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Thesis*

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“Tomando Café” is an eight-minute-long choreographed and filmed dance for camera that encompasses multi-dimensional research on the racial ideology of colorblindness, systematic oppression, identity, exile, and social interaction over coffee. When looking at someone for the first time our brains try to draw connections from our own experiences in order to create a comprehensive sense of who they are based solely on immediate sensory intake. Labels and stereotypes often infiltrate these definitions of others because no other specifics are known about the individual’s character. However, in this way of understanding, the complex and unique history of that individual is lost in assumption and faulty preconceptions. When we inquire into the lives of others, we can begin to correct this habit of mis-understanding.

Fundamental to this work is the assertion that we do not live in a post-racial society. In a poor attempt to overcompensate for a ferocious era of racism and slavery where non-whites were seen as sub-human, color is now invisibilized.^[1] For this very reason, I chose to use songs written in Spanish to visibilize a non-dominant culture. To fully understand the complexity of the work, I have included sidebars throughout this paper with relevant lyrics translated to English. Full-text Spanish lyrics can be located on pages thirty-six and thirty-seven. I realize that someone who is fluent in Spanish may pick up on subtle cues in the film that are undetectable to others. I considered adding English subtitles to the film, accompanying the songs, but ultimately decided that this would defeat the purpose of letting the art speak for itself. I want to allow the film to reach different audiences in different ways depending on the viewer’s distinctive experiences. Viewers who do not speak Spanish might not understand the words but what can they take away from the mood, the melody, the movement, the filming choices? How does your own background inform the way you receive this work?

On the micro scale, “Tomando Café” delves into two specific white Latina perspectives on discovering internal and external senses of home, personal identity, navigating duality, and understanding exile in its physical and mental manifestations. On the macro scale, this film speaks to a much broader theme. The work aims to exemplify an artistic method of countering colorblind ideology, placing emphasis on the differences among people and demonstrating the importance of recognizing one’s own positionality in existing power-based social hierarchies.^[14] Pulling from the feminist ideology of intersectionality, in coming to fully know, accept, and perform all aspects of personal and collective identity, we are better able to find a sense of authenticity and grow our perspectives on the world and how it functions.^[3]

There are many constraints on how to conduct ourselves socially, to be politically correct, to be polite, and these limitations impede our ability to communicate honestly about racial and cultural difference. As a result, there is a general lack of tools for navigating these conversations with compassion and sincerity. Through the lens of this work, I propose that an artistic approach to this issue is an accessible means to start dialoguing more about what goes unsaid, unseen, and unheard. Each of us comes from a unique and complex background of ancestry and experience. What do we choose to show and share with others, when, where? What do we hide and why? What do we choose to see and what do we choose to overlook? Do we make these choices consciously or subconsciously and why? These questions will be illuminated through a detailed explanation of the development of the film.

A barista finishes up foaming milk at a café and a sigh of steam is released from the machine. The title screen reads: Tomando Café, Spanish for “drinking coffee.” I am sitting by the window in a café, Pekoe’s Sip House on Alpine Ave., wearing my favorite yellow hat, a geometric, brightly colored sweater, gray sweatpants, hiking boots, hoop earrings, chipped nail

polish, and no makeup. The morning sun shines over the mountains, clearly visible through the storefront window. I am working on my thesis paper, pause to take a sip of coffee, and reach for a book in the depths of my backpack. My rummaging is interrupted by an acquaintance, Jazmin Levis, who is inquiring into my research. She dons a characteristic knit hat, brightly colored plaid shirt, jeans, chipped nail polish, UGG boots, and no makeup. We embrace and sit down.

This colorful café world is a representation of a utopia where we can counter colorblindness and fully embrace our own intersectional identities as well as those of others by communicating. Despite the fact that we are in a café, a social setting where politically correct language and pleasantries are expected, Jazmin and I are clearly our truest, most colorful selves. Costuming this section required us to look no further than our laundry baskets for the ensemble that answers the question, “What is the truest you?” We appear as ourselves void any of the defense mechanisms and carefully contrived boundaries typically demanded of us in social interactions. Cut to alternate utopia.

Throughout this paper the alternate universe will be referred to as SÍNCO, an abbreviation for the Spanish “sín color,” meaning without color. SÍNCO is portrayed in grayscale as it is a representation of the colorblind world that we live in presently. The old film effect also creates a sense of confusion regarding time, leaving the audience questioning whether these scenes are from the past. Though they are actually a reflection of the present, the old film effect indicates that we, as a society, have made less progress than is projected in terms of recognizing and accepting difference. SÍNCO is set in the same mountains that are visible in the café scenes to establish the bizarre parallel between the two worlds.

The mountains are often perceived as a quiet place we can go to escape the falseness of these socially acceptable exchanges, a place to seek truth and escape. Yet in this unlikely setting, two elegantly dressed women are seen sitting at an elaborate dining set at the edge of the mountain top merely staring at each other and sipping coffee. *SÍNCO* is an overt exaggeration of the niceties and social graces that we use to guard ourselves and hide aspects of who we really are. Words are initially unnecessary here as every single action is precisely choreographed. Jazmin and I are dressed in excessive makeup, large hats, scarves, leather gloves, perfectly polished nails, copious amounts of jewelry, dresses, nice jackets, and multiple layers of tights and leggings.

Back in the café, Jazmin and I find ourselves telling each other our most personal stories, the ones that are rendered invisible to the naked eye. As these stories manifest through four dance pieces, our masks diminish in *SÍNCO*. Layers of clothing and makeup are stripped from our bodies demonstrating a gradual breakdown of this exaggerated reflection of today's world. As the film progresses, the unseen becomes seen and the untold, told, prompting the neatly ordered *SÍNCO* to deteriorate into something much more human; frustrated, urgent, and imperfect. Close-up shots of our facial features in each reality are spliced together to show that there are two parallel universes that we both inhabit. In *SÍNCO*, I pick up a vase filled with flowers and coffee and pour Jazmin a cup, pour one for myself, and wait for her story to begin. A shot of a dirty chai beverage ushers in the title screen: **Chapter 1: Lágrima: The Dirty Chai.**

Lágrima, Spanish for "tear," is a popular coffee drink in Buenos Aires, Argentina where Jazmin Levis was born and raised. The Dirty Chai makes reference to the famous Dirty War that ravaged Argentina between the years 1976 and 1983. Some thirty-thousand Argentineans were "disappeared" by the country's military dictatorship. When President Isabel Perón was deposed,

military officials seized control of the country imposing curfews, strict censorship, banning trade unions, and bringing all aspects of government under military regulation. Censorship ran rampant with social customs and practices becoming actively monitored and repressed and all artistic voices interpreted as signs of rebellion. During this time, thousands of innocent people were jailed, tortured, and held at detention camps for acting and speaking out against the regime privately, protesting publically, or being related to a dissident.^[6] Pregnant women who were detained gave birth on the cement or dirt floors of their cells only to have their children taken from them and given away to other families without record.^[5] Travel restrictions made self-imposed exile nearly impossible, though some did make it out of the country before the militant laws came into being.^[12]

Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, a group of mothers whose children had been killed or detained by the dictatorship, organized protests in the streets. They marched wearing white bandanas embroidered with the names of the disappeared and holding signs and banners bearing their loved ones' faces. They flooded into the main plaza in front of the presidential house, begging for their kidnapped loved ones to be returned, begging for justice.^[9] Many victims of the disappearances dealt with the terror of the situation by becoming closed off to the public out of severe depression and fear that they too might become targeted.^[10] These women had the strength to share their stories with each other and the world, organizing around a cause for life: for freedom. The white scarf worn by Jazmin is an homage to their bravery as is the setting for the scenes, the central fountain outside the University Memorial Center at CU Boulder. Throughout the work, the scarf is Jazmin's totem, a signifier of her identity and history.^[13]

Jazmin carries this history with her, deeply rooted in the development of the culture she comes from. This piece is her identity solo, paying respect to that history, a lament for the lives lost and the massacres endured. Costuming this piece was mostly about finding something that expresses elements of Argentine history through the traditional shoes (known as “alpargatas”) and headscarf while still maintaining Jazmin’s fun personality, a love of patterns, and a love of deep, muted colors. Dark purple and navy blue are colors that seem to fit a solemn yet hopeful, internal mood. The skirt was chosen particularly for the choreography which includes turns and sweeping motions. Choreography for this section is inspired by a question-based performance practice, gestural details and concepts chosen from a book by Jazmin’s uncle detailing life under military occupation, and movements taken from her own improvisation on a personal understanding of exile and home.

