IMAGE, PROCESS, EXPERIENCE:
EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPES OF CHILEAN CINEMA (2008-2014)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores representations of landscape in Chilean fiction cinema from 2008 to 2014, through a corpus drawn from the so-called novísimo cine chileno, a generation of young filmmakers who have attracted significant critical attention both within Chile and on international festival and arthouse circuits. The thesis is built on close readings of the selected films within a conceptual framework informed by interdisciplinary perspectives from the developing field of landscape studies. It aims to show how these cinematic landscapes function beyond the limitations of narrative setting or symbolic imagery and are instead represented in ways which capture landscape’s processual, experiential and polysemic nature, which in turn throws light on landscape as an approach to a wide range of thematic concerns within these films. It begins by placing the selected corpus within a broader cultural history of the Chilean landscape and maps out the conceptual framework which will be applied and developed through the thesis, considering landscape as experience and process, as well as image. The thesis then sets out the foundations for the thesis’ close readings by demonstrating how such a conceptual approach can reveal the inherent tensions of film landscapes – between being inside and outside, contemplation and immersion, proximity and distance – and can also uncover the multisensory and embodied aspects of landscapes on screen, with particular attention to the roles of sound and haptic imagery. In the remainder of the thesis, this approach to landscape is developed through further close analysis of selected films in order to demonstrate how landscape functions in relation to certain thematic concerns – what contact between body and landscape reveals about materiality and mortality, how the cinematic landscape both invites and resists its framing as territory, and how film as a medium has a particular capacity to evoke the multiple temporalities at work within landscape. As a whole, the thesis works to illuminate the aesthetic, formal, narrative and thematic functions of landscape in the chosen films and argues for the usefulness of interdisciplinary conceptual approaches in the study of cinematic landscapes in order to reach a more nuanced understanding of film’s representation of the relation of people and place.
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INTRODUCTION

Amid the boom in both production and critical enthusiasm for Chilean cinema since the early 2000s, a body of films has emerged which pays close attention to the landscapes of its home terrain as far more than a setting or backdrop to narrative. Recent decades have also seen a growing attention to landscape as a point of conceptual discussion and an object of study across a variety of disciplines.

However, little critical analysis has so far been made of the landscapes of the novísimo cine chileno, despite the growing academic interest in cinematic landscapes. This thesis responds to this by bringing selected works of contemporary Chilean filmmaking into dialogue with the richly interdisciplinary theoretical and conceptual discussions taking place within landscape studies. Its objective is, firstly, to devote close critical attention to landscape as a significant aspect of recent Chilean cinema that has greater depth of meaning than has yet been brought out by existing work on these films. Secondly, it explores the additional perspectives that an attentive analysis of these particular films might offer to the existing discussion of cinematic landscape – a discussion from which Chilean cinema has, by and large, been absent. In doing so, this thesis demonstrates how the application of ideas from landscape studies to film opens the way to a deeper and more nuanced critical engagement with cinematic landscapes.

In response to the question of how a conceptually enriched interdisciplinary approach to landscape can enhance the analysis of cinematic landscapes, the
thesis considers a number of sub-questions. Illustrated through close readings of works from recent Chilean filmmaking, each of these addresses a different facet of film landscape’s construction and investment with meaning and engages with a particular perspective from the broader critical study of landscape. What does a phenomenological understanding of landscape reveal about film's capacity to present landscape as an immersive sensory, bodily and affective experience rather than detached object of observation? Through a combined focus on landscape’s materiality and the contact of body with body and body with landscape, what slippage is revealed across the assumed boundaries of human and nature, self and other, living and non-living? How does the conceptual interplay between landscape and territory reframe the acts of observing, representing and being present within landscape and how does territorial desire play out in filmmaking and spectatorship? And if we consider landscape as a site subject to human and natural processes of both preservation and transformation, how do we read filmmakers’ engagement with landscape in terms of tradition and modernity?

These questions are not, by any means, the only questions that could be asked of cinematic landscape or even of the particular films discussed in this thesis. They are, however, questions that engage with both the salient features of the chosen examples of cinematic landscapes and, together, build a case for the insights that are gained from various critical angles to the study of what landscape is and does. They are not intended to provide exhaustive coverage but have been developed to respond to the specificity of the corpus while creating scope and implications for the broader analysis of landscape in film.
In the chapters which follow, the thesis will show that an interdisciplinary approach to landscape in the selected corpus reveals how these films, while still maintaining varying degrees of connection to the rich cultural history of the Chilean landscape, also address wider questions that arise from a more critical conceptual understanding of landscape. In its consideration of landscape from a sensory and phenomenological perspective, the research shows cinema’s capacity to represent landscape as both process and experience, as well as image. As it extends its interrogation of the cinematic landscape into particular thematic areas – including mortality, territory and temporality – the thesis demonstrates that the conceptual nuances of landscape are crucial to understanding the films’ engagement with these issues. In doing so, the thesis establishes that landscape is not only a productive site of enquiry for better understanding the films themselves but also functions as point of connection between contemporary Chilean cinema and growing scholarly discussions in which it has so far been largely overlooked.

CHILEAN CINEMA

In approaching this research, I have chosen to restrict the number of films discussed in favour of devoting more time and attention to close analysis and sustained discussion of eight carefully chosen examples. The methodology of this thesis is not to provide an exhaustive overview of all possible instances of landscape in Chilean cinema, but to tease out the inner workings of key examples and build connections between these in order to demonstrate the insights that may be gained from a deeper analysis which engages conceptually with the idea of landscape as well as its image. As such, I want to provide a brief
explanation of the three main criteria which have been used to mark out a coherent body of films for close analysis.

Firstly, the scope of this thesis addresses only fiction features. There are several prominent documentaries released by Chilean directors in recent years whose treatment of landscape is well worth critical discussion, including Patricio Guzmán’s *Nostalgia de la luz* (*Nostalgia for the Light*, 2010) and *El botón de nacar* (*The Pearl Button*, 2015), *Surire* (Iván Osnovikoff and Bettina Perut, 2015), *Los castores* (*Beaverland*, Nicolás Molina and Antonio Luco, 2014) and *Alas de mar* [*Ocean Wings*] (Hans Mülchi, 2016). *El viento sabe que vuelvo a casa* [*The Wind Knows That I’m Coming Home*], a documentary feature which pays close attention to the landscapes of Chiloé was released in 2016 by José Luis Torres Leiva, whose fiction film *Verano* [*Summer*] (2011) is discussed in Chapter Two. However, the decision to focus the research for this thesis on fiction film was essential given that the different conventions around aesthetic and formal approaches landscape in the documentary mode of filmmaking as well as the particular current and historical context of documentary making in Chile would require additions and adjustments in approach which would be difficult to manage within the scope of the project without limiting the thoroughness and precision of its analysis of the selected corpus of fiction works. To also encompass documentary works would require critical engagement with a large body of film literature distinct from those works that have already informed this thesis and, consequently, a significantly different approach to close analysis. There are, nevertheless, films covered within this thesis – particularly *Manuel de Ribera* (Christopher Murray and Pablo Carrera,
2010) and *Huacho* (Alejandro Fernández Almendras, 2009), discussed in Chapters Four and Five, respectively – that play deliberately with combining elements of documentary style and approach within fiction film. The particular effects of this documentary-fiction blend as it relates to landscape in individual films is discussed in more detail in the relevant chapters. In terms of implications for defining the corpus of this thesis, however, the focus on these films within the overall category of works of fiction acknowledges that the inclusion of documentary-style elements may somewhat blur but does not entirely erase the distinction. While certain films included in this thesis incorporate elements of documentary style, they do so in a way that is designed to work self-consciously with invented people, places or events and which does not make a claim to objectivity, but instead reinforces the constructedness and multiplicity of landscape's effects and meanings.

With a focus on films that have mainly been successful among arthouse and festival audiences, the demarcation of this corpus is such that it also excludes many well-known and popular genre films from the period, including horror (Jorge Olguin's *Caleuche: El llamado del mar* [*Caleuche: The Call of the Sea*] (2009) and *Gritos del bosque* [*Whispers of the Forest*, 2015], for instance), action (such as Ernesto Díaz Espinoza's 2014 modern western *Redentor* [*Redeemer]*) and the first feature-length Chilean animation (*Ogu y Mampato en Rapa Nui* [*Ogu and Mampato in Rapa Nui*, 2002]). While all of these examples may well provide fertile ground for further research into Chilean cinema's relationship to the natural world, it is not within the scope of this thesis to address the intersection of these concerns with films that are explicitly styled and marketed
with strong genre conventions, as this would require the exploration of a very different audience and context of consumption as well as approaches to narrative and aesthetics which have little in common with the predominant characteristics of the grouping of films outlined previously. This is not to suggest, however, that the films discussed in this thesis are entirely untouched by the markers of various genres and their genre inflections are raised in connection with the representation of landscape in some of the later chapters. In Chapter Two, the analysis of movement through and across landscape is considered in relation to the aesthetics and conventions of the road movie; in Chapter Three, landscape as source of threat is connected to the reworking of horror genre elements in *Matar a un hombre* (which also echoes the psychological thriller or even elements of film noir); and in Chapter Five, *Huacho* is analysed in relation to the existing literature on a “peasant/rural cinema” subgenre.

Although the release dates of the films selected for the central corpus do fall within a fairly narrow six year period (2008-2014), the more specific criteria for their inclusion was the intention of focusing the thesis on a particular cohort of filmmakers; all the films selected for close examination in this thesis are works by directors who released their debut feature films from 2005 onwards. Many films by more established directors produced during this period, such as *Dawson Isla 10* [*Dawson, Island 10*] (Miguel Littín, 2009), also engage with nature and landscape in ways that merit further research beyond the mention that is made of them in relation to other films in this thesis. Again, however, the decision to limit the corpus in this way was taken in order to provide a close
focus on the specificities of the novísimo cine chileno as a particular moment and tendency in Chilean filmmaking and to particularise the contextual discussion with this in mind.

The question of how definitively and according to what criteria and commonalities these emerging trends can be categorised together is one that is worth discussing, albeit briefly, in relation to the corpus of films in this thesis. Roberto Trejo interrogates the validity of Chilean cinema as a current category. He highlights the (economic and artistic) diversity of productions which might be thought of under this label, leading to his assertion that ‘en estricto rigor no existe un “cine chileno”, sino chilenos que producen o realizan películas cinematográficas’ [in the strictest sense, there is no ‘Chilean cinema’, only Chileans who make films].

However, this thesis deals with a cohort of Chileans who make films who do share, to a degree, thematic concerns, aesthetic practices and industrial networks and whose films have found success in the same markets and attract the interest of the same audiences. The films which this thesis draws on could all be considered as part of what has been called the novísimo cine chileno [the Newest Chilean Cinema]. This label (and variation on its theme) have been used to identify a group of young Chilean film-makers who, like Scherson, reached adulthood and began their careers in a post-dictatorship context and who share a constellation of certain thematic and aesthetic approaches, as well as circulating within the same industrial networks of production, distribution, exhibition and cultural commentary. In this thesis, although others are mentioned where relevant, I deal in detail with work by

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1 Roberto Trejo Ojeda, Cine, neoliberalismo y cultura : crítica de la economía política del cine chileno contemporáneo, (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Arcis, 2009), p. 125.
eight of these filmmakers: Alejandro Fernández Almendras, Sebastián Lelio, Christopher Murray, Pablo Carrera Matías Rojas, Marcela Said, Alicia Scherson and José Luis Torres Leiva. All of these could be said to belong to a post-dictatorship generation, being born between 1971 and 1985 and having therefore begun their careers after the transition to democracy in 1990. These eight filmmakers all began their careers in the early 2000s, releasing their first features between 2005 and 2009. They are also all formally trained film professionals, having completed audiovisual-centred courses at various institutions both in Chile and abroad.

Although there is some variation in commentators’ choices of name\(^2\) and their analysis of its precise moments of origin\(^3\), there is a broad consensus that there has been a growth of Chilean cinema in a new direction since around 2005. This

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\(^2\) Where necessary, this thesis follows Ascanio Cavallo and Gonzalo Maza in using the term ‘el novísimo cine chileno’, according to the title of their edited volume of director-centred pieces (See: Ascanio Cavallo and Gonzalo Maza, El Novísimo Cine Chileno (Santiago de Chile: Uqbar Editores, 2011). However, the same trends, works and filmmakers have also been discussed under the label of ‘el Nuevo-Nuevo cine chileno’ (See: Sebastián Lelio, ‘Un balance al cine chileno’, La Fuga, (2005) <http://lafuga.cl/un-balance-al-cine-chileno/> [accessed 03 March 2017]) and simply ‘el nuevo cine chileno’ (as opposed to ‘el Nuevo Cine Chileno’) (See: Carlos Saavedra, Intimidades desencantadas: la poética cinematográfica del dos mil (Santiago de Chile: Cuarto Propio, 2013)). However, whether it is referred to as ‘new’, ‘new-new’ or ‘newest’, the emphasis on novelty and contemporaneity persists.

\(^3\) The 2005 edition of the Valdívia Festival is often referenced as seminal event in the new cinema and saw the screening of Alicia Scherson’s Play (2005) alongside other works that were important in setting the tone for these emergent tendencies, such as En la cama (In Bed, Matias Bize, 2005), Se arrienda (For Rent, Alberto Fuguet, 2005) and La sagrada familia (The Sacred Family, Sebastián Lelio, 2005). Mouesca and Orellana situate a key turning point earlier, identifying ‘una suerte de explosión’ [a sort of explosion] with the appearance of Cristián Galaz’s 1999 comedy El chacotero sentimental (The Sentimental Teaser) and the subsequent release of Taxi para tres (A Cab for Three, Orlando Lübbert, 2001), Sexo con amor (Sex with Love, Boris Quercia, 2003) and Machuca (Andrés Wood, 2004). At this point, Mouesca and Orellana note, it was possible for commentators on the Chilean film industry to talk about ‘[el] “reencuentro” del espectador nacional con su cine’ [the reencounter between the national spectator and the national cinema]. However, there are clear commonalities which make it helpful to understand these films within the more limited classification of the novísimo cine chileno rather than more within the broader shift that followed the transition cinema of the 1990s, as posed by Mouesca and Orellana. See: Jacqueline Mouesca and Carlos Orellana, Breve historia del cine chileno: desde sus orígenes hasta nuestros días (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2010), p. 201.
shift has been accompanied by increased critical interest in Chilean filmmaking beyond national borders and a good deal of acclaim on the international festival circuit, with a new generation of filmmakers making its own mark on the industry. In this sense, the films in this thesis’ corpus could be considered as exemplary cases of the “festival film”, defined by Marijke de Valck as ‘films that successfully travel the international film festival circuit, but fail to “make it” outside of the circuit’. Often cited as one of most important films which set the tone for those which followed, Alicia Scherson’s Play (2005) won awards in Tribeca, Karlovy Vary and Montreal, among others, in its year of release. Over the next decade, Chilean films were found among the nominees for the Goyas (Gloria, Sebastián Lelio, 2013), the Oscars (No, Pablo Larraín, 2012) and the Golden Globes (La nana (The Maid), Sebastián Silva, 2009). In 2013, El verano de los peces voladores (The Summer of Flying Fish), the first fiction feature by Marcela Said premiered at Cannes, alongside veteran filmmaker Alejandro’s Jodorowsky’s La danza de la realidad (The Dance of Reality, 2013), further cementing the place of younger directors in representing the national industry. Although it failed to gain an Oscar nomination, 2014 saw Matar a un hombre (To Kill a Man, Alejandro Fernández Almendras, 2014) win in the World Cinema category at Sundance as well as prizes in Miami and Rotterdam. The exhibition of these films, and in some cases funding and other support for their production, has often taken place under the rubric of festival sections focused on the discovery and development of “new” cinema, particularly from Asia, Africa and Latin America and this in itself has helped to constitute el novísimo cine chileno as a category. As de Valck explains:

4 Marijke de Valck, Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p. 176.
New global meanings are attributed to the films by how they are framed and labeled as a consequence of the programming. This is particularly true of the specialized and thematic sections. “Discoveries” of new auteurs of new waves, therefore, are by definition acts of creation and not of reportage.²

Chilean film scholar Maria Paz Peirano concurs, arguing that ‘festivals nowadays are the main hubs for the constitution of the international field of film production, and gatekeepers of the latest “alternative cinema”’.⁶ Crucially, however, Peirano also emphasises the social function of the festivals as a meeting point for Chilean film professionals and students, creating a collaborative network in the national industry. Peirano explains that the growth of Chile’s film festival scene is connected to the conditions of global film markets and the dominance of highly commercial cinema, usually Hollywood blockbusters, in the chain-run multiplexes which control the majority of exhibition space. In response to this, film festivals have carved out a ‘national festival circuit connected to the global film landscape’,⁷ operating in the confluence of global trends and specific national economic and political conditions. The operation of global film trends through the circuit is such that many of the same films were recognised both abroad and by awards panels within Chile. Directors winning the Altazor Fiction Film prize included Sebastián Silva (*La vida me mata* (*Life Kills Me, 2007*) and *La nana*), Matías Bize, (*La vida de los peces, (The Life of Fish, 2010]*) Pablo Larraín (*No*) and Sebastián

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² de Valck, p. 177.
⁶ Maria Paz Peirano, 'Pursuing, Resembling, and Contesting the Global: The Emergence of Chilean Film Festivals', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 14 (2016), 115.
⁷ Peirano, p. 127.
Lelio (*La sagrada familia* [2005] and *Gloria*). Top prizes in the national categories at Chile’s major film festivals (FICViña, FICValdivia and SANFIC) were awarded to many of the same emerging filmmakers who were enjoying success on the international scene. By 2010, a fairly clear picture was emerging of a cohort who were shaping Chilean cinema’s artistic trajectory from their own generational perspective.

‘No hay nada más viejo que hablar del cine nuevo’ [there is nothing older that talking about new cinema] begins the introduction to Cavallo and Maza’s *El novísimo cine chileno* released the following year, giving a self-aware nod to the potential difficulties of the kind of periodisation proclaimed by their title. Indeed, the book’s title itself calls back to what was once the cutting edge of Chile’s filmmaking, the 1960s movement still referred to as the Nuevo Cine Chileno; films which were characterised by new directions in form and aesthetic and a strong political conscience amid the social and political identities that coalesced around Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular [Popular Unity]. Chilean film academic Udo Jacobsen has characterised the most recent works of Chilean cinema as a marked departure from the social and political concerns of previous generations:

Desde el cine militante, que aspira tanto a la denuncia como a la construcción de un proyecto social, pasando por las estrategias de enmascaramiento del cine en dictadura, hasta el breve periodo de un cine transicional en todos los sentidos, desembarcamos en una etapa

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8 Cialllo and Maza, p.13.
compleja que pone de manifiesto, en tanto síntoma de los tiempos, un cambio profundo en la sociedad chilena.⁹

[From militant cinema which aspires both to condemnation and to the construction of a social project, through the masking strategies of cinema during the dictatorship, to the brief period of a cinema of transition in all senses, we have arrived at a complex stage that highlights, as a symptom of the times, a profound change in Chilean society.]

The comparison of the “New” and the “newest” Chilean cinema is a key point of analysis for Carlos Saavedra, particularly in terms of thematic concerns. Among the clearest difference is a general move away from the explicit and collective social and political visions of the New Chilean Cinema and towards a more individualist cinema, one which privileges subjectivity, private lives and intimacy. Acknowledging that of course there have always been individuals in cinema, Saavedra proposes that what differentiates their presence in contemporary cinema in Chile is ‘el papel que asumen y las cosas que dicen’ [the role they play and the things they say], which suggest a certain way of existing that is particular to 21st-century society. He characterises the image of society portrayed in this new cinema as ‘claustrofóbica, excluyente y temerosa’ [claustrophobic, exclusionary and fearful].¹⁰ Individual identity and personal and familial relationships are common topics in recent Chilean cinema and these often play out with limited explicit reference to social or historical context, as though closed off from the exterior world.

¹⁰ Saavedra, p. 15.

