

Image Politics and Disturbing Temporalities

On “Sex Change” Operations in the Early Chilean Dictatorship

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Abstract This article analyzes the use of images in the press coverage on the first trans woman in Chile who managed to successfully change her legal gender in 1974, under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, and who identified herself with the name of Marcia Alejandra. First, the author explains how sex change worked as a device in Chile during that period. Then, the author discusses a leaflet with photographs of Marcia Alejandra, configured according to the rhetoric of “before” and “after” her gender reassignment surgery, in order to analyze how these images published in the press disrupt our understanding of the political and medical narratives on the body that encode trans historicities, and even of a progressive temporality itself.

Keywords “sex change,” image politics, Chilean dictatorship, disturbed temporalities

This article is part of a larger research project that explores the conditions that made possible the development of legal and medical procedures that gave trans women access to “sex change” operations under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile (1973–90). During that period, gender reassignment surgeries were carried out in several health establishments without judicial mediation. In other Latin American countries also under military dictatorships—such as Argentina (1976–83) and Brazil (1964–85)—laws prohibiting such surgeries were often subsumed under other laws that criminalized any “mutilation” of the body (López Bolado 1981; Cardozo and Rodríguez 2016; Braga 2016). In Chile, however, there was no specific legislation regulating such surgeries. Not only were genital modification surgeries *not* penalized, but they even came to be discreetly offered in some public hospitals and private clinics in Santiago, starting in 1973, and as a free service for beneficiaries of the public health system in the Hospital van Buren of Valparaíso, starting in 1976. In this context, appealing to Law 17,344,

which authorizes the change of names and family names, some trans women¹ obtained legal changes of name and sex. In this way, during the military dictatorship, a crucial chapter in the history of the relations between the state and the demands of the trans population began.

Here, I use the formulation “sex change” enclosed in quotes both to mark my own distance from the term and as a way of highlighting the epistemological (and temporal) tension that arises from using the available categories of the recent historical past. The formula “sex change” can be problematic because it might presuppose a linear and irreversible trajectory, one that marks an original departure point that, following the biological sex assigned at birth, is more “real” and “true” than what precedes it. This is certainly how the press covered (and visually rendered) Marcia Alejandra, the first trans woman to successfully change her legal gender, under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, in 1974. As we will see, for press discourse Marcia Alejandra’s operation marks a temporal point of arrival, which becomes the teleological product of the surgical techniques of genital modification.²

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Pinochet’s dictatorship was the relationship between the systematic application of policies of torture, the execution and “disappearance” of individuals, and the simultaneous (though not subsequent) establishment of economic policies that promoted an indiscriminate openness to international trade, the reduction of public spending, and financial liberalization. These economic policies made Chile, according to some, the first neoliberal laboratory on the planet (Harvey 2007; Gárate 2015).³ As the Chilean philosopher Willy Thayer (2006: 20–21) points out, “The coup did not happen *in* Chilean history, it happened *to* Chilean history.” In this sense, the dictatorship inaugurated a new mode of hegemonic time. But that does not imply that the military coup must be considered an interruption of “national” history or that it implies its end. On the one hand, what the dictatorship does in its self-proclaimed *estado de excepción*, or “state of emergency,” is confirm the exceptionalism of Chilean history—its more than two hundred years of republican political violence (since 1810) in the name of the law. On the other hand, the dictatorship perpetuated this violence as a transition from the state to the market as the main regulator of social relations. In the name of progress and achievement—that is, modernization as a historical and chronopolitical norm—the dictatorship governed both state and market according to the binary of repression/consent, which is based partly on the state monopoly over violence, torture, and the ideological instruments of persuasion. The dictatorship also promoted certain economic freedoms, self-entrepreneurship, and the production of inequality and indebtedness, which served to undermine the reconstitution of collective ties.

In this article, I argue that this characteristic of dictatorial governance has a correlate in different sex-gender technologies that emerged during the same

period, through which a disciplinary regime of sex began—in an incomplete, fragmentary, and contradictory manner—to make way for a more flexible model of identity and sex, or what Paul B. Preciado has called “pharmacopornographic” technologies (2014: 63–73) of body production.⁴ This does not imply, however, a clear, straight trajectory of any supposed “sexual modernization,” which would leave behind all disciplinarian characteristics. On the contrary, I am interested in observing the interplay of tense, turbulent, and overlapping body technologies (and temporalities) that become clear when we juxtapose the visual imagery of the “before” and “after” of a “sex change” and that of the military coup in Chile.

