The Violated Body in Action:

A Cuy(r) Approach to Contested Subjectivities and Identity Formation in Contemporary Ecuador.

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Abstract.

First published in 2013, Raúl Serrano Sánchez' short story collection *Cuerpo adentro: Historias desde el clóset* is one of the first Ecuadorian works featuring stories specifically by and about cuy(r) bodies. The two short stories that the thesis analyzes, Jennie Carrasco Molina's "Princesa de Navidad" and "La Venus Impropia" by Eduardo Adams, discuss non-normative characters as they navigate urban life in contemporary Quito, and detail the complex ways in which their identities are highlighted, elided, challenged, fragmented, and (hyper)sexualized. Looking at processes of disidentification, abjection, and images of the grotesque, the thesis seeks to demonstrate the complex, multifaceted and oftentimes ambivalent mechanisms that underly and undermine non-normative bodies' access to inhabit their identity in neoliberal and normative hegemonic structures. The thesis furthermore argues that, through alternative modes of communication and performative practices and rituals, including non-verbal, sensory, and affective approaches to articulating gender expression and social bonds, cuy(r) subjectivities can re-assemble their identities and survive in those spaces where their bodies are continuously violated and contested.

Résumé.

Premièrement publié en 2013, le recueil de nouvelles, *Cuerpo adentro : Historias desde el clóset*, édité par Raúl Serrano Sánchez, constitue une des premières œuvres équatoriennes présentant des histoires spécifiquement par et sur les corps cuy(r). Les deux nouvelles que le mémoire examine, "Princesa de Navidad" de Jennie Carrasco Molina et "La Venus Impropia" d'Eduardo Adams, traitent des personnages non normatifs alors qu'ils naviguent dans la vie urbaine du Quito contemporain, et détaillent les manières complexes dont leurs identités sont mises en évidence, élidées, contestées, fragmentées et (hyper)sexualisées. En examinant les processus de la désidentification, de l'abjection et de l'imaginaire du grotesque, la thèse cherche à démontrer les mécanismes complexes, multiformes et souvent ambivalents qui sous-tendent et restreignent l'accès des corps non normatifs à habiter leur identité dans les structures hégémoniques néolibérales et normatives. Grâce à des modes de communication alternatifs et des pratiques et rituels performatives—notamment des approches non verbales, sensorielles et affectives destinées à favoriser l'articulation du genre et des liens sociaux, la thèse soutient en outre que les subjectivités cuy(r) sont capables de réassembler leurs identités et survivre dans ces espaces où leurs corps sont continuellement violés et contestés.

Introduction.

While some Latin American cuy(r)[1] authors, such as Fernando Vallejo (Colombia) and Manuel Puig (Mexico), have been included in the national and international literary landscapes since the latter half of the 20th century, the same visibility of minority communities and writers has not yet been extended to Ecuador's literary and cultural landscape (Rausenberger 14; Lind 32). The circulation of literary and academic texts dealing with Ecuadorian cuy(r) identities is scarce. Cuy(r) voices remain in the invisible margins of society despite the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1998 and the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2019 (Rausenberger 10). At the same time, acts of violence against dissenting bodies and sexualities continue to be a shaping presence across Ecuador: "Race, sexuality, gender, class, migration status, age and disability produce the flesh and bone of the queer body whose life is at stake in those contexts of multiple expressions of violence" (Viteri, "Intensiones" 412). Using an intersectional and situated approach to looking at two short stories featured in the first Ecuadorian short story collection published in 2013—*Cuerpo adentro: historias desde el clóset* (*Cuero adentro*)—namely Jennie Carrasco Molina's "Princesa de Navidad" and Eduardo Adams' "La Venus Impropia," I explore how cuy(r) bodies inhabit urban spaces, cope with discrimination in generally phobic environments, build communities and establish a sense of belonging, and engage in pleasure.

[1] Throughout this thesis, I adhere to Diego Falconí Trávez' usage of the term "cuy(r)" to denote individuals and groups identifying with non-heteronormative sexualities and/or genders. For an in-depth analysis of the transcultural tensions between "queerness" and the "cuy(r)" in Latin America—and more specifically the Andes, please consult Appendix 1.

Contextualization and Research Background.

C*uerpo adentro* and the Latin American Short Story.

Within Latin American literary history, the short story is afforded a notable position, not only because of its malleability, but also because of its aptitude to render perspectives lying outside the *status quo*. According to Sayer Peden, the advent of modernism played a significant role in the popularity of the short story as a preferred genre in Latin America as local authors felt prompted to include more Indigenous perspectives in their stories (xviii). The increase in short story publications operates as a literary turning away from traditional and rigid genres toward a renegotiation of the text as a formal rendition of modern life. In addition, the genre allows for the pluralistic realities of those inhabiting these spaces: "The authors of modern short fiction often reject sequential action, preferring to present their materials in the form of incomplete mosaics that oblige the reader to link seemingly unrelated segments to discover intended meanings" (McMurray 136). In defying traditional literary genres, these early short story writers thus paved the way for contemporary short stories, where these same literary techniques underscore, reflect, subvert, and complicate the narrative.

Elaborating on this thought, Alex Nissen understands the short story as a literary "'other' of fiction prose narrative" (181). In other words, the scholar equates the short story to the colonial "Other," those individuals and groups that have been targets of discrimination, such as immigrants, racialized populations including the Global South, and non-normative gender or sexual identities (181). Consequently, the short story provides room for literary exploration away

from the norm at the same time as it defies restrictive structures imposed by colonial discourses on the continent.

In Latin America, first engagements with non-heterosexual pleasures in literary works surfaced at the close of the nineteenth century. Published in 1895, Adolfo Caminha's *Bon-Crioulo* constitutes the first Latin American novel touching on homosexuality overall; Aluísio Azevedo's *O cortiço*, published five years prior, is the first novel to describe a lesbian sexual act (Foster 2). As for the short story genre, Pablo Palacio (1906-1947) emerges as an essential figure within Ecuadorian cuy(r) literary history: part of the Vanguardia literary movement, Palacio has published a series of stories including "Débora" (1927), and "Vida del aharocado" (1932) (Falconí, "Pablo Palacio" 200). Later turned into a novel, the short story "El hombre muerto a puntapies" (1926) is considered the most emblematic of Palacio's texts. In his analysis on the works of Palacio, Falconí succinctly establishes that Palacio "introdujo en su obra una serie de cuerpos raros con identidades y acciones *visibles* que en sus relatos estaban unidos por las múltiples formas de violencia ejercidas sobre ellos, una violencia que además en casi todos los casos va ligada a la sexualidad" (Pablo Palacio 42). Presenting the discriminatory and violent aspects that come with homosexuality in the Ecuador of the 1920s, a time at which homosexuality itself is still a crime, this short story thus lays the groundwork for future cuy(r) authors and short stories grappling with the topic—including the two short stories this thesis examines.

Published in 2013, *Cuerpo adentro: Historias desde el clóset* (*Cuerpo adentro*) features 32 short stories from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that touch on topics around cuy(r) experiences, including but not limited to coming out, bodily and sexual violence, exploring differing sexual and gender identities, dissident pleasures, as well as local, regional, and global

diaspora. Edited by Raúl Serrano Sánchez, the short story collection is the first of its kind for intentionally creating a corpus centring on the cuy(r) body. First published in Quito in 2013 by the Ministro de Cultura y Patrimonio del Ecuador, *Cuerpo adentro* features 32 short stories, all of which grapple with cuy(r) identity in Ecuador and the Ecuadorian diaspora. My discussion centers on Jennie Carrasco Molina's "Princesa de Navidad" and Eduardo Adams' "La Venus Impropia," two stories centring on the life and experiences of non-normative characters on the transgender spectrum.

Carrasco's "Princesa de Navidad," a short story first published in *Cuerpo adentro*, follows the story of Emilia, a young transwoman whose life was irrevocably altered the moment she decides to place her mother's crown on her head. A third-person narrative told from the protagonist's perspective, Carrasco's text provides an intimate account of Emilia's emotional and physical world as she explores the tensions between femininity and masculinity. Finding safety and community in urban spaces, Emilia looks back on the strained relationships with relatives, finally reconnecting with her sister.

First published in 2077 before being republished in Serrano Sánchez' collection in 2013, "La Venus Impropia" centres on Reina, a transwoman engaging in ruminations on her bruised and reconstructed body as she observes herself in the mirror. Opening with Reina regaining consciousness after having been assaulted, Adams' story touches on the protagonist's lived traumata, and cuy(r) social bonds. As Reina parses, dissects, and reconstructs her body, the text jumps between narrative voices and timelines, thus creating an elusive account of a transwoman who, in the end, returns to her assaulter.

Much like Palacio's foundational text, both Carrasco and Adams address issues around gender-based violence and the persistence of discriminatory practices as a result of traditional

and normative cultural practices and governing principles. “Princesa de Navidad” and “La Venus Impropia” are particularly well-suited for a comparative analysis for several reasons: published after 2005, both stories are set around the same time and are of identical length—seven pages. Moreover, Adams’ and Carrasco’s texts present protagonists using metaphorical sobriquets while also having undergone substantial corporeal modifications, emotional and physical traumata, and geographical displacement. Identifying these common threads brings to the fore how Emilia and Reina perceive the world around them.

The Cuy(r) Body in Politics.

In the case of Latin America, the abrupt adoption of neoliberal models alongside democratic regimes in the latter half of the twentieth century has caused a unique economic environment, with the commodification and globalizing processes existing in constant tension with the cultural remnants of dictatorships, imperialism, and the ubiquity of the Catholic Church. Indeed, several scholars indicate a disharmony between Latin American countries’ economic advancements and their ability to progress in socio-cultural progress as hegemonic structures and values continue to dominate the landscape. This holds also true for cuy(r) subjectivities, whose rights on paper do not always correlate to their lived experiences.

While the level of a nation’s progress toward modernity is commonly assessed by looking at the rights status of its cuy(r) citizens, this correlation can be misleading (Lind, “Querying” 52-3; Hoad 2007; Berryman 132). Analyzing the case of Ecuador, Elisabeth Friedman finds that, despite recent legalization efforts, the social acceptance of cuy(r) subjectivities remains low and can thus not be used as a reliable filter, especially in those regions

in which, historically, “Church opposition is strong” (419; Benavides 89). Even though Latin American governments have demonstrated social progress in terms of including women in government roles and augmenting gendered representation, “they are less willing to undertake direct challenges to gender power relations,” thus perpetuating existing barriers (Friedman 431; Berryman 132). Considering the position of sexuality in society in neoliberal structures, Amy Lind asserts that, in the case of Ecuador, heterosexuality acts as a social institution whereby “people’s intimate lives are tied up with state and neoliberal governmentalities” (Lind, “Interrogating” 52-3).