Comparisons have also been made between the emerging generation of filmmakers and those who entered the industry in the decade immediately following the end of the Pinochet regime in 1990. Describing the relationship of younger filmmakers to their immediate predecessors who began their careers in the 1990s, Cavallo and Maza suggest that

[e]l gesto que han propuesto nació a contracorriente de una generación inmediatamente anterior...que llegó al cine en su vida adulta, con una fuerte vocación de conectar con grandes audiencias, establecer narrativas clásicas y crear sistemas de producción industriales.¹¹

[the approach they have set out was born against the current of the generation immediately preceding them...who came into filmmaking as adults, with a strong desire to connect with large audiences, establish classical narratives and create industrial systems of production.]

Certainly, the generation of the 1990s were responsible for greater commercial success, with work including Boris Quercia’s Sexo con amor [Sex with Love] which became the most watched Chilean film of all time from its release in 2003 until the arrival of TV spin-off Stefan v/s Kramer in 2012. The novísimo cine chileno has not produced anything approaching this level of commercial success – indeed, a distinct lack of domestic spectators is common to the films covered in this thesis.¹² In 2015, Chilean newspaper La Tercera described the nation’s

¹¹ Cavallo and Maza, p. 15.
¹² According to statistics from annual reports produced by the Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes [National Council of Culture and the Arts], the number of tickets sold for each film following its theatrical release (where figures are available) was as follows: El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia (3,260), Raíz (1,235), Matar a un hombre (4,425), El año del tigre (2,924), El verano de los peces voladores (2,190), Turistas (5,862), Huacho (654). For comparison, the most watched Chilean film to date (Stefan v/s Kramer, 2012) sold over 2 million tickets at the box office.
recent cinematic trajectory as ‘un éxito de exportación sin espectadores’ [an export success without spectators].

As noted previously, Chile was producing more films annually than ever before and the previous decade had seen nominations and prizes for Chilean films at leading festivals across Latin America, Europe and North America, which had brought with it a vastly enhanced critical interest in the country’s emergent directors. Many of these same films, however, returned to audiences of only a few thousand on the national distribution circuit, with only a 3% share of the national audience.

Despite the fact that these films have enjoyed greater success on the international festival circuit, the body of academic work relating to these films is largely Spanish-language and comes primarily from Chilean publishers; very little attention has been given to these films outside Latin America, in comparison with contemporary Brazilian, Mexican and Argentinean cinema which have all attracted the attention of international film scholarship to a greater extent. However, even within Chile, Stange and Salinas note that ‘[e]scribir sobre cine chileno es un ejercicio reciente’ [writing about Chilean cinema is a recent exercise], as evidenced in part by the fact that the earliest known publication on the subject (Alberto Santana’s Grandezas y miserias del cine chileno) only dates back to 1957. Although the Nuevo Cine of the 1960s and early 1970s was accompanied by a good deal of academic literature which moved away from the narrative-centred and historically focused analyses of the

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1950s to broaden its critique to the realms of aesthetics, politics and the state of the national industry, this growth in film writing came abruptly to an end with the 1973 coup, with only a handful of texts published during this period, primarily dealing with the issue of exile cinema.

Following the return to democracy there was a boom in film writing in the 1990s, both on the subject of the new post-dictatorship cinema of the transition and the revisiting of earlier periods of filmmaking, with as many books on Chilean cinema published from 1990-1999 as in all previous decade. The most recent surge of publications on the topic within Chile – which doubled again between 2000 and 2007 – has been supported by the developments of the CNCA and the growth of dedicated university film departments and schools, which have helped to develop a national film studies “scene”. Interest in the Nuevo Cine and the transition has continued, in addition to a number of publications on the documentary genre.

Publications addressing the novísimo cine chileno have provided overviews of the contributions of individual filmmakers (El novísimo cine chileno, Cavallo and Ascanio, 2010), analysed some of its key films through theories of realist aesthetics (Retóricas del cine chileno: ensayos con el realismo, Pablo Corro Penjean, 2012), explored the economic context of its production and exhibition (Cine, neoliberalismo y cultura, Roberto Trejo, 2009) and examined its treatment

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15 Stange and Salinas.
16 Among these are the Escuela de Cine de Chile (founded in 1995) and the professional training programmes offered by film departments at ARCOS, ARCIS and UNIACC, all based in Santiago. Successful filmmakers have also emerged from the “Dirección Audiovisual” undergraduate programme (Christopher Murray) and the Instituto de Estética (Marcela Said) at the Universidad Católica. Outside the Región Metropolitana, the most prominent centre for filmmaking and film studies is the Universidad Austral de Chile in Valdivia.

El novísimo cine chileno,17 an edited volume launched at the 2011 Festival de Cine de Valdivia in partnership with Uqbar Editores, brought together 21 essays by Chilean film critics, each focusing on a particular director, the majority of whom were under 40 at the time the book went to press. Edited by established film critic and author Ascanio Cavallo and producer, scriptwriter and critic Gonzalo Maza, the book showcases not only the films themselves but also the strength of local film criticism (both academic and journalistic) emerging alongside the new cinema. The book is among the earliest and firmest attempts to suggest something like a canon of the novísimo cine chileno, a cinematic phenomenon which had yet to fully crystallise. The book’s titular term is primarily defined in the editors’ explanatory note, in which they identify three principal characteristics of this new generation of filmmakers. Firstly, they observe that these directors generally appeared on the festival circuit within a few years of each other; secondly, it is argued that there are certain thematic and formal tendencies which differentiate them from the previous filmmaking generation. The third aspect of this new cinema, according to Cavallo and Maza, is the simultaneous development of a network of critics who have helped bring these films to wider attention.

Cine, neoliberalismo y cultura,18 a 2009 monograph by Universidad ARCIS researcher Roberto Trejo, sets out an economic analysis of cinema in Chile in

17 Cavallo and Maza.
18 Trejo Ojeda.
which Trejo argues that the current state regulatory apparatus and commercial infrastructure does not facilitate the audiovisual industry's development to its full potential. Central to Trejo's argument is the alienation of both filmmakers and audiences from the social relations that surround production. The expectations of Chilean audiences, Trejo suggests, have long been conditioned by hegemonic (particularly US) models of film form and content. Meanwhile, he argues that technological fetishism and the privileging of “art for art’s sake” have distanced the new generation of filmmakers from their socio-political context. Although his criticisms of current systems of production, patterns of consumption and creative output are bold and raise some interesting observations about the relationship between infrastructure and the direction of a national audiovisual culture, it is less clear precisely what Trejo would have instead as his preferred alternative cinema for the Chile of the early 21st century.

In *Intimidades desencantadas*,19 Carlos Saavedra analyses the treatment of subjectivity in early 21st-century Chilean cinema. Saavedra argues that filmmaking during this period has been primarily concerned with questions of interiority and intimacy, reflected in both narrative and aesthetic approaches which privilege the private and the personal over the public and the political. Saavedra connects these tendencies of form and content to the influences of a globalised market logic that downplays national socio-political critique as these films seek status as cultural commodities in an international market niche for

19Saavedra.
*auteur* cinema. The central corpus of Saavedra's analysis lends itself to a discussion of film space as presented through interiors and private spaces, which are made intimate, enclosed, even claustrophobic, which the author argues reflect a contemporary tendency towards individualism and self-reflexivity and a preoccupation with intimacy and interiority as a form of spectacle. As noted earlier, the protagonists of these films, in Saavedra's words, are ‘individuos encerrados en espacios privados, casi una proyección simbólica de la sociedad chilena reciente: claustrofóbica, excluyente y temerosa’ [individuals shut away in private spaces, almost a symbolic projection of contemporary Chilean society: claustrophobic, selective and fearful].

Suggesting that disillusionment is the predominant socio-political mood of these films, Saavedra observes a clear departure from previous generations, in particular from the politically committed New Chilean Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s.

Looking back over the last four decades, Pablo Corro’s *Rétoricas del cine chileno: ensayos con elrealismo* covers a longer period of Chilean cinema than the other publications mentioned but nevertheless contains extended discussion among its fourteen chapters of several films from the *novísimo cine chileno*, including the work of Christopher Murray and Pablo Carrera, as well as José Luis Torres Leiva. With a focus on the poetics and aesthetics of audiovisual language, Corro’s work uses examples from Chilean cinema to illustrate broader arguments about cinematic style. Central to Corro’s reflections on the films

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20 Saavedra focuses primarily on: *La buena vida* (The Good Life, Andrés Wood, 2008); *Se arrienda* (Alberto Fuguet, 2005); *Play* (Alicia Scherson, 2005), *La vida de los peces* (Matías Bize, 2010); *En la cama* (Matías Bize, 2005); *Navidad* (Christmas, Sebastián Lelio, 2009); and *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia* (José Luis Torres Leiva, 2008).

21 Saavedra, p. 15.
associated with the novísimo cine chileno is his characterisation of the predominant style of contemporary Chilean filmmaking as ‘poéticas débiles’ [weak poetics]:

Un rechazo a los temas de orden histórico con tratamientos épicos, el predominio dramático de los roles femeninos por sobre los masculinos y un debilitamiento de la presencia actancial de estos. Llamamos debilidad a esta preferencia por las acciones a baja intensidad, al interés por los segundos planos, a la reivindicación del sonido como dimensión rica en sugestiones y refractaria a las literalidades, al gusto del fuera de campo como margen deliberado para la intervención imaginaria del espectador.22

[A rejection of the epic depiction of themes of a historical nature, the predominance of feminine over masculine roles and the weakening of actantial presence of these roles. We might label as weakness this preference for low intensity actions, the interest in backgrounds, the recognition of sound as a dimension rich in suggestion and resistant to literalness, the taste for offscreen space as a deliberate margin for the imaginary intervention of the spectator.]

Given the alignment of period and generation and the overlapping corpus of examples, these existing works have provided a solid foundation and point of departure for the research behind this thesis. The strongest influence, however, has been that of Carolina Urrutia’s Un cine centrífugo: ficciones chilenas 2005-

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22 Pablo Corro Penjean, Rétoricas del cine chileno. Ensayos con el realismo (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2012).
2010. Her work is broadly similar in structure and approach to my own, making use of close readings of a carefully selected and grouped set of examples in order to shed light on particular tendencies within contemporary Chilean cinema and to draw out of these readings broader contributions to conceptual discussions. As well as examining a different (although overlapping) corpus, the objectives of my own work differ both in its focus on landscape as the central point of analysis (rather than as a contributing aspect in a broader argument about subjectivity) and in its much deeper interrogation of the concept of landscape. This conceptual work that frames my own close readings allow a fuller and more complex account of landscape’s form and effect in the selected films, as well as creating a sustained point of contact between the corpus at hand and current discussions of landscape both in film studies and in wider interdisciplinary landscape studies.

Urrutia's overarching argument makes the case for considering contemporary Chilean cinema as ‘centrifugal cinema’, characterised by a decentred narrative and style:

El cine chileno centrífugo es aquel que se aleja del centro [...] en muchas ocasiones, no hay conflicto central (el conflicto ya no constituye el núcleo de la narración); hay, por el contrario, acontecimientos débiles, relaciones azarosas, situaciones dispersivas, tránsitos y vagabundeos.23

[Chilean centrifugal cinema is that which distances itself from the centre [...] on many occasions, there is no central conflict (conflict no longer

constitutes the nucleus of the narrative); on the contrary, there are faint events, risky relationships, desultory situations, movements and wanderings.]

The effect of this centrifugal operation is the destabilisation of ‘jerarquías entre el protagonismo del sujeto y el protagonismo del espacio’ [hierarchies of the protagonism of the subject and the protagonism of space]. Out of these rearranged relations of space and subject, landscape finds room to emerge independently from narrative and become more than setting or background. In her chapter “Sujeto y territorio”, Urrutia explores this idea with reference to Turistas (Tourists, Alicia Scherson, 2009), El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia [The Sky, the Earth and the Rain] (José Luis Torres Leiva, 2008), Manuel de Ribera and La sagrada familia (The Sacred Family, Sebastián Lelio, 2005), the first three of which are also discussed in this thesis. Her reading of landscape in these films supports her broader argument about the decentring of the subject, with the displacement of narrative and a shift of focus away from character and into landscape. This transforms the relationship between character and landscape, according to Urrutia, so that

pareciera que el paisaje se independizara completamente respecto a sus acciones, la naturaleza adquiere una vida propia, e independiente, que no está ahí para servir o contener a los personajes – no es simplemente un escenario o una mera locación – más bien parece estar ahí a pesar del personaje, antecediéndolo y posteriormente, sucediéndolo.  

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it would seem that landscape becomes completely independent of their actions, nature acquires an independent life of its own, not there to serve or contain the characters – not simply a setting or a mere location – instead, it seems to be there in spite of the character, preceding them, and later succeeding them.

Representing the greatest extent of any detailed discussion of landscape in contemporary Chilean cinema thus far, this chapter of Urrutia’s work has been an essential point of dialogue with my own research and I engage with her work in more depth in later chapters. Urrutia’s readings of the films indicate landscape’s potential as a fertile field of enquiry within this new cinema and gesture to the relevance of these films to ongoing discussions in the study of film landscapes; her conceptual approach to landscape has clear echoes of Martin Lefebvre’s distinction between setting and landscape in cinema, although she does not engage directly with his work.

In extending the discussion of landscape in contemporary Chilean cinema with deeper analysis of a wider range of films, this thesis adds to the existing body of work outlined above by providing a sustained critical focus on a shared tendency that connects many of the films of the novísimo cine chileno but which has received limited attention in attempts to articulate the characteristics and concerns of this wave of filmmaking. However, the thesis is not only intended as a contribution to the understanding of contemporary Chilean cinema. By framing the analysis of Chilean cinema within current thinking on film landscapes and by forging conceptual connections with landscape studies more broadly, the thesis also stakes a claim for the place of this corpus within
discussions in film studies that extend beyond Chile’s national borders. The analysis contained in the following chapters is intended to contribute to a broader understanding of film’s capacity as a medium to present landscape in ways that capture its processual, multisensory and polysemic nature, as it had been understood in the reinvigorated conceptual discussions that have emerged in landscape studies in recent years. By showcasing both the prominence and the complexity of landscape representation within the selected films, the thesis aims to establish contemporary Chilean cinema as an essential contributing case study in the evolving discussion of film landscapes.

Like many contributions to the discussion of cinematic landscapes, this thesis selects its corpus from within the cinema of a single country. While it is beyond the scope and purpose of this thesis to try to tackle the much-debated matters of precisely what constitutes a “national cinema” and what the analytical function of such a category should be, it is clear that the approach to landscape as a point of focus within the study of a given country’s cinema has been a common structuring element for publications on the topic. Cinematic landscapes are regularly grouped together for analysis on a national basis, whether as journal articles, in the form of edited volumes which bring together perspectives from a variety of national cinemas (or a particular auteur from a national canon), as chapters within broader studies of national cinema or as monographs which offer an extended examination of the cinematic landscapes.

of a particular country. Given that a filmed landscape exists off-screen within a national territory, this may seem like a natural approach and, indeed, there are many reasons why a national framework may well prove both insightful and productive as an approach to cinematic landscape, as many of these recent publications have demonstrated. However, given the emphasis that is placed in this thesis on considering the landscapes of contemporary Chilean cinema as resonating with questions, themes and discourses that extend beyond purely national interests, I should take some time here to clarify why and how I have nevertheless chosen to carry out this research within a national framework.

This thesis acknowledges that the relationship between nation and landscape in cinema is both historically important and remains a relevant issue in discussions of more contemporary filmmaking. As will be set out more extensively in the first part of Chapter One, the close readings of particular films contained in Chapters Two to Five take place within an awareness of the cultural history of landscape representation across cinema and other arts in the Chilean context. The approach adopted in the thesis overall takes into account the nation-landscape connection but its greater concern is to show how the national is one of multiple signifying strata that may simultaneously lie within a

given cinematic landscape and to avoid privileging the idea of national identity above or to the exclusion of other ways of relating to and reading landscape.

This approach to the national dimension of landscape in the selected films – that is to say, treating the national as one dimension interwoven with many others—also guides the thesis’ approach to postdictatorial readings of these films and their landscapes. The selected films are not explicitly or primarily focused on the (post)dictatorship as their subject matter, unlike a number of films released in the same period where form and narrative are very much driven by questions of state violence, repression, historical memory and the transition; examples here would include Pablo Larrain’s trio of dictatorship films (*Tony Manero* [2008], *Post mortem* [2010], *No* [2012]), *Dawson, Isla 10* (2009) by Miguel Littín and Sebastián Sepúlveda’s *Las niñas Quispe* (2012). The objective of this thesis at a conceptual level is to argue for and provide the framework to support an expanded reading of cinematic landscapes as being marked by multiple timeframes, interpretations and experiences and as functioning in modes other than the symbolic and the allegorical; therefore, the kinds of postdictatorship readings which have tended to dominate academic work on Chilean cinema since the 1990s are not centred in my analyses of these film landscapes. However, the approach taken equally does not deny the possibility or validity of potential postdictatorship readings of these landscape representations and mention is made of this influence across the later chapters, particularly where it demonstrates landscape’s potential to simultaneously hold different, even conflicting, meanings and experiences.
Throughout the thesis, there is an ongoing crossover between local, national or regional specificity and concepts and idea which tend more towards the universal. There are points at which the thesis takes a more explicit focus on Chilean history or society, particularly in parts of Chapters Four and Five. However, the observations made within a more nationally framed take on landscape are not left to stand alone but are instead made to contribute to a wider exploration of how landscape operates at multiple levels of meaning. For instance, Chapter Four’s discussion of landscape and territory moves between the films’ relationship to a nationally specific history of colonisation and an overarching examination of the conceptual relationship between landscape and territory. Likewise, in Chapter Five, broader questions about the temporality of landscape, including its relationship to tradition and modernisation, are interwoven with more locally, nationally and regionally specific manifestations of the relationship between landscape and history. The intention behind this approach is to demonstrate something of the complex interrelationships and tensions that can be brought to light when landscape is considered as the site of multiple forms of identification and interpretation.

**LANDSCAPE AND CINEMA**

The depiction of landscape in film dates back almost to the beginnings of cinema itself and as such is subject to what early film historian Tom Gunning refers to as ‘a long history of transformations in framing, the view framed and the role of the spectator’. While I do not intend to attempt a potted history of cinematic landscapes, I think it is worth providing a sense of origin and

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contextualisation for the academic discussion to which this thesis aims to contribute.

For Gunning, cinematic landscape representations of the early 20th century (which he describes as a ‘major genre’ in the early ‘cinema of attraction’) privileged the idea of the ‘view’ and were therefore more closely aligned with the perspective, composition and subject matter of landscape paintings. Martin Lefebvre sees in this period that ‘the cinema was inverting the process often regarded as the one giving birth to landscape in Western art: the slow emancipation of space from the demands of eventhood and narrative’.29

It was not long, though, before landscape began to be mobilised for purposes beyond those of the postcard view and the travelogue and this is attested to by some of the earliest theoretical writing on film landscapes. In *Nonindifferent Nature*, Sergei Eisenstein argued that it was the image of landscape which was closest to music in terms of its capacity to express ‘pure emotionality’ and that (in the absence of synchronised sound) ‘it is landscape that has the problem of expressing emotionally what only music is able to express completely’30, the prime example from his own work being the fog sequence of *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).

However, sustained academic interrogation of film landscapes in their own right is, for the most part, a fairly recent endeavour. Writing in 1995, P. Adams Sitney framed his chapter on cinema in *Landscape, Beauty and the Natural Arts* by stating that ‘[l]andscape seems to have been granted no place among the

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29 Lefebvre, p.xi.
topics of argument in the aesthetics of cinema’. While Adams Sitney focuses on North American and European cinema and seems to delimit the concept of landscape more firmly in terms of natural beauty than I intend to in this thesis, his remarks nonetheless serve as a reminder that we are dealing with a comparatively underexplored point of intersection when we bring an interest in landscape into film studies.

