

Dis/Orientating Times

Questioning the Coloniality of Chilean Post-Dictatorial Memory Practices Through Patricio Guzmán's *Nostalgia De La Luz*

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ABSTRACT

The 'peripheral' region of the Atacama, and the way in which this violent dictatorial past is memorised, is a central part of Patricio Guzmán's 2010 documentary film *Nostalgia de la Luz*. By connecting the search for those who disappeared and were killed in this region during Pinochet's regime with searches into the region's colonial and pre-colonial pasts, the director tackles several layers of buried state violence that are rarely put together: dictatorial and colonial, as well as national, regional and global. I pose that Guzmán critiques not only the way Chile's officials have dealt with traumatic memories of the dictatorship, but through the medium-specificity of his film also constructs a notion of memory that critiques the concept of linear time as it has come to be conceived throughout the colonial and neoliberal projects of the state. I pose that Guzmán's film shows that Chile's dead are not as dead as it may seem and its dictatorial and colonial pasts still linger, both discursively and materially, very prominently in its present and future. Guzmán's film *Nostalgia de la Luz* furthermore has the capacity to be a vehicle of critique and knowledge production that, in the Chilean context, functions as a practice that counters a (neo)colonial, neoliberal linear conception and experience of time. In turn it continues to produce different engagements with traumatic memory and history in ways that tribunals and commissions cannot.

KEYWORDS

(De)colonial, phenomenology, time, race, film, Patricio Guzmán

Early March 2016, at 94 years old and without ever having set foot in prison, Sergio Arellano Stark—one of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet's most infamous and cruel associates—died. Shortly after the 1973 coup d'état, Pinochet gave Arellano Stark leadership over a military task force that would travel Chile by helicopter to search and kill for those who opposed his right-wing dictatorship. The Caravan of Death, as the task force would come to be known, is estimated to have killed at least ninety people in different cities across the country, mostly in the North: the area of the Atacama desert.¹ Government stances on this epoch of Pinochet's regime (1973 - 1990) have varied, mostly focussing on a process of uncovering 'factual' truths and giving former victims some financial restitution. However, unlike for example South Africa, few attempts by Chilean governments since the 1990s have been made to reflect on this period outside of a political and juridical framework in order to "restore dignity" and give voice to the victims of

¹ According to the Valech Commission at least 35,000 people were tortured and executed during Pinochet's reign. More than 2,200 persons disappeared during his military dictatorship. Nevertheless it is likely that these numbers are significantly higher due the fact that Pinochet's regime relied much on clandestine internment camps spread throughout the country.

injustice. Since the end of the dictatorship it can be said that Chile's main focus has been on the continuation of a neoliberal capitalist project of economic growth and progress. It would seem Chile's governments are oriented solely to the future, and its dead belong firmly to the past. Furthermore, in this orientation, links between dictatorial and colonial power structures are hardly ever acknowledged. The 'peripheral' region of the Atacama, and the way in which this violent dictatorial past is memorised, is also part of Patricio Guzmán's 2010 documentary film *Nostalgia de la Luz*. By connecting the search for those who disappeared and were killed in this region during Pinochet's regime with other searches taking place there, the director tackles several layers of buried state violence that are rarely put together: dictatorial and colonial, as well as national, regional and global. Thus, Guzmán critiques not only the way Chile's officials have dealt with traumatic memories of the dictatorship, but through the medium-specificity of his film also constructs a notion of memory that critiques the concept of linear time as it has come to be conceived throughout the colonial and neoliberal projects of the state. I pose that Guzmán's film shows that Chile's dead are not as dead as it may seem and its dictatorial and colonial pasts still linger, both discursively and materially, very prominently in its present and future. Guzmán's film *Nostalgia de la Luz* has the capacity to be a vehicle of critique and knowledge production that, in the Chilean context, functions as a practice that counters a (neo)colonial, neoliberal linear conception and experience of time. In turn it continues to produce different engagements with traumatic memory and history in ways that tribunals and commissions cannot.