In his book, her uncle, Daniel Tarnopolsky, makes reference to searching for the warmth of home as searching for sunshine. Jazmin recalls childhood memories of asking him to tell her stories about what it was like to live under military rule, to be in a constant state of fear. To this he would reply, “It was cold.” In an interview I conducted with Tarnopolsky, he elaborated on this response. If it was not a loved one, friend, or neighbor being disappeared, it was the media reporting a horrific news story championing those in power or relaying details on the next viciously restrictive mandate. The entirety of the country was a factory of fear, completely void of warmth, of life. In conditions like these, it does not take long to completely forget what freedom feels like, what the sun feels like. And even if Tarnopolsky were to walk outside in broad daylight and see the bright ball of light in the sky at this very moment, he still would not find what he was looking for. The sunshine he longs for exists only in memories; memories that disappeared with the life of the first assassinated innocent, the first child kidnapped and dropped

into the ocean from a military plane, the first mother separated from her newborn baby and tortured until her death. In the dance manifestation of her personal story, Jazmin is searching for her sense of sunshine and finding home and comfort only in small moments. She slips and slides on the patches of ice and snow on the ground, only finding security in the sun. Meanwhile in SÍNCO, she lovingly touches her headscarf, establishing its importance to her identity. She uses it to wipe off her makeup, removing a layer of inauthenticity. Historical pictures of the real women protesting disappearances in Argentina are displayed intermittently throughout the chapter to give some contextual clues to viewers. In the end, it is only turning back time that brings Jazmin back to her fullest state of warmth, liveliness, happiness, and completion. She is then seen in SÍNCO taking a sip of coffee to conclude her tale. She is without jacket, hat, and makeup implying that she has shed some of her defensive layers and showing that maybe this utopia is not so perfect after all.

Tarnopolsky exiled himself from his home country as a means to escape the influence of a vicious, militaristic regime.^[12] Jazmin has made a choice to remove herself from her home country and study in the United States. Her experience and that of her uncle differ greatly in terms of circumstance, however what remains unchanging is the longing for a sense of home. The physical displacement from home creates a need to establish a new, or at least modified, identity in a foreign place with foreign customs and language. Jazmin has come to understand the way society functions in the U.S. and has maintained the aspects of her personality that make her uniquely her. However, some of these aspects translate to Americans as overbearing, bawdy, loud, and intimidating. That said, in her words, “I’ve had to tone it down a bit to feel normal here.” She identifies strongly as Argentinean and Argentina will always be home for her. But being so far away, both physically and now culturally, from family and friends is a constant

challenge. “Going back is harder now. It takes me a good week or so to readjust and even then, they notice I’m different. Sometimes it’s like I don’t belong here and I don’t belong there so where do I belong?”

The music for this section transitions from Jazmin’s sister Morita singing Puro Teatro, into the original version of this song sung by La Lupe. La Lupe was a Cuban artist also known as the Queen of Latin Soul. A Black Latina, she was told from a young age that she would never accomplish her dream of becoming a famous singer. Not only did she achieve this goal, but she also used her fame to send subversive messages to the public about the oppressive regime transforming her home country. For this reason, Fidel Castro blacklisted her records and pushed her out of the country, forcing a self-imposed exile to New York. This particular song, at first glance, seems to describe the lying theatrics of a romantic partner.^[10] However, it applies equally as a cry to Fidel directly, describing the foolishness of believing his trickery and his deceit of the entire Cuban people. The idea of mass manipulation and using various masks to actualize

desires connects strongly to my research on social interaction and sharing of personal information. It relates directly to Jazmin’s experience of living and studying in a foreign country as well as the history she carries from the impacts of the Dirty War. Argentina’s history is

Music: Pure Theater-La Lupe

Translated from Spanish

Just like in a scene
you fake your cheap pain
Your drama is unnecessary
I already know this play
Lying, how well the role fits you
After everything it seems
that this is your true form
I trusted blindly
in the fever of your kisses
You were lying serenely
and because of this the curtain fell
Theater...

You are pure theater
Well-practiced falsehood
Studied simulation
It was your best performance
destroying my heart
and now that you cry to me truly
I remember your act
Excuse me if I don't believe you
It seems like theater to me
and according to your point of
view I am the wicked one!
Ay!!

It was your best performance
destroying my heart
and now that you cry to me truly
I remember your act
Excuse me if I don't believe you
It seems like theater to me
Excuse me if I don't believe you
You are pure
Theater

marred by military violence against its citizens and a loss of national identity. Argentineans were effectively exiled within their own homes as the customs of the home country they had come to know began to, quite literally, disappear. As death squads killed more and more innocent citizens in the name of social order, cultural practices began to dissolve. Though the context of this exile differs greatly from that of La Lupe's experience and Jazmin's personal experience, in all cases there is a loss of control over the feeling of belonging and finding a once-familiar home. When home is known and then lost, a fragment of identity is lost too. Perhaps La Lupe's call to Castro could also be a call to the military leaders that seized every social outlet to spread their message of fear across an entire nation.

In SÍNCO, Jazmin and I sit across from each other with various layers of clothing visible on the ground. Her honesty and transparency has lessened my own guards as well though I still wear makeup. She motions for me to move toward her and we carefully proceed to switch chairs and mugs and take a sip of coffee in unison, void of any emotional expression beyond a pleasant smile. Now in the café, Jazmin has just finished her tale and we each take a sip of coffee much less carefully and on our own time, still processing the weight of her story. Back in SÍNCO I sigh in preparation for relaying my own story. I remove a small bag of coffee beans from my bra and place it on the table.

In thinking about the role of coffee in my everyday life, I enjoy one cup when I first wake up. My daily caffeine dose offers me a chance to just breathe and contemplate without thinking about the pending stressors of the day ahead. It is my personal meditation time but also something I have always enjoyed socially since my Abuelita, meaning grandmother, gave me my first cup as a small child. My father's mother was a woman who found comfort in routine. Strong and proud mother of ten, Victoria's fingerprints had vanished from her fingers long

before I met her, a consequence of her pious commitment to daily prayer. If not in use, her wooden rosary never left her neck. Victoria lived a troubled life in service to her children and abusive husband. Somehow, even in her last days of life, she had the energy to take me out for hot chocolate or coffee and always paid with a coin purse she pulled from her bra. *Always*. A small bag of coffee beans is my totem, my identity, my history and a nod of acknowledgment and love to my Abuelita, Victoria. In the café, I pour milk into my coffee creating the background for the next chapter title: **Chapter 2: Half-and half: Café con Leche.**

“It's just like when you've got some coffee that's too black, which means it's too strong. What do you do? You integrate it with cream, you make it weak. But if you pour too much cream in it, you won't even know you ever had coffee. It used to be hot, it becomes cool. It used to be strong, it becomes weak. It used to wake you up, now it puts you to sleep.”

-Malcolm X

Long before I fully understood what any of it meant, I sported the nicknames halfie, beaner, tweaner, white girl, almost-Latina, and café con leche. The last of these names and the title of this section comes from an affectionate nickname gifted to me by my parents: coffee with milk. My pink-skinned, blonde-haired, blue-eyed mother would be stopped in the supermarket and asked what country she had adopted her pale-olive-skinned-ringlet-headed-brown-eyed-baby-girl from. It was too early for me to understand, but eventually systems of racial hierarchy and inequity would become central to my creative passion and ultimately extend far beyond my understanding of self and become pertinent to this work.