During broadly the same period that the novísimo cine chileno rose to critical attention in the first two decades of the 21st century, there has been an upsurge in academic interest in the cinematic representation of landscape and a succession of publications have appeared around the topic. However, despite the concurrence of these developments and despite the richness of the representations of landscape to be found in the films of Chile’s emerging directors, this corpus has thus far been absent from the broader discussion of film landscapes and the question of landscape has received relatively little critical attention in publications on this new strand of cinema. Although reference is made to a broad range of work on cinematic landscapes throughout the chapters, in order to situate my own work within the current academic context from the outset, it is useful to take some space here to outline some of those contributions to the discussion of landscape and cinema which have been

31 The dominance of English-language influences here has been unavoidable, simply because work on cinematic landscape has been far scarcer in Spanish language academia, although there are some examples which have been useful influences on this thesis. The most prominent among these is the interdisciplinary work from the Universidad Carlos III in Madrid, research which produced a 2007 publication which offers a theoretical and analytical perspective on the specificity of cinema as a form of geographical representation and suggestions for the application of geographical theory in order to further illuminate the relationship of film and geography. See: Agustín Gámir Orueta and Carlos Manuel Valdés, ‘Cine y Geografía: espacio geográfico, paisaje y territorio en las producciones cinematográficas', Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles, 45 (2007), pp. 157-190.
encountered as points of intersection, convergence or divergence with my own approach.

There are some points of connection in existing works on landscape in other national cinemas whose authors work with an understanding of landscape that overlaps in some aspects with the approach taken in this thesis. Giuliana Minghelli’s *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film*, for instance, adopts a focus on the materiality of the neo-realist corpus and ‘the disappearance of the story into the materiality of bodies and their environment’\(^{32}\) which echoes the suspension of narrative progress by the protagonisation of landscape that I argue occurs in some of the films in my own corpus. While her focus is on identifying a particular relationship between landscape aesthetics and affect, Stella Hockenhull’s work on British cinema from the early 2000s has been a useful influence on my understanding of the specific formal capacities of cinema as form of landscape representation, particularly through her application of the work of Martin Lefebvre.\(^{33}\) Further national-focused explorations of landscape and cinema have been produced by the research project on ‘Cinema and Landscape’ led by Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner, which has produced two edited volumes – *Cinema and Landscape* in 2010 and *Film Landscapes: Cinema, Environment and Visual Culture* in 2013.\(^{34}\) These collections gathered together writing on film landscapes from Tom Gunning’s work on the ‘phantom ride’ genre of early cinema in the late 19\(^{th}\) century through commercial and arthouse cinema of the 20\(^{th}\) and 21\(^{st}\) centuries, taking in film from Europe, Africa, North America, Asia

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32 Minghelli, p. 162.
33 Hockenhull.
and Australasia. Specific focus on Latin American cinema, however, was limited to a chapter on Cuba in the 2010 volume, with South American cinema failing to register. Nevertheless, approaches to cinematic landscape articulated in these volumes have influenced aspects of my own analysis in the chapters which follow. In particular, my own consideration of what constitutes “landscape” for the purposes of this analysis is closely aligned with Harper and Rayner’s assertion that

[w]hile it is possible to narrow landscape definitions on the basis of human intervention, absence or presence of natural features, or, indeed, the impact of conspicuous characteristics, the key point about landscapes is that they are composed of many elements and that these elements interact to create our overall conception and reception.

While my analysis draws more deeply on a range of interdisciplinary ideas in order to engage fully with these ‘many elements’, it shares the view that landscape need not, and perhaps cannot, be pinned down to narrow criteria. Additionally, Harper and Rayner, as well as some of the individual chapters within the edited volumes, gesture towards the multisensory understanding of landscape that I explore in detail in Chapter Two, suggesting that ‘[f]ilm landscapes are additionally landscapes of sound and of movement, as well as landscapes of image.’

36 Harper and Rayner, p. 16.
37 Harper and Rayner, p. 3.
In *Landscape Allegory in Cinema: From Wilderness to Wasteland*, David Melbye situates film landscapes within the wider representations of landscape in other media from both literary and visual culture. Melbye’s reading of the cinematic landscape across a wide geographical and historical range of films is guided by the search for allegory, which he defines as ‘an assembled narrative mode wherein the principal characters move beyond their normal protagonist/antagonist functions and into a symbolic dimension of meaning’ which ‘derives from a cultural tendency toward social critique’.\(^{38}\) Although my own work here on landscape shares with Melbye’s in some senses the broad aim of forging ‘a wider conceptual link between space and popular culture’,\(^{39}\) the depiction of landscape in the films analysed in this thesis is not first and foremost a medium of social critique. Melbye also tends towards the interpretation of landscape imagery as a manifestation of characters’ interiority, an approach which would side-line the protagonisation of landscape itself in many of the films I discuss in the following chapters.

Cited in both these works is the 2006 publication *Landscape and Film*, edited by Martin Lefebvre, in particular Lefebvre’s own chapter entitled “Between setting and landscape in the cinema”\(^{40}\). At the centre of Lefebvre’s work is the crucial distinction he lays out between setting and landscape in cinema. For Lefebvre, a cinematic setting is ‘the space of story and event: it is the scenery of and the theatre for what will happen’.\(^{41}\) When, on the other hand, we see filmic space


\(^{39}\) Melbye, p. 7.


\(^{41}\) Lefebvre, p. 20.
become landscape, we are seeing a kind of ‘anti-setting’, in which space becomes ‘freed from eventhood’.\(^{42}\) By observing a form of spatial representation in which the world is able to transcend the demands of narrative, Lefebvre provides the conditions for an analysis of landscape which can hold meaning in and of itself, rather than existing only as decorative, metaphorical or symbolic backdrop; a distinction which is important if we are to view landscape outside and beyond national iconicity or allegory.

Although the region is generally underrepresented in the overall picture of the study of cinematic landscape, there are several Latin American-focused approaches to the relationship between film and landscape that have influenced the discussion in this thesis. Jens Andermann references Lefebvre’s distinction between setting and landscape in *New Argentine Cinema*, both in the chapter which looks at urban spatiality and in the following chapter focused on the representation of non-urban spaces in the work of Pablo Trapero, Lucrecia Martel and Lisandro Alonso.\(^{43}\) Andermann builds on the idea of a ‘space freed from eventhood’ to suggest that a particular aesthetic and mode of seeing occurs when contemporary Argentine cinema looks away from the city. As I attempt to in this thesis, Andermann places emphasis on the cinematic landscape as both image and experience, referring to ‘[l]andscape’s irreducible double-presence onscreen, as a spatial image open to metaphoric or allegorical inscription, and as experiential place apprehensible only through close observation’.\(^{44}\) I return in more detail to Andermann’s interpretation of the representation of landscape in Lisando Alonso’s *La libertad* (*Freedom*, 2001) in

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\(^{42}\) Lefebvre, p. 22.


\(^{44}\) Andermann, p. 71.
Chapter Five, where it has provided a productive point of comparison for my
own discussion of Manuel de Ribera.

Stephanie Dennison’s chapter in The Brazilian Road Movie\textsuperscript{45} on the Brazilian
sertão in Marcelo Gomes’ 2005 film Cinema, Aspirinas e Urubus (Movies, Aspirins
and Vultures) has also been helpful as an example of how discussion of film
landscape can expand beyond questions of authenticity and national identity.
Even in a landscape which has such iconic status as the sertão, Dennison
presents a strong argument for a cinematic landscape which speaks to a ‘post-
national identity’ through an understanding of the sertão which ‘is framed not
so much in relation to the region, or to the nation, but to the world’.\textsuperscript{46} From the
same volume, Mariana da Cunha’s reading of the sertão in O Céu de Suely (Love
for Sale, Karim Ainouz, 2006) argues that this particular landscape in
contemporary filmmaking has become a space for ‘an intimate and personal
trajectory’, departing from its role as a ‘stage for collective struggle’ in the
Cinema Novo of the 1960s, demonstrating how generations of filmmaker
repurpose landscape images and inscribe the landscape with new meanings.

Overall, while the academic exploration of landscape in cinema remains heavily
inclined towards the discussion of the nation and national identity, recent
decades have seen the emergence of conceptual approaches (such as those
proposed by Lefebvre) which have the potential to open up cinematic landscape
beyond the familiar discussions and into more ambitious and far-reaching
questions. The implications of the existing work on cinematic landscape for the

\textsuperscript{45} Sara Brandellero, The Brazilian Road Movie: Journeys of (Self) Discovery, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).

\textsuperscript{46} Stephanie Dennison, ‘Sertão as Post-National Landscape: Cinema, Aspirinas e Urubus’, in The
Brazilian Road Movie: Journeys of (Self) Discovery, ed. by Sara Brandellero (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 184-98 (p. 193).
individual films in this thesis is considered in greater depth in Chapters Two to Five and elements of existing work are brought into the conceptual framework laid out in Chapter One. What so far remains largely underdeveloped in film scholarship on landscape is the potential engagement with work on the conceptual, aesthetic, experiential and political dimensions of landscape which crosses disciplinary boundaries.

Contemporary Chilean cinema provides ideal material as the basis for extending the discussion of film landscapes. As far as case studies for the analysis of cinematic landscapes, many recent Chilean films are something of an "untapped resource", despite being rich in landscape representation – as explained earlier in the introduction, existing work has shed light on some of the ways in which landscape relates to issues of subjectivity but an extended multi-thematic analysis of landscape across a wider range of films has not yet been produced. Indeed, the lack of such an analysis constitutes a sizeable gap in the critical discourse around these films, given that the foregrounding of landscape is frequently so marked. By focusing on the novísimo cine chileno in particular, it is possible to frame the analysis of landscape within the context of a particular time period and generation and to understand the points of connection and departure between the films within a shared context of production and reception.

I discuss the power of landscape's investment with meaning in much greater detail in Chapter One but it is worth outlining its significance as a field of analysis before giving some initial sense of the role that landscapes studies might play in opening up film landscapes. Part of landscape's richness, in fact, is
its capacity to suggest a degree of naturalism and authenticity, while belying complex networks of meaning which extend beyond the frame and beneath the surface of the image. In Landscape and Power, W.J.T. Mitchell reframes the study of landscape image-making as more than a naturalistic attempt to transcribe the land into image; instead he, and other contributors to the edited volume, seek to expose the codes, conventions, connotations, and stereotypes at work in the representation of landscape. As Ann Bermingham states in her chapter, even the most apparently naturalistic painting can be “a mode of political discourse”; the work of analysis of landscape images, then, is to articulate the ways in which landscape representation always functions on multiple levels, whether as image, symbol, experience or process.

We should also bear in mind that filmic representation can influence the way that an audience relates to a landscape, whether previously known or unknown. In a comparison with the work of the cartographer, Harper and Rayner suggest that

the relationship between map-makers/film-makers and their audiences can be akin to a shared pilgrimage, in which the individual, or the group, or a culture, moves through a familiar or newly discovered landscape. This relationship with landscape, temporal and spatial as it is, can even form the basis of a rite of passage, in which the breadth and depth of what is known is enhanced or acquaintance made with that which was previously unknown.  

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Film’s power to mediate the relationship of human beings to their environment in this manner and even to create entirely new relationships between subject and space means that the representation of landscape has implications which extend far beyond the frame. Given that the landscape image on screen creates this powerful nexus between filmmaker, spectator and the world beyond the film, it seems reasonable to look beyond film studies for analytical tools. Although a more developed discussion of this thesis’ engagement with interdisciplinary ideas from landscape studies is elaborated in Chapter One, it is worth taking some time here to offer an initial outline of the broad scope of this field and some brief introductory comments on its potential value in the analysis of film landscapes.

One of the commonalities of the attempts to define the field of “landscape studies” is an emphasis on the way in which the concept of “landscape” inevitably straddles multiple strains of academic thought, whether this is referred to as being interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary. The term cuts across the arts and sciences, attracting the attention of scholars from across geography, ecology, architecture, art history, philosophy and beyond. By engaging with these ideas, the study of film can be made to speak to issues at stake beyond its conventional disciplinary boundaries.

Another important contribution made by landscape studies, which is magnified by its interdisciplinary mode of discourse, is the recognition of landscape as a polysemic concept; as Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels argued, ‘the meanings of verbal, visual and built landscapes have a complex interwoven history’, into which ‘every study of a landscape further transforms its meaning.
depositing yet another layer of cultural representation'. Drawing on postmodernist thinking about the instability of signs and the recycling of meaning, Cosgrove and Daniels suggest that by the late 20th century landscape seems less like a palimpsest whose ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ meanings can somehow be recovered with the correct techniques, theories or ideologies, than a flickering text displayed on the word-processor screen whose meaning can be created, extended, altered, elaborated and finally obliterated by the merest touch of a button.

An approach to landscape such as this frees our enquiries from the search for a singular truth behind cinematic landscape (for instance, by pinning it down as a metaphor for some particular aspect of national identity) and instead allows the discussion to capture the various coexistent meanings that might come to be signified within a landscape image. From the polysemic nature of landscape arises the need for a conceptual framework which can embrace overlapping and potentially conflicting meanings being made out of an image, a need which is most productively addressed by the blended interdisciplinary approach that can be adopted and adapted from landscape studies. More exploration of this layering of meaning is undertaken in Chapter One, where I situate the rest of the thesis against a broader cultural history of images of the Chilean landscape.

Attached to this is the idea that an understanding of landscape images must take into account the context of their production, with reference to the land

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49 Cosgrove and Daniels, p. 10.
from which the landscape image is taken. Raymond Williams claimed: ‘It is possible and useful to trace the internal histories of landscape painting, and landscape writing, landscape gardening and landscape architecture, but in any final analysis we must relate these histories to the common history of a land and its society’. Landscape cinema could easily be added to Williams’ list of mediums here and would be no less removed from the historical, political and social conditions of the land from which it produces its images – this contextualisation of landscape is most evident in Chapters Four and Five, where the specific histories embedded within the Chilean landscape are examined within the exploration of landscape’s relationship to territory, colonisation, tradition and modernity.

Elements of landscape studies also speak clearly to modes of thought which are already prevalent in contemporary film studies and allow us to apply these with more precision to the study of cinematic landscape. A good example of this is the emphasis on landscape as a bodily, multisensory experience; this idea is particularly explored in Chapter Two, which taps into the wealth of work in recent decades on film as phenomenological experience, whose major contributors include Vivian Sobchack and Laura U. Marks. Similarly, the representation of “the non-human” has been a burgeoning area of work within film studies in recent years; Chapter Three combines a focus on the interaction of human and non-human bodies in life and death with an understanding of how landscape situates the human within broader cycles of life, death and decay.

50 Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 120.
**Thesis Structure**

Each of the chapters which make up the thesis makes use of a different perspective on landscape in order to build towards a better informed and more illuminating understanding of the multiple ways that screen landscapes are imbued with meaning. After an initial exploration of the cultural history and conceptual framework which create a point of departure for the thesis, the succession of chapters from Two to Five shift towards the application of the various conceptual intricacies of landscape to the selected corpus. Working within the thesis’ overarching concern with the function and form of cinematic landscape and the ways in which this can be better understood with reference to interdisciplinary conceptualisations, the central chapters each refine their conceptual approach to a specific aspect of the cinematic landscape. The chapters then each bring this conceptual work into contact with analytical close readings of two films; this demonstrates how each of these aspects contributes to a greater overall understanding of the representation of landscape through cinema and also shows that landscape can work as a focal point to enhance interpretations of the aesthetic, narrative and thematic concerns of the films at hand. By structuring the chapters around a careful focus on a pair of films which share a conceptual concern with landscape, the thesis allows common lines of thought about landscape as multisensory, processual, experiential and subject to tension to resurface in different contexts while also allowing space for the specificities of particular films to emerge.

Exploring what might be thought of as a cultural history of landscape in the national context, the first chapter considers the interconnection of the
representation of landscape in contemporary cinema with a broader and longer process of constructing, expressing and disseminating the notion of a specific and exceptional Chilean landscape in diverse mediums including landscape painting, literature, poetry, and photography. By engaging with existing scholarship in this area, this chapter positions the reading of these films through the lens of landscape within an ongoing critical discussion about the role of this concept in Chilean culture. In the second part of the chapter, I demonstrate how the idea of a national landscape can be usefully set in tension with the other major component of the thesis’ argumentative framework: a productive reading of these cinematic landscapes must not only take into account their place in the articulation of a Chilean landscape but must also consider how these readings respond to recent conceptual developments in the study of landscape, which have arisen in diverse academic fields such as film studies, art history, cultural geography and architecture. My thesis proceeds from this overarching understanding of landscape as a concept which simultaneously operates within, across and beyond the demarcations of the nation to close analyses of individual films, with a focus on how their aesthetic and narrative treatment of natural landscapes nuances their position between the (local / national) specific and the universal. This allows the thesis to uncover ambiguities and frictions which would not be produced by a more limited reading of landscape mainly as a symbolic or allegorical register of national identity, as it is most frequently been applied in the study of cinematic landscapes.
Through intimate and contemplative representations of the rural Southern Chile, Chapter Two explains how the attention to the affective dimension of landscape in *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia, Verano* and *Raíz* disrupt attempts to locate an assumed national or regional specificity in the landscape by positioning landscape as an intensely personal and subjective experience rather than as a readable object of perception. By framing these films within the concept of affective landscapes, I argue that these films make deliberate use of the cinematic medium’s capacity for shifting spectator perspectives and subjective alignments in relation to the physical environment. Ultimately, these shifts – between being within and outside of landscape, between immersion and contemplation, between proximity and distance – work to underline the idea of landscape’s plurality at a level which precedes symbolic meaning or explicit narrative significance. The apparently straightforward visual pleasure of landscape as viewed from afar is perpetually contradicted by the sensory complexities that arise as it is explored “on the ground”, which I argue functions as a tactic to challenge the primacy of vision in cinema’s relationship to natural landscapes. My reading suggests that Torres Leiva and Rojas offer a necessarily fragmentary and incomplete engagement with landscape as a multi-sensory and affective experience rather than as an object or spectacle to be understood or represented in totality.

Chapter Three shows how *El año del tigre* [*The Year of the Tiger*](Sebastián Lelio, 2011) and *Matar a un hombre* deepen further the complexities of the cinematic landscape emerging from contemporary Chile as they challenge the boundaries between the living and the non-living, the human and the natural,
the familiar and the alien. Focusing on how landscape’s materiality is rendered on-screen, this chapter shows how these films convey a profound anxiety about the place and status of the human within the perceived hierarchies and structures of the natural landscape, through a breakdown of divisions into which the spectator is ultimately also drawn. Although the narratives of both films are derived from real-life events in 21st-century Chile and thus inevitably engage with certain nationally-specific social concerns, I argue that the representation of landscape is central to the articulation of these concerns but that this representation simultaneously develops these stories in ways that allow them to resonate with audiences beyond national borders. At the heart of this representation, I suggest, is the contact between body (both living and dead) and landscape. Through landscapes patterned by mortality and its material remnants, these films allow a more troubling dimension of the body’s relationship to the external world to emerge, a dimension which connects the particular and the universal.

Having illustrated through the reading of the films in Chapter Three how landscape can become a space in which to locate the nexus of the universal and specific, I then develop this idea in Chapter Four in relation to the two films which explore the relationship between landscape and territory: *Manuel de Ribera* and *El verano de los peces voladores*. My reading of these films begins from the basis that landscape is constructed as territory through control, visibility and presence, before proceeding to examine how these particular cinematic landscapes invite this territorial desire through spectatorship. By considering the potential for the act of filming a landscape to operate as an act
of colonisation, this chapter raises the question of what an ethics of landscape representation might entail and offers a focused reading of these films in response to this idea, which takes into account their status as cultural products and the context of their production. I suggest that while both films offer partial thematic critiques of and formal resistances to the territorialising gaze, they ultimately also create a seductive vision of landscape which cannot be separated from the colonial histories that have marked Chile.

