Neutralizing Consent: The Maternal Look and the Returned Gaze in *El infarto del alma*

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> *"El infarto del alma* was a literary experience, a book to which I am still indebted, in the sense that I feel a tinge of regret for not having pushed the writing further. This particular asylum is one of the most extreme in the country – with the understanding that all asylums are extreme places; it is a public hospital that takes in terminal and indigent patients . . . It is incredible that these lives, which transpire with such slowness and such effort, should evolve into love affairs. Love in a place like this is a poetic and political act. It laughs in the face of a bourgeois system that turns couples into economic alliances, or commercial enterprises. In the asylum, these social constructs do not exist; they are replaced by the terrible burden of survival and by an unexpected notion of the other. This notion is at the heart of the crisis of these patients, who do not even have a reliable self that they can count on. The art of love is what this space bequeaths to us. The wonderful thing was to be able to reveal the existence of such a subversive union."
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> —Diamela Eltit, in an interview with Julio Ortega

El infarto del alma, by Diamela Eltit and Paz Errázuriz, is an artistic project that brings together photographs and narratives which show and articulate the desire of the abjected and "insane" Chilean "*aislados*" living in the Phillipe Pinel psychiatric hospital.[1] The text, when located within the trajectory of the activist work of both women, is a political project working to raise awareness about

Lucero 22 (2012): 55-75

the state of the residents of this neglected institution. The authors' focus on the couples, on the lovers that have formed among the inpatients of the facility, seeks to produce in the reader an attack on her own soul, provoking not only thought, but desire for action. As Eltit highlights in the above citation, love is a poetic and political act for these non-recognized actors of society. The authors, in their representation of these subversive unions, work to allow the *aislados* to assert perhaps the only thing that remains their own, unregulated by neoliberal society and the state: their desire.[2]

In its dual medium of word and photograph, this text actively calls attention to the material and discursive regulation of the body by forcing the viewer to confront the socially excluded Other. Through their exploration of the amorous pairings formed by the *aislados*, the authors actively highlight the abject desire displayed by these mentally impaired beings, a desire whose articulation seeks to claim an agency for the *aislados*, conferring unto them the power to resist and provoke the viewer.[3] Yet, even this well-intentioned representation remains troubling.

This essay explores the problematic of consent that is at play in the use of images of the mentally impaired in *El infarto del alma*. It first looks into the manner in which consent is complicated in the consideration of a text such as this, which disseminates images of beings that are incapable of legally granting consent. Working from Marianne Hirsch's discussion of the maternal look in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory,* I argue that the scripting of Eltit and Errázuriz's presence in the text as adopted mother figures within the hospital's inpatient community revises the structure of consent that governs the photograph's (and text's) production, diminishing its unacceptability. I contend that the maternal look serves as a means of creating subjectivity where, in the eyes of neoliberal society, there exists none. Such a framing confers unto the patients that appear in the photographs of *El infarto del alma* a manufactured subjectivity: as pseudo-mothers Eltit and Errázuriz re-birth the images of these residents through art, producing subjects where previously there existed non-recognized bodies treated as objects.

Additionally, I argue that the framing of the subject in a centered, frontal position, with his/her gaze directed at the camera/viewer, not only extends the maternal recognition and celebration of the "child's" subjectivity to the level of the photograph, but also creates a space for an autonomous expression on the part of the *aislados*. This occurs via their confrontation with

the reader of the page: these newly re-created subjects express their agency by meeting the viewer's gaze directly, calling into question their consumption and refusing to be reduced to spectacle. The assertion of this previously unrecognized subjectivity puts the notion of consent in the use of these subjects' images at play, in a continuous movement which functions to question the underpinnings of a neoliberal order that seeks to fix consent (and these subjects) to a specific, "rational," controlled definition.

The Contained Margin, Revealed and Out of Control

The hospital patients who appear in the photographs of *El infarto del alma* are listed as "N.N.," officially catalogued as "not named." These individuals exist without civil identification, therefore legally outside of recognition by the state. Rejected from state acknowledgement and living on the margins, these five hundred *aislados* are also geographically located in the margins of the city, in the countryside of Putaendo, Chile, two hours outside of Santiago. The *aislados* of the hospital are, quite literally, living on the outskirts of society in a structure located on the margins of history.

