with others, forming larger units of sense, such as “tom sem som” (tone without sound) and “com som cantem” (sing with sound). Some of the pairs find it more useful to stay together (*contem* = they contain), while others do not form a single word even when united (*com som* = with sound). Other words are more promiscuous in copulating with their pair as well as others, as in the case of *tom* (tone): “tombem sem som” (fall without sound) and “tom sem som” (tone without sound).⁸³

In the case of Concrete poetry, polysemy is often created by way of the spatial arrangement of the words that allows us to read the text in different ways, literally and figuratively speaking. The reader is able to locate distinct readings of the poem by reading it in different directions – horizontally, vertically, diagonally, etc. – thus creating a variety of spatial syntaxes and performative readings. In “Tensão” for example, we can find the phrases “tensão tambem sem som” (tension, also without sound), “tombem tambem sem som” (fall, also without sound), “tom sem som” (tone without sound), among others.

The poem “Tensão” is representative of an important shift in visual poetry away from mimetic representation. The poem focuses on exploring the concept of tension, and thus creates a conceptual poetics, instead of a mimetic one.⁸⁴ Most earlier forms of visual poetry focus on providing a visual image that corresponds to the image that is produced by the words. This link

⁸³ Charles Perrone provides an excellent analysis of the poem “Tensão”, and more specifically, of the textual fabric created by the interplay of the poem’s phonemes in his book *Seven Faces: Brazilian Poetry Since Modernism*. Duke UP, 1996.

⁸⁴ Rosmarie Waldrop also claims that the intentions of the Concrete poets are “anti-mimetic” in her essay “A Basis of Concrete Poetry” (142).

is calligrammatic, and has been critiqued by Rene Magritte's paintings, such as *La trahison des images*. Foucault points out that Magritte's painting can be understood as an "unraveled calligram", which reveals the tenuous assumptions upon which language and representation are based, when in reality a word is not an image, nor is an image the object that it represents.⁸⁵

The difference from mimetic to conceptual visual representation is evident when one examines the poems from the Noigandres group and Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*. The *Calligrammes* also convey an aspect of their contents through visual arrangement, but there is no particular relationship established between the words and the image. They can be summarized as words in the shape of the object that they are speaking about, while the Concrete poem attempts to establish a conceptual relation between form and content, without trying to draw a picture of the object in question. Below is an example of one of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* in which the words form the image of the Eiffel Tower:



⁸⁵ See *This is Not a Pipe* (2008) by Michel Foucault, translated by James Harkness.

Some sections of Mallarmé's poem, "Coup de dés", also seem to contain pictographic representations of elements of the poem, such as a listing ship or a constellation, but the main arrangement focuses on creating a variety of simultaneous readings based on font size and placement. This new structural syntax for poetry was emulated in the early phase of Concrete Poetry, termed the "phenomenological" or "organic" phase by Charles Perrone (26), which can be observed in poems like Augusto de Campos' first set of texts, *poetamenos*, and Haroldo de Campos's series "o âmagô do omego ou fenomenologia da composição". Haroldo de Campos also acknowledges the importance of Mallarmé's break from traditional syntax in the essay "olho por olho a olhu nu"; in this work he describes what the poets have absorbed from Mallarmé as "método prismográfico (sintaxe especial axiada no fonema)" (*Teoria da poesia concreta* 46). Basing the poem's arrangement and lexicon on the sounds of the phonemes is an interesting exploitation of an arbitrary element of language that the concrete poets exemplify.

Almost all forms of poetry base part of their structure on the arbitrary phonemes that are used to communicate and produce ideas. Phonemes are used to give a poem rhythm through rhetorical devices such as anaphora, anadiplosis, alliteration, consonance, assonance, paronomasia, various kinds of end rhyme, etc. However, Concrete poetry exploits this tendency to a much greater degree. Many concrete poems create a message, or a series of messages, based on the chance associations of phonemes, such as Décio Pignatari's "beba coca cola", a parody of the soft drink's mind-numbing slogan. Marjorie Perloff provides an analysis of this poem in *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media*, and accurately signals the permutations of phonemes and morphemes that allow the reader to associate drinking Coca-Cola with drooling (babe), shards of glass (caco), and the all-purpose orifice used by some organisms, such as birds and reptiles, to excrete urinary, fecal and reproductive discharges (cloaca).



Since the words of the poem are produced simply by rearranging the letters of the Coca-Cola slogan, it would seem that the message of the poem is based on random coincidences of sounds or letters. For example, it so happens that the word “cloaca” can be formed by the letters from Coca-Cola, which communicates a message about the underside of consumerism.

The exploitation of chance associations can also be seen in the works of Mallarmé and Juan Luis Martínez. Chance, or *le hasard*, is one of the most prominent themes in the former’s book-poem, *Un Coup de Dés jamais n’abolira le Hasard*. Haroldo de Campos himself notes the role of probability in his essay, “Lance de olhos sobre Um Lance de Dados”:

O poema de Mallarmé – *Um Lance de Dados* (*Un Coup de Dés*, 1897) – não se presta a fragmentações. Seu coeso sistema de relações, desenvolvendo-se num horizonte probabilístico (“cette conjonction suprême avec la probabilité”), através de formas verbais condicionalizantes e de futuros hipotéticos... (a que a frase final, “Toute Pensée émet un Coup de Dés”, confere reversibilidade, *da capo*, rearmando o problema *ad infinitum* (Mallarmé 187).

At first it seems contradictory that such a rigorous form of poetry such as that displayed by Mallarmé's grand poem and that of the Brazilian concrete poets could incorporate an element of chance. This, however, is the great paradox that Mallarmé explores in *Coup de Dés*. The poem juxtaposes random chance with inevitable destiny with a protagonist who survives a shipwreck, clutching a pair of dice in his fist. The shipwrecked Master feels that the number is already contained in the dice, that it was already present in the shipwreck, and he refuses to throw the dice in an act of defiance. Once the dice are rolled (and we never learn if he does release them) the number is unalterable, it could not be any other. Despite the Master's act of defiance, a constellation appears (Ursa Major), which contains the number. Quentin Meillassoux notes how the apparition of the constellation reflects a divine throw of dice in the heavens that supplants or complements the Master's throw:

We do not know whether the dice have been thrown, but the Poem closes... with the apparition – hypothetical (punctuated by 'PERHAPS') – of a stellar Constellation close to the Septentrion, or identical to it... This Constellation seems to be set in motion as if by a celestial Throw supplementing that of the Master, with an outcome described as 'consecrated' – the stars being identified with the points of a nocturnal Die... (17-18).

Was there ever the possibility of another number if the number was already contained in this celestial throw? Is the Master defiant because he does not want to be limited to reproducing the preordained celestial roll? Meillassoux argues that the poem is ciphered and that the number of stars in Ursa Major (7) is part of the unique number (707) around which the poem is constructed. And yet the title of the poem as well as its final verse seem to indicate that chance can never be destroyed: "A throw of dice will never abolish chance" and "Every Thought Emits a Throw of Dice". Maurice Blanchot has commented on the role of chance in the poem, supposing that if chance is not vanquished, it is at least drawn into the rigor of language: "Le hasard est sinon vaincu en cela, du moins attiré dans la rigueur de la parole et élevé à la ferme figure d'une forme

ou il s'enferme" (146). The chance associations of words are enveloped in the closed figure of the structure of the poem, according to Blanchot. Haroldo de Campos likewise believes that chance is not abolished, but rather incorporated into the construction of the poem: "Do ponto de vista de uma teoria da composição, a consequência duma tal hermenêutica do *Coup de Dés* não seria a abolição do acaso, mas a sua incorporação, como termo ativo, ao processo criativo" (190). I believe this is precisely what links Mallarmé to the Concrete poets and Martínez, the use of aleatory procedures, or the exploitation of chance, in the construction of the text and the creation of alternate performances of the text.

Martínez's works that best illustrate his use of aleatory procedures are *Aproximación del Principio de Incertidumbre a un proyecto poético* and *El poeta anónimo*, which have been analyzed with this perspective in Weintraub's book, *Juan Luis Martínez's Philosophical Poetics*. In his chapter on *Aproximación del Principio*, Weintraub sums up the book's importance in Martínez's canon with the following comments:

Thus, in the posthumous *Aproximación del Principio* the reader finds a key demonstration of Martínez's aleatory writing procedure as poetic-principle. It is a transnational poetics of controlled or manufactured chance that is consistent (although employed to varying degrees) throughout the five major projects making up his body of work. In a way, therefore, *Aproximación del Principio* attempts to encapsulate the larger literary and philosophical principles that make Martínez's work such a rigorous (although often internally contradictory) theoretical system. (182-83)

This work is one of the most enigmatic of Martínez's poetic productions because of the prominence of the image over language. The book is made up of 55 distinct images, which in turn are the result of combining ten individual images. In truth, there are 45 composite images, since each individual one appears by itself as well as combined in pairs with every other one. The ten singular images, presented in order of their appearance in the book, are:

- 1) a violin with a bow beside it (and with arrows indicating the different parts of the instrument)
- 2) four bows arranged like spokes of a wheel, pointing to eight philosophical ideas (with a ninth in the middle)
- 3) a diagram of the four elements with their corresponding associations and state changes⁸⁶
- 4) a circle filled-in with a pattern of four lines in triangular shapes, pointing towards the center
- 5) the “Yellow River Map”, made up of the eight trigrams in a circular shape
- 6) a four dimensional cube labeled “*L’hypercube des Warlpiri*”⁸⁷
- 7) a thick-bodied and hairy spider
- 8) a skeleton (with bones identified with a key)
- 9) a sketch of Rimbaud with pipe and hat, drawn by Verlaine
- 10) an astronaut (also with lines indicating parts of the suit to be identified)

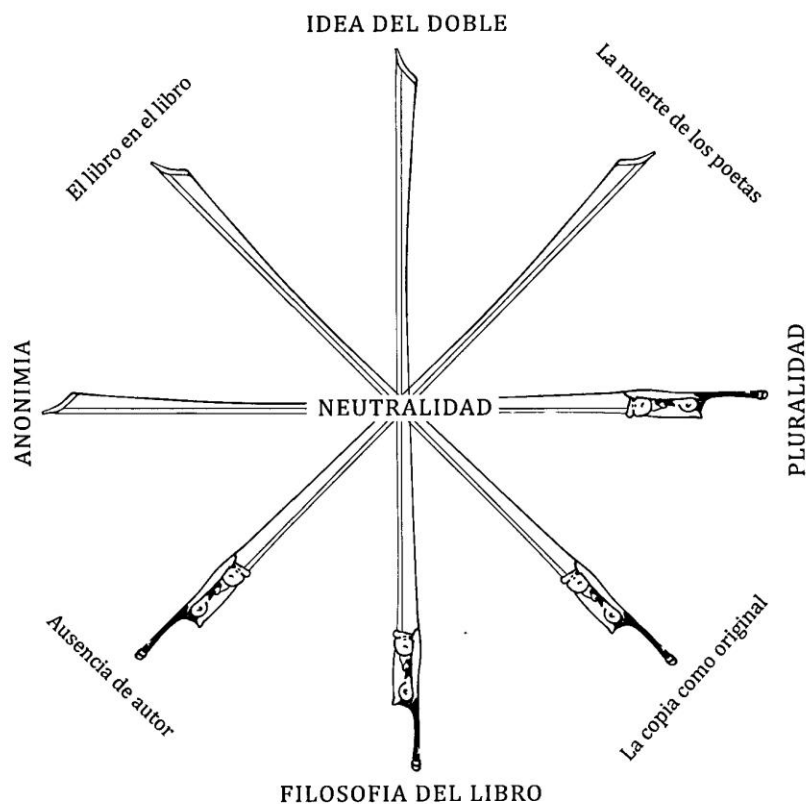
The eclectic nature of these images adds to the ambiguity of the book, making it difficult to decipher the meaning of their selection and arrangement. However, there are certain themes that arise from the juxtaposition of images that can provide a general framework to approach this work. I believe that one of the principal aims of this project is an epistemological analysis of the different systems of philosophical thought arising from both East and West, “civilized” and “primitive” human civilizations, revealing the overlapping that occurs in these different ontological expressions. The permutations of these images (especially the Yellow River Map, the Warlpiri Hypercube and the Aristotelian diagram of the four elements) reveals surprising coincidences in how distant civilizations have divided up reality through visual systems. The overlapping of these images occurs in the text in such a way as to suggest a system of correspondences that transcends the respective cultures. In this sense, Martínez may be hinting

⁸⁶ This diagram of the four elements, of unknown origin, may be based on the original philosophical ideas of Anaximander, or posteriorly, Aristotle.

⁸⁷ The Warlpiri are an indigenous people of Australia, who have been studied for their system of kinship, notably for the division of their relatives into eight groups (which would correspond to Martínez’s poetic project since there are also eight trigrams in Chinese mythology, seen in the *I Ching*). The hypercube was developed by French anthropologist Barbara Glowczewski, as indicated by Weintraub (178).

at a metasystem, or an organizing principle of human philosophical thought, to which he adds his own organizing concepts. Of course, it is equally plausible that this project only functions to destabilize the legitimacy of human beings' ways of organizing reality, in line with the type of playful parodies that Borges constructs based on similar totalizing philosophical systems.

Martínez's eight philosophical concepts that correspond to the eight trigrams (plus the additional concept of "neutrality" at the center), Weintraub calls "poetic-philosophical principles" and sees these as informing all of Martínez's work. These principles can be seen in the diagram below, taken from *Aproximación del Principio*:



In accordance with Weintraub, these principles are evident throughout the work of the Chilean poet. In fact, these are the organizing principles of Martínez's most recent posthumous publication, *El poeta anónimo*, which uses these concepts as the names for the chapters or sections of the book. The chapters also correspond to the trigrams of the *I Ching*, reinforcing the connection between Martínez's system of philosophical principles and the other ontological metasystems of organizing reality. In this sense, perhaps *Aproximación del Principio* functions

as a sort of cipher through which we can approach or decode *El poeta anónimo*. Since both works are structured on the *I Ching* and evince a construction based on aleatory procedures, they may best be approached as complementary texts that are codependent for their fullest signification. Weintraub has provided a table that illustrates the correspondences between the juxtaposed philosophical systems, which I reproduce below:

Table 5.1.

<i>Aproximación ...’s poetic principle</i>	Direction	Number (magic square)	Image in nature	Trigram
IDEA DEL DOBLE	South	9	Fire	Li, “the clinging” (light-giving)
La muerte de los poetas		2	Earth	Kun, “the receptive” (earth)
PLURALIDAD	West	7	Swamp, marsh	Dui, “the joyous” (open)
La copia como original		6	Heaven, sky	Qian, “the creative” (force)
FILOSOFIA DEL LIBRO	North	1	Water	Kan, “the abysmal” (gorge)
Ausencia de autor		8	Mountain	Gen, “keeping still” (bound)
ANONIMIA	East	3	Thunder	Zhen, “the arousing” (shake)
El libro en el libro		4	Wind	Xun, “the gentle” (ground)
NEUTRALIDAD	Center	5	N/A	N/A

(*Juan Luis Martínez’s Philosophical Poetics* 180)

Since the *I Ching* is designed to be read as a book of divination, and since the two books by Martínez in question are structured around the *I Ching*, it raises the question of whether one could read Martínez’s works in a similar manner. The process of divination of the *I Ching* consists in asking a question to the book, and using some aleatory technique so that chance decides which part of the book one looks to for the answer. There are various techniques that can

be employed, such as using bones, yarrow sticks, coins, gemstones, or dice⁸⁸. The connection between Martínez's two books and the *I Ching* may suggest not only an aleatory compositional procedure (as Weintraub has suggested), but also an aleatory reading process similar to the *I Ching*. One could approach *El poeta anónimo*, for example, with the idea of asking the book a question, tossing coins or dice, and reading the corresponding part of the book indicated by the results of the coin toss or dice roll. Thus we return to Mallarmé's, "Toute pensée émet un coup de dés", or perhaps more accurately for Martínez's work we could say, "Tout coup de dés émet un pensée".

I would like to highlight how Weintraub's assertions coincide with the particular treatment of chance that we have seen in the Brazilian poet's work and in Mallarmé's poem. Weintraub calls the strategy of Martínez a "poetics of controlled or manufactured chance" while at the same time being part of a "rigorous (although often internally contradictory) theoretical system" (182-83). In all three examples analyzed above, the poets display rigorous constructions of the poetic text, highly conscious of the organization of image and space. Yet at the same time they also use probability as a structural element of the text. Décio Pignatari explains this combination of order and probabilities in the essay "Acaso, Arbitrário, Tiros":

Rigorosamente falando, somente, uma arte condicionada por (novos) princípios abre (novas) possibilidades e probabilidades, que configuram o campo do Acaso, onde tem lugar e tempo a criação, mediante permuta dialética entre o racional e o intuitivo. Esta arte é objetiva e permite – se não obriga – projetos gerais de estruturas anteriores a qualquer seleção de palavras-material (no caso da literatura), pouco importando, de resto, que esse projeto tenha sido suscitado por um certo fato de palavras relacionadas, pois nele impera um princípio de ordem ou ordenação, ainda que provável ou probabilístico. (149)

⁸⁸ For the yarrow stick and coin divination procedures, see: Wilhelm, Hellmut and Richard. *Understanding the I Ching: The Wilhelm Lectures on The Book of Changes*. Princeton University Press, 1995: (128-131).

Pignatari explains how order and the use of guiding principles in the construction of the work of art can be used to open new possibilities and probabilities. By doing away with traditional linear syntax of poetry and embracing the “método prismográfico (sintaxe especial axiada no fonema)” (*Teoria da Poesia Concreta* 46), the concrete poem’s arrangement and lexicon are based on the sounds of the phonemes, exploiting an arbitrary element of language. In addition, by freeing the word from traditional syntax, the poets release it into the empty space that is Mallarmé’s legacy, opening up multiple possible readings.

This means that the reading process is different from most traditional poems, something the Concrete poets believe was inaugurated by Mallarmé. Haroldo de Campos describes this new role for the reader in the above cited essay, “Lance de Olhos sobre Um Lance de Dados”: A tentativa de amostragem que fazemos tem, portanto, uma única justificativa: incitar. Despertar no eventual leitor a vocação para o texto original, na sua armadura completa, ‘spectacle idéographique d’une crise ou aventure intellectuelle’, como exclamou Valéry... marco decisivo numa evolução crítica de formas” (187). De Campos goes on to comment that the poem does not consider the reader as something static or closed, but rather as something in movement, since it is an “open work”. This coincides with his argument in another essay, “A Obra de Arte Aberta”, in which he suggests that an open structures, such as the one found in Pound’s *Cantos*, “permitem uma perpétua interação de blocos de idéias que se criticam reciprocamente, produzindo uma soma poética cujo princípio de composição é gestaltiano” (*Teoria da Poesia Concreta* 33). Although De Campos is speaking about Pound’s poem, it is equally applicable to the Concrete poets’ work as well since their poetry follows and builds upon this poetic technique. The key to creating a polyvalent poem in this way is the construction of a Gestaltian principle of construction, as De Campos puts it. The spatial syntax of a concrete poem allows for the multi-

stable perception of looking at a single form, but realizing that there is more than one way of seeing it. This application of Gestalt psychology to Concrete poetry can also be seen as arising from exploration of the poetic word in its three dimensions. As Claus Clüver has pointed out: “Interpreting the Concrete ideogram involves realizing the poem’s structure and the isomorphic analogies it offers to what is signified by the textual sign” (140). If there is reduction in the concrete poem, there is also condensation. The word is explored in three dimensions – verbal, vocal and visual, yet it also remains open to various interpretations.⁸⁹ This means that the reader has an expanded role in reading Concrete poetry.

The extended role of the reader in the poetry of Juan Luis Martínez is the topic of the next section, in which I hope to analyze the type of activity and engagement solicited in his works, while keeping in mind the importance of the Mallarmean influence in the Chilean poet’s use of the space of the page.

3.3 The Space of the Page: Juan Luis Martínez

Mallarmé’s contribution to poetry is not just the visual arrangement of words on a page, but the use of blank space as part of the signifying structure. This is one of the points of emphasis in Paul Valéry’s reaction when he first read Mallarmé’s *Coup de dés*:

It seemed to me that I was looking at the form and pattern of a thought, placed for the first time in finite space. Here space itself truly spoke, dreamed, and gave birth to temporal forms. Expectancy, doubt, concentration, all were visible things. With my own eye I could see silences that had assumed bodily shapes. Inappreciable instants became

⁸⁹ In response to Houaiss’s accusation of “voluntária castração” of the word’s polysemic qualities, Haroldo de Campos wrote “A temperatura informacional do texto” in which he praises the verbal density of James Joyce, which his group desired to emulate.

clearly visible: the fraction of a second during which an idea flashes into being and dies away; atoms of time that serve as the germs of infinite consequences lasting through psychological centuries—at last these appeared as beings, each surrounded with a palpable emptiness. There amid murmurs, insinuations, visual thunder, a whole spiritual tempest carried page by page to the extremes of thought. . .there on the very paper some indescribable scintillation of final stars trembled infinitely pure in an inter-conscious void; and there in the same void with them, like some new form of matter arranged in systems or masses or trailing lines, coexisted the Word!⁹⁰

Mallarmé's poem is designed to make it appear as though the empty space produces, or – in the words of Valéry – gives birth to the poetic word. This correlation between word and star is affirmed by Mallarmé, who in a letter to Gide in 1897, hinted that two of the ideograms in *Coup de dés* involved “a heeling vessel and a constellation” (Cohn 11). In this way, the empty space of the page can act as part of the signifying structure by representing the empty sky, which paradoxically gives birth to the stars.

The use of space in Martínez's work is obviously quite distinct, and yet there is a link to the conceptual relation between the void and production. Although space is used in a variety of ways in *La nueva novela*, one of the main uses is to represent the silence of the author and the invitation for the reader to respond and add to the work. In Mallarmé's great poem, the blank space of the page may represent the heavens that give birth to the stars/words, but these are still produced and arranged by the author, albeit in ways that the reader can combine in different ways. Martínez, on the other hand, radicalizes this tendency, leaving the void open to the reader, who becomes a participant in the construction of the written text. *La nueva novela* in particular uses the physical spaces of the book as well as a thematic treatment of space to help make us

⁹⁰ This citation is from a letter written to the editor of *Les Marges*, later published as “Controverse sur un poème de Mallarmé” on Feb. 15, 1920, and can be found in the text titled “Concerning ‘A Throw of Dice’” in volume 8, page 309, of *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry* (1972).

aware of both *how* spaces affect *us*, and in turn, how *we* can affect *spaces* by reimagining and resignifying them.

If we look at a few examples, we can see how Martínez uses poems that are also proposals in order to solicit the participation of the reader:

14

EL ESPACIO Y EL TIEMPO

Fije en su mente, antes de dormirse, dos puntos cualesquiera del espacio y calcule el tiempo que se necesita, durmiendo, para ir del uno al otro.

Un aviador de veinte años de edad da la vuelta a la tierra con tanta rapidez, que "gana" tres horas por día. ¿Al cabo de cuánto tiempo habrá vuelto a la edad de ocho años?

The empty space provided below the proposals seems to indicate that the reader should attempt an answer. This position has also been proposed by Eugenia Brito who argues that the work of Martínez not only points towards blank space, but that this space is relegated to the reader as a means of completing the novel; she writes, “El blanco de Martínez, hacia dónde apunta la Nueva Novela, es una incitación a que el lector escribe en realidad la novela” (28). On the other hand, one could be argued that these proposals/questions are not meant to be answered because they are simply too absurd. For example, the information given in the question (the time it would take to travel from one point to another while sleeping) doesn’t help us to calculate the time, since we aren’t given a speed or distance to base our measurement on. Instead, we are told to measure it while sleeping. How fast are we travelling when sleeping, if we travel at all? Despite the apparent absurdity of the question, I concur with Brito that the reader is supposed to attempt an answer and this is apparent when we consider that Martínez has given us his answers to the equally absurd questions of Jean Tardieu.⁹¹

The first section of *La nueva novela* is called “RESPUESTAS A PROBLEMAS DE JEAN TARDIEU” and includes several copied and translated tasks from Jean Tardieu’s work “Petits problemes et travaux pratiques”⁹², but also contains Martínez’s answers to some of these questions. For example, Tardieu asks us, “Given a wall, what is happening on the other side?” The question seems absurd because the information given is obviously not enough to ascertain what is happening on the other side of the wall. Nevertheless, Martínez gives us a clever answer:

⁹¹ Jean Tardieu (1903-1995) was a French poet, dramatist, artist and musician whose poetry is a fundamental inspiration for Martínez’s *La nueva novela*. His dramatic oeuvre is often associated with Theatre of the Absurd, but some of his poems, in particular the ones referenced by Martínez, employ a species of pataphysical humor akin to Martínez’s project. Tardieu’s work is also referenced by Julio Cortázar in chapter 152 of *Rayuela*.