In the final chapter, this idea of landscape as bearing the traces of the past is held alongside the idea of landscape as a medium which is perpetually in development. Landscape as a temporally layered site is the concept which guides Chapter Five’s analysis of Huacho and Turistas, two films in which the representation of landscape is marked by the coexistence of tradition and modernity. My reading of the films illustrates how the competing dynamics of transformation and preservation register in the landscape and how this perspective on landscape can open out to address broader anxieties about the mutability of identities and forms. By illustrating how these films contest the notion of landscape as a stable and permanent repository of meaning, this chapter explains how landscape can be read as a means of making economic forces and social change visible, as they alter ways of life, social relations and the physical environment at local, national and transnational levels. Here, again, landscape’s capacity to connect these levels is demonstrated both visually and conceptually, reinforcing the thesis’ central concern with the polysemic nature of landscape, as well as with the tensions at work within it.
In its concluding section, the thesis closes by drawing together the crucial threads of discussion that have emerged from the film-focused chapters, showing how the successive explorations of the different tensions thrown up by landscape can be cumulatively understood as a demonstration of the analytical power of an interdisciplinary and conceptually nuanced approach to landscape as it appears on screen. The implications of this critical approach to the wider study of film landscape are also considered as the conclusion also looks onwards and outwards to areas where the work of this thesis could be further developed, indicating potential areas of expansion in terms of both geography and genre.
CHAPTER ONE
In Chilean artist Demian Schopf’s photographic work “China Supay” (2011), portrait and landscape collide in the image of an Aymara dancer, dressed in a costume worn for certain religious festivals, standing in front of a landfill site in the altiplano of Northern Chile (Figure 1). Part of Schopf’s series Los coros menores, this image is one of a set which references the traditions of the Uro people; traditions which were initially absorbed into Aymara culture and subsequently blended into syncretic celebrations of the Catholic saints following Spanish colonisation.

Figure 1: China Supay (Demian Schopf, 2011)

The vibrancy of these costumes is juxtaposed with the landfills selected by Schopf as his setting. The landfills are found near the settlements in various Chilean, Bolivian and Peruvian urban hinterlands which have become home to many Aymara people. Schopf’s landscape photographs echo some of the many tensions which transect the Chilean landscape and emphasis the relevance of
new modes of questioning cultural landscape. They reinsert a marginalised indigenous population into the symbolic landscapes from which they are often erased. They invert the notion of conventionally beautiful or sublime landscapes by filling them with the detritus of 21st century consumption and in doing so call upon contemporary anxieties about the environmental destruction which has accompanied economic development. They make reference to a culture which cuts across national borders, recalling pre-nation state territorial formations and asserting the mutability of geopolitical claims on the landscape. In the primacy of the human subject, in the juxtaposition of inherited tradition and consumer culture and in the imported components of the outfits, they demonstrate that the landscape is patterned not only by the national, but also by the personal, the local and the global. In short, the photographs call into question the centrality of the national which has frequently dominated discussions of landscape.

This calling into question is particularly resonant in the case of Chile, whose national identity has traditionally been profoundly connected to its landscapes and where the production and circulation of cultural representations of landscape is historically founded in the desire to embed a sense of this national identity. Landscape, as Barbara Bender explains, ‘has to be contextualised. The way people – anywhere, everywhere – understand and engage with their worlds will depend on the specific time and place and historical conditions’.¹ The purpose of this chapter is to outline something of the cultural context on which this thesis draws and also to establish the conceptual and theoretical

framework through which the main body of the analysis will function. By providing a measure of context for the discussions of Chilean cinematic landscapes which follow in later chapters, the chapter seeks to demonstrate the historical importance of landscape in Chilean cultural thinking, the changing significance of landscape as a socio-political issue in the 21st century and the questions that inform recent engagements with landscape, which variously contest, critique and decentre its historical relationship to the national.

This chapter is structured in two main parts. The first part explores the cultural context of landscape in which the films discussed in the main analysis of this thesis are situated. I begin this section by firstly outlining the relationship between landscape painting and the consolidation of an independent Chilean nation state in the early 19th century and then develop the discussion into an examination of the ways in which landscape has been threaded through discourses of national identity more broadly. This section does not constitute a chronology of landscape representation; instead, the discussion is structured thematically, considering the roots and developments of certain discourses and ideas about the Chilean landscape. Against this historical background, this section also considers new concerns which are emerging in 21st century artistic engagements with landscape and the contours of landscape as a socio-political issue in contemporary Chile which provide the context for these developments. The second half of the chapter then goes on to consider how particular conceptual and theoretical constructs of landscape can provide a framework for the analysis of this thesis’ corpus of films, in light of the complex and contested cultural resonances which pattern the landscapes they represent.
LANDSCAPE IN CHILEAN CULTURAL HISTORY

From the earliest origins of the Chilean nation, landscape has been embedded in the entwinement of scientific and artistic approaches. In the early decades of the 19th century, which saw the creation of independent nation states across the former Spanish colonies in Latin America, there was a significant rise in the number of foreign travellers to the region. Among these visitors to the new nations were not only scientists and those with industrial and commercial interests, but also a large number of “traveller-artists” who created a wealth of images of the continent’s landscapes, as well as the detailed illustrations of its flora and fauna and ethnographic depictions of its inhabitants, which were then widely circulated in Europe and so formed the primary visual representations of Latin America in the European imaginary. As Dawn Ades observes, albums of landscape views (such as Joseph Skinner’s *The Present State of Peru* [1805] and Daniel Thomas Egerton’s *Views of Mexico* [1840]) were some of the most popular volumes to emerge from the exploration of the continent and were enthusiastically consumed by an educated elite for whom ‘the appreciation of landscape had become...one of the tools of cultivated taste’.² As Martin Kemp has observed, the production of these images coincided with a trend towards the displacement of the historiated landscape in favour of attention to the evocation of the sublime and the spectacular in contemporary views of nature.³

This enthusiasm for landscape art was to become as important in the case of Chile as it was for anywhere in the continent. According to Ivelic and Galaz, the

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arrival of foreign traveller-artists such as Carlos Wood, Johann Moritz Rugendas, Raymond Monvoisin and Ernesto Charton de Treville to 19th century Chile should not be considered as a movement or group, owing to the variety of personal motivations of the artists in question. Nevertheless, there are certain commonalities that spanned their thinking, since ‘todos están motivados por el espíritu de aventura, el anhelo de descubrir un mundo nuevo, pujante, no contaminado aún con los signos negativos del progreso civilizador’. The view that artistic representations of the landscape could offer a unique contribution to visions of Latin America was widely promoted in Europe by Prussian geographer Alexander von Humboldt, following his five year expedition to the New World, beginning in 1799. Although Humboldt and his companion, the French botanist Aimé Bonpland, produced thirty volumes of scientific field studies from their travels in the territories that now make up Venezuela, Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Mexico, and although these publications were widely acclaimed in Europe, Humboldt still felt that a more complete impression of the continent could not be fully conveyed without the work of artists; as Patience Schell explains, 19th century naturalists were ideally ‘accomplished artists’, able to ‘draw specimens and landscapes at any moment’. Encouraged by Humboldt’s call, artists such as Fredric Edwin Church, Ferdinand Bellermann and Rugendas not only retraced Humboldt’s itinerary but also went further, travelling southwards into Bolivia, Argentina and Chile. For many of these artists, their paintings were not only works of art but also of

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ethnography and natural history, reinforcing the bond between artistic vision and scientific knowledge of the New World.

The science-art connection was crucial to the Chilean state’s early preoccupation with the exploration of its geographical territory. For instance, in 1830 the French botanist and naturalist Claudio Gay was contracted by Chilean statesman Diego Portales to carry out some of the first geological and geographical investigations of the country. Gay’s scientific reports from his explorations were accompanied by illustrations of landscapes as both natural history and ethnography. The information provided by these expeditions were of significant economic and political value to the national government as it underwent a period of economic expansion supported largely by the exploitation of the primary resources contained within its geographical territory as the basis of both mining and agriculture. As well as sponsoring the artistic and scientific activities of many such expeditions by various travellers, successive governments of the newly independent Chilean state also prioritised the creation of its cultural and educational institutions, including the Universidad de Chile, the Escuela Nacional de Artes y Oficios, the Academia de Pintura and Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. The creation of these institutions was a visual representation of a nascent national identity and the attendant power of the newly formed state. Furthermore, as Jens Andermann has argued in the case of Brazil and Argentina, they can also be seen as mechanisms in the embedding of a hegemonic “optic”, or way of seeing, which naturalised the political power and control over populations and resources held by the post-
colonial nation state within narratives which evoked the inevitability of a natural or historical destiny.6

During this period, the artistic representation of the landscape was inseparable from scientific knowledge, territorial claims, the legitimation of the state and the economic exploitation of natural resources. As Patience Schell explains, due to the arduous nature of travel in the country, the visual communication of Chile’s diverse territory was crucial to creating a unifying national imaginary, since ‘in lived experience, Chile was more a loosely united group of localities than a single nation’.7 Because of this, Schell notes that “Chile” and “Santiago” were frequently conflated at the time of Independence – a tendency towards centralism which some would argue is still characteristic of social and political relations among Chile’s regions.

The formation of a collective national identity was a key strategy in this process and this identity was to be constructed not only through the legal and political institutions of the state but also through cultural and symbolic structures. Gabriel Cid Rodríguez and Jacinta Vergara Brunet argue that, among other landscape painters in Chile, the work of Johann Moritz Rugendas (himself inspired by Humboldt)

se vinculó con el proceso de construcción nacional en el Chile decimonónico, al resaltar una singularidad paisajísitica que actuase

7 Schell, p. 43.
como el correlato estético de la excepcionalidad chilena dentro de esta “América tropical”.8

[w]as linked with the process of nation-building in 19th century Chile, emphasising a singularity of landscape that served as the aesthetic correlative to Chilean exceptionality within this “tropical America”.

The notion of Chilean exceptionality can also be traced in later thinking on landscape in Chile. The Partido Radical senator Alberto Cabero (author of Chile y los chilenos [1926]) advocated a position of geographical determinism, in which he juxtaposed Chile’s temperate climatic regions with tropical Latin America, where he argued that ‘[e]l trópico es propicio al desborde imaginativo, a las excitaciones cerebrales, al mismo tiempo que a la laxitud y a la inercia’9 [the tropical is disposed towards imaginative overflow, towards cerebral excitation, and simultaneously to laxity and inertia]. Sylvia Dümmer Scheel has explored how these ideas were deployed to promote an image of Chile as civilised, stable and industrious at the 1929 Exposición Iberoamericana in Seville. She notes that ambassador Rodríguez Mendoza explicitly suggested that the Chilean pavilion emphasise its temperate regions, its snow and rainfall, to promote a country where ‘en lugar del plátano, se da la manzana’ [instead of the banana, there is the apple]. Scheel argues that through the Chilean exhibit:

8Gabriel Cid Rodríguez and Jacinta Vergara Brunet, 'Representando la "copia feliz del Edén". Rugendas: paisaje e identidad nacional en Chile, siglo XIX.', Revista de historia social y de las mentalidades, 15 (2011), 111.
9Alberto Cabero, Chile y los chilenos, (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Nascimento, 1926), p. 137.
La selva fría aparecía como indicador de lo lejos que estaba la nación de las junglas “ardientes” de la “América salvaje”; la manzana, en tanto, la salvaba del estigma de país bananero.10

[The cold forest appeared as an indication of the distance of the nation from the “burning” jungles of “savage America”; the apple, then, saved Chile from the stigma of a banana republic.]

Images of Chilean landscapes thus became an essential means of signifying and circulating the claims of specificity and difference from which a national identity could be forged, not only in the context of the newly independent republic but also in the 20th century nation. Another crucial theme that arose in early landscape painting and persisted into later centuries was the representation of the human domination of the landscape by its new inhabitants, further helping to bind the national territory to a unifying identity. For instance, the 19th century German colonisation of Araucanía formed the context for the works of Carl Alexander Simon, which Fabien Le Bonniec situates

among the first that depict not only a minute part of this wild nature but above all the distantiation, common in European painting of the time, in which the humans, having succeeded in taming nature and its adversity, stand out against natural landscapes that have become distant backgrounds.

As Le Bonniec explains, this period coincided with the clearing of large swathes of the primordial forest and, too, with the end of an independent Araucanía; ‘the material and spiritual integration of an until recently independent territory into that of the Chilean Nation’.\(^{11}\) Certainly, the latter part of the 19\(^{th}\) century was a period in which the Chilean state’s representation as a territorial entity was subject to constant change, not only with the expansion into the southern regions during the Occupation of Araucanía but also through the later incorporation of the territories acquired from Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific. The taming of nature in the 19\(^{th}\) century mindset was depicted in the same vein as the suppression of the indigenous population of the Northern and Southern regions and landscape painting helped to symbolically integrate these regions into a national imaginary emanating from Santiago.

In the early 20\(^{th}\) century, the connection between territorial expansion, the consolidation of Chile as a nation state and the growth of landscape painting in Chile developed into a means of communicating a particular image of Chile abroad. The most prominent example of this is perhaps the aforementioned case of the Chilean pavilion at the 1929 Exposición Iberoamericana in Seville, which featured the work of muralists Arturo Gordon and Laureano Guevara, for which they were jointly awarded the exhibition’s gold medal. Gordon and Guevara’s murals, with titles such as “La minería”, “La pesca” and “Frutos de la tierra”, represented the Chilean landscape as a natural haven for economic activity and agricultural productivity. As noted by Porras, Maturana and Ossa, the work of these artists was installed in the pavilion in order to explicitly

promote a particular ‘perspectiva cultural, geográfica, étnica e industrial de Chile’١٢ [cultural, geographical, ethnic and industrial perspective on Chile] – a perspective that could most vividly be communicated to an international audience by representing Chile through the human exploitation of its landscapes.

The intention of highlighting these selected examples of Chilean landscape painting is to demonstrate the particular importance of this art form in the early stages of building a vision of Chile as an independent nation, both at home and overseas. This nation-forming connection between people and landscape, however, was not only to be found in painting; developments and echoes of these same sociohistorical and political discourses around landscape can be traced in many other art forms, which this chapter will touch on as it progresses. Symbolic and cultural interpretations of landscape feed into the intense relationship between place and identity, providing a means for its inhabitants ‘to embody their feelings, images, and thoughts in tangible material’.١٣ Landscape, both as material reality and cultural representation, has long been thought of in this way particularly in the case of national identity; Donald Meinig suggests that ‘[e]very mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the shared set of ideas and memories which bind people

١٣ Yi-Pu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 17.
together’. Stephen Daniels highlights the selective way in which certain landscapes become privileged as representative nationscapes:

National identities are co-ordinated, often largely defined, by ‘legends and landscapes’, by stories of golden ages, enduring traditions, heroic deeds and dramatic destinies located in ancient or promised home-lands with hallowed sites and scenery. The symbolic activation of time and space, often drawing on the religious sentiment, gives shape to the ‘imagined community’ of the nation. As exemplars of moral order and aesthetic harmony, particular landscapes achieve the status of national icons.

19th century thinking on how the Chilean people might be bound together through an affective connection to the national territory often contained strands of geographical determinism, a position that had been prevalent in discussions of landscape in Latin America more broadly, stemming partially from its applications in the work of Alexander von Humboldt. In his “Manuscrito del diablo”, published in the Revista de Santiago in 1849, José Victorino Lastarria made several harsh generalisations about the characteristics of rural Chileans. In a frequently cited passage, he argued that

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Este chileno no ve pues a la naturaleza de que está rodeado; pero participa de su esencia, porque es monótono como ella, perezoso y terco como su medio día, insensible como sus riscos. 17

[This Chilean does not really see the nature that surrounds him; but he participates in its essence, because he is similarly monotonous, idle and obstinate, as insensible as her rocky crags].

This was another discursive thread which proved persistent in cultural thinking on the Chilean landscape. Almost a century later, Mariano Latorre, winner of the 1944 Chilean National Prize for Literature, refuted Lastarria’s bleak depiction of Chile’s regional populations and labelled Lastarria a ‘santiaguino típico’. Instead, he characterised Chile as a ‘país de rincones’ [country of corners], in which he characterised the nation in terms of the diversity of its geography and argued that this in turn produced a great regional diversity in the characters of its inhabitants. According to Latorre:

La multiplicidad es el carácter del paisaje chileno. Y múltiple es, también, la sicología de su poblador, pero paisajes y hombres son unos en su pluralidad.18

[Multiplicity is characteristic of the Chilean landscape. And multiple too is the psychology of the population, yet landscape and men are united in their plurality].

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18 Mariano Latorre, Chile, país de rincones, 2nd edn (Santiago de Chile: Zig-Zag, 1957), p. 21.
Latorre’s mode of thinking about the Chilean landscape has much in common with other efforts to construct the Chilean nation through its geography. Its focus on geographical diversity is echoed in another essential Chilean landscape text, Benjamín Subercaseaux’s *Chile, o, una loca geografía* (1940), which became one of the most controversial and commented-on of his literary output, not least for its description of the ‘carácter indolente y apático’ of the Chilean people.

For Subercaseaux, the landscape was, above all else, the key factor in explaining what might be thought of as the characteristics of *chilenidad*:

Chile, contrariamente a otros países, posee una geografía que supera al sentimiento nacional del pueblo que lo habita…[H]ay en este Chile algo que lo hace eterno e inmutable; y ese algo es su geografía…[A]simismo Chile, cualesquiera sean la raza que lo habite y los trastornos que sufra, quedará en definitiva ocupado por chilenos; por hombres sujetos a una misma historia y a un mismo paisaje que les modelará un mismo carácter, los exaltará en las mismas glorias y los hará sobrellevar las mismas miserias.20

[Chile, unlike other countries, has a geography that goes beyond the national sentiment of the people who inhabit it…[I]n Chile there is something which makes it eternal and immutable; and that something is its geography…[L]ikewise Chile, whatever race it is inhabited by and whatever upsets it suffers, will definitively remain occupied by Chileans; by men subject to a shared history and a shared landscape which moulds

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20 Subercaseaux, p. 28.
them into a shared character, exalts them in shared glories and makes them bear the same misfortunes].

Subercaseaux’s view of landscape was that it provided a common experience to its inhabitants, an experience which would make them “Chilean”. So strong, in fact, was Subercaseaux’s belief in the unifying properties of landscape that he reminded his readers of ‘esa facilidad del extranjero para “chilenizarse” y la parte que le cabe la tierra en el misterioso proceso’. However, in counterpoint to this the impulse towards harmonisation and unification, this perspective also touches on the darker inverse of this desire for integration – the fear of the disintegration of the national territory and thereby the state. In geographical terms, the diversity emphasised by Latorre and the singularity underlined by Subercaseaux presented distinct challenges in maintaining the social and political order, due to the communicational difficulties presented by the extremes of the Chilean landscape and the consequent centralisation of population and power around the capital (which continues today as the Región Metropolitana de Santiago is now home to around a third of Chile’s population).

For Chilean sociologist Jorge Larraín, writing over half a century after Subercaseaux and Latorre, the extreme diversity of the Chilean landscape remained a salient factor in questions of national identity. However, Larraín explicitly suggests that the unified plurality which arises from the differences and distances inherent in the country’s geography are reinforced by the fear of disintegration:

Hay varios elementos materiales que distinguen el entorno físico chileno

[...] Contrariamente a lo que podría pensar, esta variedad de regiones y
las dificultades de comunicación no favorecieron los regionalismos y localismos, sino que desde el comienzo acentuaron un fuerte centralismo, posiblemente por la clara conciencia que existía del peligro de disgregación.\footnote{Jorge Larrain, \textit{Identity and Modernity in Latin America} (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), p. 261.}

[There are various material elements which distinguish the Chilean physical environment [...] Contrary to what one might think, this regional variation and difficulties in communication do not engender regionalism and localisms, but instead have always accentuated a strong centralism, possibly because of the clear awareness that exists of the danger of disintegration]

The idea of the diverse geography of the Chilean territory as particularly unwieldy and intractable, not to mention dangerous, is another idea which surfaces throughout its cultural history. Indeed, before the nation ever existed, the extremities and variations of its landscape, along with the multiplicity of its indigenous populations, were already being flagged as singularly troublesome by the first colonisers in the Southern Cone. In the 16th century, Pedro de Valdivia’s letters to Carlos V were some of the earliest efforts to convey the particularities of the region to a European. In his descriptions of the territories that are to be found south of Peru, which he refers to as the Nueva Extremadura and of which he is made governor by the King, Valdivia describes the land as potentially fruitful (foreshadowing the images of a fertile land that would later arise through landscape painting), remarking on the extreme fertility of the land and describing the multiple harvests. However, the territory is at the same time
inscribed with multiple threats to the security of this colony, both natural and human; Valdivia describes, for example, “monstruous” rainstorms and the threat posed by rebellions of the indigenous populations.