Thus, in the first section of my article I shortly explicate on the way memory has been dealt with in the Chilean post-dictatorial context by political, juridical and academic actors. Furthermore, I briefly pose how *Nostalgia de la Luz* offers an intervention to these already existing, often colonial and neoliberal, treatments of memory and its engagements with Chile's traumatic pasts. In the second section I explicate on how the colonial and neoliberal experience of time, that is critiqued in Guzmán's film, comes about when approached from poststructuralist phenomenological framework. Using the work of Sara Ahmed (2007) I explore the inherent links that colonial conceptions of race and gender have with a linear conception of time. This facilitates institutions and bodies to orientate in specific directions of progress and make recent and more 'distant' (colonial) traumatic memories—and their connections—illegible. In the last part of this article, I explicate on how Guzmán's film in its technique, structure and narrative, opens up a subversive epistemological space that counteracts the construction and experience of linear time through what Butler and Athanasiou call the "performative act" of the body. By doing so it complicates and produces an experience of non-linearity that holds the possibility to function as a dialogical and restorative truth in opening up critical ways of reconciliation and engagement with traumatic memory.

DEALING WITH MEMORY IN POST-DICTATORIAL CHILE

Chilean governments have worked consistently since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship, in 1990, to establish a narrative of 'post'-dictatorship by setting up truth and reconciliation commissions that primarily focussed on uncovering forensic (factual) truths. One of the first truth and reconciliation commissions, the Rettig Commission, set out several goals: establishing a "complete picture" of human rights violations under the Pinochet regime; "to gather evidence to allow for victims to be identified"; and "to recommend reparations." (Brahm 2005) Although the Rettig Commission to some extent succeeded in finding and identifying a number of persons who 'disappeared' during the Pinochet regime, most of these *desaparecidos* (disappeared) are still unaccounted for. The findings of the commission were heavily disputed and condemned as biased and incomplete by conservative and moderate political leaders, and follow-up plans centering on reconciliation and education were short-lived when president Patricio Alwyin declared the period of reconciliation over six months after the release of the Rettig report in 1991. In his book *The Healing of Nations* (2005), Mark Amstutz argues that the Rettig Commission's findings, and president Alwyin's public acknowledgement of guilt and apology on behalf of society to the victims, failed to set the stage for dialogue between victims and perpetrators and actually reinforced divisions between left and right, leading to an environment in which "little public discussion on the past" has been possible (2005, 89). Addressing Chile's past in the early twenty-first century has often been overshadowed by other national concerns like economic stagnation (Amstutz 2005; Cardenas 2012; Stern 2010). Furthermore, Chilean truth and reconciliation commissions succeeding the Rettig Commission have found it hard to move past the problematics of holding high-ranking military figures like Pinochet and Arellano Stark *legally* accountable. Consequently endeavours that have taken place within the political and legal strata dealing with this collective trauma, often overlooking the simultaneous particularity of it, seek answers that will allow for an (imagined) end to this haunting period of time to be written, in order to 'progress,' or in other words, leave the past behind.

A fair amount of academic work has explicated on the Chilean government's (in)ability to reconcile traumas from this dictatorial period in the political and juridical sense. Cath Collins and Alfredo Joignant's *The Politics of Memory in Chile: From Pinochet to Bachelet* (2013), and Steve J. Stern's *Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile* (2012), provide detailed accounts of the way in which the conflicting memorial narratives are dealt with by a variety of political actors and how it continues to shape current sociopolitical communities. Memory, in these studies, is often approached from an angle of (political) instrumentalisation: i.e. in which ways are memories and historical narratives used to broke power and gain leverage in the sociopolitical realm? Other studies, such as Macarena Gómez-Barris' *Where Memory Dwells* (2009) or Marina Llorente and Marcella Salvi's *Sites of Memory in Spain and Latin America*

(2015), focus more on the literary and artistic canon emerging from this post-dictatorial period and critically examine the significance of, and various relationships with, memory and trauma from a variety of theoretical frameworks. These works seek, to varying levels, to both deconstruct narratives of Chilean history and memory, as well as offer readings that explicate on how art might allow communities and individuals to relate anew to these traumatic events and find a different sense of justice other than the political and the juridical one. I want to thus emphasise that there are scholars who have indeed explored the ways in which memory of the dictatorial period in Chile functions in a variety of intersecting domains, such as politics, law, and culture.

