

## This Sex Which is Not 100011001: Chilean/Digital/Trans Visibility\*

*Ese sexo que no es 100011001: Sobre la visibilidad digital/chilena/trans\**

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### Abstract

Given the prevalence, in Chile and throughout Latin America, of both digital media and trans\* visibility over the last 20 years, this essay draws parallels between these two forms of seeing and being seen. It will focus on three digital Chilean films featuring trans\* characters: *El pejesapo* (José Luis Sepúlveda, 2007), *Empaná de pino* (Wincy Oyarce, 2008), and *Naomi Campbell* (Camila José Donoso and Nicolás Videla, 2013). The representations of blurred gender binaries in these films are analogous to their evasion—in the context of “trans-fiction”—of the supposed binary between fiction and documentary genres. In light of recent debates about trans\* rights in Chile, and the recent Oscar win of *Una mujer fantástica* (Sebastián Lelio, 2017), which featured a trans\* character, this essay argues for the uniqueness of digital cinema as a site for trans\* people in Chile to confront issues of access to political, historical, and aesthetic representation.

**Keywords:** Chile; Digital; Trans\*; Film; Gender; Sexuality

### Resumen

Dada la prevalencia, tanto en Latinoamérica como en Chile, de los medios digitales y de la visibilidad trans\* en los últimos veinte años, este ensayo examinará los paralelos entre estas dos maneras de ver y de ser visto. Se centrará en tres películas chilenas digitales protagonizadas por personajes trans\*: *El pejesapo* (José Luis Sepúlveda, 2007), *Empaná de pino* (Wincy Oyarce, 2008) y *Naomi Campbell* (Camila José Donoso y Nicolás Videla, 2013). La borradura entre los binarios de género en estas películas es análoga a su evasión—en el contexto de la transficción—del supuesto binario entre los géneros del documental y ficción. A la luz de los debates recientes sobre los derechos trans\* en Chile, y la visibilidad internacional de *Una mujer fantástica* (Sebastián Lelio, 2017), este ensayo argumentará por el cine digital como un sitio privilegiado en que las personas chilenas trans\* pueden reclamar su acceso a la representación.

**Palabras clave:** Cine; Chile; Digital; Trans\*; Género; Sexualidad

Whence the mystery that woman represents in a culture claiming to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities. *She is neither one nor two*. Rigorously speaking, she cannot be identified either as one person, or as two. She resists all adequate definition. Further, she has no “proper” name. And her sexual organ, which is not *one* organ, is counted as *none*.

“This Sex that is Not One”, Luce Irigaray; emphasis in original.

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Despite the basis of Irigaray’s essay, cited above, in an essentialized, cisgender femininity that many thinkers have critiqued,<sup>2</sup> her work mobilizes the evasion practiced by the subjects of three Chilean feature films that I will analyze here. Indeed, all of them offer trans\* forms of resistance to phallo(go)centric languages that name, define, and quantify transgender people\*<sup>3</sup>: *El pejesapo* (*The Frog-Fish*, Dir. José Luis Sepúlveda, 2007), *Empaná de pino* (*Meat Empanada*, Dir. Wincy Oyarce, 2008) and *Naomi Campbell* (Dir. Camila José Donoso and Nicolás Videla, 2013). These films’ protagonists efface their government names, blur the dividing lines between fiction and (auto)biography, refuse medicalized, institutional forms of knowledge that classify them (often based on their sex organs), and appear within cinematic forms that lack easy genre-based definitions.

Evasion might appear to be a curious note on which to begin an essay on visibility, a word that connotes intelligibility, forthrightness, and activism. Yet Irigaray’s evocation of women as “neither one nor two” offers an entrée into thinking about how these films allude visually and linguistically to the ones and zeroes of their digital condition. In them, trans\* people evade gender binaries on a content level, all the while these films include these same binaries on a form level. Irigaray’s focus on the “name” is also key for our consideration of the genre of trans\* film itself: since these films portray subjects and actors who are trans\*, and—in many cases—public figures in Chile, the onscreen performances are rooted in real life in a way that would not happen with cisgender actors and subjects. In addition, according to Laura Mulvey (2006), the new forms of pensive spectatorship that have been made possible by digital cinema<sup>4</sup> are related to the earliest ideas on feminist spectatorship. Mulvey proposes that the ideal “alternative

spectator” imagined “is not motivated by voyeurism, but rather curiosity and the desire to decipher the screen, informed by feminism and responding to the new avant-garde cinema” (p.191). Therefore, the ideas of Irigaray are key to the way in which the spectatorship in the digital era is conceived as a resistant practice.