In an analogous manner, the scholar posits that this neoliberal influence gives rise to the commodification of the cuy(r) subject, with the cuy(r) subject being put into relation with processes of exoticization and othering, thus stimulating the residues of imperialist modes of social control (“Querying” 59). Hence, cuy(r) identities are publicized—made available for contestation. In propelling dissenting bodies into a space of contestation, these bodies become a threat to both the Ecuadorian nation and the concept of *familismo*—a Latino cultural concept emphasizing the nuclear family, traditional values, and heteronormativity (Lind, “Interrogating” 31; Henry et al. 156). In that sense, cuy(r) bodies exist in opposition to governing principles.

Persisting imperial ideologies under global capitalism have played a critical role in shaping discourses about the cuy(r) body, sexuality, desires, and imaginaries, prompting a series of Latin American scholars to connect neoliberal to neocolonial practices. For María Amelia Viteri, cuy(r) and other marginalized subjectivities live the palpable ramifications of such phobic and hegemonic environments, where violence operates as a function of neoliberalism (“Intensiones” 415). Employing Foucauldian terms, Santiago Castellanos underpins sexuality with a “tecnología biopolítica que regula el control de las relaciones entre los cuerpos a través de

un complejo sistema de estructuras" (198). Put another way, in the case of Ecuador, neoliberal structures re-produce marginalized subjectivities and favour their discrimination.

For other scholars, such as Verónica Gago, Latin America's unique social and political climate, while discriminatory, does not prevent or restrict cuy(r) subjectivities' experiences. Gago posits that contemporary neoliberal practices need to take into account neoloberalism's "capacity for mutation, its dynamic of permanent variation, especially looking at variations in meaning, at recursive, nonlinear time rhythms, at disruptions driven by social struggles—all of which reemerged with new aspects in Latin America in the context of the crisis of 2007–8" (5). In characterizing neoliberalism through its disruptiveness and non-linearity, Gago creates a connection between contemporary neoliberalism and the characteristics of the short story genre: its malleability. In this sense, neoliberal economies may be considered a well-suited environment in which malleable and non-linear stories and identities can take shape.

Latin American Feminism.

Feminist scholars such as Judith Butler, Monique Wittig, Cherríe Moraga, and Gloria Anzaldúa, have performed foundational work regarding the identification, questioning, and dismantling of persisting heteronormative structures and hermeneutics. Their legacy has profoundly influenced scholarly and activist work in Latin America (Viteri, "Intensiones" 410; Espinosa and Castelli 191; López-Casado 81). Understood as a fundamental figure for feminist thought in Latin America (López-Casado 83; Espinosa and Castelli 191; Sylva 193), María Lugones examines the indifference toward violence against minority groups, investigating how and where markers of identity intersect and fail to be recognized within normative Latin

American systems and hierarchies (Lugones 13-14). With Lugones' early theorization of intersecting identities in mind, Viteri et al. tailor the concept to the Andean context, where intersectionality "permite interrelacionar el género como categoría de análisis mutuamente constitutiva, con miradas desde y hacia el cuerpo (Viteri et al., "Corpografías" 25).

Unlike the Global North, Latin American activist and academic efforts constitute malleable and enmeshed categories. Here, the development of gender-focused study programs within academia has heavily relied on the inclusion of feminist activism as early as the 1990s. The act of theorizing, institutionalizing, and politicizing discussions on sexuality, desire, and gender—whether considered dissident or not—has given rise to a number of obstacles, including a lack of context-specific terminologies or a corpus that would consolidate the multidisciplinary and intersectional nature of a gender-focused field of study[2] (Cornejo et al. 419). In the Peruvian and Colombian contexts, Cornejo et al. highlight the "malleability of the term *gender* in the Latin American context," a term that is used "by religious and social conservatives to push back against LGBT rights and spaces, which include sites of academic knowledge production and activist circles" (Cornejo et al. 420). As for Ecuador, common terminologies include cuy(r), *entundamiento*, *locas*, and *transfeminismo.*[3]

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[2] As indicated by several scholars, Latin American academia does not employ an institutionalized or theorized nomenclature when addressing gender and sexuality in and outside of academia. I deliberately use "gender-focused" or "gender-centred" studies to account for this cultural and conceptual difference, and they are not synonymous with Western terminologies, such as "gender studies," "women's studies," or "queer theory."

[3] Please consult Appendix 1 for an in-depth analysis of transcultural differences in terminologies.

Complicating the relationship between capitalism as a global colonialist force and the coloniality of knowledge, Lugones rejects the capitalist, heterosexual and patriarchal framework previously accepted as the status quo (16), arguing instead for the need to adopt an active and situated awareness of binary fallacies and intersecting identities when discussing violence against minority demographics (42). Noting a general lack of comprehensive studies on gender-based violence, recent scholarship is invested in understanding how gender-based violence intersects with other identity and minority markers, such as gender and sex, social and familial environment, or geographic location (García 192; Vega 121; Gopinath 3; Lugones 13; Valenzuela 23).

In 2017, Amelia María Viteri et al. published the first cross-continental study on feminism, gender, and migration, "Corpografías: Género y Fronteras en América Latina," which considers how identity markers gender, national borders, economic climate, and respective penal systems affect women's and minority groups' ability to benefit from geographical movement, affording particular attention to how the bodies and safety are negotiated when moving in these spaces and crossing borders. In Ecuador, Viteri et al. highlight that, among the LGBT population, transgender people find themselves at a heightened risk of being exposed to hate crimes, transphobia, and violence ("Corpografías" 83; "Crímenes de transexuales"). Furthermore, in 79% of the cases, human trafficking victims were tightly linked to sexual exploitation, with women and minority demographics being the primary victims of human trafficking (Viteri et al., "Corpografías" 56; Ruiz 128).

Viteri reminds her readers of the intimate connection between violence and the cuy(r) body when stating that intersecting identities "produce the flesh and bone of the queer body whose life is at stake in those contexts of multiple expressions of violence" ("Intensiones" 412).

Developing this idea, Christina Schramm understands that "teorizar queer contiene implicaciones que van más allá de las políticas de reconocimiento y de redistribución y que además abarcan procesos de desnormalización y desjerarquización" (Schramm 111). Schramm thus calls for the dismantling and undoing of existing structures to allow for a new set of social and governmental rules that operate against gendered inequalities and for the creation of a shared future (Long 26; Sylva 103).

Araujo and Prieto (2009) and Lind and Pazmino (2009) published special issues on citizenship and sexuality, both of which have appeared in the *Íconos* quarterly dossiers. In contextualizing their texts in distinctly south-south scholarship, these first textual engagements with sexuality and gender laid the groundwork for subsequent explorations within the region (421). To dissect feminism from colonial thought, Yuderkis Espinosa Miñoso takes a decolonial approach to feminism in Latin America: rather than developing extant feminist ideology, Espinosa calls for a feminism that is generated on the continent, which pertains specifically to local realities and that focuses on personal experience (2008). In turning away from institutionalized works and Western feminist discourses, Espinosa gives rise to a "genealogy of experience," a project that seeks to revisit the human experience, the body, and oneself as a starting point for feminist theory alongside other more widely accepted forms of documentation (2015).

Research Gap, Methodology, and *Cuerpo adentro*.

Several scholars point to the general lack of studies and analyses on dissenting sexual and gender identities (Vega 121; Gopinath 134; Viteri, "Intensiones" 408). Extant research on cuy(r)

bodies tends to be anchored in sociological and health-related frameworks.[4] Looking beyond North America as the global and definitive site for feminist scholarship and queer theory, Gopinath contends that prior scholarly work has failed to consider "normative and deviant sexualities as central to both the colonial and nationalist projects" (134). In the context of Latin America, existing scholarship has focused on empiric data collection, such as through interviews, and testimonial and anecdotal accounts. This is the case for Benavides' and Falconí's works centring on gay men; Alexander Doty concerns himself with the lesbian experience; several interviews are conducted with transgender individuals in the works of María Amelia Viteri ("'Latino' and Queer'"); Katie Rebecca Horowitz is invested in Quito's drag king scene ("Trouble With 'Queerness'"); and Edgar Vega Suriaga interviews popular drag queens in Quito bars to gain an understanding of how they relate gender, sexuality, employment, and individual expression ("De gays y trans").

While the work of these scholars is relevant in that it showcases situated perspectives and holds those up against existing academic theoretic frameworks, literary analyses of cuy(r) bodies remain scarce. This is especially true for the Andean region, which is overall understudied in comparison to other Latin American regions (Mahler 141; Ramos 153; Rausenberg 17). While a few scholars, such as Falconí Trávez, have examined deviating sexualities in Ecuadorian literature, most of this research has been restricted to one author: Pablo Palacio. Little to no literary research exists on other sexual or gender identities, and contemporary bodies of literature

[4] Recent scholarly articles examining the barriers to health care access in the transgender population include Agarwal et al. (2021); Millet et al. (2017); Brömdal et al. (2019); Rees et al. (2021); Anderson et al. (2015); and Aylagas-Crespillo et al. (2018).

remain widely understudied. Indeed, according to Viteri, there is a need for studies and methodologies that "pursue processes of knowledge making and sharing, as well as survival" ("Intensiones" 416). This is the gap that my discussion of Jennie Carrasco Molina's "Princesa de Navidad" and "La Venus Impropia" by Eduardo Adams seeks to begin to address.

Research Questions and Relevance of Discussion.

My discussion is guided by, but not limited to, the following research questions: how is gender-related trauma expressed in literary texts, and how does the body respond to such violence? How does the Ecuadorian context affect the ways in which characters express emotions, identity, and pleasure? Lastly, how do cuy(r) identities build and maintain social networks within and outside the space, and in which ways do phobic spaces affect this identity-building? Considering Jennie Carrasco Molina's "Princesa de Navidad" and Eduardo Adams' "La Venus Impropia," this thesis argues that in these texts, the characters resort to processes of disidentification, abjection, and images of the grotesque to articulate the ways in which neoliberal and normative structures barricade these characters' access to inhabit their identity. Furthermore, I posit that Carrasco's and Adams's respective protagonists rely on performative practices, rituals, and alternative methods of communication, including non-verbal, sensory, and affective approaches to understanding articulating gender expression and social bonds—practices that allow Molina's Emilia and Carrasco's Reina to re-assemble their identities and survive in those spaces where the cuy(r) body continues to be violated and contested.

Looking at how minority populations navigate urban life in Ecuador, a generally understudied nation in Latin America, this thesis constitutes the first literary and academic

discussion of cuy(r) bodies' realities and experiences as they navigate urban life in Ecuador in the face of violence and discrimination. While both Carrasco and Adams are widely published in Ecuador, their texts have not been studied in an academic context. Shedding light on these short stories becomes critical as they provide a unique insight into the current socio-political urban climate in Ecuador, where, despite recent legalization efforts, cuy(r) bodies continue to face discrimination, gender-based violence, and limited access to health care services and employment opportunities.

My discussion will find relevance for Hispanists, scholars specializing in trauma studies, intellectuals interested in intersectional and situated approaches, as well as writers. Aside from the topical relevance of my discussion, the analysis of the texts themselves is also significant in the sense that Serrano's short story collection is not readily available in the Global North, meaning that my discussion is one of the first to facilitate the introduction of these foundational texts to other parts of the world.

