HAUNTOLOGIES OF MUSIC IN LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA

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Abstract

The term hauntology is as elusive as the metaphorical ghosts it conjures. Derrida's original iteration allegorizes the spectral returns of Marxism after the fall of the Berlin Wall, an insistent non-present/non-absent apparition that problematizes the role of the left in post-1989 Western society. A decade later, cultural theorist Mark Fischer built on Derrida's definition when analyzing the British record label Ghost Box and its artists' engagement with sounds and images connected to an uncanny fictional past: simulated memories that trick the audience into tracing the music's origin to somewhere in the 60s and 70s. In a broader level, Fisher's hauntology acknowledges a yearning for promised futures that were lost in the context of a seemingly inevitable capitalist society.

Recent scholarship by Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen has translated hauntological thought to a Latin American setting, moving beyond nostalgic recollections of the past and instead understanding the ghost as a recurrent reminder of Latin America's violent past: the ghost of colonial violence, dictatorial regimes, systematic disappearance of political adversaries, and so forth. However, Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen also acknowledge a hauntological dimension in the resistance to this violence, manifested in the spectral entities conjured during the acts of remembrance of the lost ones, acknowledging their existence against regimes that have attempted to erase them. As opposition to the erasure, the ghost is found in the photographs of the disappeared, the narratives of a *what-if* present, and in the reappropriation of artistic forms that once served the oppressive regimes.

Considering the different definitions of hauntology and its subsequent translation to the Latin American context, this research project analyzes music in Latin American cinema as a hauntological device, a reminder of a lost past associated with notions of nostalgia, cultural memory, and loss in the context of the region's tumultuous political past. The music in Latin American cinema complicates the separation of the past and the present through mechanisms that evoke different manifestations of the ghost, both in the films' cinematographic narrative and the real-world circumstances they attempt to reflect. In this thesis, I propose a theoretical and methodological approach to the study of Latin American film music from a hauntological perspective. I propose three films as case studies to illustrate this approach.

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Introduction

Latin American cinema, broadly understood as cinema that tells stories embedded in the region's social and cultural circumstances, is haunted by many ghosts. Along with representations of cultural, social and political realities in the region, the spectral presence of the dictatorships that have ravaged the region, the region-wide colonial past, and the current hardships that have been replicated through years of political neglect lurk around many cinematographic narratives. These lurking ghosts take many forms throughout different films and their specific historical circumstances.

The film *La Llorona* (2019), Jayro Bustamante's recent engagement with the Mayan genocide in Guatemala, tells the story of General Enrique Monteverde, a re-narrativization of real-life dictator Efraín Ríos Montt and his brutal regime. Instead of the almost idyllic form in which Ríos Montt died — "with the love of his family, with his conscience healthy and clean" as his lawyer once declared— Bustamante's search for a compensatory poetic justice puts Monteverde's demise in the midst of a ghost ridden house.[1] The ghost from the folk tale "La Llorona," "the weeping woman," is re-narrativized as a reminder of Monteverde's crimes. In this version of the tale, La Llorona is the ghost of an indigenous woman whose children were drowned by Monteverde's men, and who was herself murdered by the dictator. Coming back as a domestic worker, she haunts Monteverde and his family to madness, eventually showing his wife and daughter the true nature of his atrocities. The justice that failed in real-life Guatemala is invoked in the film, in which the ghost moves on to haunt Monteverde's second-in-command officers after the dictator's death. The intertextuality of the folktale entails a region-wide engagement with the story, as the character of "La Llorona" is part of the folk imagery of many Latin American countries: a cautionary horror tale, in the same way that dictatorial regimes have remained so in the region.

Other films have a more metaphorical sense of a lurking ghost in their narratives. Fabián Bielinsky's *Nueve Reinas* (2000) is a heist/revenge film about con artist Marcos and his family's

[1] Stephen Kinzer, "Efraín Ríos Montt, Dictador Guatemalteco, Murió a Los 91 Años," *The New York Times*, April 1, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/es/2018/04/01/espanol/america-latina/efrain-rios-montt-obituario.html. "[…] con el amor de su familia, con su conciencia sana y limpia." All translations are my own.

plan to take revenge on his criminal practices. The film is set in the general unrest in Argentina in the late 90s, a moment plagued by economic uncertainty as a result of aggressive neo-liberal policies during the 80s and 90s, and that prophetically announce the economic breakdown of 2002. Although the film is set as a comedy, the ghostly presence of hardships that can be traced to historical political neglect provide the backdrop to the characters' stories, as well as a sense of regional preoccupation translatable to other national realities. Carlos Carrera's *The Crime of Father Amaro* (2002) bring in a different set of ghosts with its portrayal of religiousness in the region. In the film, The Catholic Church's pervasive connections with the criminal underworld and its persecution and censoring of journalists recall an all-too-familiar world of repressive mechanisms and frequently unquestioned practices.

One seemingly extraneous example is that of Disney's *Encanto* (2021), a film about a fictitious Colombian reality filtered through Disney's historically problematic treatment of its others. In this reality, a fantastical realm called an *Encanto* materializes to provide refuge to Grandma Alma Madrigal after being chased by armed men. In the Colombian (and Latin American) context, this chase could easily be imagined as exerted by dictatorial soldiers, drug traffickers, guerrilla soldiers, etc. Borrowing from the rich literary tradition of magical realism, the Encanto becomes the only possible solution to these hardships, one that involves the intervention of a supernatural entity. Once within the reality of the Encanto, the songs performed by the characters provide an unusually profound musical engagement with past hardships and secrets that should not be talked about. This is most notable in the hit song "We Don't Talk about Bruno," but other songs recall ghosts of family traumas, cultural trauma, and gendered expectations that are all very familiar within a Latin American setting. Despite caricaturizing a regional reality from the perspective of the other, this engagement with the past through imagery and music include many of the ghostly elements that are found in Latin American cinema at large.

Inspired by cinema in which literal and metaphorical ghosts recall the reality of the region, and the musical engagements that provide a materialization of these ghosts within the filmic reality, I propose a hauntological approach to analyze Latin American film music. The ghostly narratives of the hardships of the past combine with the interconnectedness of the rich

musical tradition of the region and with recognizable cinematographic codes to provide a clear point of departure for the conception of this analysis.

To construct a sense of a Latin American hauntological, it is productive to contrast different theorizations of hauntology. A first perspective comes from Derrida's original iteration that allegorizes the spectral returns of Marxism after the fall of the Berlin Wall, an insistent non-present/non-absent apparition that problematizes the role of the left in post-1989 Western society. A decade later, cultural theorist Mark Fischer built on Derrida's definition when analyzing the British record label Ghost Box and its artists' engagement with sounds and images connected to an uncanny fictional past: simulated memories that trick the audience into tracing the music's origin to somewhere in the 60s and 70s. Fischer constructs a hauntological imaginary through blurry concepts such as "unhomesickness," the "half-forgotten," and the "lost context," which purposely intensify the uncanny in the ghostly past Ghost Box's artists aim to evoke.[2] Critic Simon Reynolds expanded the understanding of hauntology to encompass a whole new genre, a type of electronic music also imagined as belonging to the 60s and 70s, this time geographically situated in Britain. Reynolds's conceptualization of Hauntology conjures memories of post-war Britain, long-lost wellbeing materialized in cozy towns and villages, and a nostalgia for a past that promised a better future through benign state-sponsored institutions such as public libraries and polytechnics.[3]

These engagements with the past, particularly from a combination of cultural and political standings, is complemented by recent scholarship by Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen, who have translated hauntological thought to a Latin American setting. This regional hauntology moves beyond nostalgic recollections of the past and instead understands the ghost as a recurrent reminder of Latin America's violent past: the ghost of colonial violence, dictatorial regimes, systematic disappearance of political adversaries, and so forth.[4] However, Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen also acknowledge a hauntological dimension in the resistance

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[2] Mark Fischer, "Unhomesickness," *k-punk* (blog), September 21, 2005, http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/006414.html.

[3] Simon Reynolds, "Wednesday, January 11, 2006," *blissblog* (blog), January 11, 2006, http://blissout.blogspot.com/2006/01/mike-powell-evocative-and-thought.html.

[4] Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen, "Introduction: Theories of the Ghost in a Transhispanic Context," in *Espectros: Ghostly Hauntings in Contemporary Transhispanic Narratives*, ed. Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2016), 1–11.

to this violence, manifested in the spectral entities conjured during the acts of remembrance of the lost ones "that give evidence to the existence of the missing before a state that has attempted to erase them."[5] As opposition to the erasure, the ghost is found in the photographs of the disappeared, the narratives of a *what-if* present, and in the reappropriation of artistic forms that once served the oppressive regimes.

Considering the different definitions of Hauntology and its subsequent translation to the Latin American context, this research project will analyze music in Latin American cinema as a hauntological device, a reminder of a lost past associated with notions of nostalgia, cultural memory, and loss in the context of the region's tumultuous political past. The music in Latin American cinema complicates the separation of the past and the present through mechanisms that evoke different manifestations of the ghost, both in the films' cinematographic narrative and the real-world circumstances they attempt to reflect. In this thesis, I determine Latin American cinema in the intersection of regional historical preoccupations and the forces exerted by a problematic past. I depart from different theorizations of hauntology to construct a Latin American hauntological, which will provide the grounding for the analysis. Drawing from scholarship on neoformalism, I propose hauntology as a methodology of film music analysis specific to Latin American cinema, in which the reality of what I call the intrafilmic is haunted by the ghosts of the nonaesthetic realm, in close contact with one another. Finally, I provide three case studies that serve as a demonstration of this methodology.

[5] Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen, 4.

1. The Latin American hauntological in film music

What is Latin American cinema?

Latin America is a vast region that encompasses more than thirty countries, with countless cultural identities and ethnic contact zones. It would be a futile quest to try to define Latin American cinema as a unitary genre or as a school of filmmaking with clear characteristics. Nonetheless, historical mechanisms have prompted the cultural closeness of the region, including the common colonial past, the predominant Spanish language (in close contact with French- and Portuguese-speaking countries), and the circulation of people, artforms and trends within the spaces that this closeness has generated. In this context, Latin American cinema can be approached as cinema that represents or engages with a variety of preoccupations associated with the region's common standings, building from a notion of translatability of these preoccupations across the region. To illustrate this, I will depart from a brief survey of academic discourses on Latin American cinema.

A first category of academic discourses focuses on the construction of a common Latin American cultural/media space. In the introduction to their edited volume, Cecilia Gil Mariño and Laura Miranda depart from historical accounts of mechanisms that have shaped a common understanding of Latin American film practices, which are complemented by the language, cultural, and geographical closeness of the region.[1] One such mechanism is built on the notion of interconnectedness provided by communication technologies during the twentieth century, which defined and strengthened "cultural cartographies that forged images of spaces, nations and regions" through inventions such as the telegraph and the emergence of cultural industries.[2] The instantaneity of communication and the establishment of common practices within the global film industry contributed to the forging of Latin American filmic practices that were "in constant dialogue with the stereotypes configured by more established

[1] Cecilia Gil Mariño and Laura Miranda, "Redesigning Cultural Cartographies to Reflect on Processes of Identitary Configuration," in *Identity Mediations in Latin American Cinema and Beyond: Culture, Music and Transnational Discourses*, ed. Cecilia Gil Mariño and Laura Miranda (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 1–7.
[2] Gil Mariño and Miranda, 1.

cinematographies, such as Hollywood."[3] Simultaneously, the filmic representation of Latin American popular dance and music, along with a constant flow of artists and trends across the region, consolidated "a virtuous circle of cultural consumption" that cultivated the Latin American filmic industry and its musical culture.[4]

Within this regional cultural/media space, exploring Latin American cinema through the lens of auteurism contributes to determine philosophical, political, and commercial standings of region-wide filmic practices. Deborah Martin proposes an understanding of the Latin American auteur-figure beyond traditional conceptions relying on the "unique, personal vision" and "distinctive cinematic style" of the director.[5] Instead, Martin locates the auteur-figure in an intersection of discursive standings: as the "voice of the people and agent of change" within a post-structuralist intent to de-centralize authorship; and as a subject that tells their own story in a bid to provide visibility to historically excluded groups through the auteur's "lived, material existence [...] and identity."[6] This proposed situatedness of the auteur-figure in the intersection of broad societal projects and a region-contingent pushback against de-centering is further supported by the historical role of the auteur during the twentieth century. According to Marvin D'Lugo, Latin American auteurism practices have been historically associated with state-sponsored productions "as part of a national cultural project" in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina; as vehicles of social and cultural militancy "in opposition to neocolonial state authority" in Argentina, Brazil and Cuba; and as representatives of national identities within a globalized market in the context of film festivals "which privileged the authorial as an expression of national."[7]

Gil Mariño and Miranda's delimitation of Latin American cinema as based on the commercial dynamics of film, music, workers, and trends across the region, along with diverging theorizations of the role of the Latin American auteur-figure within nationalistic, political and commercial standings, prompt an understanding of Latin American cinema as a region-wide

[3] Gil Mariño and Miranda, 2.
[4] Gil Marino and Miranda, 2.
[5] Deborah Martin, *The Cinema of Lucrecia Martel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 4.
[6] Martin, 4-5.
[7] Marvin D'Lugo, "Authorship, Globalization, and The New Identity of Latin American Cinema," in *Rethinking Third Cinema*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake and Anthony Guneratne (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 110.

transnational phenomenon. Gil Mariño and Miranda, however, caution that attempts to homogenize Latin American cinema through the acknowledgement of common production, consumption, and socio-cultural practices might result in a sense of "homogenizing exoticism" that would result in a misrecognition of cultural and ethnic differences.[8] Considering this important distinction, I advocate for an understanding of cinema in Latin America as "translatable," in terms that its socio-cultural and commercial mechanisms are understood as common across the region while still accounting for specific practices in specific geographic and cultural contexts.

A second category of academic discourses focus on the role of Latin American cinema in addressing the present struggles of the region in connection to the hardships of the past. In their edited volume, Carolyn Fornoff and Gisela Heffes explore Latin American cinema's engagement with the nonhuman and the more-than-human.[9] Through this lens, Latin American cinema is circumscribed to the urgency to address issues related to the effect of human practices on the environment with an "impulse to destabilize cinema's anthropocentric thrust."[10] Within these preoccupations, the discourses advanced by the authors

> acknowledge the centrality of coloniality, imperialism, and capitalism to the perpetuation of a singular, linear, utilitarian approach to nature. They recognize that the contemporary crisis is the result of entrenched ways of being, a civilizational paradigm rooted in violent histories of colonization, patriarchy, and capitalist development.[11]

In line with the notion of translatability explored before, this focus on the challenges for the region in terms of environmental and posthumanist issues also acknowledges preoccupations that problematize established national boundaries and identities. For instance, the contributors to Fornoff and Heffes's edited volume explore, among other topics, the

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[8] Gil Mariño and Miranda, 4.

[9] Carolyn Fornoff and Gisela Heffes, "Introduction: Latin American Cinema Beyond the Human," in *Pushing Past the Human in Latin American Cinema*, ed. Carolyn Fornoff and Gisela Heffes (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021), 1–22.

[10] Fornoff and Heffes, 3.

[11] Fornoff and Heffes, 5.

cinematographic representation of the aftermath of the 1985 Mexico City earthquake and its political and social implications; the politics of interspecies relations in a region-wide study of left-wing cinema; and the intersection of race, social class, environmentalism, and notions of progress in the cinematographic representation of the Central American Caribbean.[12]

In a similar vein, Mariana Cunha and Antônio Márcio Da Silva encompass their approach to Latin American cinema through the lens of human rights.[13] The authors locate their study against the backdrop of human rights narratives in the region, focusing first on a global exploration of these narratives, and then moving into an analysis of dictatorial regimes in the region and the subsequent processes of transition to democracy during the 80s. Wider topics and perspectives of human rights in the region are identified: the resistance during state-sponsored terrorist regimes, the post-dictatorial traces of human rights violations, gender and human rights, LGBT rights, and indigenous struggles, among others. The authors aim to locate these preoccupations in different eras of Latin American cinema: from 60s and 70s "revolutionary cinema" with what John King calls its "'Pan-American' aspirations" and its embeddedness as "part of the struggle" of human rights in the region; to contemporary cinema that engages with topics as diverse as cinematic landscapes as a retelling strategy of the dictatorial past in Chile, human rights violations in Brazilian prisons, depictions of indigenous peoples in Argentinian cinema, among others.[14]

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[12] Carolyn Fornoff, "Visualizing the Geosphere: The 1985 Earthquake in Mexican Cinema," in *Pushing Past the Human in Latin American Cinema*, ed. Carolyn Fornoff and Gisela Heffes (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021), 47–48; Moira Fradinger, "Humanimal Assemblages: Slaughters in Latin American Left-Wing Cinema," in *Pushing Past the Human in Latin American Cinema*, ed. Carolyn Fornoff and Gisela Heffes (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021), 111–38; Mauricio Espinoza and Tomás Emilio Arce, "Sea Turtles and Seascapes: Representing Human-Nature Relations in the Central American Caribbean," in *Pushing Past the Human in Latin American Cinema*, ed. Carolyn Fornoff and Gisela Heffes (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021), 255–80.

[13] Mariana Cunha and Antônio Márcio Da Silva, "Introduction," in *Human Rights, Social Movements and Activism in Contemporary Latin American Cinema*, ed. Mariana Cunha and Antônio Márcio Da Silva (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 1–19.

[14] John King, *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* (London: Verso, 2000), cited in Cunha and Da Silva, 11; Cunha and Da Silva, 11; Tom Winterbottom, "Human Rights and the Shadow of Chile's Dictatorship: Patricio Guzmán and the Poetics of a Cinematic Landscape," in *Human Rights, Social Movements and Activism in Contemporary Latin American Cinema*, ed. Mariana Cunha and Antônio Márcio Da Silva (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 21–43; Antônio Márcio Da Silva, "Human Rights Abuses and State Violence in Prison Films by Hector Babenco," in *Human Rights, Social Movements and Activism in Contemporary Latin American Cinema*, ed. Mariana Cunha and Antônio Márcio Da Silva (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 71–93; Dilys Jones, "Territories, Existence and Identities: Indigenous Peoples in Argentine Films," in *Human Rights, Social Movements and Activism in Contemporary Latin American Cinema*, ed. Mariana Cunha and Antônio Márcio Da Silva (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 95–112.

Although departing from specific framings of issues in the region, Fornoff and Heffes's and Cunha and Da Silva's edited volumes and their contributors converge in the study of representation of broad cinematic representations of Latin American societal challenges and their historical and political circumstances. A sense of translatability is present in this scholarship through its engagement with geographically and culturally specific preoccupations.

Considering Latin American cinema's engagements with overarching regional topics, the sense of translatability of these topics, and the transnational context of artistic and cultural practices in the region, I argue that academic discourses do not identify Latin American cinema as a genre but instead as a vehicle for the preoccupations and issues of the region. This notion of a vehicle, a sort of conduit of societal struggles, is a gateway to explorations beyond the strictly cinematographic through topics related to the re-apparitions of the hardships of the past, the notion of lost futures that were promised and never came, the poetic justice of imagined *what-if* presents, and a fragmented nostalgia for the half-remembered: the themes, imagery and sounds that evoke a Latin American hauntological. The next step in this theoretical construction is to define the terms of engagement with this regional hauntology.

The Latin American hauntological

The metaphor of haunting in the Latin American historical context can have different shapes: ghosts of loss, of suffering, and half-remembered pasts; of vindication, as agents of poetic justice, of alternative histories had the past been different; but also, as a physical place of haunting, a topological ghost associated to cursed places where ghosts leave a trace in each of their re-apparitions. The translatability of the region's political pasts, instances of violence, notions of loss and memory, environmental concerns, and a general sense of broken futures, almost unequivocally call for a hauntological approach to the history of the region and its artistic representations. In this theoretical proposal of a Latin American hauntological, I depart from Jacques Derrida's and Mark Fisher's theorizations of the concept of hauntology, particularly focusing on the destabilization of ontological notions and its overlapping with

existentialist engagements with the past. I contrast these ideas with recent scholarship on spectral criticism applied to Latin American artistic settings. Finally, I will construct my own theoretical and conceptual approach to hauntology in this work.

The conceptual underpinnings of hauntology prompt a framework to analyze and interpret situations that are better understood through the metaphorical presence of ghosts. Derrida uses the ghost to analyze the role of the left in the new political scenario following the fall of the Berlin Wall, interpreting communism as a recurring apparition that haunts the seemingly victorious capitalist system. Although the term hauntology is only mentioned three times in *Specters of Marx,* Derrida expands on the ideas of the specter and the haunting in different allegorical settings, thus creating a sort of mythology regarding these metaphorical apparitions. In his deconstructionist effort, the haunting is conceived as a "presence of absence," a mechanism to acknowledge that which no longer is and the effects of its absence. In stating that "[t]here is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as reapparition of the departed," Derrida destabilizes an ontological understanding of this ghostly entity, instead arguing for a blurring of what is known about it:

> One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. At least no longer to that which one thinks one knows by the name of knowledge.[15]

From this, two avenues of understanding the haunting emerge. The first one is related to the term's relation "to the way in which nothing enjoys a purely positive existence," how "'being' is not equivalent to *presence,*" bringing this unstable understanding in contact with notions of time: that which was and no longer is, that which was promised but never will be, that which is imagined as a possible consequence of something that never was.[16] The second one is related to the instability of the term and the productive ways in which scholars have bent it

[15] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.
[16] Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester: Zero books, 2013), 26; Mark Fisher, "The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology," *Dancecult* 5, no. 2 (2013): 44. Emphasis in original.

into different shapes. Riley cleverly calls this the afterlife of hauntology, a re-conceptualization of the term in both academic and artistic settings.[17]

Fisher's readings of Derrida, particularly when used to describe the eponymous genre of electronic music that evokes nostalgic images of Britain's 60s and 70s, prompt a conceptual tension between ontological re-figurations and an existentialist engagement with the passing of time. Fisher acknowledges Derrida's deconstructionist ideas, stating that "[e]verything that exists is possible only on the basis of a whole series of absences," but moves the term towards a conversation with Martin Hägglund's conceptualization of the *no longer* and the *not yet*.[18] That which is *no longer* still "*remains* effective as virtuality," which Fisher attaches to the concept of the "fatal pattern."[19] Although Fisher does not expand on what this pattern is or why it is fatal, his reading of the *no longer* suggests a repeated recalling of the ghost of that which was lost. The ghost's unstable existence in a liminal space of absence/presence problematizes the very nature of temporal logic, thus implying this process of repetition. Buse and Stott productively question the timely nature of the ghost's apparition:

> Ghosts arrive from the past and appear in the present. However, the ghost cannot be properly said to belong to the past, even if the apparition represents someone who has been dead for many centuries, for the simple reason that a ghost is clearly not the same thing as the person who shares its proper name. Does then the 'historical' person who is identified with the ghost properly belong to the present? Surely not, as the idea of a return from death fractures all traditional conceptions of temporality.[20]

Furthermore, Buse and Stott locate the ghost as contingent to the moment in which it reappears, stating that it is "haunted by a chain of overdetermined readings, mis-readings, slips and accretions."[21] This goes in line with Derrida's notion of the ghost as one that "demands that one take its times and its history into consideration, the singularity of its

[17] John A. Riley, "Hauntology, Ruins, and the Failure of the Future in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker*," *Journal of Film and Video* 69, no. 1 (April 1, 2017): 19.
[18] Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, 26.
[19] Fisher, 27. Emphasis in original.
[20] Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, "Introduction: A Future for Haunting," in *Ghosts*, ed. Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1999), 11.
[21] Buse and Stott, 12.

temporality or of its historicity."[22] In the context of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union that Derrida addresses, this means a reassessment of the seemingly dead communism, "its hopes, its discourse, its theories, and its practices," and how its disappearance haunts the present of a capitalist system that seems to have triumphed.[23] Building from this, the ghost forcefully provokes new examinations of its historicity and the nature of its grasp on the present with each re-apparition. But its signification is unstable, prompt to interpretations, re-interpretations and misinterpretations, an endless process of non-determination. Combining the ideas of the re-apparition of the ghost, its liminal nature, the haunting as necessarily related to a broken time, and the problematic non-determination of its signification, then the "fatal pattern" of the ghost can be read as the constant return of hardships past: repeated violence, repeated practices of past political regimes, repeated gender roles, repeated othering and discrimination, etc. These re-apparitions happen in specific moments through history, grasping every new present through re-interpretations and re-significations.