Persisting through independence and beyond, this double-edged idea of Chile as simultaneously abundantly productive and potentially lethal resurfaces in Latorre’s references to ‘el enredo tectónico de su geología’ [the tectonic entanglement of its geology]. This tectonic activity was, and continues to be, both destructive and productive. It has caused devastating earthquakes throughout the centuries and there are dozens of active volcanoes along the length of the country. However, this same activity has contributed to Chile’s exceptional wealth of mineral deposits, such as the copper reserves that feed Chuquicamata, the world’s largest open pit copper mine, in the Antofagasta region in the north of the country and its volcanic soils support the agricultural and forestry activities that have also helped promote its economic growth. The understanding that life in Chile is dependent on a perilous relationship with its tectonic circumstances constitutes a historically enduring strand in discussions of national identity; today, frequent references are made in the Chilean media to the conditions of life in “el país más sísmico del mundo” [the most seismic country in the world]. Cultural responses to the deadliness of Chile’s natural geography span various art forms, as well as periods. Pablo Neruda’s reflection

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22 A handful of recent examples of this tendency include a report by La tercera on an analysis of Chile’s seismic and tectonic activity (“El país más sísmico del mundo”, 25th April 2015), an infographic published in Chile’s leading free newspaper Publimetro (“Chile es el país más sísmico del mundo”, 3rd April 2014) and an interview with seismologist Marcelo Lagos which aired on national television in 2014, available online: <http://lared.cl/2014/programas/mentirasverdaderas/marcelo-lagos-el-pais-mas-sismico-del-mundo-tiene-una-red-sismologica-que-no-esta-a-la-altura> [accessed 24 May 2017].
on the fragility of life in the wake of a tsunami in *Maremoto* [1970] surveys the organic and inorganic detritus abandoned on the shoreline:

pequeños cuerpos fríos, maltrados por la implacable eternidad del agua por la ira del viento.

Ser y no ser aquí se amalgamaron en radiantes y hambrientas estructuras: arde la vida y sale a pasear un relámpago la muerte.²³

[cold little bodies, abused by the implacable eternity of the water, by the wind’s anger.

Here, being and not being were combined in radiant and hungry structures: life burns and death passes, like a flash of lightning.]²⁴

Neruda’s description of the debris and devastation following the tidal wave, with its emphasis on the vulnerability of bodies to the vastness of natural forces, foreshadows elements of the discussion around *El año del tigre* in Chapter Three. While picking up on the wider cultural history of Chile’s tectonic landscape, this chapter also establishes connections between the particular post-seismic landscape of Lelio’s film and broader conceptual ideas about seismicity and natural disasters as part of its focus on materiality and mortality.

The materiality of landscape has been a strong feature which intertwines both contemporary artistic and literary responses to the physical environment in

Chile, with connections death, displacement, disappearance and fragmentation becoming increasingly prominent after 1973. Poet-artists such as Cecilia Vicuña and Raúl Zurita have engaged directly with this concept by creating artworks which intervene directly in the physical form of landscape. Zurita’s bulldozed inscription of the three kilometre-long phrase ‘Ni pena ni miedo’ [Neither pain nor fear] in the Atacama desert in 1993 has been read by Nelly Richard as an act of

   displacing the creative gesture to a vital support (the Chilean landscape) […] without the cultural overdetermination of an artistic frame of reference.  

In the context of a nation recently returned to democracy, Zurita’s intervention in the landscape marks it as a site where both the past and future can be inscribed, unbounded by the confines of the gallery or the page. Alongside this “opening out” of language into physical space, there is also an attempt to draw together the individual memories fragmented by the experience of state violence and repression into the shared domain of landscape, with its comparable permanence. The work constitutes a self-citation of the prominence of the Atacama in Zurita’s earlier dictatorship-era poetry, most notably in the 1979 collection *Purgatorio* [Purgatory], in which Zurita writes:

   i. Los paisajes son convergentes y divergentes en el Desierto de Atacama.

ii. Sobre los paisajes convergentes y divergentes Chile es convergente y divergente en el Desierto de Atacama.26

[i. Landscapes are convergent and divergent in the Atacama Desert

ii. Over the convergent and divergent landscapes, Chile is convergent and divergent in the Desert of the Atacama.]

Zurita’s works thus contribute to an understanding of the Chilean landscape as a layering of shared, contested and conflicting experiences and meanings. The desert is both the space selected by the military regime to enact its violence against the dead and the disappeared and the site selected by the poet to address the memory of this collective trauma; it is both the site of the destruction of memory and its reinscription, both the subject of artistic representation and its medium.

The idea that landscape can give physical form and meaning to that which has been displaced or discarded is also present in the work of Cecilia Vicuña. According to literary sociologist Soledad Bianchi, Vicuña’s precarios (1966-), an ongoing series of found-object work in the form of sculptures and installations are likely to be ‘muestras primeras de arte conceptual y de land art en Chile’ [first instances of conceptual and land art in Chile].27 Using objects akin to the detritus of Neruda’s Maremoto, Vicuña’s precarios are deliberately situated, rather than cast adrift, within landscape. The interface of landscape and artistic expression crosses the genres of her creative work; her poem ‘Sendero

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Chibcha’, which makes reference to Andean indigeneity, Vicuña affirms landscape’s potential to give voice to poetic meaning:

La poesía habita algunos lugares donde los riscos no necesitan sino ser señalados para vivir dos o tres líneas una marca y el silencio empieza a hablar.\textsuperscript{28}

[Poetry inhabits certain places where the cliffs need only to be signalled to come alive two or three lines a mark and the silence begins to speak.]

These lines, published in the 1983 book of poetry *Precario/Precarious* which also contained photographs of her sculptures, find in landscape, specifically in the geologically instable liminal space of the cliff-edge, a space where language can be drawn out of silence, suggesting that the physicality of the land has a stake in the possibility of reconstituting the fragments of a repressed collective memory.

The approach to landscape in Vicuña’s cross-genre body of work operates not only within a post-dictatorial memory framework but also in dialogue with ecocritical perspectives on landscape’s own vulnerability and the fragility of a human-landscape relationship, with particular reference to indigenous cultures. Vicuña’s 2010 ‘documentary poem’ *Kon Kon* details the origins of her *precarios* but the film also connects these to the depletion of natural resources and the threatened livelihoods and cultures of the Diaguita and Mapuche fishermen of Chile’s coastal landscape. Candice Amich has argued that the film,

refigures precarity, as the fragility of life and culture under conditions of neoliberal globalization, into planetarity, an alternative that looks to precapitalist culture to imagine a postcapitalist future’.29

Landscape (and nature, more broadly) as point of (re)connection to fractured or displaced indigenous cultures in the face of the environmental and social impact of neoliberalism and globalisation is also a feature of the work of Huilliche Chilean poet Jaime Huenún. Huenún’s 2012 collection *Reducciones* [Reductions]30 refers in its title to both the Spanish colonial system of resettling

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indigenous populations and to the accompanying physical, cultural, political and spiritual “reduction” of the indigenous presence in colonised Latin America. Indigenous understandings of natural landscapes in Huenún’s poetry are mobilised with a view to both reviving indigenous knowledge and tradition but also offering an alternative perspective on current ecological crises, resisting the confinement of the indigenous to the realm of an idealised past. The eco-critical attention to the reciprocity of the human and the natural within landscape is combined with a temporal understanding of the natural landscape as both layered with and transcending human histories. As Ida Day suggests, Huenún's work 'foregrounds the evidences and effects of past practices that lie at the root of material conditions in the present', while also exploring how this material reality of ecological crisis is underpinned by 'spiritual dimensions'.

Huenún's recognition of these tensions contributes to the polysemy of Chile's cultural history of landscape while also amplifying cultural perspectives which have historically been marginalised from both the idea of a national landscape and from its interpretation.

In the postdictatorship context, the Chilean landscape has been brought into dialogue with issues of historical memory in the artistic expression of literature, film and visual art but this has also been underscored in a range of recent academic work on the mnemonic, memorial and monumental dimensions of certain Chilean landscapes. Mario Aguilar, for instance, has explored the transformation of the Villa Grimaldi site (from farm, to social and leisure space, 31Ida Day, 'Ecological Crisis and the Re-Enchantment of Nature in Jaime Huenún's Reducciones' in Ecological Crisis and Cultural Representation in Latin America: ecocritical perspectives on art, film and literature ed. by Mark Anderson and Zélia M. Bora (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016).
to interrogation and torture complex, to memorial park) within the changing landscape of Peñalolen in Santiago through anthropological and historiographical perspectives on landscape, looking at the retrospective public understanding of ‘landscapes of secrecy’.\textsuperscript{32} Considering memorial landscape (including Villa Grimaldi) through the lens of Rosalind Krauss’ 1978 essay ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’, Jens Andermann has argued that this practice in the Southern Cone ‘recovers a long tradition of conferring to the mnemonic power of landscape the memory of the defeated (Indians, peasants, workers)’ but also reconfigures the ‘civic and didactic function entrusted to the modern park in Latin America’.\textsuperscript{33} Through this combination of inheritance and transformation the 1990s memorial garden is seen to be a means of emplacement for fragmented and displaced memory, while also opening into an ‘expanded field’ of landscape which resists final suture and teleological imposition. The Atacama desert – in many ways a remote and inhospitable contrast to the accessibility and order of the park- has been equally important in the academic discussion of postdictatorship memory. Work by Flora Vilches\textsuperscript{34} and Lessie Jo Frazier,\textsuperscript{35} among others, has moved toward an understanding of spaces of dictatorial violence within the broader history (or ‘biography’, in Vilches’ terms) of the Northern Chilean landscape (particularly in relation to the nitrate industries), examining how these landscapes are patterned by change and continuity in the collective memory.

Remoteness – in the case of the Atacama and at the national territory’s other extremes – is another aspect of Chile’s landscape which recurs in the cultural imagination, often presenting an enticement to exploration (and, ultimately, colonisation). The work of Chilean visual artist Fernando Prats recalls the seductiveness of some of Chile’s most climatically extreme landscapes and how these have enticed human exploration. His 2011 Antarctic installation *Gran Sur* [Great South] consists of neon signage mounted on wooden and aluminium frames in Elephant Island and the Chilean Arturo Prat research station on Greenwich Island, illuminating a Spanish translation of a fabled advertisement supposedly published by Sir Ernest Shackleton in *The Times* in 1914,

> Men wanted for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful, honor and recognition in case of success.

By establishing these neon beacons in territories once beyond public visibility, Prats’ work speaks to the transformative effect of the territorialising gaze that frames landscape as domain (taken up further in Chapter Four) but the location of his installations also connects them to Chile with a particular historical specificity. After losing the *Endurance* to the ice of the Weddell Sea, Elephant Island was where the Chilean Navy tug boat *Yelcho* rescued 22 surviving members of the Imperial Trans-Atlantic expedition on August 30, 1916. The prow of the *Yelcho* is now memorialised in Puerto Williams (which claims the

36 Although much quoted, the advertisement is almost certainly apocryphal. Nevertheless, it persists as a near-legendary element in the origin stories of what Elizabeth Leane calles the ‘Heroic Era’ of polar exploration. As Leane explains: ‘No evidence for this addendum to the tale of the *Endurance* has ever been forthcoming, yet it continues to grace countless coffee mugs and T-shirts – a Heroic-Era fiction that has entered into communal memory’. See: Elizabeth Leane, *Antactica in Fiction: Imaginative Narratives of the Far South,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 85.
title of the world’s southernmost city) and Elephant Island falls under the territorial claims of Chile, as well as Argentina and the United Kingdom.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 2: Gran Sur, (Fernando Prats, 2011)**

The *Gran Sur* series thus contributes to a dialogue about Chilean’s most extreme landscapes which reaches back and forth across historical and popular memory, as well as locating the overlap of national histories and territories. While the Antarctic region does not itself feature in the films covered by this thesis, the exploratory history of the harsh and remote landscapes at the edge of Chilean territories is revisited in Chapter Four as *Manuel de Ribera* invokes colonial histories amid the island landscapes on Chile’s Pacific coast. The issue of the extremities of landscape as a physical manifestation of the limits of the nation is another persistent piece of imagery in the rhetoric of national identity of Chile as a kind of continental island – bordered in the West by the Pacific
Ocean, in the East by the Andes, in the North by the Atacama Desert and
dissolving into the Antarctic wilderness in the South. Larrain claims that the
Chilean national identity has been shaped both by this sense of insularity and
also by the kind of isolation that comes from being “at the end of the world”:

El estrecho territorio nacional está atrapado entre grandes montañas y
un mar vastísimo. Estar en Chile da una sensación de aislamiento
parecida a la de una isla pero un poco más acentuada por la altura de las
montañas y la enormidad del mar que lo separan del resto del mundo. La
identidad chilena tiene conciencia no sólo de su aislamiento geográfico
sino también de su ubicación en los confines del mundo.37

[The narrow national territory is trapped between great mountains and
a vast sea. Being in Chile gives one a sense of isolation similar to that of
an island, but a little more accentuated by the height of the mountains
and the enormity of the sea that separate it from the rest of the world.
The Chilean identity is conscious not only of its geographical isolation
but also of its location at the edge of the world.]

With the advance of globalisation, particularly since the adoption of
neoliberalism and the opening out of the country’s economy to the global
marketplace, Chile’s geographical isolation has nevertheless been subject to
increasing influences and forces from beyond its border; the transformative
impact of these on landscape, and its tension with preservation and tradition,
form part of the analysis of Huacho and Turistas in Chapter Five. As Demian
Schopf’s photographs have exemplified, Chilean cultural engagements with

37 Larrain, p. 261.
landscape are increasingly marked by tendencies which transcend national boundaries. The study of cultural landscapes has responded to these changes. Although the historical relationship of landscape and national identity continues to be of interest to Chilean scholars, perspectives on the political, social and cultural functions of landscape have also emerged, which decentre the nation from its previously privileged position.

One of the best known and most critiqued pieces of landscape-inspired art to emerge from post-dictatorship Chile was the principal attraction at the Chilean pavilion at the 1992 Expo in Seville; a 60-tonne iceberg, moulded from polar ice by a sculptor in a refrigerated unit in southern Chile and transported to Spain across the Atlantic from the Antarctic port of Bahía Paraíso. According to Eugenio García, one of the pavilion organisers, the intention was to demonstrate Chile’s commercial and industrial proficiency and place the country firmly on the world trade map: 'Si podemos transportar este hielo, podemos transportar productos frescos chilenos, como frutas o salmón, a cualquier parte del mundo con la misma eficacia'. Notably, the motivation behind this (literal) mobilisation of the Chilean landscape echoed a desire to promote many of the same strengths of the country as the Gordon and Guevara murals at the 1923 exhibition; despite the change in political and technological context, the basic intention of both works was to promote Chile as a modern, efficient and economically productive country making full use of its abundant natural resources.

Tomás Moulian framed his analysis of the iceberg exhibit in the context of what he described as “transformismo”; the surface changes which took place in post-dictatorship Chile that masked the underlying continuity between authoritarian and democratic rule. For Moulian, the iceberg was a reminder of the erasure of uncomfortable histories and memories from the political landscape and the national image of the “new” Chile that was emerging in the 1990s:

El iceberg representaba el estreno en sociedad del Chile Nuevo, limpiado, sanatizado, purificado por la larga travesía del mar. En el iceberg no había huella alguna de sangre, de desaparecidos. No estaba ni sombra de Pinochet. Era como si Chile acabara de nacer. Ni los ojos adiestrados de un geólogo, para qué decir un arqueólogo, podrían haber distinguido el sufrimiento acumulado, las huellas imborrables, en la luminosa belleza del hielo petrificado.39

[The iceberg represented the society debut of the New Chile, cleaned, sanatised, purified by its long voyage across the sea. The iceberg bore no trace of blood, of the disappeared. Not even a shadow of Pinochet. It was as if Chile had just been born. Not even the trained eyes of a geologist or an archaeologist could have distinguished the accumulated suffering, the indelible marks, in the luminous beauty of the petrified ice]

In the iceberg, the Chilean state was able to present itself on the global stage through an image which severed the link with a troubling past, an image of a present completely unmarked by what had gone before. However, in her

analysis of this same exhibit, Nelly Richard observes that although the iceberg seemed to exclude a connection with Chile’s recent past, it was nonetheless woven into a broader cultural imaginary of Latin America. According to Richard,

el iceberg se entrelazaba también la hipercontemporaneidad de su hallazgo publicitario con los sueños y fantasías más legendarios del continente latinoamericano, tejidos – en filigrana – por una mención oblicua a la magia sobrenatural del *boom*.

[the iceberg interlaced the hypercontemporaneity of the publicity stunt with the more legendary dreams and fantasies of the Latin American continent, delicately woven through an oblique allusion to the supernatural magic of the *boom*].

Richard suggests that by creating a geographical inversion of José Arcadio Buendía’s encounter with what he believes is the world’s biggest diamond in *Cien años de soledad*, the exhibit literally mobilised a piece of the Chilean landscape in a way which simultaneously emphasised the idea of future progress, while also creating undertones which gestured towards one of the most well-known exports from a particularly marketable phase of Latin American cultural production. While the literary allusions of the work perceived by Richard are unlikely to have been apparent to many of the Expo visitors, the iceberg exhibit, with its implied connection to Antarctica, certainly still drew on the image of Chile as a remote and geographically extreme territory, even as it embodied Chile’s presence on the international stage. Here,

even as the exhibit worked to reinforce a particular version of a Chilean national identity, other regional and global forces were at work within and around the image. Not only this, but the cultural critiques that arose around the iceberg demonstrated the potential of the image to accrue multiple and contestatory meanings once it is “released” into the view of spectators and becomes subject to a plurality of interpretations and associations.

The intertwining of economic, historical, political and cultural references in the various readings of the iceberg exhibit is one example of how multiple developments across the social, political, economic and environmental realms form a context for contemporary Chilean cultural responses to landscape. The remaining chapters of the thesis, of course, elaborate on particular elements of these layered and multiple meanings in regards to the selected corpus of contemporary cinema but it is worth here identifying some of the most prominent contributions from earlier filmmaking to the cultural history of landscape in Chile. Given the later development of cinema as a technology of landscape representation and its more difficult development as an industry and artistic tradition within Chile, its role in the cultural history of landscape is naturally not as extensive as those of art or literature; however, there are two periods in particular that it seems useful to draw attention to here, namely the Nuevo Cine Chileno of the 1960s and 1970s and the films that emerged amid the revival of post-dictatorship film production in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Many of the key films of the New Chilean Cinema were set in urban environments, such as the shady Santiago underworld of Tres Tristes Tigres (Three Sad Tigers, Raúl Ruiz, 1968) and the deprivation and marginalisation
behind the touristic facades of the coastal city of Valparaíso in *Valparaíso, Mi Amor* (*Valparíso, My Love*, Aldo Francia, 1970). However, rural Chile provides the setting for one of the most well-known films of this period, Miguel Littín’s *El Chacal de Nahueltoro* (*The Jackal of Nahueltoro*, 1969) – a retelling of the real-life crimes murder of a woman and her children by Jorge del Carmen Valenzuela Torres in 1960 – which depicts peasant life in the rural surroundings of Chillán as being dominated by both drudgery and exploitation. The rural landscape is framed in the film as a space of marginalisation, which serves the ideological standpoint from which the crimes are deconstructed by the film’s social analysis, critiquing the exclusionary workings of Chilean society and its institutions.

