

SAMPLE TRANSLATION

Pampa Negra Ediciones



PROYECTO FINANCIADO
POR EL FONDO DEL
LIBRO Y LA LECTURA



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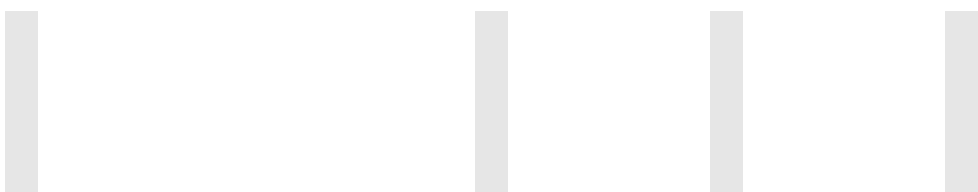
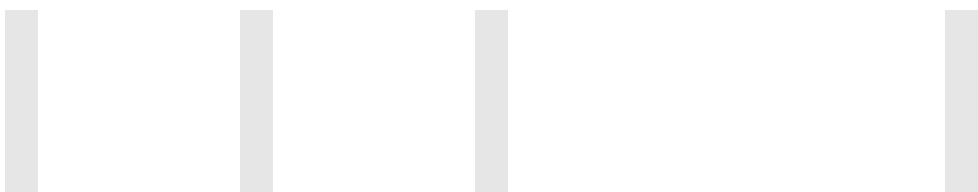


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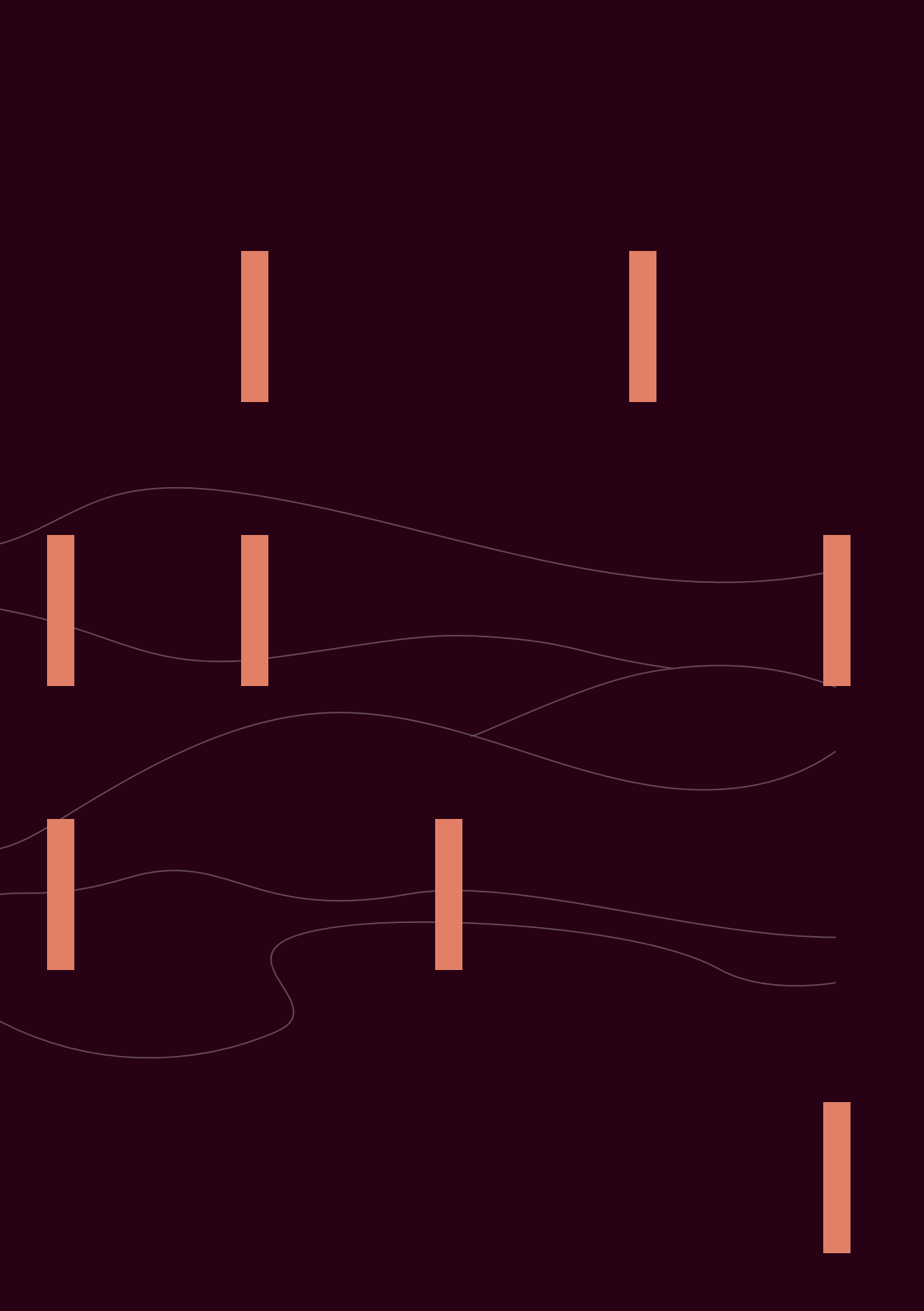
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NORTHERN LITERATURE LIBRARY

NORTHERN LITERATURE LIBRARY [Biblioteca Literatura Nortina] is constituted as an effort to (re)visit the literature produced from the arid “north” of the country, and its cross-border connections, problematizing its margins and constituent elements, expanding its horizons through the publication of current works and the rescue of texts that for various reasons remained unpublished to date, or through the reissue of titles today unreachable, which have not had the circulation they deserve. Its editorial care contemplates critical reception and dialogue with visual artists.

PUBLISHED BOOKS

#01: “A square for death” (Radio Theater)

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#02: “The smugglers” (Novel)

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Nicolás Ferraro

UNA PLAZA
para la MUERTE



A SQUARE FOR DEATH

UNA PLAZA PARA LA MUERTE

Manuel Durán Díaz (1918-1977)

Pampa Negra Editions, 2018 y 2022

Northern Literature Library #001

15x21cms, 66 pages.

ISBN: 978-956-09750-1-0

Prologue by Alberto Olgúin Durán.

Illustration by Jorge Tarbuskovic.

A square for death, radio theater from Manuel Durán Díaz (1918-1977), was broadcast the first May of 1971 by the radios of the Technical University of the State (Universidad Técnica del Estado) and the Cooperative Radio (Radio Cooperativa) from Antofagasta. This little-known piece of literature, commemorates the murdered workers at the Colon Square (Plaza Colón) of Antofagasta the 6 February 1906, the day in which the Workers Mutual Aid Organization (Mancomunal Obrera) from this city declared a general strike. This re-edition includes material from the writer's family archive, reviews published in the press of the time, a prologue by his grandson, the theater director and head of the Performing Arts career of the University of Antofagasta, Alberto Olgúin Durán, in addition to the direct reference to the original audio of that historical broadcast: <https://plazaparalamuerte.pampanegra.cl/>

Collaboration with the family of Manuel Durán Díaz:

www.manueldurandiaz.cl



**Manuel Durán Díaz
(1918-1977)**

Born in Antofagasta on December 11, 1918, he dedicated his entire life to the art of letters: writer, poet and journalist. He showed his talents already in his student days, editing with Raquel Gutierrez the publication *Pulso* of the Boys Lyceum [Liceo de Hombres], where he did his primary and secondary studies.

He worked for years in the newspaper *El Abecé*, where he worked in all the possible occupations until his retirement in 1950. Undoubtedly, these were the most prolific years of his literary career, publishing a large number of articles and his books: *Inauguración de la tierra* (1942) and *Tierra de madrugada* (1947), both of poetry, as well as the story: “Los diez pesos de Lucho Rivera”, included in the anthology *Tres cuentos del norte* (1942). Together with local writers, he founded the Cobrysal Group, a true dynamo of literary and cultural activity in the city, besides winning the 1st prize in the Poetry Contest sponsored by the municipality of Calama, directing several literary magazines, collaborating in the local and national press, while maintaining an intense radio activity, of whose programs we highlight: *Furrowing Furrows* [Surcando surcos]. In these radio stations he deployed a set of radio plays: “History of the Antofagasta Waltz” [Historia del vals de Antofagasta], “The Course of Naranjo” [El derrotero de Naranjo], “El Chichero”, and the title that summons us: “A Square for death” [Una plaza para la muerte], emitted on May 1, 1971. The posthumous publication of his poetry book: *3 dimensiones para mi tierra* (1997). Manuel Durán Díaz died in Antofagasta on January 2, 1977.

MANUEL, DEATH AND THE SQUARES

*“Now i want to talk about poets,
of dead and living poets,
of so many children of this party
and of the torture of being themselves,
because it must be said that there are those who die on their paper,
that living life its size must hurt.
Our life is so high
that to touch it you almost have to die,
and then live”*

Silvio Rodríguez.

I think of Manuel and I think of the aroma of goat cheese, beer. I think of Manuel and I feel the taste of a ripe fig picked from his courtyard. I think of Manuel and I see a giant room crammed with books, diaries, messy paintings, photos of classical musicians, tape recorders, more books, an old phonograph, moths, radio microphones, various junk, a typewriter, unfinished poems and more and more books.

And it was in that space -the recording room they called it-, purgatory of conversations of old Antofagastinos, where Manuel wrote the radio play *Una plaza para la muerte* [A square for death].

And that Manuel stopped to write about an event like the one that took place in Plaza Colón is not a coincidence. If one reviews his literature or reads articles about him on the day he died, it would be easy to understand why he wrote this historical melodrama. This tale is as real and painful as few others.

Because Manuel left in his poems an immense love for the women and men who inhabit this strange place, a hybrid city trapped between the hills and the sea, and because his social commitment was always in his poetry. A social commitment very elusive to the duties of any disci-

plined militant. Because Manuel was a rebel just like the heroes of his “plaza”. A marginal poet, journalist, painter and drinker. He drank, the letters, the books, the Atacama desert, the pain, and he drank life.

Una plaza para la muerte [A square for death], you should know, is more than a radio drama. It is a poetic testimony of a dark part of our city that Manuel, like few -like very few- dared to dramatize. Manuel poeticized pain and blood. So dark is the episode that in the libretto, after hearing the Waltz of Antofagasta and a few brief words from the narrator, we immediately move on to the bullets. Manuel, without being able to avoid it wrote; “Voices of scream, noise of bullets... then the music enters”. The bullets ring out and the radio drama begins.

I imagine Manuel’s creative process, pained by the events of that February day. I don’t know if it is relevant but, in the fictitious names of the characters in the play you can hear Alvarito, Willy, Juanito and Renecito, among others. Names of their children. In creative terms, it could almost be a lack of originality, but somehow it reflects how Manuel Durán Díaz, looked at art. Questionable or not (especially in our times where everything tends to be separated into departments) for Manuel his family and art were the same thing. They all had to be poets even if they were not. His house was poetry and his daughters and sons, his partner Albina, his dogs and cats, all were hyperbolized beings in his head.

I imagine the recording, with the texts directed by Manuel himself, as a moment of high creative tension. I imagine the moment when death and bullets are recorded. How would the “radio listeners” have felt the blood coming out of the workers bodies? How would they have felt the betrayal of their own civilian citizens, uniformed and in cassock? “Here and as everywhere else the friar and the capitalist unite to fuck us” says one of the narrator’s text.

As a curiosity and supported by Brecht who despises the intrigue in the dramaturgical plane (spoiler we call him now) Mañungo is called the worker who dies thinking of his beloved. A kind of hero who will have no monuments or official recognition. That’s how I think Manuel felt.

The writer of this visceral prologue knew him very little. I was lucky enough to record some of his poems in my childhood, eat some goat

cheese with him and talk about stars and fairies one afternoon. But with what I have read and heard in the gatherings with the most duranes duranes I can assure that Manuel Durán Díaz felt like Mañungo, the murdered. That kind of hero is respected by many and despised by the political, cultural and social establishment.