I was born to a Colombian father and an American mother of Scottish and Dutch ancestry. I am the product of two sets of cultural customs, two languages, and two very different worldviews. I am an intersectional being, not a sum of many parts but a whole representation of each part fully and at once. Despite an ever-growing multi-racial population, the institutions governing our society have yet to catch up and recognize the importance and value of

intersectional both/and principles. The dichotomous either/or system is perpetuated, producing a violent internal conflict in the minds of those of us who do not fall neatly into a single category.

^[4] But because I have spent twenty years being careful not to confuse my Spanish with my English in my speech and my complexion is the palest of pale olives, I often pass as full white American. This is not always so. Sometimes my mixed features and hair are recognizable as “other,” or if someone asks for my full name and the Spanish accent pops out then I can almost certainly expect an, “I knew it!” However, in a binary mindset, one that ruled much of my childhood and adolescence, there exists an inevitable choice to express one aspect of myself and perform that. I had to be just one thing and relegate the other to the shadows. And that one thing was determined for me by genetics before I exited my mother’s womb. I would only be seen as white regardless of the fact that being white makes me no less Latina and being Latina makes me no less white. In this frame of mind my home is not a home at all. It is the limbo between two labels, two categorizations, two distinct meanings placed on my body by seemingly ever-present social systems that decide who I am for me. But I have the power to make a choice to make all aspects of myself seen. In shifting my thinking of myself towards a more intersectional model, others come to see all of me instead of just parts becoming lost in a sum total.^[4]

Una buena taza de su negro licor, bien preparado, contiene tantos problemas y tantos poemas como una botella de tinta...

{A good cup of black coffee, well made, contains many problems and many poems like a bottle of ink...}

Rubén Darío

From January 2014 through August 2014, my social anxiety and I conducted forty-three random interviews in Boulder, Denver, and Longmont, Colorado. This was a personal project that I thought might influence my work at some point in the future, but has become remarkably relevant in this process. By random interviews, I mean that they were a series of unplanned meetings in which I would arrive at a coffee shop, stake out any lone individuals, and ask to buy them a cup of coffee and talk. Participants ranged as widely in age (twelve to ninety-two) as they did in demographics and self-identity. Twenty-one interviewees self-identified as female, nineteen self-identified as male, two self-identified as transgender, and one chose not to identify with a particular gender. Twenty-four interviewees racially identified as white, six as Latino, five as Black, two as Asian, four as Other/Mixed, and two opted not to identify. I pulled from a list of questions ranging from a benign, “what is your name and where you from,” to “what has been the most formative experience of your life?” Participants got the option of answering or passing on any of the thirty questions I had prepared in both Spanish and English. A full list is included on page thirty-five of this paper. This interpersonal research was the spark that ignited my curiosity into the superficial nature of human conversation upon meeting a stranger.

Most shied away from the more thought-provoking questions requiring self-examination of ideologies to express views on colorblindness and answering how opportunity differs based on skin color and ethnicity. Others seized the opportunity to make their voices heard and state their opinions clearly and strongly. There were fake smiles and real ones exchanged. Awkwardness and visible discomfort became commonplace. Tears of pain or joy or some mixture of both stained many cheeks and it all happened over two simple cups of coffee shared between two complete strangers. Café world is a means of transparently showing my interpersonal research process to the audience. The comfortable way in which Jazmin and I interact in this universe is

what I experienced with those interviewees who were willing to fully engage in conversation and let any preconceptions of appropriate social conduct to melt away.

Pondering those experiences in connection to this project, I wondered about the role of coffee in social culture both in the U.S. and Latin America. The longstanding social practice of meeting for coffee in Latin America is very similar to how we now share coffee in the United States.^[14] Catching up with an old friend, dictating a life story to a curious student, a first date, a study session, or a potential job interview: these are all reasons to grab a cup of coffee, relax, and chat. It is in this way that coffee can be perceived as an equalizing force. As conversation and warm, caffeinated beverages flow, we are granted an opportunity to become more at ease and let any consciously or subconsciously imposed filters release their hold on our words. Whether coming from a Latin American perspective, a U.S. perspective, or both, the cultural understanding of what it means to have a cup of coffee with someone is universal. True, it may be only for an hour or two, but when we spend a few moments fully present and engaged in something with another human, really seeing someone, giving and receiving information, a connection is made. Genuine moments such as these may be rare to most, but, as I quickly discovered, they can happen if we seek to let them happen. From another perspective, coffee carries a legacy of inequity and exploitation.

It is first important to consider the supply chain of coffee to the United States. “Coffee trees produce their best beans when grown at high altitudes in a tropical climate where there is rich soil. Such conditions are found around the world in locations along the Equatorial zone, between latitudes twenty-five degrees North and thirty degrees South.”^[3] Many Latin American countries fall in this region. Trees are planted and harvested by farmworkers by hand on small farms and with a strip-picking machine on large plantations. The fruits or “cherries” are

processed by sun drying and raking or are mechanically separated from the pulp and sorted to be fermented and dried until moisture reaches eleven percent. The milling process removes the husk and, after polishing, the beans are again sorted and graded. Green beans are exported to be bought, roasted, ground, and brewed into your morning cup of coffee here in the U.S.^[3] Walk into any Starbucks and you can request a bold blend from Latin America. Brazil and Colombia are the top producing countries in the world and Guatemala, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, and Mexico also make the list. The prevalence of fair-trade systems has increased in the past century but coffee production carries a history of exploitation. To meet a demand for coffee that could not be satisfied domestically, large corporations from the Western world seized land in the tropics and soon found that foreign labor was cheaper, easier, and less messy. There was no need to take into account the basic human rights of the workers. Production rates soared to match Western demand with very little economic gain for the coffee-growing nations themselves. Environmental issues ensued from overworked land and harmful chemicals used in the growing process. Economic upturn in coffee-growing nations promised by the Western companies was proved a mirage. The life of a picker was physically strenuous and unrewarding leading to increased poverty, injury, and often premature death.^[14] For the purpose of this work, coffee is both an equalizer and an inequality. It is one cultural commonality that can be easily drawn between two very different worlds but is also a symbol of a longstanding, exploitative business relationship between Latin American countries in the “bean belt” and the U.S.^[14] These two different interpretations are both valid and can be true at the same time only if we allow our minds to pull away from dichotomy.

This chapter begins with a montage of family photos, coffee mugs, and ground coffee which are seen to create a dividing line in the otherwise white, blank space. I am first bound to this line, looking at photographs, recalling memories, and pondering whether the coffee is an equalizing factor or dividing factor between my two cultures. This line is a limbo of instability and represents an inability to choose just one part of my identity to express. Food and clothing suddenly appear in the space, serving as the main cultural differentiators between the two sides of my background. I explore both sides, finding ease in being on one side or the other, but more difficulty in being directly on the line. I find things I love on both sides, nabbing a Colombian guava paste candy and an Oreo cookie and placing them in my bra. I collect an American flag ball cap and a traditional Colombian hat known as a “sombrero vueltiao.” I then return to the line and begin to divide. Jordan Cate embodies my white American culture as I embody my Colombian roots. For all intents and purposes, she is the U.S. and I am Colombia.

This section is as much a solo as it is a duet happening inside my mind. The white, blank setting emphasizes a dream-like world in which this story is manifesting. On the American side, there are Lay’s potato chips, a McDonalds meal including a big mac, an apple pie, and super-size French fries, Oreo cookies, Ked shoes with the American flag on them, the baseball cap with the American flag on it, Coca-Cola, Twinkies, pizza, a coffee maker, Folger’s coffee, and various clothing articles in red and white. These are cultural symbols things that I identify as fully American. The Colombian side has a plantain press, a wooden kitchen tool used to froth milk and a metal vase, a large wooden spoon, beans and rice, Colombian “oblea” wafers and guava candy, chocolate, rosaries, traditional musical instruments including a pan flute, the traditional hat and shoes, Colombian coffee sent from family in Bogotá, and various clothes in red and yellow. These items are completely specific to Colombia. We wear blue tank tops in two

different shades and styles with matching black shorts in order to make it clear that we are two distinct parts of the same person. The blue tones of our tank tops combine with the red/white and red/yellow miscellaneous clothes to complete the colors of the flags of the U.S. and Colombia respectively.