⁹² This text was first published in *Un mot pour un autre* (1951) but can also be found in *Le professeur Froppel* (1978).

Dado un muro, ¿qué pasa detrás ?

— Hay hombres construyendo otro muro. Frente a ese nuevo muro vuélvase a la proposición: "Dado un muro, ¿qué pasa detrás?" — Hay otros hombres construyendo otro muro frente al cual está usted preguntando: DADO UN MURO, ¿QUE PASA DETRAS? ... DADO UN MURO, ¿QUE PASA DETRAS?

The infinite regression of builders constructing walls, wondering what is on the other side of the wall, is both humorous and absurd. However, with answers such as these, Martínez shows that it is not impossible to answer his proposal-poems, often by maintaining the absurd humor of the questions.

Another example of Martínez's humorous answers to the paradoxes of space and time is his response below to Tardieu's question about how to get one point to escape from another, without the other noticing:

Dados dos puntos, A y B, SITUADOS A IGUAL DISTANCIA UNO DEL OTRO, ¿cómo hacer para desplazar a B sin que A lo advierta?

— Plántesele a A el siguiente problema:
¿Cómo haría A para desplazarse sin que B lo advierta?

(En el momento que A se concentra en el problema, B se desplaza rápidamente).

Once again, the reply resolves the question in a way which employs the same logic (or illogic) of the question and maintains the absurd humorous tone. Martínez does not answer all of Tardieu's questions, and leaves ample space for the reader to attempt an answer, as seen in the first questions mentioned in this chapter. In the second chapter of *La nueva novela*, "CINCO

PROBLEMAS PARA JEAN TARDIEU”, Martínez proposes a series of questions back to Tardieu. Although the questions are explicitly addressed to Tardieu, it seems reasonable to assume that Martínez was aware of his implicit audience of the text, a variety of readers beyond Tardieu who would receive and ponder these questions. Most of the questions are accompanied by ample space for the reader to provide a response, which I have copied below along with the text:

Tardieu, suponga que el ESPACIO y el TIEMPO
son las dos lentes de un par de gafas.
¿QUE SUCEDE SI USTED TAPA O CIERRA UN OJO?

Although the question about space and time being separated seems better suited to an astrophysicist like Stephen Hawking, a creatively-engaged reader could attempt an absurd answer like the ones that Martínez has given us.

Despite the fact that these questions are obviously meant to solicit a humorous response, they can also be placed within the theme of the death of the author. Barthes concludes his essay “The Death of the Author” with a comment that can be very apropos when used to describe Martínez’s work: “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.” Throughout *La nueva novela* Martínez crosses out his name, writes it differently, and uses intertexts to destabilize the voice of the author. In addition, he has commented in interviews that his goal in writing was to disappear as an author, and that he would rather have a literary identity than a real one. In this, Martínez again coincides with Mallarmé. Barthes believes that

Mallarmé was one of the first to suppress the author in favor of the language of the text. He writes, “In France, Mallarmé was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner.” Martínez continues this tradition by foregrounding language itself by removing it from the corresponding authors and combining their texts in different contexts. Simultaneously he questions his own role as author, often reducing it to the collector of texts, not a producer. And finally, he leaves blank space in the text for the reader to respond to questions that could only solicit an absurd or poetic answer.

Space not only acts as a structural agent by providing a basis for a participatory project, but also as a theme, perhaps the most prominent theme of *La nueva novela*. This enigmatic work constitutes a veritable labyrinth of intertexts, citations, poems, images, problems, characters, objects and spaces. From the image of houses in chaotic disarray on the front cover, to the invitation to draw escape routes for your own house on the back cover, there is a constant preoccupation for how space is disrupted, how people disappear from spaces, and more hopefully, how space can be reimagined and reclaimed.

One of the principal themes in the treatment of space is the threat posed to the space of the family. The home, as opposed to the abstract space of capitalism, is the secure site that we have filled with personal meaning. Gaston Bachelard privileges the site of the home in *The Poetics of Space* as “one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind” (6). The first image we see of *La nueva novela* is the home. Somewhat ironically, when we come upon the front cover we are already too late to witness what has happened. The grainy black-and-white image of disheveled houses suggests that we have missed some cataclysmic event that has inverted the status of secure space of home into a place of fear

and insecurity. This insecurity is also manifest on the back cover as the reader is told to draw the shape of his/her house, marking two escape routes for *each* member of the family. Why so many escape routes? And more importantly, why would we need to escape from our house in the first place?

The case of Tania Savich may give us a clue. A portrait of the little girl is found juxtaposed to one of Adolf Hitler, on the previous page. The images occupy the same physical space of the page, one on the front side, the other on the back. This overlapping of space in the book proposes a similar overlapping of their stories. In the appendix of the book, in a section entitled “Notas y referencias” we find an explanation of this relation: “Hitler prolongó el sitio de Leningrado más que a ninguna ciudad del mundo. Cercada la ciudad en un despiadado asedio, careció muy pronto de alimentos, de electricidad, de medicinas y así sus habitantes se vieron desprovistos de toda salvación” (132). Immediately below the author tells us that a little girl wrote the following entry in her diary: “Tía Leche murió el 10 de Mayo. / El 13 de Mayo, a las 7,30, murió Mamá. / Los Savich han muerto, todos están muertos. / Sólo me quedo a mi misma” (132).

Tania Savich’s image is enclosed in a circle, while that of Hitler is surrounded by a square. Hitler’s page is titled “Adolf Hitler y la metáfora del cuadrado”, with a quote from Paul Celan’s “Deathfugue”, “La muerte es un maestro de Alemania”, while the reverse of the page is titled “Tania Savich y la fenomenología de lo redondo”, with a quote from Karl Jaspers, “Das Dasein ist rund” (Existence is round). The circle becomes an important metaphor for family, security, existence and solitude in *La nueva novela*. On Tania’s page we read: “Tania vio desaparecer un día el círculo de su familia, pero se quedaba aún a sí misma como delicada habitante de otra redondez que ahora invita al lector acariciar su pequeña fotografía” (114).

Interestingly, and probably not coincidentally, *The Poetics of Space* by Bachelard contains a chapter with the same name, “The Phenomenology of Roundness”. Bachelard also quotes Karl Jaspers as saying, “Every being seems in itself round”, and Joe Bousquet, who wrote “He had been told that life was beautiful. No! Life is round!”. These words are echoed on Tania’s page: “Tania, la existencia es hermosa...No Tania. Das Dasein ist rund. La existencia es redonda” (114). Bachelard in this chapter helps resolve the apparent paradox that ‘roundness signifies both the community of the family and the solitude of the individual’ by proposing that roundness connotes *unity*. Unity resists dispersion; hence unity of the subject may outlast the disintegration of the family. Bachelard writes, “images of *full roundness* help us to collect ourselves, permit us to confer an initial constitution on ourselves, and to confirm our being intimately, inside. For when it is experienced from the inside, devoid of all exterior features, being cannot be otherwise than round” (234).

Juan Luis Martínez thus juxtaposes *unity* with *dispersion* through the use of *round* and *square* images, a conceptual and not mimetic use of space. We find a family portrait, the father of Jean Tardieu, is represented with a *circular* image. In contrast, on page 61 we find *squares* both occupied and vacant that allude to disappeared persons. The running legs, we are told, are in transit between this page and page 99. If we follow them in their course through the space of the book we will discover that not all of them arrive at their destination. Thus Martínez uses the phenomenology of roundness and squareness, together with the space of the book, to demonstrate how we are affected by the unifying and disintegrating forces of different types of space.

An awareness of the influence that space has on us is the first step toward reclaiming or redefining it. But how are these spaces produced in the first place? According to Henri Lefebvre,

every society produces its own space. In the case of the capitalist society, however, this space is not unique to any particular society, since it is produced through the act of homogenization, turning a differentiated place into abstract space lacking determinable referents, which in turn problematizes the externalization of memories and experiences. The production and perpetuation of space serves to propagate the discourse that founds it. Lefebvre writes, “Capitalism and neocapitalism have produced *abstract space*, which includes the ‘world of commodities’, its ‘logic’ and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state” (53). According to this theory, it is impossible to carry out a revolution in society without an equally revolutionary change in the organization of space.

Henri Lefebvre also tells us that “Abstract space, the space of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism... depends on consensus more than any space before it” (57). The author notes, however, that any consensus is only provisional and illusory since every form of authoritative discourse includes inherent contradictions that will eventually be exposed. Lefebvre is optimistic that this revelation will allow for revolutions without having to resort to Molotov cocktails. Moreover, he writes, “A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a *creative* capacity in its effects on daily life, on *language* and on *space*” (54, my emphasis). This is, to my mind, a perfect summation of a hidden agenda in *La nueva novela*. Martínez uses the language and the space of literature to provoke a creative re-imagining of our social-political space, language and life. Just as the authority of the author as the sole creator of meaning in the space of the work is undermined by allowing the reader to participate in the creative act of writing, so does the dominant use of social space by capitalism become undermined by reimagining how we can occupy it and make it our own. The blank page can be seen to be related to the abstract space of capitalism in the sense that both are empty, without any

significant markers to give them meaning. Hence, the re-appropriation of space entails a re-writing, in which we inscribe meaning over abstract space. The logic of the totalitarian state is designed to suppress the multiple meanings that are produced by distinct individuals and groups. Thus, the appropriation of space, for example by occupy movements, is palimpsestic in nature. New meaning is inscribed on top of capitalism's abstract space. This connection between writing and occupying I believe is apparent in the way Martínez structures his book to subvert the dominant discourse of the logic of the state while also proposing the re-imagining and the re-appropriation of space through the creative act of writing. This connection, however, is much more apparent in contemporaries of Martínez, such as Raúl Zurita and the artistic collective CADA. In the following sections I look at the points of intersection for these writers in terms of space, poetry, performance and politics.

3.4 Juan Luis Martínez and Raúl Zurita

There are two principal ways in which we can link the projects of Martínez to CADA: through the similarities with the poetry of Raúl Zurita (member of CADA) and through the use of participatory poetic forms. For the first of these, one can look at the poetic forms and the use of space in both poets' (Martínez's and Zurita's) works to find their commonalities that suggest a degree of influence between them. As regards the latter, I analyze the performance poetry of CADA to reveal how their avant-garde techniques to intervene in public space and solicit an audience response can be viewed within the same current as Martínez's proposal poems.

First of all, it should be explained that the work of the poetic neo-avant-garde in Chile is sometimes distinguished as a separate movement from the “Escena de avanzada”. Nelly Richard originally included the works of artists such as “Eugenio Dittborn, Carlos Leppe, Juan Dávila, Carlos Altamirano, the group CADA, Lotty Rosenfeld, Catalina Parra, Alfredo Jaar, etc.” as well as a literature group, comprised of “Raúl Zurita, Diamela Eltit, Diego Maquieira, Juan Luis Martínez, Gonzalo Muñoz, Soledad Fariña, etc.” (106). Marcelo Riosco finds it useful to distinguish between some of the literary figures and some of the visual artists by suggesting that there has been some confusion between these and that they are actually two different movements. Riosco explains that the Escena de avanzada is principally a plastic movement concerned with a direct political intervention, while the work of Martínez and others is slightly outside of this realm, less focused on political intervention. He writes:

Los casos de Maquieira y Juan Luis Martínez aparecen, dentro de este contexto, como marginales a la Avanzada. Aunque algunos textos de estos dos poetas pueden tener una lectura política, el trabajo global de ellos no se enmarca dentro de este contexto y es imposible asociarlos a la propuesta de ruptura y crisis que propusieron los artistas visuales que sí vieron en la Avanzada un escenario para una formulación artístico-política contra el discurso institucional que proponía la cultura liberal del gobierno del general Pinochet. (57)

There is good reason to distinguish between these two groups, especially given the proposal of Riosco to explore the ludic aspect of the Chilean neo-avant-garde, although I find that at least in the case of Juan Luis Martínez, it is useful to think of him as a precursor, or part of the movement of the Avanzada. Let’s take a look at Richard’s characterization of the Avanzada below to see if any of these qualities are applicable of Martínez’s work:

The set of socio-aesthetic reformulations that the *avanzada* proposed was made explicit around the following cuts and fractures:

- The dismantling of “the painting” as artwork and of its ritualized contemplation. [...] This was achieved through a critique of the Fine Arts’ aristocratic tradition, accompanied by a social reinsertion of the image in the serial and reproductive context of visual mass culture (documentary photography, news reports) and of popular culture’s subgenres (comic strips, soap operas).
- The questioning of institutional frameworks for validating and consecrating the “masterpiece” (histories of art, the Museum) and of the circuits for commercializing the work-product (galleries)...
- The transgression of discursive genres. This occurred through works that combined various systems of sign production (texts, images, gestures) and that exceeded technical and formal specificities, mixing cinema and literature, art and sociology, aesthetics and politics, in an interdisciplinary way (24).⁹³

Although some of the mediums mentioned by Richard are not used by Martínez (in particular the use of film footage such as soap operas, cinema, and video installations), the overall objectives of the movement coincide with the poetic philosophy of Martínez and there are some surprising coincidences as well (such as his inclusion of photography and comic strips in his works of poetry).

Regarding the first proposition, there are various ways in which Martínez dismantles the work of art, although perhaps not the painting specifically. Richard explains that this is done through the insertion of images from mass culture and popular subgenres, which can be seen in the poet’s earliest work and in his latest. In *La nueva novela* Martínez uses a comic strip to answer one of Jean Tardieu’s questions, and uses an image of Superman carrying a lady with the faces of Rimbaud and Marx pasted on their heads. In *Poeta anónimo* he employs images of Donald Duck and newspaper clippings in the collages of photocopied materials that make up the work. These materials certainly undermine the “ritualized contemplation” of the work of art that Richard mentions, but this objective is also carried out by other means in Martínez’s work. As

⁹³ Translation of Richard’s text is taken from Richard, Nelly. *The Insubordination of Signs: Political Change, Cultural Transformation and Poetics of the Crisis*. Translated by Alice A. Nelson and Silvia R. Tandeciarz, Duke University Press, 2004.

mentioned in the previous chapter, Martínez questions the notions of literary production and authorship through a poetic of appropriation and pastiche. Additionally, text and image can have a dissonant relationship, in the same vein as Magritte's work. This aspect has also been noted by Ayala, who comments on the use of photographs of Alice Lidell, the "real" Alice of Lewis Carroll's Works: "Al leer *La nueva novela*, el encuentro con estos dos retratos de Alice Lidell tomadas por Lewis Carroll produce la sensación sorpresiva...de que el texto altera la percepción de la fotografía, de que se contradicen mutuamente y de que al contradecirse no agotan ni resumen el sentido de la imagen" (157-8). Furthermore, the role of the reader of a Martínez book is changed from the passive state of contemplation, described by Richard, to an active state of participant, as described in the previous section.

The second characteristic of the Avanzada seems closely related to the first, in that both are ways of questioning or dismantling the institution of art, albeit from different angles⁹⁴. The second approach is to attack the institutions that frame the masterpiece, instead of the work itself. Although Martínez does not seem to directly criticize the institutions mentioned by Richard (museums, galleries, histories of art), he does challenge the commercialization of the work of art by publishing his own works in difficult to reproduce editions. In fact, his first two works, *La nueva novela* and *La poesía chilena* have become rare and expensive cult artifacts because of the difficulty in creating reprints for commercial distribution. The somewhat ironic commercial value of his works is perhaps an unforeseen consequence of producing objects that resist facile reproduction and distribution. Creating an object that resists the commercial system can come to be valued highly by the very same system.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ This description by Richard of the Escena de avanzada as a critique of the institution of art is reminiscent of Peter Burger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* and probably owes its influence to this theoretical work.

⁹⁵ An excellent analysis of the way in which capitalism has affected the "matter" of contemporary poetry can be found in Christopher Nealon's *The Matter of Capital*.

Finally, the third and most readily apparent characteristic that Martínez shares with the Escena de avanzada is the transgression of discursive genres. *La nueva novela* is perhaps the best example of this technique, but it can be found in most of his works to some degree. In his first book he demonstrates the use of different genres and discourses on several levels. On one hand, Martínez combines elements of high culture (references to Rimbaud, T.S. Eliot, René Magritte) as well as popular culture (Superman, *Alice in Wonderland*). On the other hand, he appropriates discourses from philosophy, literary theory, mathematics, physics, and others into the genre of poetry. It could even be argued that he combines genres in a third sense, through the ambiguity of a work that is part poetry, part visual art, part scrapbook (and part novel?). Richard mentions the blending of aesthetics and politics as an important example of the merging discourses, a characteristic that I explored in the previous chapter.

Returning to the topic of Martínez's connection with the CADA and the Escena de avanzada, it is best to start with his literary and personal connection to Raúl Zurita. In 1969, Zurita and Martínez began their friendship, the same year they become brother-in-laws, with the marriage of Zurita to Miriam Martínez, the sister of the poet⁹⁶. They lived together for a time in Martínez's father's house in Concón, during which time Martínez says they shared many "precariedades"⁹⁷. In a personal interview, Zurita described their relationship in terms of collaboration, reading each other's works and providing feedback⁹⁸. Some have wondered about how much of an influence Martínez was in Zurita's work, a question that arose in the Roblero interview cited above. In response to whether Martínez was a great influence on Zurita,

⁹⁶ According to the biography available at juanluismartinez.cl.

⁹⁷ In an interview with María Ester Roblero, found in *Poeta anónimo* with the title "Me complace irradiar una identidad velada", Martínez says, "Vivimos juntos con nuestras familias en la casa de mi padre en Concón. Fue una época en que compartimos muchas precariedades" (68).

⁹⁸ This interview was conducted on July 3, 2013.

Martínez responds: “Bueno, yo creo que es así. Pero eso no va en detrimento suyo para nada.

Raúl tuvo un mérito muy grande: logró un espacio en la escena poética, lo cual era muy difícil en ese tiempo... Por otro lado, siendo él ahora un poeta de éxito, me ha arrastrado consigo” (68).

Other than their personal relationship, there are stylistic reasons why the two are linked as well.

One of the principal similarities between the early publications of Martínez and Zurita is the infiltration of logical-mathematical structures into poetic discourse. Often times this irruption of quantitative language is imposed over poetic language by providing a structural principle to organize the discourse, although at times these quantitative sciences of math, logic and physics contaminate the texts with their own discourse as well. If we take a look at this poem from *Purgatorio* (1979) by Zurita, both cases are evident:

Las había visto pastando en el radiante λόγος?

- I. Algunas vacas se perdieron en la lógica
- II. Otras huyeron por un subespacio
donde solamente existen biologías
- III. Esas otras finalmente vienen vagando
desde hace como un millón de años
pero no podrán ser nunca vistas por sus vaqueros
pues viven en las geometrías no euclidianas.
(*Purgatory* 66)

The poem’s use of words and phrases like “la lógica”, “un subespacio”, “biologías”, and “las geometrías no euclidianas” shows that logical-mathematical and scientific discourse have affected not only the structure, but the language as well. The poetic discourse, which in this series of poems, “Áreas verdes”, explores valences of an allegory involving animals and landscapes, is in turn interrupted by the penetration of non-Euclidean geometry and logic. In a

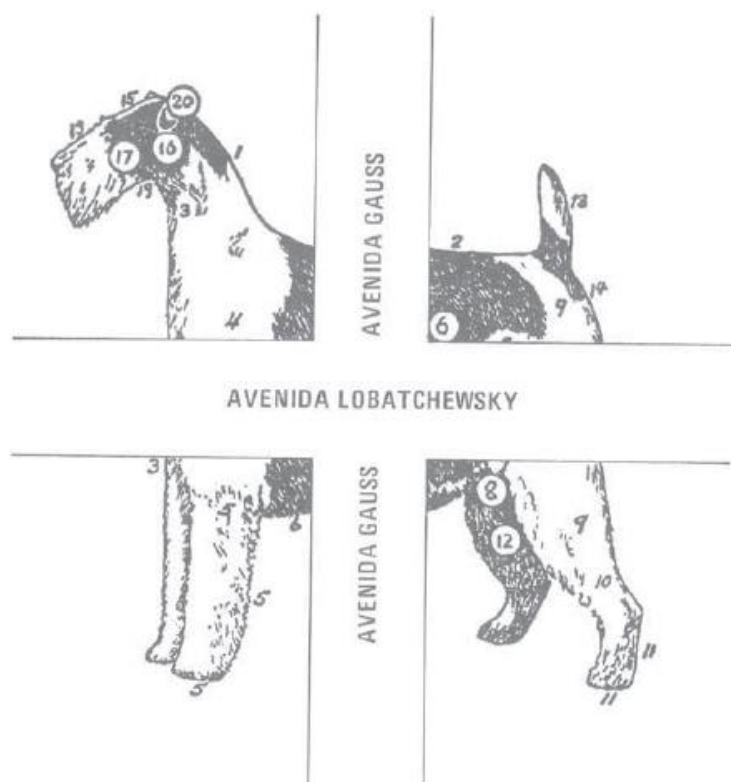
sense, poetic language is “threatened” by logical, mathematical, or scientific language in a similar way that the cows are threatened by their “pursuers”⁹⁹.

If one compares the plight of the cows in Zurita’s “Áreas verdes” to that of Martínez’s Sogol¹⁰⁰ in *La nueva novela* (published two years prior), there are a few striking resemblances. As the title of Martínez’s poem indicates, “FOX TERRIER DESAPARECE EN LA INTERSECCION DE LAS AVENIDAS GAUSS Y LOBACHEWSKY”, the dog is condemned to a similar fate as Zurita’s cows: both become lost in non-Euclidean space¹⁰¹. In Martínez’s work, the poem is accompanied by a visual representation on the previous page, showing the Fox Terrier at the intersection of the avenues of Lobatchewsky and Gauss, represented below:

⁹⁹ The “pursuers” (perseguidores) are mentioned several times in this series of poems, including in these verses: “Quién daría algo por esas auras manchadas que las / vacas mugiendo dejan libres en los blancos espacios no / regidos de la muerte de sus perseguidores?” (72).

¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that “Sogol” is “logos” backwards, which also appears in Zurita’s poem in Greek “λόγος”, suggesting another point of intersection in these two poems.

¹⁰¹ Martínez refers here to Nikolai Lobachevsky and Carl Friedrich Gauss as two prominent figures who challenged Euclidean geometry.



The poem presents a problem to the reader, specifically how to locate the missing dog, “Sogol”, who mysteriously disappeared at the above intersection. Martínez articulates the problem as follows: “Suponga que su perrito de raza Fox Terrier, de pelaje a manchas negras sobre fondo blanco y que obedece al nombre de “SOGOL”, se dirige por una avenida y al llegar a la esquina de otra, desaparece súbitamente. AVERIGUE DONDE Y COMO PUEDE VOLVER A ENCONTRARLO” (81). Like the “respuestas” to the problems from Jean Tardieu, Martínez gives a sample answer to the problem, using an enumerated outline structure similar to the Zurita poem analyzed above. The answer contains certain logical propositions, such as “a. La avenida Gauss solo es invisible / en su punto de intersección con la avenida Lobatchewsky” and “b. La avenida Lobatchewsky sólo es visible / en su punto de intersección con la avenida Gauss” (81). At the end, he concludes that the only way for the Fox Terrier to be found is for the

dog to return on its own from the other dimension: “Dado que esa fisura precisa e infinitesimal / pertenece a las geometrías no euclidianas / la única solución es que el Fox Terrier / regrese pos sus propios medios desde otra dimensión, / cuya entrada y salida se encuentra en la intersección / de las avenidas Gauss y Lobatchewsky” (81). These two poems then, one by Martínez and the other by Zurita, share not only a common quantitative structure and language borrowed from mathematics and logic, but also a common theme, of animals that disappear in non-Euclidean space.

Although some of the poetic forms and themes are aligned in early works of Martínez and Zurita, there are also several important points of departure. Notably, I would like to focus on the transition from spatial poetics of the page, to the body and geographical space.

Zurita’s poetry in printed publications does not seek the same type of reader participation that I have described in Martínez’s work. The particular use of space in Zurita’s early works, such as *Purgatorio* and *Anteparaíso* (for example, using encephalograms as a textual support), is somewhat novel, but coincides only with some of the uses of space in *La nueva novela*. We saw how both use enumerated lists to reference a pseudo-logical/mathematical discourse and distribute words on the page in this schemata. In addition, both poets use the juxtaposition of text and image to enhance the visual signifying support of the poem, revealing another form of poetic discourse through the word-image combination. In *Purgatorio*, for example, Zurita uses the encephalograms and doctor’s note, which give his diagnosis as suffering from schizophrenia¹⁰², as visual supports to the text. He writes poetry over them, which seems to both contrast and complement the scientific discourse of the diagnosis. Below are examples of each:

¹⁰² The text in Spanish reads: “Los resultados especialmente Rorschach coinciden plenamente con tu diagnóstico de psicosis de tipo epiléptico” (41). Epileptic psychosis and schizophrenia are closely linked and have similar symptoms, but are not entirely equivalent.