Nevertheless, these academic studies, as well as government-supported inquiries, have focussed on Santiago and the ‘central’ areas of Chile as spaces of analysis. Zones at the ‘margins’ of the country, like those surrounding the Atacama Desert and Patagonia, have often not been taken up in these areas of research even though these have been important stages of state violence. Guzmán’s *Nostalgia de la Luz* (*Nostalgia for/of the Light*) is set in the heart of the Atacama Desert, a region – as previously mentioned – marked by both dictatorial and colonial violence. The film questions the relationships between various unceasing investigations for answers; on the one hand scientific research into the earth and the solar system concerning questions on the origins of life, and on the other hand the search for the remainders of those who disappeared during the Pinochet regime. The Atacama Desert is known for being the driest in the Western hemisphere, and due to these optimal atmospheric conditions it is deemed to be a gateway to the stars, an ideal environment for the large scientific community of astronomers to conduct their work. Moreover, the same conditions result in the fact that the Atacama Desert’s soil, filled with nitrate, is the perfect place for archeologists to search for traces of indigenous pasts, uncovering precolonial hieroglyphs and mummified pre-Columbian bodies. But Guzmán also introduces the Atacama as the place where Pinochet, and his supporters, buried and scattered the fragmented bones of those who disappeared during his dictatorial reign. Furthermore, the history of indigenous and *mestizo*² indentured labourers is placed as another layer of memory within Guzmán’s narrative. By intertwining these searches, through his extensive use of cinematic and narratological palimpsest, Guzmán constructs the Atacama as a space of discovery and quelling, a space of life and death, where beginnings and ending, memories and utopias, flow into each other blurring the notion of progress through linear time and space.

Thus, *Nostalgia de la Luz* shifts the hegemonic political, academic and juridical gaze on the centres of Chile to the peculiarities of this peripheral region and its history of the dictatorship, linking it with further-stretching histories of colonial violence and even humanity’s origins. A few

² The term *mestizaje*, taking as its root *mestizo* or ‘mixed’, is the Spanish word for the general process of mixing ancestries. *Mestizo* in turn refers to subjects and communities identifying and identified as having (visible) mixed ancestry. In this article it is not used in the (subversive) way that feminist thinkers like Gloria Anzaldúa and Chela Sandoval have put forth.

scholars have engaged with the film's departure from the established repertoire of images, sounds, and knowledge of revolution and dictatorship that dominate Chilean political, academic and artistic discourses—most notably Tamara Lea Spira in her 2012 review “Toward a New Temporality and Archive of ‘Revolution’”. Another valuable contribution on Guzmán's work comes from David Martin-Jones' “Archival Landscapes and a Non-Anthropocentric ‘Universe Memory’” (2013). Through Gilles Deleuze's theorisations on cinema, Martin-Jones stresses the way in which *Nostalgia de la Luz* constructs the non-human materialities of landscape, and even the universe/cosmos, as archives and living repositories of history and memory. I would add here, building on both Spira's and Martin-Jones' excellent arguments, that the film, in its medium-specific engagement with capturing a multiplicity of histories, puts forth an experience of time (through memory) that is all but linear, but rather multidirectional. The film pulls into focus the way in which the neoliberal capitalist state, and subsequently much of its citizens, have come to *orientate* themselves towards a certain racialised and gendered spatiotemporal experience that complicates a critical and multi-layered reflection on past traumas. In the next section, through the theoretical framework of phenomenology, I explore how such a ‘progress’-based *orientation* comes about in the specific context of Chile, which causes the linear engagement with time that Guzmán vehemently tries to subvert in his film.

DIS/ORIENTATING EXPERIENCES OF THE COLONIAL PROJECT OF TIME

Taking up this notion of “orientation” towards a linear progression of time, I will first explicate on how this orientation comes about through the theoretical framework of phenomenology. In short Edmund Husserl conceived phenomenology as a manner of exploring the ‘subjective’ topics of consciousness and the content of conscious experiences such as perceptions, judgements and emotions. It seeks to determine the crucial characteristics and structures of the subject's experience through a critical systematic reflection (Sanyal 2014, 172). By tracing the way in which Husserl theorises from which point a subject's experience of the world unfolds—and thus in which direction(s) bodies are orientated and orientate—feminist scholar Sara Ahmed posits that this point of unfolding is shaped by the ‘objects’ bodies are in contact with. Ahmed continues to pose, in her feminist poststructuralist reworking of phenomenology, that “orientations are about the directions we take that put some things and not others in our reach” (2007, 152).