Manuel, he died on his paper. He did things for himself, of course, like everyone else! But most of the time he did it for others. He founded magazines, he created emblematic radio programmes. He created societies, he opened the door of his house to everyone. Manuel Durán Díaz, gentlemen, was the driving force behind an idea that has not been officially recognized. It was Manuel who thought that Antofagastinos and Antofagastinas should recognize other Antofagastinos and Antofagastinas. He was the true creator of the Golden Anchor. The chronicles say so and it would be fair that sometime he was recognized in official circles. Moreover, he was offered the nomination for the Golden Anchor during lifetime and he refused it, as a faithful representative of the poet who lives life at his own size. Far from the light, a friend of his friends, but I imagine him inquisitive with what he did not like.

Reading journalistic chronicles of January 1977, after his death, I can see a deep gratitude of many for the life of the poet and impulses to other artists and thinkers to continue with their artistic life motivated by his consequence. Death to give life to others, such as the dramatic work you will read below. Death to some to gain life for others.

I invite you to this square that has blood and death, betrayal by fellow citizens and their authorities (as many times), but also hope that there are people like Mañungo (or Manuel itself), willing to give their life for others; creating, imagining, fighting, poetizing and who generally die on their paper writing their story or the story of others.

Alberto Olguín Durán

Luciano Cruz

LOS CONTRABANDISTAS



BIBLIOTECA LITERATURA NORTINA

THE SMUGGLERS

LOS CONTRABANDISTAS

Luciano Cruz Astudillo (1926-1974)

Pampa Negra Editions, 2022.

Northern Literature Library #002

ISBN: 978-956-09750-3-4

13x20cms, 88 págs.

Prologue by Damir Galaz-Mandakovic.

Xylographic illustrations from Manuel Dongo Rosal.

“By the edge of the rough northern coasts, by paths embedded in the Pampa, inside of the Antofagasta and Tocopilla brothels, or in the ocean, in front of the mouth of the Loa River, a fearsome smuggler boss moves with great speed, driven by a fierce tenacity, in search of the disloyal accomplice who has dared to scamp a large amount of a contraband. The convulse backbone of the plot is undressing, with a great realistic force, the little-known world of the audacious gangs that in the North of Chile (Norte Grande), practiced the illegal entry of goods. They are the ones who have the primary performance in this novel, and they emerge from it endowed with an overflowing energy, fearless, vigorously animals, resolved, turning the story into a powerful breath of life”

Yerko Moretic (1927-1971).



**Luciano Cruz Astudillo
(1926-1974)**

He was born in Gatico on July 15, 1926. He attended primary school in Tocopilla and secondary school at the Barros Arana National Boarding School [Internado Nacional Barros Arana] in Santiago, beginning his literary adventure in the student magazine *Internado*. After graduating, he worked as a journalist in Santiago,

the capital of Chile and returned for a short time to Tocopilla, where he opened a bookstore and was elected alderman in 1951, being a communist militant. That year he published his first book, the compilation of short stories: *El Americano*. Back in Santiago, he worked in *El Siglo* and *Vistazo*, and in 1958 he published *Los contrabandistas* [The smugglers], a short novel that “analyzes the sordid underworld of these beings, in permanent struggle with police surveillance, against the swings of the coastal swells and against their own brutal impulses” (Mario Baha-monde). This work won the Alerce Prize of the SECH in 1959. The following year he moved to Venezuela, where he worked as a reporter for *Páginas* and *La República*, reporting on guerrilla warfare in Venezuela and other countries such as Mexico and Dominican Republic. In Caracas he wrote the novel *Mi hermano el alcalde* [My brother mayor], published in Chile in 1965. He returns to the country, rejoins *El Siglo*, goes bankrupt with the Communist Party and works with his brother Gilberto in advertising graphics. He was arrested and tortured in the National Stadium by the Pinochet dictatorship, dying as a result of the consequences shortly after his release, on April 30, 1974, in the city of Tocopilla.

The work is inspired and illuminated by the details of Tocopilla in the 1940s and 1950s. In that port theater, the greed for merchandise and sumptuary and exotic products encouraged an important illegal market of products, inaugurating diverse relations between dissimilar local actors, where the demonstrations of forces were a constant, especially with the theft and removal of contraband, which in fact were bags with merchandise. The purpose of smuggling was clearly to avoid paying the taxes charged by customs, for which officials, the police and criminals were also in collusion.

The steamships, once they landed in Antofagasta or Iquique, sent a telegraphic message through the company All America Cables Incorporated, located on Serrano Street at Arturo Prat Avenue. In that message they informed their contacts of the products and quantities they were transporting. They also advised the day and approximate time of arrival in Tocopilla. This time generally coincided with nighttime, which facilitated the practice of various crimes, including prior threats.

Once the steamer had arrived, the smuggled goods were thrown into the sea. These foodstuffs, cigars, alcohol, fabrics, clothes, jewelry, etc., were carried in bag with a lighted lantern inside, so that the bags were thrown into the sea and as they had air in them, they floated. Thus, the smugglers would set out in boats or chalupas to collect the merchandise with pistols in hand, ready to shoot anyone who dared to interrupt the collection exercise.

The merit of Luciano Cruz Astudillo, not only in this work, lies in his acute observations and descriptions of the surroundings of Tocopilla. He knows every corner of the port and describes with grace the landscapes, the neighborhoods, the beaches, the hills, the roads, the central streets, the images of the daytime, nighttime, and early morning port. He presents very well the psychology of the hooligans.

His portraits are successful visual ethnographies of a bustling, multinational and active port that in 1940 had 15.624 inhabitants and in

1952 had 20.241 inhabitants. Not only does he have that grace, but also his observations allow him to portray the underworld of the underworld of Tocopilla, where guns, knives and fights were the elements that in fact created a local geography governed by gangs, runfias and outlaw cliques that not only confronted the corrupt police but also, and especially, confronted each other. Loyalty was a relational capital. Thus, those actions merge with what we can call porteñismo, a structuring axis given by the author's own biographical experience as a good recognizer of spaces and their particular corners. As it was mentioned by the prominent literary critic Yerko Moretic in 1959 in *The Smugglers* [Los contrabandistas] the convulsive "backbone of the plot strips with great realistic force the little-known world of the audacious gangs that, in the Norte Grande, practice the ilegal internment of merchandise. It is a world to which a whole network of prostitutes, merchants, thieves, dealers, pimps, police and civil authorities parasitically adhere"¹. For such reasons, Mario Bahamonde himself said about Cruz in 1961: "He is a writer who has been able to look with accurate eyes at the essence of local life"².

Luciano Cruz has the peculiarity of changing the names of his characters, but in the local daily life of Tocopilla, everyone knew who he was talking about. There were many who were angry with the writer, who always affirmed that there was more reality than fiction in his works. That detail shows the courage of writing where the writer is part of what he describes. And that scene will not always be pleasant.

The agile pen of Luciano Cruz, as soon as the novel *The Smugglers* [Los contrabandistas] was launched, was awarded on August 17, 1959 with the illustrious Alerce Price of the Chilean Society of Writers [Sociedad de Escritores].

Damir Galaz-Mandakovic

Historian from Tocopilla, PhD in History and Anthropology

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1. Moretic, Yerko (1959). "Los contrabandistas de Luciano Cruz". *Atenea*, N° 386, pp. 246-247.

2. Bahamonde, Mario (Compilation and notes) (1961). *Antología del cuento Nortino*. Antofagasta: Universidad de Chile, Departamento de Extensión Universitaria, p. 364.

REALISM AND OBJECTIVITY: THE SMUGGLERS
[LOS CONTRABANDISTAS] BY LUCIANO CRUZ ASTUDILLO

Fast and capsized car rides, assaults with revolver in hand, violent attitudes, harsh language, murky and dangerous environments, spectacular homicidal fights; in short, brutal, aggressive and breathtaking action, such is the fundamental characteristic of this short novel that offers an unusual, direct and passionate rhythm.

Along the rough edge of the northern coasts, along roads embedded in the pampas, inside Antofagasta and Tocopillan brothels, or in the ocean, in front of the mouth of the Loa River, a fearsome smugglers' boss moves with great speed, driven by fierce tenacity, in search of the disloyal accomplice that who has dared to cheat him out of such a large amount of contraband. After a laborious back and forth, he finds him. He kills him, but before doing so, he has received mortal wounds.

The descriptions are sparse, except for a few superfluous explanations about the area; the dialogues are brief and blunt. Direct, vertiginous narration prevails, without rest or subjective interpolations.

Despite this apparent lack of interest in expanding and deepening the basic episodes, the convulsive backbone of the plot unveils, with great realistic force, the little-known world of the audacious gangs that, in the Norte Grande region, practice the illegal internment of merchandise. It is a world to which a whole network of prostitutes, merchants, thieves, dealers, pimps, police and civil authorities parasitically adhere; but its core is formed by men who, at night, and using the most diverse means, risk their freedom and even their lives every minute, in efforts that combine the love of danger and the need to subsist in some way.

Those are the ones who play the main role in Luciano Cruz's book, and they emerge from it endowed with an overflowing energy, intrepid, vigorously animal, determined, reckless, turning the story into a powerful vital breath.

As if he kept away from any literary purpose, as if he only wished to faithfully transmit a feverish experience without any kind of embellishment, without idealizations, Luciano Cruz narrates scenes and speaks of beings in a stark and impersonal way, in such a way that they live by themselves, without any support or defense from their creator. The novelist, it seems, has done nothing more than transcribe that life with the utmost accuracy and sobriety, but revealing, at the same time, absolute mastery over what is essential and significant. Hence, the lively realism of types and events.

In short, *The Smugglers* [Los contrabandistas] is a successful creative incursion of Luciano Cruz through a reality that he has known closely in his wandering life and which he has managed to synthesize with unusual vigor and realism.

Yerko Moretic
Revista Atenea, 386, 246-247.

Chapter One

—“They stole the bags!” Exclaimed Pecas, facing the tall, stocky, almost naked man standing in the semi-darkness of the room.

—“We looked for them everywhere”, he continued “not a trace of them. We turned every corner, every stone. It must have been a tip-off!”

Negro Mellado remained motionless. He had shaken his frizzy hair in disbelief, suddenly waking up from his peaceful sleep. He had a reputation for being serene, but this had never happened to him. Had his bags been stolen? Four million in nylons, watches, shirts and cigarettes!

—“And Peta and Molleja?” he asked.

A cold sweat froze his back. His stomach began to clench. His slanted eyes closed scrutinizing, shining in his wide, half-squared sallow face, with flat cheeks and flattened ears. He looked up and down at Pecas, his cousin, a blond boy speckled with brown spots and dressed in American-style jeans and a plaid shirt, with a seven-tongued dragon on his back.

—“They stayed there, just in case.”

—“Have any cars from Antofagasta passed by?”

—Pecas bit his nails, annoyed.

“We have to do something. Let’s hurry. Let’s go on the road!”

—“Yeah, sure” said Negro, confused. He was barefoot and in his underwear, his torso covered with a T-shirt, standing on the threshold of the dining room of his house, in front of the half-open door. Behind Pecas, he watched part of his black Ford 46 car, illuminated by the electric bulb and the pale reflection of the moon. All the rumors of the saltpeter port, just two blocks away from his house built at the foot of Don Pancho hill -round at the top and slightly higher than the row of hills of the coastal mountain range-, reached him with strange resonances. It was three o’clock in the morning and the wind lifted the rhythmic lull of the ships, boats, tugboats, the scurrying of the waves and their crashing on the rocks of Tocopilla. The moon filtered through the door and the cracks in

the house's corrugated iron -extending the reflection of the light of the bedroom, lit by the blows of Pecas, and where his wife, Leontina slept grumbling-, and it slipped through the roofs, the waters of the bay and the streets, spilling down the steep and rocky wall of the high coastal hills until it appeared above, on the hill, phosphorescent and wide, clarifying the sleeping and extensive saltpeter pampa. Had his bags been stolen? That was what Pecas was telling him, when he thought that everything was as usual, back on the road to Antofagasta. If he lost the bags, they could ruin him. They would not believe him. He had to pay for more than half of the other car, the Chevrolet 50, and also pay off the outboard motor of his boat. Who could it have been? He thought about the smugglers and did not suspect anyone. But who knows? No, they must have been from Antofagasta or Iquique. Or maybe from Santiago. Yes, it was the most probable scenario, the month of July ended and the thieves, the 'lanzas' from Santiago who had come to the festival of La Tirana, the religious and pagan party of the interior of the Tarapacá province, were passing through Tocopilla. Everyone knew that, but it was more difficult that they were them, they did not know the place, they could not give the exact spot where the boat was going to leave the bags. The boat! Chascón Julio! He suddenly remembered the unmistakable figure of the boatman Julio. It could have been him. But who had he worked with? Ah, if he knew, he would kill him, would kill him, yes...