NA MARIA ALEJANDRO
PSICOLÓGICA

LA GRUTA DE LOURDES

Qto:

Te ~~remito~~ ^{remito} una impresión sobre la
paciente ~~Violita~~ ^{Dulce Beatriz} ~~Violita~~ ^{Roramunda} ~~Violita~~ ^{Manuela} dado el mal es-
tado en que se encuentra. Los resulta-
dos especialmente Rorschach coinciden
plenamente con tu diagnóstico observán-
dose numerosos elementos positivos de
psicosis de tipo epiléptico. El caso
es muy interesante y me gustaría
saber si hay o no corroboración con
el EEG y si existe foro.

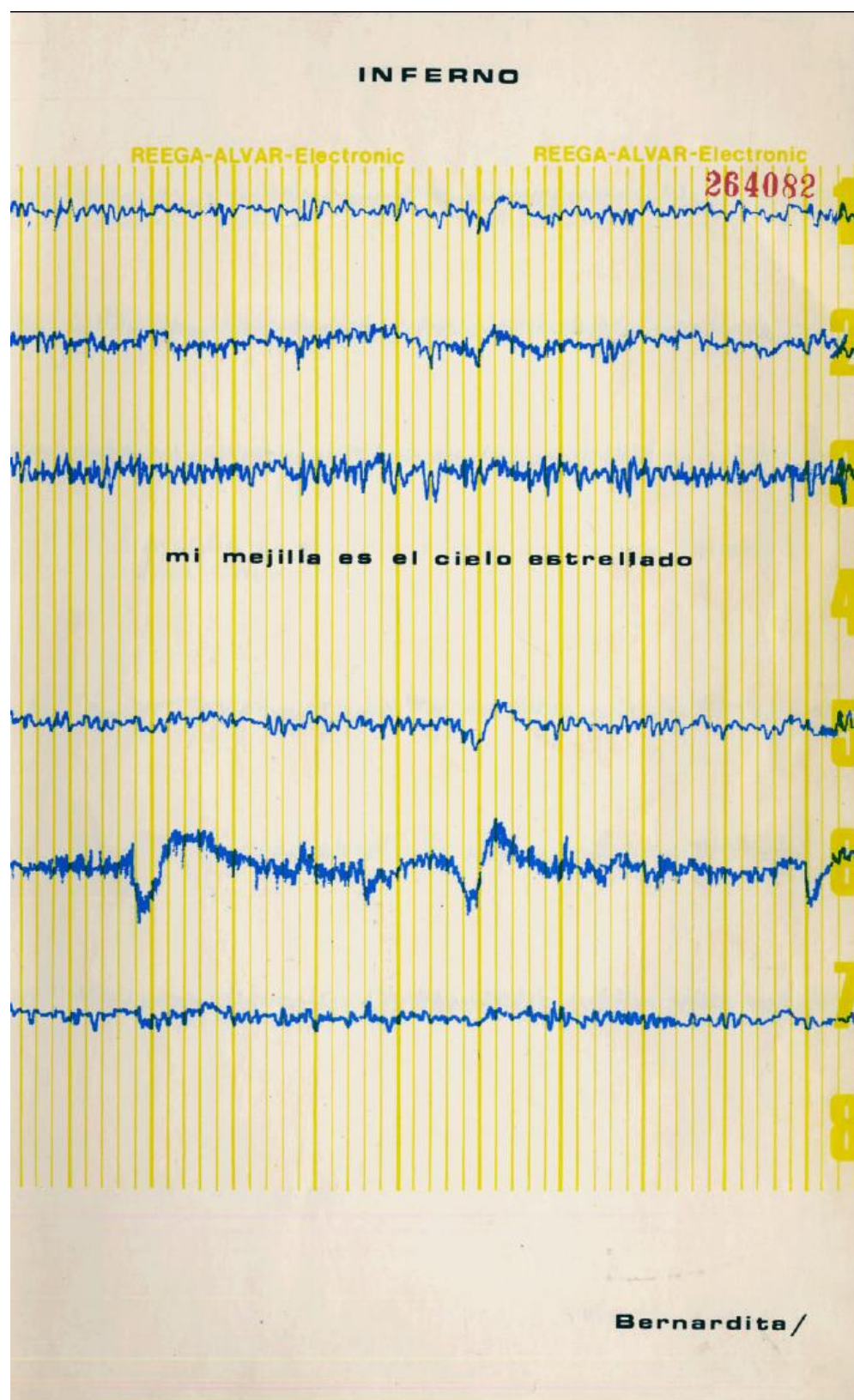
El informe detallado lo tendré
el lunes próximo.

Atte,

Juan Ruiz Herrería

4/5/74.

AMO TE AMO INFINITAMENTE



In the first example, the doctor's note, we see two modifications of the text. The first is a removal of the author's name to replace it with the names of four women (and the corresponding article change from "el paciente" to "la"). The second modification is the addition of the words "TE AMO TE AMO INFINITAMENTE T", with the next phrase starting with a "T" or repeating the same "TE AMO..." again, but truncated by the end of the page. Since the initial "T" to start the phrase is missing part of its beginning, this seems to imply that the phrase is circular, containing its beginning in its end, possibly repeated ad infinitum across the page and the empty space connecting its beginning and end.

The first textual modification is reminiscent of Juan Luis Martínez's practice of crossing out his name. Zurita also strikes out his name from this text, but not from his work in general. Despite the similar technique, these gestures are aligned with different ideological programs. Martínez strikes through his name in order to challenge the concept of the author as the producer of the discourse of the text and his poetic coincides with this gesture. His works are largely made up of appropriated texts, demonstrating that an author is one who collects and recombines the words of others. Zurita, on the other hand, uses the erasure of his name as part of an impulse to find reconciliation and communion, a regeneration of the personal and social body, which I would link to what Waldo Rojas calls "una suerte de aspiración mística: la de la realidad suprema del Amor" (66). He displaces and merges his identity with those of others starting with the cover and the opening page of *Purgatorio*, which combine an image of the poet's scarred cheek with the text, "mis amigos creen que / estoy muy mala / porque quemé mi mejilla", giving a female gender to the speaking subject. This technique, although in appearance similar to Martínez, does not attempt to annul the speaking subject, but rather disperse it onto various subjectivities, representing a transcendental polyphony.

The second example, taken from the encephalograms reproduced in *Purgatorio*, shows a similar impulse to transcend personal suffering, linking it to other subjects or objects. This poem and the sequence of poems to which it pertains, “La vida nueva”, highlight the confluence of three material supports of the poet’s work, namely, 1) the page, 2) the body and 3) geographical space. The page acts as a support for the text, giving it a spatial body to occupy that the poet also uses to portray the physical representation of brain waves. The text equates the cheek of the subject to the starry sky (“mi mejilla es es el cielo estrellado”). However, “estrellado” has two meanings in Spanish, which I believe are at play in the poem. On one hand, “estrellado” can mean “starry”, but it also can mean “broken” or “fragmented”. In this latter sense, Zurita references the image of his mutilated cheek, which has also been broken. There is a third allusion as well, since the text is supported by the visual representation of the encephalogram, which according to the doctor’s note, is also “broken”, in the sense of mental illness. Thus the text employs the notion of “estrellado” to describe a visual spatial representation on the page, a described mental condition, a physical mutilation, and a geographical space.

The use of body and geography as textual poetic supports is not a new phenomenon, but it does constitute a divergence in the use of space in Chilean poetry. This use of space is novel, not in the history of art, but in relation to other poets’ use of space, and in relation to Martínez’s use of space, as treated above. Whereas Martínez uses the space of the page to activate the reader to become a participant, Zurita incorporates other subjects and objects into his poetry. His poetry is enunciated from different voices and texts – texts that extend beyond the page to incorporate geographical spaces and the body. His solo projects such as “Escrituras en el cielo” do not look to activate the spectator in the same way that Martínez’s writings do, but his

collaboration with CADA often has a similar impulse to encourage the public to open up their own spaces and create their own artistic responses.

3.5 Performance and Poetry

I believe that Zurita's geographical projects and body art can be understood in relation to CADA through the lens of performance studies. These works, as well as some of Martínez's can be viewed as performances on a few different levels, depending on the definition of performance. In the broadest sense, it is possible that all human behavior could be considered performance. Marvin Carlson suggests this possibility in his work, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*: "The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as performance, or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself" (4). This definition is based on Richard Schechner's concept of "restored behavior", namely that the performer is conscious of a distance between the self and the acted-out behavior, based on an awareness of the doubled or repeated nature of the action. Schechner writes, "Because the behavior is separate from those who are behaving, the behavior can be stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed. The performers get in touch with, recover, remember, or even invent these strips of behavior and then rebehave them..." (36). This distance highlights the degree to which we are acting as "not ourself", but also "not not ourself", since Schechner affirms that we have various selves that can be activated in performance. In *Between Theater and Anthropology* he writes, "Put in personal terms, restored behavior is 'me behaving as if I am someone else' or 'as if I am 'beside myself,'"

or “not myself,”” as when in a trance. But this ‘someone else’ may also be ‘me in another state of feeling/ being,’” (37). Based on last chapter’s treatment of discovering the other within oneself in Juan Luis Martínez’s poetic translation in “Poemas del otro”, this definition lends itself well to the idea that Martínez was performing his not-not self. One more aspect of performance to keep in mind is that it is an action that is done consciously for an audience. Marvin Carlson explains that “Performance is always performance *for* someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when, as is occasionally the case, the audience is the self” (5).

Another way of approaching performance studies is to begin with its origins in anthropology and ethnology. Most overviews place Arnold Van Gennep’s *Rites de passage* as a groundbreaking work in the field. His analysis of ceremonies such as the rite of passage emphasizes the “set-apartness” of these events from ordinary life. He uses the term “liminal” to describe this stage of transition during the ritual, and this term that has had great resonance in performance and theatre studies. Victor Turner, in *From Ritual to Theatre*, uses the concept of the liminal in his theory of social dramas, but emphasizes the “in-betweenness” and ludic dimension of the liminal stage. Turner writes, “Liminality may involve a complex sequence of episodes in sacred space-time, and may also include subversive and ludic (or playful) events” (27). In a liminal performance, the actors stand outside of their normal cultural constraints, defamiliarizing elements of their culture through playful recombinations. Finally, Turner sees this process as a font of creativity for artistic production:

Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. These cultural forms provide men with a set of templates, models, or paradigms which are, at one level, periodical reclassifications of reality (or, at least, of social experience) and man’s relationship to society, nature, and culture. But they are more than (mere cognitive) classifications, since they incite men to action as well as thought. (52)

This idea of the ludic combination of diverse cultural elements of course calls to mind the poetic pastiche technique of Martínez, but there is one more aspect of performance theory to look at before passing on to an analysis of the poets' works.

The last aspect that I would like to highlight is the importance of the presence of the body in constructing a new kind of memory and knowledge. Diana Taylor contrasts the disembodied knowledge of the archive with the embodied memory of the repertoire in her book, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Taylor proposes that our idea of knowledge can be expanded by incorporating the practices of the repertoire: "performances, gestures, orality, movement, dancing, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (20). In contrast to the "documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs" of the archive, the repertoire requires the presence of the body, a certain "being there" as part of the transmission (20-21). Although these seem to be opposite categories, Taylor notes that they are also simultaneous, complementary and even share some similarities. The repertoire and the archive, for example, are both mediated. Both are repeated through codes and pass through processes of selection that edit their content prior to transmission.

Returning to the work of the two poets in question, there are a number of ways in which their poetic projects can be read through the lens of performance studies. Perhaps the most outstanding example from the work of Martínez is his appropriation of his other's voice in "Poemas del otro"¹⁰³. In the previous chapter I provide a detailed analysis of how the Chilean poet ingeniously appropriates the poetry of another poet with the same name. Martínez finds the

¹⁰³ I write the title "Poemas del otro" in quotation marks to refer to the collection of poems in the book with the same name, *Poemas del otro*, in order to distinguish it from the other poems in the book.

poetry of another Juan Luis Martinez (without an accent on the “i”), translates the French poems to Spanish, and presented several of them as if they were his poems, or at least without revealing their source.¹⁰⁴ The poems were attributed to the Chilean Martínez until 2014, when Scott Weintraub published *La última broma de Juan Luis Martínez: no sólo ser otro sino escribir la obra de otro*, which explains the discovery of the original authorship of the poems, thanks to a hint left in the posthumous publication of *El poeta anónimo* by Juan Luis Martínez in 2013. The photocopied library card of the Swiss-Catalan Martinez’s work led Weintraub to discover that Martínez’s “Poemas del otro” was a translation of the other Martinez’s book of poetry, *La silence et sa brisure*.

What is of interest here is how this gesture of appropriation of another’s voice constitutes a performance according to the theories described above. Firstly, Martínez’s translations embody the concept of twice-behaved behavior, a duplicitous gesture with the awareness that one’s actions (or speech acts) have already been done by another. In the case of “Poemas del otro”, Martínez is conscious of a concrete example for his appropriation – his public readings and publications are repetitions, albeit translations, of another’s words. When Martínez reads “Quien soy yo” in Paris in 1992 he embodies the voice of his other¹⁰⁵. Despite the fact that these words were not originally written by the Chilean poet, they can constitute his self, or one of his selves, much in the way that an actress can be not-not herself during a performance. One can enunciate the words of another and still feel them as a genuine expression of the self. The context of enunciation and the action itself of pronouncing the words has a profound impact on their meaning, much in the way that the fictional Pierre Menard reveals in his rewriting of the

¹⁰⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the Swiss-Catalan Juan Luis Martinez and the Chilean Juan Luis Martínez see the previous chapter, section 1.5.

¹⁰⁵ According to Cristóbal Joannon, editor of *Poemas del otro*, this poem was read in Paris, at the conference “Les belles étrangères” at Sorbonne University in April, 1992. (109)

Quijote in Borges' famous short story. Thus, Martínez's poetic pilfering is a performance of someone else's behavior, his linguistic double, and reveals the way in which a performer can activate various selves that are other forms of, but not distinct from, one's identity.

It is also interesting to think of Martínez's performances of the other Martínez's writings in terms of Taylor's archive and repertoire terminology. The work of the Swiss-Catalan Martínez is the archival material that the Chilean poet embodies and performs. This is evident not only in the live performance of his poetry readings, but also in the significance associated with publication. As noted in the previous chapter, the publication of "Quién soy yo" four days before the 1988 plebiscite was a significant political gesture due to the oblique references to a country veiled in anguish and solitude as well as a hopeful tone for better future. The poem was paired with a picture of the Chilean poet with his family in the newspaper, *La Época*. This combination again shows the poet literally embodying the work of another, presenting his own image alongside the words of his other in order to comment on a contemporary political context.

In much of the Chilean poet's work there is a poetic technique based on the recombination of archival material. *La nueva novela* and *El poeta anónimo* in particular demonstrate Martínez's use of collage and pastiche to construct new signifying sequences. The results of these constructions are sometimes elegant and tragic, such as Tania Savich and the phenomenology of roundness, but more often are playful and ludic, like combining high and low culture, such as Donald Duck and Rimbaud. This not only constitutes a type of performing the archive, but also can be seen as a subversive and ludic defamiliarization of cultural elements, according to Turner's theory of performance. Martínez plays with the myths, symbols, and codes of Western civilization in his works, destabilizing their gravitas in a ludic manner. The recycling of texts that makes up these two works is also suggestive of Schechner's idea of twice-behaved behavior

– a conscious decision to deploy others’ words as part of a new performance. It is interesting to note that for Turner, these reclassifications of cultural materials are not merely cognitive, but “incite men to action as well as thought” (52), an idea that I have already suggested above in the analysis of Martínez’s participatory poetics.

We can also view the presentation of the materials in Martínez’s works as performative in another sense, as a conscious attempt to intervene in the space of the book by creating multiple readings. *La nueva novela* in particular is dense with self-referentiality, creating various links between content on different pages, functioning like hyperlinks on a website.¹⁰⁶ The reader is given various suggestions for how to read the text by following instructions to jump from page to page (such as following the runners that appear on pages 61 and 99), or moving back and forth to discover the relationship between consecutive pages, sometimes through windows or inversions. Even the extensive endnotes seem to interfere with the typical spatial orientation of the book, operating in reverse. The pages that are elucidated in the index lack references to make us aware that they have endnotes, so instead of traveling from the page of text to the index, the reader actually discovers the reference only from the index and then travels backwards to the text. This organization of references and performative use of space promotes multiple non-linear readings of the text, making it possible that each reading of the text will constitute a unique performance. On the other hand, Zurita’s work perhaps offers a more readily apparent connection to theories of performance. Actions such as branding his face with a hot iron, burning his eyes with ammonia, writing poems in the sky and in the desert, as well as participating in artistic interventions with CADA, are all demonstrative of performative elements as outlined here. When Zurita scalds his cheek, he shows his awareness of the audience, of “turning the other cheek” to his abusers, as a

¹⁰⁶For a discussion of the hypertextuality of *La nueva novela*, see Juan Herrera’s “*La nueva novela* de Juan Luis Martínez: Poesía protohipertextual en el contexto de la videósfera.” *Acta Literaria*, no. 35, I Sem, 2007, pp. 9-27.

response to the incarceration and torture he suffered. This action also reveals a new positioning of the subject, a realization that his new self is distinct from his old self as a result of being broken into fragmented selves. This action is also paralleled in his use of shifting signifiers to refer to the self in *Purgatorio*, crossing out his name from documents and writing others' names in its place. Finally, this action may be understood as arising from a place of marginality and liminality. The poet finds himself in a strange limbo, or "purgatory", from which he desires to speak. The actions of self-mutilation as well as the text of *Purgatorio* are produced from this liminal, in-between place where he is still searching to reconstruct his own subjectivity and find communion within a fragmented society.

With regards to Zurita's land art (or more specifically, his land and sky art), there is an attempt to take the poetic word from the page and externalize it on a new space. The written word is thus transformed into the incarnate word through a performative writing. In order for this to occur, the poet must see external space as a possible surface for inscription. The sky, the desert, or the walls of the city are understood as being unique spaces open to the possibility of receiving an artist's subjectivity, or to use Lefebvre's terminology, abstract space can be transformed and made one's own through a process of resignification. In contrast to a poetry recital, the land art of Zurita is more of a silent performance. It is closely linked to the action of writing, albeit a public writing, available to any observer who happens to be watching; as Carlson says, performance is always *for* someone.

Although one could separate Zurita's literary works from his performances, I prefer to interpret these as parts of a single poetic gesture. All three surfaces, the blank page, the body and geographical space, are connected through the poet's use of them as writing surfaces, and in turn, each can be a metaphor for each other. When Zurita uses a bulldozer to write "Ni pena ni

miedo” in the Atacama Desert he uses the landscape as a page. When he burns his check, he writes on the body a distinguishing mark that represents personal and collective trauma. Finally, his writings in books of poetry are also inscriptions on the national body of Chile and emphasize the connection between poetry and country by alluding to geographical spaces as poetic symbols. In *Purgatorio*, Zurita employs spaces of Chile, such as “El desierto de Atacama” and “Áreas verdes”, as titles for sections of the book and as sceneries for metaphorical dramas, like the one between the cows and cowboys in the same book. The geography, however, is not only a backdrop for the drama, but also becomes mobilized, as can be seen in the “marcha sin ley de las impresionantes cordilleras de Chile” (63) in *Anteparaíso*. The plains of Chile complain that they are sick from the cold that the mountains bring, representing the wounds of the speaking subject and the nation. Thus, the boundaries between writing and performance are blurred in Zurita’s work, since all three spaces, geography, body and text, are brought together by parallel inscriptions.

In the next section, I continue the topic of analyzing the relationship between poetry and performance, but I shift from Zurita to CADA, the experimental artistic group that he participated in, while keeping in mind the topic of space and the group’s relation to the spatial poetics of Martínez and Zurita.

3.6 From the Page to the City: CADA’s Performative Poetry

Formed in 1979 by key members Juan Castillo, Lotty Rosenfeld, Fernando Balcells, Diamela Eltit and Raúl Zurita, CADA (Colectivo Acciones de Arte) created a series of interventions in the cityscape of Santiago in hopes of producing a counter reaction against the military government as well as challenging the distinctions between art, life and politics. Their work embodies the characteristics of the *Escena de avanzada* cited above from Nelly Richard, such as: dismantling the work of art, challenging the institutional frameworks, and blurring the lines between discursive genres. These characteristics match so closely with CADA's projects that it seems Richard had the group foremost in mind when articulating the *Escena*.

Although it seems at first glance that their projects would have strongly resonated with the disillusioned left, there were several critical responses that Robert Neustadt highlights in his book, *CADA DÍA: la creación de un arte social*. First, the right saw them as a group of "locos" who needed to learn to respect order. Traditionalists had a hard time viewing their actions as art, and the orthodox left wrote them off as elitists due to their use of technology and high cost productions (Neustadt 13). Although they were criticized for being too theoretical and indirect with their political statements, the group had a great impact on intellectual circles of the time (Ibid. 14).

In my analysis of their artistic production I would like to focus on the way their work impacts, not only society, but the spatial production on which society is built. Although some of their political statements may have been too indirect or theoretical for the lay person, their message of non-conformity and challenging the status quo was clear, and as Lefebvre argues, the abstract space of capitalism is dependent on consensus (57). By breaking up the quotidian nature of everyday life with provocative actions and messages, CADA's performance art looked to

challenge the symbols of the regime and destabilize the conformity of its spaces. Neustadt describes their impact on space thus: “Las acciones del CADA abrieron un espacio dentro del discurso autoritario que permitió que fuera posteriormente ocupado por el movimiento democrático” (14). I believe this is particularly evident in their last intervention, “No +”, but I would like to begin chronologically.

CADA’s first intervention, “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” (1979) was a reactivation of Salvador Allende’s promise to deliver a half-liter of milk to every child in Chile. On October 3, the collective of artists handed out 100 half-liters of milk to families in La Granja, a poor neighborhood of Santiago. On the same day, the magazine *Hoy* was distributed with an almost entirely blank page as CADA had requested. Originally the group wanted the page to be blank, but they settled for a mostly empty page with the following text:

imaginar esta página completamente blanca
 imaginar esta página blanca como la leche diaria a consumir
 imaginar cada rincón de Chile privado del consumo diario de leche como página blancas
 para llenar

The text immediately establishes a connection between a series of poetic valences based on permutations of whiteness, absence, milk, and the blank page, which in turn link the action of distributing milk with the intervention of the magazine page. Neustadt sums up the missing necessities represented by the white milk as follows: “La leche del CADA relexionaba sobre la carencia nutritiva, histórica y democrática: hace memoria de la consigna de Allende, denuncia la carencia nutritiva y critica la dictadura” (32).

These actions were also accompanied by a reading of a text called “No es una aldea” in front of the United Nations building in Santiago, an exhibition of videos of their distribution campaign next to a box filled with empty bags of milk, and milk-related actions in Bogotá and

Toronto by Cecilia Vicuña and Eugenio Téllez, respectively. “No es una aldea” was recorded in five different languages (Spanish, French, English, Russian, and Chinese), and as Neustadt explains, “tiene el efecto de ampliar las posibles lecturas del discurso” (26). Neustadt’s observation corresponds directly to a section of CADA’s text that says, “Cada vida humana en el páramo despojado de esta patria chilena no es sólo una manera de morir, es también una palabra, y una palabra en medio de un discurso. Entender que somos una palabra a escuchar es entender que no estamos sólo para enfrentar la muerte” (cited in Neustadt 128). I do not entirely coincide with Neustadt’s interpretation of this quote, in particular that “La palabra en medio de un discurso a que se refería el CADA, sería entonces, el ‘neoliberalismo’” (26). Rather, it seems to me that “the word” stands in contrast to the wasteland of Chile in which each human life is only leading to death. Each life is also a word of a discourse, and a word that can and should be heard. This seems to be an optimistic message, related to the group’s idea that life can be viewed as a work of art that can be corrected¹⁰⁷. Read in this sense, each human life is a word, or a voice that can transform the dominant discourse. This interpretation makes more sense in terms of their utopian impulse to transform society by activating the public to participate in artistic production.

