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***Maricón-grafía Regia: Maricón resistance, filth and the performance of
pleasure at the City of Monterrey, Mexico.***

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***Maricón-grafía Regia: Maricón resistance, filth and the performance of
pleasure at the City of Monterrey, Mexico.***

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Abstract

Maricón-grafía Regia: Maricón resistance, filth and the performance of pleasure at the City of Monterrey, Mexico.

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México, in the last fifteen years, has lived different process of political, cultural and social change. Part of those changes have been the expression and perception of sexuality and gender within public and private spaces; one example can be marriage equality which has become a Federal mandate. However, even when these transformations have allowed some social, political, and job security to members of the LGBT+ communities, its alignment with the State and hegemonic ideals over LGBT+ citizenship has facilitated the censorship and erasure of non-hegemonic LGBT+ lives from collective archives. My objective with the *Maricón-grafía* is to analyze the working-class LGBT+ exercises of resistance to the LGBT+ hegemony and homogenization, specifically the resistances performed by men that have sex with other men. In this work, I examine leisure and non-hegemonic sexual pleasure as the performance of resistance by working-class LGBT+ individuals at downtown Monterrey, toward LGBT+ hegemony. My interest centers in the performative power that public cruising between men, nightclubbing and non-hegemonic sexual practices have had in preventing mainstream LGBT+ desires from occupying spaces and homogenizing identities of downtown Monterrey. My spaces of study are the LGBT+ working-class nightclub *El*

Wateke, the public park *La Alameda* and the space for anonymous sexual encounters between men *La Casita*.

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Playlist for this thesis

Music has been a personal and important part of my research project, it accompanied me closely not only during the writing processes but also during the field work, being always present no matter where I was walking and to whom I was talking to. Here I share this list of songs you can listen to while you read, if you wish; this as an effort to make the reading process more intimate, as intimate at the experience of this research was to me.

Enjoy.

César

Introduction

1. *Corazón Corazón* by La Parodia Nacional (YouTube)
2. *La Marcha de Zacatecas* by Banda de Artilleria (Spotify)
3. *El Corrido de Monterrey* by Los Alegres de Terán (Spotify)
4. *Balajú* by La Bruja de Texcoco (Spotify)

La Vibora de la mar and those que se quedaron atrás

5. *La Vibora de la mar* by Tatiana (Spotify) [Listen to this song until it becomes unbearable for the soul, just as the *elegebete* homogenization is]
6. ...Baby one more time by Britney Spears (Spotify)
7. *Himno Nacional Mexicano* by whomever, this is just to remind you of the homonationalist presences at the march y'all
8. *Todos me miran* by Gloria Trevi (Spotify)

El Wateke: Performativity Popular, the organic refusal and how we dance all night long.

9. *Farolito* by Toña la Negra (Spotify)
10. *Veracruz* by Toña la Negra (Spotify)
11. *El Palomito* by Los Cadetes de Linares (Spotify)

12. *Suavecito* by Laura León (Spotify)
13. *Ya te olvidé (1992 en vivo)* by Rocio Durcal (Spotify)
14. *Así no te amaré jamás* by Amanda Miguel (Spotify)
15. *Desvelado* by Bobby Pulido (Spotify)
16. *La Gran Señora* by Jenni Rivera (Spotify)
17. *Rebota* by Guaynaa (Spotify)

El amor acaba: La Alameda, pleasure and negotiation in refusal of mainstream LGBT+ inclusion

18. *El Amor Acaba* by José José (Spotify)
19. *Azul (Tema principal de la Película Güeros)* by Natalia Lafourcade (YouTube)
20. *Papi Chulo* by Lorna (Spotify)
21. *Como el viento* by Celso Piña (Spotify)
22. *Saguita al Bat* by Tropical Panamá (Spotify)
23. *La Pajarera* by Buyucheck & La Abuela Irma Silva (Spotify)
24. *Siboney* by Olga Guillot (Spotify)

Hablame de mierda, hablame de meados y culo: La Casita Monterrey and the performatic filth activism

25. *Oye* by Margarita la Diosa de la Cumbia (Spotify)
26. *Me Gusta ser una Zorra* by Las Vulpes (Spotify)
27. *El Ladrón* by La Sonora Santanera (Spotify)
28. *De mi enamorate* by Daniela Romo (Spotify)
29. *Nalgas con Olor a caca* by Hija de Perra (YouTube)
30. *Lejanía* by Lisandro Meza (Spotify)

Closing remarks

31. *Cielo Azul, cielo nublado* by Pesado (Spotify)
32. *Inocente pobre amiga* by Lupita D'Alessio (Spotify)
33. *Tengo miedo torero* by Lola Flores (Spotify)
34. *Yes sir, I can boogie* by Baccara (Spotify)

...Hablo por mi diferencia

Defiendo lo que soy

Y no soy tan raro...

(Pedro Lemebel, *Manifiesto [fragment]*, 1986)

The *Centro de Monterrey* has always (will always) belong to us; *chingados que no* (Introduction)

Corazón, corazón

Being *Maricón*¹ and *norteño*² is a complex and complicated combination in México. In general the country has been constructed over a romanticized ideal of man and womanhood where the black and white images that the 1940's cinema "curated" have become mandate for the ways we act; being *un maricón* does not translate into the gendered constructions imposed, being *un maricón* subverts, or at least used to (and I will return to this point later in this introduction), the performative impositions belonging to the gendered society.

The city of Monterrey has been historically characterized for being one of the most important economic centers of Mexico, dating back to its industrial identity at the beginning of the XX century. This image that exists in the collective imaginary that has been created of the city of Monterrey also feeds into the ideals of a Christian (mostly Catholic) morale where the acceptance and celebration of diversity is out of the question. This economic identity and reliance of Christian morals was boosted with the entrance of neoliberalism to Monterrey at the end of the 1980's.

It is in this context where the values of the production of capital and the imposed Christian constructions on social performance is where I read and understand myself. It is here where I try to find my *maricón* ancestors, history and assemblages. But the *maricón*

¹ Pejorative term used to refer to gay men in México.

² People that come from the north of México

desert of Monterrey feels infinitely empty and tremendously hot. The great curse of the *mestizo maricón* writer still haunts us: being the result of ancient colonization processes in the north of Mexico that destroyed our historical lines and make it difficult finding whom we are talking about and to whom is this writing for.

I see, in finding myself in this context of denouncing the question regarding the social, political and economic process that que LGBT+ communities have taken in Monterrey, a path to get closer to understanding the *maricón* archive of Monterrey and to whom these words are being dedicated to. My objective with this *Maricón-grafía Regia* is centered on the construction of possibilities for the non-hegemonic LGBT+ archives of the counter hegemonic identities escape the censure from the ideals of citizenship and respectability.

I remember myself back at my grandmother Delia's house seating over an old brown-gray carpet watching *La Parodia Nacional* (1996-1999), a Spanish variety and gossip show, while she is seated on her old green sofa. *La Parodia Nacional* was conducted by the Spanish TV presenter Constantino Romero, and throughout the four years it was transmitted by *Antena 3*, the show was recognized for the high audience ratings it generated. The show presented itself as a cabaret styled after those spaces in the European context; circular tables with a single spherical light surrounded a stage where different performances took place and gossip of the Spanish elite was always at the order of the day.

As I watched with my grandparents, *La Parodina Nacional* was, for a side of my family, a bridge of absurdity with the European cultural roots they desired by imposition. Talking about *La Parodia Nacional* among *mestizo* middle class families granted a bohemian status; an eccentricity level that showed education and refined taste for European TV shows.

La Parodia Nacional however was an embodiment of liberty that kitsch performativity can bring to bodies, for me specially represented on the gossip segment *Corazón Corazón*.

The *Corazón Corazón* segment started with six men entering the stage singing their interest of knowing the latest gossips that magazines at the barbershop had. Wearing only a shiny platinum tuxedo with black pants, sunglasses and their hair heavily fixed with hairspray, the men would dance while six women sang about the gossip of the Spanish elite they were looking for. Contrary to the grey tones wore by the men, the women at *Corazón Corazón* were dressed in clothing with garish tones and exaggerated high wigs. The dancing number didn't have complex steps or constantly changing lyrics, it was the kitsch entertainment vessel that shared gossip to an audience; for me it was a reflection of the life I wanted to have, one with color, music, wigs, and men.

I bring to the discussion this memory of my unintentional *marica* childhood for the lesson it taught me in the years that followed; the world of *Corazón Corazón* was one not desired, one too flamboyant and feminine to be repeated by the child of a catholic middle-class mestizo family. I bring it for the song of *Corazón Corazón* playing constantly in the back of my head as a reminder of the performative possibilities, presented by Diana Taylor (2003) as the embodied knowledge and its expression by specific communities outside from the hegemonic archival spaces, that bodies can present as resistance tools to respectable LGBT+ hegemonic ideals.

*“Corazón, corazón,
corazón pinturero.
¿¡Qué pedazo de artistas*

*hay en las revistas
de mi peluquero!?”*

(La Parodia Nacional, 1996)

Why a *Maricón-Grafía, joto?*

In the last 10 years Monterrey has faced constant processes of radical transformations which have affected the way the city develops and the bodies that interact in it perform, and gender and sexuality have not been exempt from these processes. As the monuments that surround *El Rio Santa Catarina*³ that were brought down during the hurricane season, the flags of progress, modernization and the XXI century have come and gone from Monterrey. Political movements claiming *independencia* have triumphed, treasoned the popular vote, and vanished from the collective memory. The complexity of being *Maricón* and *norteño* in Mexico hasn't been a situation exempt from these changes.

Ten years of cultural, political and economic changes have also forced the *maricón* bodies of the city to search for a reexamination of their fights, organizations, and dialogues among the State and civil society. Motivated by local, international actors and the constant fight of their students, higher education institutions have tolerated the opening of LGBT+ organizations, such as UNESII⁴ at the *Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León*, CREDS⁵ at the *Universidad de Monterrey* and AIRE⁶ at the *Tecnológico de Monterrey*. Outside of university circles and more in synch with the realities lived on the streets of Monterrey, non-

³ Dried body of water that crosses the center of the city and that at the moment of this being written was in the middle of a fight against the privatization of the land.

⁴ *Universitarios por la Equidad y una Sociedad Íntegra e Incluyente*

⁵ *Comunidad de Representación de la Diversidad Sexual*

⁶ *Asociación por la Integración, Respeto y Equidad*

hegemonic LGBT+ collectives as well as hegemonic ones have appeared and consolidated their political presence. As in the case of university's LGBT+ organizations, public collectives have been pushed by the demands of a changing society and international actors as is the General Consulate of the United States in Monterrey. Some of these organizations are GESS⁷, MOVINL⁸ and COMAC⁹.

On the same line of the consolidation of organizations, there also exists the presence of self-identified radical groups which have open the dialogue to other forms of political participation and interactions with the system. In Monterrey the main two groups that have followed this track are ACODEMIS and *Colectivo Trans Monterrey*. There is no doubt that the strength that these collectives have acquired has brought benefits to LGBT+ lives in Monterrey, particularly the ones looking for institutional recognition belonging. The fights that the hegemonic LGBT+ collectives have brought today facilitate the access to marriage, labor protection and the acquisition of spaces for educational and cultural performances. Notwithstanding how positive these changes have been for particular LGBT+ realities, being part of the search for institutional recognition and belonging has caused the marginalization of the non-hegemonic identities that do not dialogue with these agendas and political performances.

These processes of marginalization have been reflected on the open exclusionary narratives that the hegemonic LGBT+ collectives have taken in order to separate the desirable gay-citizen from the undesirable *maricón* that is rendered a noncitizen; the integration of the bodies and identities that perform in accordance to Monterrey's hegemonic expectations and

⁷ *Género, Ética y Salud Sexual*

⁸ *Movimiento por la Igualdad en Nuevo León*

⁹ *Comunidad Metropolitana AC*

the ones that do not. The hegemonic LGBT+ agendas have, however, transitioned from the discourse to the praxis, a scenario where censure over identities, spaces and archives is imposed in favor of a tolerant integration to the State and its allied institutions, as mainstream LGBT+ organization and pink capitalism.

Muy puto, mi amor, para esto del pódium

muy puto, mi amor, para esto de existir

Even when the compulsory censure over non-normative identities has heavily impacted in the way the LGBT+ archives are constructed and how political activism is perceived by the heteronormative society, performative non-hegemonic LGBT+ resistance and refusal are still present in Monterrey and have helped in preventing the cooptation of public and private spaces by LGBT+ respectability and the hygienist vigilance over performance.

Throughout the performance of pleasure, clubbing, cruising and the occupation of spaces in downtown¹⁰ Monterrey, *maricón* bodies have resisted and refused the homogenization of their identities toward a hegemonic LGBT+ narratives. They have also resisted the gentrification of working-class LGBT+ spaces by the advances of the transnational private market at *El Centro* of Monterrey, gentrification that has also open up tolerance for LGBT+ mainstream identities in the reconceptualization of Monterrey.

Why a *Maricón-grafía*? I use this term as it opens possibilities for an analysis of nonhegemonic realities, spaces and archives of the LGBT+ academia of northern México. As a *norteño*, *maricón* and *mestizo* academician I see the privilege that race, gender and

¹⁰ Referred from this point on as *El Centro*

education gave me and the international positionality it has permitted me to speak from a particular platform. Yet, I also understand my responsibility in using these tools of privilege to write for, with and from the nonhegemonic LGBT+ communities I work with.

Why a *Maricón-grafía*? Additionally, I employ the term for it is important to continue this dialogue on the exercises of vigilance and censure of nonhegemonic *maricón* bodies, mostly in times when LGBT+ activism, pink capitalism¹¹ and the so-called progressive States continue to walk toward a liberal LGBT+ hegemony. I also understand the relevance of my work on the need to expand the discussion on LGBT+ urban *mestizo* topics, activism and lives outside the parameters of *Ciudad de México*¹² and Guadalajara. Because Monterrey is *norteño* city, it carries a particular *maricón* history that can't be analyzed under the discourses that have previously attempted to make sense of CDMX and Guadalajara; nonetheless, a mutual constructive conversation can be and should be established.

Whom is this *maricón* reading? And how (or what?) is he researching?

In order to present my analysis of the *maricón* performative resistances to the LGBT+ hegemony at Monterrey, I use two approaches: on the one hand a theoretical analysis and the empirical observation and, on the other, documentation of specific working-class LGBT+ spaces in Monterrey. My intention with this double-pronged approach is to place in dialogue my embodied experiences, observations and interviews during my three-month field-work at

¹¹ Referred to the neoliberal capitalization of LGBT+ identities.

¹² From this point on t Will be referred as CDMX

Monterrey, with academia's focus on queer theory, performance studies, queer migration studies and political/activism studies.

My fieldwork was performed from June to August 2019 at Monterrey, Nuevo León, México. Considering the territorial extension that Monterrey covers and that its metropolitan area has a population of 4 million, my research focuses on *El Centro* of Monterrey. Extending from *Juan Villagrán* to *Rafael Platón Sánchez* streets and from *Colón* avenue to *Washington* street, my field work focused on observing and documenting three specific spaces: the Public Plaza *La Alameda Mariano Escobedo* historic site of cruising between men; one of the oldest *maricón* cantinas at Monterrey *El Wateke/Jardin* and *La Casita Monterrey* which is one of the most important sex dungeons and dark rooms in Monterrey. All the observations were made under the principal of letting my body transit and experience the spaces in order to enrich my understanding of the *maricón* geographies of Monterrey.

The participatory observation methodology in regard to these spaces was enhanced by interviews with local LGBT+ activists of Monterrey and users of the spaces. By request of the people being interviewed, I changed their names for the purposes of this project, except for the activist Abel Quiroga and writer Joaquin Hurtado, both of them proud of sharing their work, opinions and making the readers as uncomfortable as possible.

In terms of the bibliography consulted for this project, I focused on four main academic approaches: Monterrey LGBT+ historical archive, performance studies, queer studies, and political analysis. I observe each of these academic and literary roads in dialogue in order to analyze the performative resistances occurring in Monterrey against the hegemony of the system over sexual and gender diversity. I present a possibility for understanding *maricón* lives that use their bodies as organic tools to contest the exclusionary LGBT+

agendas which reward respectable and hygienic citizenship and censure the history and realities of the otherness in Monterrey.

