Narratives of Estrangement in Infrapolitics and in Lucrecia Martel's Cinema of Perception

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Abstract

This essay studies cinema and infrapolitics from the standpoint of estrangement as a narrative device that sets perception and politics in relationship to one another. It proposes that recent books on infrapolitics by Gareth Williams and Alberto Moreiras deconstruct prominent narratives of estrangement in which the processes of perceptual renewal catalyzed by art are ultimately understood in terms of their ulterior political significance, and elaborate alternate narratives in which estrangement instead makes perceptible, and marks

the passage to, an in-eliminable strangeness at the heart of the relationship between politics and life. It then interprets Lucrecia Martel's 2015 short film *Leguas* in terms of its interweaving of political and infrapolitical narratives of estrangement. It finally turns to a recent essay by Silvia Schwarzböck, titled *Los monstruos más fríos: estética después del cine* (2017), which narrates cinema history in terms of how twentieth-century cinema, by teaching viewers to identify with the cold, inhuman strangeness of the camera's gaze, contributed to the increasing estrangement of human perception into the machinations of the modern state. Through its study of these materials, this essay argues that narratives of estrangement form an important standpoint for approaching the relationship between cinema and infrapolitics, due to the central significance of perceptual renewal—that is, the possibility of seeing things differently—to both the cinematic medium and infrapolitical reflection.

Keywords: Estrangement; cinema; infrapolitics; Gareth Williams; Alberto Moreiras; Lucrecia Martel; Silvia Schwarzböck.

Resumen

Este ensayo estudia cine e infrapolítica desde la perspectiva del extrañamiento, entendido como un dispositivo narrativo que relaciona la percepción y la política. Propone que los recientes libros sobre infrapolítica de Gareth Williams y Alberto Moreiras deconstruyen narrativas prominentes del extrañamiento en las que los procesos de renovación perceptiva catalizadas por el arte se entienden siempre en términos de su significado político ulterior, y, en cambio, elaboran narrativas alternativas en la que el extrañamiento hace perceptible y marca el paso a una extrañeza ineliminable en el corazón de la relación entre política y vida. Luego interpreta el cortometraje *Leguas* (2015) de Lucrecia Martel en términos de su entrelazamiento de narrativas políticas e infrapolíticas del extrañamiento. Finalmente, aborda un ensayo reciente de Silvia Schwarzböck, titulado *Los monstruos más fríos: estética después del cine* (2017), que narra la historia del cine en función de cómo el cine del siglo XX, al enseñar a los espectadores a identificarse con la extrañeza fría e inhumana de la mirada de la cámara, contribuyó al creciente extrañamiento de la percepción

humana en las maquinaciones del Estado moderno. A través del estudio de estos materiales, este ensayo argumenta que las narrativas del extrañamiento constituyen un punto de vista importante para abordar la relación entre cine e infrapolítica, debido a la importancia central de la renovación perceptiva —es decir, la posibilidad de ver las cosas de manera diferente— tanto para el medio cinematográfico como para la reflexión infrapolítica.

Palabras clave: Extrañamiento; cine; infrapolítica; Gareth Williams; Alberto Moreiras; Lucrecia Martel; Silvia Schwarzböck.

The story of estrangement, as it spreads through modern literary theory in the century following Viktor Shklovsky's 1917 essay "Art, as Device," goes something like this: engagement with works of art defamiliarizes our perception of things, removing them from the realms of habit and everyday routine, and allowing us to see them in a new light. When we then reflect on this perceptual shift, we find that its consequences reverberate across our understandings of art, ourselves, and the world we inhabit. Estrangement happens, then it is accounted for in our thoughts and actions. And if each moment of estrangement is generally understood to be punctual in nature, over time, the series of perceptual transformations and accounts of such experiences forms a diffuse narrative, in which our lives become a perpetual flight forward into estrangement, which is also a perpetual step back to reflect on what happened and what it meant. In the midst of historical events such as wars, revolutions, economic crises, or pandemics, this narrative frequently bridges personal and political registers: the world itself becomes strange, the social and political conditions of our everyday lives are disrupted, and we glimpse new ways of seeing and doing things in the midst of the upheaval. For artists, scholars, filmmakers, or anyone else who comes to think about life in these terms, estrangement is a powerful narrative device that traces paths between perception and reflection, and between the perceptual and

the political. That it happened in the past means that it may happen again in the future, and one's life story becomes legible as a sequence of moments of estrangement and their consequences.

This essay considers cinema and infrapolitics from the standpoint of narratives of estrangement. It studies the use of estrangement as a narrative device in three different types of materials: recent books on infrapolitics by Gareth Williams and Alberto Moreiras; a 2015 short film by Lucrecia Martel titled *Leguas*; and a 2017 essay on aesthetics and cinema by Silvia Schwarzböck, titled *Los monstruos más fríos: estética después del cine*. Part 1 of the essay argues that the writings on infrapolitics deconstruct prevalent understandings of estrangement that rely on a distinction, which Svetlana Boym associates with the perspectives of Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt, between estrangement *from* and *for* the world. In broad strokes, contemporary film, art, and criticism has been guided by an imperative to see estrangement in terms of the latter, articulating narratives in which perceptual renewal flows into political transformation. Infrapolitics investigates what is obscured when such bridges are tended between the perceptual into the political. The books by Williams and Moreiras establish a general horizon of estrangement in which our lives are fully subsumed within the machinations of biopolitics and global capital, and we inhabit our epoch as a "community of beings who dwell in it, existing fully estranged from it" (*Infrapolitical* 4-7). In this context, they continue to reflect on estrangement, drawing examples from literary and philosophical texts, and also out of the midst of the most everyday of experiences, that point toward the possibility of an infrapolitical estrangement that would make perceptible what Moreiras describes as a "life beyond life, against biopolitical subjectivation" (*Infrapolitics* 24). In this sense, estrangement in infrapolitics has to do with a "reflexive displacement" (*Uncanny* 44), in which one perceives, and comes to inhabit, an in-eliminable strangeness that conditions one's relation to the world.