That which has *not yet* happened "is *already* effective in the virtual (…) playing a part in undermining the present state of things."[24] A related reading of this is considering the *not yet* as the *never will*, that which will never come to happen, but that has somehow been promised and remains expected despite its improbability. In the context of the inescapable predominance (and inexorability) of the capitalist system deemed by Fukuyama as "the end of history," Fisher ruminates on the lost futures that were promised during the twentieth century:

> It meant the acceptance of a situation in which culture would continue without really changing, and where politics was reduced to the administration of an already established (capitalist) system.[25]

[22] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 126.
[23] Derrida, 64.
[24] Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, 27. Emphasis in original.
[25] Mark Fisher, "What Is Hauntology?" *Film Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (September 1, 2012): 16.

Through this hauntological mourning of futures that will never come, and through the understanding of "the end of history" as a defined political stance, I build from Fisher to locate the traces of the *never will* in different manifestations: the unfulfilled promises of political projects, such as the well-being state or the deceiving stability of dictatorial regimes; architectural design that aimed for the future, both in its design and its functionality, which eventually became decaying and anachronistic; and sounding technologies that proposed electronic sounds as the sounds of a future that never arrived, among other manifestations. This has further implications beyond the mere imagining of a broken future, such as the imagining of a modern, futuristic society conceived as a logical continuation of the well-being state of the past, but that has been able to leave behind the ghosts of homophobia, racism, and other forms of discrimination.[26] I think of these imaginations as *what-if* presents, alternative versions of the present that are consequences of an imagined altered past.

An implication of the *never will*, a sort of "applied" hauntology, is what Fisher calls "places stained by time" found in the analysis of the representation of architecture in 70s and 80s films, particularly in Kubrick's *The Shining.*[27] Fisher locates this architecture as looking both towards the lost futures and the no longer pasts: the lost futures of capitalist supremacy and "corporate hyperdomination," and the *no longer* lurking pasts of violence, organized crime, and indigenous extermination.[28] The physical space acts as a sign, both a reminder of the violence that happened there, and a sort of indexical sign of the promises of a future that never came, in its deterioration and dislocation with time.

Riley finds similar looks into the future in his analysis of the architecture in Tarkovsky's *Stalker.* In this case of "a science fiction turn to the past," the stain of time is found instead in ruins, which Riley calls "monument[s] to failure."[29] In exploring the connection with failed futures, the inability of these places to "catch up" with modernity, and the intertwining of the ruins with nature in "an experience of disjointed but circular space and time," Riley identifies these ruins as places for oneiric experiences: the setting for the imagining of *what-if* presents and

[26] Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life,* 33.
[27] Fisher, "What Is Hauntology?" 19.
[28] Fisher, 20.
[29] John A. Riley, "Hauntology, Ruins," 21.

the reminiscence of the lost futures, the material place of a performative reimagining of reality.[30]

Moving to a specific Transhispanic setting, Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen bring forward studies of the haunting related to historical instances of erasure, silencing, disappearance, and loss in the region.[31] In this context, the haunting is found in the attempts to disrupt the present with "images or words that contradict the coherent, unproblematic, and historically decontextualized character of the representation of social reality in hegemonic discourse."[32] For engaging with this disruption, spectral criticism departs from two components: the acknowledgement of "the region's tortuous relationship with modernity and its disadvantaged status in global politics;" and an understanding of the haunting as the re-apparition of the silenced stories from the victims of the past, thus subverting the official narratives established by hegemonic groups.[33] The common regional recalling of the pervading ghosts of (neo)colonialism, dictatorial regimes, historical economic disadvantage, and many societal preoccupations regarding repeated violations of human rights prompt once again a sense of translatability. A hauntological approach to these historical traumas both confronts and reassesses the terms in which the official historical narratives have been written.

In one such strategy to confront hegemonic narratives, Jo Labanyi proposes an understanding of the retelling of the past through metaphorical engagements instead of retellings that aim to realistically represent the past. In showing the past's "dark points—its relative inaccessibility, its distortions," Labanyi proposes a "deliberately unrealistic approach" that simultaneously acknowledges the difficulties of retelling the past, and that prompts fantastical

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[30] Riley, "Hauntology, Ruins," 23.
[31] Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen, "Introduction: Theories of the Ghost in a Transhispanic Context," in *Espectros: Ghostly Hauntings in Contemporary Transhispanic Narratives*, ed. Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2016), 1–11. The authors use the term Transhispanic "to unbind the tenuous boundaries of a geocultural space that literary studies calls 'Hispanic,' and which implies a political, cultural, or linguistic hegemony," stating that they "recognize the internal diversity and tensions that may exist within political entities that have minimized the expression of ethnic and cultural groups within them." Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen, 10 (endnote 4).
[32] Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen, 3.
[33] Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen, 4.

settings in which poetic justice and *what-if* moments are possible.[34] This prompts a constructive engagement with the hardships of the past, which have been blurred by the hegemonic narratives, through the imagining of alternative circumstances and the conditions that would have needed to be met for creating a different story. Labanyi concludes that artforms that re-narrativize the past through the metaphor of the ghost provide

> a productive balance between acknowledgment of the past and a desire for change through their understanding that what matters about the past is its unfinished business, which requires critical reflection and action in the present.[35]

Labanyi's approach to the ghost as a strategy of remembrance is closely related to the mechanisms of magical realism, a literary genre that has Latin America as its playground. Authors such as Gabriel García Márquez (often cited as its creator) and Isabel Allende have found the workings of supernatural events to give meaning to a regional reality that balances between the magical and the terrible. For example, in García Márquez's *A Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), the Buendía family's first born José Arcadio is murdered after returning from hunting, and his blood runs through the town of Macondo in a thin thread until reaching his mother, who then follows the thread back to his lifeless body. Interpreting these magical/terrible settings, Matthew Strecher defines magical realism as "what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something 'too strange to believe.'"[36] In the Netflix series *Narcos* (2015-2017) about the drug conflict in Colombia, this phrase has been used to provide an understanding of the conflict as being so terrible and incomprehensible that it can only be understood as something supernatural.[37] Magical realism, in its reading as a strategy to understand the terrible and horrifying in Latin America, provides an additional layer to notions of the re-narrativization and aestheticization of the ghosts of the region.

[34] Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen, 8.

[35] Jo Labanyi, "Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War," *Poetics Today* 28, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 109.

[36] Matthew C. Strecher, "Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 25, no. 2 (1999): 267.

[37] At the beginning of the first episode of the first season, the phrase is presented as a title card. The phrase eventually fades out, except for the words "too strange to believe."

The haunting is a kaleidoscopic metaphor, with its simultaneous engagements with the past, the lost futures, the places stained by time, historical injustice, and narratives of the voices of the dead. It lurks around different artistic forms and the cultural realities they aim to represent. In my engagement with a hauntological understanding of the region and the study of a musical/filmic hauntological, I propose three manifestations of the haunting. The first haunting can be understood as a harmful haunting, a ghost from which one needs to escape or hide. In this case, it is the ghost of the past presence and present absence of dictatorial regimes, colonialism, gender violence, discrimination, violent erasure, etc. The exodus of musicians during the dictatorships in Argentina and Chile, the systematic discrimination against indigenous groups in Mexico, and the region-wide epidemic of femicides, are instances of this apparition. This haunting relates to how "the past has a way of using us to repeat itself," Fisher's fatal repetition that prompts historicized re-apparitions of the ghost.[38]

This evil ghost also prompts the recognition of what has been erased, and hence a second category of the haunting: the ghost of those who have disappeared, and who now are conjured in a sort of "afterlife" when traditional and hegemonic discourses are challenged. The absent presence of those who no longer are, but who exert an agency over the present. This ghost strives for justice, as the proverbial ghost in folk imagery, through subversion contextualized in narratives of the infracitizen: the historically oppressed, the discriminated, the dissident.[39] This ghost instills strategies of re-narrativization of the hegemonic recollections of the past and the acknowledgement of interstitial identities, along with the aestheticization of the haunting into narratives of poetic justice and *what-if* presents.

The last one is not a metaphorically corporeal ghost, but instead the place of haunting built from Fisher's and Riley's engagement with architecture through the concept of places stained by time. This is the place where the haunting is prone to occur, or where the effects of the haunting can be seen. The architecture of failure, the evidence of failed political and societal projects, combine with the idea of the "non-places," which can be expanded to Latin American notions of repeated patterns: translatable urban landscapes plagued with traffic jams,

[38] Fisher, "What Is Hauntology?" 19.
[39] Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen, "Introduction," 5.

insecurity, garbage, pollution, an "architecture of anachronism" that signifies the disadvantaged position of the region.[40] In line with the oneiric spaces of Riley, this is the "magical place" where the alternative *what-if* fictions arise from, in close combination with the second ghost of poetic justice. This is complemented with a permanent notion of dislocation with western modernity.

Hauntology as method

Considering the applicability of hauntological thought that I have proposed for studying the translatable preoccupations and the engagements with the historical past in the region, it is appropriate to establish that this hauntological perspective can be applied to Latin American film in its quality as a vehicle of these preoccupations and engagements. In this research, I intend to study the hauntological through the cinematographic representation of musical practices, musical traditions, modalities of listening, and musical reenactments of memory found in different diegetic layers. Considering the unstable nature of the hauntological categories that I have theorized and their transgressions of ontological boundaries, this research will take an eclectic methodological approach.

An analysis of the filmic reality of the film can bring different musical engagements to the fore, as well as put them in dialogue with the real-world Latin American musical culture. A first part of my method will be grounded in neoformalism as theorized by Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, as well as in Emilio Audissino's film/music analysis. I focus on the film's reality as a reflection of life in Latin America, its struggles and preoccupations, and the musical elements that draw ties between the aesthetic realm of the film and the nonaesthetic realm that surrounds it. In the second part, I depart from James Buhler's readings of Jean Mitry and Gilles Deleuze to make sense of the unstable dialogue between the filmic musical elements and their evocations of the Latin American hauntological in line with the manifestations of the haunting previously theorized. In the following I will discuss in greater detail these methodological underpinnings.

[40] Fisher, "What Is Hauntology?" 20.

In Breaking the Glass Armor, Thompson explores neoformalism's engagements with the aesthetic and nonaesthetic realm.[41] Thompson departs from Russian Formalism's approach to the world from a perceptual perspective, in which a difference is established between "practical, everyday perception and specifically aesthetic, non-practical perception."[42] Building from this, Thompson distinguishes a nonaesthetic world, where perception is used for practical ends (such as focusing on the green on a traffic light for crossing the street, while ignoring many other sights, sounds, smells, etc.) and an aesthetic realm that "plunge[s] us into a non-practical, playful type of interaction."[43] In this aesthetic realm, perception is renewed as the viewer switches to a sense of observant non-intervention and non-engagement, while still retaining certain emotional and logical engagements brought from the nonaesthetic realm. Renewed or expanded perceptions and repeated film-watching, Thompson argues, prompt a sort of dialogue between the perceptual experiences that are attuned to film and those from real life, affecting the viewer's "perception of everyday objects and events and ideas."[44] Based on this dialogue, neoformalism then approaches the work of art as part of a distinct aesthetic realm and its relation to the world, based on Russian Formalism's engagement with "the specificity of art" first, and "toward a general theory of mind and society" as a strategy to make sense of the work of art and its historical reception.[45] Inspired by these notions, I propose the study of an intrafilmic reality that is recognizably Latin American first, and toward the social, cultural, historical, and political realities of the nonaesthetic realm it is a part of.

For approaching the Latin American intrafilmic, I draw from neoformalist approaches to meaning as explored by Thompson, Bordwell and Audissino, categorized in four types: referential, explicit, implicit and symptomatic. The viewer constructs a referential meaning of the film when they make sense of a coherent filmic world in which a narrative takes place. Bordwell argues that this constructed intrafilmic world "draws not only on knowledge of filmic and extrafilmic conventions but also on conceptions of causality, space, and time and on

[41] Kristin Marie Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).
[42] Thompson, 8.
[43] Thompson, 8.
[44] Thompson, 9.
[45] Thompson, 9.

concrete items of information."[46] The references for constructing this world can be traced to the real world or to fictional world constructions – such as the ones found in other pieces of fiction. The explicit meaning is eloquently explained by Audissino as

> the reply one may give to the question, 'What is the film about?' Grasping the explicit meaning means grasping the characters' feeling, motivations, desires, the cause/effect chain connecting the events, the correct temporal order, and its obvious meanings.[47]

Implicit meaning is identified broadly as the "set of values that the film consciously supports."[48] Bordwell associates the implicit level with uncertainty: regarding the possible interpretation of the film, in what he calls "problems," "issues," or "questions" within the film; or regarding elements that may contrast with referential or explicit meanings of the work.[49] Finally, symptomatic meaning is created by understanding the film as a product of its time, thus providing insights on its historical and socio-political situatedness.[50]

Particularly, I focus on the referential meaning as the departing point for constructing a Latin American intrafilmic reality through recognizable referents: historical events, cultural practices, geographic locales, and any other element that provides the film with a sense of regional recognizability. The referential meaning is thus closely connected with the symptomatic meaning of the films: the contemporary events surrounding the film's production or its reception, the political (or otherwise) associations of the filmmakers, actors, composers, etc., and the general discourse surrounding certain eras of filmmaking in the region. The implicit meaning, especially when building on Bordwell's "uncertainty" perspective, provides a way to destabilize readings of the film in connection with re-narrativization strategies, notions of poetic justice, and *what-if* presents. In conjunction with these analytical strategies, the explicit meaning remains as an important tool that provides grounding to the other three types of meaning.

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[46] David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Harvard University Press, 1989), 8.
[47] Emilio Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 80.
[48] Audissino, 87.
[49] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 9.
[50] Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis*, 80-1.

After determining the Latin American intrafilmic reality, the next step is to determine the methodological tools to analyze the musical elements within the film and their ties to the nonaesthetic realm. I draw from Audissino's film/music analysis, particularly from his engagement with Gestalt psychology and the concept of isomorphism, defined as "a correspondence between Gestalt qualities from one field of experience to another."[51] Building on "the transcultural presence of some perceptual categories," Audissino constructs an analysis of film music based on "Gestalt qualities of the music" through Leonard B. Meyer's "secondary parameters" of music.[52] In opposition to "primary parameters" of music such as "chordal progressions, syntactic relations between tones, etc.," these parameters are what can be described as "exterior" characteristics of music, and include dynamics, tempo, register, timbre, rhythmic particularities, and the recognition of broad harmonic and melodic elements (such as cultural codifications of major tonalities as happy and minor as sad).[53] Audissino argues that these are broadly distinguishable characteristics that do not require an in-depth musicological analysis and are easily associable with (trans)cultural conventions and perceptual categories. For instance, Audissino analyzes a scene from *Hook* (1991) in which Peter Pan relies on his happy thoughts to be able to fly. The process of flying is described through the secondary parameters of crescendo, specific orchestral textures, and fortissimo dynamics in combination with cinematographic representations of excitement, liberating joy, and soaring flight.[54] Drawing from Meyer, Audissino locates this isomorphism of music and joyous emotions as coming from a cultural experience that perceives similarities between musical elements and their organization, and the experience of certain concepts, ideas, states of mind, etc.[55] This is what Meyer calls "the realm of cultural metaphor," a cultural association of musical elements with physical and biological metaphors that themselves provide cultural valuations and associations.[56]

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[51] Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis*, 106.
[52] Audissino, 105, 108.
[53] Audissino, 108.
[54] Audissino, 112.
[55] Audissino, 112.
[56] Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 129.

In this "reverse-engineering move" from bigger Gestalt structures to their component parts, Audissino defines what he calls micro- and macro-configurations of filmic devices.[57] Micro-configurations of certain perceptual categories associated to certain devices can combine to create a macro-configuration. In this combination, music interacts with other devices to create a "surplus (of meaning, emotion, perception)" beyond notions of music as a "modifier" of the rest of audiovisual elements.[58] For instance, micro-configurations of sadness in different devices, such as music that is culturally coded as sad in combination with a sad expression of a character, creates a macro-configuration of sadness.[59] For addressing instances in which these cultural constructions of micro- or macro-configurations are not strictly isomorphic, Audissino recurs to a Gestalt approach to audience perception as a

> perceptive effort of relation-seeking; we have to 'observe' the problem from different angles until we find the right one from which the required relation is individuated that can illuminate a solution.[60]

In response to Nicholas Cook's "similarity/difference test," in which music can conform to, complement, or contest the other audiovisual elements, Audissino advocates for a "problem-solving attitude" towards assessing the different and potentially inconsistent micro-configurations and how they work together towards a resulting macro-configuration.[61] This approach opens up the possibility to understand apparent contradictions as macro-configurations of irony, satire or uneasiness, among others.

This analysis based on neoformalism and Audissino's film/music analysis, in which the intra-filmic reality is established simultaneously as its own and in relation to the nonaesthetic realm through mechanisms of meaning creation, and through its engagement with cultural meanings of music and its involvement in micro- and macro-configurations of devices, provides the grounds of a Latin American intrafilmic reality. Echoing Kathryn Kalinak's

[57] Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis,* 111. Within neoformalism, devices are defined as any specific element of the film: editing, lighting, music, sound effects, etc.
[58] Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis,* 110.
[59] Audissino, 113-4.
[60] Audissino, 115.
[61] Audissino, 46, 116.

theorizations of a cultural perception of music in which its “basic properties are understood, either consciously or unconsciously, by the entire set of individuals in a given culture, not just a few,” I propose that recognizable notions of Latin American musical practices, musical traditions, modalities of listening, and reenactments of memory are embedded in an also recognizable Latin American intrafilmic.[62]

The jump from the intra-filmic reality into detecting the hauntological is not direct. Because of the nature of the hauntological, the “tracing” of the different manifestations of the ghost is prone to instability. In a sort of methodological performance of hauntology, I intend to explore the presence of absence in the filmic representation of music, a sort of empty sign prone to uncanniness and suspicion. If smoke is a stable indexical sign of fire, then in this type of unstable empty sign there are doubts over whether it was indeed fire that caused the smoke, prompting some degree of suspicion on its nature. A sense of “something more” beyond the obvious categories of signification, the answer to the question “what is the film not telling us?” Translated to the musical hauntological, this is found in musical elements that evoke unstable or uncertain associations to a Latin American historical, social, cultural, or political embeddedness, and its ties to the region’s hauntology. These associations may vary with time, may be understood differently by different groups, or may prompt contrasting interpretations that need to be renegotiated or acknowledged as contradictory.

I depart from Buhler’s readings of Mitry’s theorization of indexical signification, particularly from its engagement with notions of absence. Mitry’s tripartite topology organizes indexical signs into three categories: indical, allusive and symbolic.[63] An indical sign implies the existence of something that has not been shown onscreen. In Mitry’s explanation, he proposes the example of a shot of a garden where a doll lying on the ground signifies the existence of a little girl. Instead, if the girl is shown in a preceding shot holding her doll, the toy on the ground then becomes an allusive sign. This type of sign implies the absence of the

[62] Kathryn Marie Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 3.
[63] James Buhler, *Theories of the Soundtrack* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 93. Buhler mentions that the term “indical” was coined by Mitry’s translator. In this case, it is productive to make a distinction between “indexical” when talking about the sign, and “indical” when talking about one of the three categories in Mitry’s (and Buhler’s) tripartite typology.

referent and the breaking of an initial unity. The symbolic sign signifies "from within a further relation:" in this case, a first shot shows the girl's parents looking for her, after which the doll is shown as a sign of the relation created between the girl and her disappearance.[64]

In extending Mitry's theorization to the soundtrack, Buhler locates indical sounds as "sounds that precede an image or that are stated without an image" in which the referent is indefinite, usually offscreen; and allusive sounds as offscreen sound "that occurs when we know the identity of the sound because we have seen a depicted body emit it."[65] Buhler's translation of the symbolic index is briefly explained through examples from specific films, but his explanation of this category as being both symbolic and as an "index of lack" prompts a new reading: sonic or musical associations that are constructed elsewhere. The symbolic sound again signifies "from within a further relation," a sign that is constructed within the logic of the reality of the film. For my analysis, I propose to expand this reading into a bigger semiotic level: musical associations constructed off-film as wider cultural/hauntological referents, indexical musical signs of unstable cultural relations that are somehow absent from the film, but that leave a trace in the cinematographic reality. This symbolic index prompts the question "what is the film not telling us?" and makes us wonder about the uncanny nature of the sign, in the same way that we wonder about the circumstances of the disappearance of Mitry's girl. These significations from beyond the film find a place in the logic of the intrafilmic reality grounded in neoformalism's four meanings.

