

**Alys Longley**

The Other Country that You Are:

A Performative Essay and Video Work exploring Radical Kindness  
in the Chilean Peoples Uprising of 2019



Fig. 1. & Fig. 2. The Grand March, Chile, 28 October 2020. Photograph by Augusto Dominguez

### Part One

In October 2019 I was living in Providencia, Santiago, with my partner and two daughters on a research exchange with the University of Auckland Dance Studies programme to the Dance Programme at the University of Chile. I was continuing an interdisciplinary collaboration with artists Macarena Campbell-Parra and Máximo Corvalán Pincheira, which we have been developing since 2017. We were making a work called *Extracción de Lealtades* (*Extractive Loyalties*) – to be performed at the School of the Art Institute, Chicago (SAIC). *Extracción de Lealtades* explored the geopolitics between Chicago and Santiago (the Chicago School of Economics having been major players in the military coup of 1973 and the writing of Chile's neoliberal constitution (Dorfman, 2020)). The work was beginning to explore how bodies, both singular and collective, are simultaneously written into, by stories that territorialise at the level of visceral cells and the structure of cities, states and nations. Our work stopped abruptly when Santiago erupted in social unrest. We quickly suspended our travel plans in order to care for our families. As I write this on 24 November 2020, we (Máximo, Macarena and I) haven't physically been in the same room since our rehearsal on the day the social outbreak began, Wednesday 18 October, 2019.

Despite us not being able to meet in person, the work continued on new tangents. A trio became a solo, performed in Chicago to which I wore clothes painted in blackboard paint which were overwritten by protesters in Chile on the 28 October. The Chicago-based students read, cleaned and overwrote phrases on these clothing-blackboards, in a consideration of whose words make it through in political processes.



Fig. 3. Students at the School of the Art Institute Chicago (SAIC), November 2019.

In Lisa Samuels' essay *Witness In Kind* (2020), Samuels presents what she describes as an "interpretive approach" which recognizes the "absolute need to cherish the continually reborn other."<sup>1</sup> As such, witness offers the "opposite of critical distance", instead this critical orientation aims "to draw together with and foster the otherness of what's encountered in a constative angle of kindness; to form kindred percepts."

(witness) speaks to our chance to be documentaries for each other when we make the move to engage with each other's work: witness is a documentary move that explicates its bearing toward the work it's reading. So witness must be performative – it must act its consequences, align its in-kind chances recurrently with the work at hand. (n.p)

The "documentary move" of this essay dives between auto-ethnographic accounts of living in Chile and working with Chilean artists, and reflective discussion of the context of the Chilean social movement (Estallido Social) as an example of radical kindness, where generosity and violence, kindness and disruption, were closely entwined. It is also performative – structured as a multi-modal essay that crosses between writing styles and modes, from video, poetry, performance writing and essay writing. Each writing fragment is an experiment in "witness", exploring how as artists we can be alongside each other, in an orientation of solidarity and support. In particular, this essay explores witness in relation to artists and colleagues who are participating in social justice movements and working through experiences of political oppression and state-condoned violence.

This essay wants to test some ideas about radical kindness in performance. I think such radical kindness might occur when our care begins to take the form of a "no" rather than a "yes". Such kindness refuses to tolerate and stabilise systems that ride on oppression and extraction from the many for the few. This essay was written through observation of, participation in and solidarity with the fight for a new Chilean constitution. I'm aiming in some small way to generate a language that attests to the very tender violence of the Chilean protests, the intense care and generosity driving epic acts of anonymous performance, emerging in the haze of tear gas, water cannon laced with chemical agents and rubber bullets.

*this is a kindness that looks like breakage this is a kindness that looks bloody this is a kindness that looks like civil disobedience this is a kindness that causes the president of the country to declare this moment a war this is the kindness that insinuates class warfare this is a kindness that stops the traffic moving because the roads are burning this is a kindness that leaves a lot of people unemployed and hungry this is a kindness that closes down the whole infrastructure of the cultural sector – the performance spaces, the museums, the art galleries are closed but the streets are alive with music and dancing and art and all the artists are on the street and the young people have taken over the streets and the protests are attended by hundreds of thousands or one or two million they are vibrant theatre works with scripts and with acts and with preparation and with execution to change everything to rewrite everything and everything is put on the line everything*