Part 2 approaches Martel's *Leguas* in terms of estrangement, outlining how infrapolitical processes of estrangement might be encountered at the margins of the film's principal ordering of perceptual experience and political significance. After illustrating the centrality of estrangement in Martel's perception-oriented approach to filmmaking, and sketching existing scholarly arguments concerning the ultimately political nature of estrangement in her first three feature films (*La ciénaga*, *La niña santa*, and *La mujer sin cabeza*, released between 2001 and 2008), it turns to *Leguas*, released in 2015 as part of *El aula vacía*, an anthology film of eleven shorts on the topic of school absenteeism in Latin America. The eleven-minute film narrates the estrangement from school of Erick, an adolescent who belongs to an Indigenous Calchaquí Diaguita community in northern Argentina. In the film, Martel combines her feature films' experimental investigations of perception with an overtly political storyline that invites the sorts of political-allegorical interpretations that the allusive approach to politics in her earlier films discouraged. Drawing on Williams's work on anxiety as an "underlying affective excess" ("Anthropocene" 14) subsisting beneath prominent political narratives of hope triumphing over melancholia, this essay argues that *Leguas*, through its saturation of the perceptual with the political, simultaneously orients Martel's cinema of perception toward a hopeful estrangement for the world, while also permitting the possibility of an infrapolitical estrangement to peek through the cracks.

Part 3 re-frames discussions of estrangement in terms of general narratives of how cinema, as a technological medium, has estranged viewers' perception throughout its history. In *Los monstruos más fríos*, Schwarzböck considers twentieth-century cinema in terms of a pedagogical process in which the mass viewing public learned to identify with the inhuman coldness of the camera's gaze—a coldness which also, in her reading, characterizes the gaze of the modern state. Cinema is, as Schwartzböck describes it, a "cold monster"

(*un monstruo frío*), and she argues that by the mid-twentieth-century films of Alfred Hitchcock, its gaze has been internalized by viewers, in a process that situates them beyond the dramatic theories of human identification that sustained classical cinema. This essay triangulates Schwarzböck's perspective with that of infrapolitics and Martel's cinema of perception, noting a shared interest in accounting for the coldness of a gaze that stretches from early cinema to a contemporary world increasingly saturated by cameras, while simultaneously investigating the conditions of possibility for the emergence of renewed forms of perception out of the midst of that gaze. It argues that, if models of estrangement for the world tend to use the warmth of human identification as an antidote to the coldness of the inhuman gaze of the camera, infrapolitical estrangement might rather be understood to emerge out of, and exceed, this perceptual interplay of coldness and warmth.

By studying uses of estrangement in these materials, this essay constructs a standpoint for further investigation into the relationship between cinema and infrapolitics. It demonstrates how infrapolitics breaks down enduring narratives of estrangement and the relationships they establish between the perceptual and the political, while at the same time articulating alternate narratives of that relationship. It also argues that, when films are viewed with a sensitivity to moments of infrapolitical estrangement, in which the absolute difference between life and politics comes into relief, the question of how particular films make this difference perceptible is always intertwined with questions concerning how cinema, as a technological medium, permits, but also perpetually conceals, such renewals of perception. The possibility of perceiving things otherwise forms an important part of the narratives that sustain both infrapolitics and cinema. Yet it is a possibility that is perpetually under threat, as the same dynamics of habituation and automatization that estrangement disrupts wash back over our thoughts and perceptions.

Part 1: The (Infra-)Politics of Estrangement in Recent Works by Gareth Williams and Alberto Moreiras

In *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983), Terry Eagleton suggests that modern literary theory might be understood to begin with the 1917 essay "Art, as Device." In that essay, Viktor Shklovsky coins the term *ostranenie*, or estrangement, to define art in terms of the processes of perceptual renewal it produces in the spectator, and the formal devices that catalyze these processes. More than forty years after Eagleton's positioning of estrangement at the origin of modern literary theory, and more than a century after Shklovsky's essay, it remains common for artists, scholars, and critics to reaffirm variations of Shklovsky's conviction that

> this thing we call art exists in order to restore the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things, in order to make a stone stony. The goal of art is to create the sensation of seeing, and not merely recognizing, things. [...] Art is the means to live through the making of a thing; what has been made does not matter in art. (162)

In the reception of Shklovsky's essay, this processual understanding of how art removes us from our habitual recognition of things, allowing us to encounter them in their becoming, has often been decoupled from his formalist concern with estrangement as "in art, an end in itself" (162). Against his circumscription of estrangement to intra-artistic questions, it has become something of a truism that the estrangement catalyzed by art transcends art, reverberating across our understandings of ourselves and of the sociopolitical conditions of our lives. In the middle to later decades of the twentieth century, Bertolt Brecht's reception of Shklovsky provided an influential explanation of how the purpose of estrangement is, as Fredric Jameson puts it, "a political one in the most thoroughgoing sense of the word," extending beyond art to reveal the historical and therefore mutable character of the institutions

that structure our lives (58). In recent decades, this view on the inherently political nature of estrangement has retained broad acceptance, with Svetlana Boym's distinction between estrangement *from* and *for* the world offering an exemplary formulation of how estrangement, rather than enacting an "escape from the political," is instead inseparable from political transformation (581). If, as Boym explains, Stoic and Christian traditions often associated estrangement with a "distancing from political and worldly affairs," Hannah Arendt's work, like Shklovsky's before her (Boym critiques earlier a-political interpretations of Shklovsky), revolves around an "estrangement *for* the world [...] a way of seeing the world anew, a possibility of a new beginning that is fundamental for aesthetic experience, critical judgment, and political action" (602, emphasis in original). In this way, perceptual renewal is understood to ground aesthetic experience and form a necessary precondition for critique and political action, and the word estrangement itself acts as a conceptual device for setting the perceptual and the political in relation to one another.

In Shklovsky's essay and beyond, estrangement names an event that takes place punctually, but it also facilitates the telling of a story in which something happens in the perceptual register (a thing is perceived differently), then that event is reflected upon, generating the grounds for a critical grasp of the world and opening the door for political action. This story continues to receive broad social validation as one of the principal means of narrativizing how art is experienced; in this sense, art's ongoing success in estranging our perception, and from there transforming itself, our lives, and our world, is the result of a successful act of storytelling. Art estranges our perception, we tell ourselves, and then we tell ourselves the story of how *this* novel we just read, or *that* film we watched many years ago, caused us to perceive things differently. Later, we reflect on the implications of that experience, while at the same time situating it in the narratives that give shape to our lives.[1]

When narratives of estrangement are used in recent texts on infrapolitics,

one might say that it is to push back against naturalized understandings of estrangement for the world, in which shifts in perception are made to flow felicitously into critique and political transformation. Infrapolitics is interested in what is concealed in such arrangements, in which nothing that a person perceives about the conditions of their existence would ever fall outside of politics. In many ways, this is due to what is seen as a radical reversal of the relationship between the perceptual and the political. If 1960s protest movements sought liberation via the politicization of everyday life, with the slogan that the personal was political tracing a path from perception and lived experience to radical critique and political action, today that project seems to have been successfully consummated—but in the opposite direction—by biopolitical regimes that delve ever deeper into our lives. As Moreiras puts it, "the capture of life by politics is undeniable—biopolitics, in ways perhaps unimaginable in 1968, has indeed made the personal the political, perhaps even terminally, and not always in precisely liberating ways" (*Infrapolitics* 86). Infrapolitics investigates the thought that the bio-techno-political regimes of today's world have subsumed the human perceptual apparatus into their machinations, such that the circuits of estrangement that, for figures such as Brecht, Arendt, and Boym, oriented perceptual renewal towards politics of liberation, now seem to do no more than feed back into a biopolitical machine without escape (Stiegler; Villacañas).