My theoretical starting line is Queer Studies. Even though when the Queer Studies is brought up by global north academia, a dialogue and translation can be established between Latin American and global south realities, academics and the narratives presented by Queer Studies. Having said that, I see the work of Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba, Karma Chávez, Hector Carrillo, Jasbir Puar, and Noelle Stout as their academic works contribute in the exercise of translating Queer studies to the realities of Latin America, presenting epistemological possibilities for understanding the ways in which *maricón* lives have developed in the region without a reading in favor of an imperial representation. Their work is also relevant for my project for the critique that can be formulated over the LGBT+ homogenization of respectable identities.

Continuing the line of Queer Studies, it is crucial to look at the radical Queer proposal which offer a revolutionary and anarchist understanding of the hegemonic LGBT+ hygienic censure and exclusion as Pedro Lemebel, Luis Venegas and Nestor Perlongher, their work helps me read the radical queer in dialogue with the Latin American realities. Other important queer scholars I'm putting in conversation with my work in relation to the analysis of *maricón* spaces, desire and vigilance are Sofian Merabet, and Michel Foucault who presents a relevant understanding on the heterosexual systems of domination, the configuration of the public space and the possibilities of resistance and rejection that otherness can open up.

The dialogue I construct between my research and Performance Studies, as which has become central with my analysis, is based on the premise presented by Diana Taylor (2003) in *The Archive and the Repertoire*, where the performance is the embodiment of knowledge

that on its repetition constructs, or subverts, narratives, discourses and expectations of actions and interactions. It is my hope that this analysis of marginalized bodies performance opens conversations on subjects censured and erased by mainstream LGBT+ spaces, agendas and archives. In this sense I study the work of José Esteban Muñoz, the above-mentioned Diana Taylor, Marcia Ochoa and Juana Maria Rodriguez. In relation to Performance Studies literature I also work with Leticia Alvarado, Deborah Vargas and Mary Douglas specifically on the construction of hygiene and the performative possibilities of filth.

Regarding the political analysis approach to my research, I work with the theorization over the hegemonic State and its vigilance over the bodies, the exceptions the hegemonic State creates for some bodies and restricts to other, the construction and destruction of citizenship and the possibilities for the political that the usage of the body allows to the marginalized bodies. To establish this analysis, I have reviewed the works by Giorgio Agamben, Christen Smith, Antonio Gramsci and Audra Simpson. These authors not only guide me into understanding the process of citizenship construction and State control over the bodies, but also the possibilities for identities to resist and reject the impositions exerted by the hegemonic powers in favor for LGBT+ homogenization.

***La víbora de la mar* and those *que se quedaron atrás*: Sodomy in Monterrey**

Before entering into the analysis on the exercises of non-hegemonic LGBT+ resistance to the mainstream LGBT+ homogenization at Monterrey, it is important to draw the connection between sexual and gender diversity and Monterrey, a turbulent relation which has been recurrent in for the city since its foundation in 1596. I want to start talking about the context of sexual diversity and its relation with the city, departing from the end of *la víbora de la mar*, one of significant events for the LGBT+ communities at Monterrey during the summer of 2019, the *2019 Marcha de la Diversidad* which had slowly become the main event where members of the LGBT+ communities in the city were able to socialize and become visible to the local observers. I return to this memory, and consider its relevance for this project for how the event was constructed, for how it spoke of the current division of the LGBT+ communities and invisibility of non-hegemonic *maricón* identities by the LGBT+ hegemony.

The pride event took place in *El Centro* in the middle of the summer, by grace of the *maricón* ancestors the rainbow paraphernalia didn't melt under the sun. No *cumbia* or *norteña* were played, if one wanted to dance one was forced to sync with the pop in English being displayed on the loudspeakers. Don't get me wrong, I love to sing and dance to Baby One More Time as other *joto* grad students; however, behind the music being displayed was an intention, a message directed to those participating and to those only watching: this was a cosmopolitan space nonaligned with the regional identities. Embrace it or go back home.

The children's game *La Víbora de la Mar* calls for children to make a conga style line and, together, run while music plays. Once the music stops, one kid will be trapped by two

other who had been letting the rest pass. The idea is to run as fast as you can without breaking the line which, at that point, resembles a snake moving. The catch phrase of the game, and the one that I see in communion with the LGBT+ realities of Monterrey, states that the ones at front run, run too fast therefore shall pass, *pero los de atrás se quedarán*. The ones that will stay, that ones that will not pass for not being in front of the snake or running fast enough are embodied by the nonhegemonic LGBT+ identities, the working class *jotos* to whom marriage equality does not represent an urgency.

La vibora de la mar composed by the ones at the march was divided in four sections, each of them with a specific subject and heavily surveilled by the organizing committee. At the head of the snake where located the homoparental families, making sure their kids were visible for the bystanders. After the family's contingent, came the people not affiliated to any LGBT+ organization or political agenda but that identified with the LGBT+ identities or as their allies. This second contingent, separated from the first and third contingents of the march, were people that saw in the march the possibility of encountering other LGBT+ people, have a shared afternoon, get drunk or high or, if they had any luck, hook up with someone at the event.

The third section, which was also separated from the second one was integrated by the LGBT+ organizations at the local public and private universities at Nuevo Leon. Finally, after the university students came the private sector, national and transnational companies which have given to themselves the tittle of allies of sexual and gender diversity communities; curiously enough, the last segment was not separated from the student's one, leaving only those in the second section of the march all alone.

During the march and within the division of the *la vibora* I see a reflection of the LGBT+ history of Monterrey, a reflection of *los de adelante que corren mucho y los de atrás*

que se quedarán, which is to say, outside from archives and agendas from the LGBT+ hegemonic organizations and the State. The division of the sections at the march speaks directly to the desires of satisfying the heterosexual State and society that observe and tolerate the event, displaying elements that help the observers feel comfortable and in connection with the sexual diversity identities. Children, the schooled youth and private capital, under this understanding, become catalyzers in the search for hegemonic LGBT+ agendas, beliefs and bodies to be inserted in the social construction of normality. The reflection on the division of the march made me think on a promotional video for marriage equality that was created by the local organization GESS in collaboration with other groups. On the video several homoparental white and mestizo couples and families appeared saying the message *soy como tu*//I'm like you. By talking about business successes, generation of capital and the desire of these people of being recognized as a "normal" family, the ad spoke to the comfort of the white and *mestizo* middle class viewers at Monterrey; the people speaking were as hygienic and respectable as the straight people views the ad.

These tensions, as stated before, have been present in the local LGBT+ history since the foundation of Monterrey and the colonial evolution of México, as Zeb Tortorici (2018) examines. The persecution of sodomy came with the imposition of *La Santa Inquisición* in México, depending on the accused's racial and social status, was penalized him/her by expulsion from a community, physical punishment or death. Tortorici (2018) states how even within this punitive line of persecution existed and space debate, specifically on the definition of what should be consider normal and what should be consider sodomy and therefore needed to be punished.

In the colonial archive, as Tortorici (2018) explores, the keyword behind the definition of normalcy and the persecution of sodomy is pleasure, for the presence of sexual

delight was enough evidence to condemn the perpetrators to death. Regarding the cases persecuted by *La Santa Inquisición* one of the first elements that was hunted for was whether the situation could be read as tolerable, for example the rape of an indigenous boy by a white colonist; or as an abomination that should be punished by death, for example a consensual sexual encounter between two male lovers (Tortorici, 2018).

However emblematic the manifestations of homosexual presence were during the beginning of the XX century, as presented by Quintero (2015), it is important to observe the processes of persecution, evolution and negotiation occurring between the LGBT+ identities and the state of Nuevo Leon, specifically in the city of Monterrey, *El Centro* and the spaces in which the present project centers: *El Wateke*, *La Alameda* and *La Casita*. It is important to note that the LGBT+ archive of Monterrey is one that has a) been strongly ignored by the State and b) has mostly been constructed, by hegemonic LGBT+ organizations, around the ideals of respectability and the desired hygienic gay citizenship, where marriage equality and production of capital is at its main interests. I relate the sanitization of the LGBT+ archives at Monterrey by mainstream LGBT+ organization to the case of the artist Hija de Perra at Chile whereas Luis Venega examines (2009), the radical and unhygienic work of the artist was condemned by mainstream LGBT+ organizations for it didn't reflected the proper ideals of gay Chilean respectable citizenship. In order to attend to this reality of Monterrey's LGBT+ archives, my archival approach to the context was mostly through the work of local writer and activist Joaquín Hurtado, as well as the work presented by local activist and academic Rodrigo Quintero, I also consulted the consulted the work of the Peruvian scholar Norma Mogrovejo for her approach to the history of lesbian activism in Latin America.

Joaquin Hurtado's (2017) book *La Vuelta Prohibida* is an example of the undesired archive. In his recount, the city of Monterrey translates its conservative streets to scenarios

where pleasure is sought and negotiated. Street lights are replaced by the neon ones of businesses that no one thought of when the NAFTA agreements were signed back in 1990. Cumbias are played, coke's snorted and the *fara fara*¹³ groups reclaim the streets that the universities and the neoliberal market and the State have taken away from them. Through Hurtado's writing (2017), he recovers the censored memories of the *maricón* sexual desires that have become a complicated relative to the *mainstream* LGBT+ organization which have established (or have tried to establish) kinship lines with the international LGBT+ history and symbols, as well as the creation of patriotic LGBT+ Mexican citizens. I connect the concept of the patriotic LGBT+ citizenship to the homonationalist citizen presented by Puar (2007), whom defines the patriotic citizenship as that which is ascribed to the desired identity, history and memory that the State has generated for itself and that helps in defining whom belongs to the national image and who doesn't.

Going even further in the archive of *maricón* Monterrey it is relevant to observe the work of Rodrigo Quintero (2015), a local author who has invested part of his academic life in creating the condensed historic research of LGBT+ life and politics of contemporary Monterrey. Even when the work of Quintero (2015) focuses on the LGBT+ mainstream organizations, his historical examination of the city has become important in the *maricón* analysis of Monterrey. For the purpose of this project, I don't want to dive deep into the colonial history of Mexico and its relation to homosexuality since most of the available archive refers to the power dynamics and persecutions occurring at the capital and neighboring cities. The archive on the colonial rule on northern Mexico is similar to the one

¹³ Regional music groups formed by an accordion, a *tololoche*, a saxophone and a *bajo-sexto*

established on the capital in relation to sodomy, its persecution, religious judgement and execution (Quintero, 2015).

Contemporary LGBT+ history of activism and political life in Monterrey differs on visibility and ideology in relation to the one lived at Mexico City. While in CDMX the political life of LGBT+ groups was characterized by the presence of Marxist and anti-institutional narratives, in Monterrey a general condemnation of communist movements had already been circulating the social spaces since 1963 (Quintero, 2015). By 1979 Mexico City based organization as FHAR¹⁴, Oikabeth and *Grupo Lambda* alongside working class organizations were able to take the streets with the first LGBTT+ protest against the State and in solidarity with revolutionary movements in Latin America (Mogrovejo, 2000).

While interviewing Joaquin Hurtado we both agreed on the lack of *maricón* Marxist narratives in Monterrey and how the absence of the same had its effects on the way the LGBT+ communities move on today. Still, Hurtado points out how the *maricón* Marxist narratives didn't last long at the capital. The arrival of the HIV/AIDS epidemic by 1983 in Mexico City and 1986 in Monterrey, altered the political interests of the organizations; the ability of obtaining and developing the needed treatments became a priority over destruction of the capitalist State and the imposition of the dictatorship of the proletariat (Mogrovejo, 2000).

While the mainstream LGBT+ political life of Monterrey was far from the Marxist ideals of some of the organizers and social movements in Mexico City, the presence of non-hegemonic LGBT+ agendas and activist was not; marginalized and radical LGBT+ organization at Monterrey were responsible for the first wave of political and social visibility

¹⁴ *Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria*

at the city. While enjoying a joint of weed Hurtado talks about how tired he is of the political LGBT+ activism in Monterrey. He has given all his life to it and now is, by no means, interested in starting a fight regarding political ideology or who can win the contest of who is the most oppressed one.

Even with his general separation from the mainstream LGBT+ activism, Hurtado points out the importance that non-hegemonic identities have had at Monterrey, specifically trans men and women and people living with HIV/AIDS. On the communal LGBT+ memory the image of trans women marching at the front of the 1999 *Marcha del Orgullo* is still present, as well as the memories of the group *Movimiento Abrazo* welcoming people living with HIV/ AIDS in Monterrey into safe spaces.

This *maricón* activism that still exists in Monterrey and deferring from the homogenized narratives has been fundamental for the diversification of activisms and social struggles, not only in regard to the LGBT+ arenas but also in terms of the protection of *El Centro* of Monterrey, the few natural green areas at the urban space and for the political rights of indigenous communities in the city. Although ignored and censured the *maricón* archive of Monterrey, the historical presence of the lives and agendas it registers, coalition with other movements in resistance, specifically the work of radical trans women, has become part of the non-hegemonic LGBT+ collective memory and lives.

These *maricón* contexts exist not only in regard to the works of Hurtado and the aforementioned Quintero, but also the collective memory of the *barrios* and its neighbors at the city. Memories where the presence of people that never subscribed to the norms is still felt; whether under anecdotes of sexual endeavors or crimes against the social order, the remembrance of those *maricón* identities still exists at Monterrey. One example of this collective memory and effort is the photographic work of Aristeo Jimenez (2009) who has

captured the intimacy and survival of the working-class LGBT+ people at Monterrey and its *barrios* as *La Coyotera* and *La Independencia*.

The 2019 *Marcha por la diversidad* ended, on that extremely sunny and hot summer day, in the same problematic tone in which it was physically arranged: from the erasure of trans identities, to the presence and celebration of the police forces and the local government for their work toward the LGBT+ struggles. As I walked down *La Vibora* I encountered a friend whom has worked all of her life for her trans sisters and communities. She was dripping sweat, trying to find a shady spot to stop and avoid the sun. We greeted as old friends greet each other after a long time of not seeing each other. Even with the joy in the air we both knew how problematic the march was, how hegemonic the event had been performed for a 19th time. She wanted to spill the tea, *yo me pongo el chal*; once again the trans collective had been promised the front of the march and, again, been ignored at the beginning of the event, this time in the name of the families and children.

Le pregunto si ya se va, si se retira

Ella dice que no, que jamás

que ahora se queda y la aguantan porque va pa' largo.

Siempre va pa' largo con estos perros.

El Wateke: Performativity Popular, the organic refusal and how we dance all night long

I

Inside of the middle-class university *mestizo* sector talking about the center of Monterrey, especially among those of us born between 1989 and 1997, it's accompanied with the memories of the so-called war against drugs. The images of clubs being shut down by the police or the organized crime are constant in the communal imaginary. Still, the center of Monterrey never interrupted its life, never turned off its neon signs and stopped its labor force.

Among hegemonic and non-hegemonic LGBT+ *memories* in *El Centro* of Monterrey the *Wateke/Jardin* cantina comes up as the perpetual vibrant space that welcomes all. The bravest *jotos* sell it as a space without limits, distant cousin of the novel *El Lugar Sin Límites* by author José Donoso; a space where everything for everyone can occur. Forced rite of passage for each and every one of us that self-identified ourselves as *maricones*; for the LGBT+ hegemonic identities educated under racialized and class divided spaces, a spectacularizing of the otherness that will give them something to talk about within their circles and fill up their smartphones with videos and photographs that deny the dignity and celebrations of the other.

I read *El Wateke* as a location in Monterrey that extracts itself from the temporal and geographic notions that conservative, neoliberal and industrial social desires have imposed on the city. Throughout the years *El Wateke* has constantly emanated life and emotions; for more than thirty years it has maintained its doors open for the workers of Monterrey and the

maricón identities that overpass the hegemonic respectability of the mainstream LGBT+ ideals of Monterrey.

Anyone can enter the *Wateke*, anyone that crosses the rainbow painted over the main entrance of the cantina, which promises to be open 24/7, is guaranteed moments full of emotion to. The rules to be followed at *el Wateke* are dictated by the drums, clarinets, trumpets and movements that occupy the space. Above everything, it's important to not be uptight toward those who work there or those that frequent the establishment. For as much as *El Wateke* gives to those who visit it, it will also charge them back. An embarrassing expulsions from the cantina to the *Colón* avenue by the commensals and the security team of *El Wateke* is the punishment for those that dare to disrupt the nonstop dace, interrupting the joy for those that have subverted Monterrey.

During my talks with the local writer Joaquín Hurtado the discussion on *El Wateke* was one of importance for what it represents for *El Centro* of Monterrey and for the evolution it has had since the 1980's; evolution in connection with the gentrification processes at Monterrey and the political diversification of the city, the state and the country. For Hurtado, the possibilities that *El Wateke* offer are not as vibrant as they use to be. Hurtado explains to me, sexual acts use to happen on the tables next to the main dancefloor, surrounded by broken beer bottles and people snorting *perico*¹⁵.