CADA’s second action can be viewed as a continuation of their first. “Inversión de escena” repeats some of the metaphors of whiteness, milk and absence, but with more emphasis on the institute of art. For this intervention, (October 7, 1979) the group organized a procession of ten milk trucks to appear in front of the Museo de Bellas Artes, which was covered by a white

¹⁰⁷ “Corregir la vida es un trabajo de arte, es decir, es un trabajo de creación social de un nuevo sentido y de una nueva forma colectiva de vida... Esa es la obra: la escultura a construir.” (Quotation taken from slips of paper from the “¡Ay Sudamérica!” action, reproduced further down on page 142.)

sheet. This action lends itself to various interpretations. Nelly Richard notes how the white-out of the museum represents a double censorship:

Cuando el grupo CADA [...] tacha el frontis del Museo [...] bloquea virtualmente la entrada, ejerce una doble censura a la institucionalidad artística. Censura su monumento, primero, como *Museo* (alegoría de la tradición sacralizadora del arte del pasado) y, segundo, como Museo *chileno* (símbolo del oficialismo cultural de la dictadura). Pero lo hace reclamando a la vez la calle como “el verdadero Museo” en la que los trayectos cotidianos de los habitantes de la ciudad pasan a ser – por inversión de la mirada – la nueva obra de arte a contemplar. (41, cited in Neustadt 31)

Richard emphasizes the idea of censorship¹⁰⁸ in this intervention, that the action is directed against the idea of the museum as a delimiting space (as the only place where art can be found), in addition to the criticism of the State’s suppression of art. In contrast, CADA’s positive proposal claims that the street and life in general can be viewed as canvases or works of art. Neustadt also sees this action as a demonstration of the group’s belief that the city could be viewed as a metaphorical page:

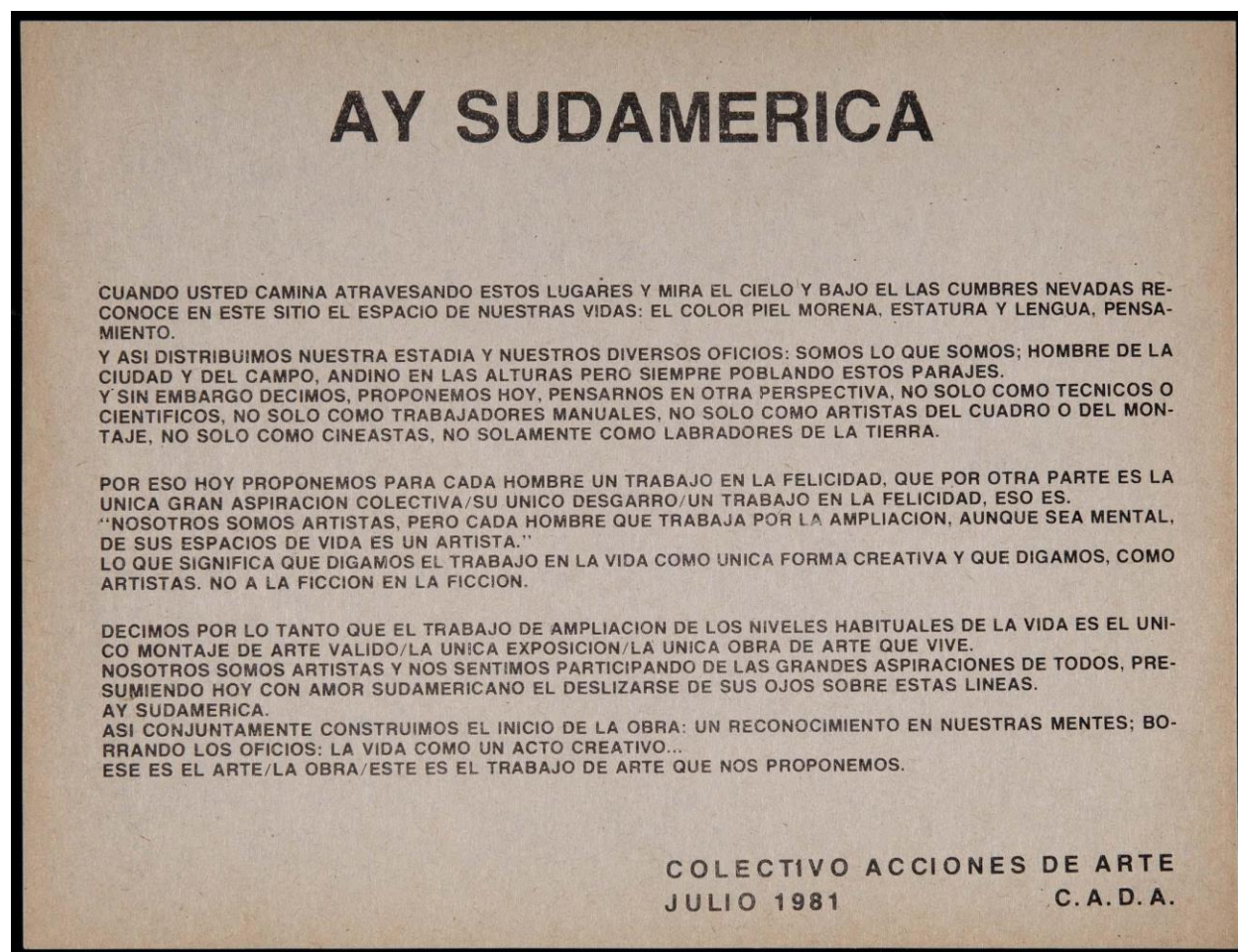
De una manera parecida a como el CADA se había tomado la página (imaginada blanca) de la revista *Hoy*, la “Inversión de escena” ocupó esta vez una “página” metafórica de Santiago para subrayar la transparencia de la represión cotidiana. Esta vez aprovecharon... de los logos comerciales de los camiones lecheros. Un logo comercial se vuelve invisible – se ve tanto que no se ve – como el diseño propagandístico que aparece en las monedas [de 1988, con la figura que rompe las cadenas]. Pero diez camiones lecheros sí ocuparon un espacio visible y la acción llamó mucho la atención de Santiago de Chile en 1979. (31)

Neustadt reveals the paradoxical nature of the gesture of the milk truck procession that makes visible the invisible. I would add that, in addition to the visible/invisible paradox of the milk

¹⁰⁸ The notion of an artist reproducing the State’s censorship would be an interesting topic of discussion in light of J.M. Coetzee’s aforementioned *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship*, in which he suggests that although the State has the language of power, the poets have the power of language, meaning that CADA’s censure, at least in one sense, is more potent.

slogan, the gesture of covering the museum in a white sheet also makes the museum invisible by covering it up, but at the same time this cover-up draws more attention to the partially hidden object, making it more visible. This could be interpreted in two distinct ways, as CADA challenging the institution of art, as Richard points out, or as a symbol of the government's suppression of artistic production, the *apagón cultural*. Probably, the ambiguous gesture is meant to evoke both possibilities and can be interpreted in a more general sense as a critique of artistic production, or the lack thereof, under a repressive regime.

For their third action, "¡Ay Sudamérica!" (July 12, 1981), CADA dropped 400,000 leaflets from six airplanes over Santiago. The text of the leaflets reads:



With the launch of this text, CADA establishes a new dynamic between itself and their public. The text has the feeling of a manifesto, but a manifesto open to everyone. It begins by addressing the reader (*usted*), and when it defines the group, “Nosotros somos artistas”, it includes everyone in the category of artists, (“pero cada hombre que trabaja por la ampliación, aunque sea mental, de sus espacios de vida es un artista”). In this way, CADA bridges the gap between artist and spectator by drawing the spectator into the role of the artist. The collective defines itself as a group that not only works to open spaces, but also encourages everyone to do the same for themselves. Finally, not only is this their proposal, but it is, according to them, the only valid work of art, ‘la única obra de arte que vive.’”

This artistic action, of course, is more than just a text; it is also a performance that occupies a particular space. The use of airplanes to release the text is reminiscent of a military action and would establish an association with the bombing of La Moneda during the military coup on September 11, 1973. However, instead of resuscitating the image of a military attack on the populace, the gesture seems to me to aim at resignifying and reappropriating both the action and the space. Bombing the city with poetry reminds one of the bombings, but also replaces them with a peaceful alternative, which in turn carries with it the textual seeds of hope for establishing a new space. Since the performance takes place in the sky and uses this as its visual support, it also resignifies this space, not as the dominion of the violent, univocal discourse of the military, but as an opening from which to initiate a new discourse in which every person can participate by opening their own spaces for life.

In passing to their fourth action, “No +” (1983-84), we move from a theoretical inclusion of the public in the artistic process, to a concrete and visible form of participation. At the end of 1983 and beginning of 1984, CADA (and many other artists who collaborated) took to the streets

to disseminate the “No +” (“No más”) message on the walls of Santiago. The idea was to solicit the participation of the public in finishing the phrases. In the following days, messages began to appear, such as, “No + dictadura”, “No + desaparecidos”, “No + tortura”, “No + armas”, etc. (Neustadt 36). This action not only transformed the public spaces of the city, but also demonstrated how people could participate in the “ampliación... de sus espacios de vida”, as they had proclaimed in their “¡Ay Sudamérica!” action. For CADA, working to widen the spaces of life meant to be an artist, and thus, the public become part of the group of artists by participating. In addition, the group left the graffiti without any signature, reinforcing their concept of the negation of authorship and the concept of a communal work of art.

Although their works were often ephemeral in nature, such as the distribution of milk, the poetry bombing and the graffiti mentioned above, they also had a lasting impact. In particular, the “No +” action fit perfectly with the No campaign to oust Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite. Democratic movements appropriated the “No +” symbol for their manifestations, and the publicity campaign also used this symbol since it corresponded with how they wanted the public to vote. On the ballots, the voter would mark a vertical line, perpendicular to the horizontal line next to “No”, to express their vote, thus making the ballot read, “No +”.

The parameters that I would like to use in further analyzing CADA’s artistic production are performance and space. To establish the continuity that exists between the poets Martínez and Zurita on one hand, and CADA on the other, I have outlined these themes (space and performance) in the work of the poets. For CADA, the performatic dimension seems most apparent, but I will make a few remarks on how their works can be understood from performance theory before returning to the theme of space.

Of the theories of performance outlined above, perhaps Turner's theory of the liminal and the liminoid is the most insightful in approaching CADA's works. In particular, his theory of the liminal as a marginal space that is conducive to the type of cultural activity that the Chilean artists explored in their works provides insight into their reconfigurations of cultural symbols. Turner writes that, "Liminality may involve a complex sequence of episodes in sacred space-time, and may also include subversive and ludic (or playful) events" (27). Although CADA's works are a bit more serious than playful, and not quite as serious as religious, they do fit within the realm of the subversive liminal experimentation. In agreement with play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith, Turner describes these liminal and liminoid situations as "the seedbeds of cultural creativity" (28). Turner explains that, "in liminality people 'play' with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements" (27). This is true of CADA's interventions, such as "Para no morir de hambre en el arte", in which the artists used the symbol of milk, combined it with symbols of absence, necessity, emptiness, etc. in order to construct a critical discourse. The effect of their project was such that Soprole, the milk company that supplied the milk trucks for "Inversión de escena", felt compelled to change their logo afterwards to distance themselves from how CADA had resignified it.

Perhaps it is better though to use the term "liminoid" to describe the practices of CADA, since the term "liminal" is usually used by Turner to refer to sanctioned rituals of society and the "liminoid" is used to refer to products or situations that are designed to cause a break from society. Turner calls the liminoid "an independent and critical source" (33). The liminoid generates "antistructure" which can create "a plurality of alternative models for living", including utopian impulses (33). "Antistructure" is also a useful term to describe CADA's

projects since the purpose of antistructure is to create a “communitas” and the “liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc.” (44), which reminds one of CADA’s claim that anyone who works to extend their space, even mental space, is an artist. (“Cada hombre que trabaja por la ampliación, aunque sea mental, de sus espacios de vida es un artista”). With this proclamation, the Chilean artists look to form a “communitas” that attempts to free their cognitive and creative capacities from the dominant societal structures. This attempt to create an ephemeral, anti-hierarchical community and the utopian impulse of the group can be seen throughout their work to varying degrees.

I would argue that CADA does not propose a solution, but rather a space in which one can imagine and experiment with different proposals. Their projects are centered around challenging the dominant construction of social space and encouraging the public to become aware of how they can inscribe and resignify the spaces of their life. This practice echoes the words of Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*: “‘Change life!’ ‘Change society!’ These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space” (59). The particular societal space that CADA challenges is the one produced by the military regime of the 70s and 80s, and can be characterized by the *apagón cultural*, repression and the imposition of neoliberal economic reform. The latter is the primary concern of Lefebvre who describes the construction of “abstract space” by bourgeois capitalism: “Through their manipulation of abstract space, the bourgeoisie’s enlightened despotism and the capitalist system have successfully established partial control over the commodity market” (62). For Lefebvre, capitalism has influenced the production of space “from buildings to the distribution of investments and the worldwide division of labor” (9-10). This form of spatial production can be considered a form of hegemony, since it subtly creates an

underlying system and discourse that exert control on all aspects of societal life. Awareness of space and its influence, then, is key to affecting any societal change.

In *Chile actual: anatomía de un mito*, Tomás Moulian provides a description of the transformation of Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship in a way that corresponds to Lefebvre's theory of abstract space. In his chapter on "La Revolución Capitalista", Moulian describes the origin of Chile's malaise as follows: "Chile Actual proviene de la fertilidad de un <ménage a trois>, es la materialización de una copula incesante entre militares, intelectuales neoliberales y empresarios nacionales o transnacionales" (18). The type of society produced by this triad of soldiers, neoliberals and businessmen consists of "mercados desregulados, de indiferencia política, de individuos competitivos, realizados o bien compensados a través del placer de consumir o más bien de exhibirse consumiendo, de asalariados socializados en el disciplinamiento y en la evasión" (18). According to Moulian, the literal and symbolic act of establishing a new social order was the bombing of the presidential palace: "Bombardear desde el aire el Palacio de Gobierno ya expresa una voluntad tabula rasa, de crear un nuevo Estado sobre las ruinas del otro" (30). The new space of Chile, built on the ruins of the former, becomes defined by "el ciudadano credit-card", "el mall" and the practice of material consumption (103-111). In terms of the organization of space then, the mall is the space *par excellence* of capitalism. Moulian sees malls as the primary space of contemporary Chile: "Estos grandes templos del consumo son, más aún que la plaza del mercado en las ciudades antiguas, los lugares de condensación de la ciudad contemporánea" (113). In fact, consumerism has come to replace political participation, according to Moulian: "La ciudadanía crediticia asume que el poder al que debe aspirar es sólo el ejercicio de los derechos del consumidor" (104). This constitutes a shift from voting in the political sphere, to going to the mall and voting with a credit card for one's

preferred brands. Other transformations of social space that Moulian mentions include: the segregation and isolation of luxury neighborhoods, the deterioration of public services (especially in popular sectors), the contamination from industrial waste, and other effects from a lack of urban planning (126-27). At the same time, however, the state held the middle class in sway with the promise of economic prosperity, exemplified by the ‘miracle’ of the consumer boom (Stern 168).

Since abstract space “erases distinctions”, “seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters” (49) and is built on “consensuses”, “privatization”, and “trouble-free” places (56), the work of CADA is to reveal these underlying structures and advocate for their contraries. Their actions were meant to unsettle the status quo and question the institutions that shape social life. By producing ephemeral interventions that could not be commodified or consumed, they resisted the capitalist ideology. The way in which their work was consumed is quite opposite to the capitalist consumption of art work. Their distribution of milk, for example, evinces a consumption designed for nutrition, not for acquiring or performing an elite social status. The way in which their works affected space is another example of how they subverted the abstract space produced by the regime. Bombing the city with poetry is an act that resignifies the symbols of the jet and bombing (which enacted a form of erasure), but it also reimagines the use of the airspace above the city. Something positive, like poetry, can replace bombs and provide a challenge to the violent imposition of the dictatorship. This is a practice that continues to be performed by Casa Grande¹⁰⁹ at various cities throughout the world that

¹⁰⁹ According the Casa Grande’s website (loscasagrande.org), the group is a “Chilean art collective that has developed a series of publishing projects and art actions related to poetry and interventions into public spaces.” Their statement is reminiscent of CADA’s and the group could be seen as a continuation of the artistic and political concerns of the former.

suffered tragic bombings¹¹⁰. It is also important to note that CADA did not simply wish to replace one ideology with another, but rather to open up a space for everyone to contribute to a new dialogue. This is evident from their texts, but also from the “No +” action, which solicited the public to respond creatively in viewing the city as a space on which to inscribe their opinions or subjectivities. This project also coincides with Lefebvre’s theory of the type of space needed to supersede the abstract space of capitalism. The new space he calls “differential space” because it contrasts with the homogenizing effect of abstract space by “accentuating differences” (52). He also says that it will “put an end to those localizations which shatter the integrity of the individual body, the social body, the corpus of human needs, and the corpus of knowledge” (52). Reconstituting the shattered, fragmented individual and social body is reminiscent both of Zurita’s and CADA’s works. Zurita, who learned to “speak from the wreckage”, forging a new poetic language to describe a fragmented identity, was also in search of a communion with the social body. CADA focused more directly on the social body, as well as the human needs and knowledge that could heal it.

3.7 Conclusion

Artistic production during the Pinochet regime cannot be fully apprehended without considering how space has been constructed, deconstructed and reimaged. I have attempted to show how poets and artists in Chile have carried out processes of deconstruction and reimagining their social spaces. This transformation, from a closed society built on abstract space to an open

¹¹⁰ Poetry bombings performed by Casa Grande include the cities: Santiago, Dubrovnik, Guernica, Warsaw, Berlin and London.

society that welcomes differentiation, cannot occur without a transformation on three levels, as Lefebvre indicates: “A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space” (54). Perhaps this is why poets and artists went beyond the traditional bounds of poetry to incorporate new forms and mediums of expression. Maybe there is more to these developments than a desire to innovate and blur generic boundaries. Interactive, participatory poetry can be an attempt to affect more than language, by intervening directly into life and space. However, is not language already intimately tied to life and space? Can we speak of social space or human life without its basis in language? Do poets really need to go beyond language and the traditional poetic text in order to be revolutionary? Is not language already, as Hölderlin claims, the “most dangerous of possessions”? (cited in Heidegger *Existence and Being* 273). These questions will be the focus of the following chapter, in which I attempt to singularize participatory poetry as a unique mode of literature that engages the reader on a particular level.

Chapter 3. Participatory Poetry and the Proposal Poem

4.1 Chapter Introduction

I began this study by writing about coincidences, and Juan Luis Martínez's work seems to be plagued by them. The first chapter treated the uncanny coincidences that can be found within *La nueva novela* and the historical context that followed it. The texts became transformed, or translated, due to the political climate following the coup. This happened in such a way that today, a poem like "Desaparición de una familia", resonates with the context of the *desaparecidos* and can be (and has been) read within the context of state-sponsored terrorism, although it probably wasn't written with this context in mind. In the same chapter, I looked at the uncanny coincidence of Martínez's double, the Swiss-Catalan poet with the same name, and Martínez's appropriation of the poet's work. In order to write poetry as an "other", the Chilean poet found his linguistic doppelgänger, and enunciated his other's poetry, albeit in translation. In the second chapter, I analyzed coincidences between Martínez and his compatriots, in particular Raúl Zurita and CADA, in terms of their similar concerns about space and the challenge that artists can present to the public in order to reimagine and redefine the space of society. In this chapter I focus on one final uncanny coincidence: a unique poetic technique employed by both Juan Luis Martínez and a group of Valencian poets named Grupo Texto Poético. The proposal-poems of Texto Poético are so similar that on first encounter one immediately feels there must be a connection between them. However, both artists published their strikingly similar works in the same year, 1977, and due to the limited range of circulation of their texts, any direct influence

looks highly improbable. In this chapter I propose a comparative analysis of their works within the framework of reader-centered literary theory.

The theory that I refer to (reader-response) is somewhat insufficient in addressing the specific type of participatory poetry that I examine in this chapter since this theoretical framework is usually designed to cover literature and art in a more general sense. In order to approach the topic at hand, these theories need to be expanded to address different forms of participatory art. Traditional reader-response theory and the “open work of art” do not entirely capture the transition from author-centered writing, to the reader-centered writing apparatus in the poets that I address.

How is participatory poetry different from other forms of poetry? Does a category as such even exist or does all poetry equally impel us to participate in the construction of the text? Or maybe participatory poetry is only a difference in degree and not of type, a more involved form of reader participation, but not a distinct form of writing? In answer to these questions I would like to propose, as a starting point, that the experience of participatory poetry is at least distinct in the sense that the reader has a heightened awareness of his or her participation in the poem.¹¹¹ Whereas some poems may leave a reader feeling like the passive recipient of the author’s words, participatory poetry calls attention to the fact that the reader is fundamental in the aesthetic experience. In any form of literature, without the reader there is no experienced work, but only marks on a page, so whether the reader is made aware of it or not, he/she has an important role in reconstructing the text and creating the aesthetic experience. Nevertheless, I distinguish between a poem that explicitly addresses the reader and asks him or her to

¹¹¹ Of course, there are also other art forms, such as the theatre, which would merit this distinction, but here I am interested in particular in distinguishing between two types of poetry: that in which the reader is made conscious of his/her role in constructing the text, and that in which the reader has a more passive role. This is not a definitive categorization and is relative to the individual reader’s interpretation of how to approach the text.

collaborate, thus creating a new form of consciousness about the aesthetic experience. If nothing else, it is this awareness that distinguishes participatory poetry from other forms of poetry.

Finally, I address the different kinds of participatory art, mostly of the 20th century, in order to distinguish the type of proposal poems of Juan Luis Martínez and Grupo Texto Poético from other forms of collaborative art. Perhaps what is unique about the work of the aforementioned poets is the way they challenge the somewhat naïve notion that the author of a participatory event/work does not occupy a privileged site from whence he or she can instruct the audience in how to make art. I believe that their work reveals this problematic relationship through the use of irony and absurdity, making the reader question the logic of the authorial voice and casting doubt on the very process of participation that they seem to promote. In addition, the absurd nature of some of the proposals and/or questions allows the audience to escape from the sort of limited responses available in most forms of participatory art. This parody of the typical participatory art, in which these poets lead us to question the authoritative voice inviting the spectator to complete a specific task, is what I see as their unique contribution to the practice of participatory poetry.

4.2 Reader-Response Theory

Although there is a great diversity of theories within the realm of reader-response criticism, these theorists generally agree that the reader plays a fundamental role in the aesthetic experience. A summary example of this perspective is elucidated by Wolfgang Iser in his essay, “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach”: “in considering a literary work, one

must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text” (279). These theories propose the work of art as an experience or a process that cannot exist fully without the spectator. This theory constitutes a shift away from text-centered theories of New Criticism, structuralism, and formalism, which in turn was a shift away from the author-centered, literary genius perspective of the Romantic period.

The first waves of reader-response theory focus on the relationship between the reader and the text, but give precedence to the formal aspects of the text in defining this relationship (as opposed to the role of the reader). Wayne C. Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, for example, is sometimes considered part of New Criticism or formalism, with its critique of the rhetorical forms and narrative techniques of the text, although it does look at the subjective experience of the reader, in terms of his/her “emotion distance” from the character (155) and the idea of the “implied author” (71) as the location of the reader’s association of values and judgements expressed in the text.¹¹²

A much more radical theory of the reader emerges in Stanley Fish’s *Is There a Text in This Class?*, a collection of essays that reveals his theory of the reader as the site of the text. Fish argues that, in an important sense, there is no author’s text since the meaning of such a text is equally as unstable as the readings that constitute it. To overcome the objection that readers’ interpretations are too unstable to constitute the text, Fish posits the idea of a relative stability, based on the concepts of “interpretive communities” and “informed readers”. Interpretive communities are groups that have a shared set of tacit assumptions about how texts are written “prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is

¹¹² See Wayne C Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, University of Chicago Press, 1961.

usually assumed, the other way around” (171). Each community, of course, will perceive the text in its own way, according to its own set of interpretive strategies. But, in addition, the uncertainty of how to interpret the text is part of the text itself, so there is no need to pin down a specific interpretation, or claim that one interpretive community is superior to another. Texts, he argues, “are not *meant* to be solved, but to be experienced” (149). The text is malleable since, according to Fish: “analyses generated by the assumption that meaning is embedded in the artifact – will always point in as many directions as there are interpreters; that is, not only will it prove something, it will prove anything” (150). The role of the literary critic is not to try to resolve ambiguities, but rather to explore what it means that texts contain them: “It is the structure of the reader’s experience rather than any structures available on the page that should be the object of description” (152).¹¹³

Umberto Eco’s theory of the “open work” sheds light on how readers can perform texts according to their own fashion without losing the specificity of the work (which seems to be lost in Fish’s theory, since a work can be made to signify “anything”). In the essay “The Poetics of the Open Work” (originally published in his book, *Opera Aperta*), Eco says that open works “appeal to the initiative of the individual performer, and hence they offer themselves, not as finite works that prescribe specific repetition along given structural coordinates, but as ‘open’ works, which are brought to their conclusion by the performer at the same time as he experiences them on an aesthetic plane” (*The Role of the Reader* 49). Instead of an oppositional juxtaposition between text and reader, Eco describes the relationship as mutually beneficial: the more readings that can be performed, the richer the work of art. He writes, “In fact, the form of the work of art gains aesthetic validity precisely in proportion to the number of different

¹¹³ See Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, Harvard University Press, 1980.

perspectives from which it can be viewed and understood” (49). Eco stresses that these multiple interpretations (or “wealth of different resonances and echoes”) do not impair the essence of the work, they do not “impinge on its unadulterable specificity” (49). Readings of a text constitute various performances whose very multiplicity emphasizes the richness of the work. Like Fish, Eco sees “uncertainty” as a positive feature, something to be highlighted, not suppressed. He traces the history of literature from medieval poetics, in which there are only a limited number of valid interpretations according to scripture, encyclopedias, bestiaries, etc., to symbolism, in which artists openly strove to find highly suggestive symbols. Mallarmé occupies a critical juncture in this process; Eco affirms that “Blank space surrounding a word, typographical adjustments, and spatial composition in the page setting of the poetic text – all contribute to create a halo of indefiniteness and to make the text pregnant with infinite suggestive possibilities” (53). Eco sees this as an intentional move on the part of the symbolists and contemporary poets, according to the relatively new idea that poetry is a process of adapting “our personal world to the emotional world proposed by the text” (53). Only from drawing from inside can the reader have a more profound emotional response to the text.