In the following, I will analyze how digital cinema has emerged in Chile as a privileged site, in which trans\* people acquire visibility meanwhile criticizing a society that marginalizes them. According to Eliza Steinbock (2017), “the sensibility of trans-ness underpins the cinematic” (p.396) as a whole: cinema has developed as a form alongside the development of ideas about gender transition.<sup>5</sup> Time—which, according to Gilles Deleuze, works like a “measure of movement” in cinema—will mediate this analogy between form and content, like a lens through which the ways in which the characters, the plots, and the trans\* perspectives interact on screen can be understood. This way, trans\* people acquire the ability to rediscover their own histories and create (or erase) alternative futures and pasts. Time also becomes a lens through which Chilean digital cinema looks for more accessible ways to represent the precarity, as well as the utopic naivety, of trans\* lives.

In recent Chilean politics, trans\* people have been the main focus of debates<sup>6</sup> that coincided with the premiering of *Una mujer fantástica* (*A Fantastic Woman*, Sebastián Lelio, 2017), starring the trans\* actress Daniela Vega. This premiere brought a lot of attention to Chilean cinema worldwide,<sup>7</sup> but instead of focusing on *Una mujer fantástica*, which has already been widely commented on (Ríos, 2018; Peric, 2018), I prefer to examine a corpus of trans\* films made previous to *Una mujer fantástica*. Therefore, I propose to identify a larger historio-

graphical tendency, in which trans\* films in digital format have problematized the boundaries between real and fictional to reclaim the access of trans\* people to political, historical, and aesthetic representation. Therefore, this essay will start with a theatrical discussion, followed by a discussion of the three films mentioned at the beginning of this essay, whose formal innovations reflect the radicalism of their political critique.

## 2. The Trans\* “Patrimony” in the Digital Era: A Question of Access

Chile’s “sexual patrimony”—a concept used by Jorge Díaz (2015) and Cristeva Cabello (2017) to highlight the often-invisible queer and trans\* artistic visual archive in recent Chilean history—functions well as a way of approaching how a tradition of sexually dissident art can question many of the seemingly fixed binaries that underpin Chile’s national(ist) discourse.<sup>8</sup> Cabello insists on “affirming that the cultural heritage is not only heterosexual, in order to affect the monumentalist discourses of a masculine nation” (p.69). A large part of the recovery of Chilean sexual patrimony has to do with Chilean trans\* people claiming their “right” to what Díaz calls “trans-fiction”: “a continuum between the performativity of [their] lives and their onstage representation”. Díaz indicates that by blurring the lines between (auto)biography and acting—and between documentary and fiction<sup>9</sup>—trans\* people can achieve greater visibility, thereby aiding in the process of recuperating their own access to national patrimony. Díaz and Cabello, then, show how trans\* representation can discursively reconceive the Chilean nation, beyond the heterosexual and cisgendered terms of its monument-oriented nationalism. Although the binary between fiction and real has been one that aesthetics has questioned since long before film, these trans\* films dispute this binary in new ways.

The “continuum” between art and life that Díaz mentions as proper to “trans-fiction” becomes all the more seamless via digital editing onscreen. Trans\* films makes use of this format to interrogate what Arlindo Machado (2015) calls the “ontology” (p.208) of the image: plasticity and hybridity are qualities that trans\* people and digital cinema share. In fact, digital films constantly allude to

their own “means of visibility”, according to Stewart (2007, p.1), for whom digital films in the United States and Europe tend to represent “the evasion, falsification, erasing, or re-conception of the basic conditions of identity and desire” (p.3). This is similar to “trans-fiction”, in that trans\* actors often times move seamlessly between their role and their identity as trans\* in a way that cisgendered actors cannot. In addition, the trans\* bodies and digital films share “a state of continuous present becoming” (Rodowick, 2007, p 138) wherein “the gradual replacement of the actor’s recorded physical presence by computer-generated imagery signals a process of substitution that is occurring across the film industry” (p.7). Although Rodowick’s emphasis is not on gender but rather on how “film ‘actors’ have become Frankenstein hybrids: part human, part synthetic” (p.6), especially in Hollywood films,<sup>10</sup> his work allows us to rethink Judith (Jack) Halberstam’s ideas (2005) about how the “fantasy of the shape-shifting and identity-morphing body” (p.76) in trans\* films takes on different implications in the digital era.