It is not difficult to see how the dictatorship reinforced a disciplinary (and temporal) regime of sex by intensifying the propagation of the heterosexual family as the main model for masculine and feminine sexual and social identities, according to conservative Catholic values (Grau et al. 1997). The dictatorship imposed a militarist-patriarchal discourse that exacerbated virile identifications with the rhetoric of command (Richard 1993). It also promoted the traditional figure of motherhood, which placed women in the role of the moral guardians of society and depositories of national traditions and perhaps of “history” itself (Junta Nacional de Gobierno 1974: 191–200). During this period, Penal Code Article 365 (which criminalized the practice of sodomy, specifically, male homosexuality, since 1875) and Article 373 (which criminalized “affronts to decency” and was used to penalize transvestism and street prostitution) were also in effect. It is important to note that these articles were applied before, during, and after the dictatorial period—consensual sex between two same-sex adults was not decriminalized until 1999. However, as is the case in other Latin American countries under military dictatorships, there are no records of a repressive policy devised by the military with the purpose of directly persecuting sexual diversity.⁵

Anyway, from the earliest years of the dictatorship, there were signs of the gradual emergence of pharmacopornographic techniques for the control of bodies that reveal more diffuse power mechanics involving the modulation of subjective desire, the diversification of the sexual market, and the medicalization of sexuality. Beginning in the late 1970s, traditional brothels were replaced by individual, discreet services that took place in strip clubs, saunas, and cabarets (Salazar and Pinto 1999); meanwhile, the first gay clubs (Contardo 2011), associated with the strengthening of nightlife and sexual markets, began to emerge in this period. Also, instead of framing the medical-legal path to sex change in a prohibitive manner, endowing the state with authority over the bodies of trans individuals, as in the Argentine and Brazilian dictatorships, the Chilean dictatorship opened a discreet space where “sex change” surgeries could be carried out in public hospitals and private clinics, and in some cases, civil rectifications of name and sex were managed and left up to the discretion of a judge.⁶ In effect, this ultimately

formalized the admissibility of the surgeries and a judicialization of civil name and sex change. This implied that, once the surgery was performed, the person requesting the civil sex change had to undergo a medical examination that gave rise to potentially abusive procedures and to forms of physical and moral punishment, which revealed the other face of this permissive legal framework: the vulnerability of the trans population to state-sponsored institutional violence. This coexistence of permissiveness and abuse at play in the judicialization of “sex change” in Chile reflects neoliberal modes of governance, which, in a society just beginning to accommodate multiplicity and difference, confront and undermine the legitimacy of disciplinary-style interventions and state planning. It also promoted a proliferation of legal arbitration that introduced more sophisticated forms of violence against the trans population (Carvajal 2016).

In the absence of LGBT rights organizations, which in Chile were formed only after 1991, in the postdictatorial period, members of the Sociedad Chilena de Sexología Antropológica (the Chilean Society of Anthropological Sexology, or the SChSA),⁷ along with doctors and lawyers, helped launch an array of medical-legal actions around access to “sex change” operations. Indeed, the sexological discourse of the 1960s is an essential precedent for understanding how “sex change” functioned as a device during the early years of the dictatorship. In 1967, the doctors of the SChSA decided to discuss the feasibility of introducing a medical-legal path for “sex change” in the country, as a way to provide a solution to the criminalization of trans women. The doctors discussed a case that was well covered in the press, which reported the arrest of a waitress at her place of work under Article 373 of the Penal Code because her official documents did not match her gender expression.⁸ The doctors presented genital modification surgery as the solution that would “define” sex and thus grant entry to citizenship. An inextricable link between class, work, the criminalization of trans people, medical power, and sex-gendered normalization technologies was thus put forward by the medical profession and, eventually, the state.⁹ In this discussion, “sex change” surgery was presented under a humanitarian, modernizing discourse and through a temporality inextricably linked to progress, as one way to guarantee “rights” and make possible the “desires” of people to define themselves in one sex (Quijada 1968).¹⁰