I was born too late in the 90's to have been a witness to that performance. Still *El Wateke* continues to carry the memories of that no so distant past. The persistent existence of *El Wateke* allows us who can't stop dancing, to experience the possibilities *El Centro* of

¹⁵ Cocaine

Monterrey offers, possibilities that welcomes *los maricones, putos, jotos, lenchas, mayates, dragas* and *trans* folks and that have been constantly erased from the LGBT+ archives and memory of Monterrey. This erasure from the archive, for Taylor (2003) represents the institutional effort to save desired memories and knowledge that comply with the performative hegemonic expectations, while ignoring or censoring those experiences that do not fit within the official archive.

In this section I explore *El Wateke* as a space for otherness, the no one's, non-citizens of Monterrey for whom the performance of pleasure is the flag of their identities. I also intend to understand *El Wateke* as a counterhegemonic geographic possibility that contests the expectations over respectable and hygienic LGBT+ citizenship; building, in between *cumbia* and *cumbia* organic resistance against the hegemonic integration that the LGBT+ activism has imposed with the support of the State and the neoliberal market. How fascinating that musical moments were to the ones experienced at the pride parade where no *cumbia* and *norteña* could be heard.

However, it is important to recognize that even when *El Wateke* offers (us) memories and experiences of joy and pleasure, the reproduction of violence is still present. For those of us that frequent *El Wateke* knowing that our night can end with a robbery or a fight is not an uncommon thought. It would be a generalization trying to draw a utopic picture of *el Wateke* without acknowledging how this space also threatens the life of its own patrons.

During my time in Monterrey I was able to experience the *Wateke* in several occasions, each and every one of them with their particularities regarding how my body moved through the cantina and how it ended interacting with other patrons. I want to focus on one night in particular when *el Wateke* served as a collective point of convergence for a

different sector of the *maricón* and LGBT+ communities in Monterrey. On this particular night *El Wateke* transformed between the allowance for the performance of pleasure and the exertion of violence, specifically over trans women.

One doesn't visit *El Wateke* alone; company is not a requirement for entering the cantina yet is encouraged by those of us that visit it. It's easier to move, dance and invite other people to join your group. My colleagues and I decided to start that night at *El Betos*, bar iconic cantina among the *metalero*¹⁶ community and that have acquired popularity among *maricones* for its cheap beer prices and general feeling of welcome toward sexual and gender diversity, not for being an openly LGBT+ establishment but just a commercial establishment for which the identity of the barer of currency is irrelevant.

Among the colleagues that decided to join us that night, just two of them had not visited *El Wateke* before and, as any other newcomer to the venue, an air of incredulity and fear surround them. How come they could not believe that Monterrey housed a place as *El Wateke*? That other *maricón* lives where possible in northern México? Part of the group invested on calming their nerves, assuring that the night waiting ahead of us promised to be great. A few of them insisted on watching over their wallets and phones, also avoiding being alone. I omitted my participation from the chat, preferring to observe the dialogue; in the process playing with the leg of a friend, letting him know I wasn't planning to end the night alone. The TV's at *El Betos* showed a football match. Not that I care for the sport, but it was poetic how they dissociated with everything that was happening that night.

Todo mundo celebró el gol

¿Yo? bueno yo tomé, tomé a mi salud

A la noche y sus brujas

The arrival to *el Wateke* was characterized by a conversation with a police officer who's *granadera*¹⁷ had stop working across the street of the cantina. His advice for us was to look for another bar to spend the night, travel to other side of the city but importantly to avoid *El Wateke* -*Allí está muy cabrón, está muy pesado y les van a hacer algo*. His warnings over *El Wateke* were aligned with the social discourse that has been constructed against the poorest areas at the center of Monterrey. As with the spaces research by Ochoa (2014) at Venezuela, they where read as areas of deviation that offered nothing for the respectable straight citizens of Caracas and where violence will be exerted over the bodies non-desired as by the punitive authorities. With the arrival of other *granaderas*, symbols of the persecution and repression against LGBT+ people in Monterrey, we decided that our presence in that spot had extended longer than required and the inside of *el Wateke* we would be safe; at the end we were *otros jotos más* and police had historically not been our ally.

For more than 30 years the doors of *el Wateke* has been open for anyone passing by, for more than 30 years it has fulfilled its promise of offering intense nights to its patrons. Even with the lack of permanent owners and the continuous threat of the organized (and disorganized) crime, the neon's sign of *El Wateke* continues to shine; the multicolor fake sky that covers its ceiling continues to light out hips and asses, shaking away a society that has constantly rejected us.

¹⁷ Pick-up style truck used by the police at Monterrey

El Wateke is located on the *Colón* avenue, between *Colegio Civil* and *Juan Méndez* streets at the skirts of the center of Monterrey in one of the oldest working-class *barrios* of the city. *El Wateke*, at simple sight is not read as a cantina focused on a working class clientele, completely orange on the outside, it is only a rainbow at the main entrance what reveals the identity of the bar. On our talks, Hurtado (July, 2019) specified how *El Wateke* was never intended to be a space for the *maricones* of Monterrey, rather it was open for the workers on the industrial sectors of the city, yet it slowly was appropriated by the trans women who lacked of leisure and working spaces. The presence of trans women at *El Wateke* continues to there, provided with the rejection of their presence from mainstream LGBT+ *antros* and bars at the metropolitan area of Monterrey.

After passing the rainbow at the entrance of the cantina, a cacophony of sounds, emotions, looks and desires fill up the air; kisses followed by hands going under shiny belts become mutual emotions. I open my first *caguama*¹⁸ of *Carta Blanca*, enjoying *Los Cadetes de Linares* in the background, observing the *sombrerudos*¹⁹ men and women dancing, letting mustaches and crimson lips (not necessarily paralleled features) touch, reclaiming a song from the *macho* imaginaries of Monterrey in the name of the *maircón* lives.

Currucú, currucú; le cantaba el palomito

Currucú, currucú; que volviera a su nidito

(*Los Cadetes de Linares*, 2007)

¹⁸ Beer bottle with 940 ml of content; extremely popular at Monterrey for its affordable ratio between price and content.

¹⁹ cowboy-styled

As the music advanced so did my body following the *norteña* and *cumbia* music desire of the DJ at the dance-floor with the friend with whom I had established a sexual dialogue. My pleasure, as well the pleasure of the people on that dance-floor was interrupted, however, by the need of foreigners to *El Wateke* to record our intimacy, to record our imperfect exaggeration.

Under the historical oppression by the heteronormative society and institutions, *maricón* bodies have been known to use exaggeration as a tool of resistance and contestation to the normative and vigilant spaces. José Muñoz (1999) identifies this exaggeration, within the Latinx performance artists, as *chusmeria*, the exaggeration of bad taste and repetition of qualities that the hegemonic aesthetic standards have rejected. By borrowing the Cuban term, Muñoz (1999) identifies a category for resistance that relies on the undesired body, the abject presence (Alvarado, 2018), as the main platform to reverse the advance of the norms regarding social interaction, gender and sexual expressions.

During our ritual dance at *El Wateke* we were the *chusmas*, we were performing our own take on the *chusmeria* and with us an entire cantina separating themselves from the sexual vigilance of Monterrey through rituals in which hips and asses generated harmonies that spoke to the streets and their history. For the foreigners to *El Wateke*, the rituals being performed by the unknown bodies enabled to justify their prohibited visit to the space where *maricón* pollution, what Douglas (1966) observes as the capacity of the undesired bodies to contaminate the desired ones, was being performed. The sense of safari, of being there only for their entertainment and the future of their friends, permitted the visitors to construct a wall dividing them from the rest of us, whom would be on their smartphones to be shared, among laughter, between their friends. This exercise of recording the *chusmas* can be

analyzed under the tensions that otherness and filth generate toward hegemonic identities. The exercise of recording represents the tension to the excess being performed by the patrons from el *El Wateke*, reaction evidencing the threatened subjects and norms that the *maricones* contested.

Let us think about the duality of filth and hygiene: each of them defines a specific state in which bodies are being read under the umbrella that a determine space and time covers; filth and hygiene are not static, for the concepts constantly navigate the determined will of groups and their norms (Douglas, 1966). In the correlational duality between filth and hygiene a measurement of shock, toward the presence of filth, can be identified. Filth generates in the spectator different variations of shock, being the two extremes total repulsion or laughter, (Douglas, 1966), however distant these reactions are they both commune on being based on the shocking filth awakes on the body.

By recording the (our) bodies at the dancefloor the hegemonic spectators addressed their own tension toward the filth and excess being performed; even with the eternal laughter that the repetition of the videos generates in them, it ends up evidencing the tension that the restrains of the norms has over their bodies, identities and performance. We continued our ritual, making sure our sweat was shared among all. An anonymous hero addressed the situation requiring the recording master to stop their endeavor or being required to leave.

¿Entendiste?

As the music continued at the central dancefloor our group decided to resume our transit through the rest of the rooms where other tones and rhythms where being displayed. We recharged our *cagauamas* and picked up some plastic cups for those who didn't have a beer on hand, not sharing one's own drink was not an option. Color lights illuminated our

exit from the dancefloor, that combined with announcement of the DJ that *las super estrellas estelares Amanda Miguel, La Tessorito y Rocio Durcal* would start their show soon, directed our feet toward the second floor of *El Wateke*, space known as *El Wateke vip*. To reach the next spot we were required to pass the sea of dancers that keep arriving at the cantina.

Guarding our walk, a *vibora* formed by the tables where people enjoyed their beers, talks, a well-deserved drunk-nap and passionate making out moments, dividing enough space for us to walk. Camaraderie among strangers, ropes of unknown solidarity; I was thankful for being there, curiously enough feeling safer than on the streets, school or my home.

II

*Me atrapaste, me tuviste entre tus brazos
me enseñaste lo inhumano y lo infeliz que puedes ser*

(Rocio Durcal, 1988)

The second floor of the *cantina* is no different to the rest of the place, there is in fact no element that will point it to be a special place or at least one that distance itself from the rest of *El Wateke*. The energy of the space, however, moves from the shared-public one, to a more intimate which is protected by the lack of illumination, being only neon lights on the ceiling, the lights at the bar and the lone lightbulb at the restrooms the only guides for those looking to take a seat around a dancefloor waiting for *las reinas de la noche*.

Same as the transformation given to *El Centro* by nighttime, and the possibilities it brought for otherness at the city, the change of the settings at the *Wateke vip* permitted

different moods and interactions to arise at the space. These intimacies being shown were not unknown to the rest of *El Wateke*, however the lack of light, the romantic music and construction of a closed aesthetic of the second floor, facilitated the interactions to be more intimate and safer for non-hegemonic bodies to move freely, as trans women, than they could have at the rest of the cantina.

By the moment we had taken our seats the *travesti*²⁰ show had already started and “Laura León “*La Tesorito*”” was finishing her number *Suavecito*. The end of the song was accompanied by a wave of cheers; *todos los jotos nos emocionamos* for being, just for a short time, near one of the divas of popular music in México. *La Tesorito* exited the dancefloor and, with all her royalty, blew kisses and made hand gestures. -¡*Loba!* - someone screamed in the dark, reaffirming the idea that her presence, that night, was one divine; temporally sacred for the rest of us, at least until the night lasted and the cantina allowed us to stay. The excitement was embodied and shared, eyes with tears, others with nervousness and lust. I felt my hands sweating in expectation for the next queen, allowing myself to feel the change in scenery and shared affections. In the dark, once again, my eyes encountered the ones of the friend I’ve already started a corporeal dialogue; we both froze in the silence the DJ had made before introducing the next performer, the next queen to take the stage.

...Hablar me impiden mis ojos,

y es que se anticipan ellos

viendo lo que he de decirte

²⁰ I use the term in Spanish *travesti* instead of drag in order to acknowledge the genealogy of Mexican artists performing as music divas outside of the mainstream drag show industry imported from the US.

a decírtelo primero...

(Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, pg. 8)

After some seconds of silence, the DJ announced the next diva to take the stage, this time was *La Super Estrella* Rocio Durcal, who entered the dancefloor lip-syncing *Ya te olvidé*. Being Rocio Durcal one of my favorite singers, I wasn't able to contain my excitement of being near, at least, a reflection of her. As the spotlight illuminated her, Rocio proceeded to place the microphone over her face, twisting her hand as for it to work as ceiling mounted microphone stand, and repeated flamenco inspired dance-moves that shacked her sequin dress. While I was able to sing along and enjoy that moment with Rocio, I could not stop reflecting on how the show differed from the aesthetics that the drag scene in Monterrey had constructed, not only in how the show was performed, but also on how the bodies were consumed. The essence of the separation between *travesti* show and drag show rested on a class division and the performance of the same.

Rocio at the *Wateke vip* departed from the repeated aesthetics by mainstream drag performers, specifically the ones that had acquired popularity among the hegemonic LGBT+ circles of the city; bodies that had been able to present shows to upper middle-class sectors of the city, as ones located at *Barrio Antiguo*²¹. The Rocio at the *Wateke vip* responded to the logics in which marginalized bodies negotiate their citizenship and construction of femininity with the hegemonic LGBT+ *sectors* and the State. I connected this reality to the work of Ochoa (2014) in the form in which *transformistas* and beauty queens had to negotiate the production of their femininity in relation to the hegemonic desires over it in order to perform

²¹ Referred to the old quarter of the city, popular for its nightlife focused on middle and upper middle class sectors of society.

and survive. Her thin body, earrings falling with each movement and old sequin dress were the elements presented as part of her agency and demand for existence.

Under the demands of normative aesthetics of mainstream drag performance, the body of Rocio from the *Wateke vip* falls into the abysm of the unwanted, the abject non-respectable identity performance examined by Alvarado (2018) that breaks the imposed rules over LGBT+ performance and that break the desires and expectations of entertainment by hegemonic groups. Under the context of Monterrey and how its hegemonic LGBT+ organizations, public and private, have evolved toward mainstream hegemonic narratives, the possibilities of citizenship for non-hegemonic identities, as Rocio from the *Wateke vip* as well as other *travestis*, is reduced, if nonexistent. On the other hand drag queens in communion with the expectations and desires of the mainstream LGBT+ organizations experiment more visibilization.

El Wateke represents to Rocio, as well as the other *travesti* artists, a space where their performance of diva femininity, within the context of the working-class conditions in Monterrey, is accepted and celebrated by the patrons of the *cantina*. On his book *Global Divas*, Martin Manalansan (2003) examines the construction of the performance of diva femininity by gay Filipino men of the international diaspora as one that is in constant tension with the aesthetics desires and homonormative interactions on the global North and Western countries. I identify the same line of tension with the performance of diva femininity of the *travesti* artists at *El Wateke* and the expectation of western-inspired drag performance by the LGBT+ hegemony at Monterrey. Rocio and the other *super estrellas estelares* have organically constructed their performance of divahood with shared knowledge on the elements that working-class sectors of Monterrey manage in order to perform and the

embodiment of their own respect and honor to the most popular women of music in Spanish. This condition places them in tension to with the desires over drag scene that, as Manalansan (2003) explains, has centered on the exaggeration and parody of what gay men understand as femininity rather than on the embodiment of honor to the women that had animated the *maricón* nightlife of the performers and other spaces at Monterrey.

It is important to point out that even when the mainstream drag scene in Monterrey has increased its presence with events as *Regias del Drag* and those promoted by *Ulisex Mgzñ*²² the general acceptance of drag and *travesti* performers is still not positive in the city. This was evidenced in May 2019 when the conservative organization *Familias Fuertes Unidas por Nuevo León*²³ tried to legally prevent public displays of drag shows in the city by pointing the damage caused to kids by promoting “*ideología de género*”²⁴ which, they argue, perverts their development.

The mainstream drag scene, however, has learn to negotiate a state of exception, examined by Agamben (2005) as the temporal moment of tolerance where specific conditions permits the existence of specific identities, with the State, LGBT+ hegemonic organizations, and Universities by performing in accordance to their aesthetic, comedic and heteronormative family ideals as well as on specific spaces and times. In this sense, mainstream drag shows now occupy the middleclass sectors in Monterrey, specifically at *Barrio Antiguo*, during nighttime on events organized by collectives and media outlets.

²² LGBT Related magazine of Monterrey

²³ Strong United Families for Nuevo Leon

²⁴Casas, D, (2019, May). *Acusan a Drag Queens de corrupción de menores por leer cuentos a niños en Nuevo León. Sol de México*, pp. 1, Retrieved from <https://www.elsoldemexico.com.mx/republica/sociedad/acusan-a-drag-queens-de-corrupcion-de-menores-por-leer-cuentos-a-ninos-en-nl-tec-de-monterrey-3686620.html>. In relation to what *Ideología de Género* is, it refers to the term used by conservative activist at Mexico to refer to the efforts of politics in favor of sexual and gender diversity.