Despite the fact that Chilean trans\* films are at quite a distance from, and indeed powerfully critique, the Hollywood aesthetic that Rodowick and Stewart analyze, they do bear out Rodowick’s argument for the digital as an “image that is not ‘one’”: the electronic image never shows a “spatial or temporary whole”, but rather “signals that produce an image through sequential scanning” (p.137). Rodowick’s concept of the negation of an analogue output in the digital sphere, then, is similar to how the subjects of the films that are analyzed below portray analogous evasions (which are, also, evasions of the analogue). Just as the digital editing activates unexpected fusions of multiple worlds<sup>11</sup>—defying filmic time that before was measured by one photographic image after another, reel by reel—trans\* people onscreen can “represent...different forms of temporality” (Halberstam, p.77) on screen, by rewriting history and indicating alternative futures. In trans\* films, time becomes fleeting and difficult to measure, thus taking away one key mode viewers had to follow the story and permitting, instead, that relationships between the characters onscreen dictate the temporality.

In the digital era of cinema, the possibilities of greater access to representation onscreen are more and more viable. According to Machado, digi-

tal films are easier to make now that high-definition cameras and other equipment are available to many more people than before, especially in Latin America (p.207). Therefore, the analysis that Hito Steyerl (2012) makes of the “poor image” is relevant here, in that it focuses on how cinema can give greater access to the population to its national “patrimony”:

The poor image is an illicit fifth-generation bastard of an original image. Its genealogy is dubious. Its file names are deliberately misspelled. It often defies *patrimony*, national culture, or indeed copyright. [...] Not only is it often degraded to the point of being just a hurried blur, one even doubts whether it could be called an image at all. Only digital technology could produce such a dilapidated image in the first place (32, emphasis added).

The poor image—a concept whose roots lie partly in Latin American cinema<sup>12</sup>—is a way of critiquing glossy, “bright and impressive” (Steyerl, p.33) high-resolution images that are often in alliance with neoliberal structures that deny “access to excluded imagery” (p.40). In this sense, an analogy can be drawn between the poor image and the improvised femininity of the Chilean *travesti*<sup>13</sup>: both circulate in unofficial networks, and both acquire an autonomous legitimacy despite being considered by some as “copies” of an “original” (whether a high-resolution image or a cisgender femininity). Digital trans\* films evade the authority of the originality of the same form in which its actors question the supposed binary between the fictitious and the real.

Access for trans\* people—to work, to space, to representation, to legal and medical knowledge, to patrimony, and to memory—is one of the main foci of debates in trans\* studies as a whole.<sup>14</sup> Film has become a key field in which trans\* people can increase their participation in political debates and spaces where they were previously denied access. Just as Mulvey focuses on “interactive spectatorship,” in which digital media have “extended the power to manipulate the existing speed of cinema” beyond the making of film editing (p.22) and allowed more spectators to pause films and thus contemplate them “pensively”, the fact that digital trans\* films from Chile show their trans\* characters con-

suming and manipulating media has implications for the way in which they access temporality and the pleasure of these films. By demonstrating how trans\* people interact with digital media—not only pausing, but also curating and commenting on it—these films allow the spectator to look *with*, instead of looking *at*, trans\* people.<sup>15</sup> The more access trans\* people have to tell their own stories—by taking control of what audiences see, and complicating time—the better they can control their own stories. In what follows, I hope to intervene in the ways in which we as academics grant and deny access, through the canons we ourselves construct.

### 3. Toward a “Patrimony” of Chilean Trans\* Films

The following Chilean films make interventions in expanding the access of trans\* people to onscreen visibility. By making explicit allusions to the digital media where this expansion takes place, they call attention not only to the accessibility of digital production, but also to how the malleability of the digital medium gives trans\* people more flexibility in representing themselves and being represented. By disputing prejudices about trans\* people, they have been able to move from the aesthetic to the political, intervening in discussions about gender in Chile today. Here I will focus on three films that take militantly political approaches to trans\* issues in Chile. Although they received much less attention from critics and viewers than *Una mujer fantástica*—which calls for trans\* inclusion using much more liberal tones, more clearly fixed approaches to genre, and glossier, higher-quality aesthetics—they provide important insights into how digital cinema can problematize the boundaries between fiction and the real.