—“I will kill Chascón!” -he muttered in anger.

Negro Mellado gripped his revolver. He had put on a wool jacket that hugged his massive torso, and his long khaki gabardine pants, the kind of those that were worn by soldiers in the U.S. Army. Three minutes later Negro and Pecas were leaving in the car, driving down the deserted street towards the one that connected to the road to Antofagasta. Leontina had not woken up, and the bedroom light remained on.

No one was passing by at that hour, and in that sector, in the saltpeter port.

The lanterns illuminated again, back, the railings of the station of the Anglo Lautaro Saltpeter Company, the bridge, where the railway line passes from the María Elena Saltpeter Office, the corrugated iron works, the Villa Esmeralda camp, of the Anglo Lautaro employees, the rocks and next to the sea, the phantasmagorical mass of the electric plant of

the Chile Exploration Company, from where the energy is generated to remove the machinery of the copper ore of Chuquicamata, to the interior of the province. After passing Caleta Boy, the beach resort at the southern entrance to Tocopilla, and the Chile employees' camp, the lanterns threw their beams into the distance, along the zigzagging road to Antofagasta. The noctilucas glowed brightly, intermittently, sometimes in overlapping lines, bordering about two kilometers. Behind them, in the narrow semicircle of the port and its flickering light bulbs, the lights of the saltpeter ships, motionless, dormant, resting, were reflected in ladders on the undulations, until they narrowed and burst on the rocks of the coast.

“Did they steal my bags?” - thought Negro Mellado again, remembering the figures of his competitors and wondering how they would have known about the Jeremec, the saltpeter ship that called twice a month at the port.

He pressed his lips together, but a sense of security calmed him down. “They couldn't go too far! Maybe it was all Pecas's recklessness”, he said to himself, a mistake due to his inexperience, he was just starting out, and it was understandable, it had happened to him the first few times too, when he was young, of course not with a shipment as valuable as this one.

More than five kilometers from Punta Blanca, a small peninsula with an inn, a gazebo and swimming pools and a paved road from the coast to its buildings, they reached their destination. The Castro brothers ran out of the road, revolvers in hand, they were small, rough, wide, very similar in their oval faces and olive skin, with long chins, with separated and big ears, nicknamed the older Molleja and the younger Peta.

Molleja shouted: “I think it was Chascón...”

But the roar of the engine and the unleashed, howling wind lost their words.

Negro drove the car into a bend, taking it out of the road, down a natural esplanade, to place it among the rocks. There, a half-hidden path led out, behind the huge mossy rocks of the beach, to a small cave.

Peta said to his brother:

—“Don't go ahead, Molleja. This is very serious. No foolery...”

He closed an eye to him, mischievous. They were happy that they had robbed Negro Mellado. He didn't want to pay them for their work.

The lights went out.

—“Has any car passed?”

—“None”.

—“Did they check the coast properly?”

—“No sign of the bags, Negro” said Peta. I don’t understand. I think they are still hidden around here.

Negro used his old tactic. He distrusted the Castros. He knew that the best one, Peta, was more alert, more lucid. Wouldn’t it be a move? But he dismissed that idea. It was absurd. He addressed the older brother, implying that it was with him, with Molleja, that he did business.

—“Weren’t you here this afternoon, Molleja? Didn’t you see the bags? What happened then?”

—“What do I have to do with it?” Molleja stammered, backing away and clumsily stepping on the pebbles.

—“They stayed here as usual. Chascón Julio and I left them in the cave. Then I went to Punta Blanca. When I came back, they were still there. Peta saw them too, didn’t he? And Pecas too, when he came on his scooter...!”

—“Sure” said Pecas nervously, looking at all the men. “That was around six o’clock. Then I took Molleja to the Rat’s Nest. We had a few beers, like always, like every afternoon”.

—“So Peta stayed here!” exclaimed Negro.

The men stared at each other, and the Castro brothers approached.

—“I took Peta with me too” said Pecas, looking down. “We have always done it the same way. But when we came back the bags were still there, weren’t they?”

—“That’s right”.

—“I can’t believe someone stole them!”

—“How can you doubt us?” shouted Peta threateningly.

—“We’ve worn ourselves out looking for them everywhere!”

Molleja glared at him grimly.

—“I don’t doubt you. You can’t pull a stunt like that on me!”

Negro Mellado spoke sincerely. He thought that not only could they not do it because it required money, a boat, another man, a warehouse to store the merchandise...and the Castros were not only what they called “rats”, poor, low-flying, but also cowards, and anyone who dared to rob

him, Negro Mellado, famous in the north and on all the ships that sailed from New York to Tocopilla, had to be a brave, daring man. Perhaps like Chascón Julio, the one who had made him curse impotently one night, defeated by his own strength and his money. “Open up!” he remembered him knocking on the door of Curriche’s brothel several years ago, when he was defeated by the boatman Julio. “Open up, Currinche, it’s me!”

—“The house is closed” he said. “It’s not open to anyone.”

—“Fuck the gringos. There’s money here. Open the door!”

—“They are not gringos, Negro. It’s Chascón Julio, he doesn’t want any visitors!...”

—“Look!” shouted Pecas. “There’s a car coming.”

Through the curves of the coast, about three kilometers away, the lights of the lanterns could be seen, fading for a few seconds and appearing for another.

—“Let’s stop him” ordered Negro, returning to the reality of the robbery. “Chascón Julio, Chascón Julio” he thought. “He can’t do this to me!” He explained his strategy:

—“Peta and I are going to Antofagasta to stop all the cars that are coming into this direction. And you” he said to Molleja, “do the same with those who are leaving Tocopilla. You will stay with Pecas. It’s four o’clock. I can be back at nine-thirty. Stop them all, eh!”

He pulled the car out of the bend, drove it onto the road, crossing it and blocking the way. The men stood threateningly. Four revolvers were pointed at the lanterns, but their eyes could see nothing, only a large, bright circle, which dazzled them even more brightly.

The car braked, zigzagging. The lanterns went out, and the driver turned on the fog lights. He stuck his head out the window and said in a drawling voice:

—“What’s up, friends?”

They approached and shone their lanterns on them. It was a dusty green station wagon. It carried three girls and two drunk young men sleeping inside. The only one who was awake was the driver, a thin guy with a blond beard and long hair.

—“Let’s go have some fun in Tocopilla” he said, half-drunk.

—“Let’s go to Georgina’s, friends. It’s really bad in Antofagasta. Are you broken down?”

He left his head fall onto the steering wheel. One of the girls snuggled deeper into the lap of a curly-haired, red-haired young man. Negro didn't answer. The men looked at each other and smiled. Pecas stuck his head through one of the windows and looked at some fat, shapely thighs. He thought that, because of his youth, that was what he was looking for. Something just for him. But he had to leave everything to time. Calmly, carefully. He had started very well. The girl half-opened her eyes, but then closed them, dreaming, turning over in her mind great, dark, stormy plans.

—“Keep going, young man”, said Negro Mellado, after making sure there was nothing there.

Pecas ran to move the car. The station wagon drove down the clear road. A drunken laugh reached the men, who felt the station wagon accelerate and take off at full speed through the shadows of the night toward Tocopilla.

Half an hour later, at the so called “curve of death”, Negro Mellado stopped his Ford in front of the small grotto of the Virgin Mary. He placed some bills in the money box placed in the hollow of the rock and prayed piously that they could find the thieves before reaching Antofagasta. But if things went badly for him, then may the Virgin help him when he had to tell Vicente about the stolen bags. He was prepared to do anything, to tell the man and to pursue, even to kill, the culprit, the thief, the one who had dared not only to laugh at him, but also at Vicente and the man...of course...he had to be killed...The candles in the grotto, almost burned down, were replaced by Peta, and the steady, yellowish light, without flickering, made him imagine Negro Mellado as a good omen. Full of fervor, he then drove his car to Antofagasta, but near Mejillones, the small and desolate port located in the northern lap of the strange arm of the province, just as the shadows were beginning to fade away and the maritime horizon was becoming more or less clear, he had a hunch, he looked up at the sky, saw a star twinkling almost above the huts, and decided to stop at Huala-Huala, the inn that served passengers on the coastal road. The three wooden and stone buildings, one of them a chicken coop, were focused and the glare made a small, shaggy dog jump out, barking furiously. The innkeeper's wife got up. Through one of the large windows, she poked her dark head, with her slanted eyes and broad

cheekbones, and raised a carbide lamp, scrutinizing the new arrivals.

—“It’s too early!” she grumbled loudly. “We don’t have anything hot yet!”

—“Get Juanucho up” thundered Negro Mellado. The men advanced. The woman looked at them in astonishment, approaching, until the glow of the lamp clarified the two blurred figures.

—“But, he is Negrito” said the woman, smiling. She ran to open the door of the inn and wake up her husband, the old Bolivian Juan López, who got up grumpily, covering himself with a multicolored poncho. But when he saw the men, a broad smile narrowed his eyes as he extended a rough, warm hand to the stocky, curly-haired man.

—“But it’s Negrito” he said, in almost the same voice as his wife. “And Petita too. What brings you here? We can make you something warm, right Negra?”

The woman didn’t answer. She watched Peta’s movements as he searched the corners, shining a lantern, suddenly looking at them suspiciously. Negro explained the robbery to the Bolivian and told him he had to let him into the bedroom. It was a matter of life or death. The innkeeper became fearful, stammered, looked at his wife, who was motionless, terrified, and protested humbly that he knew nothing, that they could search everything, everything, the chicken coop, the dining room, the rabbit hutches, the toilet shack, but the bedroom, he swore he had nothing and knew nothing about anything.

—“All right, Negrito” he said then, “come in... come in... I don’t know what you’re looking for. But there’s nothing of yours here!”

—“I wish, Juanucho”.

Forty minutes later, Negro and Peta were swerving, colliding as they rounded the curves and hurtling toward Antofagasta. The car jumped over the bumps in the road and the men on the cushions. Negro was furious and pressed the accelerator. He had no idea, no suspicion, no clues, nothing, about the thieves. But now he was much more bothered with the loss of his reputation. The whole town would know about this, they were going to talk about it, he could not shut the mouth of Pecas and Molleja, much less the Bolivian and his wife, nor the small and suspicious man at his side, Peta... He gave him a red-faced, angry look, and he only saw the man’s indefinable face, his eyes fixed ahead, scrutinizing.



Yes, everyone was going to know, and the worst part about that was that they would laugh at him, Negro Mellado and his lack of judgment, at his trust in these three idiots, for giving a responsibility to a child... A child, yes, because that's what Pecas was, even though he looked just like him when he was that age. What great thing had Pecas done? All he had to do was compare, without sentimentality, his own youth with that of Pecas, his cousin, who had never walked barefoot and had never set sail before...

Then his imagination made him see the ports of America and the fabulous New York, the first time he saw its skyscrapers and the endless stream of cars on the port avenue, twenty years ago, when the saltpeter ships seemed to collide into each other in the bays of northern Chile and his strong adolescence passed from one ship to another, sleeping on decks or in the squares, basking in his own satisfaction, alone, without a girlfriend or commitments, or even friends. Sixteen years old, the age of Pecas, who didn't even know Santiago! A hateful thought crossed his mind and, from a distance, punished him, slapping him hard, he alone was to blame for everything. Now the only thing to do was to run to Vicente, take refuge with him, and let his strong, powerful fist fall in the port, so that no one would laugh. Ah, if only he could find the thieves...