After I divide, U.S. and Colombia wind up in our “home” culture sides. After initially enjoying the familiarity of these sides, we begin to realize that the other exists and are called to recombine. However, we wind up crossing to the other side of the line instead of re-integrating. Here, things are extremely foreign to us, some enjoyable and seemingly useful, others less so. Colombia experiences a less than delicious twinkie while U.S. is unsure of what to do with the rosary. U.S. finds that the alpargatas cause her to dance an unfamiliar salsa while the Keds cause Colombia to do a country line dance jig. After growing increasingly confused of our identities while exploring these strange objects, we remember that the integrated me took treats from each of the “home” sides. U.S. pulls the Oreo cookie from her bra and Colombia indulges in a guava paste candy. These treats give us a moment of comfort and familiarity and allow us to find our way back to the line. This time my two cultures are able to recombine and I find a moment of wholeness. The actuality of the identity-dividing

**Music: Blues for my guitar-
Pappo's Blues**

Translated from Spanish

When I listen to my guitar, I feel like everything is better, and everything becomes clear to me, everything around me, it's like listening differently, it's like listening to my own voice.

When my fingers move, in their fine tune, of the notes of their chords, there is a conversation; my guitar and I have a strange relationship.

I don't like to add effects nor modify her voice, her sound is perfect as is and that is how I like her, like she's sounding now, no need for distortion.

I remember the night when she first appeared, since then she accompanies me wherever I go; my guitar and I have something common between us

I thought about exchanging her for another, of better quality, I will never leave you because there is something between us

It is not just a melody, it's a conversation

My guitar and I have something in common between us

Sensation, a strange sensation

Between you and me girl

line is something whose existence I questioned for the better part of two decades. In realizing that I do not need to parse out the culturally distinct aspects of myself to understand my identity and be understood by others, I have found a sense of integration and home.

By the late 1970s when the Dirty War began, the popularity of traditional Argentinean blues and tango had been replaced by rock. Viewed as highly subversive material, military censorship greatly inhibited its availability to the public. In a 1976 speech, Admiral Emilio Massera denounced rock musicians and fans as potential subversives and by 1977, both consumers and creators were being arrested and blacklisted. By the year 1980, rock had gone underground as a source of solidarity amongst Argentine youths.^[8] Despite all odds, few bands like Pappo's Blues managed to continue producing and performing out of sight of the government during and after the Dirty War. This particular song speaks about a relationship between man and guitar, wanting to abandon it for a better one, but being unable to because of a deep, complicated, and profound love. It is easy to relate the song to feelings about a romantic relationship or furthermore to Argentina before military occupation; not wanting to change its perfect sound and being attached to its rich pitch which does not just relay a melody, but a conversation and history. I use this piece as accompaniment for the second section that draws from my experience of feeling lost in a limbo between two cultures, as if one were the musician and the other the guitar.

The camera captures my face now looking disheveled with smeared makeup and a visibly distressed expression, creating further cracks in the utopian façade of SÍNCO. Jazmin and I are now stripped of our layers and have begun to express emotion more freely as we uncover the roots of this colorblind ideology. Back in the café, my story has concluded and we are quietly reading through Gabriel García Márquez's Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "The Solitude of

Latin America” from 1982, and discussing its relevance to my work. In SÍNCO, we read his words aloud. The scene fades to an image of an Americano beverage and the chapter title reads:

Chapter 3: Americano: Double Shot. An old ceiling fan begins to turn, and the cycle begins.

The title of this chapter comes from a popular coffee drink and also from an interview question: “what does it mean to be an American?” A double shot means two shots of espresso, a nod to a dizzying head rush of caffeine, the dizzying nature of running in circles, and the sometimes-dizzying layered footage in the section. This chapter is an expression of the process of trying to explain what it is like to be at a systematic disadvantage to those who refuse to believe it exists in the U.S. How can an individual actively try to rid of colorblind ideology and change the minds of others? It is much like running in circles of all shapes and sizes, trying to find any commonality, any weak spot in the brick wall that exists around recognizing racial difference and its subsequent effects. While changing one’s own way of thinking is difficult, changing another person’s thinking is nearly impossible unless they are ready to accept the change. Ultimately people cannot change their thinking unless they, themselves, make a conscious effort to do so.

This section in “Tomando Café” features three dancers of different ethnicities who are coming to understand their own identities and the power they have in greater society. Jordan Cate identifies as European American and Native American. Madison Coia identifies as European American. Sara Alamad identifies as Middle Eastern, Jordanian. Dancers were instructed to wear comfortable clothes of their choosing to move in. The piece is loosely based on an experimental movement study I created in Performance Improvisational Techniques class with Lauren Beale. Every word and phrase originated in a deeply detailed multi-hour conversation between Jazmin and me about colorblindness and what genuine progress toward

equality might look like as well as how to change popular thinking. Each dancer's improvisational sequence came from the following score: wake up/shake up, hit the beat, do you want to sit?, tired, how hard do you work?, endless cycles, frustration, confusion, see something, learn, make them see it too, take the camera, run in circles. The meaning of the score evolved as my research deepened and I decided that the dancers needed to be fully aware of the content of my thesis study before starting movement. Prior to filming I led a performance practice which included reading pertinent texts and quotations as well as practicing embodying each aspect of the score.

In pre-broken-down SÍNCO, I examine my reflection in a copper coffee mug. I am still fully dressed, showing a break from linear time. In the café, I examine my reflection in a silver coffee pot. The piece is set in Carlson Gym at CU Boulder due to its generally run-down look, yellow hue of the lights, and cracked mirror with danger tape. Most of the section is shot from the side so that the reflection is what the camera captures. A dry mop sits propped against a chair in the center of the room, an acknowledgement of my Abuelo, my grandfather. Though I never met my paternal grandfather, I am told he was a stern man, frustrated at the lack of job opportunity he experienced when he came to the United States. He lived out the last decade of his life as a janitor at Villanova University in Pennsylvania. A vicious, bitter, and abusive alcoholic, Celiano was often a “boogeyman” figure in my father's stories about his childhood in Colombia. The mop improvisational prop is my way of acknowledging my grandfather and thanking him for giving me a father who chose to forge a completely different life for himself and his family despite the fact that he came to the U.S. at age fourteen knowing only two English words: “Coca-Cola and French fries.” He held a plethora of odd jobs like dishwashing and painting houses and offices for his brother's painting service. These provided minimal

compensation but, somehow, he managed to work his way through college and then medical school. As part of our initial performance practice, this personal anecdote was relayed to the dancers. We decided collectively that the mop should represent the work required to break from the cycles we are a part of.

Unbeknownst to the audience, the end of Jordan's cycle is shown first. She sits in front of the mirror shaking, awakening herself to her own positionality in systematic hierarchies and the degree of privilege she has because she is identified as fully white American while her Native American heritage is externally invisible. She moves through the cyclical score once alone, breaking from the reflection view for a brief moment to emphasize her solo exploration. Cut to the café where I sit reading the Gabriel García Márquez text and conversing with Jazmin. Jordan is then moving through the sequence again with Madison as rhythm keeper. The rhythm keeper is on autopilot, trying to repeat the beat as uniformly as possible. Back at the café, Jazmin reads the text and reaches for her coffee as we discuss. Now in Carlson, Sara is rhythm keeper as Jordan dances, implying a third round of the score. As Jordan and Sara manipulate their faces in beautifully grotesque ways in front of the mirror, another layer emerges with footage of Jordan backing into Madison and shaking him. This layered scene grants the viewer access to Madison's cycle where he has been forced to see himself and acknowledge his personal power. Suddenly we are back in Jordan's sequence with Madison as rhythm keeper again.