*El pejesapo* (2007) follows its male protagonist, known as Daniel SS, through a series of semi-related vignettes that together portray his struggles, and those of other characters, with poverty, labor exploitation, and drug abuse. Shot in Mini DV for just US\$500, the film’s conditions of distribution (it is available for streaming online for free) and low-budget production values mirror its searing, unrelenting critique of the exclusions wrought by Chile’s neoliberal and governmental institutions. Spanning a suicide attempt, several attempts to

find work, and unfortunate confrontations with people and organizations that refuse to help him, Daniel's precarious existence mirrors the film's precarious conditions of production and its critique. The film also has a strange relationship to time: Daniel's character does not undergo any dynamic development, and the order of most of the scenes could easily be changed with little impact on the narration, suggesting an infinite number of ways in which the film could play out. The disregard for continuity is made evident by the ways in which the bodies change on film: in one shot, Daniel has long hair tied back in a ponytail, and in another right after it, his hair is short (Figures 1 and 2); sometimes the characters are bundled up for winter, and then dressed in summer clothes immediately afterwards. Multiple scenes are poorly lit, meanwhile, making the characters onscreen barely visible at times; the sound is also extremely poor.<sup>16</sup>

While many critics of the film, such as Pablo Corro (2012: 192-3) and Víctor Hugo Ortega (2011), have focused on its ambiguous position between feature and documentary, none have explicitly related this evasion of genre categories with its evasion of sexual and gender categories. There are several multiple moments of transition between the two genres, in which the film and its protagonists evade the expectations of the viewer. One such moment occurs involving a trans\* person. In one scene, Daniel has a sexual encounter with Barbarella Foster, who works in a trans\* circus (and appears in *El gran circo pobre de Timoteo or "Timothy's Great Low-Budget Circus"*, documentary by Lorena Giachino, 2013). The fact that we see Foster performing fellatio on Daniel in a way that is clearly not staged, before apparently penetrating him, graphically jars Daniel's story from the fictional into the realm of the documentary (Figures 3 and 4), evoking the idea of "trans-fiction". The attraction between Foster and Héctor Silva, the actor who plays Daniel, was reportedly real,<sup>17</sup> and the two actors call attention, through a sexual encounter that is both real and staged, to some of the contrivances inherent to "acting."<sup>18</sup> The ambiguity between fiction and documentary that we see in the film—following a method that Sepúlveda has called "no-guion" or non-script, "a political device [that] subverts conventionalism" ("Who We Are")—is also explicitly related to Daniel and Barbarella's sexual and political dissidence. In this sense, the film lives up to the name of the camouflaging fish from which it



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Figuras 1 y 2: La falta de continuidad en *El pejesapo* se hace evidente por la manera en que los cuerpos se mutan de una escena a otra: en una secuencia, Daniel tiene el pelo largo, tomado en un moño; en la secuencia siguiente, su pelo es corto.

Figuras 3 y 4: La escena de sexo entre Daniel y Barbarella Foster sacude a lxs espectadorxs del ámbito de la ficción a lo real.

gets its title<sup>19</sup>: its characters, its genre(s), its mode of production and distribution, and its movement among different media evade easy classifications in the same ways that trans\* people embrace an aesthetic of "becoming" that evades fixed categories of gender. We also see Barbarella speak with Daniel about her access to cable TV in her room: "they treat us like queens", she says. Television offers a type of protection, as it entertains her from home and saves her the need to go out and expose herself to the (many) dangers that trans\* people

risk on the streets. Moreover, following Mulvey, her access to digital media gives her a new agency she did not have before. The film plays with the ways in which digital media and TV can aid, but also complicate, the attempts by characters, cis and trans\* alike, to evade and efface the categories of gender and convention.