The ideological bent of the New Chilean Cinema was also inscribed on the northern desert landscape in Helvio Soto’s *Caliche sangriento* (*Bloody Nitrate*, 1969), whose narrative takes place during the late 19th century War of the Pacific between Chile, Bolivia and Peru. Soto’s film, which was banned on its initial release, reframed the conflict as one motivated by foreign imperialist and economic interests (primarily around the extraction of Atacama nitrate deposits). As well as being framed within a critique of the violence of resource extraction, however, the desert setting was also crucial to the film’s relationship to genre, with critics such as Jacqueline Mouesca suggesting that the landscape of the Atacama with its vast expanses and abandoned towns was also imbued with all the ‘dureza y sordidez’ [roughness and squalor] of a Western.41

With the advent of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1973, the Chilean landscape largely disappeared from cinema screens as the country’s film industry fell into decline and leading directors were driven into exile. However, the representation of landscape in a symbolic mode which invoked its connection to the memory of the nation’s recent past was a strong feature of the generation of filmmaking immediately preceding the novísimo cine chileno. Landscape in the cinema of 1990s transition period carried both an explicit historical weight and a more visible connection to the question of Chilean identity. Monica Villaruel has argued that the cinematic landscapes of this period, including Ricardo Larraín’s La frontera (The Frontier, 1991) and El entusiasmo (Enthusiasm, 1998), were marked by an overall identification with the nation, as well as by particular regional connotations:

El paisaje, aún estando al servicio de los relatos, revela una presencia importante en los filmes. Desde áridos parajes urbanos hasta ciudades como Valparaíso o el paisaje verde y lluvioso del sur, el seco desierto del norte y el territorio insular, son lugares que contienen las vivencias de los personajes y llevan un peso histórico. Sin embargo, estos espacios están marcados por los trayectos de los propios cineastas que no por casualidad consideran esos lugares a la hora de filmar. El mar, en La frontera, el desierto en El entusiasmo; el sur y el norte, fueron señalados como “elementos de la nacionalidad”. El sur fue asociado al refugio y el norte, a la guerra y a los grandes emprendimientos.42

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42 Mónica Villaruel Márquez, La voz de los cineastas: cine e identidad chilena en el umbral del milenio, (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2004), p. 150.
The landscape, while still serving the stories, reveals an important presence in the films. From arid urban vistas to cities such as Valparaíso or the green and rainy landscape of the South, the dry desert of the North and the island territories, these are places that contain character’s homes and carry a historical weight. However, these spaces are marked by the journeys of the filmmakers themselves, who do not come to films in these places by accident. The sea, in *La frontera*, the desert in *El entusiasmo*; the south and the north were marked as “elements of nationality”. The south was associated with shelter and the north with war and great ventures.

The landscape-nation relationship during this period was heavily invested with symbolic and allegorical meaning. In two of the best know films of the transition period – *La frontera* and *Amnesia* (Gonzalo Justiniano, 1994) – the locations chosen (a remote island in Southern Chile and the Atacama desert) were not only grounded in historical realism in terms of their uses as sites of exile and disappearance during the dictatorship period but the country’s geographical extremities were also used as metaphorical approaches to the memory of the dictatorship. The desert of *Amnesia*, which appears in recurring flashbacks, is not only the location of the protagonist’s own personal memory of trauma but also metaphorically stands in for repressed collective memory of the hostility and inhumanity of political violence, contrasting as Peter H. Rist suggests ‘the vertical scrawl of present day urban Valparaíso with the vast, horizontal expanse of a wasteland’.43 The isolated Southern town, cut off by the tides,

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where the central character of La frontera is confined recalls the historical reality for many Chileans who were internally exiled in remote parts of the country. In its metaphorical dimension, the devastation wrought upon the island and its inhabitants by repeated tidal waves come to represent both historical violence and its persistent return in the form of traumatic memory, while the final sequences of the film depict a bright glowing dawn as the sun rises after the tsunami, an obvious allusion to the possibility of new beginnings.

In the later 1990s and early 2000s prominent, cinematic landscapes in Chilean filmmaking generally shifted away from this allegorical emphasis on historical memory but landscape nevertheless retained a clear connection to national, as well as regional, identities. Filmed in Santiago, Calama and Chiloé, Andrés Wood’s Historias de fútbol (Soccer Stories, 1997) was structured around three vignettes of young Chileans from the north, south and centre of the country and their relationship to the nation’s favourite sport, with geography becoming a deliberate and explicit ‘marca identitaria’ [marker of identity] in Wood’s work, according to Villaroel. Villaroel, as well as Ascanio Cavallo, Pablo Douzet and Cecilia Rodríguez, have suggested that the attention to landscape as a surrounding for daily life and the customs of national and regional identities in Historias de fútbol functions in a ‘neocriollista’ vein which is also apparent in Wood’s 2001 film La fiebre del loco (Loco Fever), which portrays life in an isolated fishing community on the island of Chiloé in northern Patagonia.

Although Fernanda Peñaloza has argued that, overall, ‘Patagonia seems to be less important for Chilean directors in comparison to their Argentine
The region was also the focus of another prominent cinematic depictions of the Chilean landscape from the turn of the millennium. Shifting away from the allegorical mode of earlier post-dictatorship films, Alex Bowen's historical comedy *Mi mejor enemigo* (*My Best Enemy, 2004*) follows a Chilean soldier sent to southern Patagonia to defend the Chile-Argentina border during the Beagle Conflict of 1978, which almost brought Chile and Argentina to the brink of war over territorial and maritime claims. Using humour and irony to support a critical and absurdist take on the relationship between landscape, territory and national allegiance, the film makes use of wide angle shots of landscape which emphasise continuity and monotony. As Jenny Haase argues, this representation underscores the constructed nature of a politicised and nationalised landscape in a region where 'history, culture and nature cannot be rigidly separated by nation states, the artificial separation of national territories becomes especially visible.'

Although landscape of course features to different degrees across the various periods of Chilean film history, as the aforementioned examples demonstrate, its mode of representation and its meanings and associations for filmmakers and audiences shift significantly. Cinematic landscapes cannot, therefore, be interpreted without taking into account the fact that landscapes, like film itself, accrue, layer and shift multiple meanings; as Adrian J. Ivakhiv explains,

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cinematic culture (as with other cultural forms) can be seen as being in an ecological relationship with the world it represents. According to Ivakhiv,

...film's worlds move because the world they take from, capturing and rearranging pieces of it, also moves. They change, transmit change, and are change. In change is crisis, opportunity, and creative transformation.47

One of the most significant creators of changing circumstances has been the impact of natural disasters and environmental crises in the 21st century. Ivakhiv describes a 'half-recognised sense of impending trauma' stemming from the experience of crisis in our relationship to the non-human. There are many instances in the Chilean case, where environmental trauma is not merely impending and half-recognised; it is frequently realised and impossible to ignore.

At the time of writing, the freak rainfalls of March 2015, which caused lethal flooding and mudslides in the Atacama region, leaving 17 people dead and many more missing, represent just one recent example of the precarious relationship between Chile’s population and its natural geography. During that same month of 2015, over 3000 local residents and tourists were evacuated amid the eruption of the volcano Villarica. In 2014, forest fires around the port city and UNESCO World Heritage site of Valparaíso resulted in the destruction of hundreds of homes, 12 deaths and the evacuation of over 10,000 inhabitants; further fires that year destroyed another 500,000 hectares in the region. Also in

2014, the far north of the country was hit by an earthquake and tsunami that killed 6 people and displaced tens of thousands. Just four years earlier, the sixth largest earthquake in recorded history, along with the ensuing tsunami, had devastated the populous central regions with a death toll of over 500. In terms of worlds that “move”, the Chilean landscape must contend as one of the most volatile on the planet.

The large-scale destruction and loss of life incurred in the immediate aftermath of these catastrophes is accompanied in the longer term by huge financial costs and disruption to economic activity. International coverage of the 2010 earthquake, for instance, had a significant negative impact on Chile’s tourist industry, even in destinations outside of the affected regions. Two years after the event, thousands of families were still living in temporary accommodation, with many expressing frustration at what they perceived as the slow pace of government reconstruction work, including the building of new homes. Other affected industries included key export sectors such as forestry and winemaking. Total economic losses were estimated at US$30 billion, which equated to around 18% of the national GDP, a shortfall which was partly covered by a sovereign fund primarily created from copper windfall savings accrued under previous governments.\(^{48}\) The Chilean economy, as this example demonstrates, is inseparable not only from the exploitation of the country’s natural resources but also from the impact of its natural disasters.

Such effects tie the Chilean landscape into a relationship with economic development where each marks the other and where each is also influenced by global forces (whether these are seismic, economic or political) which extend far beyond national boundaries – particularly when devastating natural disasters at the national level become linked through scientific and media discourses with ecopolitical discussion of climate change on a global scale. The constant and rapid movement of people, information and commodities across these boundaries means that events which change the physical landscape of one country can very quickly shift the contours of the transnational political landscape. A clear example of this from the Chilean context is the arrest of Rotem Singer, an Israeli tourist accused of accidentally causing a forest fire in the Torres del Paine National Park in 2011. The fire, which destroyed over 100 square kilometres of forest, took weeks to extinguish and severely disrupted the tourist activity around the park. Alejandro Navarro, president of the Environmental Commission of the Senate pressed for compensation from the Israeli state, arguing that

Cuando un ciudadano comete un delito en el extranjero contra el patrimonio nacional, su país de origen tiene el deber moral y jurídico de compensar el inestimable daño provocado al alma nacional.49

[When a citizen commits a crime against the national heritage of a foreign country, his country of origin has the moral and judicial duty to compensate the inestimable damage caused to the national soul.]

49 El Ciudadano, Torres Del Paine: “Si se prueba la responsabilidad del turista, el estado de Israel debe indemnizar a Chile”, 2 January 2012
<http://www.elciudadano.cl/2012/01/02/46452/torres-del-paine-%E2%80%9Csi-se-prueba-la-responsabilidad-del-turista-el-estado-de-israel-debe-indemnizar-a-chile%E2%80%9D/> [accessed 4 April 2016].
The emotive language deployed by Navarro made it clear that this incident was no longer simply an environmental disaster but was also quickly transformed into an economic, political, legal and even moral issue. On the one hand, the rhetoric around the landscape as a ‘national heritage’ and the equating of its degradation to ‘damage to the national soul’ makes clear the extent to which national identity remains invested in Chile’s geographical territory. On the other, the transnational appeal for compensation indicates the anxiety arising from the increasing vulnerability of this territory to destructive influences perceived to originate beyond national borders. Fabien Le Bonniec has argued in the wake of events such as these there was an increased perception in Chilean society that ‘[o]utsiders had proved incapable of valuing and preserving the local landscapes in the same way as the populations who lived there, or, worse, they contributed to their pillage and destruction’.50

One of the questions that arise from this comment is the uncertainty over the definition of the ‘outsider’ in the context of globalisation. As recognised in Le Bonniec’s work, it is not enough simply to define outsiders as those entering or intervening in the landscape from beyond national borders. He also examines the issue of the controversial HidroAysén megaproject, which aims to build five hydroelectric power plants on two rivers in Chilean Patagonia. On one level, the project is opposed by the Chilean branch of the international campaign group Greenpeace. On the other, however, concerns over the fate of this particular landscape have been expressed in local and regionalist terms which criticise not only the influence of foreign multinationals but also the manoeuvres of national economic and political elites in Santiago.

50 Le Bonniec.
These issues have sharpened awareness of the multiple territorial claims (made both currently and historically) on Chilean landscapes and their symbolic, political and economic value, which are explored in further detail in the discussions of Manuel de Ribera and El verano de los peces voladores in Chapter Four in particular. Le Bonniec has explored the connection between the environmental debates that have arisen from recent projects in southern Chile and the political and cultural conflicts that surround those territories where indigenous Mapuche communities now live as minority groups in their historical territories. Specifically, Le Bonniec highlights the difficulty of talking about landscape as a concept, given that the very idea of a Chilean “landscape” results from the imposition of European epistemology and aesthetics onto land which previously made meaning through a very different linguistic and cultural context, as reflected in the interrelated issues of power, territorial control and landscape representation which arise in Chapter Four. However, even within the unequal power relations between economic and ethnic groups that still shape socio-political relationship to landscape, these imposed ideas are themselves subject to re-appropriation and manipulation. Recent incursions of state and industrial projects into this territory have met with opposition from local Mapuche activists who, according to Le Bonniec have taken over for their own purposes the landscape representations that were used to legitimate their extermination, the plundering of their territory and their economic and political marginalization, so as to transform them into an instrument of autonomist demands.51

51 Le Bonniec.
This process of re-appropriation, re-signification and transformation is indicative of the instability of meaning in landscape. The potential plurality of landscape's meaning is such that one landscape can simultaneously signify multiple ideas, identities or values, depending not only on the ways in which it is represented but also the ways in which those images are consumed by their audiences (intended or otherwise). This ‘apparent paradox’ is highlighted by Katrin Mundt when she observes the seemingly contradictory idea that precisely Chile – a paragon of neo-liberalism whose unrestrained expansionary drive is neither compatible with a sustainable use of natural resources nor with the protection of the rights and living environments of indigenous populations – demonstratively identifies itself with images of such landscapes and cultures\textsuperscript{52}

Mundt argues that contemporary art in Chile has responded to the pluralities and paradoxes of the 21\textsuperscript{st} landscape by countering ‘a unifying panorama of a national landscape as a source of meaning and identity with the strategy of shifting and replicating contexts’ which ‘disrupts the accustomed sense of spatial continua’.\textsuperscript{53} This fragmentation of space creates the conditions of existence for what Mundt refers to as micro-landscapes, which are subject to more variable modes of spectatorship.

These instances exemplify the impossibility of confining the relevance and interpretation of a given physical territory to the national interests which claim it. Although nation and territory are frequently co-constitutive, “the national” is


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
only one mode in which a demarcated landscape might be framed; depending on the conditions of its representation and interpretation, it may resonate at any number of other levels, including the personal, the local and the global. Given the plurality of imaginative investments in landscape, which frequently contest and overlap each other, it would clearly not be helpful to propose that recent cinematic engagements with the Chilean landscape be thought of in purely national terms, even more so given the transnational context of the production and consumption of these representations, as outlined in the introduction. Therefore, the at least partially national or local contexts of production, distribution and funding notwithstanding, an approach to these film landscapes has to mark out a theoretical standpoint which is capable of questioning landscape as more than a fixed symbol of nationhood and which helps to develop a perspective from which to think through this layering of meaning and value in landscape.

LANDSCAPE: CONCEPTUAL OUTLINES

The conceptual framework which supports this thesis’ exploration of landscape in contemporary Chilean cinema within a conceptual framework takes into account the weight of the relationship between landscape and nation in Chilean cultural history, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, while also extending its field of vision to consider how landscape functions as process and experience (as well as image) at personal, local and global levels. This framework provides foundation for a discussion of the key films which acknowledges the ways in which cultural landscapes remain marked by the designs of the nation (as both historical legacy and contemporary formation),
even as the thesis seeks to look beyond these and open up new perspectives on the formation of landscape’s meaning and the new frames of reference to which it has become connected.

In order to tackle these questions, the analysis which follows in the remaining chapters draws throughout on theoretical and conceptual approaches from film scholarship, but also makes use of modes of thinking which have arisen from the rich multidisciplinary interest in landscape in recent years, including work by architects, art historians, anthropologists and geographers. As I will go on to discuss in more depth in the rest of this chapter, the conceptual stance of this thesis engages with existing film writing on landscape, particularly in its emphasis on the specificities of film as a landscape medium and its approach to defining landscape in the context of cinematic spatiality more broadly. However, a large proportion of writing on landscape in cinema continues to be dominated by a focus on the questions of national cinemas and national identity which have conventionally been closely associated with film landscapes. While this thesis interrogates the persistence of the idea of a “Chilean” landscape, its purpose is also to unpack how certain landscapes may be framed in such a way that they acquire other meanings in the global visual economy and thus presents an opportunity for an interdisciplinary engagement with more diverse sources of contemporary thinking on landscape. Through its application of this thinking to the selected films, this thesis seeks to demonstrate how the study of cinema can engage with work from the broader field of “landscape studies” in order to understand film landscapes in a way which is attentive to the
complexity of the concept of landscape itself and which therefore has a greater capacity to analyse their various layers and tensions of meaning.

Although it goes on to draw on many other disciplinary perspectives, this thesis’ conceptual engagement with landscape starts out from the crucial distinction between setting and landscape in cinema laid out by film scholar Martin Lefebvre. For Lefebvre, a cinematic setting is ‘the space of story and event: it is the scenery of and the theatre for what will happen’.54 When, on the other hand, we see filmic space become landscape, we are seeing a kind of ‘anti-setting’, in which space becomes ‘freed from eventhood’.55 By observing a form of spatial representation in which the physical world is able to transcend the demands of narrative, Lefebvre provides the conditions for an analysis of landscape which can hold meaning in and of itself, rather than existing only as decorative, metaphorical or symbolic backdrop; a distinction which is important opening up cinematic landscape to discussions outside of and beyond national symbolism, iconicity or allegory.

Lefebvre is also clear that filmic representations of space, particularly in the case of narrative cinema, involve a certain degree of what he calls ‘slippage between setting and landscape’.56 He argues that this is a possibility which differentiates the filmic landscape from the pictorial landscape, because cinematic space may be represented in a way which engenders either a narrative mode of spectatorship (setting) or a spectacular mode (landscape). Lefebvre observes that it always possible (and usually very likely) that a film

54 Lefebvre, p. 20.
55 Lefebvre, p. 22.
56 Lefebvre, p. 38.
will engage with both modes of spectatorship at different points, although he emphasises that they cannot be entirely simultaneous, since ‘the spectacle halts the progression of narrative for the spectator’.\(^5^7\) Thus a transition between setting and landscape (and back again) is possible in narrative film, a characteristic which Lefebvre calls the ‘\textit{doubly temporalized landscape}’, resulting in ‘the precariousness of a landscape that more or less vanishes when the narrative mode takes over and the cinematic space resumes its narrative function as setting’.\(^5^8\)

Using Lefebvre’s cinema-specific approach to defining landscape establishes a conceptual base from which we can engage with the aesthetic and formal qualities of landscape representation in these films. However, the purpose of the thesis is not simply to demonstrate the (transient) presence of landscape in contemporary Chilean cinema or to analyse how these shifts in spatial perspective function. It is also intended to explore how these landscapes become imbued with meaning and how they act as the site of conflicts of meaning in contexts where the personal, the local and the global become intertwined with the trace of the national. In order to do this, the analysis applies ideas from a range of contributors to the interdisciplinary field of landscape theory. The conceptual basis for this approach does not seek to establish or define a particular theory, concept or school of thought from this field as a comprehensive solution to the complexities that will become apparent in analysing these cinematic landscapes; instead, it employs a range of ideas in a manner that is responsive to the aesthetic, formal, narrative and contextual

\(^{57}\) Lefebvre, p. 29.  
\(^{58}\) Lefebvre, 29.
demands of the selected films. Accordingly, each chapter (as outlined in the Introduction) engages with different perspectives and ideas from scholarly work on landscape. There are, nonetheless, some broad conceptual commonalities that underpin and draw together the ideas that surface in the four later chapters. The remains of this chapter will outline three of these in particular: firstly, that landscape is multiple in meaning and form; secondly, that landscape and its meanings are processual; and thirdly, that landscape carries an inherent tension within it and within its representations. The first section of this chapter contextualised these ideas by exploring some of the competing visions of Chile that have historically been constructed through landscape imagery and demonstrating how landscape’s meaning has been continually in-process through the layers of national cultural history; this section is intended to provide a more refined conceptual foundation for the work of later chapters.