Of particular interest to my analysis of participatory poetry is Eco’s differentiation between “open works” and “works in movement.” These are actually not distinct categories, but one category inside of the other. A “work in movement” is a type of open work that constitutes a further “opening”. Eco describes this kind of work as follows: “it invites us to identify inside the category of ‘open’ works, a further and more restricted classification [...] because [works in movement] characteristically consist of unplanned or physically incomplete structural units” (56). This is precisely the idea that I explored in the previous chapter, looking at how absence or empty space in the text can be a rhetorical device that invites the reader to participate in the

construction of the same text. Eco here uses the terminology of “incompleteness” or “fragmentation” which imply the creation of “their own space and dimensions to fill it with” (56). But the work does not leave us feeling incomplete, since every performance is a satisfactory version, yet nor does it exhaust all of the possible performances of it. For Eco, this is not merely a way of reading, but the very basis of human experience. Our subjective process of perception consists of “reading” reality in a certain, almost idiosyncratic way; the ontological basis of the phenomena that we perceive is “open” in such a way that it allows for multiple perceptions (or interpretations), which do not exhaust the object of perception. When Eco permits himself to explore a perhaps too idealized version of this shift towards the open work, his description of the reader coincides with the somewhat utopic vision of the spectator-participant in CADA’s declamations¹¹⁴; Eco describes this person as “an individual who is open to the continuous renewal of his life patterns and cognitive processes. Such an individual is productively committed to the development of his own mental faculties and experiential horizons” (61).

In contrast, reader-response theorist Louise Rosenblatt’s approach starts from a detailed study of actual reader’s responses to selected texts, which allows her to trace the transactional process of the poem as event. She describes some of the first steps of the event in the following manner:

First of all, each of the readers was active, not a blank tape registering a ready-made message. He was actively involved in building up a poem for himself out of his responses to the text. He had to draw on his past experiences with the verbal symbols. He had to select from the various alternative referents that occurred to him. To do this, he had to find some context within which these referents could be related. He sometimes found it necessary to reinterpret earlier parts of the text in the light of later parts. Actually, he had not fully read the first line until he read the last, and interrelated them. There was a kind of shuttling back and forth as one or another synthesizing element – a context, a persona, a level of meaning – suggested itself to him. (*The Reader, the Text, the Poem* 10)

¹¹⁴ CADA: “cada persona que trata de ampliar sus espacios de vida, aunque sean mentales, es un artista.”

One may notice that this is a series corrective processes by means of which the reader comes to reinterpret previous fragments in light of new information. According to this theory, the text is the “stimulus” for the reader’s experience, but it is also the guide that regulates the evolving interpretation (11). Rosenblatt finds it useful to distinguish the “text” from the “poem”; the former consists of the linguistic signs on the page, while the latter is the aesthetic transaction that occurs between reader and text. The theory is called “transactional” since, borrowing from the philosophy of American pragmatist John Dewey, this linguistic shift away from the subject-object duality emphasizes the transaction itself as the basis for the experience.¹¹⁵ In other words, the smallest reducible phenomenon of the poem is always the transaction between reader and text, and not one or the other by itself.

Rosenblatt’s theory may sound solipsistic at first by focusing on how each individual essentially creates her own poem through the reading process. In addition, each reading by the same individual creates a new poem, since each experience is unique due to the subject’s current preoccupations and situation. In a sense, this is similar to the Heraclitan subject who cannot step into the same river twice, since different waters flow, but more importantly, since the individual has also changed.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, she stresses that the reader is always responding to the text, which guides the reading, and that language itself is already a social construct. All human activity is essentially transactional, and linguistic activity in particular, since “language is at once basically social and intensely individual” (20).

¹¹⁵ John Dewey’s theory of “transaction” defines the basic element of interaction of an organism with its environment as a process of transaction in which there is mutual and reciprocal influence. This relationship of transaction is the simplest form of experience (i.e. experience cannot be reduced to simply a subject or an object by itself) and thus forms the basis of Dewey’s epistemology and subsequent theory of aesthetics. See Dewey’s *Knowing and the Known*, Beacon Press, 1949, for his theory of transaction and *Art as Experience*, Penguin, 2005, for his aesthetic theory.

¹¹⁶ In one of Heraclitus’ enigmatic fragments he writes: “Into the same rivers we step and do not step, we are and are not” (Heraclitus in Barnes, J., *The Presocratic Philosophers*, revised ed., Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.).

Literary critic Norman Holland also conceives of the reading experience as a sort of give-and-take transaction, largely shaped by the personality of the reader. The reader is affected by the text, absorbing elements of its content, which in turn activate the reader's latent content. Holland's view of the reader seems to be much more stable than Rosenblatt's; in fact, the reader's personality will shape the text as he or she recomposes it. He asks, "What is that something, ineffable effect of personality on perception?" in *The Question, Who Reads What How?* (1970 Richter). Holland observes how his students react differently to the same text based on his analysis of their personalities. The text is constructed from a set of psychological factors that remain constant enough to define the reader's identity. Thus, the text is a sort of impetus that initiates a psychological process in response, which in turn constitutes the individual's reading of the text. Holland's prescribed method then, is to combine a psychoanalytic study of the reader with a structural analysis of the text. By analyzing what readers find in it, we can come to understand the text.

In the "phenomenological" school of reader-response theory, Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss emphasize the idea of the performance of the text by the readers.¹¹⁷ Specifically, the text is "concretized" by the reader much like the way that a musician interprets a score. Iser distinguishes between the text and the work (similar to Rosenblatt's theory), by describing the work as the reader's experience of the text: "The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized" (*The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach* 279). He describes the work as the "convergence" of the reader and the text. However, for Iser, the

¹¹⁷ In *The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach*, Iser writes: "The phenomenological theory of art lays full stress on the idea that, in considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the action involved in responding to that text" (50). Phenomenology, as a branch of philosophy, is primarily concerned with the study of experience and consciousness, formally initiated by Edmund Husserl.

score of a literary text not only contains “gaps”, but is ambiguous in a way that prompts the reader to fill in the missing information. The “unwritten” part of the text is the element that stimulates the reader’s creativity and participation. In fact, he writes: “A literary text must therefore be conceived in such a way that it will engage the reader’s imagination [...] for the reading is only pleasurable when it is active and creative” (Ibid. 280). Iser’s reflections on the activation of the reader through the gaps in the text provide an excellent example of how absence can be productive:

If one sees the mountain, then of course one can no longer imagine it, and so the act of picturing the mountain presupposes its absence. Similarly, with a literary text we can only picture things which are not there; the written part of the text gives us the knowledge, but it is the unwritten part that gives us the opportunity to picture things; indeed without the elements of indeterminacy, the gaps in the text, we should not be able to use our imagination. (Ibid. 288)

Nevertheless, there is a degree to which the literary text exerts its influence on the reader for Iser; the reader becomes temporarily “occupied” by the thoughts of the author. The contemporary reader is also guided in the interpretive process by both the literary tradition with its tropes and conceits, as well as relevant socio-historical contexts.

Jauss places more emphasis on the context of consumption based on the prejudices and expectations of the readers. Literary history for Jauss is the shifting history of audience reception, how different sets of readers have afforded us different perspectives of the text. In this way, the analysis of the subjective leads to (instead of overrides) the discovery of the historical. Jauss write, “The obvious historical implication of this is that the understanding of the first reader will be sustained and enriched in a chain of receptions from generation to generation; in this way the historical significance of a work will be decided and its aesthetic value made evident” (20). Jauss’ objective is in essence to “destroy” the received literary cannon through a critical revision, in order to write literary history according to the “aesthetics of reception” (20).

Reception is so central to Jauss's theory, that the "literary event" can only have an effect if readers still respond to it (22).

Finally, it is worth noting how Haroldo de Campos' short essay "A obra de arte aberta", which preceded Eco's *Opera Aperta*, shares some common ideas.¹¹⁸ Like Eco, De Campos sees Mallarmé (and in particular *Un Coup de Dés*) as fundamental for the concept of the open work of art. According to De Campos, the poem's open structure in space negates the linear, sequential reading:

A concepção de estrutura pluridividida ou capilarizada que caracteriza o poema-constelação mallarmeano, liquidando a noção de desenvolvimnto linear seccionado em princípio-meio-fim, em prol de uma organização circular da matéria poética, torna perempta toda relojoaria rítmica que se apóie sobre a "rule of thumb" do hábito metrificante. (*Teoria da Poesia Concreta* 30)

De Campos sees Mallarmé, together with Joyce, Pound, and Cummings, as "eixos radiais" which solicit the creative labor of the reader. While some reader-response theorists talk about absence or fragmentation, De Campos uses the term "silence" to speak about the suggestive emptiness in open works of art. He writes, "Dessa verdadeira rosácea verbal que é o *Un Coup de Dés* emerge, como elemento primordial de organização rítmica, o silêncio, aquele silêncio que é, para Sartre, 'um momneto de linguagem' e que, 'como a pausa, em música, recebe seu sentido dos grupos de notas que o cercam'" (*Teoria da Poesia Concreta* 30).

Most of these theories provide a description of the reader's participation without differentiating between different levels of reader engagement depending on distinct art forms. In this sense, Eco and De Campos are unique in describing the evolution of art towards more open

¹¹⁸ Haroldo de Campos, "The Open Work of Art" (1955), translated by Maria Lúcia Santaella Braga, in *Dispositio: Revista Hispánica de Semiótica Literaria*, 6, no. 17-18, Summer-Fall 1981, pp. 5-8. In his preface to the Brazilian edition of his *Opera Aperta*, Umberto Eco wrote, "It is certainly curious that some years before I wrote *Opera Aperta*, Haroldo de Campos, in a short article, anticipated my themes to an astounding degree, as if he reviewed the book which I had not yet written and would yet write without having read his article" (see *Dispositio* 5).

forms that require a different type of engagement or participation. However, these theories that consider the history of art to be an evolution of forms are somewhat suspect, at least to the degree that they imply a sense of progress over time. On one hand, they tend to simplify artistic production into a series of chronological categories that suppress the literary outliers of each time period. While Eco's argument that religious art of the medieval period is more codified into rigid systems of symbols (not open for individual interpretation) is accurate in general, how would he interpret a book like *El libro de buen amor*, with its juxtaposition of ambiguous narratives that tend to undermine the moral message as outlined by the author? In the same vein, it would seem wise to avoid the kind of implicit value judgements assumed by the argument of progress in art, that somehow a more participatory form of art is superior to a more traditional form. Perhaps it is best to think of these differences as ones of category rather than degree. For example, reading a poem by Mallarmé requires a different type of engagement than reading a poem by Góngora, but reading a poem by Góngora may require an equal amount of "work" (albeit of a different sort) on the part of the reader.

Once established a general theory of reception aesthetics, we must ask, what is participation and what are the different levels of participatory engagement in society and in art? In the next section, I would like to take a look at the different manifestations of this kind of art in the 20th century in order to further specify distinct categories of response and participation.

4.3 Participation in 20th Century Art

Although many forms of art could be considered participatory prior to the 20th century, I would like to focus on the developments of aesthetic participation in the past century in order to contextualize the contributions of the proposal poems of Juan Luis Martínez and Texto Poético. Probably the most important influence to participatory poetry prior to the 20th century would be Mallarmé (whose work I have analyzed in the previous chapter, and so will skip over here). Since there are diverse forms of participatory art throughout the 20th century, I divide my analysis into different subsections to better highlight each development. I look at participatory art of the past century in three major periods: the historical avant-gardes of the '20s, the happenings and event groups of the '60s, and the neo-avant-gardes of the '70s and '80s, as well as a few unique precursors (Jean Tardieu and John Cage) from the 50s.

In terms of participation, the historical avant-gardes took up varying positions, but overall there was a sense of antagonism between artist and society. While there are many important theories of the avant-garde, Renato Poggioli's emphasis on the relation between artist and society seems relevant to any study of the dynamics between creator and audience. In terms of participation, this aggressive stance is distinct from the open invitations of '60s happenings. Avant-garde artists wanted to unsettle and provoke their audiences, inciting the public to change. This antagonistic dynamic is readily apparent in avant-garde theatre movements like Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre.¹¹⁹ In "A Short Organum for the Theatre", Brecht writes: "We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the

¹¹⁹ Although Brecht is the most well-known of its proponents, the term "epic theatre" was coined by Erwin Piscator who emphasized the need to address vital contemporary issues in the theatre by way of audience interaction and documentary elements. See Piscator, Erwin, *The Political Theatre. A History 1914–1929*, Translated by Hugh Rorrison, Avon, 1978.

particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself” (“A Short Organum for the Theatre” in *Brecht on Theatre*, 190). Brecht sought to redefine the audience’s participation in the play, instead of passive observation and catharsis, to active reflection provoked by the *Verfremdungseffekt*, or alienation effect, which would lead to direct action. He also argued that all theatre is political since “for art to be ‘unpolitical’ means only to ally itself with the ‘ruling’ group” (196). Along similar lines is Antonin Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty, which also tried to “wake up” audiences and inspire “immediate violent action” (84-85), focusing more on the irrational affective impact than the goal of providing insight, as found in epic theatre.

In poetry, this antagonistic tendency can be seen both in the aggressive subversion of the formal elements of poetry as well as in the production of manifestos. In terms of the manifesto, this practice can be seen at least as far back as Romanticism (*Lyrical Ballads*)¹²⁰, thus leading Poggioli to characterize the antagonist split between artist and society as a product of Romantic art. Nevertheless, the manifestos of the avant-gardes are much more common, as well as more militant and performative. Each new -ism of avant-garde produced its own manifesto, breaking with art as it had been before. This is reminiscent of Mayakovsky’s declaration; “I write *nihil* on anything that has been done before”¹²¹, and brings us closer to Peter Burger’s theory of the avant-garde as a critique of the institution of art. For Burger, the avant-garde is not so much about resisting society’s modernization as it is an attempt to critique autonomous art and bring

¹²⁰ In the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) William Wordsworth outlines the principles of their new poetic style in the preface, thus establishing the beginning of the Romantic movement in English literature.

¹²¹ Quoted in Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Harvard University Press, 1968 (62).

art back into social practice. By using the “aesthetic fragment”, the artists aggressively challenged their audiences, to not only contemplate the object, but to make it part of their lives.

What characterizes the avant-gardes then, is the use of shock to motivate the spectator into an active role. Manifestos, poems and plays occupied a double role, not only being artistic products/objects, but also of performing their own theories of art and politics, establishing the relationship between them, and challenging the spectator to redefine his or her perception of their dynamic. In this sense, an avant-garde manifesto, like Tristan Tzara’s Dada Manifesto of 1918, has become an artistic text, although it explicitly performs an anti-art stance that attempts to deny a privileged space for art. In fact the very basis of meaning of Dada seems to be contradiction: “I’m writing this manifesto to show that you can perform contrary actions at the same time, in one single, fresh breath” (4). The manifesto thus unites action (performance of the text), participation (solicitation that the public respond to the text), and art (a text or object that can be appreciated aesthetically). However, the avant-garde manifesto is also a contradiction, because it often denies itself this third characteristic and tries to break with the concrete limits of a sphere of art, returning art to praxis, to life.

With regards to poetry, much of the avant-garde production follows in line with Mallarmé’s visual poetics of freeing the word in space in order to mobilize the blank space of the page and the readers’ capacity to find new ways of reading a visual text. In a more apparent way, we can see Apollinaire’s *calligrammes*, Marinetti’s *parole in libertà*, and Pound’s imagist poems as examples of visual poems that incite new forms of readerly participation. But we can also look at Eliot’s modernist verse, Stein’s differential syntax, and Duchamp’s conceptual

poetics as examples of the “new” poetics, a tradition of Language poetry which began with Modernism and has continued into the 21st Century under the guise of the postmodern¹²².

Comparing these artistic practices of the historical avant-gardes to the theories of reader-response theory, do they evince a divergence from more traditional forms of literature? Without attempting to conclude that the public of an Avant-garde work participates to a *further* degree (quantitative), is there a *qualitative* difference in his or her type of participation? I believe that theorists such as Poggioli and Bürger have already outlined some of these differences in audience response. In terms of Poggioli’s theory of antagonism, for example, the aggressive stance of the artist towards the public serves to make the public aware of his or her importance in receiving the work and incorporating its lessons into life. Many artists of this period wished to shock or alienate the audience, making them feel uncomfortable in the role of passive receivers of the work. In this sense, we could say that avant-garde art not only exposed the institution of art, making it visible and challenging it, but it also exposed the relationship between artist and public. By making the audience aware of their role in the work of art, these works created a conscious awareness of participation that is of a different quality than what most reader-response theory has outlined.

Some works from this period even went beyond this conscientizing of the audience, to generate more open-ended forms of participation, more akin to artistic events of the ‘60s and Juan Luis Martínez’ *La nueva novela*. One such example of this type of participation in modernist or avant-garde style art is the collective diary of Oswald de Andrade, published as *O*

¹²² In *21st-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics*, Perloff contends that what is commonly referred to as “modernism” should instead be seen as the first stage of modernism, and that what is often referred to as “postmodern” today, is merely a continuation of Language poetry and avant-garde poetics that began in the 20th century.

perfeito cozinheiro das almas deste mundo (1918).¹²³ Because of the work's relative obscurity it is usually overlooked in studies of participatory art and in studies of modernism. Yet this work solicits a form of communal collaboration that really doesn't come to the forefront in art until the 1960s and later. The book was an enormous notebook found at Oswald de Andrade's *garçonnière* (a sort of bachelor pad for a wealthy young man's sexual initiation) in which dozens of friends contributed all manner of entries, including the following elements, as described in the introduction:

“pensamentos, trocadilhos (inúmeros), reflexões, paradoxos, pilhérias com os *habitués* do retiro, alusões à marcha da Guerra, a fatos recentes da cidade, a autores, livros e leituras, às músicas ouvidas (das eruditas às composições populares americanas), a peças em representação nos palcos de São Paulo, às companhias francesas em *tournee* pelo Brasil. Há mais porém: há colagens, grampinhos de cabelo, pentes, manchas de baton, um poema pré-concreto de Oswald, feito com tipos de carimbo, cartas de amigos grudadas em suas páginas, afora charges da imprensa com legendas adaptadas para zombarias com os integrantes do grupo, enigmas pitorescos, recortes de jornais e, inclusive, o cartão de um usuário em que se lê: ‘de la part de Décio de Paula Machado’. Soltas entre as páginas do caderno, flores murchas e uma pequena bandeira norte-americana de seda” (IX).

This work certainly has an avant-garde element to it since the framing of these diverse fragments and objects as a “work of art” is itself a challenge to the traditional notions of an artist's work. But somewhat unique for its time is the fact that the work had very little artistic direction, and instead was open to any form of “participation”; visitors could leave their mark on the work in any way imaginable (including their “contributions” of stains and hair). In terms of the form of participation then, this book is less author centered compared to other avant-garde books, and is similar to the form of participation in the happenings of the ‘60s.

Before proceeding to the ‘60s, there are a couple of precursors from the 50s that merit consideration because of their influence on later writers, especially as influences for Juan Luis

¹²³ Oswald de Andrade, known for his *Manifesto Antropófago* in which he describes Brazilian literature as the cannibalization of other literary traditions, is considered one of the founders of Brazilian modernism.

Martínez. The first and foremost of these is Jean Tardieu, whose work was directly appropriated by Martínez and whose proposal poems predate those of Fluxus and other experimental artists of the '60s. "Un mot pour un autre" was published in 1951, not only the theater work by this name, but also included in the book were the set of poems called "Petits Problèmes et Travaux Pratiques" which Martínez translated and rewrote in *La nueva novela* (1977). These poems are both poetic texts and they solicit a poetic response from the reader. Because of their dual nature, I refer to them as proposal poems; they are both proposals for the reader to write poetry and constitute poems in their own right. Their poetic dimension often arises from an encounter with the unexpected and with a sort of illogic bordering on the absurd. A few examples include these poems from Tardieu:

Aimez-vous les en-soi?
Ou bien, préférez-vous les pour-soi?

On dit communément que 'le temps, c'est de l'argent'.
Faites le calcul, au cours du dollar.

Comment vous représentez-vous l'Être?
A-t-il des plumes dans les cheveux?¹²⁴

Another integral aspect of these poems is their capacity to produce a humorous reaction in the reader (like the pair of questions above, "How do you represent Being? Does it have feathers in its hair?") based on a sort of pataphysical joking.¹²⁵ The humoristic element seems to

¹²⁴ "Do you like things-in-themselves?
Or do you prefer things-for-themselves?"

It is often said, 'time is money'
Make the calculation, in dollars.

How do you represent Being?
Does it have feathers in its hair?" (70, cited in *Le Professeur Froeppel*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978, my translation).

¹²⁵ The field of pataphysics is difficult to define, in fact, Andrew Hugill says "This is a word that tries to exclude itself from the dictionary" (*Pataphysics: A Useless Guide* 1). For a definition, Alfred Jarry's formulation that

arise from the clash of two disparate planes, on one hand, the simplistic didactic voice of the instructor who gives you word problems to solve, and the quasi-metaphysical, pseudo-philosophical nature of the pataphysical game. The first question has a simple, “do you prefer A, or do you prefer B?” structure, but instead of two categories that lend themselves to subjective opinions, Tardieu uses ontological categories, like “things in-themselves”.¹²⁶ The second question takes a common phrase, “time is gold”, and overloads the quantifiable dimension, asking the reader to calculate time’s value in dollars.

The collision of these two planes (logic and illogic) not only creates a humorous response, but also ironizes the speaking subject, destabilizing his/her position of authority. The reader begins to distrust the implied author’s capacity to produce sensible questions.

Furthermore, the reader will probably wonder whether these interrogatives are meant to be answered at all, or if they are not simply rhetorical questions meant to solicit laughter. In this way, Tardieu’s pataphysical questions undermine their own participatory structure by posing apparently unanswerable questions, at least from the perspective of traditional logic.

Another important precursor from the 50s is the experimental musician John Cage. Cage’s work was fundamental in shaping the trajectory of participatory artwork of the ‘60s, in particular through his classes that inspired artists like George Brecht, with his event scores and word scores. In turn, Cage’s work was profoundly affected by quantum physics and the uncertainty principle. Heisenberg’s famous principle not only demonstrated that reality is to an extent fundamentally unknowable (since we cannot make an accurate measure of particles without

“Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments” (1965, 145) is a good point of departure. A more detailed description of this pseudo-scientific philosophy will appear shortly in the following section of this chapter.

¹²⁶ The “thing-in-itself” (*das Ding an sich*) is a term from Immanuel Kant’s philosophy used to describe an object that exists independently of sense perception. See Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

disturbing them) but also that indeterminacy is built into the structure of reality (at least in all wave-like systems) despite the presence of an observer. This theoretical model was influential on Cage, who integrated indeterminate elements into his musical compositions. He describes one such project, the *Music of Changes*, as “an object more inhuman than human, since chance operations brought it into being” (36). This work, however, is not open to diverse forms of interpretation and participation. Cage describes the function of the performer as “that of a contractor who, following an architect’s blueprint, constructs a building” (36). This seems reminiscent of Jauss’s concept of the reader as the musician who performs or “concretizes” the author’s score. However, some of Cage’s other works are more open to other forms of audience participation.

One of Cage’s most well-known works, *4’33*, shows just that. By constructing a musical work in which the musicians play silence for four minutes and thirty-three seconds, the work is open to all of the random sounds from the audience, and each performance will be unique. Cage considered works like this to be “experimental”, in the sense that the outcome is unknown. For Cage experimental is “not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as an act the outcome of which is unknown” (13). Since the outcome cannot be foreseen, the performance is indeterminate, and each outcome is unique.