A final perspective consideration ties up my methodological approach. I focus on Buhler examinations of Deleuze's movement-image, particularly on the impulse-image. In the impulse-image, Deleuze establishes the notion of an originary world, a world "made up of outlines and fragments […] the set which unites everything, not in an organisation, but making all the parts converge in an immense rubbish-dump or swamp."[66] The impulse-image is not a realistic representation, for example one that represents a room that is part of a house, with a realistic logic in terms of its space and the elements in it. Instead, it is a naturalistic sensation,

[64] Buhler, *Theories of the Soundtrack*, 93.
[65] Buhler, 94.
[66] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 124.

in which elements from that room are perceived to exist and have a certain utility, such as a lamp that can be turned on or a glass that can break, but that are not organized in any way yet in the film's reality. Although Buhler finds the impulse-image in sound effects, appealing to how "sounds pass freely from one source to another, being embodied by each in turn but settling definitively in none," I propose a complementary layer to Mitry's indexes: the distinguishable, unorganized fragments of cultural musical associations that "leak" into the reality of the film and are perceived as naturalistic constructions of musical signification, taking different filmic functions and evoking cultural functions and associations, but that might contain their own extrafilmic significations.[67] In other words, fragments of the Latin American musical reality, embodied in musical practices, modalities of listening, musical acts of remembrance, and musical cinematographic constructions, with their own signification "from within a further relation," which establish a dialogue between the intrafilmic and the nonaesthetic realm as unstable, uncanny signs of the musical hauntological.

According to Buhler, the action-image, a later stage of Deleuze's movement-image, is the basis of classical sound film.[68] This entails that the impulse-image happens before any sense of filmic musical organization, including considerations of diegesis. For instance, music that can be codified as danceable, like reggaetón in chapter 3, recalls the possibility of it having recognizable associations, significations or functions: a certain logic to it, as the lamp in the room of my previous example. But after being recognized as having that logic, the music can have a strictly diegetic function as the music that the characters dance or listen to, or as non-diegetic music that accompanies a sequence.

Considering that the films in my analysis portray musical engagements of different kinds (listening modalities, musical traditions, musical functions, etc.), and that they could occupy different diegetic places, it is important to briefly establish a methodological perspective to diegesis. In line with Audissino, I want to avoid any sense of diegetic/non-diegetic dualism. However, it is important for my construction of the intrafilmic to determine where the music is being produced and how it is associated with the reality of the film, for instance if it provides

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[67] Buhler, *Theories of the Soundtrack*, 108.
[68] Buhler, 108.

accompaniment to dancing, if it is intended to be background music, or if it is a reenactment of any of these possibilities from the perspective of the audience. From this standpoint, incorporating Robynn Stilwell's theorization of the fantastical gap is productive. Considering how instances of diegesis may coexist in a given scene, the liminal space that exists between diegetic and non-diegetic music is a fantastical gap that when traversed offers "important moments of revelation, of symbolism, and of emotional engagement within the film and without," thus providing meaning to the filmic moment.[69] Each instance of the fantastical gap in my case studies will be analyzed individually. An additional understanding of diegesis is that of Winters's extra-diegetic, understood as music that "seems to be deliberately distanced from the here-and-now," and that provides accompaniment to montages or title screens.[70]

To recapitulate, my methodological approach consists in determining the intrafilmic reality as a recognizable Latin American reality that draws ties to the nonaesthetic realm. This reality is constructed through film-specific combinations of the four meanings of neoformalism and through an analysis of culturally recognizable musical elements in the film. The next step is to ask "what is the film not telling us?" to determine the musical hauntological in each film. Buhler's readings of Mitry's theorizations of the indexical sign and of Deleuze's impulse-image provide a framework to deal with the instability of the musical hauntological through musical associations created beyond the film that leak into the intrafilmic reality as fragments of unorganized musical reality. Specific instances in which issues of diegesis arise will be analyzed separately, within the framework of Stilwell's fantastical gap and Winters's extra-diegetic.

The case studies

The following chapters will engage with very different contemporary Latin American films as case studies, in which the filmic/musical hauntological occurs in different ways. In the following, I provide a short summary of each chapter. For understanding the significations

[69] Robynn J. Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic," in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 200.
[70] Ben Winters, "The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space," *Music and Letters* 91, no. 2 (May 1, 2010): 237.

created in the nonaesthetic realm and how they leak into each film, a case-specific additional methodological layer is laid out in each of the chapters.

In chapter 2, I analyze Lucrecia Martel's *Zama* (2017), a colonial drama about a magistrate of the Spanish crown set in an indetermined colonial outpost during the late eighteenth century. In the context of Martel's project as one that subverts traditional recollections of the past and hegemonic colonial narratives, the film has two musical engagements: a Shepard tone constructed as a signifier of uncertainty and ghostly moments; and the music of Brazilian duo Los Indios Tabajaras, used as an anachronistic and subversive resource. For engaging in the signification of the Shepard tone, I draw from academic discourse on the Shepard tone and its transgression of both western musical forms and the sense of temporality. The associations with the musical hauntological are built through these senses of otherness. For engaging with Los Indios's music, I analyze social media discourse that provides insights into the modalities of listening of their music, as a departing point to understand the concept of "the past is always better" and how this leaks into the film as complicated associations with a Latin American past.

In chapter 3, I focus on Pablo Larraín's *Ema* (2019), a family drama set in the city of Valparaíso, in post-dictatorial Chile. With reggaetón as a lurking ghost that simultaneously signifies misogynist narratives and vindicatory feminist struggles, the physical spaces of the city provide a stage to represent engagements with violent pasts and the possibility to re-narrativize them. Reggaetón finds its place as an alternative to elitist musical practices, but needs to be renegotiated to strip away its more problematic implications. The nationalistic projects of the dictatorship, using folklore as a symbol of autochthony, pushes reggaetón to become a vehicle of institutional rebellion. For understanding reggaetón beyond the intrafilmic, I explore contrasting significations found in journalistic and academic discourse, as well as the general cultural significations and renegotiations of the genre in the region.

In chapter 4, I study Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* (2018). Conceived initially as a cinematographic representation of Cuarón's childhood memories, the project eventually became a narrative that evokes 1970s Mexico City as a collaborative effort of remembrance. In an intrafilmic historical recollection that intends to be simultaneously precise and vague, the musical

practices of different social classes collide against the backdrop of the political violence of the past, particularly that surrounding the Corpus Christi Massacre of 1971. The associations of music beyond the intrafilmic happen in different layers. First, an engagement with the modalities of listening during the activities related to domestic labor, their historical significations and problematic implications. Second, the significations of rock in Latin America in line with different access to the genre by different social classes. Finally, I draw from contemporary discourses of nostalgia to locate the film as an invitation to remember, departing from the Latin American significations it provides and prompting audiences from other cultural perspectives to provide their own.

2. The haunting of indeterminacy: Lucrecia Martel's *Zama*

The film *Zama* (2017) is based on the homonymous novel by Antonio di Benedetto (1956). The story follows the titular character, Don Diego de Zama, in his misadventures during his post as magistrate for the Spanish crown during the late eighteenth century in an unspecified region of South America. Lucrecia Martel constructs this world not as an accurate representation of a historical moment, but instead as a confusing and blurred notion of the historical past, in a bid to destabilize any sense of a hegemonic narrative. The film avoids common traits of historical cinema, instead relying on deliberate anachronism, geographical and historical non-specificity, and confusing parodic elements. Certain elements that are commonplace in Martel's cinema, such as the audiovisual configuration of obstructed shots and uneasy sound design, the importance given to the off-screen, and the ghostly presence of out-of-focus characters, contribute to intensify a sensation of non-stability and confusion.

The film initially shows Diego de Zama in an outworn colonial context, demoted to a remote outpost where he works as magistrate for the crown. His unhappiness with his position is evident, and his utmost desire is to be transferred to the city of Lerma so that he can be reunited with his wife and son. As a mid-range crown official in the periphery of the empire, Zama is in an interstitial social space, showing a fragile sense of superiority towards those he considers his inferiors, and perceived as incompetent by the colonial authorities. Simultaneously, Zama aspires to the affections of the noble Spanishwoman Luciana, who rejects him and is instead more interested in Ventura Prieto, Zama's assistant magistrate and an advocate against the enslavement of indigenous people. Life in the colonial outpost is permanently haunted by the lurking ghost of a criminal called Vicuña Porto, through rumors of his violence, a permanent fear of attacks that never come, and multiple contradictory accounts of his capture and execution by "brave men." The film is constructed through different vignettes that show Zama dealing with these situations and his seemingly endless quest for achieving his transfer to Lerma, as evidenced in his dealings with different governors throughout the years. In the last part of the film, Zama enlists in the hunt for Vicuña Porto after he receives the discouraging news that the process for his transfer will take years to complete. In this final quest, Zama discovers Vicuña Porto hiding as one of his companions,

and his fate is sealed when he shatters Vicuña's men's hopes to find wealth: the shiny rocks that they seek after are revealed to be worthless. After having his hands severed and left to fend for himself, Zama is finally rescued by unseen indigenous people while an indigenous boy enigmatically asks: "do you want to live?"

Zama's journey has been analyzed by Catherine Grant and Deborah Martin as an invitation for the audience to witness "the transformation offered to, but not always entered into, by the film's white or criollo characters: a dissolution of colonial corporeality, a fall, or passage, into the body of the other, the native, the non-white."[1] The concept of a passage, inspired by an eponymous installation by Martel at the EYE Museum in Amsterdam,[2] prompts a notion of becoming within the fictitious (but still very recognizable) Latin American reality that Martel seeks to depict. Zama is very much a cog in the colonial machinery, using his authority to perpetuate oppressive mechanisms, but lives in an interstitial space of interactions where his association to the colonial project is blurred. These contrasting interactions include his caring relationship with an indigenous woman and the child he fathered with her, or his permanent status as a victim of bureaucracy and corruption within the colonial outpost. In progressively falling out of the Spanish crown's favor and becoming entangled with a network of interactions with the non-colonial others, Zama goes through the passage towards "becoming Latin American," at least within the extent that Martel's fictitious reality allows.

To understand the filmic reality in which the passage operates, it is productive to approach the symptomatic meaning of *Zama* through the constructions of filmic reality in Martel's filmography. In analyzing Martel's so-called Salta trilogy (*La Ciénaga* (2001), *La Niña Santa* (2004), and *La Mujer sin Cabeza* (2008), set in the Argentinian province of Salta), Deborah Martin studies the films' "strong political commitment to the depiction, analysis and often the defamiliarisation of the local culture."[3] Martin states that these films portray culturally

[1] Catherine Grant and Deborah Martin, *Rites of THE PASSAGE*, Vimeo video, 2021, https://vimeo.com/506945841, 05:12.

[2] The installation *The Passage* consisted of a dark room with screens that acted as mirrors in which the visitor saw themselves reflected. But instead of a normal reflection, the screen showed their heat signature along with other ghostly images walking around them while whispering in South American indigenous languages. This illusion of ghostly presences combined with military imagery was a metaphor of loss and violence in indigenous communities in South America.

[3] Deborah Martin, *The Cinema of Lucrecia Martel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 9.

recognizable intra-familial relationships and the relationships between the white middle class and the dark-skinned working class in a bid to reveal perpetuated neocolonial, patriarchal and heteronormative structures. Simultaneously, the Salta represented in the film is geographically indetermined, what Martin calls "an imaginary *salteño* space," a non-existent place that can be still recognizable as holding the "vicissitudes of everyday life in Salta."[4]

Within this indetermined-yet-recognizable geographical locale, Martel uses different mechanisms to portray the others. Grant and Martin determine the spaces in Martel's intrafilmic as being contested by different factions, portraying violence that restages "repressed ancient conflicts" and in which "[i]t's difficult to know which side everyone is on."[5] Within these spaces of conflict, scholars have identified Martel's use of the offscreen as the space where the other is constructed: as vehicle for "enigmatic expressions of lesbian sexuality," as the place of provenance for the voices (shouts, laughs) of indigenous boys in contrast with the world of the predominant upper classes, and as a general strategy for representing confusion, anguish and incomprehension.[6] Martin further states that the offscreen diegetic sounds "suggest further layers to reality, something beyond the frame, beyond the visible or tangible," a constant reminder of the violence, horror, and general uncertainty within Martel's intrafilmic.[7] Instances of this are found in *La Niña Santa,* where female private spaces are irrupted by male-centered notions of technological and artistic prowess embodied in the novelty of the theremin, through the irruption of the instrument's amplified sounds into the private sonic spaces of women; and in *La Mujer sin Cabeza,* where the fatidic car accident that prompts the story is only heard from the perspective of Verónica, the upper-class protagonist of the film, who is never really sure about who she hit (an indigenous child, probably) or if the event happened at all.

When the others are constructed onscreen, they are usually blurred through out-of-focus shots and their position in the background. Grant and Martin compare the blurred others to

[4] Martin, *Lucrecia Martel,* 8. Emphasis in original.
[5] Grant and Martin, *Rites of THE PASSAGE*, 03:02.
[6] Martin, *Lucrecia Martel,* 5; Inela Selimović, *Affective Moments in the Films of Martel, Carri, and Puenzo* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 112; Gerd Gemünden, *Lucrecia Martel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 91.
[7] Martin, 10.

ghosts that haunt the “white settlers and their descendants” with “thoughts of another world, or haunted by the one they're in.”[8] In line with the hauntological framework I have proposed, the authors locate “ghosts of past extermination and enslavement” along with “ghosts of present violence and marginalization” that coexist in Martel’s intrafilmic in a visually evident manifestation, i.e., as visible specters like those from horror cinema.[9] These spectral presences, just like Fisher’s ghosts, prompt a sense of repetition in Argentinian and Latin American history.

In *Zama,* there is an additional element in the construction of the intrafilmic: that of an imagined Latin American past that is deliberately anachronistic, with no clear references to historical timeframes or geographic locales. This filmic anachronistic past, Gerd Gemünden argues, goes against the conventions of Argentinian historical dramas by avoiding heroic characters, grandiose battles, elaborate sets, or special effects.[10] Contributing to the discourse regarding the re-narrativization of the past in *Zama*, Guillermo Severiche argues that Martel not only illustrates the past of marginalized groups and communities, but she also “allows herself to invent other dynamics in which the subdued have a more than relevant agency.”[11] Severiche locates this agency in the colonized as owners of their own fate: indigenous women who despise Zama, native communities that are capable of defeating and capturing the colonizers, and black and mulatto characters who enter spaces without asking for permission.[12] In line with the ghostly constructions of the out-of-focus, Severiche also accounts for the blurred characters as bringers of death and illness as constructions of the agency of the colonized.

Considering the academic discourse surrounding Martel’s filmography as part of the symptomatic meaning in *Zama,* i.e., as expressing a preoccupation on how the retelling of the past can be subverted and reimagined in film, my analysis focuses on a filmic reality that works as a sort of “playground” of poetic justice: a filmic construction in which fictitious interactions

[8] Grant and Martin, *Rites of THE PASSAGE*, 06:20.
[9] Grant and Martin, 08:33.
[10] Gemünden, *Lucrecia Martel,* 96.
[11] Guillermo Severiche, “Experiencias Sensoriales, Porosidad y Redención En *Zama* (2017). Una Lectura Benjaminiana del Film de Lucrecia Martel,” *Imagofagia*, no. 22 (December 12, 2021): 272. “[…] se permite inventar otras dinámicas en las que los subyugados tienen una agencia más que relevante.”
[12] Severiche, 279.

can be imagined as alternative, redeeming pasts for the historically oppressed. In line with my theorization of the non-place of hauntology, the isolated, decaying colonial outpost that has been all but abandoned by the hegemonic powers provides a stage to subvert historical oppressive social interactions, historical clichés, and discriminatory practices. Within this stage, I will analyze the two main musical manifestations throughout the film: the Shepard tone, and the music of Brazilian duo Los Indios Tabajaras.

The Shephard tone is an auditive illusion of a perpetually ascending or descending pitch. *Zama's* version, dubbed in the credits as the "Diego de Zama Special Effect," is a descending Shepard tone, an isomorphism of physical downward motion and of the metaphorical descent of Zama's misadventures. It is found in constructions of certain cultural associations throughout the film, such as regional disadvantage, corruption, colonial othering mechanisms, among others. Its uneasy nature prompts an association between Zama's becoming Latin American and the real-life circumstances of the region.

The music by Los Indios Tabajaras was chosen by Martel in opposition to any instance of "historically accurate" music. This mechanism to enhance anachronism and construct confusion is read by Gemünden as a slightly parodic element. I argue, however, that beyond its disruptive nature, it provides a gateway into different engagements with the Latin American past. Drawing from audience discourses on its reception, I identify the outward features of this music that provide a sense of parody and anachronism, but also of familiarity, comfort, and longing for the past.

The Diego de Zama Special Effect

Eleonora Rapan has studied the Shepard tone as a mechanism to produce meaning in *Zama* and in Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk* (2017). In Martel's film, Rapan establishes the Shepard tone "as a sonic element [that] carries us and the character we are watching into the Shepard tone's timing, a time where we don't perceive a beginning or end."[13] In addition to providing

[13] Eleonora Rapan, "Shepard Tones and Production of Meaning in Recent Films: Lucrecia Martel's *Zama* and Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*," *The New Soundtrack* 8, no. 2 (September 2018): 140.

a gateway into Zama's thoughts, Rapan also locates the Shepard tone as a product of the present, an "extemporary element" that "functions as a comment from a clearly contemporary observer."[14] Although not specifically stated by Rapan, this construction is in line with Martel's use of elements from horror cinema as mechanisms to re-narrativize the past and further a sense of anachronism, mechanisms that are familiar to Rapan's contemporary observer. An earlier study by Ira Braus provides a complementary approach, in which the Shepard is acknowledged in "its propensity for increasing structural tension" and "as an auditory illusion of infinity," in opposition to classical formats that "celebrate not so much infinity as contrasts, thus limits."[15] I use these readings of the Shepard tone as a reflection of subjectivity, an element borrowed from horror cinema, and an agent of tension and disruption within western music conventions to approach the "Diego de Zama Effect" and its outward features of uneasiness and haunting throughout the film.

Through the metaphor of "descent," in this case associated with the passage towards becoming Latin American, the Shepard tone and other constructions of uneasiness establish a place of haunting within the filmic reality. This fantastical non-place provides the framework to study translatable Latin American preoccupations and notions of poetic justice in Martel's imagined past. Through analyzing the scenes where the Shepard tone appears, I explore Zama's passage through Mitry's signification "from within a further relation" between the uneasiness of the Shepard tone and a series of Latin American historical hardships, a relation that prompts a hauntological understanding of the recurring ghosts of the region's past.

The first scene in which the Shepard tone appears is that of the arrival of the character only referred to as the Oriental, who visits Zama's colonial outpost with his son. Before the first apparition of the Shepard tone, both father and son are introduced as out-of-focus others: the Oriental in the background, approaching from the beach, as Zama is seen in closeup having a conversation; and the son, who speaks in a contrasting Spanish accent, addressing Zama in a very formal and uncanny way, while also out of focus. The uneasy nature of the boy's "apparition" is further accentuated by his whispering while he describes Zama: "a god who

[14] Rapan, "Shepard Tones," 139.
[15] Ira Braus, "Retracing One's Steps: An Overview of Pitch Circularity and Shepard Tones in European Music, 1550–1990," *Music Perception* 12, no. 3 (April 1, 1995): 347.

was born old and cannot die. His loneliness is atrocious." As soon as the slave who carries the boy in his back walks away, the descending Shepard tone appears. In the next shot, now in in full focus, the boy is seen from below, towering over Zama. In full voice now, but turned into a non-diegetic voice (not as a sort of narrator, but instead as if telepathically speaking), the boy continues to describe Zama: "The energic, the executive, the pacifier of Indians." Suddenly, speaking diegetically again, the boy continues the phrase with "the one who made justice without using his sword" while showing the sword that he surreptitiously took from Zama. When offscreen voices are heard, the slave turns around, making it look like the boy decided to dramatically pause his speech to turn his back on Zama. The caravan then continues, as does the boy's description of Zama as a justice bringer. Finally, the scene cuts to the Oriental, who is also being carried by a slave, but his figure is way less imponent: he seems sick and deteriorated. The Shepard tone ends abruptly with the cut to the next scene.

The construction of this uneasy scene serves two purposes. First, as stated by Gemünden:

> This surreal scene is the only one where Zama's backstory is hinted at; tellingly, its mise-en-scène calls into question the truthfulness of what it conveys, namely that Zama was once a powerful, effective, and respected servant of the Crown.[16]

The second one is a double-sided foreshadowing: the boy's description of Zama's greatness establishes where the descent starts from, pointing at the things that Zama has already lost or will eventually lose; and the less transcendental (but important by association) fate of the Oriental and his son, who will perish to the plague. The micro-configurations of uneasiness provided by the ghostly boy, his foreshadowing speech, and the associations to sickness and death, combine with the micro-configuration of descent of the Shepard tone to establish the entrance to the passage. The Shepard tone occurs during the boy's description of Zama, and interacts with the changing diegetic position of the boy's voice. In this instance of the fantastical gap –the shift between spoken voice and a sort of telepathic communication–, the micro-configuration of the uneasiness of the dialogue combines with the Shepard's tone implication as a disruptor of time (with its condition as an illusion of eternal continuity) and

[16] Gemünden, *Lucrecia Martel*, 94.

as ghostly and mysterious. An additional layer of micro-configuration of the tone comes from its sonic quality: this Shepard tone is produced with digital means instead of with acoustic instruments, which goes in line with Martel's project of disruptive anachronism.

Before the second apparition of the Shepard tone, Zama has a conversation with Luciana about some cups that were sent to her, which were poorly packaged causing some of them to break. Wrapped in newspaper from Buenos Aires, Luciana states that the news in those wrappings were more recent than the news that were distributed in the outpost, showing the isolation and the disadvantaged situation of the region. When Luciana mentions Zama's transfer, the sound of ghostly cicadas "announces" the Shepard tone (Rapan calls these "'Shepardised' cicadas"), which irrupts shortly after in combination with distorted dialogue from Luciana.[17] While Zama's expression reveals his preoccupation regarding his situation, Luciana continues to talk about unrelated themes, unaware of the ghosts that haunt her interlocutor. The resulting macro-configuration is one of abandonment and helplessness: Luciana does not react to the haunting that mortifies Zama, and can be even considered part of the haunting through her indifference regarding the magistrate's unlikely transfer. The Shepard tone, and with it the moment of haunting, ends abruptly when Luciana starts clapping and Zama sillily and submissively follows.