The figure of Julio the boatman returned, along with other smugglers: the fat Carranza, the lame Titoya from Antofagasta, some from Iquique, whose names he couldn't remember; he imagined how they had found

out the information and gathered to rob him, laughing at him, trampling on his reputation, not caring at all about the respect he had earned in more than twenty years of work.

The car turned one of the curves, following the long warning whistle that Negro gave furiously. It was getting lighter. The white patches of the Pacific stretched along the coast. The rocks and stones, the color of the sand, white in parts, black and greenish at times, were beginning to take over the earthy and rough landscape. The hills were no longer black or leaden. Three sleepy seagulls squawked.

He had to find the bags, he had to recover the money that meant the consolidation of his future by paying off his Chevrolet 50 car, which was already making him money transporting passengers within the city, and the outboard motor for his boat, with which he used to go out and buy fish on the high seas from the fishermen returning from Guayán, a cove north of Tocopilla, justifying his profession as a fisherman and his maritime license to the Internal Revenue Service.

—“There’s a car coming!” said Peta.

A pale, almost white light disappeared around the curves and reappeared behind the rocks. Negro had a premonition. He stepped on the accelerator and had no doubts. It was the brown car from the Agullo Agency.

—“Isn’t that Agullo’s car?”

—“Looks like it” said Peta, crouching down and gripping his revolver. The men looked at each other.

—“Why so early?”

On the ridge of the surrounding hills, the first rays of sunlight were gliding down, falling and yellowing at an angle the still waters of the Pacific. The land was beginning to warm and the wind swirled through the nooks and crannies, raising dust, ruffling the weak waves that lay dead on the beach, lifting the myriad drops and throwing them into the air over the sharp rocks, and whistling along the narrow coastal platform. The cars drew closer. About fifty meters away, Negro recklessly turned around and planted his car like a barrier. The two men jumped out, revolvers in hand, shouting and waving their arms, while the driver of the Agullo Transport Agency, his eyes wide open, slammed on the breaks and skidded to a halt on the hard asphalt of the road.





Sergio González Miranda

CLAUDINA

Teatro, amor y revolución en la pampa salitrera



BIBLIOTECA LITERATURA NORTINA

CLAUDINA. THEATER, LOVE, AND REVOLUTION IN THE NITRATE PAMPAS

CLAUDINA. TEATRO, AMOR Y REVOLUCIÓN EN LA PAMPA SALITRERA

Sergio González Miranda

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Collages by Sebastian Contreras.

Claudina is both a protagonist and a privileged witness to that world in which workers edited and wrote newspapers and women workers organized plays, to be distributed and performed in every corner of the desert and beyond. Workers who could not conceive of education and culture divorced from the transformation of the system that, in the first instance, placed them in a position of social subordination, but not of passivity. This novel represents for us the same thing that Claudina's plays represented a hundred years ago. It is the possibility of living, even if only for the hours it takes to read, in a world different from the one we face every day. A world, we insist, no less unjust than the current one, but more hopeful, one that allowed a young woman who arrived on a conscript boat from the south to become, in addition to the mother of the people of Tarapacá, the socialist muse of the people of the north.



**Sergio González Miranda
(1954)**

Historian and sociologist from Iquique. He lived his childhood and youth in the historic neighborhood of El Morro, where swimming and baseball occupied unforgettable moments. Likewise, music has a special place in his creative work, enjoying a wide spectrum that goes from Joan Manuel

Serrat, Violeta Parra and The Beatles, to classical jazz, Portuguese fado and Argentine tango, of which he also dances.

He studied sociology at the University of Chile, graduating in 1978. He got his Master's degree in Regional Urban Development at the Catholic University of Chile. In the 1980s, back in his homeland of Tarapacá, he was one of the founders of the Regional Studies Workshop (TER) and the emblematic magazine *Camanchaca*. Years later, he obtained a double PhD; in Education at the Academia de Humanismo Cristiano [Academy of Christian Humanism] and in American Studies at the University of Santiago de Chile.

He has extensively researched the Pampan culture, the saltpeter society and border relations between Chile, Bolivia and Peru among other topics of the Norte Grande. He has been an academic at different universities, especially at the University Arturo Prat and, currently, at the Instituto de Alta Investigación of the University of Tarapacá (UTA). Of his vast written production, the following stand out: *Hombres y mujeres de la pampa* [Men and Women of the pampas] (1991), *Chilenizando a Tunupa* [Chilenizing Tunupa] (2002), *El dios cautivo* [The captive god] (2004), *Ofrenda a una masacre* [Offering to a Massacre] (2007). *La*

llave y el candado [The Key and the Lock] (2008), *Voces desde la arena* [Voices from the Sand] (2021) and *El Espejo del Desierto* [The Mirror of the Dessert] (2024). A career that, among other recognitions, has been consecrated with the Premio Nacional de Historia [National History Award] in 2014, and being named Hijo Ilustre de Iquique [Illustrious Son of Iquique] the same year.

Claudina. Teatro, amor y revolución en la pampa salitrera [Claudina. Theater, love and revolution in the nitrate pampas] is his first published literary work, although poems and stories from his pen have already been published in northern magazines. In its pages, the author pays tribute to all the women who have sown red flowers of rebellion in the dessert.

PROLOGUE FRAGMENT

Sergio González Miranda is one of those historians obsessed with reconstructing the past of his region, the Chilean Norte Grande. To do so, paraphrasing the beautiful title of an article of his authorship, he has tirelessly searched the word. Like the old caliche diggers in the pampa, he searched, consulted and even created archives where there were none in order to get as close as possible to the saltpeter society. In order to get closer to it, but also to bring it closer to us.

With these fragments of the past, Don Sergio wove hundreds of stories set in the Tamarugal pampas and its ports. He wrote books and articles. He spoke at conferences and congresses. He taught classes to different generations of students. And today he gives us this novel entitled *Claudina. Teatro, amor y revolución en la pampa salitrera* [Claudina. Theater, lover and revolution in the saltpeter pampa].

Now, who was Claudina? Claudina del Carmen Morales Pavéz, also known as Claudina de Codocedo, was a young woman who arrived to the north of Chile in a ship with hitched workers; she worked in a pampas inn and as a seamstress; she was director and soul of different theater groups; wife, lover and mother; she was a freethinker, agitator and communist. She was, for the people of Iquique and the president Arturo Alessandri Palma, “the mother of Tarapacá”.

Claudina was one and thousands, because she lived intensely among the saltpeter offices and the ports she inhabited. Was there another option in this land as magnificent as it was cursed for the workers who came from different parts of the country and the planet in search of a better present and future? Possibly not. Still today, she invites the foreigner in love with the brown of the hills and the green-blue of the ocean, to live it intensely. With a feeling as if its magic -because it is also a magical land- would disappear.

In this intensity, which is also that of her historical time, Claudina appears in the novel moving between different actors and processes: the workers' movement and the women's movement; the pampino theater; the saltpeter boom and crises. Claudina is a protagonist and, at the same

time, a privileged witness of that world in which the workers edited and wrote newspapers and the women workers organized plays to be distributed and performed in every corner of the desert and beyond. Workers who did not conceive of education and culture divorced from the transformation of the system that in the first instance placed them in a place of social subordination, but not passivity. Because, as the novel shows from a public but also intimate dimension, Claudina, her comrades and her companions, were the agents of that historical time.

In the pages of the book, both famous and anonymous characters parade. We get to know in a more vivid and personal way, in a record that history books do not manage to tell, the leaders of the Partido Obrero Socialista founded in the first months of 1912 -called from 1922 Partido Comunista de Chile- and the Federación Obrera de Chile, such as Luis Emilio Recabarren, Elias Lafferte and Luis Víctor Cruz.

But not all were men in the magnificent cursed land. There were also women of the stature of Belén de Sárraga, the Spanish freethinker who traveled through northern Chile leaving the seed of female activism and anticlericalism in the Belén de Sárraga Centers and in Claudina herself. Don Sergio portrays her as “a goddess of the idea”. We know less about other women, powerful and supportive, although invisible in the records of history, that the author’s prose invites us to want to know more about: Grazina, the woman who saw death in Claudina and took her away from it; the indigenous midwife who helped her give birth to her third daughter, Fanny, in the Peña Grande office.

There are characters and there are, in fact, ideas in circulation from the most moderate to the most radical, which, because of their relevance to the popular sociability of the time, have the status of persons in the novel. Liberal, democratic, socialist, anarchist and communist ideas. They debate and dispute, but also build bridges and dialogue with each others, because, after all, they all share the same north of social or political emancipation. In Iquique, Marina, Claudina’s second daughter, refuses to attend a performance of the Ateneo Obrero theater group, be-

cause, she argues, they were anarchists. Her mother scolds her and closes the discussion about the plans for that night: “¡Belén de Sárraga was an anarchist, and Recabarren loved her so much!”

Just as the author did not live in Claudina’s time, but it seems as if he had lived it, he did not meet her in person, although it seems as if he had met her. He did have the chance to meet her family, especially her first daughter Rogelia, who in the course of the long interviews he conducted with her, adopted her as her aunt and she was her nephew. Later the aunt would entrust the nephew with a real treasure: the scrapbook, with photos and clippings of her new relatives.

Those were gray times, caused not by the fog of the winter *camanchaca*, but by the terror of the dictatorship. For Sergio González Miranda, conducting those interviews, sharing a cup of tea and cake with Doña Rogelia, rescuing her memories, became a refuge. It was, in his words, “entering the world of *Alice in Wonderland*”. It was to immerse oneself in other time coordinates, no less unfair than those of Chile in the 1980s, but perhaps more hopeful. The coordinates of what had passed, of what no longer existed, fragmentarily captured by oral history and the valuable family album: “the pampas and the saltpeter, the workers’ organizations, the social theater, class solidarity, and that culture that emerged in the middle of the desert”.

This novel represents for us the same thing that Claudina’s theater represented a hundred years ago. It is the possibility of living, if only for the hours it takes to read it, in a different world from the one that we face every day. A world, we insist, no less unjust than the current one, but more hopeful, that allowed a young woman who arrived on a ship from the south to become, besides the mother of the people of Tarapacá, the socialist muse of the people of the north of Chile. In unearthing this and so many other stories of the Norte Grande, Sergio González Miranda occupies a similar place to the one that Claudina occupied a century ago. He is a creator of old worlds, which serve as a refuge in dark times. But they should also infect us with the hope of the men and women who populated them and walked them, back and forth, seeking to build new worlds.

Ivanna Margarucci

CHAPTER I

The flags of engagement

The golden yellow flags of the docking station fluttered in the port of Valparaíso like hands inviting the workers to come aboard. The dock was filled with men, women, children and hopes for better days. Many years ago, the embrace of the turn of the century had been left behind, and the countryside expelled those who did not own a piece of land or those who had too much pride. Those who wanted to forget also left. Many imagined the saltpeter mines as a new America, a horizon to be conquered, where they could extinguish the fires of love, erase their stormy past, escape the law, take on another name and another face, as they used to say in the desert tambos: “Don’t ask me who I am, because I’m not asking”.

Domingo Morales Valdés was one of those who wanted to forget. The death of his wife almost drove him mad. He used to go to the far end of his field in Rancagua, sit on a rock under the acacia tree, and cry with a mixture of love and rage. He felt he couldn’t take it anymore, the image of his wife constantly haunted him since her death. He had felt more alone than he could ever have imagined, the moments of pain were so great that he often thought about dying. That is why he would go to the back of the grove to cry out for the loss of Lorenza, the companion who had been with him even in the worst moments of Balmaceda’s civil war, the war that almost ruined him. Despite the fact that she was carrying their daughter in her womb, she was always ready to do anything during those dark days. Claudina was born on January 2, 1892.