Cut to the café where Jazmin and I create the rhythm with our coffee mugs. Back in Carlson, Jordan and Sara more vigorously contort their bodies as they explore their reflections and another layer emerges in which Jordan shakes Sara, inviting the viewer into her cycle. The shots of the dancers closely examining their reflections parallel to the beautifully difficult process of self-discovery, acceptance, recognizing power, and consequent privilege. A sudden

shift throws viewers back into Jordan's sequence with Sara as rhythm keeper. Layered on this scene is footage of the perceived endings of Madison and Sara's sequences and the beginnings of Jordan's. First, Madison shakes Jordan. Then, grabbing the camera, he runs in circles around the room, forcing the viewer to become a part of the sequence. Next, Sara shakes Jordan and follows suit, grabbing the camera and running. Jordan, who has already been shaken twice by two different people, finds that only she can change her thinking, as demonstrated in the first scene when she shakes by herself. She too moves toward the camera, takes it, and runs. A soft rhythm is looped underlying spoken text. The repetition of the rhythm underscores the cyclical thematic content and demonstrates an automated, constant rate of passing time amidst the sequences which layer, overlap, and cut, breaking from linear time.

It is necessary to detail the role of this particular mirror to fully understand my artistic choices. The mirror in Carlson has been cracked and university maintenance placed danger tape over the fractures to hold bits of broken glass together and keep it from shattering all over the floor. In some shots, tape obscures the face of the rhythm keeper adding to the mechanical, unaware nature of their role. When viewing a piece by looking into a mirror as the movement happens behind you, you must make a choice at every moment. You can choose to look directly into the mirror at your own reflection, at the room behind you, or at the dance behind you. Adding another reflector to this setup, a camera, and the additional factor of keeping a consistent rhythm further complicates this concept of who is doing the watching and who is doing the dancing. In the context of "Tomando Café," it is a question of who is absently observing and who is actively evaluating, searching, and awakening. When the dancers take the camera and run, they are forcing the audience to become a part of the frustrating cycles that come from being part of a systemic hierarchy and being invisibilized by that system.

“You guys know about vampires? ... You know, vampires have no reflections in a mirror? There’s this idea that monsters don’t have reflections in a mirror. And what I’ve always thought isn’t that monsters don’t have reflections in a mirror. It’s that if you want to make a human being into a monster, deny them, at the cultural level, any reflection of themselves. And growing up, I felt like a monster in some ways. I didn’t see myself reflected at all. I was like, “Yo, is something wrong with me? That the whole society seems to think that people like me don’t exist?” And part of what inspired me, was this deep desire that before I died, I would make a couple of mirrors. That I would make some mirrors so that kids like me might see themselves reflected back and might not feel so monstrous for it.”

-Junot Díaz

Díaz’s words are performed by Madison Coia and serve as the main text for this section. The use of mirrors in this work illuminates systems of selectively ignoring and othering, points to an unavoidable authenticity, and creates a path toward diminishing the influence of colorblindness. If every individual is to be understood in the context of their unique background of experience, and all of those experiences are informed by one’s culture, when you take away an entire culture from a person, you tug at the one string that will unravel their whole sense of being. To be denied a culture at the systematic level, to have an integral part of your being be made invisible and devalued, is something that many non-white minority populations endure daily. As Gabriel García Márquez states in “The Solitude of Latin America,” “the immeasurable violence and pain of our [Latin American] history are the result of age-old inequities and untold bitterness, and not a conspiracy plotted three thousand leagues from our home.”^[6] These inequalities are conditioned into every aspect of life in the U.S., identifiable in policy-making and law enforcement, job, housing, and educational opportunity, distribution of wealth, and mass incarceration.^[2]

“...he recorded that he had seen hogs with navels on their haunches, clawless birds whose hens laid eggs on the backs of their mates, and others still, resembling tongueless pelicans, with beaks like spoons. He wrote of having seen a misbegotten creature with the head and ears of a mule, a camel's body, the legs of a deer and the whinny of a horse. He described how the first native encountered in Patagonia was confronted with a mirror, whereupon that impassioned giant lost his senses to the terror of his own image.”

-Gabriel García Márquez

In his poignant speech, Márquez eloquently describes the state of Latin American identity and the roots of systematic oppression that have kept Latinos and Latinas from achieving the equivalent successes of Europeans and citizens of other first world nations. He unveils a patch-work story, so painfully truthful in its comprehensive definition of disadvantage and inequity as it existed on the day when the speech was made, as it has existed for centuries before, and as it continues to exist in this present moment. The full-text speech can be found on pages thirty-seven through forty-one of this document. Márquez's array of literary works in the world of magical realism all come from this complicated history of colonization and the lossy transition from “indigenous” to “civilized.” Here, the truth is made visible, made plain without any hints of magic or fiction. Here, Márquez relays a series of facts and undeniable truths so powerful and relevant to understanding why these mysterious systems at play in our world cannot be ignored. To ignore them is not progress. To ignore them is a covert form of racism.^[15] I perform the above section of his text as part of the sound score for this chapter.

The mirror can signify a perpetual longing for any sort of external validation that the person you see in the mirror in fact exists and exists with purpose. It is as if you were to picture the following scenario. You look at your surroundings but do not see anyone that looks like you at all, or maybe, you see one or two representations of what someone like you “should” be but are not. You see the stereotypes but you do not think you fit into any of them and you are always confronted by yourself, always questioning who you are and how you fit into a larger societal

existence when there does not seem to be room for you there. You are born into otherness, made to feel separate from the whole. In that separation is an introspective solitude so consuming that externally generated concepts of what you are and “should” be can become internalized. As Díaz suggests above, the lack of a reflection can be dangerous to the mind but the presence of a true reflection can be healing.

To spend time in front of a mirror, really seeing yourself, you can come to know yourself in a new way. Mirrors are the one way that we can visually perceive what we look like. We see ourselves stripped of any makeup, any masks, any layers we may use to hide in public. Our reflections can provide a historical lineage carried in the height of the cheekbones, the curve of the chin, the smattering of freckles across the nose. If one spends enough time both looking and seeing, tracing the lines and bumps and curves, one is also given an option to see oneself in a larger frame. Questions begin to flock to the mind. “What shade is my skin, my eyes? What is the texture of my hair like? How are my lips shaped? What is my nose like? What am I wearing and where did it come from? What does all of this mean?” After the superficial layers are acknowledged, the mind delves deeper. The reflection can become an evaluation of oneself based on society’s pre-determined rules and lead to curiosities of where one might fit into the hierarchies at play. Who am I and how does my identity inform the power I have and, oppositely, how does the power I have inform my identity? What is available to me because of that power?

In recognizing one’s own power and privilege, one’s own prejudices and preconceived notions, the colorblind ideologies that seem so ingrained in the rules of society begin to dissipate.^[2, 16] If I know myself fully, I can come to understand others much differently since each of us is an amalgam of unique circumstance. In understanding the self, not as a sum but as many parts inextricably linked to create the whole, I see that each of those parts contributes to

the level of power I possess in hierarchical systems. I can then begin to see others in the same way, not generalizing, but seeking more details and knowledge about the people I meet; not disappearing color from existence, but instead recognizing it as an important, yet singular snippet of information connected to a much larger web of identity.

Finding tools to communicate about racial difference may seem difficult because there is no pre-existing template. There is no prototype or instruction manual, but there is an entire racial history of lessons. What has been learned and what is progress? When these parameters are defined, the path forward becomes clearer. How can we most effectively communicate our stories? How can we most effectively receive others' stories? If verbal communication is the divide, the gaping canyon separating us from true progress toward a more accepting and equal society, then perhaps artistic communication is the bridge. In sharing our individual histories and experiences of reality with one another, we can explore the very roots of age-old disparities. We can decipher the many ways in which oppressive systems have been perpetuated to the present day due to our conscious and unconscious participation. Admitting our personal role in contributing to the survival of such inequalities is essential to comprehending the ineffectiveness of a colorblind perspective.