Originally a tuberculosis hospital and converted into a psychiatric facility in the 1940s, the age and neglect of the hospital's structure is revealed by its decrepitude. The last four photographs in the text evidence the extent of the damage time and the state have done. One image highlights a gaping hole in the wall, another shows an aged ceiling with multiple flaws and inconsistencies, a tone echoed in the peeling paint of a third image. These are not the clean, white-washed, well-kept interiors of a modern hospital. These are closed off, forgotten spaces, a place no "rational" human being would (or should) want to send a member of her family. Yet, the *aislados* have been sent to this facility, many times, by just such people.[4]

In the hospital, patients are found in random places, following no particular order. For instance, one photograph shows a man sitting huddled in the dark, barefoot on a floor marked by dirty footprints. In the background of this photograph, another patient lies on the dirty tile floor intersecting a doorway, again on the ground, sprawled and seemingly asleep. "La falta" and "la soledad" of life in these unacknowledged and marginal spaces, forgotten by civil society, is referenced repeatedly in Eltit's accompanying textual passages, and is evidenced in photographic form by the decrepitude of the structures of the hospital, as well as in the sterility of the block

architecture of the building. One image shows the lack of any marker of human comfort in the facility – the structure is the ghostly shell of a hospital. Without context, one would guess that this building had been abandoned. This tone echoes the view of society toward the *aislados*: shells of human beings, nonproductive members of society who need to be contained, controlled, and forgotten. Yet, the figures upon which Eltit and Errázuriz focus their text refuse to be forgotten: they will not be *aislados*. Confronting the viewer as couples, placing their love and their sexuality in the fore, they refuse society's efforts to keep them at the margins.

The positioning of the margin at the center via the provocative photographs of the sexuality of the disabled in *El infarto del alma* produces a profound effect on the viewer. The reader of these photographs and their text is confronted with her own desire to see these individuals, alongside her repudiation of their sexuality. Errázuriz's photographs, paired with Eltit's narrative, disquiet the viewer and resist easy consumption. Upon her viewing of the first two lovers, Eltit remarks, "Saludo a la primera pareja. Pienso seriamente en el amor. La verdad es que no quiero pensar en eso." The reaction to seeing the abject desire of the *aislados* is one that disrupts the marginalization of these subjects by forcing Eltit (and her reader) to think about that which she is taught by society to not want to consider. The photographs make real and centrally present the existence of these couples. At the same time, the manner in which the couples gaze back at their viewer disquiets the comfortable social order to which the "rational" viewer pertains. It necessitates that she think about their love.

The discomfort one experiences upon viewing the returned gaze in these photographs stems from the positioning of their subjects in a manner that actively evades the easy consumption of their images. This technique, used by Errázuriz in her photographs, echoes that of North American photographer Diane Arbus, who employs the same disruptive framing in her own treatment of subjects who live marginalized existences in New York: the physically deformed, transvestites, and in some, the mentally disabled are all positioned centrally and actively confront the gaze of the viewer.[5] In a parallel fashion to the difficulty of viewing Errázuriz's photographs in *El infarto del alma*, Judith Goldman observes the difficulty of viewing Diane Arbus's photographs, stating:

> Each picture acts like a visual boomerang; freaks and lonely people scare us into looking first at them and then back at ourselves. Arbus's camera reflected the visual confrontations we choose not

> to have, the appearance of horrors that stop us but are hard to see. That is never easy. (30)

While Goldman observes the existence of unease in viewing the Other in Arbus's work, one which forces us to question ourselves, I see a similar unease in the viewing of *El infarto del alma*. Eltit and Errázuriz's project not only takes marginalized figures and places them photographically in a text for our viewing, but it places individuals who lack the ability to understand the photographic project in a position from which they will be consumed by the viewer's gaze. Goldman's observed unease with regards to Arbus's photographs is augmented in terms of *El infarto del alma*.

As Susan Sontag remarks in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, in times of war, "photographs are a means of making 'real' (or 'more real') matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore" (7). In *El infarto del alma*, photographs serve this same function. They work to give testimony to the existence of those whom the social order and the state have deemed inappropriate for incorporation into civil society. The photographs make real the existence of the psychiatric hospital in Putaendo. They make real the relationships between the *aislados* that people would prefer to ignore, contain, and to forget. However, the discomfort one senses upon viewing the photographs in *El infarto del alma* remains. It is not simply a matter of bringing a suppressed element of society into focus: the aesthetic approach of the artists also poses discomfort to the viewer as she realizes the voyeuristic nature of the gaze through which she is consuming the images of these subjects. One has to question and complicate the means by which Eltit and Errázuriz are seeking to lend agency to the subjects of their work. These subjects, mentally impaired, subaltern in existence, are positioned here in a photograph and are encouraged to be consumed by viewers. However altruistic the motives of these two artists, is the use of these subjects in their work ethical? The viewing of *El infarto del alma* requires us not only to question ourselves as viewers, but also to re-examine the project of the authors and to question them as creators of this text.