In this context of this increasingly total biopolitical estrangement of perception, infrapolitics nonetheless continues to draw on narratives of estrangement, drawing examples from literature, philosophy, and everyday life in which shifts of perception take place and things are seen differently. Rather than delimiting the political significance of such experiences, however, it instead focuses on how they make perceptible the in-eliminable difference between the perceptual and the political themselves. Infrapolitical estrangement would be that which lays bare the difference between life and

politics, a difference which, as Moreiras emphasizes, "can only be unconcealed, glimpsed, touched upon, sniffed at, also through words, not just with one's body" (*Infrapolitics* 86). At first glance, it might be tempting to see this as a renewal of older models of estrangement from the world. Yet, as the following survey of themes of strangeness and estrangement in recent books by Williams and Moreiras argues, for infrapolitics it is rather a question of deconstructing the from/for distinction itself, allowing for an understanding of estrangement in which another way of perceiving things, and another politics, would emerge out of, and remain attuned to, the strangeness at the heart of the relationship between politics and life.[2]

In the opening pages of *Infrapolitical Passages* (2020), Williams, situating his perspective within the epochal horizon of biopolitical estrangement sketched above, defines infrapolitics in terms of estrangement: "the *infrapolitical* only ever registers and strives to account for the most quotidian of sayings and experiences, while doing so in their most uncanny proximity and estrangement" (1, emphasis in original). He illustrates this process via a commentary on a 2019 speech by then-teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg, deploying a series of formulations that resonate nicely with Shklovsky's essay a century ago. When Thunberg takes the microphone and admonishes the political classes, she "renders the previously inconspicuous conspicuous by placing the routine political calculations internal to capitalism in another light, reconverting the familiarity and ordinariness of *home*, for example, into the unfamiliar ground of an existential conflagration" (2, emphasis in original). Her words set in motion an interplay of perceptions: her perception of the situation, in which she speaks to the political class from a position that "insists on safeguarding [...] a distance from all reigning forms of political calculation," catalyzes for Williams, in turn, a fleeting, preparatory perception of the infrapolitical as it comes detached from the political: "through Thunberg's perception, language, and persona we encounter the two intertwined registers of not only the

political but of what precedes it and underlies it, namely, the 'infrapolitical'" (2). We perceive, not a new political principle to orient political action (this is the trajectory that Williams goes on to associate with recent works by Alain Badiou), but instead "merely [...] an a-principal, infrapolitical recollection of being and nothing else, little more than a call, by saying its matter, to let being be in a way that it is not being allowed to be" (3). Her words estrange us from our habitual ways of seeing all things in terms of political-economic calculation.

Williams considers such moments of estrangement in terms of passages taking place in a world where, in an important sense, everything has already passed. He situates infrapolitics in the wake of the completion of metaphysics in the Nietzschean will to power (as understood by Heidegger), and equally in the wake of the capitalist subsumption of everyday life, as perceived by an array of figures, including Jacques Lacan, since at least the 1960s. In *Infrapolitical Passages*, Williams narrates the story of an estrangement that might occur in the wake of this dual completion, in which, by inhabiting the closing-off of metaphysics and political economy and thinking within it, one might pass to a different, infrapolitical view of things. He extracts this story from a broad range of sources, from recent Latin American theoretical and cultural production to ancient Greek philosophy, drawing from the latter, by way of Heidegger, narratives of Heraclitus inviting non-philosophers into his home and teaching them to perceive, as they warm themselves at his hearth, that "the most familiar, ordinary, and commonplace (that is, the ontic) is the very dwelling place of the question of Being" (3).[3] In this sense, if infrapolitics is often considered in terms of de-narrativization and the undoing of narratives—as Williams puts it, "infrapolitics, as a denarrativizing activity, 'dwells in the passage'" (26)—, it nonetheless also narrates the passage from the familiar to the unfamiliar—that is, estrangement.

The topic of estrangement is also briefly taken up in Alberto Moreiras's

Infrapolitics: A Handbook (2021). In response to the question "what is infrapolitics?," Moreiras references Jacques Derrida's response to a request to define deconstruction in "Letter to a Japanese Friend." After listing Derrida's negative responses (not-analysis, not-critique, not-method, not an act or operation), Moreiras, paraphrasing Derrida, concludes: "[t]he most that can be said, therefore, for deconstruction, is that it happens, there is deconstruction, '*ça se déconstruit*,' and the '*se*' bears the whole enigma" (*Infrapolitics* 65). He then goes on to extend Derrida's response about deconstruction to infrapolitics:

> There is a case to be made that infrapolitics, as we think of it or as we let it think us, is neither an analytic tool nor a form of critique, neither a method nor an act or operation, that infrapolitics happens, always and everywhere, and that its happening beckons to us and seems to call for a transformation of the gaze, for some kind of passage to some strange and unthematizable otherwise of politics that is also, it must be, an otherwise than politics. (65)

After this brief narrative, Moreiras turns back to Derrida, remaining with the thought of strangeness as he notes that, "[i]n the brief 'Letter,' there is a hint of this strangeness, which infrapolitics and deconstruction would share" (65). He associates this strangeness with the moment when Derrida describes deconstruction, in a way that seems strangely programmatic, as "a discourse or rather a writing that can make up for the incapacity of the word to be equal to a 'thought'" (Derrida, qtd. in *Infrapolitics* 65). He explains that this identification of deconstruction with the occurrence of "an unfillable gap or a fissure between thought and language" is partially applicable to infrapolitics as well, but that infrapolitics is ultimately neither a discourse nor a writing—"infrapolitical reflection is of course both, but not infrapolitics as such, if there is or could be an 'as such' of infrapolitics" (65). Yet, if infrapolitics betrays itself at the moment of reflection, reflection remains necessary: "one must start somewhere" (66). In this way, Moreiras defines infrapolitics in terms of the

perpetual relay between the thing that happens to estrange our perception of things, and the reflection the moment of estrangement requires.