The ‘what’ that [a body] does is what puts certain objects within reach, just as it keeps other things in the background. What comes into view, or what is within our horizon, is not a matter of what we find here or there, or even where we find ourselves, as we move here, or there. What is reachable is determined precisely by orientations we have already taken. Or we could say that orientations are about the

directions that we take that put some things and not others in our reach (Ahmed 2007, 152).

I would pose that certain ‘timezones’ are found to be more reachable than others, such as the ones that in a linear conception of time are positioned *in front of* the subject: present and future. Moreover, if in this phenomenological approach one theorises ‘memory’ as an object, certain memories and pasts can be found to be more reachable, while others remain in the background. In this conception one can speculate on how bodies are often dispossessed from memories that threaten this progression forwards into the future; those memories that are traumatic have accusatory potential (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013). I will return to this point in the final section of this article, but let me posit here that it is precisely because of this accusatory potential that marginalised memories have the capability to distort this linear conception of time.

But how is it that certain timezones, and memories, are found to be more reachable? What informs this orientation towards—or for that matter rigid categorisation of—present and future, and dictates the ways in which the neoliberal capitalist state deals with memory? Returning to Ahmed’s reading of Husserl, she poses that the way ‘objects’ are engaged with, and thus how ‘time’ is constituted, is dependent on the “ways in which the world is available as a space for action” (2007, 153). Drawing on the work of Frantz Fanon, she poses that this availability is shaped by an underlying ‘historic-racial’ schema. Ahmed thus complicates Husserl’s phenomenological concept of the daily “tactile, vestibular, kinaesthetic” experience of time and space. She proposes that “racial and historical dimensions are beneath the surface of the body described by phenomenology”, and this consequently informs the way in which the body experiences daily life: “As Fanon’s work shows, after all, bodies are shaped by histories of colonialism, which makes the world ‘white’, a world that is inherited, or which is already given before the point of an individual’s arrival” (Ahmed 2007, 153). Looking at *Nostalgia de la Luz*, I pose that the viewer is implicitly given the opportunity to see how (individual and national) bodies, shaped by the historical-racial schema that Fanon and Ahmed speak of, come to engage with this colonial conception and experience of linear space and time.

About fifteen minutes into the documentary Guzmán interviews an archeologist, Lautaro Núñez Atencio, who is working in the Atacama Desert. Guzmán speaks on the histories of the Nineteenth and Twentieth century that Chile’s governments continuously fail to reflect upon. The archeologist states: “We’ve hidden away our nearest past”. The Spanish word he uses for hidden is “*encapsulado*”, which would translate to “boxed in”, and/or “archived”, and which connotes a certain *making-static*, or *putting away*.

While photographs of indentured indigenous and *mestizo* labourers working saltpetre mines come into view, the archeologist continues:

How many secrets are we keeping about the nineteenth century? We have never acknowledged that we marginalised our indigenous peoples. It's practically a state secret. We've done nothing to understand why in the nineteenth century those staggering economic phenomena such as saltpetre appeared and yet today there's nothing left. [...] It's absurd, like we avoid looking at this recent history. It's as if this history might accuse us (Guzmán 2010).

The marginalisation of indigenous people is referred to directly by the archeologist. However, as Spira points out, the presence—but mostly absence—of pre-colonial and colonial culture in *Nostalgia de la Luz* opens up a space in hegemonic knowledge productions to include a much longer duration of struggle that is fundamental to the understanding of the Atacama, of Chile, as well as much of the Americas (Spira 2012). This knowledge highlights the discourses and power structures that are detrimental to the aforementioned historical-racial schema that shapes the experience of linear time.