Oyarce's *Empaná de pino* (2008) stars the late, great trans\* personality Hija de Perra, who played a version of herself in the film (Figure 5). It cites previous queer films by John Waters, Pedro Almodóvar, and Gregg Araki<sup>20</sup>—part of a long tradition, particularly in Chile, where, as Nelly Richard (1993), has pointed out, artists “took exaggerated recourse to citations and inter citations, postulating the artwork as a zone of exchange, appropriation, and counter-appropriation of dispersed enunciations selected from the international artistic repertoire” (p.67). Although *pino* generally refers to a type of ground beef filling in Chilean empanadas, Hija de Perra's, which she sells at the local *feria*, are made out of human flesh. The film, which is also made up of a series of loosely connected, interchangeable episodes, follows the protagonist's efforts to kill her friends and enemies, one by one. These murders fulfill a dual purpose: they give her the filling to make her meat pies, and they are sacrifices to bring back Caballo, Hija de Perra's husband whom she killed in the past. The edges of the frame throughout the film are rough, as if to suggest that the viewer is watching a poor copy; some scenes, in which the camera is immobile and the shots are framed from an awkwardly high or distant angle, evoke the field of vision of surveillance footage. The film queers and parodies sacred masculine “rituals” such as the local *pichanga* (pick-up soccer game) and a Boy Scout troop meeting: in both scenes, the heteronormative, patriarchal practices are debauched into revelries of sex, drinking, and chaos (Figures 6 and 7). The film makes use of its digital medium to play with the viewer's expectations, questioning the all-knowing, empirical assumptions that surveillance cameras make about their subjects, and moving between documentary and fiction. It also rejects the auratic quality that Steyerl identifies as the antithesis to the poor image.

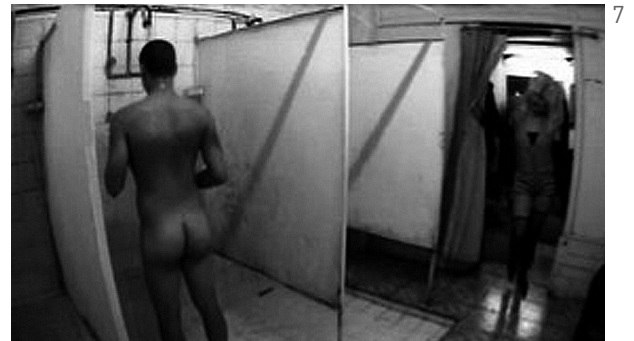
A wedding between Hija de Perra and her husband Caballo is another such parody that occurs in the film. Hija de Perra is dressed in white, but her



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Figura 5: *Empaná de pino* es protagonizada por el personaje trans\* Hija de Perra, quien hace una versión de sí misma en la película, borronando así las fronteras entre ficción y documental.

Figura 6: En una reunión de scouts, *Empaná de pino* muestra la rapidez con que las prácticas heteronormativas y patriarcales pueden devenir bacanales de sexo, alcohol, y caos.

Figura 7: En una evocación de la estética de una cámara de vigilancia, una amiga de Hija de Perra tiene sexo con uno de los jugadores después de una *pichanga*.

breasts appear over her dress (Figure 8), presumably to make fun of the rhetoric of purity surrounding heterosexual marriage traditions. The ceremony is followed by a speech in which Hija de Perra's friend Perdida thanks her for teaching her about "corporal corruption, vaginal opening, and prostitution" and expresses her hopes for her friend to be "a terrible housewife". When this sequence turns out to be a flashback — diegetic VCR footage that Hija de Perra is watching after Caballo's murder—viewers realize that they are looking *with* Hija de Perra, as well as *at* her (Figure 9). Upon seeing the protagonist mourn the death of Caballo, we see how, as Halberstam puts it, trans\* subjectivity can be "a metaphor for other kinds of mobility or immobility" (77): the viewers are moving, alongside Hija de Perra, between present and past, between humorous and melancholic tones, between digital film and TV, and between found footage and fiction. Movements among genres and temporalities evade fixity, its image quality and uses of digital media are flawed, and Hija de Perra's onscreen motivations are occasionally difficult to understand. Yet Hija de Perra was something of a public intellectual in Chile until her death, from AIDS, in 2014. She often gave talks on panels at universities, and also speeches at public manifestations of LGBT rights, as can be seen at a 2013 event in the northern Chilean town of Arica in which she calls for a Foucauldian "escape" from the surveillance of "westernized, Christian" categories of sexuality.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, the increased visibility and the legacy that *Empaná de pino* enabled for Hija de Perra and her ideas occurred in spite of these cinematic evasions.

Donoso and Videla's *Naomi Campbell* (2013) tells the of Yermén (figure 10), a trans\* woman looking for a way to pay for gender confirmation surgery, once again told in loosely autobiographical, partially interchangeable episodes. The film is structured around the ways in which viewers see alongside Yermén, instead of looking at her. At four points throughout the film, Yermén takes up the camera herself (Figure 11), documenting the men of her neighborhood through voiceover (thereby, once again, allowing the feature to bleed into documentary, and make those men into objects of *her* gaze). In one scene, she comments that "These losers come by all the time. They are always around. And they are losers. Losers...fucking...losers" (*Naomi Campbell*). Like Hija de Perra, she comments on



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Figura 8: Hija de Perra en su matrimonio.