Uncanny Rest, composed during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, situates itself on the interior of this process, in a world made doubly strange: the quarantines, masks, Zoom meetings, and enforced isolation redouble our contemporary condition of estrangement, as the virus itself imperceptibly gnaws away at the pretensions of science and economics to "capture the totality of being" (33). To experience a pandemic is to perceive distance and proximity differently as one's everyday routines are altered by the restriction of public spaces and opportunities for circulation. In *Uncanny Rest*, Moreiras considers this "strange and unprecedented experience of pandemic confinement" (60), arriving at an understanding of confinement as a time for an exodus that explodes the sorts of "from/for the world" dichotomies in the narratives of estrangement described above. Instead of seeing the retreat from public circulation as a "retreat into inner consciousness," Moreiras asks rhetorically:

> Why not imagine a retreat in an adverse sense, not toward inner consciousness, but toward the exteriority of the world? A step back toward the world as *parergon*, toward the outside, which is never just the outside, since it in-sists and re-sists in the dimension of the existential "ex-". (44)

In confinement, the world becomes a *parergon*, a constitutive exteriority or supplement that is also a lack. Infrapolitics reflects on this step toward exteriority in which the world is seen in its utmost strangeness, as that which can never be taken on as one's own, nor appropriated for politics. To illustrate this thought, Moreiras quotes a passage from Juan José Saer's *The Investigation* in which the transition to adulthood is described as an "understanding that one has not been born in one's native land, but in a larger, more neutral place, neither friend nor enemy, unknown, which no one could call his own

and which does not give rise to affection but, rather, to strangeness" (Saer, qtd. in Moreiras, *Uncanny* 44-5). In *Uncanny Rest*, the early months of the pandemic become a time of reflection on this passage that happens when we gaze out at the world and perceive "the boundless darkness that wanders, at once glacial and igneous, beyond the reach not only of the senses, but also of emotion, of nostalgia and of thought" (Saer, qtd. in Moreiras, *Uncanny* 45).

The English translation of *Uncanny Rest* contains an entry, titled "Notebook of Alberto Moreira, Heteronym," in which Moreiras transcribes a few pages of typewritten notes found in his family's papers, seemingly pertaining to his uncle Timoteo Moreiras. In them, the writer, in Galicia in the early 1940s, reflects on a visit by either the ghost of Fernando Pessoa (who died in 1935) or by someone in Pessoa's circle who spoke to Timoteo about the poet. Moreiras notes that "there is something infrapolitical in them" (112), pointing out a felicitous affirmation, attributed to the Pessoa heteronym Alberto Caeiro, that "'*O que existe transcende para baixo o que julgamos que existe*.' (What exists transcends from below what we judge to exist)" (113). What follows is a six-page confluence of voices and languages, as statements attributed to Caeiro mix with Timoteo's words, written under the heteronym of Alberto Moreira, along with occasional commentaries and clarifications from Alberto Moreiras himself. The theme, one might say, is none other than estrangement. The objective of the poet is to perceive things without recognizing them and situating them in structures of signification: to be "only eyes to see" (114), or to see things "without anything but what can be seen" (118). Caeiro, in the esteem of Timoteo, enacts this passage into the thingness of the thing: "[i]n you poetry is its dissolution into a blind gaze, which you turn into a full gaze through blindness itself" (118). Alberto Moreiras, commenting on this estrangement of the poetic gaze, notes that, "only through that destruction something appears. That something, a remainder, a pain, what is it? (118). Infrapolitics, one might say, revolves around that narrative of estrangement,

in which something appears out of the destruction of things in the blind/full gaze of the poet, and, out of the midst of a community living in total estrangement, the foundations of that condition momentarily waver.

Part 2: Estrangement in Lucrecia Martel's Cinema of Perception

Estrangement has an important place in Martel's first three feature-length films. Her multi-generational casts of characters live in a context similar to that described by Williams and Moreiras, with her adult characters remaining hopelessly estranged from each other in a swamp-like social world, living stagnant lives without hope for renewal. As Ana Amado puts it, in reference to the frequent falls and declines toward horizontality of characters in *La ciénaga*, "estos cuerpos no comunican utopías sino pura derrota" (52). While her adolescent characters are immersed in the same social mire, Martel, loosely organizing their experiences around coming-of-age narratives, at times permits a relative optimism to peek through, as their personal crises and losses of faith occasionally allow for glimpses of potential renewal in the future. Eva Lynn Jagoe and John Cant, identifying such hopeful dynamics in the sensual relationship between the characters Amalia and Josefina in *La niña santa*, argue that if the adults in the film "sufren los traumas causados por sus inhibiciones y represiones, el placer que sienten los jóvenes con sus cuerpos apunta a una forma de progreso humano" (177). Her characters' lives unfold in the tension between these two dynamics, with estrangement functioning as a narrative device that allows her to weave together portraits of bleakly estranged existences with occasional hints of alternate possibilities.

Estrangement, as a cinematographic device, is furthermore central to Martel's approach to filmmaking. She submits her films' audiovisual materials to an array of experimental techniques designed to elicit shifts in viewers' perception; as Deborah Martin puts it, "all Martel's films in some way work to

call into question our perception, making us uncertain about what we see or hear," and this estrangement of perception "allows for the glimpsing of other realities, for an encounter with 'the horizon of ideology, the border of the obvious, the natural and the self-evident" (12-13). Martel herself emphasizes the centrality of perception in her films, arguing that, as a filmmaker, the construction of perceptual spaces is what is most important, rather than the telling of stories:

> El cine es un proceso emotivo e intelectual de pensamientos, una serie de cuestiones basadas en lo perceptivo que estás compartiendo con el espectador [...] Para mí, el cine es la oportunidad de compartir con los espectadores no una historia—que en realidad me parece una excusa, un residuo de la película—sino un lugar de percepción. ("Para mí" 9)

In this process, the camera and microphone register the sights and sounds that form each film's perceptual material. As the director engages with this material, problems or questions emerge, and she uses cinematographic procedures (framing, composition, editing) to reflect on these questions, with a particular emphasis on how experimentation on the relationship between auditory and visual perception can lead to experiences of breakdown that, as Ana Forcinito puts it, "open up new paths for approaching both what remains invisible and our own inability to see" ("Being" 47). The film is then shared with the audience, in whom this process of perception and reflection repeats itself anew. Through her films' foregrounding of these processes, perception itself comes to exist as something like a micro-protagonist, and estrangement comes to function as a narrative device. As Jens Andermann puts it, Martel articulates a "form of social and affective chronicle," using "sensorial uncertainty *as a mode of narrative organization*" (159, emphasis in original). Underlying the personal stories of her characters and the historical narratives of a turn-of-the-century Argentina in crisis, Martel studies the myriad micro-dramas of estrangement

that simultaneously make up the fabric of her characters' experiences and reverberate in the experiences of her viewers.