Months earlier, President José Manuel Balmaceda had taken his own life rather than see the country descend into anarchy. His portrait hung in the homes of the pampinos for decades, while Balmaceda’s liberals continued to dominate Tarapacá politics until 1915, when Arturo



Alessandri wrested the Senate seat from Arturo del Río, the ‘cacique’ of Tarapacá.

More than a decade later, Domingo often thought about taking his daughter out of boarding school so she could accompany him, but he didn’t know where. It was at that boarding school that Claudina learned to play the piano. Lost in his memories, he heard the cries of Florindo Pavez, a former worker of his who had left for the saltpeter mines who was said to have returned with a watch and gold teeth. Those who went north, to the saltpeter pampas deserved respect, not because they left with a suitcase, a sack with few clothes, and returned with an English cashmere suit and a watch in their pocket, but because they earned it with hard work with a sledgehammer and drilling, which bent the backs of even the most upright pampino.

Domingo feared the desert, but his soul was already a desert. -“I can’t forget her, Florindo,” he said with his voice breaking slightly. - “I always remember her, even though we’re not related,” replied Pavez. His smile revealed a golden glow inside his simple farmhand’s mouth. “Now I’m a recruiter,” he said, looking him straight in the eye with a certain air of authority. That was the job that allowed him to dress in cashmere, have a pocket watch, and gold teeth.

Silence accompanied them for a long stretch, although Domingo was eager to ask him about the saltpeter mines. It was Pavez who broke the ice by getting straight to the point. - “Why don’t you go north to forget her?”

Abandoning what he had loved most was also abandoning what hurt him the most. Lorenza’s ghost would not haunt him in such distant lands, least of all in the desert devoid of those flowers she loved so much. His daughter would one day understand his decision.

Claudina was born a few months after the revolution of 1891. She always remembered that her father was a Balmaceda supporter. In the midst of the revolution, Lorenza felt the first discomforts of pregnancy, and Domingo had to go out at night to find a doctor. He put on the blue government armband and left, but panic overwhelmed him when he saw corpses in the ditches wearing the same armband. He was looking at the remains when he heard a patrol approaching at a gallop, he thought about pulling of the armband, but instead chose to throw himself next to one of the dead bodies. He buried his face in the mud and held on until he

tasted roots in his throat. From then on, he was more of a Balmacedista supporter than ever. Claudina heard this story many times and told it many times.

By locking the door to his house, he would seal away the pain and leave his memories intact in case they would fill him again someday. For now, he just wanted to leave. He would pack his clothes and Claudina's in a few suitcases, and that would be it.

* * *

His feet, accustomed to walking on dirt paths, were dragged slowly one after the other, leaving their last traces of mud on the ship's gangway. That mud, whose smell would transform into nostalgia. There was Florindo, in his dusted-off suit and broad smile, ready to welcome the new recruits. He had his right hand in his vest pocket, occasionally checking the time on his Portex watch, and in his left, the list of his men, as the deck of the steamer slowly began to fill with bundles, furniture, animals, and the oil from the first frying. Domingo and his daughter Claudina arrived there. He paid for a cabin. The enlisted men traveled on deck, exposed to the wind, fog, waves and cold. Joseph Conrad says that it is not the ship that marks the departure, it is the sailor who marks his own departure, but it is a technical farewell and not a sentimental one, however, for the enlisted men it was a heartbreak, an uprooting, and the hope of returning in better conditions, demanding respect, that respect that does not exist for the poor in rural Chile.

The flags of recruitment drive waved more vigorously that sad summer of 1908, carrying men, women and children who would replace the pampinos murdered in December of the previous year at the Santa María School in Iquique, and all those who departed from that port with suppressed rage, having achieved nothing but misfortune and tragedy. That year, all production records were broken, in order to bury what had happened. It is not money that is lacking, said the saltpeter miners; they wanted obedience, submission. Until 1913, everything was a bonanza for them, but social laws had to wait until the arrival of Arturo Alessandri, the lion of Tarapacá. Curiously, it would be a liberal who made the gesture of redress for those who were killed in Plaza Montt.

For Domingo, going to the world of saltpeter was a voluntary exile, perhaps the distance would heal the pain. - "If time doesn't heal it the sun will burn it, to forget it with wine I would rather stay here," he reflected. He was not looking for money, on the contrary, he brought what he had left and could start something new, a bakery perhaps, in case he wasn't accepted as an employee in the saltpeter offices, as he was thinking about the idea of moving to the pampas.

On the ship, Claudina befriended a married couple who were headed for a strange place called Pampa Unión; the husband, Don Casimiro, was an accountant and had a contract in his suitcase. Doña Eugenia, a childless housewife filled with a restrained affection due to her infertility, welcomed Claudina from the very beginning, offering her the maternal warmth she hadn't felt since Lorenza's death. Faced with the delay in departure, while waiting for the stragglers to catch up, they quickly planned to go down to the port to stretch their legs and walk around the streets surrounding the Valparaíso pier.

Doña Eugenia convinced Domingo to give Claudina permission, whose dark eyes sparkled at the mere thought of walking the steep streets that she saw from the ship, imagining climbing those hills full of houses hanging like wooden brooches.

It was a sunny day, the eve of May 21st, and the square was decorated with garlands and Chilean flags in memory of the heroes of Iquique. Valparaíso was leaving behind the earthquake that devastated the port in 1906 and was once again experiencing a thriving and dynamic trade, although poverty had not disappeared. The colors and finery of the port contrasted with the gray of the worn suits of the enlisted men, everyone wore a nervous smile on their faces, a grimace of anxiety, few were interested in the national holiday, they were only interested in boarding the ship and leaving. This was not the case for Doña Eugenia and Claudina, who walked with restrained joy, wandering through the narrow streets surrounding the port. They looked at shop windows and bought small items; Doña Eugenia gave Claudina hairpins and combs, handkerchiefs, and a purse. When it was time to return, they quickly looked for a bakery to stock up on this essential food for the long journey. The bakery had a portrait of a boy dressed as a sailor in the display case, among the bread, as a tribute to the May 21 celebrations. Claudina stared at the portrait when

a young man appeared and interrupted her, saying, “That’s me”. Claudina became frightened and went to find her protector, who had already entered the store. The same young man stood behind the counter to serve the two costumers. While he was weighing the bread, he kept looking at Claudina, who felt uncomfortable.

—“Are you leaving on the Mapocho?” asked the young man.

—“That’s right, we’re going to Antofagasta,” replied Doña Eugenia, suspecting the young man had a certain intention toward Claudina, who remained silent.

—“Are you still receiving passengers?” he asked again.

—“I don’t know, young man, go to the ship yourself and ask.”

—“What’s your daughter’s name?”

Doña Eugenia waited for Claudina, but seeing that she was frowning deeply, she preferred to answer herself.

—“She’s my friend Claudina. And you, young man?”

In a confident tone, the young man replied, “I am Juan Domingo Navarro Madariaga.” He had an air of sadness that was reflected in his very white skin.

The women left the store with Juan Domingo’s gaze on their backs, like a rope trying to reach them.

The sun was yellowing and provided just enough light to register the last few recruits. Domingo’s attention was caught by a young man running up with a suitcase in his hand and a bundle on his shoulder that looked like a guitar. He climbed the gangway without any problems and faced the recruiters.

—“I’m here to sign up for the saltpeter mines.”

—“What’s your name?” asked Florindo.

—“Juan Domingo Navarro Madariaga, sir, at your service”. The man checked his list and, not finding the name, glanced sideways at the other two recruiters who also did not have it on theirs.

—“Who did you talk to, son?” replied the most experienced recruiter.

—“No one, sir, I just want to sign up now”.

—“Then you can’t, the lists are already closed.”

Domingo, perhaps touched by the coincidence of names, approached Florindo and asked him to recruit him. Florindo looked at the boy, exam-

ined his back, and realized that he would be a good worker. He looked at his hands, large and marked by his work in the bakery.

—“I only have room for Mejillones.”

—“It doesn’t matter, sir, I just want to go to the north with you”.

The recruiter cleared his throat, adding a clearer voice: “This won’t be a pleasure trip, it’s a trip on deck and you’ll be working from sunrise to sunset.”

Years later, he joked with Claudina that he had left everything behind for her. - “I even left the bakery oven on.” She responded by telling him that, living next to the dock, how could he not have realized that he could have boarded the ship, because he was dumber than a loaf of bread. Claudina always believed in the truth of that untimely love.

On deck, in the middle of the trip, Juan Domingo played the guitar in every group, while Claudina took refuge in the company of Mrs. Eugenia; by the way, he realized that he did everything for her. “I’ll open a bakery like my father’s and we’ll get married,” he told her. She thought he was half crazy.

The ship cut through the water like a stiletto, while the deck was filled with the foam that the enlisted crew members took turns sweeping up. For this reason, the tents began to gather together in the center, forming a veritable tumult of bundles and people. There were cats and dogs, some pigs and several chickens, not to mention the rabbits, which were the first to be shared in some “picantes” prepared by northern pampinos that were returning to the saltpeter mines. “Picante” is a speciality of the cholos, but in the pampa, it is eaten everywhere, even with “papitas a la huancaína”, a pasta made with walnuts, red chili, and cilantro. While eating one of these picantes, Juan Domingo had the opportunity to dedicate a song to Claudina, but she was more concerned with removing the chili peppers from the rabbit than listening to him. Juan Domingo was not very tall, but he was certainly attractive. He was the son of a Spaniard, he had greenish-gray eyes, wavy light brown hair, and a very sweet, almost funny personality, which contrasted with Claudina’s black hair and strong character despite her young age. Rogelia Navarro Morales, their daughter, would years later show off those brown curls when she was crowned as the spring queen in Mejillones.

The woman of a family that was traveling on deck preparing the afternoon snack put a flour sack as a tablecloth, and her husband and children sat around it. Juan Domingo approached and began his tune: “The rose loved the carnation, for her the carnation died, and making a thousand promises, they lived peacefully...” Quickly, the music filled the tumultuous crowd of people driven by the desire to escape poverty, and the singer did not know how to stop until midnight. Claudina enjoyed it from a distance. For her, he was a dream that transformed a long and difficult journey into a smooth and brief one, not even the swaying of the immense mountains of sea in the heights of Coquimbo, nor the water that invaded the entire deck, made her think of danger or regret that strange journey following her father. The ship sometimes sailed over the back of the great mountain and other times sailed through a valley surrounded by hills of water. At those times, the cleaning shifts were to clean up the vomit.

Claudina, seeing a crew member, approached him to ease her fear of so many ups and downs.

—“Sir, is the sea very dangerous?”

The crew member looked at her indulgently:

—“My child, calm seas have never made good sailors.”

It became a motto for her life.

A

Claudina and the worker's theater

The first time I heard about Claudina was from Willy Zegarra, a multi-faceted character who returned to Iquique in the 1980s after a long journey abroad. Guillermo Zegarra Figueroa joined the university theater as a set designer, but turned out to be a poet, actor, playwright, and the creator of one of the more successful plays of those years: *Margarita, el remolino de la pampa* [Margarita, the whirlwind of the pampa]. He also became the soul of the Iquique theater scene.

Willy had been an actor with the Ateneo Obrero [Workers' Athenaeum] directed by Professor Eulogio Larraín, an anarchist theater group that operated during the prelude of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Ironically, Zegarra was also the drum major of the Carampangue regiment.

—“Were there any female directors of workers' theater?” I asked him once.

—“Of course, my mother-in-law!”

I couldn't imagine that this lonely man, always well-dressed, with his gray hair dyed blond, and a seductive smile, had ever had a mother-in-law. Despite his age and the fact that he was missing a leg, he always walked upright in female company at the Teatro Universitario Veteranos del 79. When he died, he was given an old-fashioned send-off: thousands of Iquique residents walked to Cemetery N°3 with the Banda del Litro leading the march, while men and women mourned him.

Willy gave me a few directions on how to get to Claudina's eldest daughter, Rogelia; strangely, he chose to withhold information about his wife, Marina. He insisted on the importance of Claudina, without mentioning another director of a working-class theater in the Pampas. Her name was becoming important to me. Could such fortune be true?