(Docu)Literature/Photography and the Role of the Artist-as-Witness

The nexus between documentary, artistic, and activist modes represents a change in the trajectory of photographic genre. In *Light Matters: Writing and Photography*, Vicki Goldberg comments on the

evolution of the field of photography as a medium of activist practice, stating: "social-reform photography moved into museums in recent years, as art has begun to absorb new categories, museums try out new roles, and documentary photographers adopt artistic modes" (179). The fusion of the artistic and the documentary modes in *El infarto del alma* occurs most evidently via the paired presentation of Eltit's narrative and Errázuriz's photographs, a pairing commented by Gisela Norat in her study of Eltit's work:

> [T]o Errázuriz's images Eltit contributes a text that conveys insights on the asylum and its inhabitants as well as her creative rendition of the possible mental ruminations of patients. Eltit acts as the conscious of the interned, communicating for them. (51)

The role of the artist as a witness and the testimonial function of *El infarto del alma* has elsewhere been explored by Ana Forcinito. In her consideration of the text, Forcinito argues, that the repeated emphasis on the realness of the bodies of the inpatients and the abandoned spaces that they inhabit are what mark the project with a testimonial gesture. The consumption of these bodies and spaces places the reader in the role of witness: "estas fotografías nos interpelan a través de otra mirada testimonial y la denuncia que esta mirada implica" (67). Thus, the testimonial function of the text relies not only on the content (both spatial and corporal) of the photograph, but also on the consumption of that content by the witnessing gazes of Eltit, Errázuriz, and, ultimately, the reader.

The observation that the testimonial function within *El infarto del alma* derives from its emphasis on the corporal realness of the residents' images begs for a further examination of whether or not the subjects of Errázuriz's photographs consented to being captured by her camera lens. In one image, the couple featured first appears to pose intentionally for the photographer; the woman seems to purposefully show her body, posing in a manner normally construed as flirtatious. The obvious posing of the woman may invite the reader's gaze, re-assuring her of her role as a consumer of the image. Assured by the recognizable manner in which the woman flaunts herself before the camera, the reader shifts to her male partner's expression. His non-accommodating facial countenance presents an element in the photograph that interrupts this scripted schematic of seeing and disquiets the easy consumption of the photo by the complacent reader. The reader, having been drawn to the pose of the woman's arm jutted out to her side, her back arched backwards ever so slightly, upon turning to the image of her lover, changes

impression. The man's pose lacks the inviting flirtatiousness of the woman's. While she invites the viewer to consume her image, he stares back at the viewer as if to rebuke this propensity toward the easy consumption of his girlfriend. Upon seeing the man, the viewer (hopefully) is made to feel as if she is intruding on a closed space, an intimate scene. The man's eyes confront the camera as if to ask, how dare you look in on our moment, our relationship, our home, us? What do you want?

The narrative that accompanies this image further disquiets the reader's consumption. The woman shown in this photograph is identified in Eltit's narrative as Juana, who may not be "insane" at all, but an abandoned orphan who has spent her whole life at the facility: "Juana, tal vez, no está loca. Es posible que Juana llegara con su padre al hospicio de la ciudad de Valparaíso cuando era una niña o cuando apenas era una adolescente." This detail, arguably, may be why Juana is the woman in the collection who most obviously poses her body for Errázuriz's photographing.[6] Yet the question of agency in connection to Juana remains unclear. Eltit remarks: "Juana, que quizás no esté loca, no puede salir ya al exterior." The doubt here is in regards to why Juana cannot leave the hospital. In fact, Eltit even posits that if the hospital were to ask Juana to leave the hospital (presumably to join the exterior society),

> Juana no lo haría. Su lucha es por permanecer en el manicomio, por sobrevivir allí. Se trata de un cuerpo político. Juana está sentada atrás, cerca de los naranjales. Sola. Tiene con ella sus bultos. Ella pervive porque se mantiene aparte. Evade el castigo. Resiste. Todavía no se ha entregado a la sumisión.

These details, that accompany the photograph of the posing woman and her partner discussed above, inscribe even more ambiguity within this set of photographs. Is Juana really "*loca*"? Does she belong in this institution? Why is she fighting to stay? Doesn't her fighting to stay in such a decrepit, unwelcoming structure (if she isn't "*loca*") imply that she is not rational? If she is sane in these photographs,,is she really expressing a true understanding of what it means to pose for the camera since she has passed her entire adult life in the institution? Is she to be seen as a productive member of society capable of giving her consent following the given legal norms? Does the confirmation of her lack of reason or possession of reason *matter* for the reading of these photographs? *Why* does it matter?

The doubt connected to the figure of Juana in the text, both in written and photographic form, reveals the deep ambiguities circulating in the use of the images of the residents in the Phillipe Pinel Psychiatric Hospital. But, at the same time, it reveals the extreme emphasis placed on the category of "rationality" within the neoliberal system that created this neglected and forgotten sector of society in the first place. It points to the redeeming value of Eltit and Errázuriz's text, the underlying activist (versus exploitative) intentions of the authors. It urges us as viewers to reconsider the project and look more deeply at what is being complicated by the text.