In existing scholarship, Martel's cinema of perception has often been situated in narratives of estrangement for the world that argue in favor of its ultimately political significance. Joanna Page, for example, sets Martel's films in the context of the breakdown of foundational distinctions between public and private life that grounded political action throughout modernity. She argues that if her films seem at first glance to enact a turning-away from political themes, and from the allegorical political cinema of previous decades, they ultimately do so in the name of another politics that emerges out of their "self-reflexive concern with questions of perception, meaning, and interpretation" (186-7). Drawing on Hannah Arendt's defense of "the importance of art in transforming individual lives into politicized lives, lending them a more solid existence through being seen and heard," she argues that Martel's "intimate, private films do not simply perform a withdrawal from that which transcends the individual," but rather, via this very withdrawal, they enact "a profoundly political gesture" (191-3). Andermann similarly highlights Martel's turn away from allegorical modes of storytelling, arguing that her use of "variations on the Deleuzian time-image" allow her to engage critically with the "crisis of historical experience that is also their subject by drawing out "the intensity of pure becoming by actively incorporating showing and seeing as key dimensions of the image itself" (155-6). In this context of crisis, in which a broad-based breakdown of the social and political foundations of collective life has also encompassed the allegorical procedures of meaning-making that used to allow filmmakers to connect the personal and the political, Martel's turn away from political storytelling and toward processes of perception and interpretation is shown to be profoundly political in nature.

Leguas can be positioned as something like an epilogue to Martel's earlier films due to its northern Argentine setting, its focus on crises in the

lives of adolescents, and its use of the techniques of perceptual filmmaking employed in her earlier films. In four scenes stretching over eleven minutes, the film dramatizes the exit from school of its adolescent protagonist. In the first scene, Erick and his younger siblings are herding a small number of cows when they are accosted by a small group of dirt bike-riding men. One of the men tells them they are trespassing—"ustedes saben que no tienen que entrar los animales acá"—, to which Erick's sister replies, "estas son las tierras de nuestra comunidad." The man then threatens to shoot any cow he finds there in the future. In the second scene, set in a home in the children's Calchaquí Diaguita community, Erick and his siblings are taught the history behind the land dispute: the land is rightfully theirs, but it has been mis-measured by its wrongful owners due to a faulty understanding of the nineteenth-century measure of *leguas*, or leagues. In the third scene, a man brings supplies to Erick's school, and Erick is called over to help unload them. It is understood that this man is the landowner whose men have ejected the children and threatened their livestock. In the fourth scene, the children, on their way home from school, come across a dead cow. Erick identifies it as one of theirs, then the sound of revving dirt bike engines sends them scrambling. Erick, alone, hides in the brush, and an intertitle reads "El mayor índice de deserción escolar en la Argentina se registra en las comunidades indígenas."

Here, as in Martel's previous films, there is an emphasis on the construction of spaces of perception. In the opening scene, a medium shot of the landscape, accompanied by the ambient sounds of birds chirping and plants blowing in the wind, gives way to a brief close-up of Erick in profile. Then, the atmosphere of relative peace and tranquility is pierced by a young girl shouting "Erick," followed by the increasingly loud sounds of dirt bike engines, as a hand-held camera situated at approximately the height of the children follows them through the tall grass as they attempt to elude the bikers. From this jarring transition, *Leguas* goes on to display many of the hallmarks of Martel's

perception-based approach: the absence of establishing shots in favor of close, crowded shots that are framed such that it is difficult for the viewer to orient oneself; the layering of audio tracks, in which voices and conversations in the foreground and background frequently interfere with one another; and a consistent emphasis on approximating the perceptual experiences of children and adolescents. The film is disorienting and disquieting, in the way that these experiences must be for the characters. To watch it is to suffer alongside Erick and his siblings; it is to perceive the sound of the dirt bikes as they pierce the auditory register, and to feel the urge to flee as they draw nearer.

Yet, in contrast to the allusive approach to politics in Martel's earlier films, one could say that *Leguas* wears its political narrative on its sleeve. Erick's experiences clearly allegorize the sociopolitical phenomenon of school desertion, and his story is situated within broader political narratives of Indigenous land rights and dispossession. Through its dramatization of Erick's departure from school, the film constructs a relatively clear political argument, which Leila Gómez formulates as follows:

> Contrariamente a lo que se espera, la deserción escolar no se explica por malnutrición, trabajo infantil, las distancias entre el hogar y la escuela, o causas relacionadas [...]. [L]os niños no vuelven a la escuela por el temor que impone la alianza entre la institución escolar y los terratenientes que la apoyan económicamente. Son esos mismos terratenientes los que mandan en el campo, la policía y, también, a los maestros y directores de escuela. Contrariamente a la propuesta de los "aparatos ideológicos del estado" de Althusser, la violencia que se impone sobre los niños indígenas y sus familias no es solo simbólica o ideológica sino también física. (176).

This argument is familiar to the characters. They discuss it at home, and they know it as well as they know the correct measurement of the land. Their speech is filled with political language—Erick speaks of rights, and the Indigenous woman teaching the children speaks of the land's belonging to the

community. Unlike Martel's earlier films, which, as Joanna Page argues, carry out a "reflexive staging of the breakdown of allegory" (182), *Leguas* seems to invite—even insist on—the sorts of allegorical interpretations her earlier films sought to move beyond.