Further, this thesis follows research that argues against the overuse of Western thinkers within queer theory and feminist studies, such as Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, or Judith Butler. As Muñoz argues, "their thought has been well mined in the field of queer critique" (15). Rather, I turn toward local scholarship. Favouring a south-south approach is significant for three reasons: not only does the emphasis on a south-south scholarship generate academic, activist, cultural and socio-political ties between and across Latin American institutions, regions, and borders; but this reorientation does also commit the Global South to a site of alternative and independent knowledge production and dissemination. In doing so, south-south scholarship facilitates the defenestration of the Global North as the locus of intellectual authority, thus successfully speaking from "below," the site of the subaltern, to borrow from Gayatri Spivak.

Ultimately, I seek to demonstrate the relevance of Ecuadorian LGTBQ+ literature by illuminating the tensions between local practices and expressions of gender identity at large.

Every analysis has its shortcomings, and my discussion is no exception. In looking at two short stories in *Cuerpo adentro*, I favour a genre that is known for its explorative potential (Nissen 184). To gain a more comprehensive overview of the cuy(r) reality in Ecuador and the Andean region, more research needs to be conducted on the cuy(r) Ecuadorian experience in other literary genres. Furthermore, this thesis centers on the urban Ecuadorian experience: there is a need for more large-scale comparative literary studies across urban and rural areas, as well as throughout the Andean region to understand which experiences can be qualified as specifically Ecuadorian, urban, or Andean. While my analysis focuses on the cuy(r) population as marginal subjects, it does not specifically consider how this identity intersects with other minority identity markers, such as race or disability. Hence, future research should consider how these intersecting identities influence and differentiate cuy(r) identities. Moreover, my work is invested in two short stories centring on the life of two trans individuals. To attain a broader knowledge about the cuy(r) body, future research should include other understudied sexual and gender identities, as well as gender non-conformity in Indigenous communities. Lastly, while this thesis seeks to include local voices, my differing academic and cultural background brings with it inherent constraints about the methodological approach and scholarly resources used.

Discussion Outline.

This thesis is composed of four chapters. The first chapter, “Monstrous Disidentifications,” examines the grotesque as a leitmotiv in Carrasco’s and Adams’ respective

works in relation to the cuy(r) body and positions this discourse of the monstrous in a context of dissociation resulting from violence and trauma. Moving on, “Rituals, Repetitions, and Defiant Gestures” considers how performative gestures, ceremonies, and embodied rituals allow for the emergence and reinforcement of a sense of belonging and self. Discussing kinship and the politicization of the body, Chapter Three, “Kinship and Social Bond Formation in Minority Subjectivities” looks at familial relationships and alternative social bond formation in the context of cuy(r) urban migration in Ecuador. The concluding chapter, “Reassembling Desire,” is invested in understanding how cuy(r) subjectivities reassemble their selves and experience sexual pleasure in the face of continued threats and potential danger.

Chapter One: Monstrous Disidentifications

The Unnatural Monster.

The relation of the minority subject to the monster to express a perceived otherness is not a new phenomenon; indeed, it has been studied extensively. While scholars such as Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Albert Memmi look at the minority subject through a (neo)colonial lens, others, including Hélène Cixous and Judith Butler take a feminist approach to distinguish the hegemonic narrative from the female one, or in Butler's case, the non-heterosexual one. In alignment with Michel Foucault's foundational work on the institutionalized and governmental discursive power and knowledge production, these scholars establish the minority subject as existing in opposition to the norm. Continuing that thought, Jack Halberstam draws on these extant theories to establish a direct connection between those subjectivities that are considered non-normative and the grotesque, the abnormal, that which is strange and weird. For Halberstam, the liminal subject embodies that which cannot be situated within the social order and is thus effectively pushed into the realm of the non-human (153).

Elaborating on the idea of the non-human in cuy(r) subjectivities, Epps indicates that "[s]trangeness is here a function of defocalization and defamiliarization that never quite gives up the ghost of focalization and familiarity. In other words, strangeness, not unlike estrangement, conjures up images of a body, a home, a nation abandoned, made foreign, and yet still haunted by dreams of something natural and normal, something familiar in focus" (Epps 209-210). Put another way, these subjectivities find themselves in a state where their identities undergo a complex process of contestation. More so than the bodily transformation needed to evolve into

one's identity, the social aspect plays an essential role in creating, maintaining, and fueling self-perception and feelings of dis-belonging and strangeness. In an analogous way, Molloy draws a connection between cuy(r) subjects and phantasmic imagery to establish a link between marginalized populations and perceptions of invisibility and sub-humanness (145). These observations also hold true for both Adam's and Carrasco's stories, where the cuy(r) subjects identify with the grotesque, the abject and the monstrous as they long for gender and sexual identities that are seemingly unattainable and always incongruent as they mourn those irretrievable versions of themselves that would have allowed for the accepted social order. Considering the discursive relations and power dynamics surrounding the cuy(r) and minority body, this chapter seeks to understand the ways in which these subjectivities perceive their identity as well as how the monstrous is conjured. Here, I argue that the monstrous emerges because of a simultaneity of distinct types of traumata, including bodily, physical, and societal trauma, which provoke a pattern of de-personification and monstrosity, leading to the characters' disidentification and self-effacement.

In Carrasco's and Adams' respective short stories, discussions engaging with the monstrous and the abject are intricately related to a disconnect that arises when the protagonists scrutinize their bodies, bodies that are both ever-changing and deemed inadequate. In the case of "Princesa de Navidad," the act of looking and self-effacement operate in tandem. Ruminating on her young adulthood and the beginning of transitioning to her gender identity, Emilia explains feeling disjointed not only from her anatomical body, but also from the body in progress:

> No obstante, no podía dejar de sentirme como protagonista de un cuento parecido al de Frankenstein. Yo, un monstruo, no por lo monstruoso, sino por ir contra natura. La diferencia con el de Frankenstein estaba en que él era ficción y yo

> realidad, con un cuerpo nuevo que no sabía cómo iba a caminar por este mundo. Parecía fácil. Parecía que el sueño hecho realidad me iba a permitir una vida feliz y realizada. Pero no. Ahí estaban las pesadillas: yo era una mujer descomunal y peluda, con un pene monstruoso. (Carrasco 129-130)

Operating in a lexical field of the monstrous, Emilia likens the physical element of her transformation to Frankenstein's monster: she is "descomunal," "peluda," and "contra natura." In doing so, Emilia insinuates that the transitioning process leaves her in an in-between state. She equates herself to a monster, "no por lo monstruoso, sino por ir contra natura." Put another way, Emilia experiences body dysmorphia, which causes her to identify as a monstrous creature for failing to abide to normative social and gender codes—as evidenced by her equating normative, heterosexual taxonomies and ideologies to the order of the natural. At the same time, Emilia refers to her penis, the sexual organ representative of the gender identity she wishes to discard, as a "pene monstruoso," a constant reminder of her inherent unnaturalness. In accordance with Epps' theory on estrangement, Emilia finds herself doubly estranged from her body: firstly, for not being comfortable with her biological anatomy and assigned gender; and secondly, for not being able to fully conform to who she wants to be.

Reina similarly articulates her disgust toward the body that is failing her. When observing her body in the mirror, for example, she wishes to recuperate her desired identity, much like Emilia: "el espejo te deja ver la cara del hombre que no eres, el mujeril deseo de que tus aguas se abran al llegar a la península (…) De todos modos te cubres esa cara de fémina horripilante, esa brusca sombra que te ha acechado siempre, y lo haces con trazos de esponja blancos, esperando de recobrar la identidad" (Adams 242). Reina finds herself in an in-between, where she is the "hombre que no eres" while also having a "cara de fémina horriplante." In the same way as

Emilia, Reina registers her body as a disjointed assemblage of male and female characteristics, a discordance to which Adams' short story alludes at the paratextual level, under the form of epigraphs. The subsequent section will consider how gendered ambiguities intersect with the ridicule and the grotesque.

Reyes Bufones and Reinas Impropias.

In the context of the monstrous in the short stories I am examining, it is worth looking at one of the epigraphs that introduce Adams' text. The epigraph I would like to consider more critically is attributed to Octavio Paz, and generates an atmosphere of ambiguous simultaneities, setting the tone for Adam's text: "Pero ¿quién es el rey y quién es el bufón?" (235). Here, Paz connects the king and the jester to bourgeois riches and the arts. In questioning the king's and the jester's identity, he challenges the notion that there is a difference between the king and his jester, suggesting that they are, in fact, conflated. Paz elaborates on such societal categorization mechanisms in *El arco y la lira*, understanding that, in modern society, poets (or jesters) are viewed as the "fruto de una sociedad que expulsa aquello que no puede asimilar. La poesía ni ilumina ni divierte al burgués. Por eso destierra al poeta y lo transforma en un parásito o en un vagabundo" (87). Much like Paz's analysis of the poet as a depreciated community member with an inferior social standing, Adams writes a character whose potential is overlooked, reduced to immodesty, misshapenness, and resistance to categorization.

This tension between the "rey"—or in this case, "Reina"—and the "bufón" surfaces in the text itself, where Reina's voice is intercepted by a third-person narrator who reminds her of her unsatisfactory attempts at posing as a woman. This narrator, who is a figment of Reina's

imagination acting as the voice of the normative social order, exclaims that the trans woman is a "cínico adonis de los disfraces del silencio, héroe de la nada, virgen bufón…va a ser muy difícil esconderte tras ese telón de circo ambulante, bajo esa pintura siempre feliz" (Adams 241). Shortly afterwards, the narrator draws an even more direct connection between Reina and her de-feminization: "La Reina vuelta rey y verdugo; y el héroe, bufón y virgen del sacrificio" (Adams 241). Here, the voice calls her a "cínicio adonis," undoing her gender identity as a trans woman. Informing her of her worthlessness, the voice furthermore likens her to a "virgen bufón:" not only is Reina compared to a virgin, typically associated with naivety, but she is also named a jester, a figure inviting the ridicule, which minimizes her credibility as a human being and confirms her inherent grotesqueness. When bringing this into dialogue with the epigraph and Rubén Darío's text, it becomes evident that the epigraph responds to this statement by calling into question governing structures.

In closing my discussion on monstrosity, I would like to briefly turn to another story featured in Serrano's short story collection, which presents a different position toward the image of the monster. "Élella," written by Marcelo Báez, inverts the monster—normativity dichotomy by looking at the body in terms of its generative potential and intersections of the "both/and" (Taylor 96; Cadena 184). In his text, Élella, a non-gendered character who is tried for murder, refuses gender and sexual categorizations altogether, effectively inhabiting all genders: "*Asexual. Bisexual. Übersexual. Homosexual. Malditos membretes*" (Báez 210). Rather than abiding to normative structures, Élella states to be both man and woman and calls those monsters who object to Élella's identity as someone "sin reglas" (Báez 211). Like other intersecting identities, such as the mestizo for instance, Élella is "unclassifiable, slippery, and belonging to more than one order at once" (Cadena 184). Báez short story, unlike the ones of Carrasco and Adams,

serves an activist function as it overtly rejects social norms. While outside the scope of my discussion, "Élella" is worth mentioning in relation to Adams' and Carrasco's texts and their treatment of the monstrous, specifically because Báez' protagonist escalates those instances of instability, flux, and resistance that Emilia and Reina set up in their respective stories.