Figura 9: Hija de Perra llorando la pérdida de Caballo frente a la televisión.

Figura 10: Paula Yermén Dinamarca protagoniza *Naomi Campbell* (2013), de Donoso and Videla.

Figura 11: Yermén toma la cámara, documentando a los hombres de su barrio y comentándolos *in off*.

what she sees on TV: in one scene she critiques police brutality, a political statement about the media's manipulation of information for political ends (Figure 13). Therefore, Yermén becomes a "pensive spectator", just as Mulvey proposes (p.22), benefiting from the democratizing ability to manipulate images. In the scenes that involve Yermén's job, in which she reads tarot cards by telephone (Figure 14), the viewers see the esoteric dimension of what they see—the future and the past in the cards—in a trans\* complication of time that Halberstam perhaps did not foresee in his analysis. Here, we see how Yermén, instead of being the object of the gaze of others, becomes an authority, for her callers, who do not see her in person. These multiple view-points give viewers access to a multitude of gazes that they otherwise might not have.

In one pivotal scene, in which producers for a reality show that might pay for Yermén's surgery interview her in a sort of audition, we see how she is able to contest their preconceived notions about her. Yermén looks straight into the camera in the office of the show's producers, and comes to control the terms of the conversation, deciding on her own terms what to reveal and resisting the clichés that reality TV often tries to impose on its subjects (Figure 15):

Interviewer: Yermén, I imagine this operation could be very important in your life, in the future. How do you imagine your life, as a woman?

Yermén: I'm already a woman, you see.

Interviewer: So, why do you want to operate?

Yermén: To do something for myself, to reinvent myself, to be more attractive.

Interviewer: Do you have problems in your sex life, in your romantic relationships?

Yermén: Um, no.

Interviewer: No?

Yermén: No.

Interviewer: So, why do you want to operate?

Yermén: Ah, for genital issues, for the discordances that I see, because when I get an erection, it's very painful. Afterwards, when I ejaculate, as men do, I feel a sense of guilt, a feeling like I lost something, like I dropped something.



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Figura 12: Yermén mira la televisión y denuncia la violencia excesiva de los Carabineros: una crítica de la manipulación política de la información en los medios masivos.

Figura 13: En varias secuencias relacionadas con el trabajo de Yermén, como tarotista telefónica, lxs espectadores ven el alcance esotérico de la visión de ella.

Figura 14: La prueba que hace Yermén para un reality que eventualmente podría pagar por su cirugía de confirmación de sexo.

By taking control of the terms of her own representation, Yermén broadens the ways in which trans\* people are portrayed: the operation is not a way for the show to "help her;" rather, it becomes a way for her to reinvent *herself*. This and other allusions to how access to particular gazes, times, and spaces is granted and denied to trans\* subjects reflect the complex relationship between the digital binaries and gender binaries.



## 4. Conclusion

Irigaray's primary insistence on women as neither one nor two begets further negations. The digital realm, made up of ones and zeroes, does mean more access to filmmaking, but it remains to be seen as to whether the onscreen, digitized trans\* body, in all its physical and temporal plasticity, subverts or "confirms the enduring power of the binary gender system" (Halberstam, p.96). In this sense, the biographies of Hija de Perra, Daniela Vega, Barbarella Foster, and Yermén Dinamarca, all of whom are public or semi-public figures in Chile, take on major implications for my analysis here. Their refusals to give viewers access to the knowledge of where their public, real lives as trans\* people end and their identities as film characters and subjects begin indicates the extent to which "trans-fiction" has the potential to destabilize the codes of narrative film genres, in the same way Irigaray imagined women at the center of the destabilization of language itself. Upon having the ability to pause, watch, and edit digital recordings, they become "pensive spectators" just as Mulvey envisions. Therefore, the idea of access, so central to trans\* studies, is thus itself negational here, in the tradition of the negative turn in queer theory (per Lee Edelman and Leo Bersani) that imagines subject positions to be explicitly contrary to normalizing regimes of gender and sexuality. In Chile, these strategic denials and refusals of access paradoxically lead to greater access to visibility for trans\* people.