The use of indeterminacy by Cage is related to the posterior use of indeterminacy in the works of Martínez, which is worth mentioning before continuing. One such commonality is that both directly reference the *I Ching*, or the *Book of Changes*¹²⁷. This link has been pointed out by Scott Weintraub in *Juan Luis Martínez’s Philosophical Poetics*: “the most cogent link between the kind of ambitious poetic project undertaken by Martínez and Eastern philosophical thought can

¹²⁷ For information on Juan Luis Martínez’s use of the *I Ching*, see the previous chapter, section 2.2, pp. 17-18.

be found in the writings and musical innovation of avant-garde composer John Cage” (176). Also according to Weintraub, “Cage radically redefined the relationship between sound and silence in Western music”, an assertion that he compares with Martínez’s poem, “El oído” in which the Chilean poet says, “El oído es un órgano al revés; sólo escucha el silencio” (*La nueva novela* 108).

Another point of reference in Cage’s oeuvre include *Music of Changes*, which employs aleatory procedures in the construction of the composition, and *Imaginary Landscape No. IV*, which uses the method of the *I Ching* of tossing three coins six times to obtain a musical composition that is “free of individual taste and memory (psychology) and also of the literature and ‘traditions’ of the art” (59). This is reminiscent of Martínez’s *Aproximación del principio de incertidumbre* in which the Chilean poet “riffs on indeterminacy”, according to Weintraub (*Philosophical Poetics* 177). In addition, in Cage’s lecture on “Communication” the avant-garde composer consults the *I Ching* by tossing coins as a means of guiding the discourse of the lecture (*Silence* 45).

Students who practiced the “musical happenings” of Cage, like Allan Kaprow, began practicing open-ended events termed “happenings” (the term attributed to Kaprow) as early as the late ‘50s, and popularized in the ‘60s. Happenings have been so diverse in character that it is hard to find a definition that encompasses all of the different events. Kaprow describes the happening as “a rough and sudden act, where one often feels ‘dirty’, and dirt, we might begin to realize, is also organic and fertile, and everything including the visitors can grow a little into such circumstances” (cited in Wardrip-Fruin 86). Generally, happenings do not have a specific outcome planned beforehand, although some are much more scripted than others and may be done to provoke a more or less specific response. Most happenings, however rely on

improvisation and their outcomes are unpredictable. Kaprow says: "It is generated in action by a headful of ideas...and it frequently has words but they may or may not make literal sense. If they do, their meaning is not representational of what the whole element conveys. Hence they carry a brief, detached quality. If they do not make sense, then they are acknowledgement of the sound of the word rather than the meaning conveyed by it" (86). Like Cage's experimental music, happenings are not conceived in terms of success and failure, because, according to Kaprow, "when something goes 'wrong', something far more 'right', more revelatory may emerge. This sort of sudden near-miracle presently is made more likely by chance procedures" (86).

Happenings evince a kind of participatory art that also expands beyond the parameters of reader-response theory. Instead of the work of art having its existence defined as an interaction between text and reader, a happening consists in the interaction not only between an artist's work and the spectator, but also among the participants interacting with each other. The sense of an ephemeral community directing the artistic experience means that each participant is responsible, to an extent, for the trajectory of the happening. This is perhaps similar to the way in which the theatrical *convivio* produces a unique experience of the work each time, but unlike most works of theater, a happening can transform into just about anything.¹²⁸

Another interesting form of participatory poetry developed in the '60s, akin to the "pedagogical" poems of Jean Tardieu, is often referred to as "instructional". A couple of examples of this "instructional art" include *Fluxkit* by George Brecht and Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit*. Many of these poetic forms originated from Fluxus, a group of experimental conceptual artists centered around New York with George Maciunas as spokesman. In his

¹²⁸ I refer to the term *convivio* as used by theatre critic Jorge Dubatti in *Filosofía del teatro: Convivio, experiencia, subjetividad* (2007): "el convivio es una práctica de socialización de cuerpos presentes, de afectación comunitaria, y significa una actitud negativa ante la desterritorialización sociocomunicacional propiciada por las intermediaciones técnicas" (65).

analysis of the connection between Juan Luis Martínez and Fluxus, Scott Weintraub writes:

“Their notion of printed work as performance event was an innovation in the reconceptualization of the writer-reader interaction”, and citing Johanna Drucker, “making the audience member a performer through the structure of the piece. One does not ‘read’ this work, but enacts it” (in *Juan Luis Martínez’s Philosophical Poetics* 110). In agreement with Weintraub and Drucker, these instructional pieces inaugurate a new form of “reader” participation by transferring the full realization of the text to the readers’ performance of it. Some examples of these instructional poems can be seen in Yoko Ono’s *Grapefruit*, cited below:

SYLLABLE PIECE

Decide not to use one particular
syllable for the rest of your life.
Record things that happened to you in
result of that.

PAINTING TO BE CONSTRUCTED IN YOUR HEAD

Observe three paintings carefully.
Mix them well in your head.

PAINTING TO BE SLEPT ON

Hang it after sleeping on it for more
than 100 nights.

COLLECTING PIECE

Collect sounds in your mind that
you have overheard through the week.
Repeat them in your mind in different
orders one afternoon.

This work is also relevant to Martínez, not only because it has the feel of a proposal poem, but also because he cites Ono’s work in a footnote to his text on the disappearance of Sogol; in said

footnote, he quotes her in translation: “Todas las calles son invisibles. Las visibles son las falsas, aunque algunas visibles son la parte final de las invisibles” (*La nueva novela* 81).

Nevertheless, we can see that this is not an entirely new style, since these instructional poems are not so different from the *travaux pratiques* of Tardieu. Perhaps the main difference is that Tardieu’s poems are more of intellectual exercises that most readers do not try to ‘perform’ because of the near absurdity of finding a real answer, while Fluxus artists made proposals that could often be rationally and realistically carried out. In this way, there is more emphasis on the performative and participatory aspect of the texts produced by Fluxus, while Tardieu’s proposals are more limited to intellectual or speculative exercises. Nevertheless, Martínez showed that these exercises were not entirely absurd and could be concretized in *La nueva novela* by producing convincing answers to them, as well as creating proposal poems of his own. In the next section I would like to outline a theory and examples for this concept of the proposal poem, taking into account how this genre relates to reader-response theory and the trajectory of participatory art.

4.4 The Proposal Poem

I first encountered the term “proposal poem” in an anthology of experimental poetry, titled *Poesía experimental española (1963-2004)*, edited by Félix Morales Prado.¹²⁹ In the introduction to the anthology, Morales Prado provides a definition for the proposal poem: “El poema propuesta parte de un proyecto poético diseñado por el autor y del cual cada receptor

¹²⁹ The objective of Morales Prado’s anthology is to vindicate the experimental tradition of poetry in Spain starting from the rebellious spirit of the 60s and continuing to the young poets of the new millennium.

tendrá que montar su versión” (15). He further qualifies the proposal poem by indicating that it acts as a script for the reader’s performance: “el poema propuesta podría verse como el guión para poner en marcha un poema acción, si bien no siempre resulta realizable como tal. Hay poemas propuestas pensados para desarrollarse sólo en la imaginación del lector” (15). Despite the possibility of inspiring a performance from the reader, Morales Prado notes that sometimes this response is only carried out mentally. As an example, he cites this proposal poem from the Valencian group, *Texto Poético*:

PROYECTO 1

escoja la palabra que más le atraiga de este poema
y sitúese frente a ella.

a continuación comience a caminar cuidadosamente
sobre los trazos de ésta, cuidando no perder el equilibrio,
ya que de producirse esto difícilmente podría salir del espacio no impreso.

al llegar al final de la palabra dé un salto seguro y decidido
hacia otra palabra y comience de nuevo a recorrerla.
no tropiece con ningún obstáculo y no se deje impresionar demasiado por el paisaje.

cuando se encuentre cansado busque el punto más cercano y repose sobre él.¹³⁰

If read in a literal fashion, it seems impossible for the reader to execute a performance of this proposal. In order to literally walk across words one would have to create a very large sculpture, but is that what this poem is really about? According to Morales Prado these instructions are only meant to be carried out in the imagination of the reader. This seems like a fair assessment, given the absurdity of realizing the proposition in a concrete way, and yet in a sense there is a

¹³⁰ Compare this poem to Martínez’s: “Tome una palabra corriente. Póngala bien visible sobre una mesa y descríbala de frente, de perfil y de tres cuartos” (*La nueva novela* 24).

way to carry out this proposal, through a poetic performance, taking on this verbal exploration of the word through writing poetry. I elucidate this idea further in the next section; first a more complete definition of the proposal poem is needed.

Writing about this same group of Valencian poets, Josep Sou in his doctoral thesis calls this type of poetry “Propuesta de Acción”, identifying it as a result of the combination of experimental poetry and conceptual art.¹³¹ His analysis of these two influences shows what proposal poetry (or action proposal, as he calls it) has absorbed from each branch of art and poetry:

***La propuesta de acción toma de la poesía experimental:**

- la libertad gráfica
- el uso de formas verbales no tradicionales: imperativo e infinitivo
- uso de formas pronominales de segunda persona con cierto matiz de distancia
- espacialización, y valor del espacio en blanco del texto en la página
- incorporación de materia objetual en los textos poéticos

***La propuesta de acción toma del arte conceptual:**

- el uso del lenguaje como soporte artístico
- la reflexión lingüística como obra de arte
- la desmaterialización del objeto

¹³¹ In “Art After Philosophy” (1969), Joseph Kosuth refers to the change toward an emphasis on the concept of art “the beginning of ‘modern’ art and the beginning of conceptual art. All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually” (18 in *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990*, Cambridge, 1991). Conceptual art can thus be described as a form of art in which the concept for the piece supersedes other aesthetic concerns. As noted by Kosuth, Marcel Duchamp is an important initiator of conceptualism with his ready-mades. The installation of *Fountain* (1917) is an excellent example of the challenge to the notion of the work of art by presenting a urinal, an object not designed with explicit artistic intent, as a work for an art gallery.

-la implicación del receptor en las propuestas y llega a prevalecer la idea, así como la realidad física del lenguaje, por encima de cualquier otra consideración.

(*La Revista 'Texto Poético': Convergencia entre la Poesía Experimental i el Arte Conceptual* 23-24)¹³²

These characteristics outlined by Sou help to further circumscribe the idea of the proposal poem. From experimental poetry, he notes that the proposal poem uses the direct appeal to the reader, using second person pronouns as well as imperatives and infinitives to instruct him/her. From conceptual art, I would like point out his observation on the relative emphasis placed on the physical materiality of language and that the linguistic reflection on its materiality is a form of aesthetic experience. In the poem cited above from *Texto Poético*, the reader is asked to confront exactly this, the physical aspect of language and to make an account of his/her verbal exploration.

Similarly to Morales Prado, Sou's analysis of the proposal poem (or action proposal) emphasizes the importance of the reader's participation in the poem, although it may be impossible to carry out a concrete action based on the proposal. Sou writes: "Se trata, así pues, de una idea que reclama ser repercutida sobre el receptor, o seguida por éste, aunque en muchos casos la propuesta resulte de imposible ejecución, rozando las fronteras del absurdo" (24). To my mind, this is one of the most important points of the proposal poem that has often been overlooked; if the proposal poem were entirely logical, it would simply be a proposal for action, perhaps a poetic action (similar to many happenings and instructional poems of the '60s). Likewise, if it were completely impossible or absurd, it would generate a feeling of ironic humor,

¹³² Sou, Josep. *La Revista "Texto Poético": Convergencia entre la Poesía Experimental y el Arte Conceptual*. Doctoral Thesis. Archivo de Arte Valenciano, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos, Valencia, 2006.

but not any kind of real response. It is precisely the poem's position of bordering on the absurd, of straddling the frontier between logic and illogic, which makes it a unique genre of poetry.

Sou hits the nail on the head with his asseveration that the proposal poem brushes up against the frontiers of the absurd, although he does not follow up this observation by looking into its most likely origins in pataphysical literature. I will take a moment to qualify pataphysics before proceeding since it provides insight into an important aspect of the unique proposal poems of Martínez and *Texto Poético*¹³³. Sometimes referred to as the science of imaginary solutions (based on Alfred Jarry's definition from 1911), pataphysics constitutes an investigation into the exceptions and the illogical side of reality. Jarry coined the term *La 'Pataphysique* (with an apostrophe at the beginning), which has led to some speculation regarding the etymology of the word (such as, "épataphysique: épater les bourgeois" [Hugill 3]). Raymond Queneau (a French poet who, interestingly enough, is cited by Martínez in *La nueva novela*), has provided a nice summation of the discipline's paradoxical nature in his statement that pataphysics "rests on the truth of contradictions and exceptions" (cited in Hugill 5). In this way, pataphysics examines topics that lie beyond the realm of both physics and metaphysics, investigating the exceptions and paradoxes of both of these. But why would this be considered humorous and how does this play a role in the proposal poem?

French poet and pataphysician René Daumal describes pataphysical humor as the result of the conjunction of two contradictory planes of thought: "Pataphysical laughter is the keen awareness of a duality both absurd and undeniable. In this sense it is the one human expression

¹³³ For a discussion of pataphysical elements in the work of Juan Luis Martínez, see also Scott Weintraub, "Juan Luis Martínez y las otredades de la metafísica: apuntes patafísicos y carrollianos" in *Estudios* 18:35 (enero-julio 2010): 141-168. Weintraub's article argues that "El proyecto de Martínez, pues, lleva a cabo una desconstrucción del pensamiento lógico-dialéctico, cuyas implicaciones estéticas, lingüísticas y políticas son investigadas como función de lo que se podría llamar la poética de la ilegibilidad postulada por *La nueva novela* (141-2).

of the identity of opposites” (*Pataphysical Essays* 4). Pataphysics is an intriguing blend of logic and absurdity, the synthesis of which often produces a humorous result. It takes as a given the paradoxes and exceptions of science and builds a method of inquiry on these contradictions.

Daumal describes this journey into pataphysics as a process of reciprocal profundity and ridiculousness:

“Evidence cloaks itself in absurdity as its only means of being perceived. Whence the humorous appearance of pataphysical reasoning, which at first glance seems ridiculous, then on closer examination seems to contain a hidden meaning, then at even closer range indubitably ridiculous, then again even more profoundly true, and so on, as the evidence and the ludicrousness of the proposition go on growing and mutually reinforcing each other indefinitely” (9).¹³⁴

What does it mean to construct a science based on the antithesis of the laws of logic, to go from “A = A” in standard formal logic, to “A = -A” in pataphysical thought? These thinkers have attempted to construct a logical science on top of that which strikes humanity as absurd – the contradictions and paradoxes of reality that are beyond human logic. In this sense, another way of formulating pataphysics, returning to Jarry, is as “the science of that which is superadduced upon metaphysics, whether within or beyond the latter’s limitations, extending as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond physics” (145).

I would like to propose that this pataphysical humor described above is an important aspect of the proposal poems of Martínez and *Texto Poético* that was missing from the previous formulations of the poems. By incorporating illogical logic into the syllogisms and word problems of the proposal poems, the speaking subject becomes ironized, and the voice of the author who gives instructions, becomes undermined from within. A particularly illustrative example of this effect can be found in Martínez’s *La nueva novela*:

¹³⁴ Daumal, René. *Pataphysical Essays*. Translated by Thomas Vosteen, Wakefield Press, 2012.

TAREAS DE POESIA

Tristuraban las agras sus temorios
 Los lirosos durfían tiestamente
 Y ustiales que utilaban afimorios
 A las folces turaban distamente.

Hoy que dulgen y ermedan los larorios
 Las oveñas patizan el bramente
 Y las fólgicas barlan los filorios
 Tras la Urla que valían ristramente.

EXPLIQUE Y COMENTE:

1. ¿Cuál es el tema o motivo central de este poema?
2. ¿Qué significan los lirosos para el autor?
3. ¿Por qué el autor afirma que las oveñas patizan el bramente?
4. ¿Qué recursos expresivos encuentra en estos versos? :

"Y las fólgicas barlan los filorios
 Tras la Urla que valían ristramente".

5. Ubique todas aquellas palabras que produzcan la sensación de claridad, transparencia.
6. ¿Este poema le produce la sensación de quietud o de agitado movimiento? Fundamente su respuesta.

A brief analysis of this poem reveals that there is a dissonance between the logical questions of the speaker and the nonsensical feeling of the poem to be analyzed, which leads to the delegitimization of the speaker. The poem is written in the style of “nonsense” literature, à la Lewis Carroll (“Jabberwocky”), which contrasts drastically with the clarity of the didactic questions that follow. None of the words of Martínez’s poem exist in Spanish, except for some prepositions (“a”, “tras”), conjunctions (“y”, “que”), articles (“las”, “los”, “el”, “la”), a possessive adjective (“sus”), and “hoy”. I describe the other words of the poem as “nonsensical” (in quotations) because, despite the fact that they are neologisms, they are not entirely without sense. The first word, for example, “tristuraban”, sounds like “tristura” with a past imperfect ending “-aban”, conjugated according to the subject, “las agras”, which in turn sounds like a combination of “aguas” and “agrío”. This analysis is also similar to Humpty Dumpty’s explanation of “Jabberwocky” to Alice: “‘lithe and slimy’ ... You see it’s like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word”) and *outgrabe* (“something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle” (*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and, Through the Looking Glass* 165)).¹³⁵ I believe that Martínez constructs a similar riddle in his poem, using Carroll’s poetic portmanteau technique to create the feeling that there is an underlying sense behind apparently nonsensical verse¹³⁶.

Despite the fact that the poem offers a hint of meaning to the reader, this hermeneutic task turns out to be immediately ridiculed by the type of questions that follow and are meant to be applied to the poem. Questions, such as “¿Qué significan los lirosos para el autor?”, parody the attempt of literary analysis to discover what the author means to say with the poem. If the

¹³⁵ Carroll, Lewis. *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and, Through the Looking Glass*. Lothrop, 1898.

¹³⁶ Overall, I would argue that this poem has a pastoral feel (pastoral in a general sense, related to poetry about the idealized life of shepherds), based on portmanteaus that are phonetically reminiscent of a pastoral scene. Some of these words include: “lirosos” (lira), “oveñas” (ovejás), “patizan” (patas/pastar), and “bramante” (bramar).

reader cannot understand what a made-up word like “lirosos” means, how can he/she be able to identify what it means for the author? The difficulty of deciphering authorial intention is doubled by the fact that the poem presents itself as almost nonsensical, and the speaker’s treatment of it as a serious question makes us question his/her sanity. Can the speaker really expect us to be able to answer any of these questions? Is there any part of the poem that produces the sensation of “claridad, transparencia”, as he/she urges us to find? Once we come to mistrust the speaker, this mistrust leads us to question the validity of the questions and whether they’re really meant to be answered. In this way, the discourse of the speaker is often subverted by the juxtaposition of incongruous elements in the poetry of Martínez.

However, on another level we infer a meta-discourse occurring beyond the words of the poem and its accompanying analytical questions. The result of this juxtaposition is that we posit a third speaker (something closer to the author) who is beyond either of these texts. We infer that someone has combined these two texts for a reason, which we assume is to make a criticism of literary analysis, namely, the vain attempt to decipher what the author means and the mistaken expectation of encountering clarity or transparency in poetry. This “superspeaker” is entirely silent, never uttering a word, but yet speaks through the selection and juxtaposition of texts/voices.

Another result of the proposal poem’s flirting with the absurd is that it gives the poem a dual nature – as a poem, and as a proposal for other poems to be written. If a proposal was entirely feasible, such as, “bake a pie at 360° for 1 hour”, there would be nothing poetic about the instructions or the realization of the task. It is only when the instructions of a proposal present something unexpected and nearly impossible that one sees it as poetic. In this poem from

La nueva novela, for example, Martínez has us contemplate the difficulty of expressing a unique individual situation using abstract language:

Encuentre un solo verbo para significar el acto que consiste en beber un vaso de vino blanco con un compañero borgoñón, en el café de Los Dos Chinos, a las seis de la tarde, un día de lluvia, hablando de la no-significación del mundo, sabiendo que acaba usted de encontrarse con su antiguo profesor de química y mientras cerca de usted una muchacha le dice a su amiga: “¡Sabes cómo hice que le viera la cara a Dios!”. (24)

The impossibility of finding a word that signifies such a complex situation calls our attention to the relationship between language and reality, a principally poetic concern. Martínez ironizes our attempt to capture a single moment of reality using a language made of abstract terms, much in the way that Funes criticizes the futility of language in Borges’ story.¹³⁷ For Funes, it barely makes sense to call a dog by the same name when seen at different moments in time and from different perspectives: “le molestaba que el perro de las tres y catorce (visto de perfil) tuviera el mismo nombre que el perro de las tres y cuarto (visto de frente)” (134). This Heraclitan observation that everything is in a constant state of flux to the point that persistent identity is questionable is the common link between Funes and Martínez’s proposal poem.¹³⁸ Can language capture the individuality of a unique moment, or is there always something that escapes verbal articulation? Martínez’s poem further ironizes this situation by asking the reader to invent a single word that summarizes the entire situation stated above. The absurdity of this request allows for the creation of a poetic experience in which the reader reflects on the relationship between word and reality.

¹³⁷ In the short story “Funes el memorioso”, Borges explores the idea that abstraction is a necessary part of communication and knowledge. After suffering an accident, Funes is left without the ability to understand how individual instances can be transformed into linguistic abstraction, and thus is unable to form concepts and communicate.

¹³⁸ The reference to Heraclitus here refers to the notion that persistent identity through the passage of time is based on the same illusion that a river is the same river although different waters flow through it. See footnote 112 on page 158.

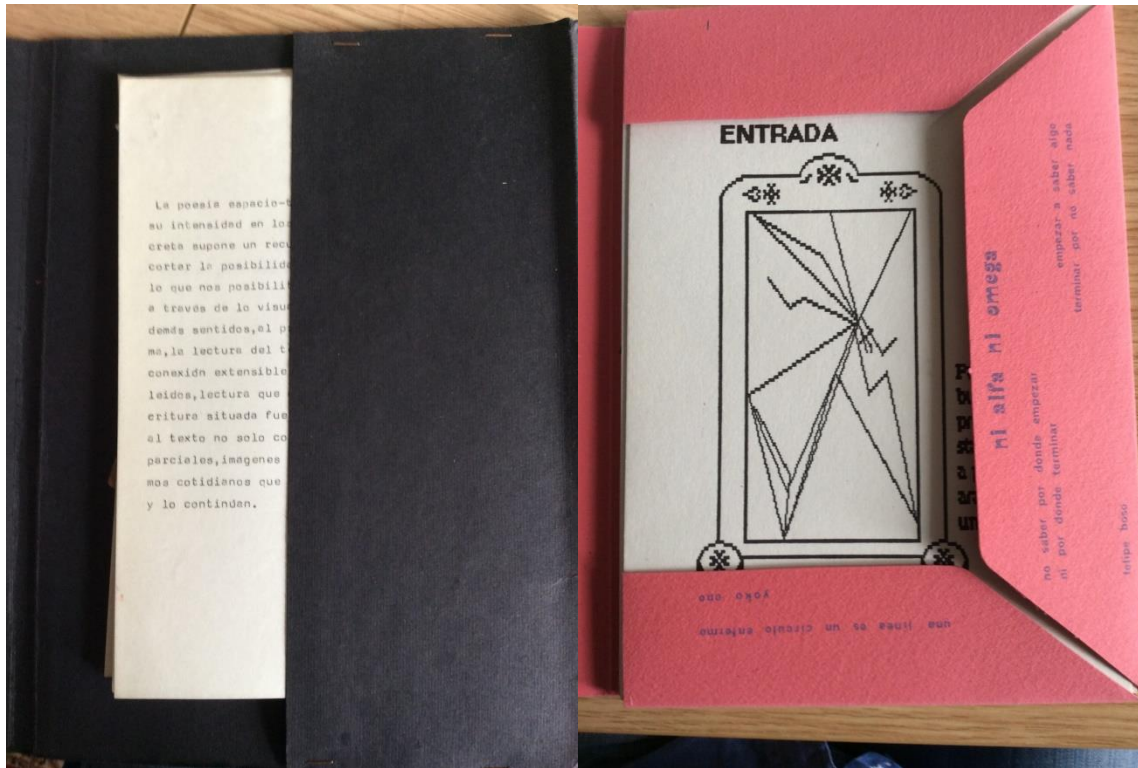
In summary, I would like to highlight the aspects of the proposal poem that are most compelling for a comprehensive definition. From Morales Prado, I borrow the notion that the poem is a “project” (and thus, not a completed work of art) which will be realized by each reader in a different way, and from Sou, the characteristic use of imperative forms, second person pronouns, incorporation of material supports, as well as the importance of the physicality of language in these poems and the use of absurdity. From there, I have added that this brush with the absurd creates a sort of pataphysical humor that works to destabilize and delegitimize the speaking subject. Finally, to best capture the essence of the proposal poem, it is advantageous to think of it as having a dual nature – as a poem itself and as a proposal to create additional poems. From these characteristics that define the proposal poem we can proceed to a comparative treatment of the work of Texto Poético and Juan Luis Martínez.