Vacating the Body, Disidentifying the Self.

Feelings of instability, gendered ambiguity and abjection also translate at the level of language, where the second person pronoun enters the narrative to express self-fragmentation and to reassemble an image of the self that allows for the possibility of multiple selves, albeit deemed unsatisfactory. Pellicer-Ortín observes that, within trauma narrative strategies, the "multiplicity of testimonial voices" is commonly used to distance oneself from and describe traumatic experiences (83; Whitehead 88). It is in this context that Muñoz develops the concept of disidentification, which "is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere" (*Disidentification* 4). Thus, when Reina and Emilia respond to their respective traumata by othering themselves, this process of dissociation may be viewed as an alternative way of ensuring their own survival in the face of "routinized protocols of subjugation" (Muñoz, *Disidentification* 161; Szegheo-Lang 103).

Indeed, "La Reina Impropia" alternates between two types of narrative voices: the first one belongs to Reina, who refers to herself in the second person, frequently relying on the pronoun "tú" as if laying eyes upon a foreign body when observing herself. In the opening paragraph of the story, the reader encounters a person watching a body in the mirror. As the

sponge removes the layers of makeup, the person delineates the ways in which the body fails in its self-camouflage:

> Una esponja embadurnada de blanca verdad y tu rostro cierto emerge paulatino desde el primer contacto. Tus facciones se vuelven visibles con cada trazo de la esponja sobre tus rasgos ajenos que se habían ido a posar en ti. Esos lánguidos labios, rectilíneos y con una mueca absurdamente femenina, grotesca, no pueden ser tuyos, no te corresponden: así que conjuras abundancia, sinuosas comisuras, júbilo granate, con la pintura debida para poder sentirte su justo propietario. Tus pómulos, tus párpados vuelven a su sitio. Una peluca beterava cubre ahora tus cabellos arisnegros, rapados a la fuerza, desde pequeño te obligaban a raparte, siempre supiste que eras así, el impropio. (Adams 235)

The combination of a factual description of the body and the use of the second person pronoun linguistically strips the body of an identity, seeks to render it into a sterile vessel without a signifying meaning, effectively de-personifying her. More than focusing on Reina's perceived grotesqueness, I am invested in highlighting the narrative voice in this passage, given the continued usage of the second-person pronoun instead of the first-person pronoun. The discordance of the narrative voice highlights the dissociative process that is necessary to survive this state of trauma, of being presented with the body that is not and yet is hers. Rather than referring to her own lips, eyelashes, and wig, she can only describe "tu rostro," and those physical attributes that "no pueden ser tuyos, no te corresponden." In eliding the "I" from the narrative, Reina removes her identity from her body, vacates it, and, in doing so, expresses the trauma associated with the visual reminder of a body that is not herself.

In this instance, I would also like to point to Reina's use of the term "impropio" to refer to herself. Not only does the masculine ending of the adjective indicate that Reina views herself as a man regardless of her attempts at female appearance, but it also shows that she views herself as inherently inadequate. Alluding to the sculpture *Vénus impudique*,[5] "La Venus Impropia"—Reina, the inadequate, the immodest—aligns herself with the sculpture's connotations of the mutilated, hypersexualized, non-natural, and therefore grotesque body.

In a likewise fashion to Reina, Carrasco's heroine defaults to a medical register when detailing instances of bodily trauma, especially in those cases that involve her male anatomy. Recounting her first experience with sexual assault during her teenage years, Emilia painstakingly remembers that it was "para morirse: uno de ellos agarró mi pene y me masturbó hasta que, entre hipos y vómitos, salió de mi cuerpo esa sustancia viscosa y blanquecina, igual a la que alguna vez mi padre depositó en mi madre y se formó un ser dual que me habitó durante veintisiete años" (Carrasco 126-127). In this excerpt, Emilia resorts to describing the factual and bodily process of the ejaculation; referring to her sperm as "esta sustancia viscosa y blanquecina," Emilia further engages in disidentifying with her body. Provoking feelings of disgust and abjection as developed by Julia Kristeva, the scene then moves on to thinking back to her own conception, again falling into a medical register. Instead of thinking of her creation as a

[5] The *Vénus impudique* is the sculpture of a female body from the Paleolithic era, whose name stands in opposition t the *Vénus pudique*—the modest Venus. Unlike the *Vénus pudique*, the *Vénus impudique* is characterized by the absence of a head, arms, and legs as well as an emphasis on the chest and female genitalia, the sculpture is commonly associated with fertility and hypersexuality (Bissonnette et al.).

moment of intimacy between her parents, Emilia understands it as a mere depositing of sperm into a uterus. Several reasons underlie this factual rendition of Emilia's memory of assault: on the one hand, the removal of all emotive associations makes the traumatic event less real; on the other hand, the factual rendition allows Emilia to take her person out of the story.

Shortly afterwards, Emilia accentuates her dissociation from her body and self when she exclaims "[m]e torné invisible," thereby fully effacing her identity (Carrasco 129). Like Emilia, Reina escapes into the realm of invisibility when confronted with her ambiguous body and identity after her assault. Reina wishes to not be seen, "por favor, que ni se percate de su presencia, porque Reina ha recobrado la niebla benigna del anonimato" (Adams 238). Seeking cover under the "niebla benigna del anonimato," Reina disavows herself.

Reina underscores the necessity to flee into anonymity when she reveals that "la indiferencia protectora retornaba," thus connoting indifference as a type of protection (Adams 238). In highlighting the protective quality of disinterest, Reina showcases her precarious social position, where indifference is the favourable option to being noticed—as she has learnt, violence comes at the price of visibility. Looking at the mechanism of heterosexual control, Amy Lind similarly states that "both invisibility and hypervisibility serve as mechanisms of control and governmentality" ("Querying" 53). For Lind then, cuy(r) self-effacement represents a symptom of the restrictive and inequitable social and governmental structures put in place.

As I will carve out in subsequent sections, this position of the invisible and liminal also doubles as a starting point from which the minority subject can take charge of their narrative in non-normative ways, especially through rituals and gestures. Tying Emilia's and Reina's instances of dissociation from sexual mechanisms and physical appearance back to Muñoz' notion of disidentification, the characters' consistent de-personification in moments where the

integrity of the cuy(r) subject's identity is contested corroborates the idea that disidentification as a "response to state and global power apparatuses that employ systems of racial, sexual, and national subjugation. These routinized protocols of subjugation are brutal and painful" (*Disidentifications* 161; Szegheo-Lang 103). Though a coping mechanism and response to their respective traumata, disidentifying their body from their identity constitutes one of the ways through which Emilia and Reina can survive, nonetheless.

Looking at the monstrous and the grotesque as expressions of trauma and bodily dysphoria, this chapter sought to demonstrate the mechanisms of self-effacement and disidentification in cuy(r) subjectivities. With these coping mechanisms in mind, chapter two will consider re-enactments, gestures, and rituals as embodied reassertions for the characters' sense of belonging.

Chapter Two: Rituals, Repetition and Defiant Gestures.

Within Western and feminist theories, discursive and performative practices are commonly understood as gendered and social constructs. Afro-Ecuadorian folklore tales tell a different story: ushering in the ritual of a new social order, the mythological figure of the Choló-Fó exists in a state of flux by resisting gendered binaries and embracing alternative modes to performing identity (Falconí, *De las cenizas* 136). In doing so, the Choló-Fó has become a crucial historical figure for Ecuadorian minority populations including cuy(r) subjectivities, as it positively highlights the potential for change as well as the possibility for non-hegemonic taxonomic systems. Using the Choló-Fó as a contrasting example to Western conceptions around gender, I am now turning to Carrasco's and Adams' texts, whose characters, like the Choló-Fó, perform their identity in deliberate ambiguity. In part defined by their ability to continuously piece themselves together and look beyond their immediate circumstances, the gender-ambiguous women not only point to the commonplace nature of gendered violence, but also draw a connection between repetition, gestures, and identity. Looking at the ways in which the stories' protagonists resort to repetitive acts, celebrations, and familiar gestures, I contend that rituals function as embodied reassertions of Emilia's and Reina's identity and a reinforcement of their sense of belonging. This section of my discussion will thus center on Reina's and Emilia's respective coping mechanisms to understand the performative component of their gender, and illuminate how such embodied acts not only reinforce, but also challenge these characters' identities. In closing, this chapter will afford attention to the drag queen as an additional element present in the stories under scrutiny.

Positioning Gestures in Latin America.

Drawing on Butler's ruminations on gendered performativity as a constructed and socially conditioned behaviour, Sylvia Molloy revisits the theoretic framework around performative gestures, and puts them into relation to representation and posing (Molloy 151; Butler 10). Looking at a specifically Latin American context in *A flor de cuerpo*, she establishes that posing as a discursive practice "refers to the unnamed," that is, posing refers to what it represents, thus rendering visible that which is represented, but not what *is* (Molloy 151). Put another way, posing constitutes a performative act, which, much like a floating signifier, does not have a linguistic referent, and is thus confined to the space of representation. According to Molloy, it is in this space that posing comes to denote an act of mimicry, that of "a fleeting identity" (Molloy 151). With every assertion of identity, this fleeting identity pretends, mimics, and is rendered visible only to be dismissed. Posing imposes what lacks visibility, effectively turning it into imposture.

When Molloy equates posing to that which is unnamed, Christina Schramm advocates that, instead, posing is a performative and constrictive process that names, with the State symbolizing the political entity that positions, labels and produces its citizens (106). Nonetheless, while gendered societal structures produce and position the subject, Schramm does not address the generative and expressive potential of repositioning the subject.

It is within this context of alternative expressive modes of representation that Carrie Noland understands the function of the gesture. For her, "gesturing may very well remain a resource for resistance to homogenization, a way to place pressure on the routines demanded by technical and technological standardization" ("Introduction" x; Rodríguez 6). She continues to

establish that “the ways in which the body’s singularity—its gender, race, size, scope of movement, and so on—necessarily inflects the generalizing momentum of the signifying process, bringing into play embodied, performance-specific, and therefore noniterable instantiations of meaning-making forms of movement” (Introduction xxi; Rodríguez 6). In that sense, performative gestures allow for the emergence of new forms of meaning and knowledge production.

Looking at the Latin American context of performance and gestures, Marina Pérez de Mendiola dedicates one chapter to the link between mimicry and the cuy(r) body. Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha, she posits that while mimicry is typically associated with the futile, and normativity, mimicry can also be revisited “in terms of a device, a strategy that allows us to subvert, disturb from within textually and socially based representations, and to undermine sexual difference” (194). Along with other scholars, such as Rodríguez and Noland, Pérez thus argues for a revision of performative gestures as solely a marker of preconditioned and gendered constructs. Rather, these scholars seek to display gestures, performative acts, and rituals as starting points for exploring identity beyond already established theories, instead favouring a situated and multiple approach that begins in the blurry, liminal spaces inhabited by cuy(r) subjectivities. In the works of Carrasco and Adams, it is precisely this flux that allows the characters to explore, repeat, and realize versions of their identity.