## Endnotes

1 The author would like to thank José Miguel Palacios, Elizabeth Ramírez Soto, Corey McEleney, and the anonymous evaluators for their comments on the writing and review of this essay.

2 Felipe Rivas San Martín (2011), for example, states that "[t]he impossibility to establish a deconstructive proposal of the sexed body in these theories of art of the 80 in Chile may be due to the theoretical influence of feminism of the French difference" (73). Here, he is referring to Nelly Richard, arguably Chile's foremost cultural theorist of sexual difference, whose work was heavily influenced by French feminist thinking of Irigaray, Monique Wittig, and others whose work was grounded in a cisgenderist view of the female body.

3 The idea of inserting an asterisk (\*) after the word "trans" is meant to convey the capaciousness of the term, to include transgender, transsexual, transitioning people, and other constituencies who may have different approaches to the meaning of trans\*. See, on this point, Jack Halberstam's 2018 book *Trans\**: "the asterisk modifies the meaning of transitivity by reusing to situate transition in relation to a destination, a final form, a specific shape, or an established configuration of desire and identity" (4).

4 For Mulvey, the ability to pause a digital film "allows the changed mechanism of the spectatorship to come into play, and with it, the changes of conscience between temporalities" (p.184). This means the opportunity of a more careful contemplation of "other details that could not be recorded within the movement of the shot", together with other pleasures and "wonderful things" in the presence of a "punctum" that otherwise could not be fixed in a moving image (p.184).

5 In a brief historiographical study of how cinema and trans\* people have "transitioned" together over time, Steinbock (citing the work of Laura Horak) goes all the way back to the ways in which silent films used the "stop-substitution trick shot to change a man into a woman" (p. 396), and works her way forward into contemporary history.

6 Trans\* identity became a major wedge issue in Chile's presidential elections in December 2017, given a bill under discussion in congress that would allow Chileans to legally change their sex. At a debate, presidential candidate (now president) Sebastián Piñera compared gender identity with clothing: "I do not agree with minors being able to change their sex without any processing. Gender cannot be changed like a shirt that one puts on each day. Many cases of gender dysphoria are corrected over time" ("Debate"). Piñera's remarks were quickly and publicly disputed by Daniela Vega herself.

7 See my book *Queering the Chilean Way: Cultures of Exceptionalism and Sexual Dissidence, 1965-2015* (2016) for more information about the relationship between Chile's positioning of itself as a "model" country on the international stage and its canon of queer cultural production.

8 Cabello and Díaz are working on how thinking beyond *gender* binaries can disrupt the heterosexual, cisgendered lineage of Chilean nationalism, but others have focused on how alternative *sexualities* can perform similar disruptions. See, for example, Juan Pablo Sutherland's *A corazón abierto: Geografía literaria de la homosexualidad en Chile* and Fernando Blanco's "Antología Queer," both from 2001.

9 Here, Díaz is talking specifically about one particular stage play, *Cuerpos para odiar*, in which sex workers and trans\* people played versions of themselves onstage. However, the fact that Camila Donoso, the co-director of

*Naomi Campbell*, is a member of one of the organizations that staged this play—CUDS, the Coordinadora Universitaria de Disidencia Sexual—indicates that the interest in the link between the evasion of gender binaries and the evasion of genres is present throughout trans\* cultural production in Chile. See, for example, this interview with Donoso and her co-director Nicolás Videla: <http://leedor.com/2014/04/08/un-cine-de-genero-en-chile-camila-donoso-y-nicolas-videla/>.

10 Rodowick talks about *The Matrix* as a paradigmatically digital film (4), in the sense that it was filmed digitally, makes major use of digital special effects, and portrays a setting diegetically experienced as digitally rendered. Meanwhile, Steinbock also mentions the fact that its directors have both transitioned to female as a key development in the history of mainstream trans\* film (403-4).

11 To make his points, Stewart interestingly focuses on two films by the Chilean-born director Alejandro Amenábar, *Abre los ojos* (1997) and *The Others* (2001), to show how their respective plots, which show different worlds and different lives being spliced together in ways that call human consciousness into question, reflect the fact that time can no longer be measured as Gilles Deleuze said it was in analogue cinema (94-8).

12 Steyerl quotes the 1970 manifesto “For an imperfect cinema” by the Cuban Julio García Espinosa (39), who points out that “Nowadays, perfect cinema—technically and artistically speaking—is almost always a reactionary cinema” as a way to show what the poor image is *not*.