What we, as a society, are doing now is not working. Colorblindness only ensures that aspects of our identities are invisibilized, aspects that many of us work extremely hard to affirm for ourselves and validate in the eyes of others. Monnica T. Williams, Ph.D. and writer for *Psychology Today* states, "Most minorities...regularly encounter difficulties due to race. Colorblindness creates a society that denies their negative racial experiences, rejects their cultural heritage, and invalidates their unique perspectives."^[15] In exploring our personal identities using academic, historical, personal, artistic, and inter-personal research, we can create

works of art that speak more authentically than the current pattern of convoluted conversations on race. Colorblindness offers insight into why these conversations are often avoided. Even on the rare occasion when race is discussed, the result is typically a resounding dead-end of defensiveness, blaming, pity, powerlessness, frustration, argument, guilt, and shame.^[2]

As the image of the three dancers running in circles fades out, Jazmin appears in SÍNCO reading “The Solitude of Latin America” aloud, makeup heavily smeared. My face is then shown reading the text while the spinning ceiling fan layers in. Tears fall from my eyes as I finish reading and the wind blows my hair across my face. The submarino beverage appears and a piece of chocolate is slowly absorbed into the white foamy abyss. The title screen reads:

Chapter 4: Submarino: From Froth to Foam.

The submarino, another popular Argentinean drink, is a glass or mug of frothed milk in which a piece of chocolate is dropped and stirred in, espresso shot optional. Before the drink is stirred, the chocolate sinks to the bottom of the glass, completely invisible in a sea of white. This is representative of that which goes unacknowledged and gets completely hidden in a colorblind world. In the café, Jazmin and I place our heads together and hold hands, again completely oblivious to the social rules of what is deemed appropriate physical touch in a public space. This moment is an anchor for us, a moment of acknowledging what we have learned in conversation, and a moment that transports us into a shared mind space.

The next scene shows us in the same position in the shared mind space surrounded by candles, wearing white peasant tops with flower/leaf designs. Jazmin wears loose white linen pants and I wear a white linen full-length skirt. My coffee bean totem is tied to my skirt and Jazmin’s white scarf is tied around her hips. Specific articles of clothing were chosen to accentuate flowy movement in the body and create enough air to snuff the candle flames as we

moved. This costume decision came from a desire to honor the dead by wearing white, a celebration of life, a recognition of death, the color of prayer candles, the color of the headscarves of Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, and the color and material of traditional cumbia outfits.

Cut to the first of two candle-lit paintings gifted to my father by his cousin, Nestor. In this painting, a white man raises his hands to the sky as planes drop bombs down from above. Nestor's paintings deeply inspire me as they are another means of using art to express frustration at social systems of inequity and demonstrate the solitude inherent in self-imposed exile. In a further deteriorated SÍNCO, Jazmin and I have stripped down to minimal black layers, sports bras and black shorts (a sharp contrast to the all-white we wear in shared mind space). Again paralleling café world, we face away from each other in our chairs, clothes strewn about the ground. We make no physical contact, but instead experience personal breakdowns while coming to realize the relativity of reality and allowing previously hidden emotional display to be fully visible. The internal becomes external. In shared mind space we step into the circle of candles and begin to dance around its circumference, allowing our turns and movements to extinguish the flames. In SÍNCO we continue our emotional collapses, improvising with movement content from the first two chapters, and clearly moving in a less choreographed fashion, allowing the impacts of our bodies to shake the coffee table and its contents. Back to shared mind space and Jazmin and I are outside on a sidewalk with heads together, another anchor. Cut to the two of us kneeling in the circle of candles, only four still lit. Then we see that the shared mind space has morphed into a street crossing scene. The significance of dancing in the street is an affirmation of our pact to dedicate time and energy toward lifting the veil of colorblindness from one person at a time by making our findings accessible.

Choreography for this section pulls from cumbia footwork, a traditional Colombian form of music and dance which came from limited movements of enslaved and shackled indigenous Colombians and Black Panamanians on the coast in the 1800s. Originally a courtship dance, often including the offering and acceptance of a candle, it evolved into a celebration of Colombian freedom and a source of national pride.^[17] I also researched and abstracted hand gestures from tango, a traditional Argentinean form of music and dance that came from the working-class African and European peoples in Argentina in the 1890s. Tango demonstrates a negotiation of power dynamics with a passionate intensity in expression, partnering, and musical accompaniment has grown to define Argentine culture through to the present day.^[8] The close embrace and quick gyrating or back-and-forth movements of the hips evident in tango and cumbia were viewed as sexually explicit and inappropriate from the Western-European perspective. Subsequently, these dances have been white-washed and appropriated for decades, their origins long forgotten or unseen by many.^[17]

This song is part of a collection of Colombian cumbia music written and performed between 1948 and 1979 that is one of the most authentically original examples of the spirit of the working class. The vibrant percussion and accordion sounds create a rhythm that is so central to the hearts of Colombian peoples, pulling from indigenous beats and more modern melody.^[17] Lyrics describe a man who lives his life planting coffee. He sings proudly and soulfully, living the life of a mobile

Music: Sembrando Café

Performed by-Alberto Pacheco y su Conjunto

I live planting coffee all the time
(x2)

Because the bush I plant will
provide with good faith

Over here

Over there

I live planting coffee all the time
(x2)

Because Mother Nature provides
with good faith (x2)

Over here

Over there

farmer, traveling to wherever the next grow is located, where there will be work for him. It is a celebration of the nomadic lifestyle and of Mother Nature for yielding a good crop.

“Faced with this awesome reality that must have seemed a mere utopia through all of human time, we, the inventors of tales, who will believe anything, feel entitled to believe that it is not yet too late to engage in the creation of the opposite utopia. A new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness be possible, and where the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth.”

-Gabriel García Márquez

In this section, Jazmin and I demonstrate a recognition of cultural complexities within ourselves and in each other. We rejoice in what we have learned in the process of this conversation while also paying respect to so many individuals who have lived and died in confinement, the disappeared, to the psychologically homeless, to the brave dissenters who united entire nations through their art, to the ones who wrote about them and kept their stories alive, and to those who are enslaved to and invisibilized by a complex system of hierarchy and inequality. In paying these respects, we are also looking ahead to how we might move forward, how in finding artistic tools of conversation to discuss the oppression that still exists in our modern society, we can heal and create genuine progress toward Márquez’s vision of utopia.^[6]

Shared mind space has reverted back to the candle circle. Jazmin and I delicately caress our totems, recalling hardships we both face and those faced by our predecessors. We celebrate our differences and rejoice in all that we have learned just by inquiring into each other’s lives in a shared journey toward knowledge and formation of personal and collective identity.

Simultaneously, we honor the difficulties inherent in making progress on a large social scale, the inequalities that have plagued the past, the inequalities that exist at present, and the way forward

through artistic communication and sharing stories in creative ways. Back in SÍNCO we experience our final individual breakdown moments.

Cut to the second of Nestor's paintings depicting a gray man sitting on a beach directing his focus toward a simple sailboat to his left while a steamboat floats by on the right. Now in SÍNCO Jazmin and I have stopped our individual processing and turn around on our chairs to face each other. In the shared mind space, I gently touch Jazmin's thigh and she begins to blow out the candles one by one. The four candles represent the things we wanted to honor most: one for our ancestors, one for Gabriel García Márquez, one for Los Desaparecidos who were killed during the Dirty War, and one for the future, for the gift of life, and for the promise to contribute whatever we can toward creating a social climate that favors acceptance and celebration of difference. I pick up the fourth, our hope for the future and commitment to sharing our stories and receiving those of others. I move toward the camera, and blow out the flame.