4.5 Proposal Poems in Action: Grupo Texto Poético and Juan Luis Martínez

In 1977 on two different continents strikingly similar participatory poetry forms were published by authors who were apparently unaware of each other’s work. Grupo Texto Poético self-published their first work, *Texto Poético 1*, in Spain the same year that Juan Luis Martínez self-published *La nueva novela* in Chile. Due to the limited distribution of these self-publications, it seems highly improbable that either work was informed by the other, although at first glance they seem to suggest some form of influence. This next section looks to compare their works in order to explore the coincidence of their style and elucidate their unique contributions to participatory poetry.

Josep Sou attributes the formation of *Texto Poético* to Bartolomé Ferrando, who started the first volume of experimental poems with David Pérez and Rosa Sanz in 1977. From then until 1989 the group had numerous participants, including José Díaz, Mercedes Calpe, Josep Sou, Manuel Costa, Regina Balbastre, Vicente Plá, Carmen Navarro and Jiri Valech alongside mainstay Bartolomé Ferrando. Although we can trace the participation of artists to each publication, the individual poems are not signed since the group wished to maintain a creative collective, perhaps related to the idea of undermining the traditional concept of authorship. In addition to their experimental style of poetry, the methods of production could also be termed “avant-garde”, and have been described by the group as “austere”: most of the poems are printed on slips of paper contained in a simple folder, although the later publications are of markedly better quality materials and printing.¹³⁹ Below are images of *Texto Poético 1* and *Texto Poético 9* placed side by side to show the contrast:

¹³⁹ They are also difficult to obtain. I would like to thank the Gettysburg Institute and the Biblioteca San Miguel de los Reyes for sending me selections as electronic copies. In addition, I am very grateful to Bartolomé Ferrando for allowing me to view his private collection of works.



In addition to the improvements of the material quality of the texts, one can also observe a progression towards more open forms for reader participation. The first two numbers of the journal show a tendency towards concrete, visual, and object poetry, while later publications contain more proposal poems and open forms for reader collaboration.¹⁴⁰ For example, we find the following poem in *Texto Poético 1*, which is more representative of the early poems: “el espacio / anterior se / encontraba, al / igual que éste, / perturbado por tu mirada” (6). This poem feels like a proposal poem, but instead of giving the reader an activity to carry out, it tells us an

¹⁴⁰ In addition, the epigraphs and manifestos that function as introductions to each work reveal a similar progression. The first publication, for example, begins with a description of the importance of concrete poetry: “La poesía espacio-temporal se manifiesta con toda su intensidad en los poemas concretos. La poesía concreta supone un recurso contra el discurso, supone cortar la posibilidad al discurso de transcurrir, lo que nos posibilita la captación sensorial no solo a través de lo visual sino también por medio de los demás sentidos, al predisponernos a ello” (1). In contrast, numbers 5-9 begin with a proposal poem or activity, instead of an introduction. Number 4 is the last one to have an introductory text, which consists of a quote from Roland Barthes. The final paragraph of the Barthes’ quote highlights the nature of language, and more specifically of poetic language, to produce unforeseen results: “Cada palabra poética es así un objeto inesperado, caja de Pandora, de la que salen todas las categorías del lenguaje...” (4).

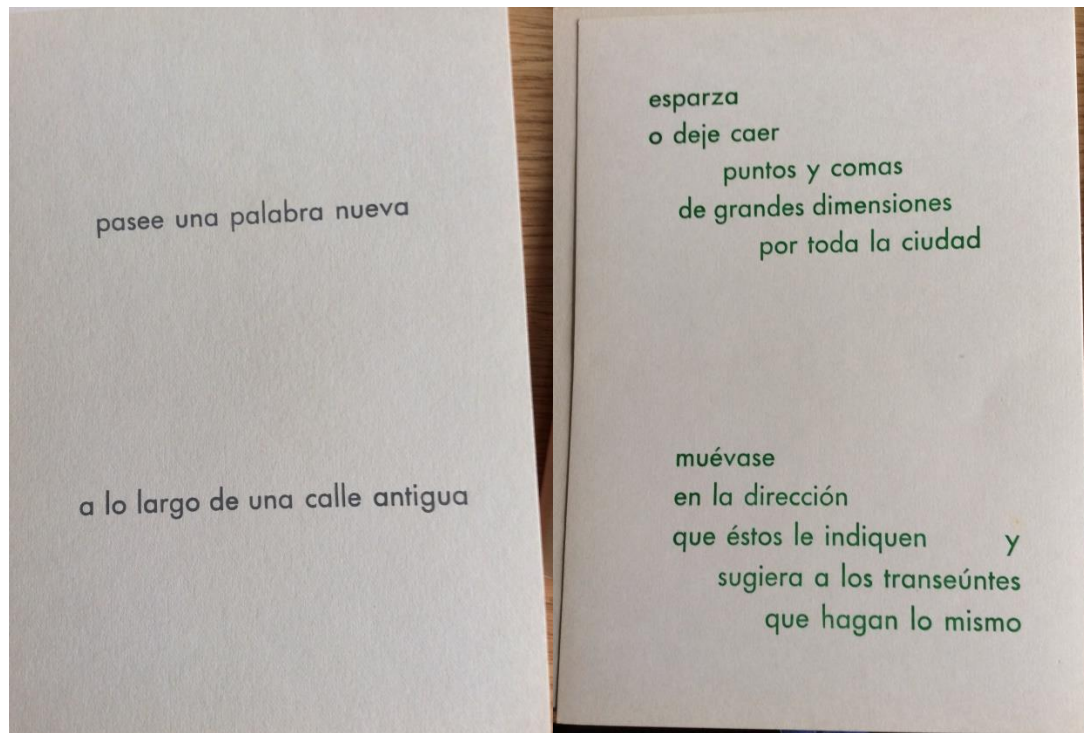
action that the reader has already done: perturbed the text with his or her glance. In this way, the poets show their awareness of the reader's participation and how it affects the text (somewhat in the vein of quantum physics, where it is affirmed that any observation disrupts the object observed), and it makes this apparent to the reader through the text which is an explicit articulation of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, this text is more of a commentary on the reader's impact on the text, rather than an invitation to collaborate.

There are invitations to collaborate in the early publications, such as the create-your-own poetry activities found in numbers 1 and 2. In *Texto Poético 1* there are a couple of clear plastic sleeves (that resemble name tag holders) stuffed with parts of words and letters. The implication of this object seems to be that the reader can put together words and phrases akin to magnetic poetry. Below are two examples taken from numbers 1 and 2:



Although these proposals call on the reader to rearrange the words and letters according to his or her own prerogative, the scope of participation is comparatively limited due to the

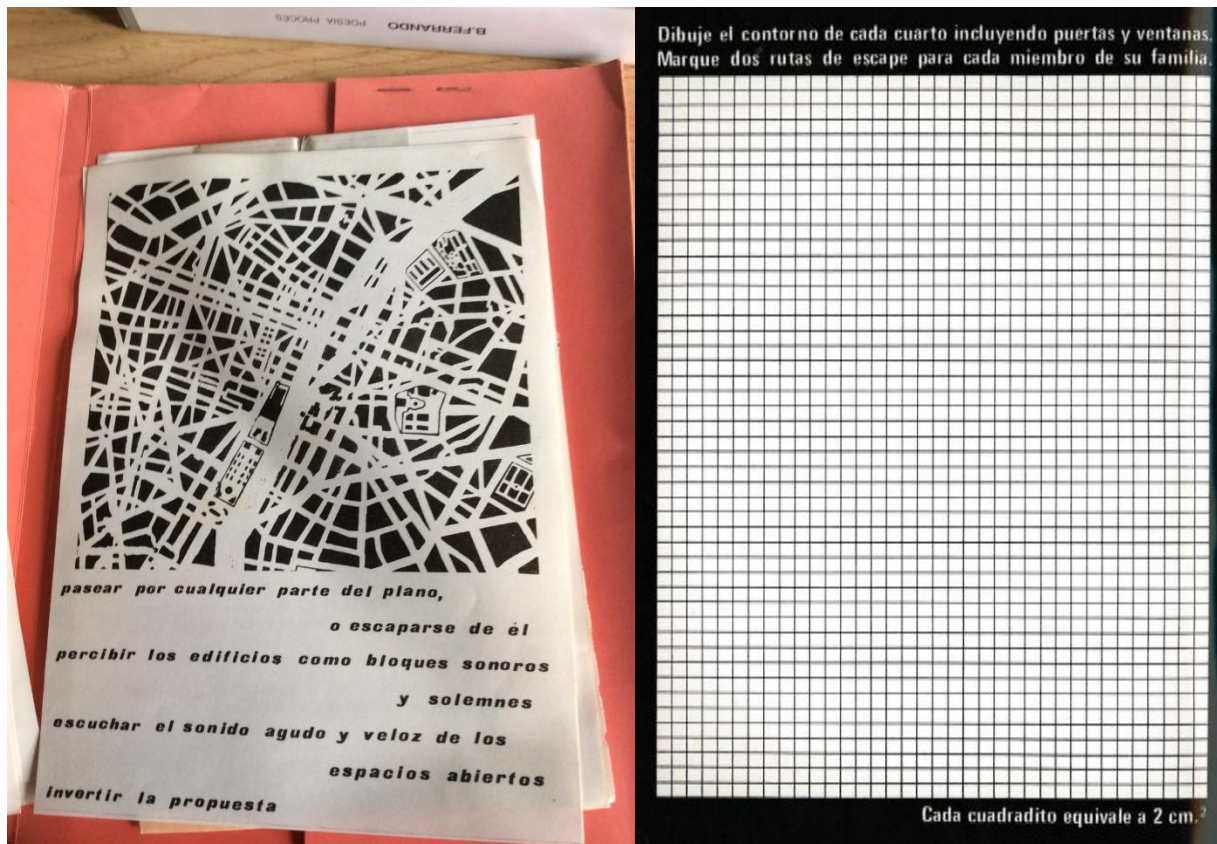
content of the words and letters selected for the reader to use. Let us look briefly at a couple of poems from *Texto Poético 9* to highlight the difference:



Both poems treat the topic of externalizing language somewhat explicitly, perhaps too explicitly to be taken seriously; what would it be like to take a stroll down an old street with a new word? Not only is the election of the specific word and street completely up to the reader, but also the interpretation as to how one would carry out the proposal is left ambiguous. Does strolling down the street with a new word mean that you have it on a sign, or that you are interspersing it in your conversations, or that you are singing it to passersby? The second poem proposes a similar juxtaposition of language and city space, this time suggesting that the reader scatter commas and periods through the city, following their trail, and having others do the same.

In *Texto Poético 4* we find a similar proposal poem that asks us to stroll through a city map, or to try to escape from it. This may remind readers of a similar text from Juan Luis Martínez (found on page 136 as well as the back cover) in which the reader is asked to draw his

or her house and mark two escape routes for each member of the family. Both texts are reproduced below:



The first text (from Grupo Texto Poético) has a lighter tone, although we are told that we may want to escape from the map, perhaps since we hear a sharp quick sound coming from the open spaces. In contrast the Martínez text is a bit more ominous. We are told to draw our house, including all of the windows and doors, and then to draw two escape routes for each member of the family. What is threatening the usually safe space that the house represents?

Another point of contact between the Chilean poet and the Valencian group is how they treat the topic of authorship. In *Texto Poético 4*, for example, there is an envelope stamped with the verb “Participaron” which contains slips of paper with the names of the poets (Ferrando,

Pérez, Sanz and Calpe).¹⁴¹ Since none of their names are attached to any of the poems and their names are given on these slips of paper, the reader could decide to match names with poems by placing the slips of paper alongside of the texts, toying with the notion of authorship as provisional, not definitive. There are also four blank slips, which could be read as an invitation to the readers to participate in the creation of the work by adding their names to the envelope of “authors”. In addition, one could “randomize” the authorship of a work by shuffling the slips of paper together in the envelope and selecting one at random to apply to a poem. This aleatory procedure, among other examples, highlights the group’s use of participatory forms of art, albeit with a certain ironic twist.

The decision to challenge traditional notions of authorship is also apparent from their first publication. In *Texto Poético 1* (1977) the names of the contributors can be found buried within a list of material (and nonmaterial) textual supports, including “el azar/cartulina negra/cartulina rosa/un clip/cuartillas blancas/el espacio/una etiqueta...” This list of elements that intervened in making the edition (in which appear the names of the poets alongside objects such as a paperclip, printed letters, an arrow, “space” and “time”), as well as the invitation to collaborate with an address where submissions will be received, places the role of the author on the same plane as the textual supports and the readers who wish to collaborate. These somewhat ludic elements (in which the importance of the poets is placed on the same level as a paperclip) can be read as a form of self-parody, challenging the importance of authorship in a similar way as we have seen in Martínez’s works (crossing out his name from his books and in his use of intertextuality).

¹⁴¹ This example is from *Texto Poético 4* (1979), but is similar to the way in which they ascribe authorship in the other numbers as well.

These observations are also supported by their theory and praxis. Josep Sou writes that their principal aim was to present the readers with a provocation that demands their participation. With regards to the commonalities between experimental poetry and conceptual art, he highlights the element of provocation: “la presencia del receptor que resuelva la provocación hacia una poesía del hacer, por tanto poesía que reclama la participación del lector” (14). In addition, during a personal interview with Bartolomé Ferrando, the poet told me that the goal of the journal was not self-expression, but rather an invitation for the other to produce something¹⁴². For this reason, one of the reoccurring genres of poetry that is utilized in the journal is the proposal poem. As noted in the analysis above, *Texto Poético*’s proposals can be read as poetic objects in addition to the poetic responses that they solicit. There is an explicit attempt to implicate the reader in the creative process of making poetry.

One can observe certain similarities between *Texto Poético*’s proposals and those of their antecedents, Fluxus, although I believe Sou is right in signaling that the Valencian group goes in a different direction. Many Fluxus proposals are much more along the lines of invitations to participate in “happenings”. As an example of a Fluxus piece, I reproduce Allison Knowles’s “Nivea Cream Piece” below:

First performer comes on stage with a bottle of hand cream, labeled "Nivea Cream" if none is available. He pours the cream onto his hands, and massages them in front of the microphone. Other performers enter, one by one, and do the same thing. They join together in front of the microphone to make a mass of massaging hands. They leave in the reverse of the order they entered, on a signal from the first performer.

Variation #1 (evolved through many performances of the above)

Large quantities of Nivea Cream must be available, at least one large jar per person. The performers enter and each lathers up his arms and face, then his colleagues, in a fragrant pig-pile.

¹⁴² The personal interview was realized on July 8, 2015, in which Ferrando stated that his group aimed to create “poesía no para expresarse, sino para invitar al otro a hacer algo.”

Now compare the above text by Knowles to *Texto Poético*'s "PROYECTO 1", cited on page 175. Although both texts ask the reader to perform actions, the first is an invitation to participate in a collective artistic "happening" while the second focuses more on the linguistic dimension of the text – exploring the contours of the word in an imaginary voyage. Another key difference is that Knowles's proposal seems perfectly feasible (albeit a bit strange), while *Texto Poético*'s proposal may approach the absurd or metaphorical. How can one carefully walk along the topography of a word? What does the "*paisaje*" of language involve? Perhaps what this proposal truly solicits is for the reader to explore language in its physical aspects (as sight and sound) instead of seeing through words to their meaning. Additionally, one could interpret this text as an opportunity to make a poetic voyage into a word through poetic means, writing a poem based on these suggestions.

These observations are supported by the theoretical claims of the group members. Souza writes: "Nos han interesado los poemas no sólo por lo que dicen, sino también por la forma en que lo dicen, hasta convertirse en verdaderas propuestas artísticas" (4). He highlights the formal dimension of the text, the physicality of language, in contrast to the perception of language as a set of transparent signs. Linguistic signs not only point to something else, they also have a shape and sound of their own, which takes on new levels of signification. This emphasis on language also distinguishes the group from other forms of participatory art, and by placing the emphasis on language they focus the artistic practice on the poetic dimension of participation.

This is not to say that Fluxus didn't have instructional poems that also bordered on the absurd or treated the topic of language (albeit in a slightly different manner). Yoko Ono's "Water Piece" from *Grapefruit* illustrates the presence of the absurd in some Fluxus works. Ono

writes: “Steal a moon on the water with a bucket. Keep stealing until no moon is seen on the water” (no page #). On one hand, the reader can imagine dipping a bucket into a moonlit pool, capturing the water where the moon’s light glistens. But on the other, it seems absurd to try to capture the moon in this way since its light will always reappear in the same spot where the bucket was dipped. The only way to remove the moonlight completely from the water would be to remove all of the water from the pool. Of course, the intention of the proposal is probably not to have readers go out and try to complete this action, but rather to marvel at the thought of trying to capture moonlight in a bucket. In this way, the absurdity of Ono’s proposal poems are much more closely tied to a sense of wonder, marveling at the poetic imagination of the proposal.

In a similar way we could appreciate Ono’s proposal poems on the topic of language. In “Chewing Gum Machine Piece” she suggests that we place vending machines that dispense words instead of chewing gum, with the text cited below:

CHEWING GUM MACHINE PIECE

Place Chewing Gum Machines with
many different word cards in them
next to Coca-Cola Machines on
every street corner.

Make it so that a word card comes
out when you put one cent in.

Put more auxiliary words than nouns.
More verbs than adjectives.

1961 Winter

The product of this proposal, if realized, would be something akin to magnetic poetry in which an individual is given words somewhat randomly which can be used to construct various units of meaning (phrases, sentences, or images, for example). Certain limitations are provided by the

producer of both experiments (vending machine or magnetic poetry), since she selects the raw material from which the semantic unit can be constructed. It is interesting to note that Ono creates a double proposal poem with this text: on one hand, she has created a proposal for her reader to actualize, but on the other hand, the reader's actualization of the proposal also creates a sort of proposal poem for those who interact with it. The participants who retrieve word cards from the vending machine will also have an opportunity to create poetic fragments based on the readers' selection of words. Ono turns her readers into writers of proposal poetry themselves by inviting them to create this procedure of recombinatory poetics and opening it up to the public.

Ono's approach, however, is distinct from the proposal poems of Martínez and Texto Poético in the form in which the task is realizable. While Ono's proposals may be far-fetched, most of them could be carried out, at least to a certain extent, if not entirely realized. It is possible to buy a chewing gum machine and fill it with sips of paper instead of gum.

Meanwhile, most of the proposals by Texto Poético and Martínez (and Tardieu, we could add) are only realizable if the reader carries out a poetic reading of the text. A literal interpretation of walking across a word, admiring its landscape, or describing a word from its profile is impossible. Only by approaching these texts from a poetic point of view, of interpreting them as figurative explorations of language are we able to carry out these tasks.

Before proceeding to additional comparisons between Texto Poético and Martínez, it is necessary to examine the other influences and characteristics of Texto Poético which coincide or differ from the Chilean poet. By comparing their influences we can see if their genealogies coincide in any places, or whether they have come to a similar juncture from two different paths. Since the Valencian group has yet to be analyzed in depth to the extent that I have looked at

Martínez's work, there are a number of characteristics that can become points of departure for a differential analysis that I discuss below.

As mentioned above, Fluxus may be one of the most important influences that led to Texto Poético's poetic proposals and avant-garde style, but there are others as well. In Josep Sou's analysis of the group, he emphasizes their attempt to exist in a heterodox or liminal space between the boundaries of literary and visual arts. He calls this the group's strong interdisciplinary component, citing their influences from Dadaism, *Fluxus*, John Cage and others in bringing together a collection of diverse poems (*poemas propuestas*, visual poems, sound poetry, semiotic poetry, etc.) which he says, "sirven de muestra diversificada de la abolición, en cierta medida, de las fronteras entre las artes literarias y las visuales" (6). It is worthy of note that Martínez's work has also been linked to John Cage¹⁴³ and has been seen as combining literary and visual art¹⁴⁴.

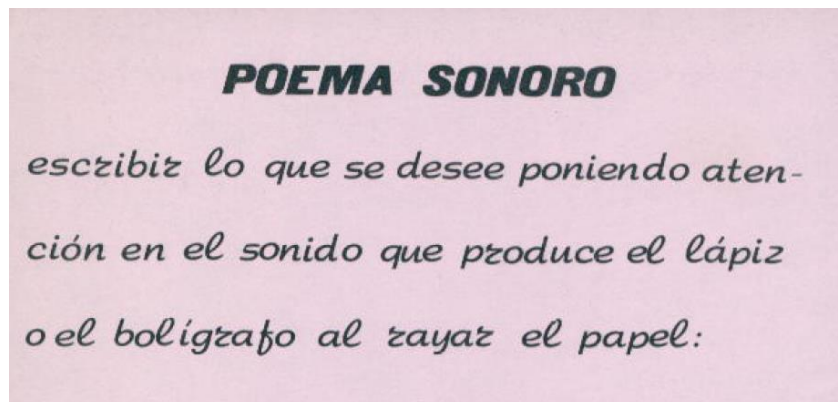
One final theoretical influence that should be noted is May 1968 in France, which the group sees as necessitating artists in general to become involved in sociopolitical issues. From this occurrence Texto Poético takes their critique of late capitalism. Sou characterizes the changes as the following: "La crítica al capitalismo tardío de posguerra, y el deseo de generar nuevas corrientes donde lo multidisciplinar signifcase una apertura hacia la concreción de las vanguardas artísticas...con un camino determinado hacia la experimentación" (22). The emphasis is on the fact that experimentation in poetry should not be done for experimentation's sake. In synthesizing techniques of the Avant-Gardes, Texto Poético was searching for new

¹⁴³ See Scott Weintraub's *Juan Luis Martínez's Philosophical Poetics* (2015). In Chapter 5 Weintraub compares Martínez to Cage with regard to their use of aleatory composition procedures based off of the *I Ching*: "the most cogent link between the kind of ambitious poetic project undertaken by Martínez and Eastern philosophical thought can be found in the writings and musical innovation of avant-garde composer John Cage" (176).

¹⁴⁴ See De los Ríos, Valeria. "La fotografía como clave de lectura de *La nueva novela*." *Estudios filológicos*, 44, 2009, pp. 53-65 and Labraña, Marcela. "Señales de ruta para recorrer el silencio." *Revista laboratorio*, no. 6, 2012.

forms of engagement with the reader in light of real life problems. Josep Sou concludes that the impetus of *Texto Poético* is an attempt to transform poetry from word into action. He writes: “Pero tal vez aquello que emerja con mayor fuerza no esté cifrado, tanto en la en la renovación del canon poético, que también, como en la voluntad de lograr la participación del receptor en las propuestas poéticas, **pasando a transformarse la poesía del decir (poético) en una poesía del hacer.**” (24, emphasis in original text).

An analysis of some of the texts of *Texto Poético* shows how they subvert many forms of experimental poetry through the use of humor and the solicitation of the reader’s involvement in the text. The following poem, entitled “Poema sonoro”, asks the reader to create a sound poem through the act of writing and listening to the sound that the pen produces as one writes. Sound poetry bases its poetic production on a series of complex permutations of morphemes and phonic associations. This poem, on the other hand, requires the reader’s participation while it also pokes fun at experimental sound poets who perhaps take themselves too seriously.



Another example of the *poema propuesta* can be seen in the following text from *Texto Poético 8*, which may be read as a parody of the type of poetry-action that Fluxus practiced:



This poem manages to involve the reader in the creation of the poetic event while portraying an erotic content, in addition to introducing an aspect of humor as one imagines people in the streets sticking their fingers in the air and sucking on them.

Another poem with erotic content and humor is entitled “*RECAMBIOS*”. In this proposal poem from *Texto Poético 4* the reader is invited to cut-out an image of their choosing and send it to the authors from whom they will receive this object through the mail within ten days:

RECAMBIOS

(Con un periodo de prueba de diez dias,
sin compromiso alguno)



- Recorte el objeto de su eleccion y envíelo.
- Vd. recibirá el artículo en paquete cerrado sin signos externos y con la máxima discreción posible.
- Los pagos se realizarán contra reembolso.
- Si al cabo de los diez dias Vd. no ha quedado completamente satisfecho, remita el producto recibido, en paquete certificado, aún despues de haber sido usado. Vd. será inmediatamente reembolsado

The images appear to represent cut out body parts of a sexual nature. The one on the far left and far right resemble the female and male sexual reproductive organs (pubic hair and an erect

penis). In between we see some images that have curved surfaces and cleavage, suggesting breasts or buttocks, while in the center is an inviting partially opened mouth.