Ritualistic Gestures in Carrasco’s and Adams’ Texts.

In both Carrasco’s and Adams’ texts, the protagonists seek comfort in repetitive gestures and invent rituals that affirm their sense of self: while Reina keeps thinking of her wig when

watching her injured body in the mirror after being assaulted, Emilia repeatedly refers to wearing a crown as a life-altering and irreversible moment of the past. Invested in the relevance of the gesture as a physical expression of language as it relates to the cuy(r) body, Juana María Rodríguez seeks to understand how what she terms *queer latinidad* is expressed through gestures. According to Rodríguez, "gestures reveal the inscription of social and cultural laws, transforming our individual movements into an archive of received social behaviours and norms that reveal how memory and feeling are enacted and transformed through bodily practices" (5). Ubiquitous across spaces, such cultural and social practices become also significant for cuy(r) subjectivities: they provide a sense of safety and memory-making to those who are pushed out into the margins of society.

Taking a closer look at post-dictatorship economies in Latin America through the lens of archival practices, Nelly Richard understands memory as "not a repository of definitively completed historical meanings that remembrance recovers simply by looking backward" (175-176). Rather, For Richard, memory is continuously written, contested, and rewritten as history unfolds, is unearthed, and re-evaluated. In their work, Patricio Simonetti and Marce Butierrez build on such discussions on archival practices when examining the place for cuy(r) subjectivities in creating such repositories. According to the scholars, "the material experience of memory" functions as "an emotional practice of remembrance that embraces the body as a whole" (2). Given that cuy(r) bodies' are historically elided from "national narratives," cuy(r) archiving strategies seek to create an indelible mark of cuy(r) subjectivities, cuy(r) bodies, and cuy(r) histories (Simonetti and Butierrez 2). Simonetti and Butierrez thus point to the importance of remembering for cuy(r) communities as they establish their own politics of belonging.

Considering two South African novels, Amy Lisa Duvenage speaks to Rodríguez' observations on the gesture as an enactment of familiar cultural processes. Within non-normative populations in the Global South, Duvenage understands that the ritual operates "as a form of healing, and as providing a renewed sense of personhood and of belonging" (148). In that sense, the ritual becomes a crucial component to cuy(r) subjectivities' ability to regenerate and overcome past trauma.

Throughout "Princesa de Navidad," Carrasco's protagonist relies on the crown as a physical reminder and vessel for gender expression. Using tender terms to describe the first exploration of her sexuality, Emilia likens this intimate moment to a formal coronation ceremony. In Carrasco's story, the significance of this moment is underscored by creating a connection between Emilia's gender identity and a coronation ceremony: "La primera vez que me puse la corona fue un domingo por la tarde, cuando todos hacían la siesta" (Carrasco 124). Simultaneously, in saying that this was the first time that Emilia put on the crown, Emilia discloses that this was the start of a repeated transformation, one that is always preceded by putting the crown on her head. Emilia goes on to describe the radiance and beauty of the crown, implicitly indicating that the crown transfers similar physical attributes upon her:

> Allí la vi, llamándome, brillante y hermosa, destellando con el sol de la tarde de verano. Me acerqué de puntillas, tomé la caja, la abrí. Con la mayor delicadeza, agarré la corona y, mirándome al espejo, la coloqué sobre mi cabeza, imaginando la ovación de un público que me admiraba por mi hermosura. (Carrasco 124)

Throughout this passage, Emilia relies on a vocabulary of amazement and excitement, implicitly treating the crown as a wondrous object of desire. Communicating that the crown was calling her, Emilia expresses that putting the crown on her head as a symbol for performing her gender

identity was an inevitable act, that she did not have another choice but to live her identity. After performing the coronation ceremony, she imagines the applause of an audience congratulating her on being a "princesa de Navidad." Each subsequent time she puts on the crown, Emilia is reminded that she was "maravillado, al ver cómo me convertía en una linda niña digna de ganar el concurso navideño" (Carrasco 124) While emphasizing that this positive association with an identity outside the binary is channelled through the crown and can only be lived in the context of the imaginary, this scene constitutes nonetheless a turning point in Emilia's life as it prompts her to remember the grace, beauty, and worth she felt the first time she was able to experience her identity in moments of violence and societal rejection.

Emilia's coronation can be viewed not only as a performative act in a Butlerian sense, whereby the performative constitutes identity ("Performative" 270-1), but also as an act of transfer as outlined by Diana Taylor in *The Body and the Repertoire*. Taylor's ruminations on the body as an embodied repertoire and producer of knowledge aid in understanding the body not only as a locus of performance, but also as a living mark of memory. For Taylor, the repertoire "enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (Taylor 20). It is in relation to this desired self-effacement that Butler develops the phrase "performative pastiche," which serves to reconsider the gendered body as an unfixed boundary, whose appearance relies on acts, that is, imitations of a center that is itself an imitation, meaning absent ("Performative" 270). Gender, as it relates to the body, can thus not be defined, but instead defines through repetition. Hence, the repeated act—now a ritual—becomes a crucial part for minority populations to perform and secure their identity.

If Emilia's crown illustrates the importance of ritual and gesture in the process of self-creation, a similar weight is attributed to the wig in "La Venus Impropia." On numerous occasions, the reader is reminded of the significance of the wig for transwomen and their ability to consolidate self-perception and gender identity. Throughout the short story, Reina's wig is mentioned four times, each time in relation to an act of violence, and each time underscoring the wig as a definitive identity attribute. The first reference to the wig takes place at the beginning of the story, where "una peluca beterava cubre ahora tus cabellos arisnegros" (Adams 235). Furthermore, the third-person narrator reveals that Reina "ha estado usando la peluca que le hizo la Wanda, del mismo color que la tenías," which implies that the trans woman has already experienced similar instances of assault (Adams 236). The emphasis on the new wig being "del mismo color que la tenías" further corroborates the importance of the wig as a vessel for self-expression and for establishing a fixed and grounding physical attribute to her identity. Subsequently, the wig is brought up again in relation to Reina's assault, where the wig was removed "de un manotón con la derecha y ahora te cambia el nombre" (Adams 238). With the removal of the wig provoking a direct name change from "Reina" to "el impropio," the wig is thus imbricated with her gender identity.

If Emilia turns to the ceremonial rite to create positive associations with her gender/drag identity, Reina refers to the ceremony in relation to her bodily modifications—both physical and hormonal. However, in her case, this ceremony is not linked to attaining her gender identity, but to undoing it. Considering her biological anatomy to be a determining factor of her identity, Reina understands the removal of her makeup, wig, and clothes as a detrimental ceremony, leaving behind nothing but the body that failed to imitate:

> Ceremonia cumplida, transformación que te ha devuelto a ti mismo, frente a esa lamina cristalina que te espejea como un mimo benéfico. Pero detrás de tu rostro, bajo tu nariz de plástico y tus guiños recuperados, una sobra busca imponerse, trepar a la superficie y borrarlo todo con un trapo sucio: la verdad, la que miente. (Adams 236)

In Reina's case, the failure to imitate and successfully pass as a woman causes the cuy(r) subject to engage in a reverse ceremonial process. Instead of masking and adding on to her so to achieve the physique and gender identity corresponding to her, Reina's ceremony consists of unveiling "la verdad, la que miente." Thinking back to Duvenage observation on the ritual as a form of healing and creating a sense of belonging, this reverse ceremony thus showcases the implications of a failed ritual as a loss of self and belonging.

In the context of the ceremonial act as an expression of identity and necessity for performativity, I would like to briefly touch on another short story featured in *Cuerpo adentro* for its similar treatment in subject matter and reference to rituals and performance: Marcelo Báez' "Élella." His eponymous protagonist, a gender-ambiguous and promiscuous scholar, communicates that she has married a number of non-heterosexual women in what she terms satanic wedding ceremonies, and blurs the lines between marriage and sacrificial ritual:

> *Me casé con todas y cada una de ellas en un rito vampírico. Todas íbamos con nuestras mascaras venecianas y exhibir nuestros cuerpos. ¿Cuántos dedos pulgares hice sangrar con mi daga? Los glóbulos rojos de ellas se mezclaban con los míos. Matrimoniadas en un ritual único. Ahora que se habla tanto de la unión entre personas del mismo sexo, yo puedo decir que fui la primera en hacerlo*. (Báez 215)

More so than Élella's direct references to the vampiric and satanic, what interests me in this passage is the significance Élella attributes to the idea of the rite as a performative act that gains meaning through the very act of being performed. Ritualistic elements, including the Venetian masks, the blood oath, and the mixing of blood as a sign of union, are integral to this vampiric wedding ritual. In that sense, the ritual becomes meaningful when it is enacted. In addition to the ritualistic importance of the wedding ceremony, Élella underlines the relation between representation, gesture, and performance when stressing that they all went "*con nuestras mascaras venecianas y exhibir nuestros cuerpos.*" Here, two things happen at once: while the face is masked, the body is exhibited. Both gestures—the intentional hiding and showing—sit within theories around performance and performativity. Thinking back to Mendiola and his understanding of mimicry as a subversive act, the imitation of a Venetian ball couple with a vampiric wedding ceremony accomplishes just that: in calling attention to the cuy(r) body as an integral part of performance, this scene pervades and transgresses normativity while succeeding in showcasing the ritual as a non-verbal tool for representation.

Drag Queens and Pervasive Imitations.

In closing my discussion on gestures, performative acts, and rituals, I now turn to the image and social function of the *drag queen* as a relevant image within both Carrasco's and Adams' texts. While not directly named, the authors allude to drag culture throughout their texts, whether in name or in gesture: performative acts including placing a crown on one's head wearing a wig, implants, and makeup, and performing in nightclubs all contribute to the creation of the drag queen as a persona in these texts. Indeed, Reina's name translates to "queen;" Emilia is a "princesa de Navidad," that is, a queen in the making, thus indicating the possibility that

either of them may be a drag queen. In not defining the gender or performative identity of either character, the authors allow for Reina and Emilia to be read in multiple ways: it does not matter whether the protagonists are transgender or identify as drag queens—the implications for their respective realities remain identical.

Looking at drag culture in a literary setting, Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui stipulates that drag culture is "a matter of engaging with a Baroque allegory, the act of extending the name of the metaphor *ad infinitum*, to twist and turn the name so that it gets baptized continuously. In other words, the drag queen's (or the drag queer's) name never stops signifying (or resignifying itself) until exhaustion" (122). In his reading of the drag queen as a "metaphor *ad infinitum*," Sifuentes-Jáuregui emphasizes the link between performativity through baptizing, another ritual commonly associated with identity and belonging. It is hence in performing what the drag queen signifies that characters like Reina and Emilia engage with a continuous resignification process by means of acting their identities—a process that is inherent to their identity as gender-fluid subjectivities.