Back in SÍNCO, Jazmin and I are gone, the table is overturned; coffee, cream, and sugar spill into the earth. We have dismantled the mirage of a world without color and have decided not to participate, not to perpetuate falsehoods or repress emotion any longer. Now in the café, I sit by myself, sipping coffee and looking up at the mountains. Cut to Jazmin doing the same, alone in the café. These two scenes leave some ambiguity as to whether or not Jazmin and I ever met each other at all. But the final shot, a close-up of the overturned coffee items on the ground in SÍNCO, solidifies the fact that a shift in consciousness has been made. Both of us refuse to allow colorblindness and societal expectations of how we should act to rule our lives.

The significance of this ending sequence is to show that if we are not individually taking on the responsibility of seeking out opportunities to share stories, receive stories, and create genuine connection and understanding, then we are not making progress. It is easy to stay quiet,

to keep thoughts bottled up inside. It takes hard work and courage to make oneself heard and to listen. We are hereby charged with the task of finding artistic methods to free our innermost thoughts from their containers. We must acknowledge our own privilege and inhibit judgements of others without first coming to know the stories they carry. This exchange of ideas, of personal truths is the foundation of forming safe spaces to communicate honestly and clearly.

Art is conversation. It is an ancient and universal form of human expression that holds meaning across the farthest reaches of the globe. The fact that art is such a central part of so many different cultures creates a point of commonality for artists and audiences everywhere. By creating art that deals with complex themes like race, social hierarchy, and colorblindness, those topics become accessible to anyone who views the work. In the arts, making work often follows a trajectory from creative process to a final, observable product. Work is made to be displayed and received by an audience. However there is a grace period offered to the artist. The fourth wall separates performers from audience in a proscenium stage setting. Display cases and DO NOT TOUCH signs shield art in museums. The unspoken pact between audience and artist is that the viewer will respectfully experience the work, internally process, externally dialogue, maybe offer critique or commentary to the artist at a later time, and learn something, anything really.

One of the most frustrating aspects of conversation around racial difference is the intervention of ego and self-defense mechanisms that prevent all parties from fully expressing themselves without interruption.^[2] Incomplete thoughts get jumbled and twisted causing tempers to flare. If an artistic platform is used to communicate about the detrimental nature of a topic like colorblind ideology, there is less room for interruption of the thought. You can fully express your experience from start to finish without being challenged or interrupted. You bravely send your

voice out to be heard and get a brief moment to enjoy others hearing and listening, looking and seeing, touching and feeling your ideas in full. This provides an opportunity to then later engage in conversation about your work and respond to questions viewers may have had. These conversations are about the art, but they are inevitably about the subject matter of your work as well. It would be impossible to talk to me about “Tomando Café” without discussing my views on colorblindness. But in showing my work, I give the audience a completed thought and offer them a way into this world I live in, should they wish to engage.

It becomes evident that artistic expression is a way forward, a way to forge the tools of communication required to create successful conversations where all parties are heard. By creating and sharing works of art we can relay the complexities of our individual experiences and allow them to be viewed externally. It is vital to consider our own personal responsibility as artists to facilitate conversation through this medium as storytellers. It is equally important to remain humble and take on the audience role, exposing ourselves to the viewpoints of other artists and expanding our perspectives.

The credits roll and Madison’s voice closes the film with a line from “The Solitude of Latin America” in Spanish: “La independencia del dominio Español no nos puso a salvo de la demencia.” In English it reads, “Our independence from Spanish domination did not put us beyond the reach of madness.” As human beings we are inherently flawed. We have made centuries of mistakes and committed the most inconceivable of atrocities. Perhaps the most indefensible of these atrocities is an unwillingness to closely examine those mistakes, recognize them, accept them, and learn from them. We must be forgiving to ourselves and to others and take on a personal and collective responsibility to change the way we see the world around us. Even if that begins with the simple act of inviting a stranger to grab a coffee.

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Interview Questions

Pre-interview: any answers will remain confidential

How do you feel about disclosing personal information to a complete stranger?

Do you speak Spanish?

Would you prefer to conduct this interview in Spanish or English?

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Do you have siblings, children?
4. What is your favorite meal?
5. What is your favorite color and why?
6. Are you a religious person? Do you identify with a certain denomination or spiritual practice?
7. Where are you from and where have you traveled to, lived?
8. How do you identify racially, ethnically, in terms of sexual orientation, gender, socioeconomic status, ability?
9. Do you feel advantaged/disadvantaged by any aspects of your identity?
10. What is one true thing about yourself that you don't like people to know about you? Why?
11. Have you ever been discriminated against? What did it feel like?
12. How do you define culture? What does it mean to be an American?
13. When do you feel most confident? Why?
14. When do you feel shame? Why?
15. Have you ever suffered a personal trauma? How has it impacted your life?
16. Do you consider yourself artistic? What is your medium? What is your message?
17. How do you define the concept of home generally? Where is your home?
18. Do you speak a language other than English?
19. Do you feel you fully realize your identity? Was there a defining moment when you realized who you are?
20. Did you attend school?
21. Describe the nature of your interpersonal relationships. Do you make many social connections? Are you married, single, divorced, widowed?
22. Where do you work?
23. What are you passionate about?
24. If you could boil your personality down to five qualities what might they be?
25. What do you consider to be the most formative experience of your life?
26. How do you define communication?
27. How do you view race and racism in contemporary society?
28. Do you hold any prejudices against people of other races aside from your own, about your race?
29. Does race exist?
30. Has this interview changed the way you feel about disclosing private information to strangers?

Full Texts:

Music: Puro Teatro

Performed by-Morita Levis, La Lupe

Igual que en un escenario
Finges tu dolor barato
Tu drama no es necesario
Ya conozco ese teatro
Mintiendo que bien te queda el papel
Después de todo parece
Que es tu forma de ser

Yo confiaba ciegamente
En la fiebre de tus besos
Mentiste serenamente
Y el telón cayo por eso

Teatro...
lo tuyo es puro teatro
falsedad bien ensayada
estudiado simulacro
Fue tu mejor actuación
Destrozar mi corazón
y hoy que me lloras de veras
Recuerdo tu simulacro
Perdona que no te crea
me parece que es teatro
y acuérdate que según tu punta de vista
yo soy la mala!
Ay!!

Fue tu mejor actuación
Destrozar mi corazón
y hoy que me lloras de veras
Recuerdo tu simulacro
Perdona que no te crea
me parece que es teatro
Perdona que no te crea
Lo tuyo es puro
Teatro.

Music: Blues para mi guitarra

Performed by-Pappo's Blues

Cuando escucho mi guitarra,
siento que todo es mejor,
y que todo se me aclara,
todo a mi alrededor,
es como escuchar distinto,
es como escuchar mi voz
Cuando mis dedos se mueven,
en su fino diapason,
de las notas de sus cuerdas
hay una conversación;
mi guitarra y yo tenemos
una extraña relación
No me gusta darle efecto,
ni modificar su voz,
su sonido así es perfecto,
y así es como la quiero yo,
como esta sonando ahora,
no hace falta distorsión
Recuerdo aquella noche,
cuando ella apareció,
desde entonces me acompaña,
donde quiera que yo voy;
mi guitarra y yo tenemos,
algo común entre los dos
Pensé en cambiarla por otra,
de calidad superior,
yo nunca te dejaría,
porque hay algo entre los dos,
no es sólo una melodía,
es una conversación
Uoh, uoh, uoh, uouh
mi guitarra y yo tenemos,
algo común entre los dos
Sensación, una extraña sensación,
uouh es entre tú y yo, nena.

Nobel Lecture- Gabriel García Márquez

Nobel Lecture, 8 December, 1982

[Translation]

The Solitude of Latin America

Antonio Pigafetta, a Florentine navigator who went with Magellan on the first voyage around the world, wrote, upon his passage through our southern lands of America, a strictly accurate account that nonetheless resembles a venture into fantasy. In it he recorded that he had seen hogs with navels on their haunches, clawless birds whose hens laid eggs on the backs of their mates, and others still, resembling tongueless pelicans, with beaks like spoons. He wrote of having seen a misbegotten creature with the head and ears of a mule, a camel's body, the legs of a deer and the whinny of a horse. He described how the first native encountered in Patagonia was confronted with a mirror, whereupon that impassioned giant lost his senses to the terror of his own image.