Rogelia opened the door to her apartment with a smile I will never forget. She was an octogenarian woman with a kind heart and lively eyes like a mischievous child. She was small, or had shrunk, because in the photos she looks like a large woman. She was welcoming, like those aunts from the Iquique of yesteryear, and soon she was treating me like a nephew. What was supposed to be an interview turned into something so important at that time when Chile was at the bottom of a well or in the middle of a forest of darkness. Rogelia was like a fountain of light that led me to other circumstances and other lives.

It was still the time of the dictatorship and -as if entering Alice in Wonderland- I was transported back half a century to when everything seemed impossible: the pampas and the saltpeter, workers' organization, social theater, class solidarity, and that culture that emerged in the middle of the desert because, as Ángel María Ganivet said, "the earth does not only produce minerals and plants, it also produces ideas and feelings." With them, Rogelia, Marina and Claudina, I witnessed how, from that supposedly hostile and dry land, three red flowers sprouted, infusing Mejillones, Iquique, and the pampas with the scent of theater, love, and emancipatory hopes. Rogelia called Claudina "my little mother," even though there was only a seventeen-year age difference between them. She had a tender and painful memory: that of her daughter Huguette, who died before reaching adolescence. She lived alone in an old apartment, called "Colectivos" in the 1960s. Occasionally she was visited by her sister Marina and her nephew Alonso.

She spoke to me about workers' theater, her life, and her mother, Claudina, with great lucidity. Rogelia had been Queen of Spring in Mejillones. Now she suffered from diabetes and had the habit of sharing tea with a piece of cake. On one occasion, she suddenly got up and went to the phone, I heard her arguing passionately with someone. She came back upset. Her eyes were teary.

—"It's the neighbours upstairs calling to insult me! They don't leave me alone!" I asked her to give me the address of the apartment so I could go and complain. She said it wasn't necessary. The incident left me somewhat shaken. Later, at home, I remembered that I hadn't heard the phone ring. Sometimes when I visited her to interview her or simply to keep her company, she would go to the phone to answer a call that no one was

making. The rest of the time, she was someone with a prodigious memory, a good sense of humor with a touch of funny irony, and a common sense even in the details. Rogelia had worked at the Iquique Hospital in the maternity ward and remembered even the names of the children she saw being born and who were now adults. - "I hope she didn't deliver my mother!" I thought. We never touched on that subject. Sometimes her memories invaded her, for better or for worse. Sometimes reality has fragile, juxtaposed planes.

—"Did Claudina really exist?" I asked myself that question on more than one occasion.

When I met Marina, this doubt vanished, but others would arise. She was a serious woman, without Rogelia's mischievousness, and with always sharp and intelligent opinions. She looked tall with an aristocratic neck and striking, defiant black hair. From Willy, I learned that all the Navarros (actually, only Rogelia legally had that surname, but it was more artistic and they used it when they did theater), including Claudina, they had been communists in that era of the pampas and the saltpeter Iquique. I wasn't surprised, in the pampas, the specter of communism ran faster than the chuca whirlwinds. My hope was that this would not interfere with my research work. We were still under a dictatorship, and people avoided talking about their political lives.

Marina was still a militant without a party. Rogelia was distant from the political contingency, perhaps for many decades. Marina, on the other hand, kept up with what her party was saying by reading the press. I remember her saying to me decisively: - "I won't vote in the plebiscite! I saw a pamphlet on the street where the party calls for no voting!" It wasn't easy to convince her to vote No. I don't think I convinced her. She had in her mind a political party from half a century ago. She wasn't the only one, apparently.

Marina had traveled throughout Chile and some neighboring countries doing theater. She made friends with actors and actresses of the time. She had been part of the famous theater group *Arte y Revolución* (Art and Revolution) of the Chilean Workers' Federation. I realized that she had a biography perhaps as interesting as that of Claudina herself... perhaps.

Was Claudina the first and only female director of workers' theater in northern Chile?

What kind of woman was she? Could she also have been a communist militant? Her two daughters were there to answer these and other questions.

My interest was always in learning about workers' theater during the saltpeter era, that complex period beginning with the crises of the 1920s caused by the end of the First World War. If there was one definitive German triumph in those years, it was that of the chemists Fritz Haber and Carl Bosch, who invented synthetic saltpeter. Then came the long crisis of the 1930s, the cause of which was the Great Depression that came from the United States.

Most of the characters who lived through that period make sense given the social and cultural context in which they lived, however, some take on a life of their own, as if they were fictional, and demand a narrative that goes beyond the context. When I learned about Claudina's biography as told by her daughters, I realized that it transcended its temporality and the format of historiography. A dilemma arose that accompanied me for decades: how to tell her life story?

I was unclear about the stature of this character. At times, she was just the director of a small theater group and a woman punished by life, at other times, she was someone with an intense life, a free spirit who was also present at key places and moments in our history. Another dilemma that also took me years to resolve.

After a long journey and not seeing my "aunt" Rogelia for months, I received the sad news of her death. Marina had passed away a few years earlier. Both witnesses were gone, and the progress made in Claudina's story seemed to be fading away.

One day, the woman who took care of Aunt Rogelia visited me and said almost in a whisper, with a certain complicity, like someone who has kept a treasure for a long time and must deliver it to its intended recipient in a secret operation: - "Doña Rogelia asked me to give you this!" It was a rustic album, made of leather and cardboard, lovingly made by someone who knew the importance contained within its pages. My head spun and my heart pounded. I went to find her grave to thank her with a beautiful red flower that I placed in a jar of fresh water.

TEATRO PROG an Func



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obra cómica, titulada:
PEREZ PELAG

so jugueto cómico, titulado
XO DEBIL
Varieda
linista señor José Espino
por la conocida señorita R
ñor Fermín Codocco.
señorita Rogelia N

Gran función por el conjunto UNION FRATERNAL

AL PUBLICO

El esforzado conjunto artístico "Unión Fraternal", en su afán de ayudar a la colectividad obrera y marchar por la senda del progreso, ofrece al distinguido público de Mejillones una atrayente velada con hermosos números de variedades. Estamos seguros que nuestro entusiasmo será corona o con el éxito de un buen auditorio, ya que siempre el pueblo de Mejillones ha sabido corresponder a toda obra de progreso y cultura. Esta vez se llevará a escena el boceto dramático "Flores Rojas", obra que refleja de cuerpo entero el pasado y el presente que aspira a una vida más humana.

EL DIRECTORIO

PROGRAMA

PRIMERA PARTE

- 1.º—Obertura al plano por el señor J. Guerra.
- 2.º—Subirá a escena la obra dramática en un acto y dividida en dos cuadros, titulada:

"Flores Rojas"

Con el siguiente reparto:

Teresina.....	Sra. C. L.
Juan.....	Sr. Fermín Codocco
D. Miguel.....	Armando Roggel
Pedro (fraille).....	J. Guerra
Maximino.....	José Espinora
Señora Caballero.....	Sra. M. C. QH

SEGUNDA PARTE

ACTO DE VARIEDADES

- 1.º «Gitanilla» por la señorita Rogelia Navarro
- 2.º «Fosa Común» por el señor Armando Roggel
- 3.º Sentimental canción «A ella» por la señorita Rogelia Navarro.
- Poesía «Episodio de madre» por la señora C. M.
- 4.º Recitación «La Nacencia» por el señor Armando Roggel

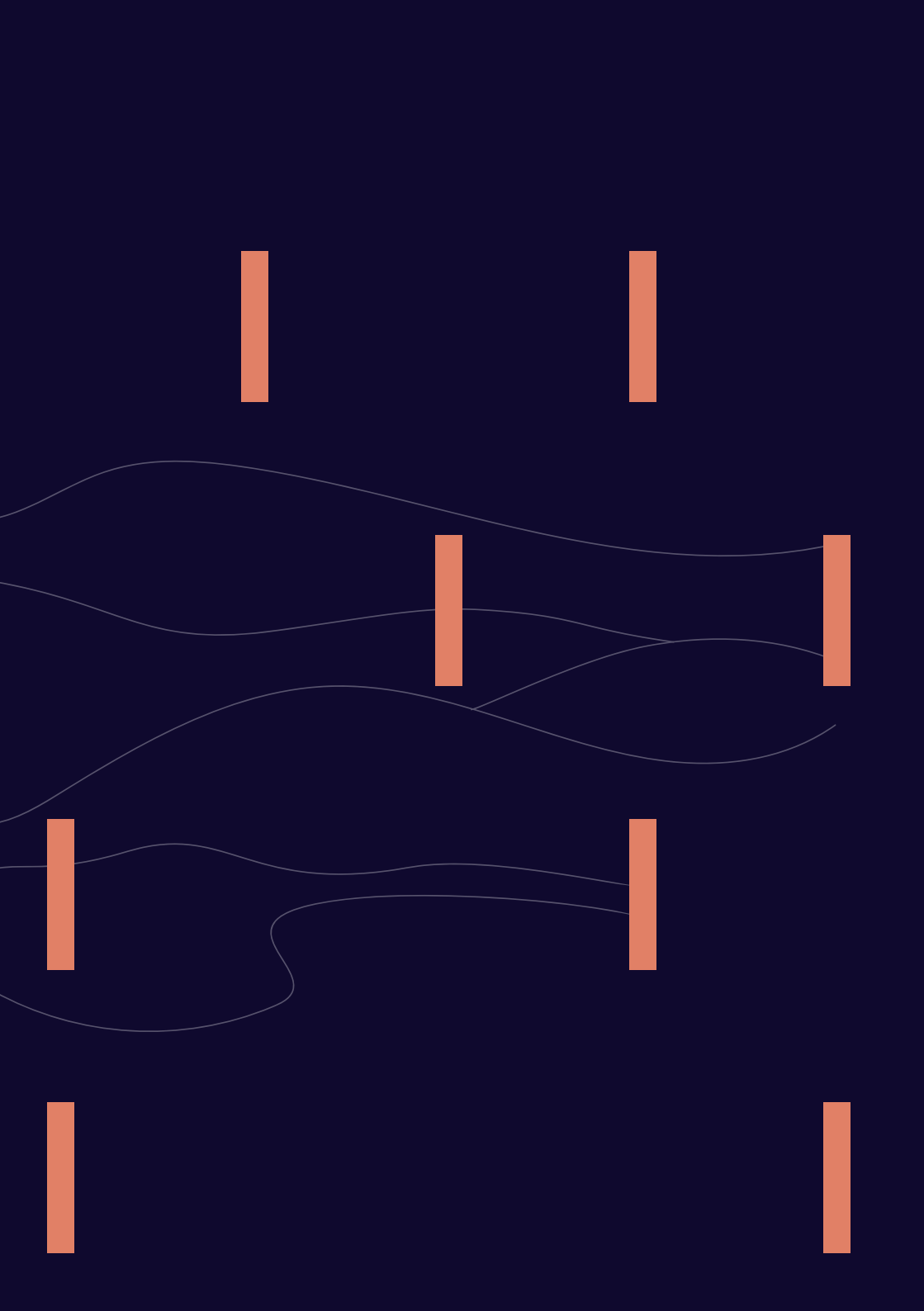
la Navarro.
do Roggel.
or Fermín
la Navarro.

TEATRO OBRERO

de la Federación Obrera de Chile

COVADONGA NUEVA 349

Asíntea
to





HIPPOCAMPUS COLLECTION

Rubén Gómez Quezada

LAS ESTACIONES DEL DESTIERRO



Relatos pampinos entre rieles,
alturas y tolares lejanos

hipocampo #002



THE SEASONS OF EXILE. PAMPINO TALES, BETWEEN RAILS, HEIGHTS AND DISTANT TOLARS LAS ESTACIONES DEL DESTIERRO. RELATOS PAMPINOS ENTRE RIELES, ALTURAS Y TOLARES LEJANOS

Rubén Gómez Quezada

Pampa Negra Editions, 2023.

Hippocampus Collection N°2

ISBN: 978-956-09750-5-8

13,5x21cms, 150 pages.

Prologues by Patricia Bennett Ramírez and Héctor Vera.