Dialoguing with Sifuentes-Jáuregui's relation between the notion of the drag queen and its continuous forms of resignification, David Tenorio likewise contends that drag queens, much like other cuy(r) subjectivities, represent an inherent challenge to normative and linear structures. In his analysis of what he terms the *ecology of drag*, Tenorio considers elements of fragmentation and instances of excess to understand dissident sexualities and politics of belonging (57). For example, "La Venus Impropia" illuminates this position when Reina is qualified as a being in excess:

> Había pensado 'jugándose la vida', algo tan cursi, tan de melodrama, una telenovela en el transporte público, y ella era la actriz, el centro, el imán de las miradas en el horario estelar, en las avenidas, la figura recortada del resto, en la

> que caía toda la atención de Burbujitas, que venía a paso raudo desde la otra cuadra" (Adams 139).

Here, the text compares Reina to a melodrama, a theatrical staging of an exotic "imán de las miradas en el horario estelar," implying that she is reified to an event to be looked at, "un cuerpo que siempre necesita arreglo; un cuerpo visto como un conglomerado de excesos; (…) un cuerpo reducido al espectáculo" (Rodríguez 156). The same passage links this existence in excess to the inherent potential for violence, as Reina is soon followed by someone approaching her "a paso raudo." Put another way, while conceptually rich for challenging normativity and for providing the opportunity to act an identity, governing societal and cultural mores—including *machismo* and Catholicism—restrict the drag queen's, and by extension, the cuy(r) body's ability to safely engage in dissenting gender and sexual modes of expression in rural spacaes.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate the ways in which rituals and performative gestures relate to the cuy(r) body in the Andean region. Using Carrasco's and Adams' protagonists as examples for the ways in which cuy(r) subjectivities form a sense of belonging, this section showcased the importance of the gesture for creating embodied memory, identity, and a sense of self. The subsequent chapter will explore familial relationships and contrast those to alternative modes of social bond formation. It will also highlight the influence of these social bonds for local and regional migration, as well as consider urban spaces as the primary locus for social networks and community building.

Chapter Three: Kinship and Social Bond Formation in Minority Subjectivities.

Blood is not always thicker than water—at least not when the contested body belongs to a cuy(r) individual. In their 2021 article on the relationship between discrimination and social support in Latin America, Richard S. Henry et al. find that among the transgender population, over 30 percent had experienced discrimination by a family member, friends, and neighbours (144). This chapter concerns itself with an examination of kinship, severed ties and alternative models for building social bonds in relation to violence. To further dismantle the complexities of the relationship between minority subjectivities and their ability to form social bonds, I put kinship into dialogue with local or regional types of migration toward densely populated, urban spaces (Eng 14). As Khachig Tölöyan maintains, the city becomes a politicized space where politicized diasporic bodies are put into relation with and established as dependent on heterosexuality and nation (Tölölyan 4; Eng 14). In that sense, when Gopinath explicates that "queerness[6] exists in an analogous relation to diaspora in that queers (…) are always in an exilic relation to home spaces," she suggests that the cuy(r) subject are politicized for putting into question existing types of normative and nationalist conceptions (79). I would like to extend this articulation to the notion of kinship and social bond formation.

Using Adam's and Carrasco's texts to ground my analysis, I seek to investigate how trans bodies and subjectivities deal with trauma inflicted in childhood, and how such trauma affects social bond formation. Here, I contend that both Reina and Emilia rely on non-verbal, that is, alternative modes of expression—including flashbacks, and haptic associations—to convey trauma, as well as to mark their survival as they navigate urban and politicized spaces; as these

[6] "Queerness" and "queer" are used in relation to Gopinath to reflect the terminology she uses.

non-normative bodies are politicized, kin relations play a crucial role for the cuy(r) subject's perception of safety and self-acceptance.

Childhood Trauma and Broken Social Bonds.

In their texts, Carrasco and Adams both present characters who have undergone childhood trauma and who have experienced familial rejection, fueling feelings of inadequacy and self-hatred. As a result of their upbringing in phobic environments (Muñoz, *Disidentification* 4), the protagonists operate in non-verbal ways, at times relying on flashbacks as is the case of Carrasco's heroine, at times dissociating from reminders of their pasts, which holds true for Reina (Pellicer-Ortín 83). In Carrasco's text, the image of the dove appears as a symbol of trauma and loss of the possibility of peace, with Emilia reliving traumatic memories. Upon recalling the death of fellow trans friends, she draws a direct connection between them and a dove, stating that she saw "a algunos amigos míos morir como palomas desvalidas, abandonados por sus parientes, en hospitales que no eran nada hospitalarios, y lloré con un llanto como el que me provocó la paloma" (Carrasco 124). The use of the dove is highly significant for the trans woman, as it prompts her to reminisce about a traumatic event from her childhood. Deeply moved by the death of the dove, Emilia is dismissed by her father telling her that "los niños no lloran," thus implicitly failing to adhere to normative emotional modes of expression (Carrasco 123). In equating the pain associated with the passing of friends to the pain of witnessing the death of the dove, the young woman stresses the emotional trauma that her father's dismissive behaviour caused, which she carries into adulthood. In the absence of emotional support and kinship, the dove—a symbol of peace—is violated and cannot survive. Emilia's memory of her

father in turn also points to the cultural Latin American concept *machismo*,[7] which "assumes stereotypically masculine traits including aggressiveness and patriarchal dominance over family members" (Henry et al. 156). As a result of this culture-specific context, those cuy(r) bodies who were raised as males are particularly at risk for familial rejection (Henry et al. 155-6).

In a similar vein, Adam's protagonist touches on severed family ties and the resulting trauma. In Reina's case, this trauma is related to her mother. Reina reports noticing a woman at theater, who she names a "vieja vecina del ahora affirmativo" (Adams 239). Soon after, the reader learns that this old neighbor is in fact her mother, whose "greñas se han vuelto a estremecer igual que antes al girar la cabeza para no ver a su hijo salir (…) Pobre su madre, ha perdido la misma hija por segunda vez" (Adams 239). Highlighting the mother's continued rejection of her child's gender identity, the text contrasts this encounter with Reina's friendship with Wanda, which is defined by a caring and supportive bond.

The Politicization of the Body, Local Diasporas and Kinship.

Interested in primarily non-Western cultures, José Chalá Cruz examines alternative paths toward community building and social bond formation, and relates those to corporeal resignification processes among diasporic populations. Anchoring his postion within a post-

[7] My use of the concept of *machismo* serves to position customary patriarchal systems within a local terminology and context. As social constructs, such patriarchal value systems persist, in varying forms, across cultures, continents, and sites of knowledge production and governance (Golash-Bota et al. 1750; Olorunfemi and Isaac 6).

structural[8] and a rhizomatic theoretic framework,[9] the scholar understands that the body is turned into an "espacio de contestación, de trasgresión y de re-significación, proposición nodal porque nos habla de sujetos activos, con capacidad de generar cambios, de cuestionar la normal, de transgredirla; y desde allí, de aportar a la construcción de discursividades" (Chalá Cruz 44). In her critical analysis of a series of interviews conducted with transgender and transsexual women navigating urban life and socio-economic relations at the nexus of local and regional migration, Lidia Raquel García Díaz posits that the city is "el punto de encuentro de lo local y lo global," with the urban to be understood as a node allowing for sexual fluidity (192). Putting the concept of *machismo* in relation to both LGBTQ+ identities and urban spaces, Berryman understands that cuy(r) populations have, however, developed "smart tactics" to adapt to their environment: "they have made alliances with feminists, worked with governments on health campaigns, promoted gay tourism in their countries, and avoided being identified with the antiglobalization ideologies of some sectors of the left" (132). As a locus defined through its malleability, the city then functions as a space where cuy(r) populations can work within and against restrictive social and political practices under global capitalism.

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[8] Such as Jacques Derrida's notion of decentering and "*play* of the structure" (1).

[9] Coined by Deleuze and Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the rhizome designates an acentered and non-hierarchical structure generating a multiplicity of lines and points of contact—nodes—in the process. Applied to philosophical concepts and linguistic structures, the rhizomatic node becomes relevant in the context of my discussion. As such, the node underlines the multiplicity of structures that enact upon and dialogue with the subject and the body at once (Gomes et al. 558).

If the city constitutes a point of encounter for non-conforming bodies resulting in an agglomeration of "locas," "encuirados" and bodies marked as cuy(r), then it is imperative to include alternative migratory models in the case of gender non-conforming populations. In her study on urban migration in Asia, Eng establishes that, unlike traditional migration studies based on "racial descent, filiation, and biological traceability," an inclusive model must look at migration "through the lens of queerness, affiliation, and social contingency" (13). This reorientation aligns with Espinosa's call for a straying away form institutionalized discursive practices in the name of a "genealogy of experience," which places the body at both the center and the beginning of original approaches to feminist theories on the continent (2015). Thus, to begin to understand how non-normative bodies and identities move in and across spaces in the Global South, extant taxonomies and models must be adjusted to find alternative kinship models to include the realities of these minority populations.

For instance, in her article "Transitar por América Latina," García underscores the significance of kinship for the formation of social bonds among the trans population, particularly in the case of transwomen (196). Looking at the effects of familial rejection, the potential of social kinship, and the concordance of the hypersexualization of trans bodies and feelings of sexual desirability, García contends that urban—at the national and transational levels—presents in repetitive patterns across the trans demographic, as urban spaces are perceived as a portal to anonymity, (sexual) exploration and continuous flux:

> La exotización de sus cuerpos, la idea de rotación como estrategia de negocio en el comercio sexual, la hipersexualización de lo trans femenino y la idea de "probar" cuerpos distintos beneficia esta circulación más allá de las fronteras nacionales. Por esta razón, este viaje, más que tener un punto de origen y un punto

> de destino, es un proceso circulatorio que les permite construir espacios que facilitan su movilidad y que conectan distintas ciudades a nivel local, nacional y regional. (García 199)

It is in those urban spaces that liminal subjectivities are free to engage in a "proceso circulatorio," allowing them to resist normative migration trajectories. This serves two purposes: on the one hand, it allows these bodies to survive in "a phobic majoritarian sphere" while forming social bonds (Muñoz, *Disidentification* 4). On the other hand, these social bonds permit the transformation of the body, turning urban spaces into spaces where identities are both expressed and contested (García 198).

Carrasco's protagonist speaks to this regenerative potential of urban spaces upon drawing a direct connection between the city and her identity: "Rápido me sentí en mi ambiente y fui aprendiendo a ser Ella, la que me había habitado desde siempre. Emilia" (Carrasco 128). Here, the "ambiente"—referring both to the city and ability to explore herself—allows Emilia to inhabit her gender identity, and to think of herself as "Ella." In a comparable way, Emilia draws attention to the link between urban spaces, kinship and self-acceptance when detailing the process to get ready for a night in town with her sister: "Me desvistió, me vistió, pintó mis labios, me colocó la corona y salimos del brazo a andar por las calles" (Carrasco 130). In this case, self-acceptance is made possible through a repaired familial bond and can be fully experienced under the cover of the city. If Emilia's movement in and across the city becomes crucial for her ability to form an identity as well as social bonds, Michel de Certeau's theory on walking in the city as performance comes to mind, insofar as walking "affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respect etc., the trajectories it 'speaks'" (99). The inherent non-verbality of walking parallels that of Emilia's non-verbal ways of communicating self-acceptance as

expressed through the sisters "walking" arm in arm in the streets of Quito—a metaphor for their renewed bond.