This poem not only solicits the readers' action, but the instructions also ask them to make contact with the creators of the poem. The language and graphical disposition suggest a parody of the kind of cut-out coupons one would find in a vanity magazine. The discourse of these magazines and of consumerism in general is subverted by presenting the objects of desire in their most unambiguous form – sexual body parts. The poem suggests that in contemporary society we see images that are meant to elicit sexual desire and a fetish of commodities and objects. Texto Poético works through the use of fragments to challenge the sense of continuity in the organic work of art. In the above poem, one notes how the body parts are spliced into pieces as images and are meant to be cut-out, decontextualized from bodies and from the poem. Another poem that exemplifies this strategy is unnamed and brief; it reads “pronunciar una palabra / separarla en sílabas y sonidos / abrir cada sonido para observar qué hay dentro de él.” This poem bears a striking resemblance the following poem by Martínez: “Repita una palabra tantas veces como sea necesario para volatizarla. Analice el residuo” (*La nueva novela* 34). In both poems, the reader is challenged to contemplate the meaning of words once their material aspect has been removed. These poems ask us if there is meaning inside of the word's syllables or in the residue of a word once it has been volatilized, or if it lies elsewhere. These linguistic meditations through poetry are one of the characteristics that unite these poets from the same decade but distant continents.

Although there are many similarities in the proposal poems of Texto Poético and Martínez, the differences in tone and style result in a nuanced distinction between the type of humor and irony employed in these ludic participatory poems. In what follows, I intend to show

how Martínez's poems tend more towards pataphysical humor (which, as we recall means taking humor quite seriously) and caustic philosophical irony, while *Texto Poético*'s sense of humor is a bit more lighthearted and the irony more playful. The results of these differences may be in part due to the distinct cultural climates: while Spain is moving away from the shadows of dictatorship, Chile is entering into the depths of the shadows; thus we can see more carefree humor of a cultural opening versus more enigmatic and dark humor of a cultural closure. These conjectures about the differences in socio-cultural milieu are probably part of the reason for their points of departure. In addition, we have seen how the different influences have shaped these poets: for Martínez we can focus on Tardieu, while *Texto Poético* inherits more from Fluxus and '60s artists like Yoko Ono. These differences in tone and style produce parallel but distinct experiences for the reader/participant as well: both invite us to participate in creating poetry through ludic scenarios and riddles but they elicit slightly different types of laughter and distinct ideas of the speaking subject. To clarify the latter consideration, although the concept of authorship is undermined in both cases (both writers make it unclear to what extent a text was produced by a single author), but in Martínez we feel a deeper mistrust of authority figures, while in *Texto Poético* we feel like part of an artistic community without a leading authority.

First let us take a more nuanced approach to their use of humor in proposal poems to highlight the distinctions. As mentioned above, both Chilean poet and Spanish poets employ a technique of casually brushing up with the absurd in order to produce their comic effect. I have mentioned how this approach is similar to pataphysical humor and may have its source in ludic philosophical writers such as Jarry, Queneau, Daumal, Duchamp, Arrabal, Tardieu etc., but we actually find much more influence of these writers in Martínez. We can also look at how Martínez's poetry not only uses far more pastiche and intertextuality of these writers, through

citation and juxtaposition, but also through imitation. A few examples may help illustrate these points:

OBSERVACIONES RELACIONADAS CON LA EXUBERANTE ACTIVIDAD
DE LA "CONFABULACION FONETICA" O "LENGUAJE DE LOS PAJAROS"
EN LAS OBRAS DE J. - P. BRISSET, R. ROUSSEL, M. DUCHAMP Y OTROS

- a. A través de su canto los pájaros comunican una comunicación en la que dicen que no dicen nada.
- b. El lenguaje de los pájaros es un lenguaje de signos transparentes en busca de la transparencia dispersa de algún significado.
- c. Los pájaros encierran el significado de su propio canto en la malla de un lenguaje vacío; malla que es a un tiempo transparente e irrompible.
- d. Incluso el silencio que se produce entre cada canto es también un eslabón de esa malla, un signo, un momento del mensaje que la naturaleza se dice a sí misma.
- e. Para la naturaleza no es el canto de los pájaros ni su equivalente, la palabra humana, sino el silencio, el que convertido en mensaje tiene por objeto establecer, prolongar o interrumpir la comunicación para verificar si el circuito funciona y si realmente los pájaros se comunican entre ellos a través de los oídos de los hombres y sin que estos se den cuenta.

NOTA:

Los pájaros cantan en pajarístico,
pero los escuchamos en español.
(El español es una lengua opaca,
con un gran número de palabras fantasmas;
el pajarístico es una lengua transparente y sin palabras).

In this first example, the principal discourse of the poem concerns communication, and more specifically the role of silence in communicating. Without silence, we are told, there would be no way of testing the “circuit” of communication to be sure that it works. If we look at this poem from a pataphysical angle, we could say that the somewhat paradoxical notion at play is that silence is a form of communication, and that without it, we would not be able to communicate or verify that we have been understood. The approach is visibly logical, employing a sort of syllogistic argumentative style, planting premises and expanding upon them to reach conclusions. The actual significance of the text, however, is somewhat at odds with the apparent logical exposition, or at least it strikes us as being somewhat absurd: birds communicate through the ears of people without our knowledge? And birds communicate a communication in which they say that they are saying nothing? The poem has the feel of a riddle, but also creates a comic effect by juxtaposing a logical, philosophical, and argumentative exposition while treating a topic of paradoxical nature. I would argue that this sort of humor is pataphysical based on the definitions employed in the previous pages. In addition, the writers that are cited in the title of the poem have a pataphysical aspect to some of their works as well. J. P. Brisset, for example, wrote in *La Science de Dieu* that mankind descended from frogs by comparing French and frog languages, but more importantly, he took these investigations seriously, or at least gives his work a serious tone, despite the puns and poetic permutations. This mix of a serious tone with silly, nonsensical, or absurdist argumentation produces a unique sort of humor, which is best described as pataphysical.

Other examples of this style can be seen in these texts from Martínez’s *La nueva novela*:

EL ESPACIO Y EL TIEMPO

Tardieu, suponga que el ESPACIO y el TIEMPO
son las dos lentes de un par de gafas.
¿QUE SUCEDE SI USTED TAPA O CIERRA UN OJO?

LA PARAPSICOLOGIA

Tardieu, Usted fue un gato y tuvo una dueña.
SE QUERIAN MUCHO.

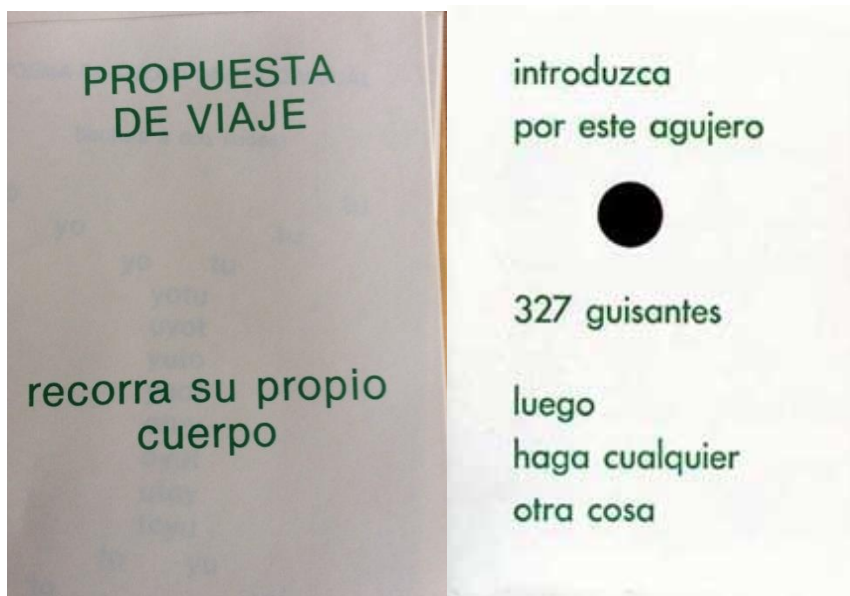
HAN PASADO CIENTOS DE AÑOS DESDE ESA ULTIMA VIDA.
Ahora Usted es la dueña y ella es su gato.

¿COMO HACEN PARA RECONOCERSE?

Once again we find Martínez establishing a dialogue with an author whose work we could describe as pataphysical. This of course, is the principal poet that Martínez dialogues with in *La nueva novela*, and the “dialogue” here is very literal, since he answers questions by Tardieu and addresses the French writer directly with his own questions. Much like the previous example, the tone is serious, almost scientific; the premises and questions might remind us of the tone from a didactic mathematics or science text book. The mix of this register of discourse with

slightly absurdist content is most probably designed to solicit a similar pataphysical comic response as we observed above.

If we compare these texts to the proposal poems by *Texto Poético*, we can find a similar absurdist humor, but the Spanish poets solicit a more congenial experience, lacking the strong didactic and scientific tone we find in speaking subject of Martínez's work. This is not the same as saying that Martínez's sense of humor is more serious. Behind the serious speaking subject of an individual text (like the ones above) we sense the work of a meta-author who arranges these texts and shares a smile and a wink with us at the speakers' amusing incongruities. On the other hand, when we read the proposal poems of *Texto Poético* we feel less distance between author and speaking subject, since the speaking subject is less of an object of ridicule. Let us take a look at a few examples that illustrate this difference:



The first poem (from *Texto Poético* 6) makes light of instructional poetry through a playful twist. The poem solicits a performance from the reader but also produces a comic reaction simply by

the juxtaposition of taking a trip and touching oneself based on the confluence of the notion of “travel” (geographical or sensual). The difference in humor is that here we feel that we are laughing with the speaking subject and not at him/her. We can sense that the one who speaks in this erotic poem is cognizant of the humor of the proposal, whereas in the Chilean poet’s work (as we saw above), the humor often results from the juxtaposition of a serious speaker who is being ridiculed by the metaspeaker who has organized the discourse.

The second poem (from *Texto Poético* 9) has a more absurdist and pataphysical feel. The apparent arbitrary nature of the number of peas (327) makes us think that the speaker has a specific scientific reason for the experiment to be undertaken. However, when we arrive at the second step, “then / do any / other thing”, we realize that the speaker does not have a coherent purpose, and thus the logic of the first step appears questionable. We can conclude that if steps 1 and 2 are disconnected and nonsensical, the number of peas is probably just as irrational and absurd. Hence we come to doubt the capacity of the speaking subject to produce a sensible discourse and we laugh at his/her absurdity. This proposal poem is much more similar to those of their Chilean contemporary.

The poems of *Texto Poético* thus oscillate between these two variations of absurdist humor. On one hand, we find light-hearted imaginative proposal poems similar to those of Yoko Ono and Fluxus, while on the other we see elements of pataphysical humor more along the lines of Tardieu and Martínez. This distinction does not always hold, since at times the poets from different continents at times seem to be channeling the same sense of humor. Nevertheless, the kind of satire found in Martínez’s “Tareas de poesía” where we laugh at the speaker’s ridiculous questions (such as: “Qué significan los lirosos para el autor?”, “Por qué el autor afirma que las oveñas patizan el bramante?”, *La nueva novela* 95) is hard to find in *Texto Poético*.

This distinction, albeit minor, produces a different relationship between author and reader. In the works of Texto Poético the many invitations to collaborate take the form of a collective that solicits its readers to become participants in a new art scene emerging from the waning of Franco's dictatorship, and these texts date from the end of this period into the *movida* and cultural opening of the '90s. In contrast, Martínez's early works date to the period leading up to the Pinochet dictatorship and during the *apagón cultural*. It therefore makes sense that Martínez appears to his readers as an enigmatic Cheshire Cat, who delivers riddles and disappears. The author as authority figure is undermined in Martínez's works, not only with the striking out and suppression of the author's name (~~Juan Luis Martínez~~) but also in the poetic of pastiche and recycled materials, which suggest that the author is a mere collector and *scriptor*. In a similar way, Texto Poético does not assign names to their poems, but instead gives the impression of a collaborative creation by giving us the name of the participants without attaching them to the individual works. These considerations on the figure of the author and the figures of authority in society are important to keep in mind when formulating a comparative analysis of the Chilean and Spanish poets as I have attempted above.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

From the disappearance of the author comes the emergence of the reader. The works of Juan Luis Martínez require a unique reader, no doubt, as has been noted by Roberto Merino in his article "Las expectativas de recepción en *La nueva novela* de Juan Luis Martínez": "Cada elemento que constituye una expectativa de recepción configura las condiciones de un *lector*

modelo (1), un lector móvil y complejo, que presenta la disponibilidad de asumir una enciclopedia sobreinformada y que resulte bastante ubicuo para realizar las diversas lecturas que la obra requiera” (329).¹⁴⁵ Martínez’s work requires a highly erudite reader to decipher the labyrinth of intertexts and literary references. This is true, nevertheless I would like to emphasize not the encyclopedic knowledge necessary to decodify the poet’s text, but rather the necessity of a reader who is able to participate and engage with the text creatively.¹⁴⁶ My argument in this chapter is that Martínez’s works and those of the Valencian group Texto Poético demand a creatively engaged reader who is able to think poetically about the propositions and riddles found in their work. This unique form of participatory art privileges the role of the imagination in readers as co-creators.

There are different levels of participation in art (as I have attempted to illustrate in this chapter), not only in terms of active and passive spectators, but also in terms of their imaginative or derivative participation. Many of the theories of reader-response criticism highlight the emerging role of the reader in contemporary literature, conceiving of the history of modern literature as a movement away from the author, towards the text, and finally reaching the role of the reader. Although I do not wish to promote a progressive model for the role of the reader as participant, I have argued that the nature of the participation of the reader has changed and continues to change. Again, I do not wish to claim that the reader has become more involved in a quantitative sense, nor do I wish to say that this emergence of participation is in a qualitative sense “better” than previous forms of readerly activity. Instead what I propose here is that the

¹⁴⁵ See Roberto Merino, “Las expectativas de recepción en *La nueva novela* de Juan Luis Martínez”, *Crítica Hispánica*, XXVIII, I., 2006.

¹⁴⁶ Marcelo Riosco also proposes that the reader of Martínez’s work is co-creator: “Como ha señalado Roman Ingarden, se trata de un lector co-creador, cuyo espacio interpretativo está delimitado por la obra misma” (*Maquinarias deconstructivas* 170).

nature of the relationship between author, text and reader continues to undergo transformations that can shed light on the aesthetic experience and the nature of readers' imaginative engagement with the text.

In order to accomplish this, I have given a brief summation of 20th century participatory art and theory of reception aesthetics, culminating in an analysis of the proposal poems of Juan Luis Martínez and *Texto Poético*. Again, I do not wish to privilege their works by claiming that they are superior to previous solicitations of participation, but instead I merely hope to show the unique nature of their works in order to examine their contributions to participatory art. In summation, I have argued that their contributions involve a unique employment of absurdist humor and illogical propositions, which I have circumscribed under the term of "proposal poetry". These proposal poems allow us to reflect on the nature of participation in art through a slightly satirical distancing technique. By parodying the artist who invites the reader to participate we can reflect on the process of collaboration and the role of the imagination in the aesthetic experience.

Finally, I have compared the works of Juan Luis Martínez and *Texto Poético* in order to distinguish their strikingly similar employment of proposal poems. Although these poets both use a brush with the absurd to produce a comic effect, I have argued that the different tones of the speakers elicit a slightly different form of laughter and feeling towards authority. The more pataphysical and satirical approach of Juan Luis Martínez undermines the author and authority causing us to laugh at the speaker, while *Texto Poético*'s absurdist humor provokes laughter more in sync with the speaker of the text. Lastly, I have suggested that these different shades of humor may be due to the different cultural environments of the writers, in particular the

movement towards and away from dictatorships and cultural closures in their respective countries.

As a concluding note I would like to suggest that these considerations of participatory poetry can lead us to further questions about the role of participation in society, such as: Does the activation of the imagination in the aesthetic experience have consequences beyond the text or work of art? Can participation in art lead one to strive for other forms of meaningful participation? Do artists that open their works to collaboration wish to suggest that individuals reclaim their agency in closed societies? What is the nature of the link between participation and democracy, if any? I hope that these questions lead to other fruitful discussions based on the issues inherent in participatory poetry and my analysis of their impact.

5. Conclusion

This investigation has highlighted the role of poetic production in the neo-avant-garde in exploring the boundaries of art in relation to the participation of the reader in literature, politics, and society. By focusing on the work of Juan Luis Martínez and the Chilean “Escena de avanzada”, I have been able to show their unique contributions to the development of neo-avant-garde and participatory poetry, which include new forms of engaging their audiences and making them aware of their agency in the spheres of art and life. In this study, I have not tried to measure the impact of their projects, but rather have attempted to outline their programs and show how their works propose to engage with their publics.

The contributions that I refer to have been organized thematically into the categories of politics, space, performance, and participation. Although the organization of this research has used these parameters for chapter divisions, I would like to emphasize that my approach has been to look at these areas as overlapping spheres. In fact, it is difficult to imagine any of these categories in isolation; what is politics without the notions of space, performance, and participation? Likewise, I have proposed that these are essential categories for avant-garde poetry in general, and in particular for Martínez and other neo-avant-garde poets, to different degrees.

With regards to the sphere of politics, I have shown in the first chapter that the work of Martínez engages political questions from several angles: undermining authoritative voices by challenging the notion of authorship as well as scientific, mathematical and logical discourse; allusions to political events through lightly veiled references to disappearances and the

destabilization of safe spaces; using spatial poetics to dramatize the conflict of geometrically opposed forces representing existence and death; mourning the loss of poetic discourse through the metaphorical burial of Chilean poetry; appropriating the voices of others and recontextualizing them within the context of the Pinochet dictatorship; direct references to disappeared persons and burial sites; and finally, the intervention that historical events had on translating Martínez's work, *La nueva novela*. In the first chapter, I have emphasized the role of the reader in interpreting the political significance of Martínez's work, especially with regards to the importance of socio-historical context. I argue that whether we think of this work as being written in 1971, before the 1973 military coup, or focus on its publication date in 1977, changes the way we understand the political engagement of the book, and that an informed interpretation will keep both of these moments in mind.

With regards to space, I have found that Martínez's works develop a form of spatial poetry initiated by Mallarmé and other avant-garde artists, but with greater focus on conceptual poetics and the creation of a space for performative gestures. In order to illustrate this difference, I have compared the work of the Brazilian Concrete poets known as Noigandres to other visual poetry, showing a non-mimetic use of space in literature that emerges in the neo-avant-gardes. In the work of the Concrete poets and in Martínez we find the idea of different performative, non-linear readings, based on the emergence of space, not only as a material support, but as a signifying element of the text. I have also shown how Martínez uses the blank space of the page as a way of soliciting readerly participation through tasks and questions that make the reader confront somewhat absurd problems that necessitate a poetic response.

Martínez and Raúl Zurita have used similar techniques in their early works with regards to the space of the page, but Zurita also created a series of parallels for his textual work through

the use of more performative gestures using the body and geographical space as writing surfaces. This impulse extends into his work with CADA, the art collective that created a series of interventions into the city space of Santiago to challenge the military government as well as the separations between art, life, and politics. In my analysis of CADA, I have shown how their artistic actions constituted performances that opened up social spaces for reappropriation and resignification, combating the abstract space created by the imposition of neoliberal policies. In this chapter I have outlined how poets have taken their work beyond the page through performative gestures and the creation of spaces for audience participation.

The final chapter has explored the different forms of participation in literature by looking at reader-response theory as well as trends toward open works of art and literature in the 20th century, in order to highlight the unique relationship between author and reader as proposed by some neo-avant-garde poets. I have focused on a coincidence in participatory forms as both Juan Luis Martínez and Grupo Texto Poético developed similar types of poems in the late 1977, two years after Franco's death. I describe these texts as "proposal poems" since they are a form of poetry that also solicits a poetic response from the reader. I have expanded upon existing characterizations of the proposal poem in order to show the similarities and differences in their approaches. Some of the divergences between the proposals of Martínez and Texto Poético can be seen in the way Martínez subverts the speaking voice of the text through more ironic and satirical humor, while Texto Poético has a more ludic approach that reveals the difference in their socio-political contexts, Chile in the midst of a dictatorship, while Spain emerges into greater cultural freedom of expression at the end of 70s. This investigation has led to the conclusion that the proposal poem provides a unique task for readers, not only interacting with

the poem on an interpretive level, but also on a creative level, because in order to reply to the proposal one must articulate a solution that responds to an absurdist approach to language.

What I have proposed here is that the nature of the relationship between author, text and reader continues to undergo transformations that can shed light on the aesthetic experience and the nature of readers' imaginative engagement with the text. This does not solve the problem of the relationship between art and life, or between poetry and politics, but rather shows that this is an ever-evolving relationship as poets experiment with new forms of writing on the boundaries.

A follow-up study could investigate how this relationship is transforming with the advent of digital poetry projects in the 21st century. Digital media allows artists to explore new relationships with their audience, including new forms of interaction. A new study could consider poets that are using participatory forms through new media and the internet, or could look at the possibility of digitalizing existing projects.

The first of these studies would examine digital poetry in Latin America, such as the projects analyzed in *Poesía y poéticas digitales – electrónicas – tecnos – new-media en América Latina: definiciones y exploraciones* (2016)¹⁴⁷, highlighting the most engaging participatory forms of digital poetry in order to investigate their relationship to earlier forms, like those studied here. By comparing digital and non-digital forms of participatory poetry, this study could explore the impact that the neo-avant-gardes and the Chilean Escena de avanzada have had on 21st century poetry, as well as illuminating the new forms of participation available through digital media. For Chilean poetry, this could include a study of poets such as Carlos Cociña, Luis Correa-Díaz, Martín Gubbins, and Felipe Cussen.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ *Poesía y poéticas digitales – electrónicas – tecnos – new-media en América Latina: definiciones y exploraciones*. Eds. Luis Correa-Díaz y Scott Weintraub. Bogotá: Ediciones Universidad Central, 2016.

¹⁴⁸ Chilean critic Carolina Gainza C. analyzes Carlos Cociña's "A veces cubierto por las aguas", *Poesía Cero*, 2003, Web, April 2017, <<http://www.poesiacero.cl/aveces.html>> and Luis Correa Díaz's *Clickable poem@s*. Santiago: RIL

With regards to the second future project, the digitalization of existing participatory poetry, this could include an exploration of new ways of interacting with older non-digital texts. While Scott Weintraub has discussed the implications of the digitalization of Martínez's works with the website juanluismartinez.cl¹⁴⁹ in terms of the loss of Benjamin "aura"¹⁵⁰ and Martínez's poetic principal of "the copy as original"¹⁵¹, I would be interested to see how these texts could take on new life through interactive media formats. For example, very few people would want to respond to Martínez's proposals by inscribing their answers in a rare copy of *La nueva novela*, but a digitalization of this work could provide the possibility of recording a myriad of responses via an interactive website. Such a project could also make use of hypertext to explore the web of links in Martínez's works. Or, a collaborative hermeneutic project like those being done on lit.genius.com could provide a rich annotated guide to the countless obscure references of his texts.¹⁵²

I believe that future studies like these will show that the poetic neo-avant-garde continues to challenge the boundaries between art and life, and between reception and participation. The neo-avant-garde and the poets that I have analyzed here are part of an ongoing conversation

Ediciones, 2016, in her article "Literatura chilena en digital: mapas, estéticas y conceptualizaciones", *Revista chilena de literatura*, (94), 2016: 233-256, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-22952016000300012>. She also points out that in the print version of "Plagio de afecto" Cociña adds a fifty-third "afecto" that is left as a blank page, which appears to be an invitation for the reader to continue "affecting texts". This could also be compared to Martínez's use of blank space to solicit a response from readers.

¹⁴⁹ The website was designed by Eliana Rodríguez and Daniela Berdichevsky, in consultation with the poets' two daughters as well as scholars, artists, poets, journalists, and curators, funded by the Chilean National Culture Council's FONDART (Fondo Nacional para el Desarrollo Cultural y las Artes), and launched in April 2011 (Weintraub *Juan Luis Martínez's Philosophical Poetics* 187).

¹⁵⁰ Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Granary, 2004.

¹⁵¹ "The copy as original" ("La copia como original") is one of the poetic principles found in Martínez's *Aproximación del Principio de Incertidumbre a un proyecto poético* and used by Weintraub to organize the chapters of his book *Juan Luis Martínez's Philosophical Poetics*.

¹⁵² According to their website, Lit Genius is "a community of scholars—and a crew of heroic hearts—devoted to annotating great literature. We host everything from the classics to recent fiction to spoken word."

about the variety of aesthetic experience and activity. In a postmodern culture where originality is tied to citation, riffing, recycling, and intertextuality, engaging audiences in creative ways may very well entail engaging them creatively, as subjects capable of creative responses. This investigation has shown that artists of the neo-avant-garde period tried to make their audiences aware of their imaginative capacities through participatory forms, and it is hoped that future studies may show the impact of this development in poetry on the poetics of the new century.

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