The third apparition of the Shepard tone is preceded by what seems to be the moment in which Zama's transfer is finally decreed. The current governor begins to read an official communication to Zama that, in a cruel turn of events, happens to be an order of transfer for the governor himself. Adding insult to injury, Zama also learns about the "punishment" for Ventura Prieto, who had previously challenged the magistrate's authority: he is being deported to Zama's yearned Lerma. Along with the start of the Shepard tone in this scene, a llama can be seen on the background of the governor's office, out of focus, an uneasy construction that makes the audience question whether this is a sort of hallucination. The llama eventually walks towards Zama while the reasons for Ventura Prieto's deportation are laid out. The llama and the Shepard tone leave the scene simultaneously, while Zama declares that "the deported chooses his destiny and is recommended."

[17] Rapan, "Shepard Tones," 140.

Gemünden examines this scene as a manifestation of "a hidden activity" found in the "overabundance of details" in one of the many contested spaces in the film, in this case between crown officials and animals.[18] Gemünden does acknowledge a surreal construction of this scene, on which I wish to expand. Beyond the contested spaces, the oneiric nature of this scene points to the extreme absurdity of the corruption within the colonial outpost, which can only be understood as a supernatural occurrence. This echoes Matthew Strecher's too-strange-to-believe event of magical realism, a re-narrativization of hardships into a fantastical setting as a strategy to cope with them. In this scene, the answer to "what is the film not telling us?" is the ghost of repeated injustice in the form of eternal bureaucracy and corruption that is commonplace in Latin America. A ghost so pervasive that has even prompted specialized academic engagement, such as Gilberto Cardenas Cardenas, Sofía García Gamez, and Alvaro Salas Suarez's identification of the concept of "comparative grievance."[19] This occurs when the "[f]ailure to comply with [legal and customary] rules creates a grievance to third parties, for having granted benefits to some to the detriment of others,"[20] an accurate description of Zama and Ventura Prieto's conflict. The re-appearing ghost of corruption in Latin America, found in many different layers of life in the region, leaks into the filmic reality of *Zama* in combination with surreal imagery and the spectral uneasiness of the Shepard tone: an aestheticization of corruption that provides a new dimension to the initial perception of the scene as simply parodic.

The final apparition of the Shepard tone is preceded by the filmic construction of the nature of Zama's new accommodation, a derelict hut in the outskirts of the outpost. The hut is in a frontier setting, a space where the agency of colonizers and colonized overlap, and where Zama's authority seems to fade. The uneasiness around this new setting is constructed from different perspectives. First, the micro-configurations of uneasy sound design (a new instance of the "'Shepardised' cicadas"), the preoccupied expression on Zama's face, and the derelict state of the hut give out a macro-configuration of haunting, almost recalling a haunted house. Second, within Martel's transgressive construction, the uneasiness of the scene is paired with

[18] Gemünden, *Lucrecia Martel,* 90.
[19] Gilberto Cardenas Cardenas, Sofía García Gamez, and Alvaro Salas Suarez, "A Synthetic Indicator of Corruption for Latin America: A Global Vision," *Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal* 28, no. 2 (March 19, 2018): 194–212.
[20] Cardenas Cardenas, García Gamez, and Salas Suarez, 196.

two apparently disconnected moments of comedy: Zama suddenly shouting "what is this pigpen?" and Fernández, Zama's scribe who has agreed to aid him with moving his belongings, walking in while clumsily carrying all of Zama's luggage. Third, once Zama settles (after Fernández declares that "the travelers are afraid of this house"), some indigenous inhabitants can be seen through the window, not only out of focus but also obscured by a mosquito net. Finally, while talking about the book that Fernández is writing, an activity that has been discouraged by the crown officials, a box outside the hut starts moving by itself. Fernández says "I wish this was something unheard of… but there is a child under it." In line with the supernatural in magical realism as a means to explain things that are too terrible to understand, and the aestheticization of the supernatural as an agent of poetic justice, Fernández yearns for a re-narrativization of his oppressed situation in this hauntological non-place.

The Shepard tone finally appears once Zama gets terribly sick while living in the hut. In this scene, the Shepard tone descends initially, and eventually changes direction and starts ascending, which Rapan reads as an isomorphism for the rising fever (a temporary shift of signification that contributes to preserve the consistency of the metaphor of Zama's descent). As Zama is helped by Emilia, the indigenous mother of his child (who then goes into the out-of-focus space) and Fernández, the ascending Shepard tone stabilizes and fuses with what we have perceived before as the uneasy sound design that evoked the sonic illusion. In terms of Grant and Martin's passage, this scene is constructed as a final crossing of a threshold for Zama. In his vulnerability, Zama lets down his guard and allows to be physically touched by Emilia and Fernández, the latter also constructed as a substitute father for his indigenous son when shown holding the child. Zama has found his place among his others, a sort of new family that he has reluctantly accepted. They are no longer haunting him, because he is part of them now.

Los Indios Tabajaras

The music of Los Indios Tabajaras has been identified as fulfilling a disruptive function in *Zama* simply by being drastically different to what could be expected in a historical drama. The Brazilian duo was active from the 40s until the 80s, and their repertory is composed of covers

of popular Latin American songs, mostly boleros and baladas. Gemünden describes their music as “easy-listening non-diegetic music that […] is used several times as a contrapuntal and parodic element,” and which provides a strong sense of anachronism and of a reimagined past.[21] It is used in recognizable cinematographic functions such as transitions and montages, fulfilling Winters’s extra-diegetic function; but also in more experimental functions such as providing a sort of “faux-diegetic” music, a specific case of the fantastical gap on which I will expand later. I argue, however, that the seemingly atemporal nature of Los Indios’s music in the film provides micro-configurations of familiarity, relaxation, and autochthony, which can be read as an engagement with Latin America’s musical past. To find what the film is not telling us, I will firstly explore the intrafilmic construction of the scenes featuring the duet’s music. Secondly, I will depart from notions of a long-lost musical past as evidenced in the reception of their music to trace the Latin American hauntological that leaks into the intrafilmic.

In the scene right before the title screen, an indigenous prisoner that is being processed by Zama and Ventura Prieto attempts suicide. After he fails, he lies on the ground telling a story about a type of fish that is rejected by water, while the two magistrates look down on him. The title then comes in, along with the first appearance of Los Indios’s music and against a background shot of fish swimming chaotically in water. Gemünden argues that the title sequence is “a most startling contrast to the sketch of white male entitlement and colonial hubris that precedes it.”[22] The music contributes to this startling contrast through its evident anachronism, i.e., played by modern instruments (nylon-stringed acoustic guitars) and being clearly located in a musical tradition as cover versions of boleros, baladas, and other genres of popular Latin American music of the twentieth century. Its light-hearted mood also contrasts with the recently shown violence. This is the first instance in which Los Indios’s music is used as a destabilizing element, a sort of audiovisual gimmick that balances between being comedic, parodic, or plainly confusing.

In the party sequence at Luciana’s estate, Los Indios’s music complicates the notion of unity throughout different spaces. At first glimpse, the music seems perfectly diegetic, performing

[21] Gemünden, *Lucrecia Martel,* 92.
[22] Gemünden, 89.

an evident social function: accompanying music to a social gathering. However, it is immediately perceived as uncanny: first, the musicians that play this music are nowhere to be seen; second, the anachronism of the music; and third, the music can be heard differently in different spaces, louder where it seems to be produced, and quieter and distorted in the adjacent rooms. This is an instance of the fantastical gap, a sort of faux-diegetic that fulfills the function of diegetic music despite its constantly perceived logical impossibility. The faux-diegetic music combines with visual incongruencies, such as the ones described by Gemünden:

> Then Zama moves into an adjacent room, which turns out to be a barn with a horse, while the next room over serves as a brothel. […] The incongruity of these adjacent spaces, divided merely by lattice, both puzzles and amuses.[23]

In a new instance of contested spaces between colonizers, colonized and animals, Luciana is found in the barn petting a horse while *humming* the main melody of the faux-diegetic music recently heard. The music immediately comes back in, in its original presence as faux-diegetic, as the guests come back into the "house" part of the estate. This moment combines different micro-configurations: Los Indios's music in its anachronistic/faux-diegetic role; the enigmatic words that one of the guests tells Zama regarding his "white burden of purity;" and the Oriental's words regarding how Luciana has the most beautiful body ever imagined. The resulting macro-configuration is one of uneasiness, as two of Zama's preoccupations come into focus (his status as a crown official and his hidden desire for Luciana) while the lively party environment seems impervious to these lurking ghosts. Simultaneously, the faux-diegetic music that contrasts with the seriousness of Zama's stakes also provides some stability to the house space, confirming that these oneiric scenes are effectively happening in the same place.

An additional instance of faux-diegetic music can be found during the scene where several crown officials are gambling, with the severed ears of Vicuña Porto as the main stake. The music that initially seems non-diegetic, can also be read as having a less evident faux-diegetic function: the background music for the social gathering. In this case, it does not recall the live

[23] Gemünden, *Lucrecia Martel,* 92.

music played by unseen musicians, as in Luciana's party, but instead the background music provided by a stereo in a contemporary party/drinking setting.

The micro-configurations of dialogue and Los Indios's music once again come together in the scene where a family of Spanish-descendants come to Zama to deliver their concern about having a shortage of indigenous workers. Having repeatedly banished all of them from their lands, and eventually annihilating them, they ask Zama for an *encomienda*, a crown-appointed assignment of indigenous workers to a Spanish subject. To this, Zama responds that "there will not be a shortage of Indios." Simultaneously, another micro-configuration arises from an uneasy sensuous interaction between Zama and the granddaughter, who is said to be "mixed" (they say they recovered her, a telltale sign that some of the indigenous workers they killed or banished were part of their family). While the conversation moves towards the negotiation of the number of indigenous workers the household needs, the granddaughter is seen to be playing with the dog, who licks her hand while Zama lustfully looks, slightly distracted from his duties as magistrate. In its role as music deliberately out of place, Los Indios's music, which has been present throughout the scene, contrasts against the colonial powers at play: the appropriation and exploitation of the indigenous bodies, both through the *encomienda* mechanism and through the magistrate's lusting of the granddaughter.

Los Indios's music is used as transitions in two scenes. The first one shows Zama moving his belongings after being evicted by the current governor, just before arriving at the derelict hut. The second one shows the passing of time after Zama has learned about the lengthy process of his transition: an older Zama joins a search team to hunt Vicuña Porto, in a final bid to regain the crown's favor. In these two scenes, the music provides a more traditional "background" music, in line with Winters's extra-diegetic, as it seems to be distanced from the narrative in its function as accompanying a transition from one scene to the other. It could be argued, however, that these are not merely transitions but instead reiterations of Zama's comedically tortuous situation, enhanced by the anachronistic and seemingly absurd presence of the music.

The final instance of Los Indios's music happens in the last scene. After Zama gets his hands cut by Vicuña Porto, he is rescued by an indigenous boy and a group of indetermined

indigenous people who take him on their boat. In a newly confusing setup, in which the boat ride seems pleasant (although nuanced by Zama's bleeding hands), the final appearance of Los Indios's music gives conclusion to Zama's story, his hopes, his journey across the passage, and the film altogether. There are different micro-configurations here: the concluding micro-configuration provided by the visuals, especially the boat disappearing into the wilderness; another micro-configuration of conclusion, as Zama has been rescued and is (temporarily) safe; and the music, with its micro-configuration as parodic/comedic. The resulting macro-configuration, still constructed as a conclusion, could be interpreted as an uncanny ending, making us wonder if this is truly the end.

The music of Los Indios Tabajaras, according to the academic discourse surrounding *Zama,* is primarily used as an out-of-place element, a disruptive mechanism that subverts hegemonic narratives through its anachronistic nature and the parodic functions prompted by its contrast with the rest of the audiovisual elements. I contend that part of the effectiveness of its use as a disruptive element does not come from its nature as randomly chosen music, but is instead related to its understanding as Latin American music with specific engagements with the (imagined) past.

Los Indios Tabajaras's music provides one of the mechanisms with which Lucrecia Martel disrupts any sense of historical accuracy in her film, but it is in no way a disruption of Latin American musical culture. Beyond Gemünden's description of it as easy-listening music, other elements can be mentioned which provide a sense of familiarity. The songs that the duet interprets are covers of well-known songs by Latin American composers of different nationalities, which were popular in different moments during the twentieth century. Many of them are boleros, with the traditional I-vi-ii-V7 progression that constitutes the harmonic foundation of the genre. The simple guitar instrumentation, an instrument that Latin America has claimed as its own, and the mid-tempo of the songs also draw ties to familiar regional musical engagements. Writing as a Latin American, these elements of familiarity come to my mind almost instantly, along with cultural associations of this kind of music as autochthonous, as well as belonging to a past that will never return. Departing from my own (autoethnographic) experience engaging with Los Indios's music on and offscreen, I propose a signification "from within a further association" between their music and regional modalities

of listening that evoke and reenact the past. For this, I build from discourse surrounding these modalities of listening found in comments in a YouTube compilation of Los Indios's music.[24] A full discourse analysis of these comments is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, departing from these comments allows me to identify different possibilities in which fellow Latin Americans engage with this music. This provides different understandings of familiarity and reenactments of memory in different modalities of listening.

The first discourse is that of nostalgic listening and longing for a long-lost past. In a dislocated sense of time, in which the music is brought to the present via the new streaming and social media platform, this discursive approach conjures the consequences of the passing of time: the idea that this music must be "rescued" from oblivion, and the implication that other types of music are neither a continuation of this musical tradition nor a substitute of its functions. These comments evidence this engagement:

> "Memories that are never erased, this is music and culture, solemnity and respect."[25]

> "This really is REAL MUSIC. Yesterday, today, tomorrow and always. A real classic."[26]

> "It is a true pleasure to listen to Los Indios Tabajaras, the beauty of their sound. Millions of times imitated, never surpassed or equaled."[27]

> "During my prime years, I used to do my homework at home listening to this music [that] is still as beautiful as before. Thanks for bringing it to this time."[28]

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[24] The compilation can be found in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vocQJwQXdM8&t.

[25] "Recuerdos Que nunca se borran esto es música y cultura Seriedad y respeto." I have translated each comment as literally as possible, to capture the nuances of each engagement with the music. This entails leaving grammar, punctuation, and capitalization intact.

[26] "Esto si que es REAL MUSICA. Ayer hoy mañana y siempre. Un Verdadero Clasico."

[27] "Es un verdadero placer escuchar a los Indios Tabajaras, la belleza de su sonido. Millones de veces imitados, nunca superados ni igualados."

[28] "En mis años mozos , hacía mis trabajos escolares en casa escuchando ésta música sigue siendo tan bella como antes. Gracias por traerla a ésta época."

Other comments also mention past shared listening experiences with loved ones, which prompt notions of remembrance of these relationships. By jointly appreciating the beauty of this long-lost music, the nature of these past relationships and the shared youth is revived:

> "Their beautiful melody brings me back to my youth and now with my 67 [years] it makes me feel always young and renewed, with wishes to keep on living in peace and harmony with the beautiful nature. From Trujillo Peru, millenary land of the Incas."[29]

From recalling a lost past, notions of youth, happiness, and a closeness to nature, a related understanding of the past in Los Indios's music comes from the remembrance of the absent. This engagement involves remembering shared experiences that present engagements with the music evokes, or past shared musical experiences:

> "Very pleasant memories from my childhood with my siblings who today rest in peace. Now it is only me until the day that God calls me. I cannot help crying when I listen to these beautiful melodies."[30]

> "This is my dad's music [that he used to listen to], now [he] is listening [to it] in heaven with God."[31]

The music provides a place of remembrance to cope with the absence of the departed, as well as providing a musical function of waiting to be reunited with them.

A contrasting discourse of evoking the past comes from a complex association of perceptions of aesthetic values (how good the music is perceived to be) with notions of genius, gatekeeping, and authenticity. In the first layer, the music is perceived as extraordinarily beautiful, performed in an incomprehensible, unnatural way. Praise is given to the original

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[29] "Su hermosa melodía me hace remontar a mi juventud y ahora con mis 67 me hace sentir siempre joven y renovada con deseos de seguir viviendo en paz y armonía con la hermosa naturaleza .Desde Trujillo Perú tierra milenaria de los Incas."
[30] "Recuerdos muy gratos de mi infancia con mis hermanos que hoy descansan en paz. Solo quedo yo hasta el dia que Dios me llame. No puedo evitar llorar cuando escucho estas bellas melodias."
[31] "ESTA ES LA MUSICA DE MI PAPA AHORA ESTA ESCUCHANDO EN EL CIELO CON DIOS."

authors of the songs for composing them, and to the two performers of the duo for being performative geniuses. A second layer is given by the notion of a "god-given" talent that does not require formal education:

> "They were the greatest representatives, real masters of the guitar. [They created] a unique sound that to this day no one can equal them, imitate them yes, but with limitations. They did not study music in a conservatory. They received the divine gift of music."[32]

> "It makes me very proud to identify among this repertory of extremely beautiful melodies, at least 6 songs by legendary Mexican composers, it's an honor to find them among the rest of the musical jewels that have been interpreted in such an extraordinary way by these immortal geniuses."[33]

The gatekeeping part of it can be seen in comments that "congratulate" those who listen to this music: a sort of exclusive club that can appreciate this music, also associated with notions of a lost past of "good" music that is gone but is somehow resurrected as this re-apparition mediated by YouTube.

> "This kind of beautiful music nurtures your spirit and makes your past life dream, congratulations to those who listen to this music."[34]

One particular interaction shows a deeper understanding of this gatekeeping, giving it a generational dimension. A similar congratulatory message to "those who keep listening to this music" is met by a response of a different user, apparently older, who approves the affirmation and commends the maturity of the first user:

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[32] "Fueron los máximos exponentes, verdaderos maestros, de la guitarra. Creación un sonido único que hasta ahora nadie puede igualarlos, imitarlos si, pero con limitaciones. No estudiaron música en conservatorio. Recibieron el don divino de la musica."

[33] "Me llena de mucho orgullo el identificar dentro de este repertorio de melodías hermosísimas , por lo menos 6 piezas de legendarios compositores mexicanos , un honor encontrarlas entre las demás joyas musicales interpretadas de forma tan extraordinaria por estos genios inmortales."

[34] "Esta clase de música bella alimenta tu espíritu y hace soñar tu vida pasada felicidades a los que escuchan está música."

> User 1: “How sad it is to not being able to listen to this music… this sure is music that is pleasant to the ear… congratulations to those of us who keep listening to this music… [heart emoji]”
> User 2: “Ivonne, you are very right, I do not know your age, but you show maturity and a refined good taste. Congratulations.”[35]

Throughout the comments, many users identify their country of origin: Chile, El Salvador, Perú, Argentina, Brazil, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Latin American diaspora from the US and Canada. This shows the translatability of the music and the discourses around it.

The discourses in these comments show particular engagements with Los Indios’s music that evoke different forms of the past, prompting unstable significations: the music as a sign of an idyllic familiar past; as a sign of the departed; or as a sign of the glorious past of Latin American music and the community that keeps it alive. These significations recall the Latin American concept of “every past time was better,” a notion present in literature such as Ernesto Sabato’s short story “El Túnel” (The Tunnel) or Alfonso Chase’s tale “Los Relojes” (“The Watches”). In Sabato’s story, main character and assassin Juan Pablo Castel ruminates about remembrance, comparing the illusion of a better past created when people “happily decide to forget bad things” against his own approach to acknowledging the calamities of the past as a strategy to survive the equally terrible present. His eventual victim, María, engages with the past in a contrasting way, by forging thorough memories that will eventually bring her melancholy and despair, a sort of preparation for a future remembrance of a better past. In Chase’s tale, the unnamed protagonist saves the family watches during a debt collection process, stating that the past lived times is the one thing that his family cannot be devoid of.

In this sort of emotional refuge in the past, in which memories seem to be simultaneously a protection against the hardships of the present and a reminder of hardships past, the discourse surrounding Los Indios’s music open up the possibility to expand on a seemingly

[35] “Que triste es no escuchar este tipo de música.... esto si es música agradable al oído... felicidades a los q seguimos escuchando esta música. .. [Heart emoji]”
“Ivonne, tienes toda la razon, no se tu edad, pero demuestras madurez y refinado buen gusto. Felicidades.”

simple sense of familiarity. Their music is understood as nostalgic, but it also brings in notions of past and present suffering. It prompts a rejection of other kinds of music, echoing cultural strategies by oppressive regimes that established any music considered autochthonous as its own. It praises the men who wrote and interpreted the music by combining fantastic narratives with Eurocentric notions of the musical genius and performative prowess, thus gatekeeping the access to a music that should otherwise be understood as a shared asset. The past time of Los Indios's music that was always better brings with it problematic engagements with the reality of the region through senses of generalized hardship, associations with past regimes, and the repeated patterns of ghosts of hegemonic narratives of music.

If Gemünden locates Los Indios's music as parodic in *Zama* through its sense of being out of place*,* I propose that these multi-layered significations of music "from within the further associations" established through its discourse leak into the reality of the film as lurking ghosts of the region's past. In a first apparent dislocation with the themes of the film, these senses of a better past haunted by suffering and repeated hardships provide the music with a connection that Gemünden does not acknowledge. If these moments seem comedic, I propose that it is partly because of the associations of the music and what it is (emotionally) used for. A sort of "laughing while crying" moment of realization of all the things that the film is not telling us.

Conclusions of the chapter

The intrafilmic reality in *Zama* is created within the cinematographic world that Martel has initiated, an indetermined Latin American locale with recognizable elements, yet deliberately uncanny and confusing. In this world, the other is constructed as a sort of ghost through its out-of-focus or offscreen presence. Diego de Zama finds himself in this space, and progressively transitions through a passage to a Latin American reality that he has tried to escape. The two musical elements throughout the film, the Shepard tone and the music of Los Indios Tabajaras, are perceived by academic discourses as destabilizing the historical drama genre. A hauntological approach to these musical elements uncovers complicated engagements with the Latin American past.