The feeling that one is intruding upon viewing these photographs, indulgently satisfying one's own desires to see, is inescapable. These photographs depict the *aislados* during their most intimate moments, the ones in which they assert their desire for one another. The posing of the couples in pairs gives testimony to their love. One photograph shows a couple in bed, under the covers, the woman's head resting on the man's chest. He has one arm around her, while the other holds her hand. They are both fully clothed, yet, the manner in which the couple gazes back at the camera confronts the viewer's easy consumption of their image. The image puts the disabled body, asexualized and abjected by "normal" societal standards, in a center-focused, sexual context, from which it had previously been excluded.

These snapshots of private moments reflect the intimacy evoked in the portraiture of the artist to whom Errázuriz's photography is most compared, Diane Arbus. The comparison between Errázuriz's and Arbus's work stems from both photographers' uses of portraiture technique for photographing individuals that have been marginalized by society. Both artists use these photographs for altruistic goals, ostensibly with all the best of intentions. Yet, the scrutiny to which Arbus's work has been subjected illustrates the problematic nature of working with such subjects. These critiques are illustrative of the problematic that underlies Errázuriz's photographs in *El infarto del alma*.

In reference to the snapshot technique used by Arbus, art critic Judith Goldman remarks that Arbus "transformed the nature of photography; yet if her achievement was great in a general sense, it was also extremely problematic" (33). This problem, for Goldman, stems in part from the manner in which Arbus's own emotional state (despair) interrupts the transmission of sentiment by her photographed subjects, guiding the viewer's eye: "the similarity of despair in Arbus's pictures cancels their credibility as objective

statements. The captions further discredit the documents' objectivity by telling us how to see the picture" (35). Goldman is quick to note that "the betrayal was not intentional; it was an obsessive vision that isolated each subject in despair" (35). This interruption implies that, even given the best intentions, Arbus's photographs remain in what she herself deemed the "gap between intention and effect," a gap that imposes a power structure onto the photograph and impedes the subjects' assertion of agency in the image. The contagion presented by Arbus's presence as photographer impedes her subjects' assertion of the photograph. This reveals an additional mediating factor present in the photographs of *El infarto del alma*: Errázuriz's presence cannot be removed. Goldman goes on to assert that the intimacy fabricated in Arbus's photographs has "something dishonest" about it (33), even if "there is every reason to think Diane Arbus liked her subjects" (33). This dishonesty, for Goldman, lies in the imbalance of power between photographer and subject: "that dishonesty was neither moral nor even intended, but a kind of compulsive cheating, made by someone who had the upper-hand" (35). This upper-hand is even more evident when the photograph is of a marginalized being. Even so, critics continue to insist on the moving nature of Arbus's images, locating in them a testimonial power that allows access to a once-present truth: "Arbus's photographs continue to perform one of photography's more paradoxical tricks: preserving memories of people who were of much less consequence to the world at large than their photographs have been" (Goldberg 47).

Perhaps it is the power of the corporal referent, the documentary nature of Arbus's camera, that the public and critics alike find redeeming. It is the same redeeming value that has been celebrated in discussions of *El infarto del alma* as a point of accessibility into the margins, even if the photographer's presence and the imbalance of power between Errázuriz and the residents of the facility cannot be overcome. Given the continued critical admission of this value, one must ask why the problematic of using the images of others, readily criticized in reference to emerging forms of documentary photography, tends to be rigorously recuperated in projects such as that of Arbus or that of Eltit and Errázuriz.[7] One comment by Vicki Goldberg stands out: "Arbus did not steal her subjects' souls; they lent them to her, with interest. Her pictures are dialogues, her subjects as curious about her as she is about them" (38). Additionally, Goldberg emphasizes that Arbus's photographs were taken in a "family-like" and mutually supportive sphere (44). Perhaps it is this facade of the family, this pseudo mother-child

relationship which marks the problematics of mediation with a more subtle, and ultimately more acceptable tone.

The Maternal Look - The Revised Dynamic of the Family

The intimate nature of the photographs of *El infarto del alma* is evident in the framing of the *aislados* as pairs of lovers, exposing their sexuality. The photographic arc of one pair of lovers highlights their familiar relationship with Eltit via the lens of Errazuriz's camera. The couple are first shown together through close-up, then, sequentially shown as a pair in larger frames in which the woman is depicted in various stages of undress. The problematic of consent in the use of the images of the inpatients is compounded by this series of photographs in their revelation of the woman's body in its most intimate state. The purpose of the woman's undressing is to show Eltit and Errázuriz the scar left on her body from a recent medical procedure, underlined in the text in the following passage:

> nos muestra su cicatriz, lo que en realidad enseña es la huella de su esterilidad, de la operación antigua y sin consulta que le cercenó para siempre su capacidad reproductiva. Por causa de su locura, sus hijos sólo transitan ahora por su mente cuando porfiada, llevando la contra a su propia anatomía, afirma que recientemente ha estado embarazada: <<Gorda>>, dice, <<de dos, de ocho meses>>. Lo dice con el pantalón abierto y con la mirada absorta, mientras su pareja también con el pantalón abierto se acaricia suavemente la venda.