*is  
put  
on  
the line*

*for the fundamental good of  
everyone*

## Part Two

And now focus moves to another moment in Santiago's history, in writing that occurs one week after the referendum in Chile (Sunday 25 October, 2020), in which Chileans successfully turned out in massive numbers to vote to rewrite their constitution, after six months of epic protest and six months of lockdown. The outcome of the referendum was 78% of voters approving a new constitution (Piscopo & Siavelis, 2019). Following this, on 5 July 2021, Elisa Loncon was voted president of the body of independent delegates voted to redraft the new Chilean constitution. As an indigenous woman, this was a ground-breaking moment in Chilean history (Ontiveros, 2021). To get to this point Chileans (both the protestors fighting for change and the military fighting for the status quo) suspended the functioning of their capital city – Santiago – to the point that it could barely function. This was a process of epic protest and military brutality at scale, with massive, systemic political change at stake. The protesters were determined to eradicate the systemic privileges of a tiny minority and to instead enable dignity for all by reversing privatisation of public goods such as education, healthcare, elderly pensions and water, recognising Indigenous and environmental rights (Nugent, Ciara, 2020).

We are in the park with our children, and Maca and I are discussing the suspension of our performance project due to the outbreak of protests. “But Aly, it’s like our project has moved from being a studio experiment to the street itself. Our research now is to live this, just to live it and know it. I really think Aly you have to come with me today to manifest, you have to experience this”. And so we go. Maca gives me a little pot and a spoon - [a cacerolazos](#) - to contribute to the sound of resistance.<sup>2</sup> We attend what Maca describes as “a little Sunday afternoon protest, in a very safe place with very few carabineros (policemen) or military.” If justice is a sea with another name, this is like entering the surge of the wave, being pulled out by a rip. The sound surges before you arrive and then suddenly you are in a cascade of emotion, sound, collective movement, suddenly you’re in the middle of a rock concert, a classical chamber performance, a competition for bikes jumping over random, escalating piles of stuff, or maybe it’s a fire in a car tyre they jump over. Immense power is evident in this contagion of resistance. There’s this shared permission to refuse an entire system of control, to refuse its way of life, in refusing to compromise, and instead find power in the belief that the country can be better, and can hold its people with equality and dignity. The sheer numbers of people manifesting hold the movement together, although there is no leader, political party or hierarchical system organizing this movement – it’s rhizomatic, seeded by teenagers and supported by the majority of the Chilean people, who have decided that it is time to, as Máximo once wrote in a text we worked on together, “undo those knots that were written with violence”.

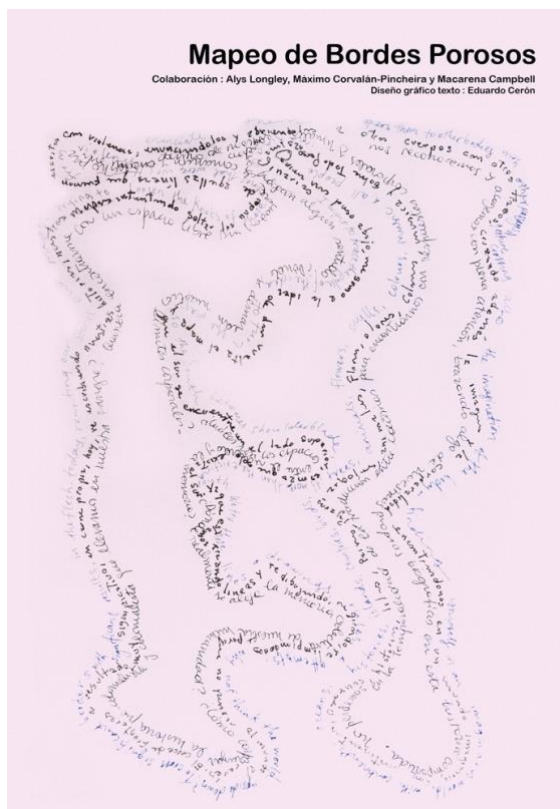


Fig. 4. Documentation from Mapeo de Bordes Porosos - Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira, trans. Alya Longley and Macarena Campbell Parra

“I want to trace the pulse of the idea, to turn the map upside down so that the South becomes shoulderblade, it’s more than the existing South, we try these lines and drawings, rules and attempts, why not think the world upside down? To cross significant borders, with significant results, in the flesh, today, rewriting our stories, our maps, trying to loosen those lines that were written from violence, enunciate them, and open them to other bodies, with other passages of gesture, crossing also the imagination of the body - finding yourself in an imaginary world, with continents, oceans, histories, islands, countries, birds, trees, animals, flowers, smells, colors, music of all people imaginable. I want to trace the pulse of the idea, to turn the map upside down” (Corvalán-Pincheira in Longley et al., 2021, p.129)