As for Adams' story, mentions of kinship are typically associated with one character in particular: Wanda, a presumed trans woman who makes Reina's wigs. In accordance with Díaz emphasis on the important relationship between social bond formation and survival among non-normative identities, Reina's mentions of transgender friends also highlight the weight attributed to those people with whom she shares similar experiences of sexual assault, and filial and social rejection (Díaz 196; Adams 241; Muñoz, *Disidentification* 4). In the closing scene of the short story, Reina is getting ready to go out with her friend Wanda. As was the case with Carrasco's text, the city enters the stage as a crucial component to Reina's reconstruction as a transwoman as it permits her body to exist, to "speak" as de Certeau intimates. Ending the story where it started—in front of the mirror—, Reina looks at her body while enumerating every step that is necessary to transform her body back to how it looked before the assault, thus conferring a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty regarding the future:

> Horas más tarde frente al espejo la cara lavada, la nariz deforme y el pelo de erizo negro, todo menos ella. Por eso es mejor refugiarse en el lápiz de labios, pensar en una nueva rinoplastia, aclararse el tono de la piel, delinearse las pestanas y las cejas, restituirse las ensortijadas remolachas capilares, los eretes, los pucheros y las miradas coquetonas, porque este año de mierda se acaba por fin, porque ya mismo llega la Wanda para celebrar hasta la mañana siguiente. (Adams 241)

Using a vocabulary of escape, Reina finds refuge not only in covering up the body that was assaulted, but also in imagining an improved and always unscathed body. With every layer of makeup, she moves further away from the body that does not correspond to her self-perception, a

body that she wants to celebrate. It is the promise of Wanda's presence—a strong social bond and support—that prompts Reina to want to reconstruct and engender her body, and to go on surviving.

While chapter three has considered the effects of trauma and violence on cuy(r) familial relations as well as alternative models of social bond formation in urban spaces, the subsequent chapter discusses the connection between reassembling the body, identity, and sexual desire.

Chapter Four: Reassembling Desires

Dialoguing with the redirection of the peripheral space allotted to the cuy(r) subject, Jack Halberstam contends that, while liminal subjects are reified to the realm of the non-human, the weird, and the strange for failing to conform to the normative structures in place—a worthwhile sacrifice to "maintain coherence within the category of the human"—this unique social position constitutes the "mode by which they survive nonetheless," a proposition that the scholar extends to physical appearance and self-expression (153). Emotional and physical fragmentation, as well as invisibility double as a starting point for re-assembling the self. While Lind correctly sustains that invisibility and hypervisibility constitute mechanisms of control ("Interrogating" 32), Halberstam's angle reorients cuy(r) subjectivities toward a position of agency, effectively providing the possibility for rewriting the narrative of these populations. Relating this to the Global South, Gopinath understands the queer body in literature and media to act as a point of contact between the "queer desires, bodies, and subjectivities," which become dense sites of meaning in the production and reproduction of notions of 'culture,' 'tradition,' and communal belonging" (Gopinath 2). Drawing on Chalá Cruz articulation of the resiginified body and its transgressive and generative potential, I argue that a similar process of alternative and continuously reshaped identity building takes place in the Adam's and Carrasco's respective stories. I further posit that the acceptance of the ambiguous and impossible body acts as an integral component of sexual desires and explorations. In assembling the contradictory pieces of their respective identities, Adams' and Carrasco's characters manage to create generative and undefined, limitless spaces.

Reassembling Bodies.

In both Carrasco's and Adams' texts, the protagonists undergo a process of physical modifications and bodily reassemblages to construct cuy(r) subjectivities in line with their identity. Both Reina and Emilia rely on a number of plastic surgeries—including breast implants and rhinoplasty— alongside hormonal treatments to alter their physique to their desired gender identity.

After coming to terms with her gender identity, Emilia asserts, for instance, that "Ese era mi camino. La reconstrucción total de mi cuerpo" (Carrasco 129). This statement is relevant for a number of reasons: not only does it indicate that her gender identity was instrumental in her ability to figuratively piece herself together, but it also points to the necessary biological, physical, and hormonal rearrangements needed to attain her desired gender expression. In a similar way, the ability to re-assemble herself causes Emilia to revisit her own body in a positive light, ultimately finding beauty and elegance in it: "Con el tiempo fui encontrando momentos precisos y secretos, para desarrollar la habilidad de transformarme en la niña que vivía dentro de mí y me hacía soñar con pasarelas y desfiles, con ser la reina de las discotecas, la más aclamada, la mejor vestida, la más bella" (Carrasco 125). Through accepting the modified appearance of her cuy(r) body, Emillia can fulfill the dreams of her younger self, and can be the "reina de las discotecas, la más aclamada, la mejor vestida, la más bella."

Turning to Adams' short story, the text offers a less overt insight into Reina's mind. This can be attributed to the third-person narrator, who infuses the narrative with biased interpretation. Nonetheless, in delineating Reina's actions and demeanour, the narrator reveals Reina's satisfaction with her reassembled physique. Describing past incidences of riding the bus,

the narrator of "La Venus Impropia" breaks down the different elements composing Reina's body, establishing her beauty and ability to attract as she accepts her body:

> Ella prefiere los del medio, para poder exhibir sus auténticos atributos lo suficiente: sus femeninos muslos y pantorrillas de zaguero futbolista, sus tetas colosales de genuina silicona, sus cutis de fina porcelana marcadamente más albo que su cuello. Pero Reina es bella, como muchas no llegarán a serlo jamás. Es una flor de marihuana cautiva en una venus atrapamoscas. (Adams 237)

In this excerpt from the text, Reina specifically chooses a bus seat where she can best show off her body. Playing with a descriptive language based on a set of oxymorons—her "femeninos muslos," or "sus tetas…de genuine colosales," which are nonetheless "auténticos atributos"—Adams' text points out that these contradictions do not diminish her beauty. Rather, they mark it. In a similar way, this passage relies on floral imagery to both communicate and subvert the beauty resulting from ambivalence. In describing Reina as a "flor de marihuana cautiva en una venus atrapamoscas," the text's unreliable third-person narrator evokes images of the phallic and vulvic, insinuating that Reina remains male. Nevertheless, Reina's ready display of her body suggest the contrary: she is proud of the body that she has created for herself to inhabit.

In a similar scene, Reina's narrator confirms this impression, explaining that, despite her inability to fully into either sexual binary, Reina "sabe moverse grácil y contoneante, y conoce los pucheros y la colocación exacta de los labios para sonreír como su madre nunca lo hubiera podido hacer" (Adams 236). In stating that the Reina can smile "como su madre nunca lo hubiera podido hacer," the narrator reveals Reina's ability to successfully navigate the world as a woman.

Although outside the scope of my discussion, it is worth mentioning Juan Pablo Castro Rodas' short story "Iris" in relation to "La Venus Impropia," as it offers similar insight into the concept of bodily reassemblage and the transgender experience in Ecuador. Also featured in *Cuerpo adentro,* "Iris" presents the story of a gender-ambiguous person surviving assault and domestic violence. In the opening sentence, Iris finds herself alone in the street, and her body is covered in blood: "mi cuerpo es todavía una herida sangrante: cicatrices y laceraciones dibujan mi piel" (Castro 223). It is in this instance that the description of her body fills in the gaps of what Iris herself does not verbalize, as her skin tells a tale of repeated past of abuse, the reality of her existence, but also a sign of her resilience. In the same way that Reina reassembles herself—both in a figurative and physical sense—, Iris remarks that her "carne se recompone. Atrás quedan los dolores y el sabor viscoso de mi boca" (Castro 223). Compared to Adams' commentary on the impossibility of silence at the close of "La Venus Impropia," or Emilia's celebratory outing with her sister in "Princesa de Navidad," Castro's "Iris" leaves his reader on a sombre note, pointing to the hopelessness of her circumstance when Iris directly implies that the friend who took her in after being assaulted is, in fact, the lover who abused her (Castro 226).

Sexual Desires and Cuy(r) Pleasures.

Although not central in their texts, the telling of sexual desire and its expression comes to signify the characters' acceptance of their bodies, and gender and sexual identities. Considering the dissimilar representations of male and female desire in artistic, literary, and cinematographic milieus, Gopinath affords particular attention to how gender operates as an intersectional marker and mechanism of inequity, which conditions, obliterates, and restricts non-heteronormative

desires to fit into a space of impossibility (3). Dialoguing with this idea, Juana María Rodríguez understands that "affective and deeply political forms of corporeality" are "likewise subjugated through the relations of power that they also expose" (5).

Concerned with the queer[10] racialized body, Gayatri Gopinath argues that queer desire becomes essential to storytelling:

> [Q]ueer desire is precisely what allows [one] to remember. Indeed, the barely submerged histories of colonialism and racism erupt into the present at the very moment when queer sexuality is being articulated. Queer desire does not transcend or remain peripheral to these histories but instead it becomes central to their telling and remembering: there is no queer desire without these histories, nor can these histories be told or remembered without simultaneously revealing an erotics of power. (Gopinath 2)

Here, Gopinath thus accentuates the interdependent connection between queer desires and an erotics of power, where desire is integral to identity yet also an articulation of the politics that shape it. Through anchoring queer pleasure in a colonial context, the scholar understands queer desire as a necessary function of remembering and telling—both of which are deeply cultural practices. Developing Gopinath's thought, I contend that such cuy(r) desire, filled with stories of the past, may itself constitute a form of telling and remembering. It is in this space of storytelling—putting together the pieces of the body and of history—that the generative potential of cuy(r) pleasures takes shape. Rodríguez addresses this potential for the positive when she challenges Halberstam's and Muñoz' works for failing to consider the "possibilities and

[10] Here, the term queer rather than cuy(r) is employed in accordance with Gopinath's terminology of choice.

pleasures" for racialized female and cuy(r) subjectivities, who are typically left out of and subjugated to the erotics of power ("Introduction"13). Disregarding the political implications of sexuality altogether, Roland Barthes' *El placer del texto* explores the relationship between pleasure, the body, and the text. For him, the text consitutes "una figura, un anagrama del cuerpo" (13). Barthes specifies that this figure is necessarily an erotic body: "el placer del texto es ese momento en que mi cuerpo comienza a seguir sus propias ideas" (13). Invested in dismantling the cuy(r) sexual and gender subjectivities as they contrast hegemonic hierarchical narratives, María Amelia Viteri posits that "Policies, then, dry and objectify subjects. Sexuality, as a subjective practice, follows a different logic: its limits are blurred, it is pervasive, its goals and processes are not easily measurable and are sometimes ambivalent and opaque" ("Intensiones" Viteri 411).