Here, Eltit underlines the fact that this woman's body has been sterilized "sin consulta." Eltit, with this phrase, recognizes that the woman cannot give her consent. In underlining this lack, Eltit emphasizes (and, arguably, denounces) how the woman's body has been policed by a "rational" society that deemed it necessary to sterilize her, to control her biological reproductivity. If one is to take this recognition of a lack of ability to give consent as fact, then how can one justify the ethics of printing and distributing this woman's naked body in a text without her consent? The answer may lie in the very intimacy that permits Eltit and Errázuriz access to this story, through the lens of a pseudo mother-child relationship.

This discussion regarding awareness and consent recalls a similar controversy surrounding another North American photographer, Sally Mann, and her widely sold and extremely successful nude portraits of her children. In 1996, art critic Mary

Gordon challenged the ethics of Mann's representations of her children, asking

> Is that what these children want? Do they know that [sic] they're doing? Will they regret this later on when, as adults, they understand the implications of their childish image? What is the effect, now, upon these children of their mother's encouraging them to pose in ways that underscore their sexuality in unambiguous ways? (145)[8]

In *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch takes up this controversy surrounding Mann's photography, arguing that the presence of a maternal look in these photographs implies a revised schematic of analysis for these images, for the maternal look itself is also subject to policing by society (154). Thus,

> the "reality" may be what we see in Mann's photographs: her retort to the gaze, her own vision of her children, her own creation, her fears, fantasies, dreams, and desires. The pictures are her way of "shooting back," her own manipulation of the screen of familiarity, a redefinition allowed by a self-conscious maternal subjectivity. (162)

While Sally Mann photographs her own children, her biological offspring, and thus embodies a maternal look whose biological subjectivity is reflected back at her, Eltit and Errázuriz's text is imbued with a manufactured maternal look that manifests itself via the scripting of their relationship to the *aislados* as adoptive mothers, a title conferred unto them by the residents of the psychiatric facility themselves.

It is not only the altruistic motives of Errázuriz and Eltit that code them as mothers, re-birthing via artistic creation the identities of these forgotten subjects, projecting them into a new subjectivity that is seen and recognized instead of marginalized, but ultimately the residents of the Phillipe Pinel hospital that cast Eltit and Errázuriz in the role of mothers. This imposed coding of Eltit and Errázuriz as mothers is evident from the beginning of the text in the section "Diario de viaje" in which Eltit's narrative recounts her first visit to the Philippe Pinel hospital. In describing her visit, Eltit states:

> Estamos rodeadas de locos en un desfile que podría resultar cómico, pero, claro, es inexcusablemente dramático, es dramático de veras más allá de las risas, de los abrazos, de los besos, pese a que una mujer me tome por la cintura, ponga su boca en mi oído y

> me diga por primera vez <<Mamita>>. Ahora yo también formo parte de la familia; madre de locos.

Eltit goes on to describe that this is the way they enter (she for the first time) the building of the institution. She is welcomed, first outside, as a mother, then brought into the building as a matriarchal figure within her newly formed family. This sets the scene for the rest of Eltit's narrative, as well as for our encounter with the photographs taken by Errázuriz. The images become snapshots, with the mother's voice scripting the narrative text that orders this species of family album. Eltit's new role as "*madre de locos*" is repeatedly emphasized in this section of the text, with various instances in which residents murmur "*mamita*" when addressing her, clinging to her as children while she moves throughout the facility. At first reluctant to perform this role, Eltit gradually comes to accept her new space within the family of the institution:

> Permanezco junto a dos mujeres que se estrechan, una a mi brazo y la otra a mi pierna derecha. Observo que Paz Errázuriz también tiene a sus hijas fieles. No hablamos. Simplemente estamos sentadas recibiendo el sol del invierno entre el murmullo de los pacientes que nos rodean. Las mujeres que se han apoderado de mi lado derecho exigen cada cierto tiempo que las mire y cuando lo hago, me entregan toda una plena y gloriosa sonrisa, mientras el <<mamita>> se me vuelve cada vez más cotidiano, cada vez más natural y digo que sí, que claro, que se porten bien, que no tengo cigarrillos, que está clientito el sol de la tarde.

In this passage, Eltit, first reluctant to see the residents as her children, accepts this role in the end and acts accordingly.