This overt politicality (which is also attributable to the requirements and overarching theme of the *Aula vacía* anthology film) is accompanied by a shift in focus from the bourgeois characters of Martel's earlier feature films to characters pertaining to an Indigenous community. Her earlier films have an important Indigenous presence, but the principal characters and families hail from Salta's middle-and-upper-middle classes. These characters, who occupy positions of relative economic and political power, seem to only indirectly perceive local conflicts, such as those revolving around land rights or Indigenous domestic labor, whereas the characters of *Leguas* experience them directly. This shift in focalization, in which the camera now approximates the Indigenous standpoint, might be understood to necessitate a different arrangement of the personal and the political: the foregrounding of politics allows the viewer to experience politics in a more direct way, as it is experienced in the Indigenous community of *Leguas*. It also might be understood, in turn, to expose the presence of political narratives at every moment of the earlier feature films: by establishing a differential understanding of the relationship between the personal and the political in the lives of different characters and communities, *Leguas* would confirm their co-presence. They are always intertwined with one another: the revving dirt bike engines that violently irrupt into the children's range of hearing, just as much as the bourgeois soundscapes of her earlier films, are always also heard politically, so to speak.

It is here that a return to the standpoint of narratives of estrangement might allow for an infrapolitical interpretation of *Leguas* to take shape at the margins of the political interpretations that the film demands. Williams, in a recent article, sets infrapolitics in contrast to left-wing humanist perspectives, such as

that of Georges Didi-Huberman in *Survival of the Fireflies*, in which "melancholic longing for an emancipation long gone" is made to give way to renewed hope for the future by way of a "transformative perception" ("Anthropocene" 3-8).[4] For Williams, such narratives of overcoming melancholia rely on an "enduring faith in the subjectivist centrality of human perception, understanding, labor, and emancipation" (4). It is this faith that allows a fleeting perception, such as Pier Paolo Pasolini's perception of fireflies on a dark 1941 night with Europe in the grip of fascism, to estrange the melancholic gaze, orienting the perceiving subject toward a hopeful "imaginary relation with a potential future happiness" (6). Infrapolitics, in contrast, would chart another path, through the ruins of a humanist theoretical edifice that has crashed and burned, and into a contemporary condition of anxiety that, in light of "the absolute technical-scientific instrumentalization of the planet itself," would nonetheless express an "underlying affective excess" (14). Anxiety indicates "the tragic rottenness of our inherited humanist metaphors" (18), and it also, as Williams argues, drawing on Jacques Lacan's consideration of the Oedipal melodrama, opens into an alternate understanding of the relationship between perception and consciousness. For Lacan, when Oedipus contemplates the eyes he has just removed from his face, he re-sees them, in a "destitute out-of-body experience of perception" (18) that exposes, for Williams, "the gap between the metaphysics of humanism and the groundlessness—the *not*—of perception" (19). Anxiety points toward the sort of negative perception (or perception of negativity) that Pasolini experienced decades later in a 1975 letter when he perceived the absence of the fireflies of his youth, and allows for an alternate, infrapolitical standpoint to emerge.

The second scene in *Leguas* might be viewed in terms of this distinction between hope and anxiety. In it, the story told in scenes one, three, and four of Erick's estrangement from the local school is complemented by a scene that dramatizes the passage from melancholia to hope. It encounters such hope

in the alternative pedagogical model of the Indigenous community, which demonstrates, as Adriana Amante puts it, "the communal nature of learning and understanding," and the fact that "what we must absolutely know is not necessarily learnt at school" (146). In the scene, the children are engaged, the older woman who teaches them is patient and kind, and the political significance is clear: the knowledge they are gaining is laying the foundation for the possibility of future justice. The story of Erick's estrangement from school, which without this second scene might empty into sentiments of melancholia, is here re-framed in terms of a hopeful political narrative, and by opening a window into the characters' learning at home, the film situates viewers within that narrative.

Yet this hopeful vision of the transformative potential of communal learning is not without undercurrents of doubt, fear, and anxiety, which peek through via a series of interactions between Erick and his father, who observes from the background a learning process that he presumably participated in a generation earlier. In the opening moments of the scene, a tightly framed shot of Erick's siblings learning at the table is complemented by an audible conversation in the background in which Erick's father interrogates him about the day's events; as subsequent shots focus in on their conversation, Erick stares blankly into space, then his father tells him to sit at the table: "andá allá que te enseñen." In the following shots of the children learning, the father remains in the background, his figure partially obscured, occasionally manifesting his concern that the children learn this lesson well: "escribí, porque si no, no vas a entender nada de eso," he tells Erick, and to the teacher he says, "Explíquele bien a Erick, en el cuaderno, hágale en un croquis, o no sé qué, para que entienda también." In this way, the anxieties of both father and son creep in at the margins of the scene: the father worries that the children won't learn the lesson well, and perhaps that even if they do, they will not be able to change the situation; and Erick feels anxious under his father's gaze,

and perhaps glimpses in his figure a future in which his hopes for justice will be dashed. This anxiety is amplified by the scene's structure of generational repetition: Erick is learning the measures, just like his father presumably did before him, and when he looks at his father, feeling his gaze and hearing his words, he absorbs his anxieties concerning an unjust situation that threatens to persist into Erick's adult life.

In the closing shots of the scene, the undercurrents of worry and anxiety dissipate as Erick, now fully engaged in the lesson, confidently recapitulates the conflicting measurements at the base of the land dispute. One might thus speak of competing atmospheres: the primary atmosphere of hope constructed in the shots of the children learning, which comes to triumph in the end of the scene; and the atmosphere of anxiety that emerges through the interactions between Erick and his father. The way that the scene is constructed, via the interweaving of foreground and background sights, sounds, and conversations, allows these atmospheres to coexist, inviting the viewer to arrange them with each subsequent viewing. This act of arrangement is necessarily an act of narrativization: viewers must filter their perceptions of the shots in scene two back through the four-scene sequence of *Leguas*, through the political narratives that underlie the short film's story, and also through the political and aesthetic narratives they bring to the table when they begin watching the film. One might stay with the hopeful elements of scene two, allowing them to wash over the melancholy generated by Erick's story; or, following the path traced by Williams, one might remain within Erick's anxiety as he drifts away from the school and its unjust alliance with the landowner, with the flies buzzing over the corpse of the dead cow lingering in our minds as the revving engines of the dirt bikes wash over the film's final shot, suspending hope as Erick hides in the woods. It is from there, as Erick is framed by the foliage, clutching the balled-up school uniform he has removed to better blend in with the underbrush, that an infrapolitical perception of things might emerge.