In the space that remains here, I analyze how the press covered the image of the first transsexual woman to successfully change her legal gender, in 1974, who identified herself as Marcia Alejandra. I argue that this case inaugurates a particular construction of transsexuality in the press, and it shows how “sex change” was configured as a temporal and political device in the early years of the dictatorship. At the same time, the media construction of the story of Marcia Alejandra has characteristics that do not appear in later press coverage, particularly the superimposition of elements from the political context in the story of the

"before" and "after" her transition. What can a perspective from the global South reveal about the narration of Marcia Alejandra's transition, and how does it offer us another way of thinking trans-historically from a geographical perspective outside the framework of the North American context?

The way in which the story of Marcia Alejandra was constructed in the media shows how the sensationalist press in the early years of the dictatorship used medical-sexological discourse to present genital modification operations as a technology of bodily and moral correction, codified in terms of technological-moral-temporal progress.¹¹ Several contemporaneous newspaper and magazine articles suggest that Marcia Alejandra's life—marked by suffering and police harassment (by the application of Article 373)—was something that surgery could solve. Here, we can observe a contrast to what was happening at the same time in the North American context where, as David Valentine (2007: 57–65) has pointed out, the depathologization of homosexuality and the pathologization of trans-genderism was followed by a process of gay and lesbian inclusion, which some sectors have understood as a path toward the normalization of homosexuality. Valentine warns that the differentiation between homosexuality and transsexuality led to a separation between gender and sexuality that, instead of being presented as a historically produced distinction, was institutionalized as a question of ontology and as a sign of both progress and modernization. In Chile, on the other hand, the decoupling of transsexuality as a diagnostic category coexisted with the criminalization of homosexuality, thus implying a divergence between the notions of "progress" that the differentiation of categories carried with it in each context. The Chilean press constructed an account of Marcia Alejandra's "sex change," establishing a distinction between homosexuality and transsexuality in terms of the temporal and medical passage from illegality to the legality of an identity. Indeed, from then on, the sensationalist press of the early dictatorship placed stories of transvestism and prostitution-related homosexuality in the crime sections and transsexual women in the entertainment chronicles of magazines and newspapers (even though, of course, the transsexual women who engaged in the sex trade or other work related to nocturnal commerce were also exposed to the application of Article 373).

Here, I focus on the only images of Marcia Alejandra published in the press, configured according to the rhetoric of "before" and "after" surgery, in order to ask how time is being reconfigured by (and through) the juxtaposition of the two images below. The story of Marcia's transition exemplifies a standard narrative to which, as Emma Huston (2015) has pointed out, trans people are often reduced. This narrative is characterized by the logic of the medical criteria for diagnosing transsexuality, the confessional discourses of the press, and the conventions of autobiography, which make transgender subjects intelligible by

imposing a linear, teleological, and irreversible narrative that seeks to award sexual and biographical coherence. These characteristics are clearly present in how the story of Marcia Alejandra was publicized. But, at the same time, that story was part of a broader sociopolitical narrative, which provides points of departure from any such linear temporality. I am interested in how the images of Marcia Alejandra published in the press disrupt our understanding of political and medical narratives of the body, and, in doing so, challenge notions of progressive temporality. The seemingly linear modification of Marcia's body—or at least how such a corporeal shift came to be represented in the press—offered a striking parallel to the temporal progression of the years before and after the inauguration of the Chilean dictatorship led by Pinochet (that is, the “yesterday” and the “today” of the Chilean coup of September 11, 1973, in which the Armed Forces ousted progressive president Salvador Allende from power).

Images and Reports of Marcia Alejandra's “Sex Change” in the Press

Historically, the sensationalist press has been a space in which segregated and marginalized identities may gain access to public visibility—a documentary base through which trans histories are sometimes constructed and narrated. One of its distinctive features is the more prominent presence of images over stories. This access to visibility is always mediated and paradoxical, as the sensationalist press resorts to distortion, stereotypes, and stigmas to shed light on marginal and otherwise anonymous subjects, enshrouding them in scandal and crime and capturing them as information commodities. During the first years of the Chilean dictatorship, such sensationalist narratives were used by the press to exploit a series of stories about transsexual women, as in the case of Marcia Alejandra. Marcia Alejandra was a trans woman who was able to undergo surgery in May 1973 during the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity) government, and in May of 1974, with the nation already under dictatorship, she was the first trans woman to obtain a legal change of name and sex. Her identity transition—exploited by the press when her case came to light—was thus marked by the historical event of the coup d'état.