Thinking back to past amorous relationships, Emilia equates the types of love available to her status as a liminal subject within society: "Amores fugaces. Amores eternos. Tuve de todo. Para qué detallar, sólo sé que una vez dentro de este mundo de energías diferentes, una vez tomada la decisión, me volví un marginal, tuve una doble vida: de día el famoso ingeniero, de noche la diva de las discotecas" (Carrasco 129). While aware of her marginal position within hegemonic structures, Emilia is nonetheless able to take this position as a starting point for experiencing Viteri's blurred limits of sexuality. Having experienced both "amores fugaces" and "amores eternos," she concludes that has had "de todo."

In closing, I would like to revisit the epigraphs in Eduardo Adams' text. When Octavio Paz' epigraph in Chapter One calls questions the governing principles that ridicule Adams' protagonist, the second epigraph alludes to the possibilities that such a character offers. A short excerpt from Julio Cortázar's *Prosa de observatorio,* the epigraph paints an abstract world of

undefined space: "…un hombre que levanta la cara hacia lo abierto / en la noche pelirroja…" (Adams 235; Cortázar 14). The man addressed in this excerpt is Jai Singh, a character in an interstitial realm whose admiration for the celestial is likened to a red-haired night— a sexually charged prosopopoeia alluding to a red-haired woman. In Cortázar's original, the "noche pelirroja" provokes a subversion of Jai Singh's reality: when he was just looking at a night sky full of stars and an ocean teeming with eels, now the ocean is filled with stars and the sky teems with eels (Cortázar 14). This inversion opens a new realm of possibilities for Cortázar's character. A seeming impossibility, the red-haired sky opens a world of endless possibilities, blurring the lines between ocean and sky. When informing Cortázar's text with Adams' short story, Reina personifies this blurring of lines, and defies that which is supposed to be possible. Here then, the "noche pelirroja"—sexual desire—becomes integral to the broadening of possibilities.

Exploring the connection between sexual desires and identity building, chapter four has concerned itself with corporeal resignification processes that Adams' and Carrasco's protagonists undergo as they reassemble their bodies. As such, this resignification process allows Reina and Emilia to establish generative associations with their environments, and, at the same time, pervade the limits of the spaces and bodies they inhabit. Straying away from clear emotional progressions, defined narrative voices, and compulsory happy endings, "La Venus Impropia" and "Princesa de Navidad" sit comfortably in the in-between, or the "both/and," carving out a possibility for characters to understand themselves as both monstrous and beautiful, as both inspiring self-deprecation and pride, as both feminine and masculine.

Conclusion.

Centring on two short stories, Jennie Carrasco Molina's "Princesa de Navidad" and Eduardo Adams' "La Venus Impropia," this thesis explored the processes of disidentification, abjection, and the grotesque to display the intricate, dynamic, and messy mechanisms that impact cuy(r) subjectivities access to inhabit their bodies and identities as they exist in spaces marked by neoliberalism and traditional values. Through rituals, performative practices, and alternative methods of communication—including sensory, non-verbal, and affective articulations of gender expressions and social bond formation, visibly cuy(r) characters like Emilia and Reina are free to reconstruct their bodies, blur identities, and experience sexual pleasure despite the continuous violation and contestation of their bodies.

In Chapter One, "Monstrous Disidentifications," I have investigated the grotesque as a central element in Adams' and Carrasco's respective works and examined how the monstrous relates to the cuy(r) body. Chapter One has further considered the use of disidentification and dissociation as alternative methods of expression resulting from violence and trauma. Chapter Two, "Rituals, Repetitions, and Defiant Gestures" looked at the ways in which performative gestures, ceremonies, and embodied rituals give rise to and strengthen a sense of belonging and of self. Addressing kinship and the politicization of the body, Chapter Three, "Kinship and Social Bond Formation in Minority Subjectivities" scrutinized familial relationships and alternative social bond formation. In this chapter, I moreover connected kinship to the causes and effects of cuy(r) urban migration in Ecuador. Lastly, Chapter Four— "Reassembling Desire," sought to understand how cuy(r) subjectivities shape their identities and they explore pleasure as they piece back their bodies in the face of violence.

In closing, I would like to turn to current academic discussions around gender and identity, as well as highlight Ecuadorian efforts to protect cuy(r) subjectivities. In their analysis of the cuy(r) subject in the Andean region, Cornejo et al. expand on the existing terminologies in the Andean region, such as *locas*, *encuirados,* or cuy(r) bodies, Cornejo et al. highlight the terms "travestismo" and "lesbian desire" as elusive notions whose meanings are continuously redefined, and which exceed "the heteronormative will to name" (425). In fleshing out the continuous malleability of identifying markers, Cornejo et al. ultimately point to the productive potential of blurring the lines of extant systems of categorization. A number of organizations, such as the Instituto Pensar in Perú and Ciclo Rosa in Colombia, question the "viability and sustainability of gay and lesbian, or LGBT studies, when unnamed and un-institutionalized" (Cornejo et al. 425). What does this mean for Ecuador? If gay and lesbian studies remain a vital part of Ecuador's academic institutions, and if the incorporation of such programs is confused as a marker for a country's social progress, then more research must be conducted on the efficacy of gay and lesbian studies. This is of relevancy given that Ecuador is a key placer of Latin America's cuy(r) publishing industry.

When it comes to Latin American scholarships and taxonomies, opinions diverge. Questions exceed answers. Rea and Amancio contend that it becomes essential to "dar maior visibilidade a essas fontes não brancas da teoria queer sondar mais, em profundidade, essas outras versões dessa teoria, que se unem embaixo do guarda-chuva da QUC (Queer of Color) e da teoria queer descolonial" [to give greater visibility to the non-white resources of queer theory and scrutinize more profoundly those other versions of queer theory, those which are gathered under the umbrella term of QUC (Queer of Color) and queer decolonial theory] (Rea and Amancio 16, my translation). On the other hand, Cathy Cohen questions the efficacy of umbrella

terms encompassing cuy(r) populations in the region, indicating that there is a need for a more nuanced approach to gender politics—one that is anchored in positionality rather than in identity politics (143). Other scholars call for the undoing of extant social and political structures altogether. Reflecting on Halberstam, Ahmed, and Edelman, Leandro Colling argues, for example, that while these authors pinpoint difficult emotional and mental states, they do not offer solutions, contending themselves with celebrating the negative, which, for Colling, is giving in to the heteronormative logic of opposites (108-109).

At the level of cuy(r) subject matter, Foster, Halberstam, and Bidaseca find that extant research disregards the realities and sexual desires of lesbian and bisexual individuals, focusing on gay and trans, and drag communities instead (10; 165; 349). Continuing this thought, Lind connects this to lesbian women's access to health care in the Global South, stating that lesbians "are seen as not 'in need' of development interventions, as they are represented either as unlikely-to-get-pregnant or unlikely-to-get-AIDS. This is so, even though little, if any, research has been conducted to assess lesbian health issues in poor countries" (Lind 56). Future analyses should thus make a conscious effort to include lesbian and bisexual voices, which remain largely unconsidered.

For now, Ecuador's activist circles continue to fight for the safety and protection of their cuy(r) inhabitants. Though not an exhaustive list, some of Ecuador's currently active gender-centred associations include: *Asociación Silhueta X*, an Ecuadorian organization concerned with developing and protecting the rights of persons with non-normative sexual and/or gender identities. *Cuerpos distinctos, derechos iguales* fights against gendered inequities. Based in Quito, *Fundación ecuadoriana equidad* provides community, medical and mental health resources to cuy(r) subjectivities, and aims at empowering this population while destigmatizing

dissenting gender identities and sexual orientations. Lastly, established in 2015 and legalized in 2017, the *Federación Nacional de Organizaciones LGBTI del Ecuador* is the first second-degree national coalition that recognizes, promotes, and protects the rights and dignity of cuy(r) subjectivities.

While my discussion of two cuy(r) characters in contemporary Ecuadorian literature constitutes an important start to the academic consideration of Ecuadorian literature, it is just that—a start. What the future holds for people like Emilia and Reina remains up in the air.

Appendix 1: Remarks on the Term "Queer" and Local Alternatives.

To reflect local and regional conceptual differences as well as to establish hermeneutic independence, a growing number of Latin American and Andean intellectuals and activists, including but not limited to María Amelia Viteri, Amy Lind, Diego Falconí Trávez, Christina Schramm, Giancarlo Cornejo Salinas, Juana María Rodríguez and Gabriela Vidal Ortiz articulate the untranslatability as well the neocolonial implications of the notion "queer" or "queered" within a Latin American setting. While Alicia Arrizón and Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba find "queer" useful as it accounts "for a sense of difference that comes with marginality" (Arrizón 3) and causes a "disrupting reordering of gender systems" (Ruvalcaba 6), Lind, among others, questions the usefulness of the term within a Latin American context, stating that the anglophone term would erase the generative potential of differences ("Querying" 49; "Interrogating" 32).[11]

In her work on the issues surrounding the imposition of Western gender categorizations for the African Yorùbá community, Oyeronke Oyewumi supports these findings, relating the socio-cultural implications to an "alien distortion," furthermore acting as a sign of the continued colonial dominance over knowledge production in the Global South (ix-x). Invested in understanding the employability of the term "queer" in a specifically Ecuadorian context, Viteri points out that, "no existe un espacio de enunciación de lo 'queer' sino varios que estarán delimitados tanto por los límites de dicha enunciación como por los usos que damos al término" ("Traduciendo lo 'Queer'" 8).

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[11] Likewise, Leandro Colling posits that "el término queer sirve para denominar tanto la teoría como el activismo, pero no es muy habitual que las personas lo utilicen para identificarse" (33).

Rather than using the Anglophone "queer" as an organizing and methodological category, several Ecuadorian leftist activists and academics employ "transfeminismo" as a concept to push back against heteronormative and neoliberal modes of thinking. As such, transfeminismo not only functions to challenge the notion of gender, but also intersects with other identity markers, such as social status, geographical location, political views, race, and ethnicity. While "queerness" considers similar markers when understood as a methodology and approach, including the critical scrutiny of neoliberal practices and identity politics, "transfeminismo" furthermore reflects "local understandings of non-normative identities, forms of expression, and living arrangements" (Lind, "Interrograing Queerness" 32). Other articulations include "pacha*queer*" (Schramm 111), "locas" (Viteri, "Intensiones" 411), and "marico" among others.[12] Within the context of my discussion, I employ Diego Falconí's proposition— "cuy(r)"—a playful linguistic resignification of the English "queer." The term cuy(r) alludes to the Ecuadorian "cuy" (guinea pig), an animal that is perceived to be highly promiscuous while also culturally significant in the Andean region (Viteri, "Intensiones" 408). In coining the term cuy(r), Falconí Trávez thus seeks to defy neocolonial implications, as well as challenge politics of desire in and outside of Western institutional spaces.

[12] Regarding the anglophone "queerness," Falconí suggests the term *entundamiento* as a possible translation "to (mis)understand the verb 'queering'" (Viteri, "Intenstiones" 408). Here, "*entundamiento"* alludes to the Andean Tunda, a gender-ambiguous mythical figure with literary and cultural significance within Afro-descendent in the coastal regions of Ecuador.

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