Part 3: "The Coldest Monsters." Estrangement in Contemporary Cinema

The call for papers for this dossier on cinema and infrapolitics viewed cinema in terms of its paradoxical insertion into the capitalist marketplace: as a technological medium, "[cinema] embodies the production conditions of the market such as the commodity form, the production of identities and consumer niches, mediatization, and technological dependence," but, at the same time, "it allows us to think [the market's] fissures." Noting a relative privileging of literary texts in existing work on Infrapolitics, the call for papers asked: "to what extent can cinema partake in what infrapolitics has characterized as a step back from market dynamics while forming part of a medium in large part formed by the market?" This question was asked not in terms of particular films, but in terms of cinema in general. The idea that certain films may be able to think the fissures of the market has often come up in scholarship on Martel, with a general consensus that her films (often in conjunction with other films associated with the New Argentine Cinema of the turn of the twenty-first century) do seem to find ways of revealing such fissures. These approaches mark an initial distinction within cinema—between, in broad strokes, art cinema and a commercial cinema fully enmeshed in the market—, then illustrate how art films such as Martel's are still able to estrange viewers' perception. These arguments have typically been supported by narratives of estrangement for the world, in which particular films' work on perception is understood to be profoundly political.

This essay concludes by considering Silvia Schwarzböck's *Los monstruos más fríos*, which revisits how cinema, in its first decades as a new technological medium, taught viewers to identify with the cold, inhuman gaze of the camera, going beyond the dramaturgical pedagogies of human identification that characterized the art of previous centuries, and blazing a path without

return to a present-day existence characterized by the omnipresence of the camera's gaze.[5] Schwarzböck narrates a process in which, in classical cinema, identification partially (but crucially) comes detached from psychology, with the camera silently interpellating and educating moviegoers to see things from its perspective, at the same time as the film industry interpellated them via an endless stream of human dramas. For Schwarzböck, the fact that the camera had been surreptitiously educating the viewer is laid bare by Alfred Hitchcock in *Psycho*, which reveals, in the voyeuristic explicitness of the film's shower scene, the "soberanía de la mirada" which will remain forever detached from the endless parade of characters with whom viewers had identified:

> Ese descubrimiento sobre la mirada lo hace *Psicosis* de Hitchcock. El espectador no es alguien a quien se manipula en su nivel inconsciente para que se identifique, en una misma película, primero con la víctima y después con el victimario, sino alguien que aprende respecto de sí mismo—de sí mismo como espectador—que siempre se ha identificado con la cámara, aunque recién ahora lo sepa. (231)

Hitchcock's film consummates a decades-long process in which the camera teaches the spectator a "frialdad de nuevo estilo: una pura frialdad de espectador" (231). From this standpoint, Schwarzböck defines cinema as a "cold monster": to watch movies was, and is, to be interpellated and educated by the camera's cold gaze.

This understanding of cinema's early history allows Schwarzböck to position the techniques of perceptual estrangement of modern cinema (the French New Wave, the early films of Godard, the Brechtian political cinema of the 1960s and 70s) as an alternate pedagogy of the senses that, in an important sense, sidesteps Hitchcock's lesson and remains all too human. Its critical negativity takes aim at the film industry's cultivation of warm character-spectator relationships that had produced in viewers, as many modern filmmakers saw it, a false

consciousness of reality. Modern cinema pursues a re-education of the senses by defamiliarizing the codes and conventions of classical cinema, breaking down its processes of human identification. Yet this privileging of the human side of things tends to evade reflection on the spectator's identification with the camera: "[Hitchcock] entiende mejor que Brecht," as Schwarzböck puts it, "hasta qué punto el espectador no se identifica con los personajes, sino con el dispositivo inhumano desde el que los personajes son mirados para que él los vea sin ser visto" (230). In this way, Schwarzböck is able to pit one form of estrangement, centered on dramaturgical processes of human identification, against another, carried out by the cameras that tacitly educate moviegoers to see things from a position of absolute distance from the human.

She understands contemporary cinema, in contrast to modern cinema, in terms of its decades-long working through of the consequences of Hitchcock's lesson, an investigation that it carries out in dialogue with the new audio-visual media of television and the internet. She organizes her survey of contemporary cinema around a series of approaches that pursue different lines of inquiry regarding the radical coldness of cinema. These include: an aesthetics of explicitness in which the violent and pornographic nature of the cinematic image as revealed by Hitchcock becomes material for cinematic reflection; a vitalist aesthetics that emerges via the instantaneity of television and its affinity with the popular revolt; an infinite aesthetics characterized by the expansion to infinitude of the image and the self in a world where digital copies proliferate endlessly; and a "re-writing of the monster" in which directors, by re-writing the genres of classical cinema, interrogate the gulf separating the popular gaze of the classical spectator from the cold gaze of the contemporary spectator. Schwarzböck views these approaches from a standpoint situated after *Psycho*, and beyond any possible return to an understanding of cinema grounded in human identification. She incorporates the coldness of the camera's gaze into her own procedures of analysis, as

Hitchcock did into his films.

This narrative of cinema history reshuffles prevalent understandings of how estrangement happens in Martel's films, and in cinema in general. It disrupts the emphasis in Martel scholarship on what might be seen as her dialogue with modern cinema's all-too-human understanding of estrangement: Martel's viewers often acknowledge and pass through the cold, clinical qualities of her experimental approach, in order to arrive at, and prioritize, the processes of sentimental re-education in which other ways of seeing, hearing, touching, sensing, or experiencing the world emerge, pointing hopefully beyond an oppressive social world. These interpretations, by foregrounding what Gerd Gemünden describes as Martel's "cinema of the senses" (24), allow perceptual warmth (a warmth that is also political) to triumph over the coldness of the camera. Yet with Schwarzböck, one might also consider how her films situate the modern tradition of sentimental re-education within a Hitchcockian investigation into the cold sovereignty of the camera's inhuman gaze. This is to say that, even as one identifies with her characters, one is also always a voyeur during her films: the same techniques that bring the viewer close to the experiences of her characters also manifest a sort of too-closeness, a constant reminder of the absolute distance encoded in the inhumanity of the camera.