The acceptance of this role is our entrance into this text as readers. We are to see Eltit and Errázuriz as members of this family of "*locos*" and read the text accordingly. In seeing the residents as children, framed by the maternal look that photographs them, we are not seeing an infantilized reduction of their personhood. Instead, we are seeing the recognition of their subjectivity, produced not only via the maternal look, but ultimately via their conferral of this look unto these two women who visit their family at the institution. This small action, this scripting of the text as a maternal re-birthing of their subjectivity, thus derives from a species of agency that originates in the inpatients themselves.[9] This origin means that the reading of these photographs as the family snapshots a mother takes of her children is not a reductive infantilization of the subjects, but a means by which a mother relates the recognized subjectivity of her

children, a reflection of her own self; it is the material production of a desire that originates from the residents themselves and manifests itself via the maternal look of the mother's camera.

The photographs in *El infarto del alma* are representations not only of the inpatients, not only of Eltit and Errázuriz's perceptions of the *aislados*, but of something else completely: of the intimate link that exists between the two sides.[10] The process of undressing undertaken by the female inpatient in *El infarto del alma*, previously deemed problematic, when considered via an analysis of Eltit and Errázuriz as maternal figures, codes the scene within the intimacy of the mother-child relationship. This scene, in its revealing of the injured body, recalls a child showing her mother the physical damage that has been done to her body, seeking to reveal the evidence of the hurt that she is feeling, perhaps seeking the healing consolation of a maternal voice or touch, a relationship of intimacy that remains coded on the photograph, soothing the problematic of consent for us as viewers.

Yet, this maternal look, this sense of mother-child intersubjectivity, does not serve to erase completely the problematic issue of consent, even as it may make it appear more subtle. Hirsch, in her consideration of Mann's photographs of her children, asserts that "even as we try to appreciate the collaborative character of Mann's images and see how each gives the other what she wants, we cannot forget the extreme differences in power, authority, and influence that separate parents from children . . . This process cannot be mutual" (164). This process cannot resolve completely the issue of the power dynamic that imposes itself onto the pinpointing of the presence (or absence) of consent.

Eltit and Errázuriz, in their roles as artists, as reproducers of materials that testify to the existence of these couples, are coded as mother figures by their subjects. The camera's lens, then, is arguably governed by the maternal look, a mediation that, as Hirsch's discussion is quick to remind us, is different from that of the gaze, for the look is returned, yet the gaze, as an instrument of ideology, of power, turns the subject into consumed spectacle.[11] The manner in which Errázuriz's photographs set her subjects up, framing them intentionally to resist this spectacle, and in the process implicate and question the gazing viewer's own concept of consent, forms the basis for the remainder of this essay's consideration of *El infarto del alma*.

The Neutralizing Effect of the Returned Gaze

The issue of consent in this case is complicated by the use of a maternal gaze unto the child's body, which re-inscribes the photograph within a revised power scheme though still remaining trapped between the black and white dichotomy of existence or lack of consent. This dichotomous dilemma recalls Carol Mavor's examination of Lewis Carroll's depiction of female childhood in his photograph *Portrait of Evelyn Hatch*. Focusing on the vacillation of presence-or-absence of sexuality in the depiction of a child nude, art historian Carol Mavor confronts the controversy over the work of Carroll, and identifies an unfortunate lack on the part of other scholars to recognize the depiction of a child sexuality in this work, stating: "very few critics have been willing to touch the little girls Carroll photographed. The subject makes them understandably uneasy. When they do touch upon the topic of his curious photographs, they tend to read not the pictures themselves, or the situation of the girl of the period, but rather Carroll" (8). The avoidance of a consideration of the topic stems, following Mavor, from the Victorian view that sex contaminated childhood, fundamentally altering the subject's identity, and signaling the death of innocence and the birth of an adult, existing one step closer to death. Mavor's analysis of black-or-white limits can be applied directly to a discussion of consent in Eltit's text. Part of the appeal of only considering the *aislados* as individuals completely incapable of any type of consent, and thus the photographs as purely a reflection of Errázuriz as photographer, is that it mandates that they stay outside of rational society, controlled by the ideology of a dichotomous world of black and white. From this gaze, there is no gray area, no complication or variation in the definition of consent. One is either a rational being outside of the mental hospital (who can give consent) or deemed "insane" and therefore incapable of consent. There is no slippage in this binary. There is no means by which the subjects in Errazuriz's photographs can give their consent to have their physical being placed into the rational visual plane of Errazuriz's ordered, image-producing camera.

Mavor's discussion of Carroll resists the desexualizing tendency of previous art criticism. It confronts the sexuality depicted in his photographs, situating it within a discussion of the varying and disputed definitions circulating regarding the determination of the parameters of "girlhood" in Victorian society, complicated by the fact that Victorians did not have a category for adolescence. This slippage between girlhood and womanhood can be seen in Carroll's photograph. Mavor reads the girl as a type of neuter, taking Roland Barthes's and Louis Marin's understanding of the term as a

"neverending play of textual and oppositional spaces" (Mavor 21) as a means of understanding the vacillation depicted in the photograph.