*There’s a clear sense of the deep conviction of this movement, that a corrupt and repressive system of political control cannot be allowed to stay, that it has to be resisted with utter commitment. The sensation of freedom is palpable. It feels like united refusal, a semi-naked*



*young woman graffiti-ing the walls of the main street in broad daylight, 10,000 women performing the work of radical feminist ensemble/collective Lastesis, telling the policemen before them that “the rapist is you”<sup>3</sup>*

*Art is a form that holds the shape of this political movement, in the absence of political leadership – in placards are funny, ironic, enraged, beautiful, simple, complicated. In songs, in performance actions, in graffiti, the art buoys us all. We’re all moved to tears by a [protest we see on our social media](#), of thousands and thousands of protestors with guitars, singing the anthem The Right to Live in Peace by the activist Victor Jara, who was brutally murdered by the Pinochet regime in 1973 (Minsker, 2019).<sup>4</sup> And then it is October 28<sup>th</sup>, the day of the Grand March, which over a million people attended, and my friend is passing me a spray bottle of lemon juice mixed with bicarbonate soda for the tear gas, we are carefully positioned, arriving earlier in the day, in a part of the march where we are less likely to be bruised, to be shot by rubber bullets, and yet my friend is a wolf, keeping me safe, never taking her eyes off me, as I can’t read the riptide of violence like she can. These protests have front lines where young men take the flak of the water cannon for everyone, holding off the military with rocks and makeshift weapons to keep the main body of the protestors safe. These frontlines look kind of like this:*



Fig. 5. Poster, Parque Salvador

*“Sin miedo” translates as “Without fear”. As time passes and the evening comes the march will escalate in intensity and violence, but here in the early afternoon centre of things, we see elderly women in matching clothes, theatre by actors perched atop bus-stops, all manner of*

*wild costumes, and the tone of the space is celebratory, joyous, with a pervading sense of a massive co-authoring of history. I think that this is the most exciting, vibrant, lively, important moment of performance that I'll ever attend in my life.*



Fig. 6. The Grand March 28 October 2019, Photograph by Augusto Dominguez

Fig. 7. Macarena Campbell-Parra and friends at The Women's March, 8 March 2020, Photograph by Coty Nuñez del Gatto.

### Part Three

How far can traditional forms of kindness go in resisting repressive forms of power? Traditionally, kindness takes the form of goodness, rightness, fixing, mending and holding spaces to be functional and whole. But what if the whole is predicated on an ideology where the very few have everything and the majority exist as a means of extraction? The conventions of kindness as nurturing cohesion, wholeness, niceness, politeness and calm seem more likely to support such an extractive status-quo than to provide a means to disrupt it. Journalist Leonie Hayden, in describing the violence toward Māori women in New Zealand prisons, sums up such an understanding of kindness when she describes "our little Pacific idyll, world famous for compassion, governed by kindness that looks suspiciously like the colonised status quo" (Hayden, 2020) (Hayden, 2020). Similarly, in their article *We're not asking for the Moon on a Stick, Kindness and Generosity in the Academy*, academics Sarah Burton and Vicki Turbine discuss the potentials for understanding radical kindness as resistance in terms of a university strike;

Care and kindness is not simply a particular attitude of geniality or occasionally "brightening someone's day". Instead, we need to comprehend it as both radical dispositions and radical acts: speaking truth to power, refusing damaging hierarchies, rejecting restrictive and exclusionary interpretations of "professionalism." (Burton & Turbine, 2019, n.p)

They discuss the importance of solidarity in terms of shared resistance to institutional constraints. For Burton and Turbine, recognition of the diverse needs of strike participants is core to genuine solidarity. This involves adjustments in the action of the strike for people in different economic situations, and with different care responsibilities.

we began to think of solidarity not as an end-point we're all aiming towards, but instead as a state of being arrived at through mutual recognition and generosity. Solidarity, in this sense, is more about bonding through the kindness of feeling seen and heard, and it rejects notions of 'sameness' and modes of activism that are conventionally intimated through solidarity calls (n.p).

This stance could be compared to Extinction Rebellion protests, where "arrestables" are identified as those that have the privilege to be arrested and continue their lives in relative peace, whereas others cannot take these risks (McEvoy, 2020). In the same way, the Santiago protests had very different roles and for different protestors, and participants self-selected how they wanted to perform their activism.