It is here that a final re-encounter with infrapolitics might be outlined. In *Los monstruos más fríos*, cinema is a monster among monsters, in the sense that it shares the coldness of its gaze with the modern state. Schwarzböck, periodically returning to a 1924 prediction by Lenin that cinema will become "un arte de Estado. Incluso el más importante" (Lenin, qtd. in *Los monstruos* 13), writes that, by the by the middle of the twentieth century, Lenin's prediction had been proven substantially correct: cinema had become "*una forma más* de Estado, como la familia, la fábrica, la escuela o la policía" (219). As cinema taught moviegoers to assume the cold standpoint of the camera,

it also dissolved them into a viewing public that claimed a presence, and a desire for participation, in the cultural processes of cinema, running parallel to popular reclamations for participation in the political processes of the state. She writes of "[d]os leviatanes," the first that of the modern state, and the second that of the "industrias culturales" (in the plural) that in today's world have come to administer culture. Cinema is the inaugural monster of these industries, working in coordination with the state, as Lenin already perceived a century ago, to consolidate a population that today lives under, but also inhabits, the gaze of contemporary surveillance regimes.

Williams and Moreiras map our growing enmeshment in a web of institutions and apparatuses bridging state and capitalist power, and they emphasizing the difficult imperative of escaping this condition; as Moreiras puts it, "[t]here will be no political emancipation without a previous, and deeper, recovery of an existential energy that must today be exodic, not vis-à-vis the world, but from the apparatuses of techno-industrial reproduction that have saturated the planet at the limit of productionist calculation" (*Uncanny* 14). Schwarzböck situates cinema within this process of saturation: it lays the groundwork for a twenty-first century in which people's identification with the camera has only intensified as they live their lives, smartphones in hand. Older generations observe newer generations descending into increasing hours of screen time and exposure to the camera's gaze, and see themselves making the same descent into an unhappy social mire that extends into, and out of, our digital lives. The public formed and educated by cinema is much like the adults of Martel's feature films, fully enmeshed in the apparatuses that guarantee their unhappiness. Schwarzböck's study of how cinema estranged the public's gaze into the camera's gaze offers an important standpoint for studying how specific films, such as those of Martel, investigate a gaze that is ineliminable from cinema itself.

Infrapolitics seeks an estrangement beyond this cold gaze. As Moreiras

emphasizes, "[a]n alternative gaze is indispensable and necessary in order to move past a social world where factical hyperproletarianization means an expropriation all the more insidious for being concealed" (*Uncanny* 14). At times, this estrangement is understood as an exodus into the warmth of certain everyday sayings and interactions that, in seeming to exceed political calculation, promise a different existence, such as when Williams re-tells the story of how Heraclitus invites his non-philosopher guests to the warmth of his hearth and teaches them to see it as the dwelling of being. Yet at others, such as in Moreiras's transcription of his uncle's notes on Alberto Caeiro, infrapolitics is associated precisely with a passage through the coldest of gazes: it is the practice of a "cold love of the real" that dissolves poetry into Caeiro's blind/full gaze (118). In this sense, the passage to the infrapolitical would have to do with the sort of warm sentimental re-education often encountered by critics in Martel's films, but also with a process of ongoing reflection on the evolution of the cold gaze that is at once that of the camera and of the poet.

This passage comes into relief in a recent article by Teresa Vilarós in which the author, in dialogue with Bernard Stiegler's *The Age of Disruption*, emphasizes the extreme coldness of contemporary human perception as it has been trained by the camera lens. She describes a present-day capitalism, accelerated by the growing use of AI, in which "[s]e cierra progresivamente el acceso orgánico a los sentidos tradicionales (gusto, olfato, vista, oído y tacto)" (3). She notes that the paths traveled by previous generations, who hoped to arrive at perceptual renewal by passing through the camera's gaze, have been closed off by in the consummation of this "nuevo sistema óptico-técnico de vigilancia absoluta" (6). If, in 1927, Salvador Dalí could imagine arriving at a new "agrimensura espiritual" by embracing the camera's "clara mirada anestética," today this seems impossible: we all live under the gaze of an "ojo algorítmico de un ordenador programado con una fría y extractiva lógica heurística," and in this sense, "[l]a pupila de hoy abre no la vía hacia

el claro sino un *cadere* hacia el pozo" (6). Vilarós, drawing on the language of Stiegler, insists on the need to pursue a bifurcation from within the midst of this situation. In her article, she outlines a reencounter with ancient visions of the world as an animal whose skin, like that of the human animal, functioned as a regulatory membrane and allowed human beings to touch, and be touched, by the world in a way that became unimaginable with the mechanistic, skin-less world models that emerged with industrial modernity. To bifurcate from our contemporary situation—to "[d]ecir basta y detenerse, pues. Infrapolíticamente"—might mean to "[t]ocarnos en y con el mundo," in search of the moments of estrangement in which, from the midst of our world of absolute surveillance, we see ourselves to inhabit the planet as the living beings that we still remain (16).

Notes

1. See Rancière (2002) for a survey of some of the principal forms of this story of how art's work on perception relates to processes of sociopolitical transformation. For recent uses of estrangement for the world in Latin Americanist criticism, see, among others, the introduction to Gómez-Barris (2017) and the conclusion to Hoyos (2019).
2. This approach is far from exhaustive. Areas of future inquiry might include additional study of a larger collection of texts, and also an investigation into the relationship between perception and other processes, such as intuition, which also mark passages into the infrapolitical. See Williams (2022) for a discussion of infrapolitics and understandings of alienation and estrangement in hegemony theory. See Cerrato (2023) and Rodríguez-Matos (2023) for studies of how Moreiras's recent books relate to his broader corpus of writings.
3. Moreiras cites a similar example from a text, later studied by Heidegger, in which Diogenes Laertius describes Heraclitus spending time in the temple of Artemis, playing knucklebones (similar to jacks) with groups of children in the temple. When the adults of the city manifest their surprise at his behavior, Heraclitus tells them: "Why, you rascals [...] are you astonished? Is it not better to do this than to take part in your civil life?" (Diogenes, qtd. in *Infrapolitics* 91).
4. See also Williams (2022) for a consideration of infrapolitics in relation to political

narratives of overcoming alienation/estrangement. Moreiras similarly differentiates infrapolitics from political narratives of hope and redemption; see Rodríguez Matos (2023) for a discussion of his work in terms of its "different engagement with the opposition between a reductive historical framework and the redemption of what is thus reduced" (99).

5. While *Los monstruos más fríos* does not mention Martel's films, it demonstrates important affinities with Schwarzböck's earlier analyses of her films. See Schwarzböck and Salas (2001) for a study of the cold, clinical directorial gaze in *La ciénaga*, and Schwarzböck (2015) for an analysis of the implications of the cold gaze in *La mujer sin cabeza* in the context of the Argentine postdictatorship.

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