With the colonial and capitalist projects of the Europeans, multiple axes of difference came to coalesce, which over the centuries resulted in a vast number highly racialised and gendered 'lower' class *mestizo* communities. Ericka Beckman, in her work on imperial ideology and race in nineteenth century Chile, poses that Chilean state actors "cast themselves in the role of European colonisers," especially with regard to the possession and exploitation of the Atacama area and the surrounding Northern zones (Beckman 2009, 74). By looking at nineteenth-century historian and statesman Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, one of the key figures in "the articulation of [Chilean] racial discourse", Beckman traces how the Northern regions of Chile functioned as a platform to further develop the notion of a developed, white, nationally unified centre of Chile (Santiago) in contrast to the underdeveloped, 'red/black', backwards peripheral regions. Vicuña Mackenna framed Chilean imperial expansion as "the noble march and the even more noble conquest of work, of creative order, and of vigorous industry' against the 'torpid laziness and incurable disorder of other races,' who had allowed territories 'to become barren and sterile'" (Beckman 2009, 75). Thus Beckman states that the ideas of imperial agents such as Vicuña Mackenna and others "helped to consolidate a long-lasting ideal of whiteness for the Chilean nation, one which could only be contradictorily squared with this nation's own history of indigeneity and *mestizaje*" (Beckman 2009, 75). This colonial discourse that casted the space of the country and its subjects into a hierarchical, racialised framework has significant impact on the lived experience of the nation's, and much of the global, experience of time.

Anne McClintock's "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'" (1992), allows one to link this colonial discourse on racialised peripheral regions of Chile further back to early modern period of the Enlightenment. The simultaneous start of the grand leaps in Enlightenment thinking and the colonial expansion allowed for a specific conflation of space and time, and narratives of history to become shaped around two movements: "the 'progress' forward of humanity from slouching deprivation to erect, enlightened reason;" and "the regression backwards from (white, male) adulthood to a primordial, black 'degeneracy' usually incarnated in [indigenous and enslaved black] women" (1992, 84-85). McClintock thus establishes a relation in which the 'past' and the peripheral imply a certain type of racialised femininity and the central 'present' and 'future' is conceptualised along the lines of whiteness and masculinity. To 'move' back in time is to become black/indigenous and feminine.

McClintock's idea of a colonial-Enlightened conception of gendered and racialised spatiotemporality becomes more layered with Marga Munkelt's work on discourses of colonial land occupation. In her chapter "Directions of Translocation," she mentions that colonial lands were repeatedly regarded as "vast empty spaces to be there for the coloniser's taking"; indeed "protocolonial space was perceived as unoccupied, or at least it was not occupied by anything or anyone" that could be regarded as 'human' and worth "mentioning, let alone respecting" (2012, xxiv-xxv). This perception of protocolonial space and how to deal with this land informed the way in which European colonisers imagined a notion of 'futuraity'—informed by linearity and 'progress'—that has no ties to 'other' conceptions of time and 'pasts,' and can thus be worked as uncharted territory. Systems of land occupation among native people in the Americas were "discounted regularly by European colonisers because they did not correspond to European capitalist patterns of permanent, non-nomadic agricultural land use, private property, and clearly demarcated borders of occupied land patches" (Munkelt 2012, xxv). Consequently, according to Munkelt "geographical and cultural difference is translated into temporal/historical difference" (2012, xxvi). Other, non-linear conceptions of space and time are thus thrown out of the equation in order to benefit a colonial spatiotemporality in which European ideals of linear 'progress'—informed by the colonial intertwinement of gender and race, and the colonial capitalist idea of agricultural development and labour—take the upper hand.

As mentioned before, Guzmán's film implicitly and explicitly plays into this colonial history of the north that is detrimental for the way hegemonic majorities have experienced time and engaged with memory. Visuals showing ancient hieroglyphs etched on rocks, weathered photographs of indigenous miners that once worked the mines and factories — they pose the question of why race and racialisation, and its subsequent role in Chile's history and the way in which that history is engaged with, became omitted from the national narrative. In a scene following the interview with