This slippage, this vacillation is precisely what can be seen in terms of consent in *El infarto del alma*. Returning to photography, as observed by Patricia Bosworth,

> [The photographic style of Diane Arbus] drastically altered our sense of what is permissible in photography; she extended the range of what can be called acceptable subject matter. And she deliberately explored the visual ambiguity of people on the fringe and at the center of society. (ix)

The use of this style by Errázuriz accomplishes a similar effect. The visual ambiguity in the photographs of *El infarto del alma* constitutes a slippage, the neuter at play in the text is the issue of consent. The framing of the photograph, the gaze the subject sends back at the viewer complicates the reading of the subjects as entirely without agency.

Returning to the photograph of Juana and José, one must reconsider the agency that is being expressed. José's confrontation of the viewer's gaze here can be read not only as a gaze that confronts the viewer (or Errázuriz as photographer), but as a patriarchal gaze that seeks to control Juana's consumption by the viewer. Juana's posing, then, may be read as the assertion of a female agency, choosing to show her body not only to her partner, but to the camera as well, thus defying her partner's desires. This reading of the moment depicted in the photograph moves away from a consideration of Errázuriz's role in the image's production, and assumes a prior existence of consent and the assertion of an agency over the content being produced. Yet, again, the presence of doubt regarding the subject's mental state in the image brings us back to the realm of the undeterminable; given Errázuriz's role as photographer, the power she holds in her relationship to her subjects, could it be that the camera just happened to catch these subjects in the serendipitous moment that allows for a reading of agency in the image? Was this posing intentional? Or, as Jo Labayni asserts, one perhaps wishes to read in the pose and gaze of the inpatients an inner truth that may not exist: "no podemos "leer" en ellas las señas de un yo – lo cual equivale a decir que no podemos leer en ellas las inscripciones del poder" (85). The desire to see beyond the eyes into the soul is one that remains stunted by the gaze of the *aislados*, even as it seems to be asserted. This continual movement maintains the issue of consent in a gray area, a zone in

which it cannot be fixed to a simple "exists" or "doesn't exist" dichotomy. In doing so, it complicates the notion that these marginalized subjects can be contained and controlled.

Conclusion: The Refusal of Easy Complicity

In its acting as a conduit of access, *El infarto del alma* is a photographic translation of life in the asylum, deriving its productivity from this very mediation. In her assessment of Ricardo Piglia's work, Francine Masiello argues for the productive capacity of translation: "translation redirects information and shifts the terms for art and individual identity . . . Translation signals those sites where languages collide, announcing a crisis of different systems for social meaning and value" (164). *El infarto del alma* functions as a translation of two orderings of society: one dictated by neoliberal systems of governance that reject those members of society deemed "unfit" or "unable" to be productive participants, and the other ordered (or perhaps not ordered at all) by a celebration of that which the first system has rejected: the *aislado*'s basic human capacity (and necessity) to love.

By way of conclusion I would like to discuss one last photograph from the text. In this particular image, one sees the vacillation between these two orders in terms of consent regarding the use of the image and the inscription of the maternal gaze, the neuter that works as the productive point of translation in questioning the regulatory controls imposed on the *aislados*. Though one knows from the text that we are seeing two patients from the hospital and that from the deterministic perspective of rational society they do not possess the means to give consent to the use of their images, without the orientation of the written text the photograph presents no such complication. There are no ready physical markers of abnormality, of otherness. What distinguishes this photograph from the rest in the collection are the sunglasses worn by the man in the image. The lenses reflect back to the viewer the image of the person who had been standing before the man and his partner as their picture was being taken. It is, presumably, the picture of Errázuriz as photographer, but it becomes the image of us as viewers. We are reflected in the man's sunglasses. We are implicated in the photograph. Our own uneasy consumption of these photographs is thrown back at us, our own understanding of these subjects as powerless is complicated.

There is a refusal of easy complicity in these photographs. The theme of consent – the consent of the *aislados* to be in the Phillipe Pinel mental institute, the consent of the woman to be sterilized, and the consent of the inpatients that appear in the text of *El infarto del alma* – remains constantly at play in these images. It remains neuter. It avoids fixity. But above all it calls on us, as viewers, to complicate our own image, our own understanding of the *aislados* and the neoliberal society that regulates and contains them. It negates our ability (and, hopefully, our desire) to keep them at the margins, in isolation, in decaying structures, and in circumstances of lack ("*la falta*") and hunger.

NOTES

1. The cited term "aislados" comes from the text of *El infarto del alma*. The text does not contain page numbers, perhaps a gesture by the authors to avoid engaging with the reasoned, rational order that they suggest has kept the inpatients of the Putaendo hospital living in such decrepit conditions. In any case, references to *El infarto del alma* in this essay will necessarily not contain page references.