13 This “do-it-yourself” ethic is illustrated in Lemebel’s chronicle “Diamonds are forever (frivolous, cadaveric and passing)” in *Loco afán* (1996), in which a transvestite describes how she gives herself breast implants: How do you do it? At a clinic, I suppose. No way, I don’t have money for that. I buy 2 bottles of pisco alcohol, I drink one, when I am fall down drunk, I cut myself here with a razor. Look, under the nipple. There are not many veins here and it does not bleed much. And then? You know silicon is like Jell-O. [...] Well, you insert it in the cut and afterwards with a needle and thread you sew yourself up. And the other bottle of pisco? You wash the cut with it and you drink the rest. You end up really drunk, afterwards the weight of the silicone falls and its covers the scar, you can’t even tell. See?” (79).

14 Many debates about trans\* people center around exclusion and access. (Puar, 2014). Moreover, many critics have argued in favor of the “capaciousness” (Love 2014: 174), “inclusivity” (Williams 2014: 133), and “expansiveness” (LaFountain-Stokes 2014: 238) of trans\* studies, as opposed to queer studies, which can be construed as more exclusive (both of trans\* people and, more generally, of specific, embodied experiences).

15 Indeed, looking and the gaze are key dynamics in trans\* film, as evidenced also by Steinbock’s adaptation

of Laura Mulvey’s argument that “women oscillate back and forth between identification with the man (active role) and identification with the woman as object (passive role)” (399).

16 As for the film’s distribution, Sepúlveda has pointed out that his resistance to the genre of feature films is in part a conscious response to “bourgeois film” in Chile. “Fiction is a huge money spender, melodrama of the rich conservatives like Matías Bizé,” he said in a 2009 interview, referring to the director of the glossy, Goya Award-nominated 2005 film *En la cama* (Nazarala). By placing his film within the canon of what Steyerl would later call poor images, Sepúlveda draws attention to the artifice and constructedness of feature film, in contrast to his own.

17 In an interview with Juan Murillo, Sepúlveda talks at length about this scene between Foster and Silva: “Our main proposal was to create a character who would develop carry out true impulses. Barbarella like the idea of being filmed while practicing fellatio on Hector. That scene was filmed on improvisation. When you propose the idea of filming a sex scene, it finally depends on the sexual conception of those who are in it. And they coincided. Acting comes second and improvisation comes first. For example, in search of Barbarella’s character we went to the transvestite circus Fama. We sat in the stands and began to look at transvestites. I told Hector to find the one he liked the most” (Murillo). Although some of what Sepúlveda is saying here comes across as sexist and even transphobic (the objectification of Barbarella by both actor and director, and Sepúlveda’s use of the male pronoun to refer to Foster), we see how “trans\* fiction” plays out at a practical level.

18 Thinking more concretely in terms of access, trans\* studies are also focused on combating economic discrimination and the high unemployment of trans\* people, indicates Tobi Hill-Meyer (2013, p. 160) in an article that calls for greater representation of trans\* in pornography.

19 The title of the film refers to a frog-fish (*Sicyases sanguineus*) that has a stalk protruding from its mouth that looks itself like a fishing pole; it is also a fish that is able to camouflage itself among the river rocks along which it swims. In this sense, it is a fish associated with subterfuge: it is seemingly capable of “fishing” for other fish, rather than being caught itself, and therefore turns the tools of its potential predators back at them.

20 Hija de Perra’s look is modeled after that of Divine, John Waters’ muse in such films as *Female Trouble* (1974) and *Desperate Living* (1977). She even drinks the urine of one of her friends at one point, in a nod to the commitment that Divine displayed in the famous coprophagy scene in 1972’s *Pink Flamingos*. Also, when her friend Perdida urinates on the floor out of fear in one particular scene, it is difficult not to think of the famous sequence in Pedro Almodóvar’s *Pepi, Luci, Bom y*

*otras chicas del montón* (1980), in which Alaska urinates upon an ecstatic Eva Siva, as Carmen Maura looks on lasciviously. Later, when Hija de Perra kills Perdida by firing a gunshot into her vagina (as it turns out, Perdida was right to be afraid of her friend), the link between penetration and death by gunshot calls to mind the final scene in Gregg Araki's 1992 film *The Living End*, when the two main characters, both HIV-positive, make a pact in which one is to shoot himself just as he climaxes inside the other.

21 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XY009QcQSA>.

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