The Shepard tone, dubbed the “Diego de Zama Special Effect” provides an aestheticization of pervading ghosts of Latin America: those of bureaucracy, corruption, historical discrimination, regional disadvantage, etc. It also provides an isomorphism of descent that is associated to Grant and Martin’s passage, perceived as a descent into a Latin American realm. The Shepard tone irrupts notions of time and space, destabilizing the intrafilmic reality, and providing a reification of regional hardships as (almost) literal ghosts that haunt Zama.

The music of Los Indios Tabajaras is initially conceived as a transgression of the historical drama genre, perceived by authors such as Gemünden as providing a parodic effect through its absurdity. I contend that the constructions surrounding these songs, used as reenactments of the past and of loss, provide a deeper understanding of it as familiar and autochthonous. In this complexity, the music goes beyond being out of place, instead becoming uncannily familiar in its recalling of regional modalities of listening. Using social media discourse analysis as a departing point, the resulting discourses conjure the ghosts of problematic notions of better musical pasts and artistic prowess, along with general nostalgic engagements and the anxieties surrounding that which is no longer.

3. Curating reggaetón: Pablo Larraín's *Ema*

Pablo Larraín's *Ema* (2019) is a family drama at heart. As a professional member of a contemporary dance group in the Chilean city of Valparaíso, the titular character Ema seems more interested in reggaetón dancing and the social milieu around it than the activities of the group. This is much to the dismay of the group director Gastón, who is also her husband. By the time the film starts, we learn that the couple decided to adopt a Colombian boy named Polo through a series of loopholes in the Chilean state adoption agency, but ended up returning him due to his unruly behavior and a grisly incident in which the boy set Ema's sister's face on fire. The film constructs the aftermath of this convoluted series of decisions in the intersection of gender roles, the politics of dancing, and the subversion of sexual and familial conventions, all within the context of the city of Valparaíso, in post-dictatorial Chile.

The film is set out as a sort of heist film: after finding out about the new family that adopted Polo (Raquel and Aníbal), Ema sets out to getting him back through an elaborate plan that involves breaking up the couple, landing a job at Polo's school, and eventually imploring for the comprehension of Polo's new parents and her own social environment towards the alternative family model that she attempts. Through the contrasting politics of reggaetón and modern dance, folklore and high art, motherhood and female agency, the film provides a rich ground to explore the physical spaces of Valparaíso and the way in which the individuals appropriate and modify them. The ghost of dictatorial oppression of the bodies, and reggaetón's status as a hauntological re-apparition provide the departing point to the construction of the intrafilmic.

Along with recent engagements with neglected female historical figures in *Jackie* (2016) and *Spencer* (2021), Larraín's cinema has explored the consequences of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile in his trilogy about the regime: *Tony Manero* (2008), *Post Mortem* (2010) and *No* (2012). In the former two, Larraín explores the violence during the regime, focusing on instances of murder, the disappearance of political adversaries, and the contact zone between the regime and imperialist interests. It is in *No*, Alexis Howe contends, where the "most tragic and hopeless" implications of the dictatorship are evident, through the

representation of the unaccountability of “a dictator guilty of grave violations of human rights[,] whose market-driven ambitions triumph despite his removal from office.”[1] This post-dictatorial transition (roughly located in the 90s, but that still has implications in the present) has been described by scholars as “the dictatorship wearing a new set of clothing” and a continuation of “the political and socioeconomic order imposed on Chilean society by the dictatorship,” thus prompting a sense of a lurking ghost of a not-truly-over past.[2] In the world constructed in *Ema,* set decades after the start of this uneasy transition to democracy, the haunting of the regime is very much present in its sociopolitical form (neo-liberal policies, poverty, corruption), as well as in a sense of oppression of the cultural practices once censored by the regime.

Beyond this symptomatic meaning, the referential meaning of the film involves the multinational nature of the story: Ema and her friends are Chilean, Gastón is Mexican (and seems to have been living in different places in Latin America), and Polo seems to have been removed from his native Colombia at some point before being given in adoption in Chile. In this multinational world, certain notions collide: Gastón’s international recognition as a dance director, which locates him as a sort of “authority;” the Valparaíso locals and their first-hand knowledge of the potentially problematic cultural and social practices of the city; and a region-wide preoccupation with child abandonment and parenthood, in this case evidenced in Polo’s possible removal from Colombia due to violent circumstances, such as the drug conflict and the general political unrest that has historically haunted the country.

The implicit meaning of the film is better understood from Bordwell’s uncertainty: it is unclear whether Ema is the “good guy” or not, or whether the project of an alternative family provides a favorable outcome for the parties involved. This entails an unstable, deconstructionist view of the narrative, that resonates with the unstable implications of reggaetón as a musical genre, one that has been historically understood as misogynist and simultaneously a vehicle of feminist vindication and region-wide social struggles.

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[1] Alexis Howe, “Yes, No, or Maybe? Transitions in Chilean Society in Pablo Larraín’s ‘No,’” *Hispania* 98, no. 3 (2015): 422.
[2] Howe, 422-3.

Complementing the construction of the intrafilming through these meanings, I also consider Urrutia Neno and Ide Guzmán's reading of contemporary Latin American cinema as one in which global/local "topics of gender, social class, migration" are centered in the individual, as opposed to an attempt to represent society as a whole.[3] Although still considering the physical urban spaces, they differentiate this cinema from films that very clearly engage with the poetic perceptions of the city or political projects that denounce inequality, among other similar approaches. The individual comes into the space to both change and to be changed by it, and the urban spaces become a sort of stage on which the individual becomes a lens through which the greater preoccupations of their context are refracted. In Larraín's film*,* this is more than just a metaphor, through Ema's appropriation of the physical space of Valparaíso through her disruptive reggaetón dancing.

My analysis focuses on the intrafilmic construction of reggaetón, first as a ghostly presence that is not to be conjured, and later as a sign of liberation and transgression. The city of Valparaíso becomes a stage for Ema's plan, with its places stained by time and by the recent political past, but it also becomes a stage for renegotiating and reappropriating reggaetón by stripping it of its most controversial significations. This entails an engagement with the past through repeated ghosts of gendered violence that collide against notions of nostalgia, particularly that associated with reggaetón's historical significations.

Ghostly reggaetón

The first scenes of the film construct a visual world of cluttered buildings, entangled power lines, and burning traffic lights, which interacts with Nicolás Jaar's synthetic string music that provides a micro-configuration of mystery and ominousness, particularly through persistent glissandos. Ema is first seen with a flamethrower (while ironically dressed as a firefighter), a scene which, along the other elements of a haunted modern Valparaíso, provides a tense entry point to the interaction of these elements along the film. A moment of magical realism,

[3] Carolina Urrutia Neno and Catalina Ide Guzmán, "Juventudes Urbanas: Ciudad, Cuerpo, Virtualidad En El Cine Latinoamericano (Chile, Argentina y México)," *Fotocinema: Revista Científica de Cine y Fotografía*, no. 24 (January 2022): 103. "[…] temas de género, de clases sociales, de migración."

a re-narrativization of the hardships into an epic scene of renovating fire, which will become a theme throughout the film.

The following sequence alternates between an oneiric dance performance against the backdrop of a burning star, and several vignettes of Ema and Gastón's marital conflict, Polo's adoption/devolution situation, and the horror of Ema's sister's incident and its consequences. The star/dance setting reads as an opposite to the clutter and violence of the city: a sort of non-non-place, as this place does not seem to be stained by time. With the continual presence of this place unaffected by time, Ema's relationship with dancing is slowly revealed: when she is accused of being careless, we can see her shortly after dancing on her own, an emotional escapism that will be explored further in the film. The dancing space, as the star/dance space, seems to not be stained by the hardships of real-life.

Throughout this montage, different musical layers collide. The ominous strings from the first scenes combine with electronic sounds, an electronic steel drum melodic pattern, and a hint of the reggaetón percussive rhythmic pattern. For clarity, the reggaetón pattern is commonly found in this form:

The pattern is rhythmically unchanged in the vast majority of reggaetón songs, although the choice of lower (bass) and higher (snare) sounds can differ. Through micro-configurations of tension in the scenes of quotidian life, and micro-configurations of liberation in the scenes of dance performance, a macro-configuration of escapism is constructed through the sequence: dancing as providing an emotional refuge to which Ema can escape to. This space is defiled when Gastón irrupts into what has been constructed as its most sacred manifestation: the star/dance space unaffected by time, which is revealed to be a performance of the dance group, and for which Gastón enters to take credit as its creative "genius." Once this space of escape is broken, the one that prevails is the all-female community and affective space of reggaetón dancing, shown in the following scene when Ema meets with her friends on a cable car.

This sequence provides the establishment of different relationships, decisions, mistakes, violence, etc., in the intersection of the dance "safe spaces" and the harshness of the city, with its people and its clutter. It also provides a musical signification between the steel drums and reggaetón, as the steel drum melody and the reggaetón pattern are shown to belong together, despite their later separate use. This is the context of what will be established as the physical setting of Ema's plan, a "rhythmic and visual space, in which the city becomes a theatrical stage (framed and mise-en-scène-d)" where the characters "exhibit [themselves], expose [themselves], communicate, fuse with the urban setting."[4] The first instances of dance in the film (sometimes without background music) act as a rehearsal for an eventual manifestation of dance in a borrowed audiovisual format: that of the music video.

A first instance of these rehearsal moments occurs shortly after the visit of Marcela, the adoption agent, to Ema and Gastón's apartment. Marcela harshly reprimands the couple and leaves, after which a terrible fight ensues. Ema leaves the apartment and escapes to her safe space of dancing against the backdrop of the steel drums melodies. After a short bus trip, we can see Ema dancing on a graffiti-decorated low wall in front of the port of Valparaíso. The space's emptiness, Ema's dance which is seemingly out of synch with the steel drums, and the general feel of this space as dislocated/oneiric makes this moment more of an instance of rehearsal, a still unfinished product. A second moment of rehearsal happens while Ema is on the merry-go-round, transgressing this space that is usually for children with suggestive dance moves. Once again, the space is curated, as there seems to be no one around.

Throughout the first half hour of the film, reggaetón remains as a sort of ghost, a presence that lurks around the activities of Ema and her friends, haunts Gastón, and has an uneasy presence in the soundtrack (for instance, hinted by the steel drums). The first time that it is mentioned by name happens during the preliminary stage of Ema's plan: meeting with Raquel to get her legal counsel as an excuse to get to know her and eventually seduce her. When

[4] Urrutia Neno and Ide Guzmán, "Juventudes Urbanas," 93-4. "[…] espacio rítmico y visual, en que la ciudad se transforma en un escenario teatral (enmarcado y puesto en escena) […] se exhiben, se exponen, se comunican, se funden con el entorno urbano."

Raquel asks Ema about the type of music she prefers to dance, she responds "reggaetón," before disruptively hopping on a table to dance for Raquel. This transgression of the physical space (dancing on the table of a law practice), an instance of the "staging" of reggaetón, resonates with other transgressions: the "forbidden" nature of reggaetón music and dancing, homosexual relationships, extra-marital affairs, and the questionable nature of Ema's plan. Reggaetón is then associated to these transgressions, its signification complicated and problematized along the uncertainty regarding Ema's moral standing.

The conflict between the now acknowledged ghost of reggaetón and Gastón's artistic project is evidenced in the scene where the dance group are rehearsing with two traditional Chilean folk musicians. These musicians are *chinchineros*, street performers typical of Valparaíso who carry a drum in their backs, use their feet to activate a cymbal attached to the drum, and who complement their musical act with dancing. Even though the *chinchineros* are part of Gastón's choreography, providing not only music but also dance to his show, he is very careful to draw a distinction between this traditional folk music and the "high-art" notion of his project. When the drama ensues after some of the female dancers (including Ema) make a mistake, this separation between high-art and street music becomes complicated: the chinchineros' music has a place in Gastón's project, despite being street music; but the dancers who are kicked out of the group are told to "go back to the streets to dance reggaetón."

It is in this intersection of artistic standings, prejudice, and male hubris that Ema finally decides to put her plan into action. In a long sequence where Ema prepares a flamethrower to be used to burn her car and draw the attention of Aníbal, who is a firefighter, certain associations become clearer through Ema's utterings. The metaphor of fire, which has been present since the first scenes with the burning traffic light and the place unstained by time of the burning star, becomes a sign of change: fire is necessary to destroy and hence to create. On a separate layer, the hose of the flame thrower is given a phallic meaning, as it is associated with orgasms. This connects with a general association with female sexual agency, particularly the possibility to obtain pleasure from sex without any judgments. Ema connects these meanings with reggaetón when she "beatboxes" the percussive rhythm, establishing the genre as a sign of her own transgression of destruction and creation, and women's struggles to gain agency over their bodies and their sexual choices. The illicit character of these decisions is "confirmed" in

the next shot by uneasy sound design: sounds that seem to be police sirens are quickly confirmed as being part of the soundtrack. The steel drums come back in when the burning of the car is completed, in their quality as a sign of reggaetón, and thus extending the significations built in this sequence. In a later related scene, the steel drums appear immediately after Ema tells Aníbal that "When you find out what I'm doing and why, you will be horrified," confirming reggaetón's association with the fire of destruction and creation that Ema now harnesses.

When Ema goes on a second date with Raquel, new instances of diegetic and non-diegetic reggaetón are shown to interact. The diegetic reggaetón throughout this sequence is shown in its social function within the reality of the film, i.e., not as part of the "rehearsal" of the music, but as music that is listened and that is directly engaged with through dance. When Ema and Raquel arrive at the party after their date, the diegetic reggaetón fuses together the other musical layers that have been present in the film: electronic music, orchestral sounds, steel drums, as they become one in a montage that reads as a sort of sexual overload, shown through different sexual engagements that have reggaetón as their common thread. This is a convergence of the different signs of liberation, transgression, safe dance spaces that the music constructs throughout the film, within a sexual space that is notably different from its real-world counterpart: this is a woman-only space, in opposition to the problematic settings in which reggaetón is danced in real life, prone to sexual harassment and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes.

This establishment of a reggaetón that is uncannily different from the one found in real life leads towards two framings of the genre in the film. In the next scene, we see Ema and her friends teaching/practicing reggaetón in a public space in what seems to be a free workshop for the community, a sort of democratization of the music in the constructed public space of the film. Gastón lurks around this space, spying on the activities of Ema and the now former members of his group, and eventually confronts them on the nature and purpose of their engagement with reggaetón. When the confrontation is taken inside his apartment, the positions of both parties are laid out, which reflect the real-life discourses surrounding reggaetón. Gastón says that this is music to "listen in jail," mocking its repetitive rhythmic pattern, while he associates it with drugs, sex, and a sense of othering in terms of it being

perceived as recalling foreign locales like Ibiza or Los Angeles. He continues by saying that the music is meant for people with no academic education, and that it provides an illusion of freedom that causes the audience to stop thinking. The dancers rebel against this position, transgressively saying that dancing reggaetón is "like fucking" ("como estar tirando"), and that the sexual space that opens up on the dance floor is a point of convergence for those who are aroused, in a way dancing to an orgasm, which is like dancing to life. This is a point of reclamation of sexual rights, as well as a transgression against any notion of autochthonous, "intellectual" or "academic" music.

As an immediate segue to this reclamation, the second framing of reggaetón is shown in the final apparition of the music video, the result of the "rehearsed" reggaetón up to this point in the film. In this new montage, the aesthetics of the film adopt the conventions of reggaetón videos: the dancers stare into the camera, in the same way that the music artist is portrayed; there are camera shots usually present in music videos, such as mid shots, circular pans, and reverse tracking shots; and the volume of the music is comparatively louder than the soundtrack in the rest of the film. Additionally, Ema is shown using the flamethrower, echoing the associations with fire and the magical realism moments of the first scenes. The space is also understood in a different way, as the once cluttered city seems less crowded, a sort of curation of the urban space as hinted in Ema's first rehearsal instance. The sequence destabilizes the curated music video format through showing again the "real life" of the intrafilmic, such as Ema's work at the nail salon or riding a bus. However, this is also a trait found in reggaetón videos, as the representation of the quotidian provides a "potent message of solidarity, empathy and sympathy towards marginalized communities," and establishes a dialogue between the transgression of the genre and the hardships that plague these communities.[5]

These two final framings of reggaetón establish it first as a problematic genre from the perspective of discourses that denounce its misogynist stances and worthless artistic value,

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[5] Omar Ruiz Vega, "Representando al Caserío: Narcocultura y El Diario Vivir En Los Videos Musicales de Reggaetón," *Latin American Music Review* 39, no. 2 (December 2018): 252. "[…] potente mensaje de solidaridad, empatía y simpatía hacia las comunidades marginadas."

and the opposing discourses against a simplification of the genre's complex associations, including those that provide a safe space for the female characters of the film. Second, the music-video-ification of the sequence recalls a sort of alternative reality, the desired setting in which reggaetón is devoid of its problematic implications and instead is a vehicle for liberation and vindication; but also, a vehicle for the acknowledgement of the many hardships of its spatial setting and the communities that inhabit it, Ema's story being one among many similar ones.

As a sort of coda, the scene in Polo's new home provides a final signification of reggaetón. The final revealing of the plan brings with it a bid for an alternative way of living from different perspectives regarding the composition of this new family and the terms of loving engagements among their members. However, there are micro-configurations of uneasiness throughout the scene, mainly through the characters' facial expressions of uncertainty and disgust. Ema's sister's burnt face stands out as a reminder of the convoluted project of Polo's adoption. The steel drums and the reggaetón return, which remind us that this whole project is a transgression, and that it is difficult to know if it will have a happy ending.

Renegotiating reggaetón

The intrafilmic world in *Ema* is plagued with ghosts that can be traced to the nonaesthetic realm. Some of them are very evident, such as the clear instances of corruption regarding Polo's adoption, in which Marcela acknowledges being complicit with the procedure despite her own reservations. Along with the moment of corruption, Marcela misrecognizes Gastón, assuming that he is gay and mockingly laughing once she finds he is not, despite being part of a dance group, dragging with her the ghost of repeated homophobia and gendered artistic practices. Another lurking ghost is that of the hardships of artistic life, adhered to the difficulties of an economic system that does not provide adequate conditions for the flourishing of art, and with it issues of economic hardship and unpreparedness for parenting. These ghosts provide the backdrop against which the ghost of reggaetón, the main thing that the film is not telling us about, constructs a set of uneasy significations "from within a further association" that leak into the intrafilmic.

Reggaetón is a polyvalent sign. Through its problematic stances on misogynist and sexist practices, it is perceived by certain academic and artistic elites as being danced and enjoyed only by the infracitizen: women who are perceived as promiscuous, the ignorant, the delinquent, etc. Through vindicatory narratives, the genre has become a vehicle for feminist stances and social struggle –which build on the very traits that make the genre problematic– to advocate for equality, sexual freedom, among other important regional struggles. It brings in the language of its imagery in music videos as a reclamation of a sense of justice from the historical hardships that have turned the marginalized communities into what they are today. Finally, it becomes a vehicle for the reclamation of that which is autochthonous, in opposition to the forceful appropriation of cultural manifestations by political regimes. It is in these axes that the ghost of reggaetón, and its significations from a further relation, leak into the intrafilmic.

As reflected in Gastón's speeches and Ema and her friends' reclamation stance, different discourses have expressed the perceived problems with reggaetón. In a 2008 study on the consequences of reggaetón listening in Chile, Germán Díaz Urrutia locates the danceable characteristics of reggaetón, as well as its easy adoption by different social classes, as inducing "practices, concepts, imageries and dances" that "do not adjust to the cultural patterns of Chilean society," and which might result in the further marginalization of already marginalized communities, as well as the eroticization of infant bodies.[6] In the early years of reggaetón, this study shows a sort of anxiety towards the popularity of the genre, and a slippery-slope fallacy of the effects of the genre based on an aesthetic judgment of the music. Enrique-Javier Díez-Gutiérrez, Eva Palomo-Cermeño and Benjamín Mallo Rodríguez provide a more nuanced approach to the study of opposing sides in policy and academic discourse on reggaetón. On one hand, they explore cultural campaigns that aim to create awareness of the contents of reggaetón lyrics, which have been identified by academic scholarship as "exaltation of heteronormativity, hypermasculinity and the objectification of women."[7] On the other hand,

[6] Germán Díaz Urrutia, "La Erotización Del Cuerpo Infantil En Los Sectores Marginados. El Legado Del Reggaeton y El Axé En Chile," *Revista Mad*, no. 3 (2008): 150. "[…] prácticas, conceptos, imaginarios y bailes […] no se ajustan a los patrones culturales de la sociedad chilena."
[7] Enrique-Javier Díez-Gutiérrez, Eva Palomo-Cermeño, and Benjamín Mallo-Rodríguez, "(In)Equality and the Influence of Reggaeton Music as a Socialisation Factor: A Critical Analysis," *Gender Studies* 21, no. 1 (2022): 67.

they locate academic discourse that argues that criticism against reggaetón "may hide a racist, classist and rejectionist view of a racialised, lower-class and immigrant music," which does not account for the genre's adoption as a vehicle of resistance of different social struggles.[8] The tension between early anxieties regarding the genre's effect on its listeners, and the acknowledgement of recent cultural strategies to re-signify it, brings forth a notion of reggaetón as a sign that has been shaped through time.

Despite its short history, a sense of historicization of the genre has emerged in recent years, prompting comparative approaches to "old" reggaetón in opposition to current practices. In a festival branded as promoting "old reggaetón" in Gran Canaria, dubbed "I Love Reggaetón," the producers were reported to explicitly appeal to nostalgia and to remind their audiences of a time when they were younger and happier.[9] The narratives surrounding the songs and artists at the festival locate this older reggaetón as being perdurable, still current, and providing the basis for current reggaetón. A sense of "older being better" also pervades these narratives, for instance comparing older three-and-a-half-minute longer songs with current two-minute songs, accusing the new songs as "disposable."[10] The notions of a better past of reggaetón connect with a sense of an "evolution" of reggaetón, from a nicer past of perdurable and meaningful songs, against the over-sexualization of current acts and songs.