This short and fascinating book, which even then contained the seeds of our present-day novels, is by no means the most staggering account of our reality in that age. The Chronicles of the Indies left us countless others. Eldorado, our so avidly sought and illusory land, appeared on numerous maps for many a long year, shifting its place and form to suit the fantasy of cartographers. In his search for the fountain of eternal youth, the mythical Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca explored the north of Mexico for eight years, in a deluded expedition whose members devoured each other and only five of whom returned, of the six hundred who had undertaken it. One of the many unfathomed mysteries of that age is that of the eleven thousand mules, each loaded with one hundred pounds of gold that left Cuzco one day to pay the ransom of Atahualpa and never reached their destination. Subsequently, in colonial times, hens were sold in Cartagena de Indias, that had been raised on alluvial land and whose gizzards contained tiny lumps of gold. One founder's lust for gold beset us until recently. As late as the last century, a German mission appointed to study the construction of an interoceanic railroad across the Isthmus of Panama concluded that the project was feasible on one condition: that the rails not be made of iron, which was scarce in the region, but of gold.

Our independence from Spanish domination did not put us beyond the reach of madness. General Antonio López de Santana, three times dictator of Mexico, held a magnificent funeral for the right leg he had lost in the so-called Pastry War. General Gabriel García Moreno ruled Ecuador for sixteen years as an absolute monarch; at his wake, the corpse was seated on the presidential chair, decked out in full-dress uniform and a protective layer of medals. General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, the theosophical despot of El Salvador who had thirty thousand peasants slaughtered in a savage massacre, invented a pendulum to detect poison in his food, and had

Music: Sembrando Café
Performed by-Alberto Pacheco y
su Conjunto

Yo vivo todo el tiempo sembrando
café (bis)
Porque la mata que siembro
produce con buena fé (bis)
Hace por aquí
Hace por allá
Yo vivo todo el tiempo sembrando
café (bis)
Porque la madre natura produce
con buena fé (bis)
Hace por aquí
Hace por allá
Al honoroso Pacheco
Ese pa la calorosa Madre Juana
Hace por aquí
Hace por allá

streetlamps draped in red paper to defeat an epidemic of scarlet fever. The statue to General Francisco Morazán erected in the main square of Tegucigalpa is actually one of Marshal Ney, purchased at a Paris warehouse of second-hand sculptures.

Eleven years ago, the Chilean Pablo Neruda, one of the outstanding poets of our time, enlightened this audience with his word. Since then, the Europeans of good will - and sometimes those of bad, as well - have been struck, with ever greater force, by the unearthly tidings of Latin America, that boundless realm of haunted men and historic women, whose unending obstinacy blurs into legend. We have not had a moment's rest. A promethean president, entrenched in his burning palace, died fighting an entire army, alone; and two suspicious airplane accidents, yet to be explained, cut short the life of another great-hearted president and that of a democratic soldier who had revived the dignity of his people. There have been five wars and seventeen military coups; there emerged a diabolic dictator who is carrying out, in God's name, the first Latin American ethnocide of our time. In the meantime, twenty million Latin American children died before the age of one - more than have been born in Europe since 1970. Those missing because of repression number nearly one hundred and twenty thousand, which is as if no one could account for all the inhabitants of Uppsala. Numerous women arrested while pregnant have given birth in Argentine prisons, yet nobody knows the whereabouts and identity of their children who were furtively adopted or sent to an orphanage by order of the military authorities. Because they tried to change this state of things, nearly two hundred thousand men and women have died throughout the continent, and over one hundred thousand have lost their lives in three small and ill-fated countries of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. If this had happened in the United States, the corresponding figure would be that of one million six hundred thousand violent deaths in four years.

One million people have fled Chile, a country with a tradition of hospitality - that is, ten per cent of its population. Uruguay, a tiny nation of two and a half million inhabitants which considered itself the continent's most civilized country, has lost to exile one out of every five citizens. Since 1979, the civil war in El Salvador has produced almost one refugee every twenty minutes. The country that could be formed of all the exiles and forced emigrants of Latin America would have a population larger than that of Norway.

I dare to think that it is this outsized reality, and not just its literary expression, that has deserved the attention of the Swedish Academy of Letters. A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude.

And if these difficulties, whose essence we share, hinder us, it is understandable that the rational talents on this side of the world, exalted in the contemplation of their own cultures, should have found themselves without valid means to interpret us. It is only natural that they insist on measuring us with the yardstick that they use for themselves, forgetting that the ravages of life are not the same for all, and that the quest of our own identity is just as arduous and bloody for

us as it was for them. The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary. Venerable Europe would perhaps be more perceptive if it tried to see us in its own past. If only it recalled that London took three hundred years to build its first city wall, and three hundred years more to acquire a bishop; that Rome labored in a gloom of uncertainty for twenty centuries, until an Etruscan King anchored it in history; and that the peaceful Swiss of today, who feast us with their mild cheeses and apathetic watches, bloodied Europe as soldiers of fortune, as late as the Sixteenth Century. Even at the height of the Renaissance, twelve thousand lansquenets in the pay of the imperial armies sacked and devastated Rome and put eight thousand of its inhabitants to the sword.

I do not mean to embody the illusions of Tonio Kröger, whose dreams of uniting a chaste north to a passionate south were exalted here, fifty-three years ago, by Thomas Mann. But I do believe that those clear-sighted Europeans who struggle, here as well, for a more just and humane homeland, could help us far better if they reconsidered their way of seeing us. Solidarity with our dreams will not make us feel less alone, as long as it is not translated into concrete acts of legitimate support for all the peoples that assume the illusion of having a life of their own in the distribution of the world.

Latin America neither wants, nor has any reason, to be a pawn without a will of its own; nor is it merely wishful thinking that its quest for independence and originality should become a Western aspiration. However, the navigational advances that have narrowed such distances between our Americas and Europe seem, conversely, to have accentuated our cultural remoteness. Why is the originality so readily granted us in literature so mistrustfully denied us in our difficult attempts at social change? Why think that the social justice sought by progressive Europeans for their own countries cannot also be a goal for Latin America, with different methods for dissimilar conditions? No: the immeasurable violence and pain of our history are the result of age-old inequities and untold bitterness, and not a conspiracy plotted three thousand leagues from our home. But many European leaders and thinkers have thought so, with the childishness of old-timers who have forgotten the fruitful excess of their youth as if it were impossible to find another destiny than to live at the mercy of the two great masters of the world. This, my friends, is the very scale of our solitude.

In spite of this, to oppression, plundering and abandonment, we respond with life. Neither floods nor plagues, famines nor cataclysms, nor even the eternal wars of century upon century, have been able to subdue the persistent advantage of life over death. An advantage that grows and quickens: every year, there are seventy-four million more births than deaths, a sufficient number of new lives to multiply, each year, the population of New York sevenfold. Most of these births occur in the countries of least resources - including, of course, those of Latin America. Conversely, the most prosperous countries have succeeded in accumulating powers of destruction such as to annihilate, a hundred times over, not only all the human beings that have existed to this day, but also the totality of all living beings that have ever drawn breath on this planet of misfortune.

On a day like today, my master William Faulkner said, "I decline to accept the end of man". I would fall unworthy of standing in this place that was his, if I were not fully aware that the colossal tragedy he refused to recognize thirty-two years ago is now, for the first time since the

beginning of humanity, nothing more than a simple scientific possibility. Faced with this awesome reality that must have seemed a mere utopia through all of human time, we, the inventors of tales, who will believe anything, feel entitled to believe that it is not yet too late to engage in the creation of the opposite utopia. A new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness be possible, and where the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth.