Afterword

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Santiago has long imagined itself without Indians. This imagination was drastically displayed and sedimented by the progressively minded elites who, during the nineteenth century, sought to combat every hint of ‘barbarism’ to impose the beatitude of ‘civilisation’. Of course, that ‘civilising’ enterprise was pure colonial violence, denying the morenidades or shades of colour that have always been part of the national capital.

Today, this ‘Indian denialism’ is experiencing tedium; a moment of malaise that has allowed what has been forgotten to find an outlet to the surface and stain the capital del reyno with its denied trajectories. Ever since 18 October 2019, when the popular uprising began, maintaining the Chilean metropolis in anticipation of its redemption, colonial symbols have suffered the wrath of those who have felt this malaise for centuries. At the same time, previously denied symbols such as the wenufoye and the wiphala have emerged as emblems of both rage and hope. There is rage at continuing colonial dominance, albeit reformulated under the veil of republicanism, and the hope of a country longing for re-foundation. The Indian-stained gestation of a constituent moment contravenes the national narrative of the elites, recovering what has been erased and carving out spaces for the indigenous presence to find a place in a city and country that has been built for so many years from the perspective of whiteness. Today, at last, in Chile and Santiago, a space is opening up to contaminate future utopias with variegation.

It is curious how similar to these processes our work in MapsUrbe has been. In affirming this, we are not interested in proclaiming ourselves prophets, but only in embarking on a larger story, on an impulse that was already reverberating through Santiago. The fact is that the discomfort was evident, and there were hundreds of us inhabiting the identitarian restlessness that today finds collective outlets. Indeed, they are more than collective; they are massive or even universal. Beforehand, we used to be just a clique that bonded over a common search for what was denied, inventing a tradition to undermine the foundations of the country’s history. That was also what MapsUrbe was: the coming together of scattered lives that went about questioning their own existence and future, searching from a seeming state of orphanage for what it was to be a ‘Mapuche in the city’. In MapsUrbe, we had a small space of bonding and complicity to reinvent ourselves and to reassemble the fragments of stories that each one of us had in order to confront a national linearity that never appealed to us; what appealed to us was the forgotten and the infinite desire to redeem our dead.

However, we never sought to have the last word with MapsUrbe. It has always been about rehearsals, collective and clumsy elaborations in search of something uncertain, more of a desire to create than to find any definitive answer. Last words are dogmatic, like the national homeland we are trying to escape from. Rather, we wanted to problematise ourselves, to be suspicious
of ourselves and, above all, to be suspicious of official public narratives. Each of us looked at the city from perspectives of rage, oblivion, grief and questioning; in other words, from our infinite experiences as members of a colonised people. There, we only found a few clues: places, laughter, love, violence.

However, through these clues, a series of apparently insignificant indications, and through interdisciplinarity, we generated creative processes. We are artists, actors, students, historians, teachers, anthropologists, and ramblers of the urban night. We mixed knowledge and feelings to the point that ‘interdisciplinarity’ felt narrow, uninspiring, and nothing like what we were doing. Perhaps it makes much more sense for us to speak of ‘indisciplinarity’, both as a gesture of disobedience and as a practice of disciplinary combination without pure and expected ends. ‘Indiscipline’ was our methodological drive, which is why we also questioned the role of the ‘external anthropologist’, and invited ourselves to abandon the comfort of any professional status, as decolonisation is above all an exercise in de-hierarchisation – not only a battle for scripts and narratives but fundamentally a power struggle. This is the daily search in which we engaged during MapsUrbe.

With indiscipline, we stained the city. We addressed spaces where the memory of our people is completely erased despite their actively participating in the development of those places, such as the privileged areas where Mapuche women have worked as nannies and housekeepers for decades. To do this, we used history, cartography and performance. We reproduced part of the anthropological photographic collection of Mapuche in Santiago; unmasking it, we tried to penetrate the violence of anonymity so typical of colonial anthropology. We also made maps with fabrics and remains of various items of clothing as well as collages of images of the city. We discussed poetry and history and wrote with our bodies and computers, engaging with the metropolis that agonisingly seduces us, enchants us and wounds us. Santiago was rethought and marked by our trajectories and reflections. With MapsUrbe, we inhabited the precious contradiction of being Mapuche of concrete: daily inhabitants of a metropolis without denying our indigenous biography. We pushed the city towards its hidden baroque reality and its inevitable champurreo, which amid all the passion of the uprising has become stronger than ever. With MapsUrbe, we were just messengers warning of the impending baroque blaze.

All this was honoured with the theatre play Santiago Waria, where indiscipline found an outlet. History, anthropology, photography, performance, poetry, political reflection, everyday walking and art – in short, everything we tried to be – were led through creative practice to different sites of the city to display them under the umbrella of our reflexive intuitions, revealing hidden memories and anticolonial interpretations that we mashed together during the process. This is another kind of dismantling, a transgression of
the neoliberal paper; because it traverses both reason and feeling, we are convinced that such a work is much more complex than any possible accumulation of writings on the ‘Mapuche in the city’, as decolonising also implies rethinking the ways of communicating the knowledge that emerges through a research process. In each of the creative exercises presented here, there is not just a description of reality; they are not only representations of those who suffer colonial pains, but they are, above all, anticolonial reflections and interpretations. The purpose of this is to stop being the eternal informants for colonial academia, and to begin, at last, to be actors who conceive our own history. MapsUrbe is part of this journey, a space that has also allowed us to problematise the global north and global south divide, and to discover that there are ways to circumvent and overcome, at least in everyday research, the weight of decades of colonial practices of investigation. In short, MapsUrbe was a theoretical and practical exercise in discovering our grey aesthetics, our bifurcated biographies and our lost and reinvented chimaeras. It emerged as an academic project, but along the way, it was blurred, stained with the street, with critical breath, and with interpretations that overturn roles. We sought to blur our individualities in order to re-emerge under a collectivity that thinks of itself as variegated, multiple, contaminated and contaminating cultural repertoires: anthropophagic in essence, ontological in movement.

We came into being under the poetic banner of David Aniñir Guiltraro, who has fostered innumerable creations, thinking and anti-discoveries; the constant creation of Mapurbe or Poblache future, of the nocturnal waria perforating the colonial condition of the capital del reyno, our beloved and despised city as we bathe with the water of the Mapocho to insist on our contradiction, perhaps our only certainty. Yet there, inhabiting the oxymoron that we are, the paradox we enjoy, we sought for a year to sediment our concerns in creations, documents and poetics. Today, in a pandemic-struck Santiago that still breathes the tensions of the uprising, in this Chile that de-monumentalises, we think of MapsUrbe as just another of the impulses that served as a canary in the mine. It is a small trail of multiples that have made it possible to strengthen the anticolonial critique which opens up the debate on a plurinational Chile, and from there, to imagine new models of democratic coexistence for the twenty-first century that are less homogenising; where dialogues of knowledge form the basis of conflicting universalisms, where heresy, dissidence and the unity of opposites are not seen as errors on the margins, but as centres of a culture of frontiers towards a world where the creole is a universal value, on the way to baroque modernity.

Rem Koolhaas, in his classic book Delirium in New York (2014), constructs a method of spatial projection on the basis of the surrealist principle of
Epilogue

‘critical paranoia’. This methodology assumes the fact that we inhabit the minds of those who imagined us in the past. We are thus, in a way, trapped in the fantasies of Christopher Columbus here in Latin America. Well, these hallucinations can also be created by those of us who suffer from the paranoias of Columbus, with our ravings against the manias of colonialism.

In a way, MapsUrbe was our critical paranoia. It was a place for us to dream of another city, fantasise about worn-down monuments, have hallucinations about a Mapuchised metropolis, and rave about aesthetics and actions that decolonised the city. It is also curious that, as a surrealist mandate, these delirious utopianisms acquired an overwhelming consistency, surpassing even our own dreams, when Santiago de Chile burned on 18 October 2019. That day, a popular revolt began that no one had foreseen, not even us, but in its gestures we found ourselves and we saw our fantasies consummated. Monuments were displaced, uprooted, streets and squares renamed under anti-oligarchic names with the emergence of sphinxes of indigenous and mestizo representation, all to compose a plebian, champurrea and plurinational pantheon with our critical paranoias consummating and inhabiting a surrealist revolt. MapsUrbe was a warning, our warning and the intimate hallucination of young Mapuche in the metropolis. Since the revolt, we have spent the last few months in the midst of a constituent process unprecedented in the history of Chile. Never before in the country’s history had there been the possibility of the Magna Carta being drafted through democratic procedures, let alone one with gender parity and with the presence of indigenous peoples. And the reverie is complete when we see that the president of the Constitutional Convention is a Mapuche woman, our lamgen Elisa Loncon. Are we in the midst of the surrealist dream of a young Mapuche woman from the sixteenth century? It is a possibility.