In this context of old vs new, an adjacent focus is that of the generations that grew up with reggaetón, and that have been forced to negotiate the genre as a nostalgic part of their upbringing and its cultural and social implications. Escobar Fuentes and Montalbán Peregrín problematize these notions in their study on the discourse of reggaetón in teenagers, with their focus on repertories that have become generational symbols.[11] The participants of the study are found to have consumed reggaetón during their childhood and adolescence, but at a later stage acknowledge doubts about the impact that it might have had in their social,

[8] Díez-Gutiérrez, Palomo-Cermeño, and Mallo-Rodríguez, "(In)Equality," 67.
[9] "12.000 Personas Revivirán Nostalgia Por El Reggaeton Antiguo En Gran Canaria," *EFE - Spanish Newswire*, November 16, 2022, https://efe.com/cultura/2022-11-16/unas-12-000-personas-reviviran-la-nostalgia-por-el-reggaeton-antiguo-en-gran-canaria/.
[10] "12.000 Personas."
[11] Silvia Escobar Fuentes and F. Manuel Montalbán Peregrín, "Relaciones de Género En El Discurso Del Reggaetón Entre Adolescentes," *Athenea Digital. Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación Social* 21, no. 3 (October 6, 2021): 10.

gender and sexual relationships. This entails, then, that the participants acknowledge reggaetón as part of their growing up, as a vehicle for remembrance for their youth, but align with academic (and societal) preoccupations on the genre's problematic implications.

The resignification of reggaetón, whether in its commercial use or through audience reception and discourses, goes first through an engagement with the past: a re-imagination of the genre, associated to better pasts and the remembrance of endearing moments of youth and growing up. This contributes to the complicated nature of the genre's significations, beyond the one-sided anxieties about the genre's "corrupting" mechanisms. Within this framework of acknowledgement of the genre's polyvalent nature, the strategies and tools that the genre offers towards social struggle acquire a hauntological perspective of engagement with hardships past and the repeated ghosts of the past.

Reggaetón's resistance strategies have been identified by recent scholarship. The first approach is that of the liberation of the bodies, a reclamation of movements, dances, looks, that though initially a part of the genre's objectification patterns, are reappropriated into tools of liberation. Núria Araüna, Iolanda Tortajada and Mònica Figueras-Maz call this a "desire (and ability) for self-objectification," a postfeminist strategy to harness traditional standards of beauty and mainstream culture mechanisms.[12] The 'perreo,' the traditional dance of reggaetón that involves very close physical contact, is "resignified in terms of a subjectification of its motivations and gratifications" in a way that it allows women to choose to dance it "because they enjoy it, makes them feel attractive, […] without being degraded by men."[13] These empowerment moves, which resignify some of reggaetón's most problematic traits, and in which the body is reappropriated even from the perspective of (self-)objectification, are identified as a "contest from within" of the social struggle mechanisms, a disruption of seemingly established discourses in favor of accommodating the tools that the genre provides.[14]

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[12] Núria Araüna, Iolanda Tortajada, and Mònica Figueras-Maz, "Feminist Reggaeton in Spain: Young Women Subverting Machismo Through 'Perreo,'" *YOUNG* 28, no. 1 (February 2020): 39.
[13] Araüna, Tortajada, and Figueras-Maz, 43.
[14] Araüna, Tortajada, and Figueras-Maz, 39.

This paradigm shift of social struggle in the context of the resignification of historically established structures of reggaetón leaks into the intrafilmic in *Ema,* through a reggaetón that prompts a generation to "rebel through the body" and "empower itself in the public space."[15] The reclamation of the body as having sexual agency, in contraposition to the body for heteronormative male consumption, is the first step towards bigger reclamations at the societal level, those staged in the public space that has been stained by time and by the ghosts of dire political decisions and repeated societal violence. The destructive fire that Ema conjures in order to create reflects that of Latin American public revolts against years of oppression, poor public policies, precariousness, etc.: those of Chile in 2019 against increasing public transportations fees, prophetically preceded by the film, are a particularly close example. But the creating fire is also that of the revolts at a regional level protesting femicides and widespread violence against women that never seems to end. The pervasiveness of this ghost prompts a region-wide mandate to "burn everything" when a woman is lost to sexist violence, and usually encounters resistance from reactionary discourses of conservation of the architecture and spaces where the protest occurs, typically vandalized with graffiti.[16] There is some irony in these reactionary protections of spaces stained by time through years of political and societal injustice and how they seek to prevent the other staining, that of feminist furious calls for justice for the lost, the killed, the raped. In this contested space, the sound of songs such as Bad Bunny's "Yo Perreo Sola" ("I Perreo-dance Alone") or Ivy Queen's "Yo Quiero Bailar" ("I Want to Dance"), still dragging their problematic implications, find their place in the narrative and musical practices surrounding these protests, from in-person manifestations to social media discourses.[17]

[15] Urrutia Neno and Ide Guzmán, "Juventudes Urbanas," 100. "rebelarse a través del cuerpo […] empoderarse en el espacio público."

[16] Examples of the "burn everything" mandate and the counter-reaction to architectural conservatism can be found broadly in journalistic and social media, ranging from articles to memes. Some examples can be found in https://concienciapublica.com.mx/carton-politico/si-cuidan-mas-a-un-edificio-quemen-todo/ and https://zetatijuana.com/2023/04/que-lo-quemen-todo/.

[17] In a feminist protest in Santiago, Chile, a banner with the words "Yo perreo sola y marcho acompañada" ("I perreo-dance alone and march with company"), referencing Bad Bunny's lyrics, can be found among the crowd. See https://ibero909.fm/blog/bad-bunny-perreo-sola; An example of Ivy Queen's song in a protest setting in Bogotá, Colombia can be found in https://twitter.com/KarolSolisMenco/status/1633624057567494144; The feminist performance "Un Violador en tu Camino" ("A Rapist in your Way") by the Chilean collective Las Tesis, has found widespread diffusion through several reggaetón covers, although this has been interpreted as verging on parody.

The reggaetón in *Ema*, despite more uncomplicated, still leaks in these complicated significations and contrasting discourses that clash in a space with a strong engagement with the past. On one hand, the staining of fatal repetitions and past hardships that translate into a system that is socially unstable and that fails to provide security for women – one of the fatal repetitions being the insults received from opposing parties towards the "irony" of reggaetón used as a feminist vehicle, which leaks into Gastón as its spokesman. On the other, a reggaetón that needs a "recalibration" to enter this stage, through its resignification and renegotiation, stripped down to its raw, social-struggle tool form, keeping its aggressiveness and transgressions which are necessary to fight in an oppressive, stained-by-time world. In the film, its more extreme reformulation is seen in the portrayal of its musical practices, with the problematically usual male groping and harassment in reggaetón parties altogether removed. The reggaetón in *Ema* is one that only engages with the project of freedom of the bodies and the spaces that they reclaim.

The second renegotiation of reggaetón with the past is related to its imagery, which connects directly with the language of the reggaetón music video. Reggaetón music videos engage with the past through representations of elements that can be read as hauntological traces of the hardships of the past. Omar Ruiz Vega locates certain elements related to marginalized communities and the pervasive violence found in them, with the figure of the "capo" ("the kingpin," usually associated with drug trafficking) being a central figure. The capo exists as an alternative figure of authority and protection against the abandonment of governments and institutions. In showing his wealth and exaggerated lifestyle, the capo responds to generalized poverty and societal disadvantage and provides a sort of path to follow for the marginalized and a sense of hope that claims that effort will bring the community out of its situation. Reggaetón artists, according to Ruiz Vega, reinterpret this kingpin character into their looks, imitating his clothing and possessions. Ruíz Vega sums this up as a manifestation of the Latin American "narcoculture," which he defines as

> a type of (sub)culture developed mainly in places where a strong presence of organized crime and drug trafficking exists, and whose symbols, modes of behavior, ideologies,

> values, beliefs, aesthetics and artistic expressions tend to reflect, regulate and/or legitimate the lifestyle of those involved in organized crime.[18]

Although problematically legitimizing the methods and practices of the real-life capo, the reggaetón artist's feats are portrayed as achieved through artistry and effort instead of illicit practices.[19] Along with the portrayal of wealth through personal appearance (through the so-called "bling-bling," exaggerated pieces of jewelry and accessories), material possessions, and opulent lifestyle, reggaetón videos also portray violence such as simulated murders and the portrayal of drug dealing.[20] In Ruiz Vega's analysis, the reggaetón videos show the real-life communities and their disadvantaged position, a reflection of the capo's mechanism of providing support where the political projects have failed. Located within the preoccupations regarding drug trafficking in the region (particularly the cases of Colombia, Mexico and Central America), the narcoculture becomes a translatable concept along with the translatability that reggaetón already provides.

In leaking into the intrafilmic, the conventions of the music video remain: the previously mentioned audiovisual elements (breaking the fourth wall, mid shots, circular pans, etc.) along with the representation of violence, the narcoculture, and the alternation between the mis-en-scène of the music video and the "real-life" community and its people. However, in the same way as the contrasting discourses of real-life reggaetón, some of the signification is stripped away once these conventions leak into the intrafilmic. A sense of the space stained by time is shown in the music-video-ified scenes in the film, both from the perspective of the cluttered city that becomes a stage, and through the personal spaces of everyday life that act as an equivalent to the disadvantaged communities shown in the reggaetón music videos. However, as the characters are portrayed as low-middle class urban citizens, these "real-life" representations do not engage as directly with the poverty and the full extent of the hardships of the reggaetón communities. Instead, these are familial scenes that engage with the dancing

[18] Ruiz Vega, "Representando al Caserío," 231. "[…] un tipo de (sub)cultura desarrollada principalmente en lugares donde existe una fuerte presencia del crimen organizado y el narcotráfico, cuyos símbolos, modos de comportamiento, ideologías, valores, creencias, estéticas y expresiones artísticas tienden a reflejar, regular y/o legitimar el modo de vida de los partícipes del crimen organizado."
[19] Ruiz Vega, 238.
[20] Ruiz Vega, 237.

safe spaces, a sort of alternative quotidian community. Notably, the roles are translated: the male capo figure is turned into Ema and the female dancers, and the problematic showing of female as possessions, what Ruiz Vega calls "narco-trophies," is altogether changed into a sense of female agency.[21] Particularly, it is Ema's aggressiveness and transgressions which locate her as the embodiment of the capo, although devoid of the exaggerated features of wealth and lifestyle. This echoes the illicit nature of Ema's plan, that which will horrify Aníbal once he finds out, which goes in line with the uneasy relation between reggaetón and the narcoculture.

A final engagement with the past emerges from the relation between reggaetón and folklore. When Ema arrives at Polo's school for an interview, the principal acknowledges that she does not like folkloric music and dancing. She says that there is freedom in her school, that it is not a *dictatorship*. This ghostly mention of the regime, a topic that had been left out of the narrative (apparently on purpose, considering Larraín's previous filmic engagements), brings in a direct connection with the topic of the *chinchineros* and their place in Gastón's project.

A historical issue with folklore is acknowledged in the intrafilmic through one of the dancers, who mentions that acts like the chinchineros' are used to attract tourism. This works in opposition to the transgression of reggaetón that, according to the dancer, "scares" the tourist, in a way pushing them away in a bid for a reclamation of the city spaces.[22] What the film is not telling us is how these spaces where folklore supposedly belongs are vestigial elements from the dictatorial regime, and a translatable issue of folklore/autochthonous music vs the perceived music of the other in the region. In Polo's school, reggaetón (and any other form of non-folklore) becomes a vehicle of institutional rebellion, in the same way that it is a reclamation against the dictatorial notions of autochthonous musical engagements.

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[21] Ruiz Vega, "Representando al Caserío," 245. "[N]arco-trofeos."

[22] The *chinchineros'* musical practice is portrayed in the film as being an accompaniment to Gastón's project, a way to embellish it and provide it with a sense of authenticity, but establishing a clear position of the folk musicians as lesser artists. In an additional layer of the Latin American hauntological that leaks into the film, the *chinchineros* have been historically considered accompaniment to Chilean organ grinders, to such extent that the Chilean Organ Grinders Cultural Corporation provides economic support to *chinchineros* as long as they are part of an organ grinder act. See https://www.sigpa.cl/ficha-colectivo/corporacion-cultural-organilleros-de-chile.

Folklore is problematic, as evidenced in historical academic discourses that discuss its authenticity and its functions in different musical practices, found particularly in the contrast between the original musical practices and the embellished forms of state-sponsored "constructed" folklore. This is evidenced in Tânia Da Costa García's reading of a misunderstanding of folklore "manifested in the use of too many instruments, in improper harmonizations and the insistence of choral singing in detriment of music simplicity" of smaller ensembles and self-accompanied music in traditional settings.[23] Daniel Party further illustrates this urge to appropriate and "legitimize" folklore through the regime´s engagement with cueca, a Chilean nineteenth-century style of music and dance. Pinochet's dictatorship declared cueca as Chile's national dance in 1979, established a cueca competition for middle and high school students, and promoted the genre in official events and national holidays.[24] In ritualizing this folkloric genre along with political and military ceremonies, the practice of cueca became a celebration "of the regime itself."[25] Post-dictatorial efforts to reappropriate cueca transgressed these formalisms, opting for the removal of the competitive aspects of the genre, and the inclusion of "bawdy humour" and "a rough singing style, inspired by street and market cries."[26]

Party explores other engagements with the problematic dictatorial past and the music practices that existed (or were repressed) in it. Television became the most important media outlet for music during the dictatorship, with featured artists assumed to be Pinochet supporters. Genres such as balada and the musicians who featured regularly on television became "audiovisual reminders of the dictatorship," and the Chileans who grew up with these modalities of listening "later came to think of them as guilty pleasures," attempting to "make peace with the mass culture of their youth and to enjoy it without conflict" in the post-dictatorial times.[27] In addition to this, post-dictatorial popular music, democratized,

[23] Tânia Da Costa García, "Reconfigurando La Canción, Reinventando La Nación: La Folclorización de La Música Popular En Brasil y En Chile En Los Años Cuarenta y Cincuenta," *Historia* 45, no. 1 (2012): 61. "[…] manifiesta en el uso de demasiados instrumentos, en las armonizaciones indebidas y en la insistencia en el canto coral en detrimento de la simplicidad musical."
[24] Daniel Party, "Rethinking Post-Authoritarian Chile through Its Popular Music," *Twentieth-Century Music* 20, no. 1 (February 2023): 96.
[25] Party, 96.
[26] Party, 96.
[27] Party, 98.

demonopolized and moved to the margins, prompted the Chilean youth to engage with "foreign musical styles [that] served as vessels to express local concerns."[28]

Considering this net of significations of dictatorial and post-dictatorial musical practices, genres such as reggaetón (along with other genres perceived as foreign) provide an alternative way of engaging with the past. This happens in opposition to the regime-sponsored genres and their resignification and renegotiation in post-dictatorial settings, which still act as pervading ghosts of the regime when used as national symbols or as part of national cultural projects. The stripping down of musical practices, in what Christian Spencer Espinosa calls "a nostalgic quest for a working-class culture negated by the dictatorship," goes in line with reggaetón's polyvalent significations as vehicle for the preoccupations of the marginalized.[29]

The subtle contact zone between reggaetón and folklore in the intrafilmic, in which the conflict occurs between the "high art" and the street musical practices, prompts more complicated hauntological engagements: the ghosts of the dictatorship, its approved musical practices, and the wish of generations of Chileans to renegotiate a musical engagement with the past. A past that still lurks, and that is interwoven with the other hauntological implications of reggaetón that I have explored in this chapter. The dancer that denounces folklore as a touristic attraction rejects this state-sponsored project with the nationalistic undertones of the ghost of the regime, finding in reggaetón an alternative towards reclaiming these spaces that were appropriated by the regime. But she is herself haunted by the ghost of reggaetón in its complicated significations as simultaneously problematic and a vehicle for feminist vindication, which appears in the form of Gastón's attack. The *chinchineros*, as representatives of the traditional folkloric manifestations and the closeness with working-class culture, also become victims of this attack, as Gastón becomes himself a reminder of the dictatorial nationalistic projects of embellished and ritualized folklore.

[28] Party, "Rethinking Post-Authoritarian Chile," 103.
[29] Christian Spencer Espinosa, *Pego El Grito En Cualquier Parte: Historia, Tradición y Performance de La Cueca Urbana En Santiago de Chile (1990-2010)* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Mayor, 2021), cited in Party, 96.

Conclusions of the chapter

In Larraín's *Ema,* the intrafilmic representation of Valparaíso becomes a stage in which the disruptive reggaetón dance accompanies Ema's project of an alternative family life. Although problematic, this project emerges as a pushback against a context of oppressive gender violence and the shadow of a very recent and not-yet-overcome dictatorship. Throughout the film, reggaetón is a ghostly presence that lurks around, its name never to be mentioned. When it finally gets acknowledged, different standings become evident, particularly those that categorically reject it.

The staging of reggaetón, a way to reappropriate the spaces and thus metaphorically the struggles that occur in these spaces, entails a sort of curated reggaetón, one that needs to be adjusted to new discursive strategies. The associations of reggaetón in the nonaesthetic realm, which prompt different modalities of engagement with the past, leak into the intrafilmic in different ways. First, the reggaetón as a new vehicle for decades-long struggles, particularly those of feminist reclamations. Second, reggaetón as a representation of the criminal underworld and of those unlikely "heroes" for communities that have been victims of failed political projects. These two modalities leak into the film without its most problematic forms: reggaetón that is free of misogynist traits, romanticization of the criminal, sexual harassment, etc.

A final engagement with the past is that of reggaetón as an alternative to genres that have been historically and problematically perceived as autochthonous. In opposition to state-sponsored constructions of folklore, reggaetón becomes the genre of those who do not want to partake of the established identity project of the regime. Gastón, as an agent of the dictatorial artistic practices, relegates reggaetón to the streets, along with its performers, listeners and dancers, and embraces folklore as long as it remains subservient to his artistic project.

4. An invitation to remember: Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*

In *Roma* (2018), Alfonso Cuarón engages in an experiment of memory, one that involves his own recollections of the past as an invitation for others to engage in a collaborative act of remembrance. The film does not rely on trends from historical Mexican films, such as the Classical Mexican Cinema's engagements with conveying a sense of Mexicanness through "an explicit aesthetic and ideological agenda," or 90s and 2000s films that have a distinct focus on neoliberalism as their political background.[1] Instead, it intends to be a combination of attentively representing the materiality of the past while simultaneously embracing the subjectivity of remembrance in the context of vastly different class perspectives. It is also interestingly located in the contemporary film industry: understood as an auteur film, representing a Latin American reality and its preoccupations, yet distributed and co-financed by Netflix and benefiting from the streaming giant's marketing machinery. In a different way as it would usually occur with independent films, Roma prompted a transmediality across additional features that accompany the film: a documentary, a music album inspired by the film featuring artists such as Billie Eilish and Beck, and a blockbuster-style trailer that features Pink Floyd's "The Great Gig in the Sky."

The film tells the story of Cleo, portrayed by Yalitza Aparicio, a Mixtec domestic worker for a middle-high class household in the Colonia Roma in Mexico City.[2] The film progressively shows her role in the household, composed of Sofía, her absent husband Antonio, and their children. Cleo's job is not limited to domestic labors, but also includes an affective responsibility with the children and being a supportive figure in their upbringing. As a live-in maid, she shares a room in an adjacent section of the house with her fellow Mixtec worker Adela. Despite sharing their common Mixtec language and other forms of cultural closeness, their lives and backgrounds are portrayed as being slightly different. When Cleo becomes pregnant and her boyfriend Fermín subsequently abandons her, Sofía arranges her doctor appointments and

[1] Charles Ramírez Berg, *The Classical Mexican Cinema: The Poetics of the Exceptional Golden Age Films* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 9; Niamh Thornton, "Paraíso ¿Cuánto Pesa El Amor?: Challenging the Neoliberal in Mexican Cinema," in *Contemporary Latin American Cinema*, ed. Claudia Sandberg and Carolina Rocha (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 84.
[2] The term "colonia" (Spanish for "colony") has been historically used in Mexican cities to refer to neighborhoods.

the general care regarding her pregnancy, in the context of Sofía's own failed marriage and the departure of her husband. In a terrible entangling with political violence in 1970s Mexico, Cleo gives birth to her daughter against the backdrop of the Corpus Christi Massacre, a fatidic entanglement that ends up with Cleo's daughter being born dead. In the end of the film, Sofía moves on from her husband's departure, patching up her relationships with her sons and daughters, as well as with Cleo, who regretfully admits that she did not want to have her daughter all along.

The film has been praised for "[t]he immersiveness of its images and sound," Aparicio's "heart-wrenching performance," and Cuarón's use of "intimacy and monumentality to express the depths of ordinary life."[3] However, it has been criticized for what some scholars have perceived as a romanticization of house labor and the politics behind it. Leda M. Pérez finds Cleo as remaining in a subservient position:

> Her second-class status is evident and reflects back to a privileged audience members' Mexican class relations that feel familiar and "right." […] Cleo ́s agency as a human being with her own plans and critical thoughts of her station in life takes a backseat to her role as a cleaner and caregiver who pillars the social station of the family for whom she works.[4]

In the same publication, Karina Elizabeth Vázquez echoes this stance by asserting that "Cleo's lack of voice leads the audience to see her as someone 'we have' but not someone who 'is.'"[5] These are valid preoccupations, considering Cleo's permanent availability as a second mother figure and how this role overlaps with constantly tending for the children (preparing meals and snacks for them on demand, for example), summed to the rest of the chores that she is expected to complete in the household. One particular example, towards the end of the film,

[3] Jonathan Risner, "Roma," *Chiricú Journal: Latina/o Literatures, Arts, and Cultures* 3, no. 2 (2019): 167; Angel Ortega, "'Roma' Delivers Stunning Performance, Cinematography," *UWIRE Text*, January 21, 2019, Gale Academic OneFile; Manohla Dargis, "'Roma' Review: Alfonso Cuarón's Masterpiece of Memory," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/20/movies/roma-review.html.
[4] Leda M. Pérez, "The Ongoing Institution of Servitude," *Contexts* 19, no. 1 (2020): 53.
[5] Karina Elizabeth Vásquez, "Of Love and Exploitation," *Contexts* 19, no. 1 (2020): 56.

shows the children enthusiastically telling the story of how Cleo saved them from drowning, and immediately asking her to prepare some drinks and snacks for them.

Estela Schindel addresses and destabilizes these interpretations, arguing that Cuarón does not aim to speak for Cleo or propose a denounce of her exploited condition. Instead, she reads the film from the perspective of a "polysemic of representation" in which Cuarón does not speak for Cleo but re-presents the images that "give presence to a situation," that of his position as an enunciator of his remembrance.[6] This polysemic representation of a remembered past provide the grounding for my hauntological analysis as an invitation for an act of remembrance, in line with current cultural notions of nostalgia and reenactments of memory and in resonation with the film's identifiable hauntological elements: remembering the hardships of the past, destabilizing hegemonic narratives (through subjective remembrance and recollection), acknowledging that which has been lost, and engaging with the non-places of hauntology where miracles happen. In exploring different strategies of remembrance, the film proposes an engagement with a past that is simultaneously specific and vague.