As a relative outsider to this situation, barely speaking Spanish and largely ignorant of the stakes at hand, how can I work in solidarity with my artist community in Chile? I can't ever truly comprehend the complexity and the emotions of what it was to experience the social movement in the months of late 2019. Although I lived through the intense destabilization of it, our family knew we would only be there for a few weeks; it wasn't my nation, my people, my future that was suddenly extremely tenuous. In another sense, Lawrence Durrell writes, "a city becomes a world when one loves one of its' inhabitants"(Durrell, 1962), and Santiago had certainly become a world for me as my collaborator Macarena and I felt like sisters, as she made sure our family had toilet paper and eggs and bread, when these things became very scarce. Perhaps solidarity is not necessarily about understanding fully, but standing alongside in recognition, care and difference.

Working in solidarity with international colleagues can be a means of thinking with difference. It can be a means to consider our privileges and losses, a space to attend to the intensity of the world, at scale. In October 2019, Santiago's streets became dangerous, schools stopped, much of the city was shut down, everyone lived under curfew, suddenly society became intensely divided between pro and anti-protest positions. And this was a time of intense hope, where thinking toward a previously unbelievable future became a widespread contagion for change. International attention can have a strong impact in such momentum for change, aiding in protecting protesters if international organisations and governments make their awareness of human rights abuses known. It can buoy activist movements to know that others from around the world stand in solidarity. Returning to New Zealand, I came to believe that every grain of attention matters, and that complex understanding of Chilean political history and context wasn't necessary for small acts of solidarity to make a difference— it felt to me as though every little shift of care toward the situation in Chile had some kind of weight to it. In the library in Parque Salvador I photographed a piece of graffiti that read "justice is a sea with another name". If we consider justice a sea, it is something that connects us, moving around the globe effecting the ethical sense of temperature and climate, sense of space, place and rhythm, often intangibly.





Fig. 8. Photograph of Poster at Parque Salvador, Santiago.

Fig. 9. Photograph from El Otro País Que Eres Performance. Photograph by Jeffrey Holdaway. Design by Eduardo Cerón-Tillería.

Radical kindness can be experienced as destabilisation. Kindness can be untethered from niceness, politeness and calm and instead evidenced in activist contexts which are difficult, awkward, violent, dangerous, resistant and direct. These understandings of kindness are aligned with the work of activist theorists such as Sara Ahmed, Naomi Klein, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Karen Barad, and Donna Haraway, who recognise an urgent need to resist an extractivist status-quo, asserting that patriarchy, fascism, racism, heteronormativity, ecocide and neo-liberal economics regularly intersect in various ways, and that disempowering these repressive forms requires a deep and radical recalibration of the status-quo. By bringing kindness together with resistance and confrontation I want to think about the portrayal of activist intervention, to think about aligning kindness with dismantling and undoing. That is where I think radical kindness and performance enter. Ariel Dorfman's article *Chile, Notes from a Revolt* (Dorfman, 2020) clearly frames the Chilean civil unrest, in which the city became suspended from its everyday flows, as the result of economic repression:

whether through fear of another military intervention or because it had become a complacent part of the system, the center-left that had been responsible for guiding the country toward democracy failed to mobilize the people against its neoliberal economic model. The result of that failure was to create rampant consumerism that left millions indebted far beyond their means and a gigantic disparity of income between the very rich and just about everybody else. As the economist Joseph Stiglitz recently noted: "When I looked at the data from Chile, the level of inequality was so high that I was surprised there were not more civilian disturbances." (Dorfman, 2020)

When the civilian disturbances came, the military response utterly flamed the fury of the Chilean people, and the escalation of tension between those in power and those in resistance had brutal repercussions (Gordon-Zolov & Zolov, 2019).

#### Part Four





Fig. 10. Publicity Material for *El Otro País Que Eres/ The Other Country That You Are*, Design by Eduardo Cerón Tillería, Photography by Augusto Dominguez. (An exercise exploring the destabilisation of borders, the notion of the body as territory and the cut between tenderness and violence).

#### [El Otro País Que Eres/ The Other Country That You Are](#)

The hyper-link above will take you video documentation of the duet *El Otro País Que Eres* which dancer Angel Garcia and I performed in Santiago, with videography by Eduardo Cerón-Tillería, about one kilometre away from Plaza Baquedano, the epicenter of the Chilean Social Movement (Dorfman, 2020). This performance was funded by travel insurance for the Chicago flights that Macarena Campbell-Parra and Máximo Corvalán Pincheira couldn't take up. The creative team on this piece donated their salaries to purchasing a defibrillator for the medics caring for protestors.

We traded absence for a defibrillator, and we were happy with the trade.