the archeologist, the viewer is confronted with images of a graveyard in the desert in which the remains of indentured labourers, many of them with indigenous ancestry, lie perfectly conserved by the arid desert air. A few miles from that graveyard, and the astronomic observatories, lie the ruins of Chacabuco. Chacabuco was once the largest concentration camp during the Pinochet dictatorship. But the ruins of this camp are also the ruins of a former mine, worked most probably by some of the indigenous and *mestizo* labourers whose bones lie a few miles from there. Guzmán visualises and narrates how the military troops of Pinochet did not have to construct a new camp, as the tiny barracks of the mine served as a perfect system for implementing incarceration and forced labour. *Nostalgia de la Luz* thus creates a dual project of deconstruction and subversion, critiquing the implicit legacies of the colonial period that impacted much of the way in which the dictatorial violence and discourses took shape in Chile as well as allowing the viewer to remember these, seemingly, different histories in connected and unified way. The more distant ‘past’ of colonial exploitation becomes intrinsically intertwined with the more ‘recent’ past of dictatorial exploitation and transgression, offering a dialogue between these memories in order to establish how these violent periods are informed by each other and still haunt the present through the mummified bodies of the indentured labourers, the ruins of the mine/concentration camp and the bone fragments of the ‘disappeared’ scattered throughout the desert.

EMBODYING NON-LINEAR MEMORY

The film’s capacity to subvert the linear conception of time and propose an experience in which memory of the traumatic past, and ongoing quests for justice, comes forward in the way that Guzmán sets up a “deeper epistemology” of existence that is circular and multidimensional (Spira 2012; Martin-Jones 2013). In the structure and rhythm of the film, Guzmán plays with the continuous switch between spaces: from the interior (both domestic, as well as ‘public’ spaces like the observatories) to the exterior (the landscapes of the Atacama), to the extra-exteriority of space which closely resembles microscopic views of the molecular (zoomed in imagery of the cosmos). Switches between spaces are often *overlaid* (faded over) with the shots of falling dust, resembling stardust, thus establishing the ambiguous relations that these spaces (and the above mentioned scientific quests) hold towards each other. And *Nostalgia de la Luz* posits a narrative of space that can never be considered separate from time. In an early scene with astronomer Gaspar Galaz within one of the Atacama observatories, Guzmán and Galaz have a conversation on the nature of science. During this conversation, the viewer is taken from the observatory to a hillside just outside the observatory on which thousand-year old pre-Columbine indigenous rock carvings can be seen. After some explanation on the travelling time of light, this scene is followed by a conversation with Galaz on the notion of the ‘present’. Guzmán asks: “So we don’t see

things at the very instant we look at them?”³ Galaz answers: “No, it’s a trap. The present does not exist. The only present that might exist is the one in my mind. It’s the closest we come to the absolute present. And not even then. When I think, it takes a moment for the signal to travel between my senses.” This reinforces the ambiguity between space, time and different ‘time zones’ earlier established by Guzmán. When the astronomer talks about how the travelling light of dying stars—‘objects’ that seemingly lie ‘ahead’ in the future—can take years to get to ‘us,’ the viewer is presented with the idea that messages from the past (or future), from ‘dead’ matter thousand of light years away, still reach us in the ‘present’. The film thus shows how the ‘natural’ sciences, lauded by the neoliberal capitalist state, come to complicate the colonial conception of linear time.

Guzmán thus establishes with his film a gaze that unfolds from an idea of not simply looking back critically at the past, but at how different spatiotemporal zones are in constant dialogue with each other. Subsequently, he both counters the idea of the neocolonial, neoliberal proclivity for linear progress and establishes an alternative to engage with memories and experience time in a more relational, cyclical manner that is both disorienting and orienting at the same time. The crux of his argument, or project, is perhaps best embodied by the women of the small town of Calama, in the Atacama Desert. These women have searched for their relatives, who disappeared during the time that the Caravan of Death visited the desert region, for over 30 years. Many of them have already passed the age of seventy. As Guzmán shows, they are considered pariahs, engaging in a quest into the ‘past’ that for the period of thirty years has gone unfunded by governments due to the ‘accusatory’ threat this search poses to a neoliberal conception of ‘closed’ justice.⁴

With small shovels these women roam the arid earth of the Atacama, lifting stones and dusting away sand in order to find the small sedimented bone fragments of their own loved ones and those of others. One of the women, Violeta Berríos, explains that her hope is to find her disappeared son, but that in her search she has found the bones of others who have died. She thus engages in a plural performative act of memorialisation that articulates “the singularity of the story and the obduracy of the body,” as well as the reproduction and healing of a larger community (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 175). By capturing this act, *Nostalgia de la Luz* in turn returns to the emphasis put on the subversion of time experienced as linear. The search for the bones of the *desaparecidos* by the women of Calama, or for that matter the search for bones of precolonial indigenous people

³ Translations are taken from both the subtitles on the commercially available DVD (New Wave Films, 2012), as well as the author’s own; the original language of the film is Spanish.