It is possible to identify an affinity between the media coverage of Marcia Alejandra's “sex change” and the official campaign by the dictatorship of Pinochet called “*Ayer hoy*” (Yesterday Today), which sought to legitimize the 1973 coup that overthrew Allende and his party, Unidad Popular. As Cora Gamarnik (2012) points out, this propaganda campaign was one of the psychological operations devised by civil servants of the Chilean dictatorship. The propaganda campaign took the form of leaflets and a book, *Chile ayer hoy* (*Chile Yesterday Today*), which circulated internationally and was disseminated nationally in various print media. Its main objective was to generate popular support for the coup d'état and to

associate the Marxist past of the Unidad Popular government with lies, betrayal, and corruption, as well as unrest and social disorder. The methodology and objectives of these campaigns (recorded in recently declassified secret documents) included the repeated use of simple images and direct messages. Using leaflets that included photographs, a series of "rhetorical units" of dictatorial discourse enunciated a "refounding" of the nation, which was supported by the national security doctrine (Berríos 2009). More specifically, the leaflet consisted of a montage of two side-by-side images (fig. 1) that illustrated, on the left, images of "ayer" (yesterday) representing the "chaos" of the Unidad Popular (demonstrations, scenes of violence, empty businesses, dirty streets), and, on the right, images of "hoy" (today) pertaining to "order" (people walking peacefully on the street, looking at store displays, shopping in packed businesses, reading in parks, images of a "happy" and heterosexual family life).

One of the questions that structure this article is how to read the "trans" bodies of the past in relation to the (political) present, at the points of rupture that have the potential to frustrate linear, progressive, and modernizing stories. I thus propose that the story of Marcia Alejandra was portrayed in media as a sexed and gendered recoding of the ideological distinction between (yesterday's) chaos of Unidad Popular and (today's) order of the dictatorship embedded in the

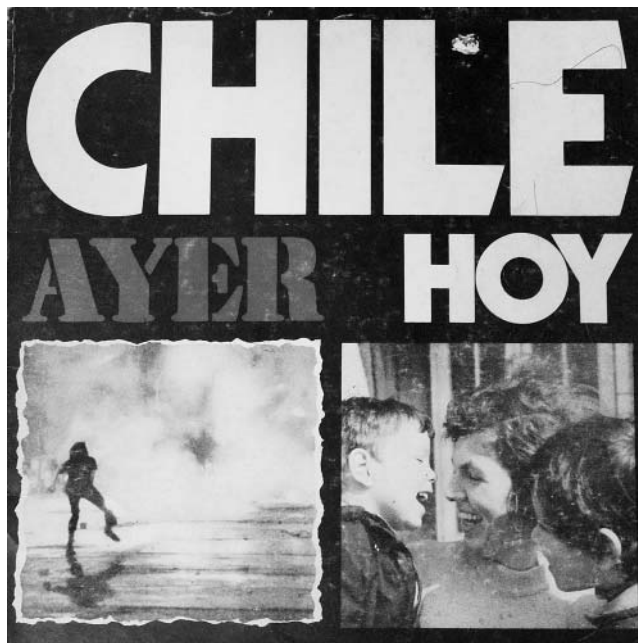


Figure 1. Cover of the book *Chile ayer hoy* (*Chile Yesterday Today*), Editorial Nacional Gabriela Mistral, 1975

Yesterday Today campaign. Thus, Marcia Alejandra's biography was temporally divided into a "before" of being an offender, associated with sexual "indefinition," homosexuality, and the criminalization of nonnormative sexualities (as per Article 373 of the Penal Code) and an "after" that was associated with her sexual "definition" as a woman, granting her a coherent legal status. It is this post-transition Marcia Alejandra who now more comfortably fits the image of the heteronormative family of "today."