2. I use the term neoliberal here in order to delineate the system that has relegated these people to the margins of society. Seen as non-productive members of society in terms of labor due to their mental impairments, the residents of the Phillipe Pinel Psychiatric Hospital are not recognized as contributing or functioning members of society. My use of this term also calls attention to the undervalued nature of maternal/biological labor within the system, of the birthing of new members of society, and the subsequent 'necessary' control of the perceived 'contagion' of the procreative sexuality of the *aislados*. Despite wanting desperately to contribute to society through parenthood, these persons (mainly the women) are surgically sterilized, thus turning their desires to be contributing members of society into "*un sueño imposible*" (the title of the section of *El infarto del alma* in which Juana, a resident of the facility, expresses to Errázuriz her profound desire to be a mother).

3. My use of the term "abject" applies Julia Kristeva's use of the term in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. In describing the desire of the residents as abject, I call attention to the means by which their love and sexuality questions the underpinnings of neoliberal society, threatening (with their biological procreative

possibilities) neatly ordered binaries, such as sane/insane, rational/irrational, fit/unfit, abled/disabled, etc.

4. Here I call into question the rationale by which parents would decide to send a member of their family, their child, to the institution, especially given the extreme circumstances of the structure and the living conditions (*la falta*). In the opening section of the text, the voice of one *aislada* (a fictional voice created by Eltit) ponders her abandonment at the institute by her exhausted mother ("fatigada") and her confused father ("confundido"), lamenting that even her guardian angel has left her behind: "el ángel se niega a llevarme sobre sus espaldas y me desprecia y me abandona en las peores encrucijadas que presentan los caminos" (n.p.). Could it be that a system that deems sending mentally impaired children to facilities such as the one depicted here, in *El infarto del alma*, is the one that actually is lacking in rationality, is truly the insane system of thinking?

5. Art historians have identified the shocking value of the returned gaze in their consideration of Manet's *Olympia* (1865), marking it as a definitive point in the turning away from the classic nude form with its depiction of an active subject whose agency is expressed in her confrontation of her consumer by the returning of his gaze (for the viewer, in his active space, is taken to be masculine). Arbus and Errázuriz contribute to this interpretive trajectory in art history in their own ways, by turning traditionally passive subjects into active ones with their intentional photographing of their subjects' returned gazes. For more considerations of active versus passive subjects and the theory of the gaze see: T.J. Clark (who explores the economic underpinnings of the power of the gaze), Griselda Pollock (who employs a feminist and gendered consideration), and Lorraine O'Grady (who presents an extended racial analysis of the theory).

6. I read the juxtaposition of narrative to photograph in this particular section of *El infarto del alma* as direct correspondence between text and image. Eltit's narrative in this section of the text includes the transcript of a conversation Paz Errázuriz recorded with Juana, one of the residents of the facility, in which Juana talks about a dream she has had in which she became a mother (a transcript Eltit then titles "Un sueño imposible"), as well as a section entitled "Juana la Loca" which tells the story of how Juana came to be living at the psychiatric facility. While it is ultimately never outright stated, the text accompanying this set of images references Juana and her partner José, and the photographs depict a couple that corresponds

to the narrative. The assumption the reader (and this analysis) makes is that the image/text correspond, however, just as there are many ambiguities elsewhere in the text, one remains uncertain if these images actually do coincide with the narrative.

7. Vicki Goldberg identifies this controversy: "critics accuse photographers of stereotyping the poor and thereby helping to perpetuate their poverty; of exploiting rather than helping the famine-stricken; of abetting atrocity by offering oppressors the chance to be famous for fifteen minutes" (12).

8. The Mann/Gordon debate goes on in the next summer's issue of *Salmagundi*, in which Mann highlights the purity of her unposed, spontaneous images, while Gordon continues to insist on the posed (and problematic) nature of Mann's photography.

9. Indeed, the conferral unto Eltit of this extremely longed-for expression of the maternal, this incredible desire to have children, runs contrary to Eltit's views of motherhood in other works. This disjuncture demonstrates the effect that the scripting of her in this role by the residents of the hospital has on the text, making it perhaps less her own words and more theirs.

10. The displacement of this link onto the moment of the in-between, the link between the two parties, can perhaps be connected to Jacque Derrida's re-claiming of the power of the melancholic condition in *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony* as the celebration of the moment of true communication between one and the Other.

11. For more on the differentiation between the look and the gaze, see Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. In terms of this essay, one sees an employment of the maternal look in order to first identify a subjectivity within the image produced in Errázuriz's photograph. But, one also sees a returned gaze on the part of the inpatients, which confronts the viewer's tendency to read the image monolithically, in accord with neoliberal society. The combination of these two elements produces the confusion of the text, the messy refusal of binary assumptions which marks the project with the activism of the authors.

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