Cuarón's films have been spread out in different genres and cinematographic traditions, ranging from mainstream Hollywood cinema to auteur Latin American film. In *Children of Men* (2006), the realistic representation of warzones in a dystopic setting through "the use of the long take, [and] a documentary-style social realist take on a sci-fi premise" provide an all-encompassing sense of logical space and the chronology of the events that occur in it.[7] In *Gravity* (2013), the novel possibilities of the Dolby Atmos technology allowed Cuarón to create an "aggressive spatialisation of sound effects, music, and dialogue in all directions across the auditorium, connecting sound with the spatial position of each shot within the diegesis."[8] In providing a "specific perspective from where we hear all the diegetic sounds," the immersive experience of the film becomes one of an illusion of presence within the cinematographic

[6] Estela Schindel, "Martel, Lucrecia (2017). Zama. Película, y Cuarón, Alfonso (2018). Roma. Película," *Papeles Del CEIC* 2019, no. 2 (September 30, 2019): 7. "[P]olisemia de la representación […] dar presencia a una situación."

[7] Deborah Shaw, *The Three Amigos: the Transnational Filmmaking of Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 206.

[8] René Idrovo and Sandra Pauletto, "Immersive Point-of-Audition: Alfonso Cuarón's Three-Dimensional Sound Design Approach," *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* 13, no. 1 (2019): 36.

reality.[9] Although apparently unrelated, it is this attention to detail, chronology, spatiality and sound in Cuarón's filmography that provides an entry point to the process of creation of a historical (yet imagined) Mexico City.

The companion documentary, dubbed *Road to Roma,* provides insights into the creative process of the act of remembrance. As an attempt to create a cinematographic work out of his memories as a middle-class child living in the Roma colony in Mexico City, Cuarón states his intention to approach the creation of the film in a more "sensorial" way, at first with no script, focusing on the details of the everyday objects found in the household. This effort eventually turned into a film with a script and a more traditional structure, but the remembrance exercise remained and later expanded into including the remembrance practices of other crew members, particularly the production designers who provided their input guided by Cuarón's prompts. For instance, through what Cuarón calls "opening doors in memories," specific memories were triggered in the crew members by certain materialities, sounds or smells found in the re-creation of the past on the film's set. Determining appropriate tiles, furniture, or clothes for the film, sometimes comparing them with old photographs, becomes then a remembrance practice that recalls further significations beyond the originally intended by the team.

These remembrance practices, that can be located specifically on the production design department, combine with Cuarón's original intention to portray his memories before creating a story with them, which is more related to screenplay and character design. Through including the input of Libo, the woman that inspired Cleo's character and that worked as a domestic worker in Cuarón's household, the final product acknowledges certain limitations in the act of remembrance. For instance, the hunger and cold that Libo and their family endured were unimaginable to Cuarón as a middle-class child, which he acknowledges as almost abstract ideas from his perspective. Considering Schindel's reading of the act of remembrance as one that is polysemic, this cinematic representation of a middle-class experience acknowledges a one-sided narrative that does not attempt to fill in the gaps of the narratives of the other. While still collaborative to certain extent, the middle-class perspective of the

[9] Idrovo and Pauletto, "Immersive Point-of-Audition," 37.

exercise of remembrance risks contributing to perpetuate problematic conceptions and stereotypes, such as the ones Pérez and Vásquez denounce.

In addition to considering the symptomatic meaning of the strategies of remembrance as providing meaning and structure to the film, I argue that the intrafilmic is built on the explicit meaning of the film through the logic of the actions and motivations of the characters and the temporal logic of the actions tied to this act of collective memory. As a result, the film becomes a representation of past everyday moments, still tied to a narrative logic, but more interested in the sensations produced by the act of remembrance. This understanding of the explicit meaning as providing an intrafilmic reality of realistic events and causalities combines with the referential meaning of historical "accuracy" and the contact moments with historical events. In this setting, the film opens a gateway into acknowledging pervasive ghosts of class difference, racism, the hardships of the political past, and different senses of loss, beyond a simplistic classification of the film as nostalgic. I read the film as an invitation to remember, a sort of installation in which anyone can walk in and fill out the spaces with their memories.

Roma does not have non-diegetic music, a seemingly natural consequence of the project of remembrance and the immersive nature of the recent entries in Cuarón's filmography. My analysis focuses on the instances in which listening practices are depicted: through broadcast radio, vinyl discs, live music, etc. The modalities of listening, the materialities of music, and the configurations of the remembered physical spaces provide a form of understanding the engagements with the past of different social classes.

The sounds and spaces of 70s Mexico

The first notable feature of the film is its attention to spaces. From the very early scenes, in which the layout of the house, the garage, and the living spaces are shown, we can see how the social construction of the household works. This is a somewhat narrow house, with nice furniture, cabinets and bookshelves, but with inadequate spaces for the family's dog (forced to live in the garage and defecate on the tiles) and a narrow garage for the car (which almost hits the wall on entry, forcing the driver to get off on the passenger side). Furthermore, the separate nature of the spaces given to Cleo and Adela to perform their home labor duties,

such as the rooftop to wash and dry the clothes and the shared room annex, materialize the class (and cultural) separation between the family and the domestic workers.

Within these spaces, Cleo and Adela listen to music on the radio while they do their chores. The songs on the broadcast are recognizable and famous songs of the time, which perdured through the decades and are recognizable in the present (for example, Leo Dan's "Te He Prometido" and Rocío Durcal's "Más Bonita que Ninguna"). While the language of the songs is Spanish, the conversations between Cleo and Adela are in Mixtec. Against this setting of underrepresentation of what could have been Cleo and Adela's musical background (lost in the polyvalence of the remembrance project), the only presence of music in Mixtec is the lullabies that they sing to the children. Within the act of remembrance from a middle-class perspective, this is the only setting of the music of the other that could survive the passing of time.

In the first part of the narrative, while the house spaces are still being explored, these homely instances of popular music of the past are intertwined with the dialogues of the children, particularly when one of them casually mentions how a man was killed by a soldier on the street. This implies the existence of an outer world prone to violence, in opposition to the inner, familiar, yet fragmented world of the household. A threshold between the inside and the outside is constructed through the garage gate, evidenced in the first instance of Antonio attempting to enter this narrow space with his Ford Galaxy. A new musical space and listening practice open up in this moment: listening to music on the car radio, in this case classical music that is juxtaposed to Antonio's standing as a medical practitioner at the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS; Instituto Mexicano de Seguridad Social). The need to get off the passenger side, the dog's feces adhering to the tires, and the general tightness of a garage built in such a narrow house undermine the associations between this musical engagement, Antonio's professional prestige, and the pulchritude of the inner space of the car.

Stepping outside of the gateway created by the garage gate, the musical and sonic elements become very different. In the busy city streets, presented through Cuarón's characteristic long shots and spatial logic, the music coming from the speakers in a store or played by street musicians intertwines with the chaotic sound of the city. In this seemingly realistic

representation of the historical Mexico City, one visual element seems to ghostly lurk around: that of the imagery of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI; "Partido Revolucionario Institucional"), the self-proclaimed heir of the Mexican Revolution that held on to power in the country for the most part of the twentieth century.[10] The PRI has been historically accused of atrocities and arbitrariness, and in the context of this exercise of remembrance, it is important to acknowledge the party's role in the Corpus Christi Massacre, a central event in the film, and the very recent Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968.[11]

Bearing in mind the ghosts of political oppression, one of the instances that connects the inner spaces of the household and the violence-ridden and PRI-stained outside world is that of the military band. The band is constantly heard in the offscreen space throughout the film, but it is presented in two moments central to Sofía and Antonio's breakup. The first one is when Antonio apparently leaves for a work-related trip, but is actually planning to leave indefinitely. The familiarity of Antonio carrying his belongings to the car, with Cleo helping and the children coming to say farewell, hides the bitter moment in which Sofía wordlessly begs him to stay. In this moment, while Sofía hopelessly holds Antonio, the military band irrupts with their marching down the street and their out-of-tune melodies. When Antonio finally leaves, he tunes in his classical music in the car radio, thus blocking out the sounds of the military band and any other sounds, including the sounds of the family he is leaving behind. The middle-class perspective of this modality of listening shows the possibility to phase out the (sonic) world happening around them. The second instance of the military band happens towards the end of the film, when Cleo, Sofía and the children come back from their trip. I will come back to this moment later.

After the parallel circumstances of Cleo's abandonment by her boyfriend and Sofía's new family life without Antonio, the musical environments become clearly different. Sofía decides to take the children and Cleo to a hacienda owned by upper-class family friends, in which they

[10] Writer Mario Vargas Llosa famously said that Mexico is "the perfect dictatorship," as the presence of the PRI is immovable. In these terms, it is appropriate to think of these as dictatorial times. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-5aq86kylI.

[11] The Tlatelolco Massacre occurred on October 2, 1968, ten days before the opening ceremony of the 1968 Summer Olympics, following months of demonstrations against PRI politics. The Mexican military forces opened fire on thousands of students partaking on a peaceful demonstration at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, killing hundreds of them.

will meet with other upper-class friends and some visitors from the United States. The new sonic spaces prompt different musical practices and modalities of listening. For instance, during the car trip to the hacienda, the music that the children listen to in the car is in English. In this historical moment in which the political projects advocated for music perceived as autochthonous, it is unlikely that this is Mexican broadcast radio. Initially, I assumed that this was music imported from abroad in the form of a cassette tape. However, some distortions and frequency overlaps can be heard at the beginning of this scene make me wonder if this is an American broadcaster, and the setting is that of a border town. In any case, this reflects the class-specific engagement with music that would not be accessible to a lower social class, both from its physical inaccessibility (having to import it and, hence, having to pay more for it; or having to broadcast it from abroad) and from its lyrics in a foreign language.

The physical spaces in the hacienda are also different, more convoluted and disorienting than Cleo's household, but still representing two realities: that of the middle-high class and that of the maids, gardeners, and other workers of the estate. This sort of oneiric space is two houses at the same time, a multi-language space (English and Spanish, but not Mixtec), and holds certain materialities specific to a social class, such as the luggage of European airlines lying around, or the (very eccentric) practice of stuffing the deceased dogs of the estate. An uneasiness lurks around the setting of the hacienda, as there seems to exist a possibility of retaliation from former owners of the lands that the estate now rests on.

At some point, the house more literally splits in two. In the context of New Year's Eve, Sofía and her children celebrate with their hosts against the backdrop of mediated music: a vinyl of Jesus Christ Superstar. This is a more intimate, more "curated" setting, in which music is meant to be listened to in a relaxed way without an immediate engagement. But the materiality of this music, the "appropriation" of the musical object, echoing Adorno's idea that "the LP can be repeated, possessed, and experienced temporally," allows the participants of this party to pass from one musical attunement to another by simply changing the disc.[12] In this case, the attunement goes from the relaxing song from the musical to a more party/New Year's Eve

[12] Andrea F. Bohlman and Peter McMurray, "Tape: Or, Rewinding the Phonographic Regime," *Twentieth-Century Music* 14, no. 1 (February 2017): 13.

attuned mambo: “Corazón de Melón” by Pérez Prado. This also entails freely changing from imported music to more traditional, perceived-as-autochthonous music.

In opposition to this, and once again in a space that seems to be part of the same house but that exists in a different dimension, the workers are having their own party with a completely different engagement with music. In an underground space in which music, conversations and noise overlap, invaded by animals, and ironically narrow for the number of people it is intended to hold, the musical practice here is one of live music and dancing. Everyone seems to be drinking, even the pregnant girl, who gets her drink thrown by one of the dancers. It would be inconceivable to change the atmosphere of this festive space.

At some point, these two contrasting spaces come together when Sofía walks out to the balcony and Cleo comes out of her party. While Cleo witnesses a man attempting to seduce Sofía and being swiftly rejected, the two sonic worlds collide, each one panned to each side: the mediated music to the left, the live music to the right. This creates an uneasy cacophony, which also creates a visual/space cacophony. Cleo remains in this interstitial space, in which she shares a certain intimacy with Sofía but does not dare to address the intrusion that she just witnessed. The micro-configuration of uneasiness provided by the cacophony of the two contrasting musical practices, the micro-configuration of conflict from Sofía’s interaction with her suitor, and the observant position of Cleo create a macro-configuration of a shared position in which neither woman feels at home, both opting to be alone in this sort of interstitial space of social classes.

When a fire breaks out in the next scene, the mediated music continues playing, whereas the live music stops, its players probably summoned to deal with the emergency. In this new instance of chaotic and overlapping circumstances, everything becomes oneiric when the man dressed as the devil, the “Chamuco” of Mexican folklore, starts singing. Although it could be read as a misremembrance of a convoluted moment, I argue for an interpretation of this moment as one of magical realism, a situation so absurd that can only be explained by the presence of something supernatural. In this chaotic situation, all of these situations overlap: a fire breaks out exactly at midnight in New Year’s, some of the men come to help while still holding their drinks, a boy dressed as an astronaut runs around, some of the children try to

put out the small fires with buckets, Cleo runs after some of the children, and the Chamuco sings Elias Blix's "Barndomsminne frå Nordland," a seemingly out-of-place Norwegian song in the middle of all these events. Meanwhile, the workers, who had to leave their party, are the ones left with dealing with the most demanding part of putting out the fire. The singing Chamuco, existing in a fantastical gap in which we are not sure if he is really singing during these chaotic times, provides a certain parodic effect to this situation, while also surreptitiously showing the ghosts of class difference. But considering the lurking ghost of the dispute over the lands, this seems to be a violent, not comical, setting. In this reenactment of memory, everything seems less problematic than how it probably was.

When Cleo goes to find Fermín in the outskirts of Mexico City, the sonic spaces now involve more political engagements. First, the ever-present lurking ghost of the PRI is everywhere, in the form of posters, political speeches, and a more direct association of the marching military band with the regime, against the background of poverty and general dereliction of this area. The construction of these outskirts seems initially parodic, provided by micro-configurations such as the festive sounds of the military band and the speech that concludes with the human bullet show. This construction is deceptive, however, since this is the brewing spot for the *halcones* (Spanish for hawks), the paramilitary groups recruited by the government to suppress student movements in the late 60s, and the responsible group for the Corpus Christi Massacre. One such deceptively parodic moment is the scene when the young men recruited to be *halcones* are training with bamboo sticks, the same weapons that were used in the massacre.

The outskirts space offers a glimpse into the music that seems to be the music of the other: rock music, played by Fermín's friend Ramón and his band, in a completely dilapidated house, a place deeply stained by time. The band, however, does have the necessary implements, such as an electric guitar, an amplifier, a microphone, and a drumkit. Although the singing is out of tune, the guitar and drumkit are synchronized and provide a legitimate rock sound (along with the peace symbol painted on the wall), and seems to work as a form of liberation and transgression from their surrounding circumstances of abandonment by political projects and the threat of imminent violence. An adjacent mediation of the rock music is seen when Ramón drives Cleo to Fermín's training. When they pull over, a hint of an electric guitar solo is barely

perceivable from the car radio. As stated before, it is unlikely that this is broadcast radio, but it does not seem to be a professionally recorded song either, leaving only the possibility that this is a recording of Ramón's band: an instance of the early rock projects that adapted the genre as their own within these convoluted times in Mexican history.

The movie has a realistic point of contact with history when depicting the Corpus Christi Massacre. On June 10, 1971, students marching against policies that negatively impacted the Autonomous University of Nuevo León were attacked by the *halcones*, first with bamboo sticks and kendo sticks, and later with rifles. Dozens of students were killed. This is represented in the film from the perspective of a mundane situation: Sofía's mother Teresa taking Cleo to buy a crib for her future daughter. As they walk through the student- and police-ridden streets, many owners close their stores in anticipation of the violence. The modality of music-making changes here: a participative practice, in the form of the student chants and the organic transitions from one chant to the other, including at some point Mexico's National Anthem. At the furniture store, the violence eventually explodes, filling the sonic space with screaming and gunshots. While the *halcones* can be seen hitting the students through a window, a student comes into the store trying to hide. A group of *halcones* eventually finds him and kills him, before one of them is revealed to be Fermín, pointing a gun to the pregnant mother of his daughter. Cleo's water breaks in this moment, and she is taken to the hospital where her daughter is eventually born dead.

Sometime after the violence, the action cycles back to the household and the threshold between the inner and the outer world. Sofía has bought a new car, which fits the garage comfortably, and the inner musical space of the car now has music like that which Cleo listens to, in opposition to Antonio's classical music. In a further instance of a cyclic world, Sofía takes Cleo and the children on a trip again, this time to the beach. The musical instances in the places that they visit are an extension of the cluttered sonic spaces of the city (on the radio in restaurants, live music celebrating a wedding), but they are not stained by the imagery and sounds of the PRI. After the massacre, the regime seems to have (temporarily) receded.

When the family returns home, the second instance of the military band mentioned earlier comes in. A sign of a new life without Antonio (the children now know that their dad left),

this is also a reminder that the violence is still there. As with many things that seem to repeat indefinitely in the region, like earthquakes, the passing of military bands, and student massacres, Cleo's life is also cyclical, as she returns home to her chores while telling Adela that she has a new story to tell.

The ghosts of repetition

There are clear instances of the hauntological issues in the film: the historical class difference, the lost narratives of the marginalized, the access to contrasting forms of musical engagements, and the pervading violence of political regimes in the country. These ghosts overlap and haunt the present through re-apparitions of issues that keep coming from the past: the class inequality prevails, the narratives of the marginalized remain lost, and the corruption of present regimes prevail against a society that has been unable to eradicate it. Focusing on the music, what the film is not telling us revolves around forms of engagement with the musical past, musical formats, class-based access to music, and music's place within an oppressive regime. I argue that current engagements with nostalgia, both from a historical past and from fictitious nostalgic reenactments, leak into the intrafilmic through the significations that these nostalgic musical engagements hold.

In a first instance of what the film is not telling us, I analyze the musical engagement of Cleo and Adela with the broadcast music they use as background to their domestic chores. Instead of close reading the individual songs in terms of their lyrics and their musical characteristics and thus risking overinterpretation, my analysis focuses on the intrafilmic class-based musical practice and its association with Latin American modalities of listening. In the intrafilmic, Cleo and Adela's background music works in a similar way as the other elements in the production design: they are realistic representations of what *could* have existed in 70s Mexico, in this case music that was popular and thus broadcasted at the time. The popularity of these songs remained through the decades, so much as to have been included in the film in the present. Beyond being simply an attempt of realistic recollection, these popular songs leak into the intrafilmic as having a historical association with domestic chores, a characteristic so clearly constructed throughout the years that journalistic media and artistic practice in countries such as Colombia and Costa Rica have identified this genre with the name "música plancha," which

translates literally as “iron music,” i.e., the music that one listens to while ironing. I will briefly summarize the discursive construction of this music.

In broad terms, música plancha can refer to the music of several Spanish-speaking artists from the 60s onwards. Some of the usual suspects are Argentinian duo Pimpinela, Mexican singer Yuri, Mexican trio Pandora, and Spanish singers Rocío Durcal and Camilo Sesto, spanning different decades and musical styles and providing the genre with a sense of translatability. In Costa Rica, música plancha has a very specific niche of cover bands and events related to the genre, particularly framed in the reenactment of the sentiments that the music is understood to provide. The discourse surrounding the events that showcase this genre found in journalistic media describe the experience as one of remembrance, evidenced in singer Laura De León’s words:

> [W]e have shared the sentiment, the pain, the joys and the memories that música plancha brings us, creating catharsis among all of us who live the feelings provoked by música plancha.[13]

Along this engagement with a nostalgic past of strong emotions, gendered framings complement the understanding of the genre. Journalistic discourses describe the genre as “the music of great singers and groups that in the 80s and 90s were the accompaniment for the mothers for doing their domestic chores when their children left for school” [*sic*].[14] The Orquesta Filarmónica (literally The Philarmonic Orchestra), a private cover/tribute philharmonic orchestra based in San José, has incorporated música plancha as one of its classical-fusion shows, and the poster for their December 2022 concerts problematically shows their classical instruments along with an ironing board, an iron on it, a bucket of clothes,

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[13] Yurguin Zuñiga Pineda, “Trece Años de Plancha En El 13: Un ‘Planchatón’ Épico Le Espera Este Fin de Semana,” *La Nación*, June 1, 2023, https://www.nacion.com/tiempo-libre/trece-anos-de-plancha-en-el-13-un-planchaton-epico/GETHCMCVW5D4NEFZ3QDDSRUZ3E/story/. “[H]emos compartido el sentimiento, el dolor, las alegrías y los recuerdos que nos trae la música plancha, haciendo catarsis entre todas las personas que vivimos los sentimientos provocados por la música plancha.”

[14] Luanna Orjuela Murcia, “Plancha Live Celebra Sus 10 Años Con Concierto Este Jueves,” *Teletica.com*, June 3, 2023, https://www.teletica.com/entretenimiento/plancha-live-celebra-sus-10-anos-con-concierto-este-jueves_336139. “[L]a música de grandes cantantes y agrupaciones que en los años 80 y 90 eran el acompañamiento de las madres para hacer los quehaceres domésticos cuando sus hijos se iban a las escuelas.” [*sic*]

and what seems to be dirty dishes.[15] Beyond problematic notions similar to the over-embellishment of folklore described in the previous chapter, this type of marketing strategies aestheticize domestic labor and prompt exaggerated reenactments of the emotional practices of lower classes. Óscar Hernández Salgar explores this type of engagement with música plancha, a dislocation between the original setting of the musical practice and the reappropriation by a higher class.