“Unforeseen suitcases and forced farewells, platforms full of voices, faces, hopes, and proletarian trades, long waits at stations whose rails travel in the return direction for the life of the veteran journalist Santiago Brel, perhaps alter ego or mirage of the author of these pages, whose trajectory traces from the exile in the cold Belgian winter to the warm childhood and adolescence in the Pampa of the northern Chile, with a stay in the Trans-Andean city of Salta, where he faces an experience that will mark him for life. Places and forced displacements through which the memory of the author-protagonist transits, not only from the nostalgia for spaces, times and absent friendships, but rather with the intention of reconstructing that apiary of gestures of solidarity and optimism with which the human community has been able to resist oblivion and exile anywhere in the world.”



**Rubén Gómez Quezada
(María Elena, 1951)**

Journalist, writer and former academic. Master in Social Communication. He attended primary school in the saltpeter pampas, then the highschool in Antofagasta, and graduated as a journalist at the Universidad del Norte in 1973. After the civil-military coup, he went into exile with his family in Salta (Argentina), where he worked as

editorial secretary of the newspaper *El Intransigente*, between 1974 and 1979. At the end of 1978 he was kidnapped and tortured during the context of the conflict between these two countries [Chile and Argentina] over the Beagle Channel, an experience he recounted decades later in a book. He lived a second exile in Belgium, where he worked in different jobs, raised a family and participated in the activities of the Chile Chico Collective. His reunion with the Chilean north was in 1987, he worked at *El Mercurio de Antofagasta* and for 25 years he worked as an academic at the School of Journalism of the Universidad Católica del Norte (1993-2018). He has published the books: *Pampean Chronicles: In search of the lost time* [Crónicas pampinas. En busca del tiempo perdido] (UCN, 1991); the non-fiction novel *Disappeared in the days of the Beagle. Journalistic memoirs, between the nitrate pampas and Salta, la Linda* [Desaparecidos en tiempos del Beagle. Memorias periodísticas entre la pampa salitrera y Salta, la Linda] (School of Journalism UCN, 2019); and an expanded and revisited reprint of his first book by Ediciones Hurañas (2021). In addition to directing and editing university publications, he is author of essays, interviews and academic works. He is currently building, with his family, a new home in the valleys of the Chilean semi-arid.

THE EVOCATIVE NOSTALGIA OF THE STATIONS OF EXILE

*“Northwest Argentina, Bolivia and Perú,
more than countries, are different ‘stops’ for buses
and trains that connect the northern people”*

Nostalgia is one of the feelings that literature has recorded since ancient times. The Greeks thought that the worst punishment, more than death, was banishment.

That “melancholic sadness originated by the memory of the lost joy”¹ is an inexhaustible engine that has generated all kinds of works and actions, trying to record what slowly fades away. It is a cry that denies the disappearance of memories and retains that which is disappearing between the fingers of time.

In *The stations of exile* [Las estaciones del destierro], northern journalist and academic Rubén Gómez Quezada, writes so as not to forget, and his narrative strategy consists of exercising memory by travelling along ancient routes that appease the ills that nostalgia produces. Unforgettable journeys emerges as the snow falls in Belgium and the desert, the pampas and his childhood appear amidst the screeching of trains. Memory sustains life.

Santiago Brel is the character who immerses himself in numerous inner journeys where the land and the people of those territories of the heart appear. Undoubtedly, it was a challenge to bring together such an extensive remembered history with the narrative hook. The inclusion of the chosen figures gives us signs of following in the ancient footsteps of those who forged our northern identity, but they also seem to represent their invocation to maintain strength and hope.

Pain is at the point of departure and return, nostalgia covers the territory of absence and and travel nourishes the dream of “social recon-

1. RAE. Nostalgia. In the Dictionary of the Spanish Language [Diccionario de la Lengua Española], 23rd edition, undated.

struction that seemed distant, that became tenuous and almost always inaccessible. It was only sustained by fleeting memories, remembrances and mourning for the distant homeland” (p. 107).

Among the journeys and characters proposed, the pampino stories are striking in their own right, and they are striking because of the emotion that breathes in the depths of the words.

The return to the homeland through figurative journeys is a photographic, iconic, rhythmic story. The words follow the sinuosity of the story and we feel incorporated into it, going down the roads, hills and pirquenes made of words that allow themselves to be molded by the narrator.

Sometimes the frame of the story is reduced to two sentences, the beginning and the end of a paragraph. Between the two, there is usually, running beautifully with the rush of memory, the extensive detail that characterizes the author’s narrative. It is a pleasure to fly over the images of the mysterious saltpeter pampa in the gaze of Rubén Gomez.

One of the remarkable passages of concentration of the story from the rescued imaginary is a paragraph that makes it possible to resurrect the Vergara office. The narrative voice shakes the oblivion and ignites the memory of the old railroad branches that used to costure the pampa, the stations, the people continuously moving, the square, the school, the theater. In just one paragraph there is the memory of a whole life.

The idea of an enormous and rugged pampa is humanized in a territory where loneliness passes by and neighborliness raises common dreams and heroic rebellions.

The hive of nationalities and trades described allows us to think of the saltpeter pampa as a more complex and novel world: the installers of sleepers on the railroad tracks, the twin-engines hunting for orders and letters on the fly, and the inns where the sorrows found their place, are remembered as an incentive for the memory not to faint.

Giving life to this complexity is a success of the author who speaks to us of an all-encompassing look. More than travel stills, he shows us life itself, he tells us about what the pampa installed in his affective memory, that which saves him now that the distance is insurmountable.

The 20th century in northern Chile took away details and feats of human effort needed to be rescued and brought to life.

To think of the motherland is to endow it with characters that have shed light on these magical territories. Among the characters visited with growing nostalgia, I highlight Paulina Cors Cruzat, woman and poet who brought us the wonder of amazement and the beauty of her poetry; she brought us the immense presence of this north of indigenous texture and universal intelligence. Paulina is a permanent task in the reconstruction of our identity.

Our century and its impressive technologies make it difficult for new generations to fully understand the world of their Pampino ancestors who today live the last generation of that epic that began in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, *The stations of exile* [Las estaciones del destierro] is a fascinating and necessary book to continue increasing the references that allows us to reconstruct the lost steps.

Patricia Bennett Ramírez
Antofagasta, November 2022.

JOURNEY TO RETURN IN “THE STATIONS OF EXILE” [LAS ESTACIONES DEL DESTIERRO] BY RUBÉN GÓMEZ QUEZADA

I finished reading *The stations of exile. Pampino tales between rails, heights and distant tolares* [Las estaciones del destierro. Relatos pampinos entre rieles, alturas y tolares lejanos] written by the journalist Rubén Gómez Quezada (1951) and published by Pampa Negra Ediciones of Antofagasta, Chile.

Several things unite me to Rubén, not only the quality of outsiders who worked in the same journalistic medium *El Intransigente*, during the exile in Salta, Argentina, but the rails and, somehow his pampa and my altiplano, geographical extension of a homeland without borders.

But, there is a difference, nostalgia. He, a great cultivator of the “disease” that the soldiers cured with opium. Personally, less nostalgic, perhaps the opposite: a seeker of new horizons. We correspond to the types of primitive man: the nomadic and the sedentary.

Rubén’s stories assume the category of literary chronicles that are assembled in a kind of documentary novel.

Standing in front of the Belgian winter, infinitely less cold and dark than the Swedish one, Santiago Brel who is none other than Rubén Gómez Quezada, returns to the past only with his eyes and the book is put together in a sad way.

Everything is reconstructed, but never the same. And Rubén’s literary reconstructions are fictional journeys in a real world that is that of remembrance, or perhaps the other way around: real journeys reconstructed with the help of fiction and metaphor.

To travel is to try to return

Among these reconstructions, the most lucid is that of the so-called Norte Grande, home of the saltpeter proletarians, carrillanos, titiriteros and good luck sellers. Or that beautiful description of Justina Dávila in

the chapter/station 3 entitled «Crossing the cordillera on the back of a mule».

Ruben's literature provokes the desire to dialogue with Justina, perhaps to embrace her because she is the representation of grandmothers who fought for their families, buying and selling.

I wrote this chapter/season, I clarify; Rubén uses in a very good way the denomination "station" instead of chapter, because the whole book is the journey of Ulysses who was reborn bloodied by the bullets of the military coup of 1973, Rubén is Santiago and Ulysses and the stations are the stops of Ulysses in his return to Ithaca.

Constantine Cavafis, author of the poem "Ithaca" writes in the third stanza:

*Always keep Ithaca in your mind.
To arrive there is your destiny.
But never hurry the journey.
Better that it lasts many years
and dock, old now, on the island,
enriched by what you gained on the way
without waiting for Ithaca to enrich you.*

That is why I dare to refute the French poet Edmond Haraucourt, author of the image of death that appears when two humans separate. The french says: "To leave is to die a little" (*Partir c'est mourir un peu*), for me and after reading Ruben's book, to travel is not to die a little. To travel is to try to return and in doing so we mock death.

*Even if you find it poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.
And being already so old, with so much experience,
no doubt you already know what Ithaca means.*

The seasons of exile [Las estaciones del destierro] is a book about exile, longing and above all the book of the return of someone who never left his homeland.

Jerny González Caqueo

RESISTIR CREANDO ENTRE POESÍA Y DANZA



La vida de Nelly Lemus Villa

hipocampo #003



RESISTING BY CREATING BETWEEN POETRY AND DANCE. THE LIFE OF NELLY LEMUS VILLA

**RESISTIR CREANDO ENTRE POESÍA Y
DANZA. LA VIDA DE NELLY LEMUS VILLA**

Jerny González Caqueo

Pampa Negra Editions, 2024.

Hippocampus Collection N°3

ISBN: 978-956-6297-09-3

13,5x21cms, 250 pages.

Prologues by Bernardo Guerrero and Adriana Goñi Godoy.

“The writing of the history of the cultural resistance during the dictatorship in Chile, so far it has been fundamentally based on what happened in Santiago. It is, therefore, an unfinished rescue, an unpaid debt that must be paid through the investigation of what happened in regions far from the metropolis, like Antofagasta. In our city, organizations, known and, unknown people, were part of this process. This book focuses on the last ones: Nelly Lemus Villa.

In her 85 years of life, this school teacher, writer, choreographer, Communist militant, has earned numerous recognitions, including the ‘Ancla de Oro’(Golden Anchor) in 2000, distinction that the city gives to some of its citizens. ¿What has done her to stand out among all the people of this city? This book seeks to answer this question rescuing not only the character, but also the person behind it. For that purpose, this book explores the intersection between collective and individual history, in the events that make her life, being in many ways like that of other women, made it unique and remarkable”.

National Prize for Memoir Writing [Premio Nacional Escrituras de la Memoria], 2024.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Jerny González Caqueo

She was born in Tocopilla, “*Mother of the wind*”. She defines herself as a typical regional product, emerging from the synthesis between unknown southern ancestors on the paternal side and piqueño-quechua, on the maternal side. Sociologist from the University of the North of Antofagasta [Universidad del Norte] and Master in Social Anthropology from

the Center of Research and Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology [Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, CIESAS-Occidente] Guadalajara, Mexico. She worked at the Center for Research on the Reality of the North [Centro de Investigación de la Realidad del Norte (CREAR)] and the Regional Studies Workshop [Taller de Estudios Regionales (TER)], NGO’s in the city of Iquique of which she was co-founder and partner, respectively. In Antofagasta she was part of the academic staff of the University José Santos Ossa, a mythical humanist alternative in the region, now disappeared. There, in addition to teaching, she initiated the Direction of Research and co-created the Gender Studies Program. She is currently a columnist for the “Linterna de Papel” of the Andrés Sabella Cultural Corporation.

LETTER TO NELLY LEMUS

“He has the vocation for memory, he cannot not remember”

Giorgio Agamben¹.

My dear Nelly:

I received Jerny’s text about your life and work. He has also asked me to write an introduction to it. I can’t refuse anything that has to do with you. And as always, I don’t know where to start, and since this book is full of streets, I will listen to my “non-literate” friends and I will start by the beginning.