To support these claims, it is necessary to analyze a series of contemporary articles published on Marcia Alejandra. In recounting her past life, several press releases recall that Marcia Alejandra had been arrested during a police raid on the clandestine gay bar El Anillo Rojo (The Red Ring) that took place on March 1973 and also in the "Escándalo de la calle Huanchaca" (Huanchaca Street scandal; *La estrella* 1969) that occurred on June 1969, due to the application of Article 373 of the Penal Code. One article, for example, indicates that "on both occasions, Alberto Arturo Torres, known [at the time] as Marcela, was among the detainees" (*Revista vea* 1974). The reference to the Huanchaca Street scandal is significant, as it refers to the arrest of a group of homosexuals and transvestites while they were having a party where, according to the press, there were also political activities linked to leftist groups (*La estrella* 1969). Thus, the press constructed a temporal association between homosexuality/transvestism, subversion of the state, and Chile's precoup political reality. These discourses constructed Marcia Alejandra's past in relation to a position of illegality and lawlessness, reinforced by the fact that some press releases explicitly linked the doctors who had performed the operation on her with Unidad Popular, saying that they had been "detained in [the prison of] Chacabuco" (*La tercera* 1974).¹²

In contrast, when the articles refer to Marcia Alejandra's life after her surgery and the civil rectification of her name and sex, they construct a future-oriented present that promises the beginning of a new life. In doing so, the press simultaneously reconciles familial heterosexuality with Marcia's career as a *vedette* or a showgirl, and also connects her figure and persona to the military world. In August 1974, the dictatorship issued a decree authorizing female recruits be required to enter the Escuela de Servicios Auxiliares del Ejército (the Army School of Auxiliary Services, or the ESAFE), thereby incorporating women into the Armed Forces for the first time.¹³ One report from that period reads, "The young woman [Marcia Alejandra] points out that even though she did complete her military service as a man, she would like to do it now in the ESAFE and that, as she said, 'hopefully they will assign me an artillery weapon'" (*Revista vea* 1975b). The statement, which can be read as a sexual joke and an eroticization of artillery weapons, lets us note that discourse on transsexuality in the sensationalist press allowed the coexistence of notions that in other official contexts

were incompatible: the admissibility of corporal transformation¹⁴ (with "corrective" purposes) with military rituals and practices, and the image of an erotic and sexually active femininity in the figure of the decent wife. This juxtaposition exhibits the many folds and textures of the regime's patriarchal discourse, which explicitly contradicts the rhetoric of the patriotic woman, the family, and Catholic fundamentalist values that the dictatorship officially promoted.

However, the linearity and irreversibility between the "yesterday" and "today" in the press stories are constantly interrupted by moments of return and regression to the past. One of the aspects of "sex change" that generated significant social anxiety was the way in which a change in gender identity could affect an understanding of sexual practices. When the press published the news in 1974 that Marcia Alejandra was then living with a man who was her partner, the media called into question any distinction between transsexuality, homosexuality, and sodomy, stating that she could now be prosecuted under Article 365 for the crime of sodomy. In this case, it was the legal discourse that was responsible for differentiating and separating transsexuality from homosexuality, separating Marcia Alejandra from her offending past: faced with the possibility that Marcia Alejandra could be arrested and prosecuted for sodomy while living with a man, attorney Abogado Hugo Soto explained that sexual relations between people with different sexual organs did not constitute a crime, even if one of the subject's genitalia was "artificial" (*El Mercurio de Antofagasta* 1973). Attorney Soto, who in this article talks about "laboratory" men and women, removes the imagery of the hermaphrodite that persisted in some medical discourses of the period, showing instead a certain optimism about the "scientific" and "modern" aspect of such surgical technologies, and admitting that the body should not be understood as strictly natural but as coconstituted by and through technical intervention. This argument coincides with legal discourses at the time that reasoned that the juridical logic behind the crime of sodomy is the principle that any copulation must take place between people of different sexes (which, in fact, implies male and female genitals), even when the sexual act is not intended for procreation (Arañcibia 1966).

Among the press accounts that mention Marcia Alejandra published between 1974 and 1975, we observe that her image was regularly exploited on the covers of newspapers and magazines, and that photographs were used to portray her both in everyday scenes and in her role as a showgirl. The diptych format of the photo spread, used to visualize the "before" and "after" of the surgery, was used only once (fig. 2), in an article published in October 1975 in *Revista vea* (1975a), a tabloid magazine of broad national circulation that was supportive of the military regime.



Figure 2. "Confesiones de un transexual," *Revista vea*, October 9, 1975, 2–3

In these images and their accompanying captions, one visual feature immediately stands out: the discrepancy between the large size of the image on the left, which occupies half of the page (with no context) and shows Marcia Alejandra looking at the camera half-naked and coyly placing her finger in her mouth, and the small photograph on the upper-right, which shows her emerging from a police van. The captions for these photographs read, "Marcia Alejandra after the operation (left). Above, when she was still a man and was arrested in Antofagasta's 'Red Circle.'" What trajectory might we trace between the surgery's "before" and "after" (or between the "yesterday" and the "today" of the body represented in the images)? How is this trajectory related to the narrative of the precoup chaos and the postcoup order promoted by the dictatorship to present itself as a therapeutic factor for society? The captions attempt to establish a linear, progressive narrative that subscribes to the discourse that surgery presents as a bodily, moral, and legal correction. But that temporality and this

historicity (which is also expressed in the use of both masculine and feminine pronouns to refer to Marcia Alejandra) are visually and conceptually disturbed on the plane of the image.

The caption of the police van photograph seeks to restore the masculine identity of Marcia Alejandra, but the image does not show a male body. We do not know the extent to which Marcia Alejandra managed the circulation of her own image, or if indeed she was able to at all. But the postoperative photography of Marcia Alejandra is confronted with an image of her past as a "transvestite" (which also appears in press releases that reported that before surgery Marcia Alejandra identified herself as "Marcela"). The bodies exhibited in the images are not rendered equally "feminine." Neither do they help trace a clear path between a clearly masculine past and a clearly feminine present. Although the "before" of Marcia Alejandra being arrested by the police, due to her nonnormative expression of gender and her work in the night trade, corresponds with the images of chaos and social disorder that sought to codify the past of the Unidad Popular, the photo of the present is stereotyped and continues to point to the scandal of "yesterday" through the sexualized pose. Furthermore, in the photograph on the left, Marcia's muscular arm places a masculine trait in the visual foreground, making reference to some of the estrangements of "sex change." Although press coverage and medical discourse attempt to establish surgery as a decisive point that makes Marcia Alejandra's biographical narrative temporally coherent, they ultimately reveal that a clear distinction between before and after cannot be reduced to a single event.

The cis-hetero-phonocentric form of writing and reading, to invoke Jacques Derrida's notion of phonocentrism, is organized according to a linear norm with a straight orientation and an irreversible temporalized event (like the "sex change").¹⁵ Such norms, however, can never be totally imposed, since they are limited from the inside by spacing and interval (Derrida 1998). From this perspective, if the images illustrate the linear sequence dictated by the captions to present a past to which we should not return, it seems most logical that the photograph depicting the scene of police repression should be on the left side (where reading begins), and that the postoperative image of Marcia Alejandra would be on the right. Nevertheless, the placement of the photographs is reversed, as if the inversion and the disproportionate size of both photographs could convert a temporal axis into a spatial axis, turning the "before" and the "after" into a forward and a behind. What if we read the queer arrangement of these two images to indicate that, far from mere linear trajectory and progressive change, a temporality of the repressed instead incessantly returns? This return then also points to forms of historical violence that return, and indeed that never fully disappear. Does the coexistence of what lies ahead, and what remains behind, signal that the identity of the trans subject—now marked by its legality—is always on the verge of falling back into illegality?

The spatial axis visually arranges the images in terms of the near and the distant, opening up a tactile dimension that diagrams a criminal, untouchable body (that must stay behind, in the past) and a future body (that must move forward, and to which a greater proximity is possible). But the photograph of Marcia Alejandra as a *vedette* along with her “criminal” image can also be seen as a cis-hetero-patriarchal resource that has the effect of “cooling” and distancing the postoperative image of Marcia Alejandra in order to protect the public from her eroticism. What proximity—and what frictions—are admissible here in relation to trans bodies?

These images allow us to reflect on the multidirectionality of the temporal and spatial narratives presented here, because the perturbations on the time line before and after the “sex change” are also present in the images of Marcia’s past and future body. For medical narratives, as well as those used to characterize Marcia in the press, these two temporal locations are articulated as stable and producing a coherent relationship between old and new. On the other hand, as Atalia Israeli-Nevo (2017: 39) points out, the temporal space of such a transition can be understood as an opportunity to “decelerate” time, distorting “a trans linear temporality, sending it back and forth.” For Israeli-Nevo, “this slowing moves trans time, exposing the lines that link normative trans narratives and cisgender temporality” (Fisher, Phillips, and Katri 2017: 9). This photo spread allows us to reflect on a temporality that transgresses progress, and what these images show is how the background becomes the foreground: between Marcia Alejandra’s photograph (today) as a showgirl and the (past) one of her police arrest, a spatial estrangement moves away and brings closer both images, producing the return and the proximity of the repressive time that wants to be left behind.

According to the normative temporality of the press, genital modification surgery is presented as a means to eliminate conflicts with the law in people who were marked from a police perspective as being of an “indeterminate sex.” However, placing transgender people in a position where they violate the law was not (and is not) a scene that we have left behind us, especially when it is possible to undergo a genital modification surgery, but civil sex and name changes were not (and are not) legally protected. While in the 1970s there were juridical procedures that permitted some changes of sex and name, this depended entirely on the judge in question. This was, however, a precarious situation, and laws in the 1970s did not guarantee the right to identity of trans individuals writ large. To this day, despite the legality of sex-change operations, Chile does not have a gender identity law (such as Argentina’s 2012 Gender Identity Law) to facilitate the civil modification of name and sex. If the before and after of Marcia Alejandra’s sex-gender transition that the photo spread sought to make visible was haunted by the yesterday and today that the dictatorship sought to establish to move on from the Unidad Popular past, is it possible, using

these images, to think that the affirmation of progress as a historical norm constitutes a euphemism for naming violence as a historical norm?

Conclusion

What do these images have to say to those who look at them decades after they were produced? It is indeed possible to imagine that Marcia Alejandra's photographs operate as an interruption, a suspension of temporalities in which we might expect to view a passage forward, a transition of body, form, desire, and time.

During the Chilean dictatorship, there was an attempt to decriminalize (and heterosexualize) the trans body through the mechanism of surgery, which was even practiced in public hospitals, as a sign of technical-moral progress. However, the trans body exists in a space of rupture. It unleashes a more complicated series of temporary breaks that take place both inside and outside the images I have presented here. Indeed, if we return to the cover of the book *Chile Yesterday Today*, it is possible to observe an affinity between the photograph of the barricade (on the left) and that of Marcia Alejandra emerging from the police van (on the right) that seeks to produce an image of the "chaos" of "yesterday" that must be left behind. But the same does not hold true for the image of the present. The photograph of the white nuclear family, happy in the image of "today," remains in conflict with the sexualized pose of Marcia Alejandra that continues to point to the scandals of yesterday—scandals that become visible in part because of the eroticism of the image.

The images composed by the sensationalist press to narrate Marcia Alejandra's transition in a linear and unidirectional manner ruins the progressive logic between the before and after of dictatorship—between "chaos" and "order," "yesterday" and "today"—causing a confrontation of temporalities and a confusion of political affinities. The media images of Marcia Alejandra are a photographic residue, a set of images discarded by historiographical narrations, lost in the sensationalist pages of newspapers that are rarely reread as historical evidence (or for their queer potential). But these are residual images that return, producing different forms of distance and proximity. Does not the reappearance of the image of Marcia Alejandra emerging from the police van, originally published before the coup d'état in March 1973,¹⁶ remind us that, at least for some of us, the state of emergency is the rule, even in a supposed democracy? These images allow us to reflect on how the foundational, progressive, and modernizing discourse of the state, through which the dictatorship sought to legitimize the coup d'état to "normalize" society, is interrupted when the trans body reintroduces a moment of repression prior to the coup. For this is a moment that repeatedly returns—one that is never to be left behind. The trans body inhabits a rupture that disturbs such simple binaries between the past and present, "yesterday" and

“today.” By exhibiting the violence of state security forces, the trans body disrupts the safe and comfortable boundary between the before and after of the dictatorship, showing the return of a repressive time from whence we can never truly escape. Perhaps these images of Marcia Alejandra’s trans*historical body show that, just as gender has no established physical, legal, or metaphorical destiny, nor are progress and modernization the only destinies of historical time.

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Notes

1. Throughout this article I use contemporary categories such as “trans woman” or “trans femininities,” although these terms were not used yet in the studied period—itsself a willful anachronism.
2. The strong preponderance of genitality in the definition of sex, which crystallizes the formula “sex change” in the social imaginary, leaves in the shadows the fact that there are not one but multiple sex-gender techniques of corporal modification, from the use of hormones and other type of surgeries such as mammoplasty, up to clothing or haircuts, which can produce the self-perceived sex.
3. It should be noted that the liberalization of the Chilean economy was executed not only by the Ministry of Economy but also by the Central Planning Office (ODEPLAN), staffed by a second generation of economists trained in Chicago and politicians linked to right-wing politics and fundamentalist Catholicism.
4. Preciado distinguishes the disciplinary sex regime, based on a dichotomous logic (man/woman) and organized around the heterosexuality/homosexuality dyad, from the pharmacopornographic regime, according to which body-control techniques do not attempt to punish or correct deviations from the norm from outside but to modulate the bodies using synthetic materials, prostheses, or the consumption of hormones, which infiltrate the inside of the individual body and modify the way of conceiving the body, in order to artificially produce a standard corporality, but in such a way that each organ no longer corresponds “to a single function or even a single location” (2014: 154).

5. An exception is the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay, where it is possible to identify a repressive policy aimed against male homosexuality (Carbone 2016).
6. It is important to clarify that, although the medical-legal procedures surrounding "sex change" did not take place behind the backs of dictatorial institutions, the information gathered so far does not suggest an official policy in relation to genital modification surgery. See Carvajal 2016.
7. A significant fact to mention is that the members of the SChSA were sympathizers of the left wing, and Dr. Osvaldo Quijada had been close to the Chilean Communist Party. During the government of Salvador Allende, the SChSA played an active role in the development of sex education policies (Barón and Lagos 1997).
8. This discussion has been recorded in Quijada et al. 1968.
9. This same argument is later taken up by Dr. Guillermo MacMillan, the doctor who developed the clinical path for genital modification surgeries at the Van Buren Hospital in Valparaíso, since 1976, who in a 1988 article stated that after surgery the applicant is then "rehabilitated" and "ends his conflict with the law due to conduct judged as immoral or dishonest" (1988: 95).
10. The members of the Chilean Society of Sexology proposed this discourse on guarantees to what in those years in Chile was called "the right to personality" (González Berendique 1968).
11. This article is part of a larger study that included the review of sixty-five articles on transsexuality and "sex change" in different newspapers of three cities: Santiago, Valparaíso, and Antofagasta (*La estrella del norte*, *El mercurio de Antofagasta*, *La estrella de Valparaíso*, *Las últimas noticias*, *La tercera*), and in the magazine *Revista vea*.
12. The Chacabuco Prisoners Camp was located at the Chacabuco Saltpeter Office, one hundred kilometers from the city of Antofagasta. It was used from the beginning of November 1973 until April 1975, with more than one thousand political prisoners.
13. In 1978, the dictatorship officially expanded military service to both men and women.
14. The nuance between correction and transformation refers to the fact that, during this period, unlike the medical and legal discourse, the Chilean Catholic Church accepted what it called a correction of the "malformed sex" but rejected "sex change," the genital modification, in "healthy" bodies (Torres in Quijada et al. 1968).
15. I return to Derrida's notion of phonocentrism understood, quickly and succinctly, as the belief that writing is merely a derived method of capturing speech, which underlies the "metaphysics of presence." Phonocentrism presupposes an irreversible and linear temporality, proper to speech and orality, an argument that, following Derrida's perspective, I want to call into question.
16. This image, with different frames, appeared at different times in newspapers and magazines of the period in May 1974, when the case of Marcia Alejandra came to light. In October 1975, when the leaflet we analyzed was published, it was the first time that the figure of the policeman was shown alongside Marcia Alejandra.

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