⁴ In Rob White’s interview with Patricio Guzmán, Guzmán explicates on his specific goal to subvert the state’s (absent) engagement with memory: “The official Chilean historical record in regard to the 1973 coup d’état is a disaster. For nearly forty years now there has been a denial of memory (like there was in Spain too after Franco’s death). Nothing seems to alter in the government’s account. Some of us want to with memory [...] but we work in solitude. [...] Chilean civilians have been responsible for new history books, but without official assistance of any kind. Memory has begun to be recuperated by NGOs, honest journalists and judges, families of the disappeared and victims. But the state hasn’t had a part in it. The government is still living in a cave.” (White, Rob. “After Effects: Interview with Patricio Guzmán”, in *Film Quarterly*, 2 February 2012, <http://www.filmquarterly.org/2012/07/after-effects-interview-with-patricio-guzman/>, accessed 26 June 2016).

by the archeologists, is inherently connected to the search of Gaspar Galaz and the astronomers for the origin of cosmos—the calcium in these bones being the same as the calcium that was formed right after the Big Bang (Martin-Jones 2013, 709). As Butler and Athanasiou pose:

The body is a memory come alive, as it were, one that forces back the hand that might erase those traces. And though in these works the body suffers, falls, and is constrained and overwhelmed by external force, the performing body also persists, survives, showing and enacting a social history, memorialising those forms of suffering and loss against the lure of forgetfulness (2013, 171-172).

In this case the ‘dead’ material of the bones, as well as the ‘living’ bodies of these women enter into a performance of embodied memory, “forcing back the hand that might erase” the relationality between colonial and dictatorial memories and pasts, as well as an experience that does not-adhere to the state’s prescribed experience of linear time.

In a final gesture, Guzmán implies a conversation, a reconciliatory dialogue, between the differently traumatised parties of the dictatorship. In the film he sets up a meeting between the astronomers and the women of Calama, inviting the women to the observatory to gaze at the stars. The astronomers, conducting a ‘scientific’ search that even during the Pinochet dictatorship received plenty of government support, come to embody the neoliberal establishment. The women of Calama, roaming the peripheral salt planes of the Atacama, condemned because of their search into the past, come to embody the subaltern orientated towards a different experience of time. Showing that their searches are not all that different, both complicating notions linear temporality, Guzmán hints towards a manner in which memories, and time in general, might be differently experienced by *all* parties.

CONCLUSION

In *Nostalgia de la Luz*, Guzmán poses that Chile “has not yet considered its past. It is held in the grasp of the coup d’état which seems to immobilise it.” In this article, I have tried to show how this immobilisation and Chile’s incapacity to critically reflect upon the past and memories of the dictatorship can be explained through a phenomenology of linear time. In the first section I provided an overview of how memory has been engaged with by a variety of political, juridical and academic actors. I continued to show how *Nostalgia de la Luz* offers a particular intervention into hegemonic knowledge production as well as the basis for a counter-memory that opens up new ways of engaging with traumatic histories and experiencing time in general. In the second section of the article I explicated, using Sara Ahmed’s work on phenomenology, how the film speaks on an experience of time that orientates the subject towards a concept of linear progression, which is informed by a historic-colonial-racial schema undergirding the subject’s

body. I posed that the film allows the viewer to trace the formation of this scheme at the hand of Chilean colonial histories, showing how ‘time’ and ‘progress’ were constructed along gendered and racialised subjectivities. However, I also argued that Guzmán not only provides a deconstruction of colonial and neoliberal conceptions of time, and thus how (marginalised) memories are dealt with, but in his film also opens up a space to subvert this. Consequently this results in an embodied experience with time that is non-linear, cyclical and allows one to rethink how the subject, or for that matter the state, might deal differently with processes of justice and memorialisation from already dis/orientated starting positions.

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