A principal feature of contemporary work on landscape across the various disciplines is the understanding that landscape can be made to mean in different ways and that these meanings can be simultaneous, even for an individual subject. Landscape is, as Barbara Bender puts it, ‘polysemic’. Underlining landscape’s multifaceted conceptual nature and the various disciplinary responses it inspires, Jeff Malpas states that landscape ‘opens out to a multiplicity of different genres, forms of practice, and modes of analysis in a way that itself reflects the multiplicity of perspectives that are present in every landscape’. One of the most thorough illustrations of this idea is D.W. Meinig’s

“The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene”, in which Meinig proposes that the signification of a given landscape can shift in any number of ways, according to how it is observed or experienced; landscape may be taken as nature, place, habitat, artefact, system or problem, or it may represent economic, ideological, aesthetic or historical value.61

Even within the category examples offered by Meinig, there are, of course, variations of interpretation that arise depending on the cultural, social or historical context in which a landscape is viewed, represented or experienced; not all cultures, or even all individuals within a culture, will share a common understanding of nature or assess landscape against the same aesthetic values or through the same ideological lenses. As Peter Herring points out, landscape ‘fashioned by interplay of place, perception and cognition, can be thoroughly personal and subjective’.62 Consequently, conceptual approaches to landscape must be prepared to contend with meaning which is ‘complex, layered, ambiguous, never simple or linear’, in the words of landscape architect Anne Whiston Spern.63

Not only are landscapes’ meanings multiple, simultaneous and potentially conflicting, they are also fluid. To draw on the idea that meaning accumulates around landscape is not to suggest that landscape itself is purely representational, simply a reflection of an external ideological or symbolic

order. Barbara Bender explains that the creation of meaning in and around landscape is a process in which the landscape itself, as well as human social, economic or cultural activity, is involved:

Human interventions are not so much done to the landscape as with the landscape, and what is done affects what can be done. A place inflected with memory serves to draw people towards it or to keep them away, permits the assertion or denial of knowledge claims, becomes a nexus of contested meaning. Equally, more abstractly, our attempts to interpret time or place are created out of (and creative of) an experience of things in place.64

Similarly, Christopher Tilley has argued that the meaning of landscape is an ongoing, mutually formative process which takes place between a landscape and its human inhabitants:

Although landscapes have meanings, whose significance we can attempt to phenomenologically make manifest and interpret, they also do things and have experiential effects in relation to persons, and the two are intimately linked.65

For Bender and Tilley, our attempts to make sense of landscape are themselves conditioned by our experience of it and our desire to mark landscape is conditioned by how it exists already. Bender also points to a temporal layering of landscape experience, where landscape, memory and interpretation are co-constitutive in this ‘nexus’ of significance. Part of the specificity of film as a

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64 Bender, p. 104.
65 Christopher Tilley, Interpreting Landscapes: Geologies, Topographies, Identities, (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010), p. 31.
medium of intervention “with the landscape” is that it registers the duration of this intervention and, in the words of André Bazin,

gives it a unity in time that is horizontal and, so to speak, geographical, whereas time in a painting, so far as that notion applies, develops geologically and in depth.66

This idea of continuity is echoed by Tim Ingold, who suggests that landscape is not something that can be made, only remade: ‘For the landscape is a plenum, there are no holes in it that remain to be filled in, so that every infill is in reality a reworking’.67 When landscape is experienced through cinema, as Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner remind us, certain additional strands of signification become attached to this nexus:

To the acknowledgement of the landscape’s potential fluidity of cultural meaning must be added the recognition of interpretative filters linked to modes (feature, short and documentary filmmaking), genres (the road movie, the thriller, the horror film) and auteurs (in all their national, industrial and critical manifestations). 68

The process through which landscape’s meaning is constructed and reworked involves the layering and interweaving of culturally mediated representation and direct experience. The notion of landscape as processual is often closely related to discussions about the bodily experience of landscape, which I explore

in more detail in Chapter 2. Hayden Lorimer, for instance, refers to ‘embodied acts of landscaping’ to mean practices and interactions in the lived experience of existing within landscape, which shape both the physical world and the self. Jessica Dubow has expanded on the idea of how landscape constitutes a ‘a kind of mutual entwinement’ of self and world, arguing that

[l]andscape experience, then, is not just how a given view comes to be represented, but how its viewer stakes a claim to perception and presence. It’s not just about an optical sight or symbolic mediation, but about all those more hidden sensory and affective processes that allow a view to ‘come into being’ for the subject, all those embodied practices which, prior to representation, allow for its realisation.

Scholars from across the disciplines have argued in support of this change in the way landscape is understood. David Crouch, a cultural geographer, suggests that an important development in work on landscape in the early 21st century has been the ‘rethinking of landscape as process rather than object; subjectively “in the making” rather than as an assemblage of physical features’; for Crouch, ‘[l]andscape occurs’, rather than simply existing or appearing. Presenting similar ideas, critical cultural theorist W.J.T. Mitchell opens his introduction to Landscape and Power by stating that ‘[t]he aim of this book is to change “landscape” from a noun to a verb’, to ‘ask not what landscape “is” or

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“means” but what it does.\(^72\) In terms of its representation, in his opening chapter, ‘Imperial Landscape’, he proposes that landscape ‘is not a genre of art but medium’.\(^73\) Archaeologists Ken Kelly and Neil Norman have described landscape as being constituted in a ‘constant state of cultural construction, deconstruction and reconstruction’.\(^74\) Whether scholars talk about landscape as a verb, as a process, as a performance, or as practice, what emerges is a common understanding of landscape as in some way ongoing and unfinished.

The ongoing and multifaceted process of making meaning out of landscape unsurprisingly generates meanings and perspectives which overlap, rework one another and coexist in tension or conflict. Denis Cosgrove observes a methodological tension in the study of landscape when he identifies two broad approaches in 21st century landscape studies – the ecological and the semiotic.

According to Cosgrove

> [a]n **ecological** landscape discourse focuses on the complex interactions of natural processes (geomorphological, climatic, biological, vegetational, etc.) shaping characteristic land areas, and extending its concerns to the ways human activities interact with these natural processes.

Although the chapters which follow do engage with these concerns (particularly in the discussion of the materiality of landscape in Chapter Three and in the interactions of agricultural and touristic activities with landscape in Chapter 72 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 1.
74 Ken Kelly and Neil Norman, ‘Historical Archaeologies of Landscape in Atlantic Africa’, in *Envisioning Landscape: Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage*, ed. by Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, and Graham Fairclough (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), pp. 172-93 (p. 173).
Five), this thesis draws primarily on what Cosgrove refers to as the *semiotic* approach, which lays scholarly emphasis more on the context and processes through which cultural meanings are invested into and shape a world whose ‘nature’ is known only through human cognition and representation.\(^{75}\)

Even within this culturally focused approach, however, there remain many tensions in the ways that landscape can be understood. Geographer John Wylie opens his 2007 work *Landscape* with the starkly articulated idea that ‘[l]andscape is tension’. In its discussions of the films, this thesis returns repeatedly to the tensions that Wylie highlights ‘between proximity and distance, body and mind, sensuous immersion and detached observation’.\(^{76}\) In doing so, it follows Wylie in eschewing attempts to resolve these tensions, instead demonstrating them to be an ‘enduringly creative and productive’ aspect of cinematic landscapes.\(^{77}\)

As previously touched on, it is important that any inhabitant or observer of a landscape (or indeed any creator or spectator of a cinematic landscape) may well simultaneously hold different, even conflicting, ideas about that landscape; as Barbara Bender emphasises, ‘[e]ach individual holds many landscapes in tension’.\(^{78}\) The position of this thesis is not that such tensions can or should be resolved; rather, the chapters which follow consider how tensions of meaning can be productive and analytically valuable. Exploring such an idea, Yi-Fu Tuan


\(^{77}\) Wylie, p. 2.

\(^{78}\) Bender, p. 2.
has referred to landscape as a ‘diaphor’, a term which syntheses meaning from the juxtaposition of opposing ideas:

It is a diaphor in the sense that it derives its tensive meaning from two dissimilar entities, ‘domain’ and ‘scenery’. Domain belongs to the vocabulary of political and economic discourse. A domain or an estate can be surveyed and mapped; it can be viewed objectively from a theoretical point high above. Scenery, on the other hand, is an aesthetic term. It is an individual and personal perspective from a position on the ground. The diaphoric meaning of landscape lies not in one image (concretely known) pointing to another, but rather in both – equally important – imaginatively synthesised.79

Further tensions in cinematic landscape are explored throughout the chapters that follow; between observation and experience in Chapter Two, between life and death in Chapter Three, between insiders and outsiders in Chapter Four and between preservation and transformation in Chapter Five. In each case, the representation of landscape on screen derives a certain impact and potency from the staging of these tensions, making visible the ways that opposing forces and competing discourses become written into landscape.

As laid out in the Introduction to the thesis, each of Chapters Two to Five returns to the question of cinematic landscape through the close reading of a different pairing of films and with a different central focus. The thematic priorities of each analysis vary a good deal, ranging from the phenomenology

and materiality of landscape in Chapters Two and Three through to its reimagining through the lenses of territory, tradition, modernisation and conservation in Chapters Four and Five. The engagement with critical approaches to landscape and the degree and manner in which each reading is contextually situated responds to the films at hand. As such, the intention is not to apply a seamless interpretative model across the chapters but instead to demonstrate the strength of landscape studies as a plural source of more diverse and more attentive ways of conceptualising landscape, which in turn yield deeper and more insightful readings of cinematic landscapes. What this chapter has provided is a broad conceptual framework in which these discussions can take place and an underpinning sense of cultural context on which the following chapters will draw to varying extents. From the perspective of the thesis as a whole, this chapter provides common ground from which the subsequent chapters start out and situates the work performed by each within a sense of an ongoing cultural history of the Chilean landscape and a rich interdisciplinary field of conceptual enquiry.
CHAPTER TWO

As noted by W. J. T. Mitchell, vernacular usage of the word 'landscape' often becomes conflated with the idea of a 'view' of a given arrangement of natural scenery. As Mitchell explains:

The landscape imperative is a kind of mandate to withdraw, to draw out by drawing back from a site. If a landscape, as we say, 'draws us in' with its seductive beauty, this movement is inseparable from a retreat to a broader, safer perspective, an aestheticizing distance, a kind of resistance to whatever practical or moral claim the scene might make on us.¹

Mitchell's description of what he terms the 'landscape imperative' refers to the observation of a flattened-out, pictorialised landscape; the (mental or physical) framing of a single, bounded landscape image, as it might conventionally be experienced in landscape painting or photography. Certainly, there are instances in cinema, too, where an extended wide angle shot or panorama might usefully be considered in these terms. However, part of the specificity of a cinematic landscape is that any given image of landscape is not viewed alone; the image in sequence recreates for the spectator the movement of the camera or of elements within the frame and these images form part of an interconnected relationality with other images and sequences of images. A distanced landscape image (as described by Mitchell) in cinema is thus juxtaposed with other, more proximal images; from this juxtaposition arises not

¹ Mitchell, p. viii.
simply an image of landscape but an imagination of the landscape as environment in the mind of the spectator. Although the cinematic image, unlike the surface of a painted image, cannot be touched (more so than ever in the age of digital filmmaking), cinema’s particular capacity here is to construct a haptic form of *visuality* through the inclusion of shots which draw the spectator into a closer, more intimate evocation of contact with the material textures of landscape made larger-than-life on screen, accompanied by the possibilities of an amplified soundscape. In this sense, cinema is able to combine the observation of landscape with the experience of being present within it, engaging the sensory perceptions at work in both proximity and distance.

From this position, this chapter argues that in order to comprehend more fully contemporary Chilean cinema’s engagement with landscape we need to consider film’s potential to involve the spectator in a ‘landscape experience’ which, in the words of Arnold Berleant, is ‘[m]ore than visual, it involves the dynamic presence of the body with its full range of sensory awareness’.² In the films discussed here, landscapes do not remain static or distant enough to be easily “read” as symbols and allegories. They are too immersive to be consigned to the role of visually pleasing backdrops to narrative; they frequently immerse the spectator in bodily contact and sensory engagement. The idea here is to explore how elements beyond the image of landscape-as-view contribute to the creation of what Martin Lefebvre labels “intentional” landscapes, in which the

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director’s formal and aesthetic approach “encourages the emergence of landscape in the film.”

The landscape image as it conventionally emerges in painting or photography is defined by the temporal and spatial closure of the frame, which sections off a slice of the physical environment from its surroundings and ensures that what is represented within it remains static and unchanging. In contrast, film as a medium has the potential to open out the cinematic landscape beyond the frame, to move across the landscape, to look more deeply or closely into the landscape, to record it as marked by movement and change, as well as being constructed by haptic and sonic experience. Cinematic treatments of landscape as something which exists to be lived and experienced both before and beyond the frame allow landscape to retain a sense of life and process; life as, in the words of Tim Ingold, ‘a movement of opening not of closure’, the essence of which is

that it does not begin here or end there, or connect a point of origin with a final destination, but rather it keeps on going, finding a way through the myriad of things that form, persist and break up in its currents.

Similarly, the approach of this chapter is also influenced by John Wylie’s notion of ‘[l]andscape as ‘lifeworld’, as a world to live in, not a scene to view’ once it is ‘[d]ivested of assumptions regarding observation, distance and spectatorship’ and ‘ceases to define a way of seeing’. Instead, this chapter explores how these

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3 Lefebvre, p. 31.
films engender a sense of a ‘lived in’ landscape by allowing multiples visualities to emerge in conjunction with other aspects of the sensorium.\(^5\)

In its discussion of these issues through close analysis, the chapter focuses primarily on the first two feature fiction films by José Luis Torres Leiva – \textit{El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia} and \textit{Verano} and the debut feature by Matías Rojas, \textit{Raíz} – all of which negotiate multiple sensory modes of landscape experience. My analysis considers how the visual approach of these films also engages with other aspects of the sensorium, most particularly sound, tactility and texture. In doing so, its overall aim is to use these films to illuminate the productive tension that is able to emerge between landscape as the object of perception and landscape as a bodily experience in cinema.

Through its analysis of \textit{El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia} and \textit{Verano}, this chapter focuses on what we might think of as the corpus’ “purest” examples of a cinematic landscape as experience. Torres Leiva’s narrative minimalism creates space for the phenomenological development of his landscapes, which are unburdened by the narrative demands of setting and which do not offer themselves up to be decoded in some symbolic or allegorical manner. In the absence of “meaning” in the landscape, these films demand a more attentive consideration of the senses, beginning with vision but expanding to include the role of the auditory and the haptic dimensions of landscape which resist the sectioning off and flattening out imposed by the act of framing. Where the landscape is free to protagonise the film almost entirely, it immerses the

\(^5\)Wylie, p. 149.
spectator in an experience which extends beyond vision and makes landscape something more vital, immediate and material.

In its moves between Torres Leiva’s work and the more defined linear narrative into which Matías Rojas embeds the landscape in Raíz, the chapter intends to demonstrate how landscape’s sensory presence continues to resist being wholly eclipsed or overwritten by narrative meaning, even where narrative’s structuring effects are more strongly felt. The central argument made here is that the auditory, haptic and temporal dimensions of cinematic landscape can operate within and around narrative without being entirely subsumed into it. Chapter 2 therefore functions as a kind of stepping-stone between Chapter One’s outline of how the thesis intends to make use of landscape’s conceptual richness and the three remaining film-focused chapters which use this conceptual framework as a basis to investigate landscape as a site of existential, psychological and sociopolitical questioning. By demonstrating how this tension operates to bring landscape to the fore in these films, this chapter will prepare the ground for the approach taken in the following chapters towards the formal and aesthetic aspects of the cinematic landscape as it intersects with other issues.

The chapter begins by considering the perspective that creates landscape as an integrated view, where landscape does occur as the object of visual distancing, as the product of the ‘isolation of a certain spatial extent and a certain temporal length’. 6 We might, perhaps, be tempted to think of these as “pure” landscape images, where visual ‘isolation’ and detachment makes it possible to imagine

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6 Harper and Rayner, p. 16.
the integration of an otherwise fragmented spatial environment. However, the
examples discussed from both films demonstrate that the integrity of these
images is continually called into question, making visible the selections,
exclusions and concealments that form ‘the narratives that are already taking
place in constructing the land’.⁷

The second section considers movement through and journeys across landscape
in both *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia* and *Verano*. Both films devote significant
attention to the ways in which bodies move across the landscape in different
ways and this section explores how these motions and pathways hold both body
and landscape in contact where each affects the other. The act of traversing
landscape in these films brings the opportunity to view sections of that
landscape as a distanced image but it is also in itself a bodily experience of
landscape; in this sense, this section acts as a bridge between the preceding
discussion of landscape-as-view and the following section’s focus on landscape
as multisensory and textured.

The third section then explores the idea of landscape as a bodily experience in
more detail, considering how this encourages the spatial imagination of the
cinematic landscape as a multisensory continuum rather than as a sequence of
captured views. Firstly, it seeks to understand the interaction between
landscape and soundscape – the way that configurations of natural and human
sounds function alongside the visual landscape in the spatiality of the films.
Secondly, the section draws on the notion of the ‘haptic’, described by Laura

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Marks as a form of visuality connected to embodied spectatorship, ‘a visuality that functions like the sense of touch’, in tension with the optic visuality which distances itself from the landscape it perceives. The haptic landscape, therefore, is one of textures and tactility – it is an approach to landscape as a material rather than an aesthetic formation.

By exploring the selected films through a focus on their sensory approach to landscape, this chapter helps to establish the thesis’ underlying principle of cinematic landscape as being constituted by more than its relationship to narrative and of therefore demanding a frame of analysis which looks beyond symbolic readings. As well as offering close analysis of these three films in particular, Chapter Two also begins to flesh out some key points in the understanding of cinematic landscape that are essential to the discussion in later chapters – film’s treatment of landscape’s vitality and materiality, its sensory dimensions, its autonomy from narrative direction and its co-constitutive relationship to the human subject.

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THE CINEMA OF JOSÉ LUIS TORRES LEIVA AND MATÍAS ROJAS

Born in Santiago in 1975, José Luis Torres Leiva has made both documentary and fiction features, as well as a considerable number of short films – all of which have been filmed on location in Chile’s regions, rather than in the capital. A graduate of the UNIACC, his career began in 2003 with a Fundación Andes grant for his first documentary Ningún lugar en ninguna parte [Nowhere Anywhere] (2004). This chapter focuses on his fiction feature debut El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia and his second fiction feature Verano.

El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia was supported by the Hubert Bals Fund and was subsequently a Tiger nominee and FIPRESCI award winner at the Rotterdam International Film Festival in 2008. Filmed in Valdivia and set during autumn on a small island in the south of Chile, the film follows four solitary islanders: Ana, Marta, Verónica and Toro. Shop worker Ana is caring for her sick mother. Her friend Verónica finds her extra work in the house of the reclusive Toro, who later tries to kiss her. Marta, struggling with some form of mental illness, wades out into the sea one day and is rescued by Verónica and Ana. These enigmatic fragments hang together as an inconclusive narrative, which is frequently overwhelmed by the film’s attention to the southern Chilean landscape.

Following the festival success of El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia, Verano also received Hubert Bals Fund support and premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2011. Produced by Alicia Scherson, Verano captures the everyday activities of holidaymakers, residents and workers at the Termas de Cauquenes – conspicuously omitting any hint of social friction, clash of interests or indeed any less-than-harmonious interpersonal encounter that might typically form
the basis of a more character-driven film. Instead, the fragmentary, decentred
treatment of the film's human figures (to call them “protagonists” would be to
imply the existence of a narrative impetus) is interwoven with an attentive
treatment of landscape, through which nature frequently imposes its own
rhythms and temporality on human activities.

Chilean commentators have disagreed about the near-absence of narrative in
Torres Leiva's films. Carlos Saavedra Cerda, for instance, has critiqued the social
flatness of the narrative in *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia*:

Al privilegiar una estética sin conflicto no se hacen referencias a la
marginalidad, sin percibir que la misma es clave en la construcción de las
atmósferas y las acciones que describen las miserias simbólicas y
materiales.

[By privileging an aesthetic free from conflict, no reference is made to
marginality, overlooking the fact that this is key to the construction of
the atmospheres and actions that describe symbolic and material
poverties.]