#### *El Otro País Que Eres/ The Other Country That You Are*

*A performance can be a drawing practice. You take a piece of chalk and trace the line of a friendship between New Zealand and Chile. It's a drawing of mistranslation and performance-writing and film and loss and exhaustion and trust and the belief that despite the immense amount of effort it takes to make this attempt it is still worth learning from each other, crossing disciplines and oceans to understand the world in each other's creative and verbal language. You trace with chalk on the disused bus shelter the imminent distance between where you are now and where you will be in two days, after you take the plane back to New Zealand, the distance between the violence of here and the peacefulness there. In Auckland you won't be able to see the clouds of teargas rising from Plaza de la Dignidad, you won't have to walk past policemen and military in full combat gear to get to the supermarket, you won't have to worry about shortages of food and toilet paper, you won't have to be stuck inside with your children, unable to go anywhere, because pretty much the whole of the city is suspended by protests insisting on dignity for all. With chalk you physically draw the missing – a gesture to the bodies missing, the eyes missing, the sense of this body being part of all of the bodies in this*

*movement, at once singular and collective – an injury to one of us is an injury to all of us, across all the seas of justice – the resistance here makes space for all of us to find hope in resistance. You trace around a singular body which is a body getting ready to leave, and a body that is also entangled with this city, right now and forever, this state-of-emergency city, this desperate-for-change city, this demanding change city, this destabilized city, this incredibly radical and hopeful city, this city with the best graffiti you will ever see, these friends, both hopeful and traumatized, who you want to take with you, you just want to take with you, just until the violence ends.*

Plaza Italia, renamed Plaza de la Dignidad is home to the Baquedano Metro station at the centre of the protest movement, is the epicenter of the Chilean social uprising, and the site of regular protests that were epic, brutal, life affirming, highly performative and very dangerous:

The police committed human rights violations on a scale not seen since the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990): thousands of arrests, indiscriminate beatings, rapes in police stations, unrestricted use of toxic water cannons intentionally aimed at the eyes of demonstrators. (Dorfman, 2020)

Images like the one in Dorfman's description above are often the ones we see of South American protests in the media, but brutality is only one layer of gatherings whose generosity, care, creativity in terms of music, theatre and dance performances and intense visual inventiveness in graffiti, placards and performance installations as part of a mass expression of human rights, had a rare and radiant buoyancy. Simultaneously, the protests were very violent, veering from gentle marches and jubilant parties in the wealthier public spaces (where the police took a softer approach), to militant frontlines in the central city, to extreme violence and repression in poorer communities, where whole neighborhoods were constantly engulfed in teargas to push the people indoors, extreme violence was common, children were taken from their parents in intimidatory acts intended to prevent the people from any activist actions. In the comments section of a *New York Times* article entitled "Police are Blinding Protestors, We Spoke to the Injured" a writer named Togo comments, "They shoot us in the eye because after years of injustice we finally opened them" (McDonald, 2019).

#### **Part Four. Basta Ya de Represión/ Enough of Repression**

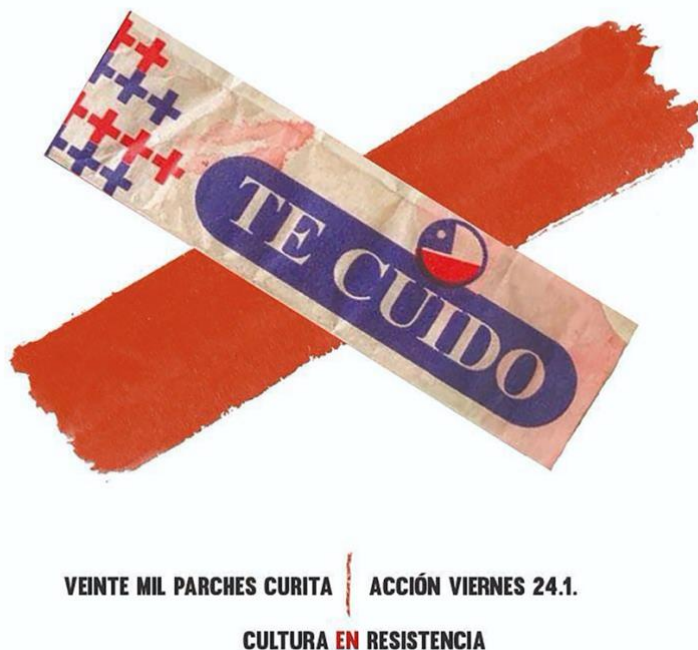


Fig. 11. Publicity Material: Basta Ya de Represión, Courtesy of Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira (Te Cuido translates as "I take care of you").

A couple of months after returning home from Chile to New Zealand, Máximo sends me through information about a protest the Mapeo de Bordes Porosos project had helped to fund. Some funding from the Chicago trip blossomed into an artistic intervention as part of protests celebrating [One Hundred Days of Resistance](#) ((Eduardo Jiménez Cavieres, 2020; Paquita Rivera & Alex Ibarra, 2020)(Paquita Rivera & Alex Ibarra, 2020).

Twenty thousand miniature band aid art works were each hand printed with the words "Basta Ya" (Enough Now) and distributed in downtown Santiago in January 2020. The group organising the #BastaYa action (of which Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira is a core member) is identified by the terms "Basta Ya de Represión"

"Enough of repression" and "[Cultura en resistencia/ Culture in resistance](#)".

This Friday, January 24, a march for arts and culture is convened at 17pm from the plaza de la aviación. We are a group of artists in mobilization with the current social situation that is lived in Chile. Along with inviting you to the March, we call to be part of an action where we will deliver and launch twenty thousand band-aid patches in the journey of the March. (Cultura en resistencia, 2020). In the last few months we have witnessed how the population has been violated in different ways. This artistic action folds to the need for healing: heal the eyes, bodies, institutions, nature, indigenous territory, the country (Corvalán-Pincheira, Máximo, 2020)





Fig. 12. Basta Ya de Represión, Band-Aid Art Works. Photograph by Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira.



Fig. 13. Basta Ya de Represión, Band-Aid Art Works. Photograph by Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira

Donna Haraway discusses the important work of finding alternatives and forms of resistance to the “cynical, well-funded, exterminationist machine” (Haraway, cited in Weigel 2019), and suggests one pathway to do this is in developing, “emergent systematicities” that respond to the “need to develop practices for thinking about those forms of activity that are not caught by functionality, those which propose the possible-but-not-yet, or that which is not-yet but still open” (Ibid).

*I think about resistance as creating form. Of the scale of twenty thousand small gestures of healing, care, and resistance. The making of space for. The feeling of the breath rising up is*



*enabled by the diaphragm dropping down. Falling into rising, push into pull, resistance into enablement, unknowing into knowing. To make space-for-change. To manifest care at scale. I think about these artists that searched for the thing that is the opposite to repression, the opposite to brutality. The artistic symbol they found was the band-aid, making a little shield for the cells to heal, to keep the pain out, to calm the nervous system of the city. To give a gift without anything needed in exchange, which is also an artwork, handprinted, literally an instrument for care.*

Chile's protest movement made space for an outpouring of creative activity that celebrated the vitality of the "possible but not yet" in incredible bodies of street art, activist performance, music, design and community-based politics:

And no matter what the ultimate outcome of the estallido may be, one thing is certain: Chile has been living an extraordinary outburst of creativity the likes of which we had not experienced since the Allende years. Thousands of cabildos, or town-hall meetings, have taken place; new rap songs have been written and ballads rediscovered ...Documentaries and plays, too, have proliferated, along with art installations throughout the land" (Dorfman 2020).

Burton and Turbine (2019) write of how protest movements can generate new forms of creative practice and community inventiveness, that the act of resisting together can be a profound form of generosity and care, precisely in the movement to dismantle a system, rather than uphold it:

the strike emphasized the inventiveness, resourcefulness, and do-it-yourself spirit of university workers. This itself shows the existence of new possibilities for kindness, openness, and community – which themselves offer avenues to solidarities more befitting an academy undergirded by casualisation.

Similarly, Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira discusses the vitality of artistic work during the Chilean social movement, where the streets of downtown Santiago were overflowing with riotous, anti-establishment artwork which were repainted faster than the Piñera government could remove.

There are many interesting acts taking place on the streets, but their authorship is not as important as the expression itself, which is about rage and distress... I have done several actions without authorship and without personal interest other than working collectively. In this sense, this way of working awakens you. We cannot hide that we were following a very individualistic and neoliberal logic in our work - and this new situation shapes you as an artist and makes you work and think from another place, another perspective... This is a collective act of creative healing by the citizenry that deposits there all its rage and pains, embodying them in visual artworks. (Zagato & Corvalán-Pincheira, Máximo, 2019)

[Houda Lazrak's pages](#) on Santiago graffiti during the Social Movement, for the blog *Street Art NYC* provides lush photographic documentation of Santiago's streets before COVID hit, conveying the volume, intensity, energy, cleverness and irony active in the call for justice and dignity for all Chileans central to the social movement (Lazrak, 2020). With mainstream newspapers and television an ally of the right-wing state and business sectors, "the agenda of

the streets, the public's agenda, is written on the city's walls, and on Instagram" (ibid). Through graffiti I learned a history of Santiago – the story of the activist dog Matapaco (whose name translates, jokingly rather than violently, into the term "cop-killer"), mascot of student protests, the story of Mapuche activist Camillo Catrillanca whose face and name is emblazoned across the city, remembering his brutal murder by police in 2018. *El Otro País Que Eres/The Other Country That You Are* contains a t-shirt printed with the words "La justicia es un mar con otro nombre/ Justice is a sea with another name" – a phrase that I found on a poster on a library boarded up by stainless steel against the violence in the city (as were most shops and public buildings in Santiago). Activist spaces of resistance are performances that literally test worlds – with potential for re-imagining what a body is and might be, moving and re-shaping power relations and recreating systems of value. The streets become theatres, hubs for the this vibrant movement, utterly in flux, emblazoned with languages of transformation.

## Part Five

The movement of language instantiates witness in critical practice. Anthropologists Alison Phipps and Lesley Saunders describe the power of poetic writing in terms of "a gentling of space" (2009). They discuss the importance of poetry in forming alternatives to what they term as a militaristic trend in the language of research methodology:

this isn't poetry for poetry's sake; this isn't poetry as therapy in this context; this is poetry for thinking in new shapes and sounds of those things we half know and hope; this is poetry for the sake of gentling the space where violence is writ large and ugly. (Phipps & Saunders, 2009)

Are the conventional writing values, particularly the defensive qualities entrenched in scholarly criticism, supportive of witness? Or does this practice warrant attention to the affects and poetics of text? In the penultimate part of this essay I present a series of performance writings that aim to carry both the hope and the brutality of the experience of living in Santiago during October 2019, in a move that combines documentary with abstraction. The following two pieces of performance writing present the poetic texts that form the soundscore of the video work *El Otro País Que Eres/The Other Country That You Are*, as printed text. English and Spanish are interwoven on the page, as they were in the context of the entire *Mapping Porous Borders* project – linguistically drawing attention to the geopolitical movement of bodies that are both singular and collective. The epic protests and intense militarization occurring in Santiago pushed the language of this devised work into a space we could never have imagined beforehand. The translated version is also the testament of a friendship, with Santiago-based actor Emilio Edwards collaborating on the Spanish translation of the work and voicing the text in its audio version. Working on the translation, Emilio and I talked about terms like privatization, we discussed colloquial terms for "tear gas" and "water cannon," we thought about how to translate the word "swells," as both a wave and a medical term. Sitting over a cup of tea in the fold between languages, Emilio and I hung out in the morning as he prepared himself for protesting later in the day. He was happy to know we had some funding for medical equipment for the medics working at the sides of the protests, and happy to support the project in the name of creative collaboration. For me as an artist, these generous and sometimes spontaneous collaborations are one of life's great, hopeful highlights - when a new collaboration begins, another trusts you enough to share their time, their language, their patience, their abode, their creativity, their performance work, their kindness, and a project moves into the world, through a series of acts of care.

## Part Six

### the other country that you are/este otro país que eres

these bacterial forces that feel like emotions/estas fuerzas bacterianas que se sienten como emociones

and move us in bewildering riptides, weaving a mesh of routes through a mesh of cities| y nos movilizan desconcertados por la corriente, tejiendo una red de rutas a través de una red de ciudades

where the singular and collective bodies are just so deeply confused

as to be indistinguishable| donde el cuerpo singular y el cuerpo colectivo están tan profundamente confundidos que ya no se pueden distinguir

the state that we are exhaled by place / el estado en que nos exhala el lugar /We stand in for others/ Representamos a los demás /we wonder if the logic of bullets has formed our grammar / nos preguntamos si la lógica de las balas ha formado nuestra gramática /which now needs urgent medical attention/ / que ahora necesita atención médica urgente / from student doctors wearing makeshift medic uniforms/ de estudiantes médicos que usan uniformes médicos improvisados /we break the language a little with the sound of pans and spoons, endlessly calling us/ untethered / sin ataduras / rompemos un poco el lenguaje con el sonido de sartenes y cucharas, llamándonos sin cesar / together / juntos

### your train was lost between| Tu tren se perdió entre lo singular y lo colectivo

#### the singular and the collective

each platform means standing in for these someone elses/ cada estación se presta para representar los significados de otros

but this roaring thousands-strong body of refusal / is a kind of violent mending / shredding as the wound closes /

Pero este rugido de miles de cuerpos reusándose, es un tipo de costura violenta, se despedaza mientras la herida se cierra.

it's surprising how tear gas can be ignored / in the right company| es sorprendente cómo las bombas lacrimógenas se pueden ignorar en buena compañía

private dreams are crossing neighbourhoods in bacterial swells/

Sueños privados están cruzando los vecindarios como mareas bacterianas

lemon pieces/pedazos de limón bravado envalentonado/ melted public amenities servicios públicos derretidos/ hallucinatory celebrations celebraciones alucinógenas

/ the translation of endless compromises

to infinite waves of resistance la traducción del eterno compromiso, a eternas olas de resistencia

The only words available / Las únicas palabras disponibles

are produced by this deeply singular set of interior bruises / son producidas por este conjunto de profundas y singulares contusiones interiores

this particular organisation of veins. / Esta particular organización de las venas.

Your train eloped with all the carbon/ tu tren se escapó con todo el carbono/

it left this intangible distance in its wake/ dejó esta distancia intangible a su paso

it left again and again/ se fue una y otra vez /

always late/ siempre tarde / always a metonymy/ siempre una metonimia

Extracellular punctuation, singular rules cross every cordon/ La puntuación extracelular, singulares reglas cruzan cada batallón bound for misapplication/ destinados a una aplicación errónea / into mass disobedience/ a la desobediencia masiva / the water canon looks so beautiful from far away/ el guanaco y el zorrillo se ve tan lindos desde lejos / as swells of solidarity break and bloom / como oleadas de solidaridad que rompen y florecen / you couldn't ever prepare your heart for this / nunca podrías haber preparado tu corazón para esto / epic sharing/ intercambio épico / across the other countries we all are / en todos los demás países en los que todos estamos

## Part Seven

There are many ways that withness plays out in this article – in solidarity with Chile’s Social Movement and in the attempt to continue a performance project despite precarious circumstances. Continuing to connect, co-create and work across geographies, languages and time zones sometimes requires fierce commitment and good doses of resilience. The works of performance and performance-writing embedded in this text are documentary moves – formed out of a commitment to continue to create with colleagues at a time of intense political upheaval. The critical orientation of withness centralises the “absolute need to cherish the continually reborn other” (Samuels 2020, n.p.).

Withness is a resource in supporting artists and academics to hold on to the intangible practices of *staying*, through upheaval and precariousness, even when it seems impossible. For performance makers, this kind of perseverance is a vital part of our toolbox in this wickedly-fast changing world. The imperative to cherish, support, and be allies to each other is urgent in this pandemic moment of emergency and transition. As the landscape of our working lives pivots and adapts, there are ways that we can attend with generosity to each other’s practices, across geographical separation. As the used-to-be-constants fall away, here is an orientation to scholarship that urges us to stay close to each other, listening, documenting and acting in-kind.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In this essay I am citing an early, unpublished draft of Lisa Samuels essay 'Witness, In Kind'. In doing so I want to recognize the iterative, fluid nature of thought and the multiplicity that exists in a single piece of writing. As readers have access to the final version of the essay, I am including some citations from the earlier version which have been rewritten through the review process.

<sup>2</sup> The history and rhythm of the cacerolazos can be heard in Lucia Newmans article for Aljazeera *Chile's cacerolazos movement* [here](#), (Newman, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The feminist performance action El violador eres tú/ The Rapist is You was seeded at the time of the Chilean Social Movement, by performance group Lastesis, and became a global resource against sexual violence toward women, naming the patriarchy, the judges, the police, the state that enables rapists to do harm without justice, as the oppressors responsible for sexual violence, and clearly stating that women who are attacked are not responsible for this violence. A driving force behind this action is the use of rape, by police and military, against peaceful protestors in the Chilean Social Movement (World, n.d.) ((Merelli, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Victor Jara was one of the most important representatives of the Nueva Canción chilena movement in the 1960 and 70s. *El derecho de vivir en paz* was originally written as an anti-vietnam- war protest song. It became an anthem for the Chilean resistance against Augusto Pinochet, especially after Jara's brutal torture and murder by the Chilean military, and was again taken up as an anthem in the protests of 2019 and 2020. In [this](#) documentation of the 100 Days of Resistance protest, January 2020, *El derecho de vivir en paz* can be heard as the song representing the protest, played here by a brass band.

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