That beginning is not the beginning for others. Ours, dear Nelly, is contextualized in the decade of the 70’s, which began with La Moneda in flames and in our beloved Antofagasta with the death of Washington Muñoz, Mario Silva, Luis Alaniz, among many others. Times of walking almost squatting but not kneeling, and of speaking figuratively. Time to listen at low volume to Jorge Cafrune, Daniel Viglietti, Patricio Manns, Alfredo Zitarrosa, in short.

You were on a different path and I was in front. But then we discovered that there were bridges, thousand of bridges and shortcuts. Some of us Jerny, Lucy, Eduardo, Juan Podestá, who is waiting for us somewhere, and I, were thinking about Andean sociology and religious dances. Van Kessel made us look at ourselves. He was our mirror.

And from then, things are flowing, the Tambo Atacameño, our temple, the ceref of our great Raúl Ortega who brought us together in a morning seminar to talk about popular religiosity. And further back, illuminating the paths Andrés Sabella, Mario Bahamonde and Pedro de la Barra. An initiatory trip to Curicó for me. If that trip were a book, the footnotes would be the tastiest.

.....
1. Agamben, Giorgio (2009). *Lo que queda de Auschwitz. El archivo y el testigo. Homo Sacer III*. Valencia: Pre-textos, p. 26.

In your slender and tiny body, Nelly, all of northernity could fit. That varied way of being and being, that founded, in his own way, Chango Lopez and that the comrade Luis Emilio Recabarren through his words and example, left us as a legacy. Perhaps you have read that initiatory novel *Thus the Steel was Tempered* [Así se templó el acero]. But there is another northernity [nortinidad] that you apprehended and valued like no other. The one that is carried in the body. That festive and tragic body. A pilgrim body that speaks through dance and music. That body inspired by the sacrifice of Christ and Tupac Amaru. That body tortured after September 11th. A synthesis made by the people, the same synthesis you make when you take your tribe, the Pacariscas to tell the enlightened ones that there is another way of seeing and being in the world. Mestizo bodies, by the way, that defy any ideal of purity.

Your life is a constant fervor, mi dear Nelly, despite so much pain. Our internal exiles, of which few speak, allowed us to survive in that city, the city of Sabella and Bahamonde, thanks to innovation and creativity, those gifts that your parents and teachers developed. And you went even further. Your life reflects it, tireless and dreamy.

You are a witness and active protagonist of our lives. You cultivate the memory in that garden that you take care of. This well-written book, which gives you the word, hiding Jerny -generous, isn't she? The precise question like a goal pass, Messi-like, lifts you up in the air and returns and returns you to your neighborhoods, to your streets, those temples where those who lack words, have their body to express themselves. Listening to you, because this book is for listening, I remembered the reflection of the philosopher Morris Berman, who writes: "The Western academic way of seeing, including philosophy, anthropology and history, tacitly presumes that the body has nothing to tell us, has no knowledge or "information", that is does not even exist for any practical purpose. Yet the life of the body is our real life, the only life we have"².

Your work, my dear Nelly is precisely that: to make the bodies speak, especially those who are not heard. Through your works, the popular streets exhibit their wisdom. Your verses, sung by Alejandro Castillo, our Cafrune and Illapu, travel the world.

.....
2. Berman, Morris. (1992). *Cuerpo y Espíritu. La historia oculta de Occidente*. Santiago de Chile: Cuatro Vientos Editorial, p. 95.

This book, spoken and discussed with Jerny, leads us to those dimensions that, after removing the salty crusts, allow us to get to know that deep, smiling, optimistic and loving Nelly.

It is a book of cultural and political memory, conceived, designed, and, above all, written with ease, delicacy and neatness. A book that can be read with ease, delicacy and neatness. A book that can be read in chorus or alone. A book that needs to reach those who have the sensitivity to understand that people like Nelly are irreducibly human. Thank you Jerny for showing us that sociology is a human discipline and committed to its environment.

Thank you for everything!

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PROLOGUE

NELLY, A LEGACY OF THE NORTHERN TRIBE

I have read with amazement and wonder this life story of a warrior woman; her weapons are resilience, the stubborn will to make her dreams come true, perseverance and infinite creativity.

I met Nelly Lemus Villa's journey from her beginnings as a poor girl from the Pampas, the daughter of Fernando Lemus, a migrant from the central region, and Emérita Villa, her mother, who had roots in the northern regions. Inhabitants of the northern deserts.

The Lemus Villa family encloses in its history the events and characters that marked the twentieth century in our country. Poor migrants in search of the mineral wealth offered by the deserts; work in the saltpeter mines under harsh conditions and exploitation, the emergence of social leaders who shaped early political organizations and class consciousness. The repression and relegation of the father that transforms the mother into a breadwinner for the family and leads to the empowerment of her daughter.

This was the first sustenance of the woman who would become an education worker, creator; who from a young age raised the flag of the poor, the dispossessed, the invisible women, the defense of life and human rights, the liberation from the dehumanizing principles of the neoliberal system, as the author points out.

The memory of a woman who, beyond the constraints imposed by the passing of time, is a source of organization and community-building centered on art, regional culture, and the joyful communion of bodies and ancestral rituals.

The memory of the elders of the tribe is a memory that is indispensable to preserve and transmit in order to cement in young people a sense

of belonging to a region, a social class, and the ancestral traditions that shape their identity and the collective.

The memories of elderly women are a compendium of experiences that explain and give meaning to ways of life in processes of change, which allows us to understand the multiple strategies we must employ to survive the times and circumstances of the historical era in which we find ourselves.

Nelly Lemus's life story is that of a class and a region, of women and men in permanent and diverse struggle to confront poverty, exploitation, in a unique habitat on our planet: the Norte Grande region of Chile.

“Through her, we learn of stories of lives and deaths forged in the desolation of labor and the fate of silicosis: deaths without flare, one after another, in the hard crust of the nitrate mines. Through Fernando, she draws on the history of the labor movement and its struggle to obtain labor and social rights. Elias Laferte and Luis Emilio Recabarren, leaders who initiated the social labor movement in Chile, are figures that Nelly feels close to: her father who knew them, tells her about them, and for that reason, she regards them as part of her own family history. Thus, the injustices and sufferings present in the lives of the dispossessed find in Nelly an ideological explanation: they are expressions of the situation of exploitation in which the working class, of which she is a part, lives”, recounts Jermy González.

A communist militant, a young mother, a normalist teacher, a separated woman, a worker and creative individual, Nelly Lemus embodies the woman of the people who transcends the mandates of her time and builds her place in the world through tenacity and an awareness of the power of the collective.

Nelly Lemus teaches women and men, young and old, that dance and music are a way to express the region's ancestral body memory. The groups of people who perform traditional dances in the villages, using the method that she teaches, form communities whose sense of belonging and identity have persisted over time, beyond dictatorship, natural disasters, poverty and scarcity, and they have persisted to this day.

In this biography, Jermy González introduces us to a woman, now in her eighties, “who has lived through various historical periods, from

González Videla to Augusto Pinochet and those of the subsequent period of transition to democracy. Each of these periods presented her a particular challenge; she faced them all, sustained by her political militancy”.

The life story of Nelly Lemus Villa presented in this book is a story where the struggles and lives of an entire working-class community in Northern Chile intersect. A memory of resistance through culture, in a region that has gone through historical cycles that have marked our country.

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Memory and Human Rights.

Introduction

Memory has circular flows. Within it lie events, places, dates, cycles of time that remain on the lookout, waiting to be remembered again to show their light of incandescent flame, their glow of fire-wound-open, which reignite when the time comes.

Today, 51 years after the civil-military coup, the recovery of that multidimensional and fateful event remains insufficient. As for the writing of the history of cultural resistance during the dictatorship, it must be said that so far it has been done mainly from what happened in Santiago. It is, therefore, an unfinished recovery, an unpaid debt that must be settled by also investigating what happened in regions far from the metropolis, such as Antofagasta. In our city, organizations, anonymous and well-known individuals were part of that invisible process. This book focuses on one of the latter: Nelly Lemus Villa.

In her 86 years of life, this normalist teacher, writer, choreographer, communist militant, has earned numerous awards, including the Golden Anchor [Ancla de Oro] in 2000, a distinction that the city gives to some of its citizens. What has she done to stand out among all the children of the city? This book seeks to answer that question by rescuing not only the character, but the person behind it. To do so, it explores the intersection between collective and personal history, in the events that make her life -while in many ways similar to that of other women- both unique and remarkable.

Born in the Pampas and heir to the tradition of struggle forged in such barren landscape, Nelly is the product of the convergence of her southern ancestors by Fernando Lemus, her father, and her northern ancestors by Emérita Villa, her mother. Through her she knows stories of lives and deaths forged in the desolation of labor and their fate of silicosis: deaths without flare, one after another, in the hard crust of

the nitrate mines. Through Fernando, she draws on the history of the labor movement and its struggle to obtain labor and social rights. Elias Laferte and Luis Emilio Recabarren, leaders who initiated the social labor movement in Chile, are figures that Nelly feels close to: her father who knew the former, tells her about them, and for that reason, she regards them as part of her own family history. Thus, the injustices and sufferings present in the lives of the dispossessed find in Nelly an ideological explanation: they are expressions of the situation of exploitation in which the working class, of which she is a part, lives.

With these significant events as a basis, she will create the framework that will fuel the creative work she will develop throughout her life. In that process, she would also build her identity, which passes from “la Rucia” [The Blonde] in her childhood, to “la Chata Lemus” in her adolescence and youth at the Normal School, “la Pacarisca”, during her time as a teacher, and “Nelly” in her adult life. In all of them beat her two eternal loves: the word made poetry, and dance, art with social consciousness. With these fruits so born, clothed in hills, moistened by the sea; she tells stories and creates worlds of beauty, justice and dignity.

Her word-poetry is nourished by the enchanted observation of the desert, with its endless chains of hills, its colors of dawn, zenith and dusk; hills that stretch deep into the desert and rise up to gaze out at the sea. Some of her verses have been set to music by various artists who have spread them throughout the world, including Illapu, among others.

Her path in dance, which began at the Normal School of La Serena took on a life of its own with the creation of the Ballet Folklórico [Folkloric Ballet] Pacarisca, and with the teaching method associated with that experience. Children, young people, men and women of different ages and from various locations, both inside and outside the region, have danced with this method, which emerged from the observation of *promesante* dances that Nelly did together with her students of the Ballet Folklórico of the School No. 29 of the Corvallis neighborhood, today Japan School. In that marginal environment, between brown faces, cracked hands, and scarce bread, at the foot of the hill, this innovative experience of popular folk dance emerged.

With the creation of the Pacarisca Method, Nelly assumed the body as the first human possession, continent of joys, sorrows and a flag of strug-

gle. She broke down ideological walls: she became a communist teacher, an atheist, who valued the knowledge and feelings of the people, associated with popular religiosity. She did so in the adverse scenario of the military civic dictatorship, when stepping outside the imposed norms of the Central Chile's identity was risky: doing so meant being labeled as Bolivian, Indigenous, dangerous to the national unity and security. But Nelly went further. On the basis of her methodological proposal she placed the premise "Everyone can dance", a risky democratizing principle in times of dictatorship. From there on, she continued to decipher the language of the body and transform it -through dance- into a tool for struggle, into a narrator of local and Latin American stories, into a revealer of injustices, into a libertarian message, and an emblem of identity.

Throughout her life, she has lived through various historical periods, from González Videla to Augusto Pinochet and those of the subsequent period of transition to democracy. Each of these periods presented her a particular challenge; she faced them all, sustained by her political militancy. Transgressive in her personal behavior, Nelly has been a communist militant since the age of 24, which she assumes as a legacy of her father, relegated to Pisagua in 1948. At that age, with two young daughters, she separated from her partner and decides to pursue the path of activism and creativity free from the constraints of a romantic relationship. Fierce daughter of the pampa, an education worker, a creator; from a young age she has flied the flag of the poor, the dispossessed, the invisible women, the defense of life and human rights, the liberation from the dehumanizing principles of the neoliberal system.



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