Rocio left the dancefloor with a standing ovation from all the people that had congregated to watch her performance. From one side of the room, trans women celebrated the kinship with the nighttime artist, from the other *sombrerudos* offered her money or drinks to celebrate her presence. We stand up and cheered for her life, for her existence in that specific moment and her performance. She crossed her hands over her chest, bowed and with a smile, left. Upon her exit, Rocio dropped her fantasia right earring, before it could be stomped by the patrons a friend collected it and ran after her getting lost between the people that continue arriving for the next performances. The next *super Estrella estelar* was the Argentinian Amanda Miguel.

Amanda took on the dance floor starting her lip-synch performance with “Así no te amaré jamás,” quickly making the rest of us to take out seats and submit to her presence and finite royalty, as I said before, this was connected to the duration of the nighttime of Monterrey and will of the nightclub. Once my friend returned from her endeavor with Rocio, we decided to return to the first floor and entered the closed dancefloor, space usually packed by *los sombrerudos, las sombreroas, y sus parejas*, yet in essence still open to everyone.

While walking to the next area two things caught my attention. The first one was the closeness to the friend I’ve been in dialogue and tension and whom I’ve been talking about since the beginning of the chapter, closeness that permitted us to flirt more under the neon. The second was a young *sombrero* making-out with a *cholo* or at least someone dressed in the transnational *cholo* fashion. Hands holding firmly *las nalgas*, lips getting bitten and biting back in response, two tongues in and out and out and in, being protected by the half-light in the *Wateke vip*. The scene left me thinking on the possibilities for two so distinct bodies to interreact, to break the *maricón* constructions on who fucks and who. Where, in the

bugarranato, (Arenas, 1992), this moment could take place? Why was this image being protected under the *santo manto*²⁵ of darkness not possible outside from that specific scene? Those questions would be answered, or at least left under more clarity once we arrived to the last dance-floor at the first floor.

The closed space was well lit, a *sombrerudo* was the DJ and he was pleasing his public that were there to dance. The space received us with “Desvelado” by Bobby Pulido, and as it started, we all took our partners and space among the sea of *Tejano* style *sombreros*. The extasy of the music exploded, and so did we.

III

The first time I heard, no not heard, that is such a simple word for what that song evokes. Let me rephrase; the first time I felt “Desvelado” by Bobby Polido was during a night at *El Wateke* when a friend and former coworker ran to the DJ and asked him for the song. When she returned from paying 10 pesos to the DJ for the song, she told me *-escucha, te la dedico*. It took only once to get me to love it; a poem dedicated to a voice in the radio so far away from the world of Pulido. Some said the song was written to the Queen of Tejano Music Selena Quintanilla. I like to think he wrote it for me.

We took our respective partners, and were quickly surrounded by the *sombrerudos* and *sombrerudas* that were already dancing in the roofed dance floor. Aesthetic divinity of the *norteño* prophecies; denim jeans adjusted by bedazzled belts that tell the story of those whom wear them over or under their stomach, that doesn't matter as long as they can get the

²⁵ Being raised under Catholicism has its repercussion in the language and expression we use.

attention of those watching the bodies drinking, dancing or just standing there. *Cantos de sirenas*.

While dancing under the multicolor lights that decorated the entire ceiling and feeling within myself “Desvelado,” my attention was redirected from the guy guiding our dance toward the interactions being shared between the people surrounding the dancefloor, the ones occupying the tables in the room and the ones at the bar. Interactions where the desire was the main motor and the show-off of capital the fuel. Such interactions made me think on the work of Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas (1992) who uses the term *bugarronato* to refer to the sexual hunt of masculine men willing to fuck the so perceived feminine men without calling themselves *maricones*. The search for the *bugarrón*, however, was a dangerous one in Cuba, especially after the revolution of 1959. Inciting *bugarrones* to fuck could result on immediate arrest and confinement on the forced-working camps *Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción*.

Even when the construction of the *bugarronato* is similar to what is experimented inside of *El Wateke*, it is important to identify that this subject is reflected also in the Mexican *Norteño* society. In his book *Translating the Queer*, Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba (2016) presents an analysis in which the Mexican *maricón* society has worked with these identitarian politics within the realms of the *mayatismo*. Under the construction of the *mayatismo* the men from working class sectors, who do not identify themselves as gay, will look for gay men in order to negotiate the exchange of pleasure for capital, either cultural or monetary (Ruvalcaba, 2016)

As in the case of the *bugarronato*, *el mayatismo* navigates the forms in which class and gender expression work as tools for the performance of pleasure among men that have

sex with other men. However these interactions that can be read as queer, by no means are they a subversive and revolutionary reflection, or new forms in which homosexual interactions occur, but rather they can be understood as the repetition of hegemonic heterosexual courtship (Gavey, 2005). The negotiation of pleasure takes place, even within the walls of *El Wateke*, between subjects with an imbalanced exertion of power; while *el mayate* can still represent the body that wants to fuck and breed *un culito*²⁶ *maricón* his economic position still leaves him on a disadvantage position, he is still susceptible to displays of violence based on the cultural and economic capital that the sexual partner possess. Similar to the case examined by Merabet (2014) at Beirut after the Civil War, where economic capital display by older men worked to attract the attention of younger working-class gays, favoring then a power imbalance between the two bodies and their negotiation of pleasure.

However, the analysis of Ruvalcaba (2016) reflects the communal knowledge that *maricones* in México have shared on the interactions we have with each other and the form in which affection and pleasure can be negotiated. Time and geography have altered the form in which these terms are understood. In this sense the term *mayate* in Monterrey refers to a man from a *popular* sector looking to negotiate affection and pleasure with other men, however his expression of gender does not necessarily have to be one that performs masculinity, rather his gender expression is read as a more feminine one. Again, a repetition of the heterosexual system of courtship in which one of the subjects continue representing the male dominant position whom takes care of a female weaker figure (Gavey, 2005).

²⁶ Little ass

Mayates y jotos paraded between the tables looking for masculine figures whom to dance or get a drink sponsored; if they were lucky, someone that could take them to another place to fuck once they left the premises of *El Wateke*. *Mayates* posing are the pictures to be framed in the memory of every *sombrerudo*; kitsch beauties for the masses that were dancing, yet dedicated only to the *machotes* drinking beer. Someone said to my ear: *pedí* “La Gran Señora.” As the *mayates* moved they looked for the aesthetic display of *norteño* masculinity: *sombreros tejanas, botas y cintos piteados*. Merabet (2014), working on the queer spaces in Beirut after the civil war, expands on the process of negotiation between men with unequal power. Merabet (2014) describes how older men, at Dunkin Donuts, displayed their capital by placing their car keys, watches, or cellular phones over the coffee tables expecting to dazzle young gay men and start a sexual connection. Along the same lines, the *sombrerudos* at *El Wateke* performed their *norteño* masculinity displaying their aesthetics as well as attitude toward other *sombrerudos* and *mayates*. As long as these men portrayed an image of hegemonic *norteño* masculinity, the *jotos y mayates* performed their desire toward them. The price for a good performance was a *caguama* or a dance sponsored by the *sombrerudos*.

It is important to note, and continuing with what I’ve mentioned before, that even when these interactions have been occurring under a negotiation of affection and pleasure understanding, the heterosexual normative into which they subscribe to still generates tensions and dangers based on power inequality between them. While *mayates y jotos* control their agencies by accepting or rejecting *sombrerudos* on their space and their search of pleasure, the hegemonic masculinity performed by the *macho* figure can signify violent interactions in a space which will protect more hegemonic displays of masculinity and

homosexuality, even when in general it welcomes everyone. Following what Gavey (2005) examines, the construction and validation of the hegemonic masculinity, whether is hetero or homosexual, is connected to the exercise of violence in connecting with power imbalance. Similar to what a rite of passage implies, violence will open a pathway for validation and integration to the hegemonic males that reproduce it; in the case of men that have sex with other men will partially extract them of being targets of homophobia and permit them use it against non-hegemonic people.

Before continuing on to the last dance floor at *El Wateke* and the rhythm and people that shared the moment with us, let me return to the image that closed section II of this chapter, that of the men kissing in the dark. Observing the interactions between *mayates*, *jotos*, trans women and *sombrerudos* and their perpetual connection to the heterosexual standards of courtship, the space at *El Wateke vip* offers possibilities of negotiations and homoerotic interactions in the dark. The lack of light, as well as the performance of non-hegemonic sexualities and gender expression, allow *sombrerudos*, *cholos y chacales*²⁷ to, momentarily, escape the heterosexual norms in search for subversive interactions that can't be shared with other equals. The lack of light at *El Wateke vip* works as cloak that protects the unknown intimacies at the second floor, protects the desires of the identities, their temporal lust, from the condemning eyes that other masculine identities carry; blessed be such darkness.

As the *caguamas* continue circulating among our group and the rhythms moved with them, we let the night set on ourselves, becoming one with the mood at the dance-floor. The

²⁷ Similar to a *mayate* yet with a constant reading of being non homosexual and hyper masculine, also heavenly connected to working class sector of Monterrey.

norteño music was interrupted in favor of other rhythms, other forms in which the bodies at the space could dance. The desire of the DJ was that of *reggaetón y trap*; even while still wearing his *sombrero tejano* crown he was letting other musical faiths to be displayed. I was grabbed by the waist.

Mamarre, Mamarre

Mamarre

“Rebota” by Nicky Jam, Farruko and Guaynaa (2018) helped so that the space transitioned from a regional setting to one that opened its fictional borders to other bodies and identities. As I move with my dance partner and our hands explored each other, the voices on the group started to overstep the music, the general excitement invited everyone to notice new presences at the room. My eyes shifted away from the ones I was dancing with, the same friend who was holding my waist toward his, to encounter the local LGBT+ activist and writer Joaquín Hurtado and Feminist Activist Rosy Zavala who had arrived to *El Wateke* accompanied by several drag queens and other LGBT+ activists. Being a follower of Hurtados’s work for a while, I lost no time in greeting him and Zavala. Of course, he had no idea who I was, even when we had had dinner months before, during his visit at the University of Texas at Austin; Rosy, on the other hand, did remember my face and greeted me as if we were long lost friends.

The *reggaetón* and *trap* called upon our desires, which we took and manifest as intense *perreo*. However, the scene was interrupted by the reappearance of the drag queens that arrived with Zavala and Hurtado. They opened the center of the dance floor and started to perform as if they were in the ball scene, they started to vogue. Their performance was

interesting not for the form in which their bodies moved or the political statement they were making, but for the reaction they generated on the people that were already at the dancefloor.

The general reaction from the people observing was divided; on one side people were celebrating their performance and trying to imitate them in their own overcrowded spot; the other people were rejecting this dissonant expression, showing gestures of disapproval, discomfort and silence. In considering Juana María Rodríguez's (2014) conceptualization of the gesture, the *maricón* gestures at El Wateke reflected the unheard defense of the space from the appropriation of the cantina.

One of the drag queens was just observing without participating, noticing how their performance was not in harmony with the mood and feeling of the space. She was approached by one of the people that arrived with her and who was taking pictures and that requested her to participate in the attempt of voguing -¿yo? *Yo no hago eso, no le sé-* After declining the request, the person insisted by pointing how easy it was, how it was only required of her to stand there, move her hands and be a "bitch". The drag queen tried, yet people that had to stop dancing to yield their space for the performance were demanding it again. Both the drag queens and the people that had arrived with them, with the exception of Zavala and Hurtado, left with a tone of dismay letting the *maricón* audience know that they were going to spend the night at another establishment.

Around 4 am our "night-out" was getting close to its end, so we decided to stop our dancing and enjoy some fresh air in the open patio of El Wateke. As chain smokers, we took space away from the main dancefloor so that we wouldn't bother people. "Desvelado" by Bobby Pulido started once again at the same time a fight broke near the tables where we were smoking. A trans woman had a guy grabbed by his shirt, screaming to his -too drunk to

understand anything-face. A security guard came by and pushed the guy just enough to make him fall. However, his rage against the customers had already be waken; he turned around to punch the face of the woman who fell to her feet. Other women joined to defend her, men, belonging or not to the security body of the bar, did as well but in favor of the security guard. Bottles and chairs started to fly, each beer crashing on the ground emulated the stars that are no longer visible in Monterrey as the result of the heavy pollution.

El Wateke, in its core, represents a space in which non-hegemonic LGBT+ identities can perform in defiance of the expectations and desires of Monterrey, its heteronormative constructions and hegemonic LGBT+ collectives. The cantina opens up a space in which other forms of abject citizenship can use their agency to a) validate and celebrate their existence and b) negotiate their inclusion into de process of pleasure and desire.

However, it is important to point out that *El Wateke* can't be fully understood if we apply a romantic reading of the sapce, even though its aesthetics and moods allows the flourishing of *popular* aesthetics that destroy the conceptions of beauty of the Monterrey's upper-middle and high classes, the cantina is still a space where violent (either sexual or non-sexual) interactions take place. In these interactions in which unequal power dynamics are the rule to be followed if validation of an hegemonic identity is wanted, non-hegemonic bodies (trans women, *mayates*, *putos*, *jotos*, and general feminine men) are subjected to expressions of vigilance, violence and control by hegemonic identities inside of the LGBT+ communities, specifically gay men.

Outside of the cantina I decided to depart on my own, take my own cab and think about this night; think about my body, its feelings and its relation to the cantina. After a last cigarette was enjoyed and shared among *los jotos*, I took a taxi and left. While the taxi

departed the music was still heard in the street, which was as crowded as the cantina with people working, returning home or having a late-night *taco de trompo*.

- *¿Se divirtió joven? – Sí, mucho - Uno aquí se la pasa con madre, ¿verdad? -.*

Pedimos Desvelado, pedimos más neón

más cerveza y desmedidos romances

El escritor bailaba-su esposa en suelo

a mí me sujetaban la cintura (ay, mi rey)

“yo seguiré, desvelado y sin amor”

< cierre de acordeón >

El amor acaba: La Alameda, pleasure and negotiation in refusal of mainstream LGBT+ inclusion

I

For my analysis of the forms in which non-hegemonic identities in Monterrey refuses the homogenization of their existence by the LGBT+ hegemony, public spaces represent a fundamental stage in the performance the construction of non-hegemonic *maricón* identities. In order to observe these forms of resistance, I positioned myself in the public park *La Alameda Mariano Escobedo*²⁸. Before exploring this space, I think it is necessary for me to go back in time, not only into my days of field work back in the summer of 2019, but to the summer of 2018 when *La Alameda* acquired a different meaning for me and my understanding of *el Centro*.

Porque el alma se vacía

como el cántaro en la nube

¡el amor acaba!

porque suave se desliza

como sombra la caricia

¡el amor acaba!

(José José, 1983)

²⁸ Refer from this point onwards as *La Alameda*

I had my José José *20 éxitos* CD playing out loud in the car, Agustín²⁹, a longtime friend, gets in and tells me he wants to show me something “special” about *el Centro* of Monterrey. I know I should not be driving so late at night at *el Centro* and the police are roaming the city and being stopped by them is a constant fear. *-Andale joto, te va a gustar-* Agustín insisted, and I responded affirming: we drove down *el Centro*. It was the summer of 2018 and I was enjoying my last nights at Monterrey before leaving for Texas to pursue a Master’s degree that, at that moment, felt too far away.

We crossed *Cuauhtémoc* avenue into a poorly lit street which Agustín called *-la zona del pedo-* badly and literally translated as the Fart Zone. But in a metaphorical sense, the name of the area referred to a space where people were looking for sex; where people, specifically men that have sex with other men, hunt for sex. We hadn’t driven deep into *la zona* where the sex workers waiting for clients appeared on the *esquinas*. At a red light we stopped and a young guy got close to the car to have a look at us. He smiled and posed, yet since we weren’t “looking,” although we were observing, he returned to his *esquina*.

I decided to end the night noting how problematic that late-drive was over our intrusion as uninvited guests to the nightlife that morphed in the center of Monterrey. Agustín, during the return drive, pointed out how the center of Monterrey had a historic vibrant sex nightlife and sex-commerce ignored by people who weren’t in search of sex. He made me even more aware of this by insisting on how it can be traced back to one of the central parks of the city, *La Alameda*.

²⁹ The names of the people that were with me have been changed in order to maintain their privacy.

I walked, and explored, *La Alameda* as a space in Monterrey that functions in the search for *maricón* pleasure, desires and resistance in the face of LGBT+ hegemony. Specifically, for this chapter, I want to analyze *La Alameda* as a space of possibilities for *maricón* otherness: marginalized communities that don't fit on the narratives of respectable LGBT+ citizenship as are indigenous communities, workers of the area, and rural migrants from the state of Nuevo Leon, southern Mexico and Central America.

The presence of identities that don't align with the ideals of citizenship at *La Alameda* have been confronted by the repetition of narratives by the State, neoliberal market and allied institutions (LGBT+ university groups and hegemonic LGBT+ NGO's) classifying the *La Alameda* as a zone of high risk. The discursive imposition of danger and lack of respectability over *La Alameda* ends up erasing the agency of the people that frequent the space toward that of a non-citizen, vulnerable to institutional erasure, vigilance and punitive action.

These narratives of classifying *La Alameda* as a dangerous space and the people that frequent it as outsiders to the parameters of respectable citizenship, have also been repeated by hegemonic LGBT+ organizations, which have affected mostly *maricón* migrants. By presenting *maricón* migrants as undesired and unhygienic subjects, hegemonic LGBT+ individuals have contributed to the exertion of violence over their bodies, erasure of their histories and their continuous displacement from the center of Monterrey. While exploring online forums on anonymous sexual encounters at Monterrey the relation between *maricón* migrants, hygiene and sexual desire was a topic that came up in several occasions. In some the comments spoke to desire of middle-class men for working-class migrants, in others the comments spoke to the rejection of the individuals and the relation to crime. One of the

comments that refers to both of them, written by user A³⁰, said on the subject of having sex with a migrant “... *es mi morbo también pero le saco por dos cosas, una las enfermedades que puedan contagiarme y dos robo o golpes que me puedan hacer. Pero si me cachondeo con esa idea// ...it’s my curiosity as well but I never get into it, first because of the sickness that they can infect me and second on the burglary or violence they can exert on me. But the idea did turn me on...* (Cruising.mx, 2020). The comment by user A is the repetition on the discourse of danger and pollution that the non-hegemonic LGBT+ bodies represent for the city and the respectable LGBT+ citizen. On the same line it does speaks to the lust this polluted bodies generate, on these ideas I will expand in the rest of the section.

With the imposition of narratives over *La Alameda* and the censorship of *non*-hegemonic identities, the continuity for the search of pleasure, affection and monetary exchange among men that have sex with men has functioned as a performance of resistance and refusal to LGBT+ hegemony. These performances can be observed on the interactions and codes that men share on the public restrooms at the park, at the benches where men would sit to observe, desire and negotiate pleasure and in the surrounding areas now occupied by local commerce and the carcasses of buildings belonging to the past of Monterrey.

It is important to mention that within these exercises of performative resistance that respond to the hegemonic gay respectability tendencies of LGBT+ organizations, the State and its allied institutions, there is also the physical presence and perpetual vigilance of the State, throughout its police forces, over the *maricón* bodies and their organic performance of pleasure. This vigilance, at *La Alameda*, works in order to control the expressions of desire,

³⁰ The web usernames have been changed in order to protect the identity of the individuals. The Spanish of all online comments being quoted was respected in way it was written, this includes typos and emojis.

punish the unwanted presences of the city that works toward the construction of respectable spaces at *El Centro*.

I arrived home when, surprisingly, my family was still awake. I guess we all have shared a level of anxiety that prevent us to sleep early or that make us get up with thousands of questions in the middle of the night. They asked the expected questions and I gave the desired answers, however I took the opportunity to question them on *La Alameda*, their memories and their understanding of the space. My dad, being born in an upper middle-class household didn't express any sympathy; *La Alameda* was a place he wasn't fond of and which hasn't meant anything during his younger years.

My mother, on the other hand, being from a *barrio popular* and raised on a working syndicalist household, had different memories and feelings of *La Alameda*. She smiled while remembering her family weekends spent there, at the giant slides that came and left after being replaced by a zoo that had the same fate after the mechanical games were installed which would also disappear later. She talked about the smells, about the rich flavors of the food being sold there; on how excellent was the taste of a chopped mango that has been kept over an enormous ice block -*Con chile en polvo, si no pos ¿pa' qué?* -. Yet, she also talked about the perception of danger and the fear that prevented her from continuing going and that worried her over my interest for the park. She ends with a warning for me, to be careful, to take care of myself.

-*Porque allí va mucha gente muy cochina-*

II

In order to arrive to *La Alameda*, I take the Monterrey subway system, which is quite incomplete if we compare it to the one in Mexico City considering the extension of the city, the size of its population and the real terrain that is covered by the two subway lines that constitute it. Still, it continues being the fastest way to arrive to *La Alameda*. At the subway wagon an orchestra of the sounds of daily lives overwhelm the space, some people selling office equipment or their homemade *cumbia* CDs offered their products. Men exchanged looks, some aggressive others searching whom to seduce; always present are the trouble makers who ignore the human boundaries and act with violence against the others. I was seating across an older guy, *un don*; my eyes crossed his, which signaled his right hand which ended over his crotch. The door opened at the *Estación Alameda*, my stop, someone was playing *reggaetón* on the loudspeakers of their phone.

Te gusta el mmm, te traigo el mmm

Y Lorna a ti te encanta el mmm

Qué rico el mmm, sabroso el mmm

Y a ti te va a encantar (Lorna, 2003)

As I walked toward the park, passing the stores and motels that surround it, I had to stop to think about the gesture *del don*, my body and this research. Notwithstanding how much is needed is to validate and work on the radical counterhegemonic archive of Monterrey, it is always important to have in mind the existence of violence among its repertoire and forms in which these gestures will be experimented by the surrounding bodies. What for me as a cis *maricón* is embodied as a counterhegemonic performative of desire, for other bodies will represent the repetition of a historical form of sexual violence, the repetition

male sexual aggression. Gavey (2005) works with the concept continuum as a path of understanding the repetition of male sexual violence. In this sense, the continuum is not chronological timeline rather a genealogy of the usage of the power social and cultural imbalance between bodies that allows males to exert sexual violence over women.

Crossing *Cuauhtémoc* avenue, one of the main roads that forms part of the streets surrounding *La Alameda*, the amount of people that either work or are just passing by starts to accumulate. Women selling either candies, cigarettes and earphones; I don't stop but realize that my cigarettes are at home: a big mistake for fieldwork. Once I cross *Cuauhtémoc* avenue, I continue toward *La Alameda*, which at this point is being separated from me only by *Pino Suarez* street, also one of the most important at *El Centro*. The nightclub *Disco Alameda* is the last border before arriving to the park, an ongoing reminder of past times at *el Centro* and the life that is experienced there once the lights are out. Honks and screams, buses that don't seem to care whether the lights are red, yellow or green; just one policeman is directing the traffic, then again no one appears to care.

The arches at the different entrances of *La Alameda*, which are four in total located at each corner of the park, are crowned with the busts of the known heroes of the local history; that ones that are used to the teach the public about the history of the country. At first the heroes were local to Monterrey, but these have been slowly replaced for Federal ones, homogenized versions on the construction of the national mestizo identities, which rejects indigenous, black and LGBT+ lives. I like to think those sculptures know the importance of the park for *marica* life in Monterrey, that they know of the lustful performances and negotiations taking place at the park and are proud on the resilience that *the jotos, putos, mayates and chichifos* continue having an space, yet persecuted by gentrification, and LGBT+ homogenization.

Accompanying the thoughts of the resistant collectives of Monterrey, is the delicious remainder of the exercises of pleasure that occupy the center of the city, seducing working men and maintaining active the street nightlife. In these memories of pleasure and *maricón* life *La Alameda* has had a constant presence as a place where bodies searching for an exchange of pleasure and affects can join and perform. The presence of *La Alameda* and its symbolic importance to the city dates back to the end of the XIX century when the park was presented as a project that emulated *La Alameda* in Mexico City. The project was constructed with two main ideas as its main objectives: 1) present Monterrey as a modernized city away from the capital at a space with a violent geography, and 2) to offer a space of encounter for the intellectual and industrial elites of Monterrey (*Diario Cultura*, 2012).

At the end of the Mexican Revolution³¹ and with the growth of the industrial life in Monterrey and the rest of the country, the symbols and practices surrounding *La Alameda* morphed in favor of the popular sectors of society. Motivated by the movement of the local elites to other zones of the state of Nuevo Leon, the center of the city started to be crowded by the local workers, students and the low-middle class families of the city. Their presence demanded a reexamination of the park which included the opening of spaces for leisure activities inside the *La Alameda* and its surroundings. The opening of a Zoo at the heart of the park, of *El Cine Monterrey* just crossing the street from *La Alameda* and spaces dedicated to children's entertainment, facilitated the incorporation of families to the park as well as to the new narratives that began to circulate about the park.

During the 1970's and 1980's *La Alameda* developed forms of LGBT+ life and social interactions that were distant to the social norms and expectations of the heterosexual society,

³¹ 1910-1920

maricón life that congregated at *La Alameda* in the search of pleasure and that continues occupying space on the social imaginary of the city. On my talks with Joaquin Hurtado, his account of *La Alameda* is one that transits from a joyous memory to the grey realization of how the space has changed and who is still pushed out of the it The restrooms that Hurtado remembers were a space in which men that have sex with men exchanged looks and gestures in their search for sexual pleasure; urine and semen where the only local currency accepted and as the sun hid in Monterrey the men searching for pleasure became a frequent image. Joaquin stops his account to think, to remember his friend's stories at the center for Monterrey; to remember how the police and the HIV/AIDS epidemic took them away from the city and the spaces of pleasure.

The 90s and beginning of the 21st century redefined *La Alameda* and the bodies that transited it, most of these changes came with the opening of the local economies to the neoliberal international market and the impact it had with the local economies which had to transition into the informal state. My family lost our house back in 1994, *papá* still remembers how the payments he had already given for the property came to be nonexistent at the beginning of 1994. To the families that were not able to maintain a job the informal commerce became the only option for economic survival under the neoliberal conditions at Monterrey. *La Alameda* ended being a reflection of the consequences of the economic hardship that affected Mexico at the end of the millennium. The public benches where people had a seat and talked about the weather, the city or their sex lives, were, after the crisis of 1994 covered by food, clothing and cheap electronic merchandise vendors; citizens that re-signified the usage of the public space. The ruins from the demolished *Cine Monterrey*³²

³² Closed at the beginning of 1990

became the skeleton of a public market for clothing brought from the United States known as *pacas*.

Alongside the commercial and spatial transformation of *La Alameda*, was the collective understanding of this place being a point of encounter for local and international migration. Men and women arriving from the south of Mexico, the rural areas of Nuevo León and Central America took *La Alameda* as point of encounter and social interactions, which the racists, classist and heavily policed streets of Monterrey do not allow. These interactions are diverse in the form in which they are expressed; from an exclusive use of indigenous languages as Nahuatl and Zapotec to the expression of this interaction in the form of anonymous sex in the restrooms or motels that have taken part of the neighborhoods near the park.

Even with the complete economic transformation of Monterrey, *La Alameda* continues standing; continues to be a space that permits the navigation for leisure, work and sexual pleasure. In some people's thinking, *La Alameda* is a symbol of nostalgia for the days when the park represented a family-oriented respectable spot, today consumed by the informal commerce and narratives of crime. For others *La Alameda* represents a space for possibilities for socialization and the search of non-hegemonic LGBT+ sexual encounters outside the aesthetic dynamics of mainstream LGBT+ desires in which not all bodies are welcome.

Hay cumbia en el centro del parque

Celso, amado Celso.

Te harías uno con el desierto

y nadie, allí, fue profeta de tierra maldita;

peregrinos de asfalto caliente

The evolution of Monterrey as a gentrified space has not been reserved for the spatial configuration of the city. Institutional reexamination in the search for inclusive public policies has also been part of the model of the city that today is being constructed. The last ten years in Mexico can be characterized for its general openness to the visibilization of LGBT+ expression and policies. Marriage equality became a Federal mandate by 2016, which allowed members of the LGBT+ communities, wishing to get married, the access to their constitutional right without having to travel outside of their home state to neighboring states where marriage equality was already approved. In the same line of visibility, trans people fought against the medical requirements that the federal government imposed on them in order to change any of their official documents. By 2015 trans people were able to eliminate the requirements for medical approval in order to access any document modification; although still this measure is applied only at Mexico City.

Reflecting on the advances made by the LGBT+ communities, and for which they had fought for and obtained, I'm able to transport myself to the days I worked for the organization GESS and the difficulties we had to consolidate projects and political collaborations. My work centered on assisting members of the trans communities to access technical instruction offered by the local government. Misgendering actions by the staff and instructors, as well as the printing of the diplomas with names that were long abandoned by the trans students became regular battles to fight against the State and its educational institutions. More than five years later the collective and political scenarios at the city are different to ones I worked with, and these were completely foreign memories to what Hurtado (2017) has written about in his short stories and memoirs. Still, the presence of hate expressions against the LGBT+ communities continue to be part of the Monterrey's normalized social context of.

However positive the achievements of political representation has been for the lives and well-being of the LGBT+ communities, they have also contributed to the construction of desired spaces and citizenship in Monterrey. As Puar (2007) examines, the appropriation of the LGBT+ agendas by the State, as occurs in Monterrey, work toward the definition of a national identity of the gay citizen, which communes with the values and desires of the State and its institutions.

This process of integration and definition of the desired citizen follows conservative agendas where marriage equality, homoparental adoption and business inclusion have become pivotal topics, and which end up allowing mainstream LGBT+ organizations integration to the tolerant spaces of the heterocentrist society. By tolerated I refer to the process of incorporation of identities that are not accepted nor celebrated but recognized as having a function in the production of capital and reiteration of heterocentrist desires and practices (Agamben, 2003).

The narratives of integration to the normative spaces imposed by the hegemonic LBGBT+ organizations, the State and allied institutions work toward the formulation of respectable subjects, the eradication of abject *maricón* agendas, which by being the abject ones are read as desires and agencies that do not conform to what the normative spaces can, and will, tolerate. Ochoa (2014) observes the tension between the ideals of respectability and the undesired bodies in the form that aesthetics are perceived: trans women, when they can't achieve an acceptable level. This search for the integration of identities and agencies to the normative spaces, as Ruvalcaba (2016) describes, is part of the transition from radical revolutionary Marxist agendas to institutional and normative ones, which was part of the effects that the HIV/AIDS epidemic had in Mexico at the beginning of the 1980's, when

organizations prioritized the collaboration with State rather than its replacement with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In Monterrey the repetition of hegemonic LGBT+ narratives of desired citizenships have also expanded to the categorization of spaces at the center of the city, under a class and race-based reading, that separates where respectable identities and non-respectable and unhygienic identities move. *La Alameda*, under this racialized and class-based understanding is surrounded by narratives and discourses that profile it as a space non-safe for the public and a most-be-rescued space of the city. Back in 2017 during an interview with the local news outlet *Multimedios*³³, activist Abel Quiroga spoke of the individuals using *La Alameda* as space for sex-work as a result of their venerable migratory and socioeconomic situation which only added elements to the rejection of *La Alameda* as a non-hygienic respectable space.

When one enters *La Alameda* passing under the arches over *Cuauhtémoc* avenue there are three things are recognized with ease: 1) The *Carta Blanca*³⁴ giant publicity display observing the park from the roof of a hotel located two blocks away, 2) the fruit vendors decorating the entrance of the *La Alameda* with colorful *cocos*, *piñas*, *tunas*, *mangos* and *sandías* which survive the summer heatwave by the grace of giant ice blocks leaving their liquid vestiges on the concrete walkways that circle de park, and 3) the mechanical police tower that stands over most of the trees at the park and that have a clear vision of the concurred spaces of *La Alameda*.

The police tower at *La Alameda* works as an instrument of self-regulation for the people that transit the parks; more than being a tool for the safety of the public is an

³³ Obtained from <https://www.multimedios.com/telediario/local/prostitucion-hombres-venden-alameda.html>

³⁴ Local beer brand.

instrument of surveillance that search for domesticating the bodies in favor of the expectations of the State. This search for the discipline of the abject body I understand it under the analysis that, Foucault (1975) presents, of the docile bodies, those that have been subjected to the hegemonic norms. In the case of *La Alameda* the police tower works toward transforming the abject individuals into the regulated and tolerated working class person.

Indigenous people, migrants and *maricones* and women, being part of the most vulnerable groups transiting *La Alameda*, are subjected to the ongoing exercises of surveillance that obey to the narratives that classify *La Alameda* as a non-respectable space where the no-citizens transit. By being classified as non-respectable space where the abject identities interact, as was the case of the streets of Caracas explored by Ochoa (2014), the exertion of vigilance and exertion of violence by the Police against the bodies that transit the space becomes permissible and encouraged.

It is important to mention that the exercises of surveillance over *La Alameda* is not limited to the ways in which the bodies perform in public but are also targeted to the intimate desires of the non-respectable otherness at the park. The abject identities, as Alvarado (2018) examines, can not only act against the aesthetic desires of the hegemonic groups, but must also be censure in their desires and expression that depart from the respectable standard. The police tower stands tall over most of the trees of the park not for having an improved vision of the zone, but as a message to all the *maricones* that there is in fact no space in the park where they can hide and perform their desires and identities. No tree is tall enough, even though there are more than one that overpass the police tower, for the policing sight of the tower.

While walking through *La Alameda* a common sight was the police officers stopping so-called-random men for routine inspections. Police practice that demand for the detainees

to submit their belongings for the search of drugs, weapons and other objects that the police consider a threat to the general public. These interventions ended up with men refusing being detained by the police and submitting their belongings to them, which was enough excuse for the police to arrest and take them into custody over a *granadera*³⁵. However random this type of detentions are called, their race-and-class base status becomes evident with the omission of *mestizo* middle class bodies, as mine, that transit *La Alameda*. My race and class-based privilege, a superficial reflection that protects my *maricón* positionality, alienates itself to the systemic performative expectations on the space, expectations that persecute the presence of indigenous, migrants and working-class bodies which represent, in terms of Douglas (1966), possible contaminants of the respectable spaces and respectable LGBT+ citizens.

One of the comments at Cruising.mx, a web platform for information in anonymous gay sex encounter and which I describe further in the chapter, by user B caught my attention for it navigated several layers of racism which classified *La Alameda* as a place where non-desirable and non-respectable individuals conglomerated at “*Mmmm pésimo, gente de clase alta o media alta desentonaríamos en el lugar, nomás camine por la plaza y no se sí sea por que me bajede mi camioneta o por it con ropa de marca y ser blanco la gente hasta se me queda mirando, no recomendable, no por los feos o nacos, si no por qué desentona uno con tanta gente estiló san Luis// Mmmm the worst, people from upper or upper middle class would be out of place, just walked around the square and I don't know if it was because I got-off my truck or because of the brand clothes I wore and being white that people kept staring*

³⁵ Pick-up styled police vehicle

at me, not recommended, not for the ugly ones and *nacos*, but for being one out-of-tune with so many people San Luis style” (cruising.mx, 2015).

The comment by user A speaks to the narrative of *La Alameda* as a place for the non-respectable citizen, a space in which the white/*mestizo* citizens should not transit since it houses individuals that do not belong to the same racial and class status. From the comment of user A makes a special emphasis on the style of people that use *La Alameda* by calling them *San Luis*-style. This makes reference to the historical relation of *La Alameda* with indigenous communities that use the space as a reference and socialization point and which have been homogenized by the society as being all of the indigenous people at *La Alameda* migrants from the neighbor state of San Luis Potosí . The pejorative tone of the comment by user A, guides the people reading it to understand *La Alameda* racially undesirable place, a park where no *mestizo* and white citizens should not use to socialize.

The narrative of *La Alameda* being a non-respectable space for the bodies that frequent it, and the danger that the park represents for the general citizenship of Monterrey has been pushed also by the hegemonic LGBT+ individuals. Cruising.mx, one of the best organized databases and chat room web platforms for men that have sex with men in public spaces, also describes *La Alameda* as a boring park that has nothing to offer to gay men at Monterrey; a dangerous place in which one has to enter well knowingly of the high possibilities of getting pickpocketed. The warnings over *La Alameda* are only to be ignored, according to the comments on the page, if the idea on visiting the park is to pick up a *chacal*³⁶ to take to a motel in order to suck him or let him fuck you.

³⁶ Category created by gay men to categorize men from working class and/or indigenous backgrounds that have sex with other men not necessarily under a monetary exchange.

At Cruising.mx other of the comments that caught my eye and that spoke to the fetishization of the abject body, by user C, stated “...*los domingos ves mucho chavos de san luis o así en los baño y como son piletas pued pueded almenos un taco de ojo y siempre ya para las 5 o 6 andan pedos como que salen de los bares de por ahi y no falta cual te acepte unas cheves :p // ...*On Sundays you can see many guys from San Luis or of that style, on the restrooms and because they are *piletas* you can at least enjoy them with your eyes but 5 or 6 pm they will be drunk since they are leaving the bars of the zone and there will always be the one that will accept you a beer :p” (Cruising.mx, 2015). Similar to the coment of user A, user B refers to the race and social-class of guys at *La Alameda* as distant from the “true” citizens of Monterrey. However, user B instead of condemning the race and social-class of the men at *La Alameda*, speaks of lust that class and race provoke at the park and call for *mestizos* and white men to take advantage of it.

While the comments on Cruising.mx calls on the desired of working class *maricón* bodies at *La Alameda*, the reality ends up falling on the fetishization of working-class and indigenous bodies by *mestizo* middle-class identities. In this sense, power division between the holders of racial and cultural capital is established, which facilitate the violent control of the abject identities by the hegemonic ones. I observe in this relation between the power imbalance a dialogue between the work of Alvarado (2018) and Merabat (2014). In this sense, the abject can be read as the young gay working class men who is attracted by the show-off of cultural capital that older gay men posses and use to lure first into an unequal negotiation for sexual pleasure.

Stout (2014) explores the reflection of desire and respectability in the relation between gay Cubans and *jineteros*. While respectable gay Cubans find in the *jineteros* possibilities for the fulfillment of sexual fantasies, they will not consider them part of the

respectable socialist gay corpus at Havana. Under the same line, the hegemonic LGBT+ identities find at *La Alameda* possibilities for their sexual desires on the bodies of *maricón* non-respectable men. This unequal relationship is explored by Smith (2016) on the form in which a duality of citizenship is established over the abject ones. This duality of the citizenship demands for non-respectable subjects, censured by the hegemonic identities, to perform in accordance to the function that the respectable citizens and the State desire in relation to the generation of capital or satisfaction of sexual pleasures.

III

Even when *La Alameda* has witnessed hard modifications to its composition and its surroundings, such as the opening of the motels along the nearby neighborhoods, the two restrooms at the park continue with minimal changes and used by men in the search of sexual pleasure. Nevertheless, a mural dedicated to the families of Monterrey and a cabin for the person charging 5 *pesos* for using the restrooms and handing 8 squares of toilet paper, both elements can be read in the lines of the surveillance that the authorities of the park have over *maricón* bodies, yet what I propose is to read them, specifically the mural, as symbols of the still going refusal to the respectable hegemonic LGBT+ expectations over the performance of citizenship; the tension between the ideal of the white/*mestizo* straight family and the *maricones* searching for sexual pleasure at the restroom.

The mural painted outside the two restrooms depict a heterosexual white family composed of an older couple, representing the *abuelos*, a young couple, representing *Los papás*, and three kids. All of them stand together under a giant text in black that reads *El Parque Alameda Mariano Escobedo es 100% familiar*. The composition of the mural

depicting a white heterosexual family expresses the desires and expectations that Monterrey has over its citizens. White heterosexual cisgender families belonged to the futuristic imaginaries that the people that modernized the city had back in the 1950's and 60's, even when these images didn't reflect the identities of the workers building the such city, as the men working class men that rebuilt Beirut after the war but could not enjoy the spaces created which Merabet (2014) explores. This lack of connection between the portrayals of the images and the realities lived in Monterrey is what makes the mural at the restrooms fascinating; the restrooms at *La Alameda* do not represent a space *100% familiar*, the park do not represents an space *100% familiar* but rather an space for sexual possibilities for *maricones* not welcomed at middle-class hegemonic LGBT+ spaces.

Néstor Perlongher (1996) presents the term *Barroso* as an epistemological opportunity to deconstruct, from the abject realities, the impositions of beauty that the baroque movements have placed over Latin America. The *Barroso* knowledge speaks to the beauty that marginalized identities and taboo practices hold. Urine, shit, semen and filth work as deconstruction tools of the ideals of beauty that the international LGBT+ mainstream agendas have. I observe the *Barroso* as part of the repertoire performed by the *maricón* bodies at *La Alameda*, a repertoire that under the analysis of Taylor (2003) contests to the hegemonic archive. Urine, semen, shit and the anus, specifically the one that has been subjected to hours of work at the harsh weather of Monterrey, interacting at the restrooms of *La Alameda* in the search of pleasure, break the hygienic normative lines in favor of radical existences.

The performance of pleasure at *La Alameda* is not reserved for the restrooms at the park, that's something I came to learn while consulting the *maricón* archive of Monterrey and taking long walks at the park. I would arrive at *La Alameda* around 4 pm during the

week, moment of the day in which people were starting their return to their homes from work and in when the park would fill with workers relaxing before continuing the end of their day. For 10 *pesos* I would get myself two cherry flavored extralong cigarettes and walk in between people, observing the vending stands and taking notes on the elements I considered interesting or rebellious to the heterosexual norm. Outside of the restroom's, men would sit at the benches and wait, looking around for other men also waiting and, with any luck, both would enter to the restrooms. Younger men would add to this exercise the usage of cellphones in order to access apps that facilitated the hunt for other men looking for anonymous sex.

I sat down to enjoy my cherry extralong cigarettes, a well-deserved rest after an afternoon of continuous walking. While seated I noticed a man my age wearing a red shirt that was walking for the second time in front of my bench. Our eyes connected and a different level of symbolic conversation took place. He walked a third and last time in front of my bench, yet this time he took the opportunity to direct my eyes to his crotch where his right hand was touching an obvious erection waiting for someone to take care of it. He sat down and waited for my response; unlikely for both of us, it never came.

“Siboney yo te quiero

Yo me muero por tu amor.

Siboney, en tu boca

La miel puso su dulzor.”

(Lecuona, 1929)

The symbolic dialogues taking place in the performance of pleasure speaks, yes, to an instant need of sexual satisfaction, but also as the gestures that escape and problematize the respectable LGBT+ interaction in Monterrey. These gestures, in terms of Rodríguez (2014) permits for a subversive, yet silent, expression of the desire and abject identities on

spaces where they will be persecuted and censured. The exchange codes of affect and pleasure among *maricón* men at *La Alameda* belongs to the search of community building for the bodies that have not been welcomed at other spaces or that are new to the park. In this sense, a connection can be established to the construction of kingship among gay migrant men for México LGBT+ in the US, as Héctor Carrillo (2017) examines. The process of identifying safe spaces and occupying them helped the migrants to avoid violent situations and beginning queer interactions in unknown spaces.

On her work, Peña (2013) observes how the Cuban queers that arrived at Miami during the Mariel exodus³⁷ had to configure their own set of gestures, codes and negotiations in order to respond to the rejection and censure of the Cuban communities that migrated to the US during and after the Cuban Revolution³⁸. The hegemonic LGBT+ *rejection* of the *maricón* search for pleasure as well as the *maricón* excess, or *chusmería* (Muñoz, 1999), has been contested at *La Alameda* by the repetition of the performative search of pleasure, its gestures and codes.

In these repetitions where bodily fluids and the exchange of pleasure are at the first line of confrontation, the exercise of refusing the respectable LGBT+ citizenship takes place. Simpson (2014) establish that refusal is performed with the rejection of norms and performative standards that dominant social groups impose over marginalized bodies; refusal permits the otherness to exist in a state of constant resistance against the systemic norms. Even when the work of Simpson (2014) is centered on the Mohawk communities and their fight against the Canadian and US government, the rejection of the State and its allies can be translated on the performance of pleasure at *La Alameda*.

³⁷ October 1980

³⁸ 1959

Similar to the Mohawk communities examined by Simpson (2014), which have perform communal actions to reject the racial and political subjugation of their bodies, *maricón* bodies at *La Alameda* have also being able to construct their own platforms that prevent the colonization of their identities and spaces by hegemonic LGBT+ collectives, institutions and allies. Refusal, however, has been historically responded by coercive measures taken by the State. In the case of *La Alameda* the exercise of surveillance and policing of the spaces works as the punitive measures against the repetitive abject *sexual* practices and existence at the park.

It is also important to mark that *maricones* at *La Alameda* have been able to establish connections with radical non-hegemonic LGBT+ collectives and spaces at Monterrey that also have refused the respectable citizenship that the LGBT+ hegemony imposes. These collectives, as ACODEMIS and *La Casita Monterrey*, which will be explored on chapter III, can be understand as examples of subversion to the homogenization that the hegemonic classes and organizations, explored by Gramsci (1935), demand of the culture and performance of society.

José Esteban Muñoz (1999) analyzed the possibilities that performative excess, or *chusmeria*, presented for marginalized identities; performative excess generated a direct response to the cultural hegemony that demanded a respectable performance of the bodies. Under this line of analysis, the performance of nonhegemonic *maricón* pleasure at *La Alameda* has worked as a barrier for the hegemonic desires of mainstream LGBT+ collectives and institutional allies. In the usage of restrooms and gestures by non-hegemonic LGBT+ individuals are the exercises of resistance and refusal of desired LGBT+ citizenships subscribed to the expectations of the tolerant State. It is pertinent to recognize that the exercises of resistance and refusal to the LGBT+ institutional homogenization at Monterrey

do carry punitive consequences against the *maricón* bodies. The censure of the non-hegemonic LGBT+ archives by hegemonic LGBT+ organizations, as well as the police persecution by the hygienic heterosexual State are part of the exertions of violence that the *maricón* non-citizens are subjected to at *La Alameda* and Monterrey.

I want to close this chapter quoting a fragment of the poem *Manifiesto* by Chilean artist Pedro Lemebel (1986), same poem that open this project.

“Yo no pongo la otra mejilla

Pongo el culo compañero

Y esa es mi venganza” (pg. 220)

Poner el culo, under the teachings of Lemebel (1986), can be read as an intersectional terrorist a performance³⁹ for the hygienic LGBT+ identities, *poner el culo* allows otherness to confront the normalization of spaces and sexual practices; *poner el culo* for *maricón* identities at Monterrey and *La Alameda*, is a bridge for the existence of other sexual and gender realities at the northern border of Mexico.

³⁹ The term refers to the work of José Estevan Muñoz (1999) in dialogue with the artist Vaginal “Cream” Davis, which will be explored on chapter III.

Háblame de mierda, háblame de meados y culo: La Casita Monterrey and performative filth activism

I

Many years ago *papá* took away my fear of the dark. In Monterrey, during the summer, it was common for the light to go out at night. It was the beginning of the year 2000, the year of transition; the year when making the peace and love sign became the symbol that everything in this *perra vida* was possible. The light went out and me and dad ended on the kitchen in complete darkness, my immediate reaction was to look for him and hug his leg. - *Ey, cálmate mijo...mira te voy a enseñar un truco*- Dad told me to put my hands over my open eyes and count from 10 to one-*ocho, siete, seis...*- My eyes, he explained, needed to get use to darkness, which wasn't something I should be scared of -*cuatro, tres, dos...*-on the contrary, darkness was a condition necessary to live, a place where what and whom was hidden during the day could come out and exist during the night -*uno, listo*-.

Anonymous sexual encounters in Monterrey are part of the local history of LGBT+ experiences. They date back to the days of the foundation of the city of Monterrey, as described in the context section of this project, when the sodomite pleasure was persecuted by *La Inquisición* by Tortorici (2018). Hurtado (2017) in his narrations of the *maricón* sexual life of Monterrey, traces a genealogy on the forms in which cruising has been a present in the city, specifically at *El Centro*, its public plazas, police stations, taxis and restrooms, *los tan deliciosos baños*. However, Hurtado (2017) omits one of the spaces which has contributed to the genealogy of *maricón* pleasure of the city: *La Casita Monterrey*⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ Referred from this point onwards as *La Casita*

During my fieldwork I asked Hurtado about the space, his relation to it and the absence of it from his narrations. My last question was answered making reference to the unavoidable pass of the time; the short stories and memoirs by Hurtado were written before *La Casita* was a reality. However, he points out, he was involved in the configuration of the organization that that houses *La Casita: Acción Colectiva por los Derechos de las Minorías Sexuales* today, or as it is known for its acronym ACODEMIS. The organization was born at end of the 90's as part of the organized answer toward the discriminatory policies of Nuevo Leon administration and the inefficient programs that the country had to attend the HIV/AIDS epidemic that had been present at Nuevo Leon since 1986.

My conversations with Joaquin, as well as the time we ended dancing together with Rosy Zavala, is a moment that I carry with care in my mind and heart, however his recounts on *La Casita* and ACODEMIS were limited. He pointed that the person to talk about *La Casita* was Abel Quiroga, current owner of the space and general coordinator of ACODEMIS, who at the end of the 1990s, along with Hurtado, helped with the foundation of the organization. Hurtado added to his recommendation to avoid looking for a formal meeting, avoid using a calendar when visiting *La Casita* and Quiroga- *tú solo cae-*.

Nadie se cura el calor en Monterrey

la ducha fría se queda corta ¿los moteles?

también, corazón.

Guided by the imposed norms of civility I ended up looking for a formal meeting with Abel, which was a condemned endeavor from its beginning. I ended showing up with no previous announcement to *La Casita* looking for Quiroga, looking for the space and its

relevance to the *maricón* resistance of Monterrey. *La Casita* is located at *El Centro*, over *Calle Washington* in between *Diego de Montemayor* and *Platón Sánchez* streets, there is nothing on its outside façade that reveals its purpose and history; an avocado green wall, a closed window and door, one can have a multicolor glimpse of its insides through the main gate which, for those that have the sufficient high, let you navigate the main parking area.

I arrived in the middle of the summer -*ahora sí que nadie me trajo, llegué por mi cuenta*- with the sun directly over my head, punishing everything and everyone, wondering whether someone would be willingly fucking, or being fucked, under such heat wave? The first area at *La Casita* is its main patio, which is used as a social gathering point and as parking lot, surrounding it were the windows of the rooms which are used for either sexual encounters or by the organization ACODEMIS office. I walked the main patio toward some music, *Oye* by *Margarita La Diosa de la Cumbia y su Sonora*.

Behind a crystal counter were information pamphlets, sex toys, condoms and art are displayed, Quiroga is sitting waiting for those looking for pleasure in a city which can't stop condemning it. Quiroga is not alone, protecting him and his space is an important collection of gay and gay erotic art. The piece that caught my attention, and which became my favorite, is one of the figure of *San Sebastián mártir* tied to a post and being pierced by several arrows. Under the catholic tradition *San Sebastián mártir* is an example of sacrifice for being executed for his faith by the Roman Empire, under the *maricón* tradition *San Sebastián mártir* is one of the favorite examples of early homoerotic art, a symbol of the hegemonic gay white beauty. For me the figure has another meaning, one that I translate into the reality of Monterrey, the execution of *San Sebastián mártir* becomes a referent of the LGBT+ history of the city, an execution ordered in the name of tradition by the State and its allied institution,

an execution interpreted by many in completely different ways that go from solemnity to sexual pleasure.

Quiroga remembers my first attempt to contact him and is glad I decided to just show up, he is glad with talking to someone in academia and that his work and spaces can form part of a bigger archive. -*Mira, estoy terminando de pasar una información, por qué no te metes y ves los cuartos ¿eh? Toma-* he gives me four condoms -*por si te encuentras algo que te guste*⁴¹. I enter the dark rooms well knowing I'm only a guest that might be interrupting the pleasure of someone that does not has any other space to perform. Besides that realization, I repeat to myself the question I had when I arrived to *La Casita*, who would be willingly fucking, or being fucked, under such heat wave?

A bed covered with, what appears to be, black leather, the delicious smell of sweat is heavy in the air. As I walk on the empty space, I could only imagine the scenes that take place every Sunday, which is described at the online archive Cruising.mx as the day in which the place is full, specifically from 11 pm onwards. As in *El Wateke VIP* there is a sense of intimacy, blindness to the other provoked by the absence of light, with the exception of some black paint that's peeling off the windows and that allows the sun to cast lines over chains, cages and the holes on what emulate restrooms.

Quiroga, seated on the sofa, points to the creation of *La Casita* as an effort, pushed by his heart, of generating a space in which gay life, in the times of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, could be enjoyed again. In this sense, darkness was fundamental for the space; a way in which the class identities, which the city and its habitants have imposed, could be erased in favor

⁴¹ Field notes July 25, 2019

of the sole performance of pleasure. For Quiroga, *La Casita* and ACODEMIS it's not important whether the patrons arrive on a luxury car or the public system, as long as they want dick, ass and know how to treat the others with respect, everyone is welcome.

Considering the form in which the city has been growing since its foundation in 1596 based on the exploitation of its resources and later on the implementation of the neoliberal systems of production and consumption, the contemporary effort by ACODEMIS should be read as a response to the hegemony that dominant sectors have imposed and repeated over the social interaction (Gramsci, 1935). Darkness, under this line, constructs a stage for the particular performance of pleasure in which social class becomes non-relevant for what men inside of *La Casita* are looking for.

It is not my interest to imply that within the walls of *La Casita* and the search for pleasure that takes place there exists an organized Marxist oriented agenda that guides the forms in which LGBT+ bodies must interact, always in dialogue with ideals of proletarian revolutions, similar to what Liu (2015) examines on the political and organic interest that have motivated new waves of Chinese left wing queer writers in relation to the ideals of the Maoist revolution. It is also not my interest to imply that Quiroga makes a call for a sexual class war his central political ideal. However, the inside of *La Casita*, its leather swings, glory holes, chains and beds work as catalyzers for the existence of subversive sexual interactions within men, rejecting the hygienic sexual values imposed by the LGBT+ hegemony.

The attire for being inside of *La Casita* is that of being nude, a towel might be of use but is not enforced by the administration of the space. I was not dressed in the proper manner, yet no objection was presented by Quiroga when I requested to enter. As I continued my walk my question of who would be willingly fucking, or being fucked, under such heat wave, was

answered. A man-made noise, not much of a moan but a grunt, a pleasure grunt is made from the dark space. A guy wearing a baseball cap, long socks and sneakers is holding his hard dick. He looks at me, look as his organ, looks at me again; he wants me to get on my knees an suck it -¿No quieres?- *Qué pena por ti y qué pena por mi* but someone is waiting for me outside. Quiroga is waiting for me at the entrance of the dark rooms, he is smiling, he knows someone found me and I rejected it. -¿*Qué pasó? ¿no encontraste nada?*-

-*Sí, pero creo que estoy interrumpiendo*

-*Para nada, esto para eso es.*⁴²

II

As mentioned, *La Casita* is divided in two spaces, one destined for the sexual encounters and the other for the activities organized by ACODEMIS. We cross the parking lot, over us the summer sun observing everything we do, pushing its heat from the top of our head to the cement ground which in turn reflected the heat to our the faces that tried to hide from the sun. The second space starts with a thin room which works as the main classroom, It is in this space is where the workshops take place, workshops related to sex-education. LGBT+ sexual health, trans rights, sex-work rights and, recently, *Reducción de daños*, of this I'll talk further in the section.

The second room is open with a key that Quiroga carries The space houses his office, the general archive of ACODEMIS and *La Casita*, and the cellar where all the material for STI's exams, workshops and condom distribution are. Quiroga is proud of the amount of material ACODEMIS receives and continues of distribute among the LGBT+ population at

⁴² Field notes July 25, 2019

el Centro; he shows off the condoms that he receives from the Federal Government -*Es más ¿tienes condones?*- I did, I had with me the ones that he had gave me before entering the darkrooms -*Toma más, pa'l rato*-⁴³ Quiroga handed me a box with 200 condoms, although I knew I would not be using them all any time soon, the gesture and *maricón* solidarity of Abel was something I did appreciate.

Quiroga is hesitant of talking with me, he has his doubts about other LGBT+ people, especially those that have been involved with mainstream LGBT+ activism and political life at Monterrey. I propose, then, for me to go deep into who was I, and what was I doing there. After some talk, Quiroga was satisfied as well as excited; his first concern was related to be talking with someone that was in dialogue with the mainstream LGBT+ activism and academia. These precautions taken by Quiroga made more sense to me once he expanded on the history of ACODEMIS and *La Casita*, especially on the response that the activism of ACODEMIS had received in relation to other organizations.

Abel made it clear, the birth of *La Casita* was one connected to love, not a political interest, but rather to his personal relation with the fight over the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the general discrimination over the search of pleasure. When ACODEMIS started it was treated by the State with the same apathy other HIV/AIDS related organization were treated, an emergency that no one at the government, society and the market wanted to see. Similarly to Joaquin, Abel remembers the days in which people were ignored by hospitals and in the heterosexual society the only answer was rejection.

⁴³ Field notes July 25, 2019

In the chaos that the HIV/AIDS epidemic generated ACODEMIS looked to address issues being condemned by the State, its allied institutions and the society. Under the work of ACODEMIS sexual pleasure was a relevant topic that needed to be extracted from the taboo. The office of Quiroga, heart of ACODEMIS, and where the fast test for STI's take place, is completely decorated with posters from all around the world in which the performance of pleasure in non-hegemonic lines is repeated. Some of them displayed a guy drinking piss directly from a hard dick, a mouth filled with cum and some text in German where the only word I could identify was HIV. The posters differ from those other I've seen in other LGBT+ organizations at the city, most of the information displayed there appeared to be centered on fear; the condemnation of sex and the always presence of death as a constant reality for the *maricones* of Monterrey.

Behind the posters at ACODEMIS, behind each and every explicit sexual image displayed, is the reiteration of one of the main objectives of ACODEMIS and *La Casita*: the erasure of fear regarding sex and the constant reminder of death from the discourses being used on the fight and prevention on HIV/AIDS. ACODEMIS and Quiroga, by the beginning of the 2000, became some of the main figures of subversive narratives that opposed those not only pushed by the State but by hegemonic LGBT+ organizations, narratives centered on the vigilance over the sexual lives of LGBT+ people, which were read as unhygienic practices reproduced on spaces that help on the spread of HIV.

ACODEMIS, with the advance of the century, was challenged with changes in the form in which these narratives of unhygienic spaces, practices and identities were being reproduced, specifically by the other LGBT+ organizations. Quiroga knows that the relation with the State was something fundamental for the survival of the people looking for medical

treatment, it has been a strategic relationship that had guaranteed the continuation of ACODEMIS and *La Casita*. However, he recognizes that in the construction of this relationship there are identities and agendas that do not fit with the expectations of the State or what the hegemonic LGBT+ organizations consider part of a gay citizenship.

- *¿Sabes qué decían (the mainstream LGBT+ organizations) de La Casita? Que éste era el infierno y que aquí vivía el diablo...y sí, y es bien buen pedo*-⁴⁴ Referring to *La Casita* as hell and to Quiroga as the Devil or at least in communication with, is connected to the rejection of the practices considered unhygienic, but mostly pollutant, by the hegemonic LGBT+ organizations at Monterrey. I think this pollutant categorization in the terms used by Mary Douglas (1966), in relation to the expectations imposed by the hegemonic institutions and organizations. For the hegemonic LGBT+ organizations that became close to the State and that were part of the frontline during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the creation of hygienic standards that were close to the values of the State and its allied institutions became fundamental. Sexual abstinence, the use of a condom and the closure of the bathhouses and dark rooms became a fundamental in order to avoid the pollution of other gay spaces and identities.

Under this hygienic imposition, *La Casita* and ACODEMIS became pollutants; pariahs that placed in danger the rest of the LGBT+ organizations at Monterrey which had constructed channels of communication with the State, obtaining the privileges of the desired gay citizenship. Described by Smith (2016) as the dual citizenship that partially permits the existence of the other citizen as long it can perform in accordance to the hegemonic expectations. As in the cases of *El Wateke* and *La Alameda*, *La Casita* presents the

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configuration of a space in which otherness can exist, specifically sexual otherness that can respond to the ideals imposed by the hygienic narratives of hegemonic LGBT+ organizations, the State and its allied institutions.

As marriage equality, political participation in the institutional arenas and security for the production of capital, became agendas to be embraced by the State, *La Casita* and ACODEMIS were left outside of the LGBT+ integration. Belonging, as Chavez (2013) explains, demands for bodies to subscribe to specific platforms and agendas that walk toward the desires of the hegemony, whether cultural, political or sexual desires. Fucking in a dark room or letting an anonymous person pee over another anonymous person, in this sense, reflected the practices that, according to the established norms, were not welcomed to the system of belonging and the privileges it brought.

However violent the exclusion from the dialogue between belonging collectives can be, Chavez (2013) also identifies the form in which these processes are necessary in the generation of tension between collectives and the State that facilitate the visibility of the identities being censored and excluded. As the myth of ACODEMIS and *La Casita* was constructed, so was the performance of pleasure lived inside of it. Quiroga, with a speck of humor, remembers how even with the condemnation by hegemonic LGBT+ organizations, the State and society, *La Casita* never stopped to work; men continue to visit it either in winter or summer, men continue to occupy the space to fuck or being fucked.

As Quiroga was talking of the challenges faced by ACODEMIS and *La Casita* as well as criticizing the form in which the LGBT+ organizations have opted for the normalization of their identities, he dropped what would become one of the most relevant phrases of my field work.

A mí no me hables de matrimonio, háblame de mierda, háblame de meados y culo //

Don't talk to me about marriage, talk to me about shit, about piss and ass⁴⁵

Quiroga's phrase represents one of the main objectives of *La Casita* and ACODEMIS, the generation of radical responses toward the normalization of sexual diversity and gender expression. The dark rooms, the workshops on the relevance of pleasure and the explicit dialogue that the organization held responded directly to the hygienist practices that searched for the condemnation of otherness as *lo sucio*, the abject existences that could not be part of what the State, its allied institutions and society were reading as the sexual and gender diversity. Vargas (2013) expands on *lo sucio* as a state of disobedience toward respectability and confrontation of the identities read as acceptable. Be being categorized as a *sucio* the other not only enters a segregated state, but performs against the hegemony.

These radical responses presented by *La Casita* and ACODEMIS, as well as the organic performances by the people that frequent them can be understood as part of the genealogy of intersectional terrorism performed by the drag performer Vaginal "Cream" Davis and registered by José Esteban Muñoz (1999). Vaginal Davis, as presented by Muñoz (1999), understood that the process of normalization in which the LGBT+ communities were walking was one that a) was non-stoppable and b) was going to have the strongest negative effects over brown, black, migrant and other marginalized bodies, and spaces that identified, as members of the LGBT+ communities.

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In front of these processes of erasure of the identities that can't subscribe to the gentrified desires of the market and the LGBT+ hegemonic organizations, Vaginal Davis, as Muñoz (1999) presents, shows the alternative of terrorizing the norm and the people that subscribe to it, not through the use of violence but of performance. Davis uses her name as a drag artist to take on to the stages her radical critique on race, gender expression and the intromission of neoliberalism into the LGBT+ organizations and life (Muñoz, 1999). On her performance, Davis will embody elements that are considered filthy and taboo by the normalized audiences, targeting the ones that represent the ideal of race and beauty. While her performance might be viewed with humor by some parts of her audience, others will receive it with tension and discomfort, evidencing the fragile lines in which, the so called, inclusion stands.

By expanding her intersectional terrorist critique taking as a start point the subscription of LGBT+ identities into the desires of the State, Vaginal Davis generates a dialogue which seeks to interrupt the homogenization tendencies of organization and the State (Muñoz, 1999). It is important to note that Davis is conscious that radical performance by itself will not disintegrate the dialogues constructed among LGBT+ organizations and the State and its allied institutions. However the purpose of the intersectional terrorism rests on the capacity to evidence the internal tensions among the communities and their processes of inclusion to the normative spaces (Muñoz, 1999)

Along similar lines as those presented by Vaginal Davis, *La Casita* and ACODEMIS facilitated the translation and repetition of intersectional terrorism in the work with taboo topics and the spaces for anonymous sexual encounters. Differently to what Vaginal Davis performs, the men visiting *La Casita* and ACODEMIS are not moved by the existence of an

organized political radical agenda, rather by the search of pleasure of spaces that extract them from the conservative routines at Monterrey and that should be read, and valued, as organic political performances. Quiroga, as administrator of the space and organization, does possess an organized radical agenda that is constantly rejecting the LGBT + homogenization of organizations at the city, and the narratives that denounce the dangers that ACODEMIS and *La Casita* represent for the public health and the acceptance of the heterosexual society of the sexual and gender diversity.

Even with a radical political conviction, Quiroga does recognize that the relation of ACODEMIS and *La Casita* with the Federal Government is quite different to the one at state and municipal level. Quiroga identifies that the Federal government knows the approach of ACODEMIS, where pleasure is one of the focal points, is well received by the *maricones*, which facilitate the acquisition of economic resources which has allowed the continuation of the work. The only requirement that the Federal Government asks of ACODEMIS is to comply with keeping a general archive on the numbers of tests being used and their results; as long as the organization can prove the test are being used and the material being distributed the Federal funding will continue flowing. While the state government closes the doors for other forms of radical activism and *maricón* sexual performance, the Federal government negotiates with ACODEMIS the existences of other expressions and political participation that question the norm yet use the monetary platforms. In terms of Muñoz (1999) Quiroga and ACODEMIS have enter a state of constant disidentification that permits the survival of the radical collective in a city that has historically reject it.

Abel stops, even with the AC turned on we both are sweating; he asks if I would like some water or lemonade -*sí, por favor*- he leaves telling me that he will look for someone to

bring it. Once back, he wants to show me the archive -*Todo lo que publicamos y repartimos durante el inicio de la epidemia de VIH en Monterrey*- piles over piles of files, brochures and pictures. We both agree that the archive of ACODEMIS had to be the biggest in the city on what radical LGBT+ experiences, also one of the most important for the non-normative material it contains. -*Me preocupa lo que vaya a pasar con el material el día que falte yo, que lo vayan a tirar; que se vaya a perder todo esto*-.⁴⁶

¿No había limonadas? No

Ni pedo, toma es agua helada

III

We both drank our waters, he checked over his phone as I did mine, just one new message. Someone was asking if I was going to join them for dinner, since I was already at *El Centro* that could be a good opportunity to meet and check in on our lives. Why not? Being this a city I abandoned to pursue an academic degree, being back and having the opportunity for moments to avoid academia was, in a way, a real joy.

As our talk continues going Abel expresses his current concerns in relation to the future of *La Casita* and ACODEMIS, specifically with the form in which the activist LGBT+ work is evolving, allowing some identities to position over others. Gay men, we both identify, in their total inclusion to the State and allied institutions, in their subscription to the neoliberal market, marriage and political parties have slowly become part of the hegemonic identities repeating the erasure of those that don't fit into their desires and standards. Quiroga stops

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and tells me he is thinking on how there are two topics relevant on the reexamination of ACODEMIS and *La Casita* work: migration and drug consumption during sex.

-La fantasia del chacal siempre ha existido- Abel comments *-pero ahora se está convirtiendo en una forma en que se puede ejercer violencia sobre otros-*⁴⁷ ACODEMIS as an LGBT+ organization has had the conviction to work on taboo subjects, specifically those concerning sexual and gender diversity. However, when urgent situations have emerged in Monterrey, ACODEMIS has also been participating to attend such cases, in this situation the migration from Central America and Southern Mexico and the presence of gay men on it.

Quiroga's is concerned about how the presence of migrants, mostly those that are part of the LGBT+ communities, have been antagonized by the local authorities and their institutions of control⁴⁸, but also have been oversexualized by gay men in the city. The fantasy of *el chacal* and the sexual myth of the working-class men refers to the sexual narrative that portrays men that do not identify as gay and that belong to popular sectors of society as sexually desirable for their masculine performance (Ruvalcaba, 2014). However, its reproduction can be strongly connected to violent forms in which sexuality, if expressed and performed to the desires of the dominant groups, is consumed.

Quiroga has seen *La Casita* as an oasis for men at Monterrey that wish to escape the strict control and vigilance that exists over their lives, by the State, Christianity and society. This oasis has now been observing a shifting population, not only on the age gap that the gay dating applications have generated, but also on the bodies that visit it. *-En la casita se les cobra 40 pesos, en un motel puede subir hasta 300 ¿a donde crees que van a ir los migrantes*

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⁴⁸ The police forces and the military

que llegan a Monterrey?- *La Casita*⁴⁹, throughout the 2018 and 2019, on an unplanned way, became an space in which migrant *maricón* men could found a space to rest and find pleasure and affection with other men. In this sense *La Casita* became an oasis for these men on a city where their presence was antagonized by the State and oversexualized by gay men.

With the migrant men that Abel and other members of ACODEMIS have talked to there is repeated on their experience, also register and studied by Héctor Carrillo (2017), the lack of LGBT+ kinship and knowledge of LGBT+ spaces to meet with other men, therefore being subjects to institutional and interpersonal violence. *-Por un pinche lonche, por un pinche lonche les ofrecen cojer y luego los dejan en la calle los cabrones-* Food has become one of the main tools with which gay men of Monterrey can access the exploitation of their fantasies, the use and abuse of the myth of *el chacal*.

With this panorama of violence coming from bodies of control and authority of the city and from the gay men of Monterrey, *maricón* migrants have learn to identify *La Casita* as a space in which they can meet, spend the night and feel safe from the city. More interesting, for Abel and myself, are the forms in which this knowledge of the space is shared among migrant men that have sex with other men. In this sense creating a transnational line of knowledge that will facilitate the generation of LGBT+ kinship that would be shared among other generations of *maricón* men in the process of transnational migration (Carrillo, 2017).

In addition to these moments of redefinition of the radical LGBT+ activism that ACODEMIS and *La Casita* had been performing, the topic of drug consumption among the

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LGBT+ communities, specifically on the consumption of crystal meth, the great T shared among men that have sex with other men. The first time I entered in dialogue regarding the consumption of T by gay men was on Grindr. Me and other guy were coordinating an express visit - ¿tu casa o la mía? - la mía- something for the weekend -¿te gusta a la nieve?- he asks, in my head there was no real connection between snow and fucking, to the snow question he added if I liked to party -¿Oye, me puedes decir que onda con las preguntas?- He was talking about meth, he wanted to know if I was cool with us pipe-smoking meth while we fucked, however he was annoyed by me not knowing the terms. The conversation was over and I was blocked.

Quiroga refers to the consumption of meth among men that have sex with men in Monterrey as a topic that requires proper attention by the LGBT+ organizations. He makes emphasis on the term “proper attention” for the topic is already part of the agendas at the activist circles, still the form in which the groups are approaching is close to the form in which the HIV/AIDS epidemic was approached, with fear and condemnation of those that consume meth. As it did with *La Casita*, ACODEMIS has presented a plan to work with the consumption of meth based on the *Reducción de Daños*⁵⁰

Reducción de Daños navigates the idea that men that have sex with other men and that consume meth do not need to be rejected by the LGBT+ organizations or denounced to the police authorities; rather the organizations must work in making sure these men can find proper instruction in the consumption of meth, spaces in which medical experts can monitor their wellbeing and can count with clean material to consume the drug. By presenting these

⁵⁰ Damage reduction.

measures ACODEMIS searches to prevent the spread of other forms of medical hazards, specifically HIV/AIDS among the gay consumers of meth.

The reaction of the local government as well as hegemonic LGBT+ organizations has been quite similar to the one they had after the creation of ACODEMIS. General condemnation toward ACODEMIS and constant demands for Quiroga to stop an activism which jeopardizes, under the reading of the hegemonic LGBT+ organizations, the relations already constructed with the heterocentrist society, the State and allied institutions. Quiroga, although annoyed by the negatives remarks from mainstream LGBT+ organizations and the State, is convinced of continuing his work, even with possibilities of expanding. He takes me again to the main cellar and shows me the box of materials obtained with Federal funding, crystal pipes, sterilized needles and rubber bands -*Con esto ya no se comparten jeringas o la meten a una caguama para desinfectar*-⁵¹

This condemnation of the activism ACODEMIS promotes with *maricón* meth users and migrants at Monterrey can be traced back to the constructions of the ideals of the respectable LGBT+ citizenship, the performance of local queer identity that subjects itself to the ideals of a normalized citizen subscribed to the national identity. I connect this back to the ideal of the dual citizenship examined by Smith (2016) in which the abject identity is tolerated if it complies with the expectations of the hegemonic control, yet it would never be fully accepted. It is important to observe how in the construction of the national identity the system of law becomes a central standard to follow in order to obtain a space in the considerations for those that can enter national belonging. The homonational citizen, as Puar (2007) analyses, will only belong to the national identity by following its values and

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narrative of order; compliance of the law by gay people is demanded if they want to become part of the national narratives. Also, as Puar (2007) examines, their participation on institutions that enforce such system of law, as it is the police and the army, can be expected and tolerated.

Following the lines of Puar (2007) is not enough with the geographical position of the individuals, but the repetition of official performances and exertion of norms that evidence the loyalty toward the particular State. By rejecting an approach to meth users with condemnation and welcoming *maricón* migrants and meth users, ACODEMIS has stopped the imposition of the ideal of a gay citizenship and constructed their own radical model of activism that navigates outside the regional *hegemonic* LGBT+ considerations. However, under the topic of survival, ACODEMIS, *La Casita*, and Quiroga still have to negotiate, at the Federal level of government, their own identities in order to guarantee the flux of material and governmental financing.

Quiroga is tired, so we decide to stop the conversation, we both know that after this conversation, more are to come. Quiroga proposes that once I'm done with the master's degree I should return and help him organize the archive, making it available *a todos los jotos de Monterrey*. As I leave the premises I stop again at the entrance of the dark rooms at *La Casita*, I close my eyes and count, from ten to one. I want to smell the place again, the sweat -7, 6, 5...- the sex and heavy air.

-3,

2,

1- *Apá*, I can see in the dark again,

Eternal nights: closing remarks

By the beginning of August 2019, I was on the search for collecting the materials I was taking with me back to Austin, as well as arranging them efficiently enough for them to fit with the resto of my luggage. Books, pictures and recordings I had captured during my time on the field were now part of what I wanted to form part of my personal library at Texas. Alongside the elements that make part of the archive I was bringing back from Monterrey, was a collection of souvenirs which I wanted with me not for their academic value, but for my own emotional connection with the city, the spaces I had researched and the stories that were being told on them.

Postcards showing the shadow of men sucking on other men, advertising on the proper use crystal meth during sex, a kitsch keychain holster with a miniature Mauser C96⁵² hand-pistol and extra thin and extralong cigarettes became tokens of my time at Monterrey doing fields work. Tokens that spoke to an ecstasy of experiences, images and feelings generated by a reinterpretation of the city I was born and raised. The summer of 2019 at Monterrey was an opportunity to live my hometown from a different perspective, not a foreign or unknown experience since I'm familiarized with the spaces researched, however being able to observed them from a critical stance. The summer of 2019 opened up to me the understanding of the spaces as processes of constant resistance toward the hygienic homogenization of sexual and gender diversity at Monterrey.

⁵² Handgun used during the Mexican Revolution by the *Ejercito Federal*, later by the *Zapatista* and *Villista* armies after the *Tropas Federales* were captured and executed.

The critical observation of Monterrey allowed me to approach the interactions and performances of pleasure exerted by the abject identities and the *maricones* at *El Centro* from a point where I could appreciate, study and validate the repetition of these performances as elements of resistance toward LGBT+ hegemony. Within *El Wateke*, *La Alameda* and *La Casita*, the embodiment of practices considered by the hegemonic LGBT+ ideals as unhygienic and nonrespectable among the sexual and gender diversity organizations, represent the main barrier toward the expansion of such ideals which would result in the displacement of the communities that do not fit into the hygienic desires.

The performance of leisure and pleasure at *El Wateke*, *La Alameda* and *La Casita* , places the abject bodies, those presented by Alvarado (2018) as the undesired identities that are segregated by the hegemony for not fitting into the aesthetic and performatic respectable standards, as the center of action in the analysis of the *maricón* resistance at Monterrey. Without presence of the abject body which gives corporality to what the LGBT+ hegemony rejects for its racial, class based and gendered characteristics, performing on the public and private spaces there couldn't exist a discussion on the resistance toward LGBT+ hegemonic tendencies. In this sense, following importance that Taylor (2003) states for the repertoire in responding to the homogenizing process that constructs the archive, *El Wateke*, *La Alameda* and *La Casita* have open up the space for the establishment of embodied and shared knowledge, which in its repetition has prevented the displacement of non-hegemonic *maricón* identities as indigenous, working class and trans people.

In their core, these spaces permit the expression, reinterpretation and validation of non-hegemonic social classes, race and gender expression within a tolerant and resistant context. By tolerant, I refer to the state of permissibility that abject identities have withing

these spaces that are not enjoyed outside on them same, where the heteronormative impositions shape the social and institutional interactions at Monterrey. On the other hand, by resistant I refer to the perpetual state of rejection, term studied by Simpson (2014) as the resistance to integration to the white political system and geographical division by indigenous nations at Canada and the US, that the repetition of the non-respectable and non-hygienic performances bring as countermeasure to the hegemonic LGBT+ intromission in *El Centro* of Monterrey.

It is important, however, to point out that even when the *maricón* resistance at *El Wateke*, *La Alameda* and *La Casita* has confronted the gentrification of these spaces toward the desired of the LGBT+ hegemony, preventing the entrance of institutional LGBT+ organizations⁵³ and their political agendas to the spaces, it has also facilitated the exclusion of non-hegemonic LGBT+ identities from the local LGBT+ discussion, political agendas and LGBT+ archive construction. During my fieldwork one of the hardest moments was finding archival evidence that spoke from the non-hegemonic LGBT+ memories of Monterrey. Apart from what Joaquin Hurtado has written and what and whom Aristeo Jimenez has photographed, in Monterrey the existence of non-hegemonic LGBT+ archive is non-existent; there are oral histories and collective memories, but lives, spaces and anecdotes have been lost on silence that ideals of respectability and hygiene generate.

I consider it is also relevant to point that even when *El Wateke*, *La Alameda* and *La Casita* house the existence of performatic resistance toward hegemonic LGBT+ desires, the presence of racial, gendered and class based violence among the bodies that perform there is still exerted among, what Foucault (1975) pointed as, the docile bodies, those that are

⁵³ As GESS, MOVINL, CREDS, UNESII and AIRE

regulated by the discipline imposed over them, and whom act in accordance to the dominant desires. In this sense, *El Wateke* and *La Alameda*, can still represent spaces of risk for the same non-hegemonic identities that perform and resist there. At *El Wateke* trans, working class and indigenous bodies do still have to confront the *mestizo* middle class desires and impositions that enter that space and can exert sexual and non-sexual violence over the them. *Mayates*, *jotos* and *chacales* still have to negotiate their pleasure and leisure with hegemonic expressions of masculinity, class and race at the cantina. This same negotiations and risks take place at *La Alameda* where *mestizo* police forces and *mestizo*/white gay men hunting for working class men will impose their desires and performance of respectability at the park, unbalancing the power relations with non-hegemonic LGBT+ bodies.

I do not consider *La Casita* within this reflection on the presence of violence by hegemonic masculinity, social class, gender and race, as a result of the of the condition in which the space is constructed and the bodies have to perform: naked in rooms with little to no illumination. *La Casita* is an space that works in guarantee pleasure to all of its patron, however in order to access it they (us) must leave outside clothes narratives constructed by Monterrey. The naked bodies interact in a dark space with pleasure being the only objective; with little to no vision and only the desire to fuck or being fucked *La Casita* constructs, temporarily, the utopia of radical non-hegemonic pleasure. This radical performance, which Muñoz (1999) categorizes as intersection terrorism in the performance of Vaginal Davis, not only helps in the construction a sexual egalitarian space, but also resists and rejects the LGBT+ hegemonic expansion at *El Centro*.

I firmly believe that *El Centro* of Monterrey holds an infinite number of memories and stories that could help us understand and value the non-hegemonic construction of the

city, specifically that city that has housed radical *maricones*. I also believe that the places in which I made field work deserve conversations, archives and research made exclusively on each one, mostly for the importance they hold on the LGBT+ radical identities at Monterrey. My hope is that this research I'm presenting can open up the dialogue on relevance that local non-hegemonic LGBT+ stories and memories have on the construction of local identities and their importance on anti-imperialist LGBT+ efforts. Even when I'm certain that further research and validation on the radical LGBT+ identities and spaces at Monterrey is needed, the future of them is uncertain at this point. When I left my hometown, returning to Austin, *El Wateke*, *La Alameda* and *La Casita* had encountered challenges that went from the continuation of hegemonic advance on the spaces, the planning of urban changes to *El Centro* and the need to change the geographical location of the spaces.

As I write this conclusion, on the sixth week of forced quarantine due to the COVID-19 international pandemic, the panorama for these spaces as well as the LGBT+ identities at Monterrey is uncertain. *El Wateke*, *La Alameda* and *La Casita* have been forced to close its doors until the health situation at Monterrey, one of the cities presenting a high number of people infected with the COVID-19 virus, can be controlled. Being the spaces and the people frequenting them part of the most marginalized sectors of Monterrey, the quarantine represents a possibility of not opening its doors once its over. However, I don't want to end this text with a negative note; *los jotos en Monterrey hemos luchado*, this situation shall not be different and its history, memories and shared knowledge shall be preserved.

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