Hernández Salgar uses música plancha as a study case to exemplify his semiotic methodology for the social study of music. He departs from the contemporary practice of listening to the plancha artists as a middle- and high-class reenactments of lower classes' emotional engagements.[16] Through contemporary associations to other musical representations of the same artists (such as in telenovelas, broadcasted at a certain time of the day to make it coincide with the domestic chores), the notion of these songs as antiquated and unfashionable, and a clear connection to the activities of social classes that are perceived as lower, Hernández Salgar argues for a genre that establishes class distinctions while simultaneously working as an escape valve of repressed emotions.[17] Additional elements of class distinction identified by Hernández Salgar involve a sense of a humoristic factor of these songs as perceived by younger and/or high-class individuals, and the setting of the reenactment for higher-classes as one of alcohol consumption and celebration.[18]

Although Hernández Salgar identifies practices and narratives that go in line with both the contemporary commercial aspect of música plancha and the class-related issues of the background music for domestic chores found in the film, he does not delve directly into the gendered aspects of the genre. Idyllically reenacted in bars and concerts as an emotional outlet, and comedically approached as in the case of the Orquesta Filarmónica's poster, música plancha also signifies an anxiety related to the completion of the chores in time, and the possible violence that results in its failure. In real-life Latin American households, where the ghost of repeated domestic violence constantly reappears, the

[15] See https://orquestafilarmonica.com/event/musica-plancha/.
[16] Óscar Andrés Hernández Salgar, "La Semiótica Musical Como Herramienta Para El Estudio Social de La Música," *Cuadernos de Música, Artes Visuales y Artes Escénicas* 7, no. 1 (2012): 70-1.
[17] Hernández Salgar, 71.
[18] Hernández Salgar, 70-1.

cleaning/washing/ironing/cooking must be completed before the male figure (usually the father) arrives from work, a figure that does not engage with any of these chores and gets angry if they are not completed.[19] These dynamics leak into the intrafilmic, when Sofía recriminates Cleo after Antonio's comments about the dog's feces. A cycle of preoccupation/recrimination lurks the practice of the listening of música plancha, and leaks into the intrafilmic as a sort of micro-configuration: along with the homely and the quotidian, the broadcast music has the micro-configuration of cleaning/washing/ironing, as well as the micro-configuration of a task that needs to be completed. As other micro-configurations of music, codified for instance as happy or sad, this complex signification of class separation, a reminder of violence, and the reenactments of memory and emotions, leaks into the intrafilmic in the apparently simple scenes of Cleo and Adela listening to music while they clean.

Crossing the boundary into the outer world, the ghost of political violence and repression is ubiquitous. The military bands that roam the neighborhoods, the posters of political figures of the PRI, and the activities of the *halcones* (that seem parodic at first through the exaggerated training in the outskirts of the city), slowly build towards a violent climax that has been foreshadowed by the knowledge of how this story ends: the Corpus Christi Massacre. But alongside this big-scale historical event there is another ghost: that of the re-narrativization and renegotiation of memory, through contemporary strategies of nostalgia and remembrance, in a bid to "rescue" the good moments alongside the historical tragedies.

The transmediality of *Roma* provides a hint about these strategies through the use of Pink Floyd's "The Great Gig in the Sky" in the film's trailer. As mentioned earlier, the blockbuster-type trailer can be read as a marketing strategy in bringing a trans-cultural and widely known icon such as the British band to appeal to a broader Netflix audience. Considering the absence of non-diegetic music in the film, the trailer also offers an opportunity to showcase certain of the scenes from the film in a more traditional way, as opposed to Cuarón's extreme realism. But beyond these marketing strategies, Pink Floyd's song works as a signifier of Latin America's

[19] The data collected by the Wilson Center provides a worrying overview of this prevalent ghost. See https://gbv.wilsoncenter.org/explore-gbv-data.

complicated entanglements with rock as a foreign music and the strategies to oppose dictatorial musical practices with it.

It is important to address the general positioning of rock music in the continent throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Ramón Garibaldo Valdéz and Mario Bahena Urióstegui trace a transition of rock

> from representing the foreign that threatened the idyllic vision of the autochthonous mestizo nation to becoming a fundamental cultural axis in the possibility of a regional unification that transcends the cultural heterogeneity of the region.[20]

The authors trace the tension between state-sponsored notions of the autochthonous music in the context of oppressive regimes and anything that could be understood as foreign, such as the case of rock and roll and its subgenres. In Mexico, the post-revolutionary project of national identity fostered by the regime used communication media such as indigenous-themed murals, films about charros and tequila drinking, and broadcasting of mariachi music to create an "illusion of cultural national homogeneity."[21] In opposition to this over-exaltation of seemingly autochthonous features, Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui locate rock as a dual project of foreign practices that were assimilated as local, and as an expression of an alternative expression of the autochthonous.[22] Furthermore, in its eventual diffusion through Latin America, both the foreign original forms of rock and the regional appropriations of the genre eventually became translatable signifiers, particularly those that Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui locate as providing a sense of common belonging across vast geographic territories, a sort of "Latin American nation."[23] The process through which rock became a regional signifier took decades to include all the layers of Mexico's (and Latin America's) social classes, considering that the distribution of foreign rock music was initially restricted to those

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[20] Ramón Garibaldo Valdéz and Mario Bahena Urióstegui, "El Ruido y La Nación: Cómo El Rock Iberoamericano Redefinió El Sentido de Comunidad en Latino América," *Diálogos Revista Electrónica* 16, no. 1 (December 3, 2014), 192. "[…] de representar lo extranjero que amenazaba la visión idílica de la nación mestiza autóctona a convertirse en un eje cultural fundamental en la posibilidad de una unificación regional que sobrepasa la heterogeneidad cultural de la región."
[21] Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui, 194. "[…] ilusión de homogeneidad cultural nacional."
[22] Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui, 193.
[23] Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui, 201. "[…] nación latinoamericana."

who could afford it in its mediated forms, before it became more affordable or began being broadcasted in radio and television. A broad reading of rock's historical function by Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui shows how the genre transitioned from exclusively representing high class in the mid-50s and early 60s, to middle class of 60s and 70s, to low class during the 80s.[24]

In this context of rock as an unstable sign of rebellion, the film provides two different engagements in line with the affordability of the genre. First, the mediated music, with Pink Floyd's as a sort of introductory indication, but strongly seen in the vinyl of Jesus Star Superstar and the possibilities of appropriation of the music and its attunement. In the film, the attunement shifts between the two possibilities (the autochthonous and the foreign, the musical theater and the mambo), blurring the definitive engagement with the "official" music. This also echoes the physical and conceptual separations of the high social class with the reality of the country.

The second engagement is found in the manifestation of rock music in the outskirts of the city. The young men appropriate the genre as a form to re-narrativize their reality, slowly finding the genre as a vehicle for their struggles. As early representatives of a Latin American strand of the genre, barely affording the instruments, and still struggling with their musical inexperience, these rock musicians' early activities reflect an additional layer of the region's reality. In using words as "'tacky,' 'pauper' and 'indio,'" used pejoratively against them, early Latin American rockers identified themselves as opposing a capitalist system that had denied them any sense of social security, turning these pejorative words in a form of "cultural pride."[25]

These two forms of rock collide in the project of remembrance, in which the past is remembered pleasantly and with nostalgia despite its tragedies, but also through the understanding that music, in this case rock, was closely associated with the ghosts of the past and particularly with the confrontation with it. The different social classes remember

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[24] Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui, "El Ruido y La Nación," 200.
[25] Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui, 200.

differently, but are entangled in certain ways: both deal with the renegotiation of hardships and the role of music in their project of remembrance.

A final engagement with the hauntological past comes from the film's position in a historical moment in which nostalgia has become an important cultural concept. In the *Road to Roma* documentary, Cuarón mentions that the black-and-white format of the film is not intended to be a recreation of an old film, as it is pristine, has no grain, and was filmed in a 2.39:1 widescreen aspect ratio. The black-and-white format, then, provides the audience with a sense of engagement with the past that remains located in a modern cinematographic experience. This is a sense of an "artificial" or "reenacted" remembrance, which resonates with contemporary notions of nostalgia, and can be traced to the intermediality that the film offers.

The album inspired by the film (simply called *Music inspired by the Film Roma*) contains a set of songs that relate tangentially with the themes and events of the film. Some of the songs engage directly with the more specific ghosts of the past (such as violence, loneliness in a huge city, love and loss, and family/mother relationships), giving them a musical dimension that they did not have in the film: a sort of a musical acknowledgement of the ghosts from the film. Although a marketing move (and probably a sort of vanity project for Cuarón to be able to work with his favorite artists), the album opens up possibilities to study engagements with the past from these artists, some of them completely removed from the culture the film intends to portray. Interestingly, none of the songs seem to touch upon the political embeddedness of the film.

I wish to associate the modalities of remembrance in the album to the moment in which one of the children, Pepe, says some enigmatic words to Cleo: "when I was older, you were there, but you were someone else." Later, he says "when I was older, I used to be a sailor, yes, but one day I drowned in a storm." These stories of a past future suggest a cyclical sense beyond their repeated appearance. They recall a past that has never existed, a dislocation caused by the non-logic of the stories from two perspectives. First, a sense of cyclical nature of time in Latin America, with the endless fatal repetitions of events that become too familiar, such as the horrors of dictatorial oppression. Second, the notion of a non-existing past (taken to the

extreme in the kid's affirmation that he remembers the future) which recalls a sense of nostalgia for moments that were never experienced. In this context, the film becomes simultaneously a project of remembrance and an invitation to engage in contemporary practices of simulated nostalgia.

In their analysis of lofi hip hop, Emma Winston and Lawrence Saywood build on Svetlana Boym's concept of "reflective nostalgia," defined neither as a superficial engagement with nostalgia nor an exact recreation of the past, but instead as acknowledging an engagement with the distance between the subject and the referent, and not the referent itself.[26] In the case of lofi hip hop, Winston and Saywood explore the genre's engagement with "what is acknowledged to be an imagined past, not only unreachable in the present, but never experienced in the first instance" in addition to real memories of past experiences.[27] This is echoed in Niklas Salmose's readings of nostalgia discourses, who affirms that

> nostalgia (place/time for yearning) either can be entirely impersonal and situate itself in a future-directed time/space, an imaginary, fictive world outside our own temporality, or it can be a past time one has not experienced personally.[28]

In line with these theorizations, along with what Boym describes as an epidemic of nostalgia, the project of creating an album that works as an invitation to remembrance seems to have a logical place in this era.[29]

Analyzing all the songs of the album is beyond the scope of this project, but certain salient features from the lyrics, song titles and sonic qualities of the songs provide a sense of this fictional project of nostalgia. One of the first notable instances of a reenacted nostalgia project is the title of Billie Eilish's contribution "When I was Older," recalling Pepe's ruminations of the past future. Beyond the evident reference to Pepe's stories, the lyrics of the song recall certain

[26] Emma Winston and Lawrence Saywood, "Beats to Relax/Study To: Contradiction and Paradox in Lo-Fi Hip Hop," *IASPM Journal* 9, no. 2 (December 2019): 45.
[27] Winston and Saywood, 45.
[28] Niklas Salmose, "Nostalgia Makes Us All Tick: A Special Issue on Contemporary Nostalgia," *Humanities* 8, no. 3 (August 28, 2019): 144.
[29] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 12.

events of the film, such as the fire ("Memories burn like a forest fire"), or the black and white quality of the film ("I'm watching movies back to back in black and white"). Bu Cuarón's song "Psycho" engages more directly with the Latin American hauntological, through notions of domestic violence. It departs from a sample from the film, the moment in which Sofía hits one of the kids, Paco, because he was eavesdropping. The song then turns from the perspective of someone who has been physically abused by their mother through a single phrase in its lyrics: "Hit me but you love me, you never say you're sorry." In terms of the sonic qualities of the music, some songs, like Beck's "Tarantula," Quique Rangel's "La Hora Exacta," and Asaf Avidan's "Between these Hands" use reverb, voice filters, and other effects to provide a retro feel, tangential to the low-fidelity qualities found in contemporary lofi songs. DJ Shadow's "We are Always Alone" uses heavily compressed electronic drumkit samples, lush piano sounds, and an electronic bass to provide the same effect.

Beyond referencing elements from the film or tangentially addressing certain regional preoccupations, these songs do not directly engage with the Latin American reality of the intrafilmic. Nonetheless, I argue that these songs are part of the film's project of remembrance. Much like the initial process of remembrance described in the documentary, in which memories were prompted by looking at old photographs, the recognizable elements to "create" nostalgia, e.g., the use of reverb, the vintage sonorities, etc., prompt an attunement to an imaginary state of nostalgia, inspired by the imagery and the sonorities of both film and album. Echoing Winston and Saywood, this nostalgia may also recall personal recollections of real memories, in addition to the never experienced imagined past. This prompts a reenactment of remembrance, a nostalgic "mood" in which the listener purposefully sets themselves into. This is a recognizable feature of lofi playlists, usually described with their purpose: music to study to, to chill to, to relax to, etc.[30] The nostalgic engagements of *Roma*'s companion album then prompt a similar purpose of setting oneself into a nostalgic mood, in this case towards an imagined Latin American past. Each of the songs' connections to the film prompt specific nostalgic reenactments: being a child and telling stories to the domestic worker that helped raise you, being poor and struggling because of

[30] See for example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar18V8jaZzY and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDA4kdgC0bc.

dictatorial regimes, being a rocker who sang songs against oppression, etc. Re-experiencing these pasts without having lived them.

The sense of an imaginary or "created" nostalgia, as a contemporary cultural practice, leaks in the intrafilmic to build an uncanny nostalgia project. Beyond the collective act of remembrance, the film does represent a historical recollection of the past, plagued with the ghosts of many hardships and fatal repetitions. But the film also remains as a blank page of remembrance to be filled by the audience. It is an invitation to participate in remembering, to focus on the distance to the referent, a remembrance inspired by a Latin American past that is also available to non-Latin American audiences.

Conclusions of the chapter

The intrafilmic reality of *Roma* is constructed on a collaborative effort of remembrance that aims to recall every possible detail from 1970s Mexico. Simultaneously, the middle-class perspective of this effort entails a sense of incompleteness when recalling the memories of different social classes. Cuarón's use of strictly diegetic music, treated as part of the production design, contributes to understanding musical practices not only as they were present in this historical past, but how they are reenacted in the present as polyvalent vehicles of remembrance.

The musical practices in the inner world of Cleo's household are centered around domestic labor: broadcast music that provides a sonic background to Cleo and Adela's duties. Although apparently homely and away from the violence of the outer world, the ghosts of domestic violence and the problematic associations of the music "for ironing" leak into the intrafilmic, providing a further signification beyond the simple act of the domestic chores. The *música plancha*, as a gendered signifier of class, contributes to the perpetuation of Clea's subservient role.

The outer world is one of violence, in which political regimes that never seem to end prompt different musical engagements. Rock music emerges as a symbol of hope and liberation throughout the second half of the twentieth century, with its significations eventually

ramifying and expanding to the whole continent. This signification is uneasy, however, understood differently in different decades and from the perspective of different social classes. The upper social classes, with the possibility to harness music through its materiality, are free to listen to music beyond that which has been approved by the regime, engaging in private musical practices that isolate them from the violent outer world. These moments prompt future memories that will be coded as idyllic recollections of a nostalgic musical past, in which pleasant memories prevail against the horrors beyond these musical spaces. For the lower classes, rock is a vehicle of social struggle that requires an active musical engagement, and thus, a direct contact with the hardships of the outer world. The future remembrance of these musical practices is one of historical resistance. In line with the project of the "Latin American nation," the signification of the genre in the region prompts further senses of translatability towards shared struggles and renegotiations of the past. Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui locate the song "Cuando Pase el Temblor" ("When the Earthquake has Passed") by Argentinian band Soda Stereo as "an anthem of hope among Mexican youth" after the earthquake that ravaged Mexico City in 1985.[31] This example of a shared engagement with the past, with rock unifying countries and social classes in enduring the region's hardships, is also a ghost that leaks into the intrafilmic, a *what-if* ghost of Latin American solidarity.

The sense of a created nostalgia complements the haunting of the ghosts of this chapter. The film and the album inspired by it open up the possibility of alternative modalities of remembrance in line with contemporary notions of nostalgia. Real and imagined memories combine in projects of remembrance that have the hardships of the Latin American past as their departing point, inspired by the filmic reality and the album's invitation to reenact nostalgia. These projects prompt a longing for a regional reality that was never experienced, as well as its adaptation by the non-Latin American audiences that the film aims to reach.

[31] Garibaldo Valdéz and Bahena Urióstegui, "El Ruido y La Nación," 205. "[…] un himno de esperanza entre la juventud mexicana."

Conclusion

The musical engagements with the past that are present in the intrafilmic reality of Latin American cinema are better understood through the metaphorical presence of ghosts. The ghosts of colonialism, dictatorial regimes, regional disadvantage, and many other hardships lurk around Latin American films in their condition as vehicles for the preoccupations of the region. Departing from different understandings of the term, I propose a hauntological engagement with the historical circumstances of the region, and in this way determining the filmic hauntological.

The methodology that I have proposed opens up the possibility to analyze the construction of the intrafilmic with music as one of its component elements. The intrafilmic as a recognizably Latin American filmic world combines with musical elements that have associations in the nonaesthetic realm, which then leak into the film as signifiers of the regional hauntological. These associations are unstable, sometimes blurred by their temporality or their polyvalence in different social and cultural arenas. This is the intent of the hauntological approach: acknowledging that there is no definitive origin, but instead simultaneous and contradictory ways of making sense of music, its practices, and its listening modalities, and how they provide a way to engage with Latin America's problematic past in the intrafilmic and beyond.

The Latin American hauntological happens in different ways, with ghosts that entail remembrance, repetition, engagements with the spaces stained by time, etc. In *Zama* and *Roma,* the haunting comes from the political consequences of regimes past, be them colonial or dictatorial. The music in *Zama* re-narrativizes a colonial past, with ghosts of recognizable Latin American hardships leaking into the intrafilmic, an acknowledgment of the repetitive nature of these ghosts. In a similar way, the music in *Roma* recalls a more recent past, in which pleasant musical remembrance collides with the simultaneous ghosts of the hardships of the regime. In *Ema,* the ghost of a past dictatorial regime also lurks around the intrafilmic. But in this case, the musical hauntological recalls the renegotiation of a problematic contemporary genre, aiming for a revision of its short history and the resignification of its musical functions.

The three manifestations of the ghosts that I have theorized are present throughout the three films. The ghost of hardships past and repeated patterns can be found in the aestheticization of corruption in *Zama,* a materialization through music of a ghost that keeps on reappearing in the region. It is also present in *Ema*, through the pervasive gender roles associated to the act of dancing, and how women are haunted when their project of reappropriation of reggaetón in their own terms is censored by voices that denounce and censor this reclamation. In *Roma,* the ghost appears as an indicator of the ubiquity of the regime, through military bands and autochthonous genres that adhere to the nationalistic project; or as gendered and class-specific modalities of listening which perpetuate the regional conditions of the domestic worker.

The ghost of poetic justice appears as a natural consequence to the ghost of hardships. It provides a re-narrativization of reggaetón in *Ema,* making us wonder: what if the genre could be used as a vehicle of societal reclamation and stripped of its misogynist narratives? What if the past of historical signification of the genre could be changed? In *Zama,* the *what-ifs* of remembrance become more personal, as Los Indios's music provide modalities of listening that recall instances of loss and the longing for those who are no longer present. The film, a big Latin American *what-if,* provides agency to those who have had it historically denied, and the aestheticization of Martel's ghostly figures through the Shepard tone conjures a ghost of historical reckoning. The ghost of poetic justice in *Roma* is more passive, instead acknowledging the loss of the perspective of the other (and some of their musical practices) in the middle-class construction of the film. It also provides re-narrativizations in the form of contemporary projects of nostalgia for pasts that were never experienced.

The music in the intrafilmic happens in different spaces, thus conjuring the places where the haunting is prone to occur. In *Zama,* the derelict places abandoned by the colonial project prompt the *what-if* moment of the agency of the other: the haunted house that terrorizes Zama with its out-of-focus ghosts and its terrifying Shepard tone. In *Ema*, the places stained by time become a stage, repurposed for dancing and for the resignification of urban hardships. In *Roma*, the intrafilmic is constructed as an inside-outside dualism, with musical hauntological implications specific to each space.

For determining the associations of music that eventually leak into the intrafilmic, I have proposed an eclectic methodology that requires an additional layer of analysis. I have expanded on the required approach for each of the case studies, after analyzing the musical construction of the intrafilmic. Although an additional methodological step may seem extraneous, it provides an understanding of the full extent of the music in the film which, as I have demonstrated, goes beyond apparent interpretations and instead provides a complex net of engagements with the past of the region. The additional methodological steps used in this research have provided the detection of certain specific ghosts. But ghosts are prone to elusiveness. Using different methodologies for this extra step could conjure different sets of ghosts.

In the case of *Zama*, I propose a sense of aestheticization of corruption through the Shepard tone, departing from academic engagements with corruption in the region. Different discourses surrounding corruption can be added to this methodological step to provide a deeper understanding of corruption as a music-mediated ghost. Regarding Los Indios's music, I have departed from an autoethnographic perspective that I have contrasted with salient discourses in social media. A full discourse analysis of a larger corpus of social media engagements is an avenue to explore further, which will undoubtedly uncover more modalities of listening that the ones I have explored.

The scholarly engagement with reggaetón has prompted a field of study of its own. Academic discourses regarding reggaetón old and new, or explorations into adjacent genres such as trap and bachata, can provide different significations of reggaetón, particularly considering the genre's fast-paced evolution throughout the twenty-first century.

Roma provides the opportunity to close-read the songs used in the film, as well as the songs in its companion album. This would prompt an understanding of different nostalgic strategies that may leak in the intrafilmic. Considering the rich history of rock in Latin America, and the many different significations of the genre throughout the second half of the twentieth century, it would also be productive to explore rock academic and cultural discourses further.

Throughout my analysis, certain instances have prompted the exploration of regional emotional practices. The involvement of theories and methodologies from scholarship in the history of emotions offers the possibility to expand this project in that direction. The concept of emotional regime theorized by Rob Boddice and William Reddy prompts a departing point to locate the hauntological within specific Latin American emotional practices.[1] For example, the instances of parodic or comedic perception of music that is perceived as old, the emotional implications of music codified as danceable, and the many instances of musical nostalgia throughout this project can be explored through the lens of the emotional regime.

A hauntological approach to Latin American film music delivers the opportunity to conjure hidden ghosts in different cinematographic engagements with music. The conclusions that I have reached, in each of the chapters and globally, along with the avenues of further research that I have proposed, demonstrate that this is a rich field of study that can be expanded to other films across different cinematographic practices and eras in the region. By exploring the region's engagement with its past through music in film, elusive and unexpected ghosts could provide us with answers about Latin America and its historical preoccupations.

[1] Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

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