Pablo Corro, meanwhile, describes Torres Leiva's fiction cinema as one of
‘menudencias dramáticas’ [dramatic minutiae], characterised by ‘pocas
acciones, acciones triviales, rutinarias o inciertas, acciones improproductivas sin
efectos concretos’ [few actions, trivial, routine or uncertain actions,
unproductive actions with no concrete effects].9 Corro suggests that Torres
Leiva's sequences can be understood through the lens of ‘pensiveness’ as

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9 Pablo Corro, 'José Luis Torres Leiva: el cine en otro sentido', in *El novísimo cine chileno*, ed. by
Ascanio Cavallo and Gonzalo Maza (Santiago: Uqbar Editores, 2010), pp. 121-33 (p. 125).
proposed by Rancière; the ‘pensive image’ suspends conclusions, prolonging the action as it postpones it and allowing a productive tension to emerge between representation and expression, between action and passivity.

Despite critical disagreements about its value or effectiveness as a narrative-aesthetic strategy, it is clear that Torres Leiva’s eschewal of dramatic development in favour of the hallmarks of slow cinema (long takes, minimalist narrative, temps morts etc.) is key to the emergence of landscape as central force and feature in his films. While narrative is more firmly present in Raíz than in either El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia or Verano, Rojas’ film still bears many of the so-called “slow” characteristics and it is the retention of these characteristics alongside his narrative that allow landscape’s presence to register so strongly on multiple sensory axes.

Raíz’s narrative is led by Amalia, a young woman returning to her mother’s home in the city of Puerto Varas in southern Chile to attend the funeral of the family maid. The film follows a journey she makes with the maid’s newly orphaned young son Cristóbal, in search of the boy’s father who is thought to be living somewhere in the countryside. As they make their way across the countryside, they try to unearth clues as to his whereabouts from those they encounter. After tracking down a woman in a nearby village who has met Cristóbal’s father, they find the house where he was last known to be living empty. Enquiries with the local police reveal that he was arrested and has been sent to prison. This quest for origins moves slowly, interwoven with an attentive treatment of landscape, in which nature imposes its own temporality on human activities. On multiple occasions, the camera is seemingly seduced by
the draw of the landscape and detaches itself from either observing the characters or assuming their point of view, moving independently into broad vantage points or immersing itself in the dense woodland or the steamy waters of the thermal springs.

In the particular ways in which they disrupt narrative flow and privilege moments of suspension and stillness in order to draw attention to landscape, the three films discussed in this chapter tap into the formal and aesthetic characteristics of slow cinema, a mode of filmmaking which as, Ira Jaffe notes, has been ‘embraced by cinephiles around the world’ via their appearance in both film festivals and leading cinema journals.10

Like the rest of the thesis’ corpus, these films attracted only small commercial audiences within Chile (with fewer than 4000 tickets sold for each film)11 but instead found their most receptive audiences internationally, among critics, festival-goers and arthouse cinephiles. Although it struggled to find a distributor for the domestic market12, El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia was arguably the 2008’s most successful Chilean festival export. In a piece that was representative of its critical reception on the international festival circuit, El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia was marked out as a highlight of ‘a vintage year’ at the 2008 London Film Festival by Peter Bradshaw writing for the Guardian. Like

many reviewers, he was enthusiastic about the representation of ‘a wild and remote area of south-central Chile’:

The overwhelming impression of the film is one in which human character and human agency are not as important as the landscape: lush and sensual and fiercely, vividly present, by turns a dense and heavily wooded prospect and then a seeping, dripping wetland. It is as if human drama is the background for the natural world, rather than the other way around.13

Responses by Chilean critics have similarly addressed the intensity of Torres Leiva’s attention to the physical environment. In a piece on Verano for Civil Cinema, part of Chile’s thriving network of online cinephile magazines, reviewer JP Vilches made it clear that landscape escaped the confines of narrative setting:

En el caso de esta película, los paisajes precordilleranos de la Sexta Región no son sólo un escenario sino una presencia que envuelve y satura los sentidos, como si en el mundo no hubiera ninguna otra cosa.14

[In the case of this film, the Andean foothills of Region VI are not only a setting but a presence that envelops and saturates the senses, as if there was nothing else in the world.]

The representation of landscape likewise caught the imagination of critics reviewing Raíz, both for Chilean publications and internationally. Antonella Estevez, writing for CineChile, described how

El viaje por los hermosos parajes de la zona sur del país es captado en todo su esplendor por una cámara que con calma lo contempla todo, incluso los sonidos ambientales, como el de la copiosa lluvia que a menudo azota a la ciudad, todo lo que construye una atmósfera atractiva y envolvente.15

[The journey through the beautiful locations of the country’s southern zone is captured in all its splendour by a camera that calmly contemplates everything, including ambient sound, like the heavy rain that lashes down on the town, all of which builds an appealing and absorbing atmosphere.]

Jonathan Holland at the Hollywood Reporter similarly focused his attention on the aesthetic pleasures of Raíz’s landscapes:

There is snow on the mountain tops, there is mist on the water and there are bears in the woods of a film which is almost as much about its atmosphere, and the effects of that atmosphere on the characters, as about the characters themselves. When Amalia and Cristobal sit side by side on a jetty together, it is their role in the visual design and the almost

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too-beautiful framing that draws the attention rather than their evolving relationship. At this point, the setting has overwhelmed the story.16

The prevalence in such reviews of commentary on the treatment of landscape in these films reveals the importance of landscape to this new cinema in its dimension as a cultural product and export (albeit for more limited exhibition and distribution to arthouse and festival audiences, rather than mass commercial markets), in addition to a film’s interpretation as an aesthetic or narrative project. What the rest of this chapter endeavours to do is pay closer critical attention to the formal and aesthetic complexities of these landscapes, with a view to understanding their intense impact on spectators, while laying the foundations for the analysis of cinematic landscape in the rest of the thesis. An attention to the haptic, bodily, temporal and multisensory dimensions of the cinematic landscape is an approach which brings the study of film into contact with the major developments in contemporary landscape theory amid the rising interest among those studying landscape in working with the non-representational (or the more-than-representational). According to Tim Ingold, ‘body and landscape are complementary terms: each implies the other, alternately as figure and ground. [...] Both sets of forms are generated and sustained in and through the processual unfolding of a total field of relations that cuts across the emergent interface between organism and environment’.17 A non-representational approach, as outlined by Emma Waterton, brings out a landscape ‘that involves a full range of sensory experiences: it is not only visual,

but textured to the touch and resonating with smells, touch, sounds and tastes, often mundane in nature’ and so revealing the everyday of landscape as lived experience. In this way, cinema can be considered within the emerging academic understanding of landscape as ‘affective, embodied, sensuous and material’, with attention to ‘the ways in which people and landscapes co-produce events and experiences’. By bringing such perspectives to bear on these films, the analysis which follows is intended to deepen our understanding of these cinematic landscapes beyond the surface appeal of the landscape as view and towards a much closer relation of subject and landscape.

**Complicating the View of Landscape**

Before becoming fully immersed in the multisensory experience of Rojas’ and Torres Leivas’ landscapes, this first section of close analysis will consider the more conventional view of landscape from removed observation and will explore the ways in which the selected films present images of this kind in a way which can be seen to self-consciously challenge the stability and distance that are implied by the notion of landscape-as-view. One of the stills from Torres Leiva’s *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia* which is most frequently reproduced for publicity and review purposes encapsulates some of the complexities of observing the cinematic landscape. Writing for online film magazine *Mabuse*, Alberto Ramos draws a comparison between the image of Marta standing by a lone tree and the work of Salomon van Ruysdael (c. 1602-70), a landscape painter of the Dutch Golden Age, noting the diminished human figure against

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19 Waterton, p. 73.
the centrality of nature and the vast expanse of sky reminiscent of the ‘dimensión metafísica’ [metaphysical dimension] of Ruisdael’s work (Figure 3 and Figure 4). 20

Ramos’ comments respond to the idea of ‘painterly’ film landscapes, which is a term used often by both critics and academics and which carries with it strong connotations of aesthetic categories of landscape such as the picturesque, the beautiful and the sublime. Wimal Dissayanake, for instance, characterises ‘painterly films’ as those ‘that make a conscious effort to foreground the beauties of nature’ and ‘go out of their way to draw attention to the beauty and sublimity of the landscape’. 21

The sequence in which Marta seemingly attempts to drown herself offers another example of this focus on landscape as a view. Initially, Marta sits with her back to the camera, looking out to sea; as the camera travels past her, the landscape fills the frame completely, aligning the spectator with her view. Here, the camera lingers on the scene, as though giving the spectator time for aesthetic appreciation. However, this sequence complicates the idea of such a view of landscape; the landscape to which it draws our attention is not particularly picturesque, nor does it show any hint of the sublime. The motionless and featureless bands of sky, land and water, in a muted palette of browns and greys invert the aesthetic values placed on distinctive, beautiful and sublime landscapes (Figure 5).

Figure 3: Marta stands and gazes at the lone tree in *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia*

Figure 4: *Landscape with a Road alongside a River* (Salomon van Ruysdael, 1646)
The sea is so lifeless in this opening shot that there is no sense of trepidation as Marta begins to make her way to the edge of the sand; it is only as she wades further out, still fully clothed, and a large wave almost knocks her over that the spectator (and Verónica, who call out to her from the beach) realise the danger of the situation. In this sequence, Torres Leiva not only troubles the aesthetic expectations set up by a long take of landscape, he also opens up the question of landscape's (in this case, literal) hidden depths, or what James Corner has referred to as the ‘dark side’ of landscape. In his critical examination of landscape as ‘total vision’, Corner writes that

Just as there is no innocent eye, there is no neutral or passive imaging, meaning that landscape, too, as image, is neither inactive nor benign. If detachment and estrangement engender the very concept of landscape – as distanced prospect – then perhaps, too, landscape itself precipitates only further estrangement and withdrawal.22

Figure 5: Coastline in El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia

Thus, however harmonious, static or even downright boring the surface of a landscape image appears to be, what Corner’s argument illuminates in this sequence is the complexities (whether material, symbolic or ideological) which might be concealed or smoothed over in the creation of that image. Marta’s literal immersion in the landscape is an engagement with its ‘dark side’; the detachment upon which the viewer-landscape relationship is founded breaks down and the spectator (still safely distanced) bears witness to its potentially deadly consequences.

The tension that emerges between immersion in landscape and a total view of landscape in *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia* resonates with Jeff Malpas’ suggestion that

> the truth of landscape – and here truth would mean as much the complex of relations that its construction necessitates as the role of experience within (thus also of) landscape – only emerges within an image. In other words, the truth of landscape is the impossibility that it – landscape as a totality – is ever given to be experienced as such. Hence, it is equally as impossible that there is an experience that totalizes and thus encapsulates whatever it is that the “landscape” is taken to be.\(^{23}\)

The question of an image that encapsulates ‘the truth of landscape’ also arises in *Verano*. Torres Leiva’s second fiction feature, *Verano*, as mentioned before, captures the everyday activities of holidaymakers, residents and workers at the Termas de Cauquenes. Situated around 30km from the city of Rancagua in central Chile, the Cauquenes hot springs were visited by General José de San

\(^{23}\)Malpas, pp. 159-60.
Martín in 1819, seeking a cure for arthritis, on the recommendation of fellow 
*libertador* Bernardo O’Higgins. Tourist publicity also makes mention of the fact 
that, in 1834, the same waters also hosted Charles Darwin, who described his 
curiosity about the geothermal workings of the springs in *The Voyage of the 
Beagle*. There is also evidence that the mineral springs were used for centuries 
previously by the region’s indigenous population, who dug wells and bathed in 
the waters for sanitary and medical purposes.24

Yet any imprint of these strands of national history is well concealed in *Verano*. 
Instead, the film explores the contemporary landscape as a site that revives a 
more impressionistic personal memory, one which lives through the immediacy 
of the senses rather than the mediation of narrative. Chilean academic and critic 
Carolina Urrutia has suggested that Torres Leiva’s fiction work endeavours to 

pensar el tiempo; a observar su paso, su transcurrir, los efectos que este 
tiene sobre el paisaje y los personas, sus marcas. Podríamos decir que su 
cine es el registro de esas marcas y huellas que va inscribiendo el paso 
del tiempo en sus personajes y en los territorios que registra25

[think about time; to observe its passage, as it elapses, the effects that 
this has on the landscape and the people, its marks. We could say that his 
cinema is the register of those marks and tracks that the passage of time 
inscribes on its characters and on the territories that it records.

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24 Ricardo Cruz-Coke, *Historia De La Medicina Chilena*, (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Andrés 
April 2015].
The time that marks Verano, then, is not historical time and nor does it impart a strong sense of narrative progress. Torres Leiva’s film does not tell the story of a particular holiday-maker or a specific holiday season so much as the registering of an impression of “summer” as it is experienced through the senses, through its weather, its colours, its sounds and its textures. This mosaic gathering of a summer’s sensory impressions is largely formed from the details of material contact with the natural surroundings. However, to return to Malpas’ suggestion, these sensory minutiae are presented in relation to other images that situate the various fragments of materiality within an idea of a landscape. Dianne Harris suggests a connection between the conceptualisation of self and of landscape, which sheds light on the search for a landscape image which might integrate our sensory experiences. According to Harris, the desire to establish the self within an integrated sense of place is a response to ‘the anxiety of apparent placelessness’, to the extent that ‘[t]o be without landscape is, perhaps, not to be’.26

Although an object of desire, a ‘truth of landscape’ never emerges with absolute clarity in Verano. The construction and mediation of the landscape image is always somehow made apparent. For instance, in one sequence the landscape is observed through the windscreen of a moving vehicle as it travels along a wide road towards the mountains. The double framing produced by the boundaries of shot and windscreen reinforces the selective construction of the image which represents landscape, since the frame draws our attention to what is represented within it, but also reminds us that the reality of the landscape

extends unseen beyond the frame. Even within the frame, the potential of an integrated vision of landscape remains fragmented by the glare of sunlight on the glass, making visible the transparent screen that distances the observer from landscape as the object of perception (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Landscape through windscreen in Verano.

Figure 7: Motorcyclist pauses to admire the view in Verano.
As in *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia*, the spectator of *Verano* is drawn both to contemplate landscape itself and to observe the act of contemplation. After an extended sequence of tracking shots in which the camera follows motorcyclist along an otherwise empty road, the camera changes perspective and remains static at the side of the road as the holidaymaker dismounts, removes his helmet and jacket and pauses to take in the view (Figure 7). The attention given to the character’s deliberate pause in action gives weight to the moment of contemplation and this is followed by a long close-up of the tourist’s face as he looks out across the landscape. If *Verano*’s characters were embedded within a more explicit narrative context, the spectator might read some psychogeographical reflection of the man’s inner state into his interest in this landscape; instead, the motorcyclist remains inscrutable, concealed behind his sunglasses which create a one-way visibility, shielding the observer from the piercing return of his gaze in the glare of the sun. This sequence functions more as a consideration on the role of distance, perspective and observation in the formation and aesthetic appreciation of a landscape image; it directs us to understanding landscape not simply as space itself but as, in the words of Martin Lefebvre, ‘a form of spatial predicate... *a form of being* of external space in our minds’.27

These sequences in *Verano* provide glimpses of a distanced view of landscape as a spectacular or picturesque vision, but these instances are as fragile and as transitory here as in *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia*. In *Raíz*, too, narrative progress is intermittently interrupted by a prolonged gaze over the landscape. As in the sequence discussed above, this gaze takes in landscapes which are often more

27 Lefebvre, p. 51.
mundane than they are majestic. Often the spectator is prompted to experience a certain self-consciousness of their own act of contemplation, as the landscapes offered for contemplation are accompanied by images of the protagonists in this same contemplative mode. The landscape which unfolds in front of Amalia as she stands on the jetty is followed by a shallow focus close-up of her face as she scans the panorama. No longer able to take in the landscape (now reduced to a grouping of unintelligibly blurred shapes, as it was when first glimpsed through the window of a moving bus), the spectator is uprooted from their perspective, replacing the image of landscape with the act that creates that image. By positioning the spectator at one further remove from the material reality of landscape, the sequencing of these shots draws attention to the distance on which such contemplation of landscape depends.

This play on distance and perspective comes into effect later in the film as Sra. Chela talks to Cristóbal beside the river. The sequence begins with a landscape shot that almost appears like a still image, a wide river emerging from densely wooded banks below a thick layer of mist. Sra. Chela’s voice is heard over this image, continuing into the following shot of the two characters at the river’s edge, with the landscape no longer dominating the frame. She tells the young boy that in this season the river is both beautiful and dangerous, as it swells from the heavy rainfall and cannot be crossed. Although her words invoke something of the idea of sublime nature, her tone is matter-of-fact; the constraints imposed by the surrounding geography are part of her day-to-day existence. Her stoical attitude contrasts with Cristóbal’s curiosity as an outsider to the landscape, which sets up the sense of proximity that comes from living
within landscape as a counterpoint to the physical distance that allows landscape to emerge as a “view” in the sequence’s establishing shot.

The notion of a landscape image as an establishing shot gestures towards a desire for spatial knowledge, control and continuity. Giuliana Bruno has argued that the establishing shot can be considered as an antidote to a ‘destabilizing “space-affect” [...] a way of securely mapping the viewer in space’. She goes on to suggest that

the recurring establishing shot appears to compensate for the fear of dislocation and the resistance of the filmic fragment to represent a totality.28

In Raíz, the ‘cartographic anxiety’ that Bruno reads behind the establishing shot is inseparable from anxiety about belonging; as the spectator responds to a fear of becoming spatially dislocated and seeks to anchor their spatial imagination in a sense of place, the characters traverse that same space in search of familiarity and identity, hoping for an encounter that we might interpret as an “establishing event”.

Shifts between what Bruno suggests is the security of the perspective of the establishing shot and the more fragmentary, peripheral or dislocated view can be understood as having a particular resonance in a post-dictatorship context, recalling landscape’s twofold potential to be both the site of (re)enactments of violence and the disruption of memory and narrative and a potential medium of reintegration and emplacement. In visually connecting the distanced image of

landscape to its more intimate materiality, cinema is able to give some visibility to the notion that the work of the establishing shot is also a form of concealing the marginal, the underlying, the discordant and the dispersed.

In this sense, the anxieties which play out in Raíz are situated within a broader cultural relationship between landscape and the past. As Susan Herrington explains, ‘the landscape idea enables us to recast our origins’, providing a site onto which we can project an image of the past that assuages our anxieties in the present.29 Similarly, Bruno describes landscape as bearing ‘a trace of the memories and imaginations of those who pass through it’.30 The visual contemplation of landscape matters in this relationship because it is produced by distance and provides the detachment necessary to (re)imagine one’s place within the landscape.

Where landscape appears as a visual phenomenon in Raíz, it shifts in and out of view, sometimes aesthetically framed and settled as the distant object of contemplation and at other times decentred by the anxieties that propel the narrative. Just as the elusive encounter with Cristóbal’s father repeatedly seems to draw closer and then retreat from possibility, the perspective that allows us to see and understand landscape as a totality is alternately offered and withdrawn.

The representational capacity of the landscape image (in terms of sense of place, identity or narrative) is thus diminished in these films, so that the idea of landscape becomes something altogether more ephemeral. Landscape in these

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30 Bruno, p. 11.
films primarily exists as a peripheral awareness, more often than not out of focus or out of frame, but nonetheless gesturing to a desire to integrate and make sense of the fragments of material and sensory experience that take place within it. Simultaneously, far beneath the level of the gaze that constructs the landscape image, other modes of visuality come into play to deconstruct it. As I go on to explore through the continued discussion of these two filmmakers in the following section, the experience of a cinematic landscape emerges as much from this mosaic of details as it does from the contemplative gaze or the spectacular view.

**MOVING THROUGH LANDSCAPE**

Crucial to the ways in which these films enact this deconstruction of the landscape image is their engagement with landscape as a space which can be moved through as well as looked at; movement not only places the subject within, rather than outside, the landscape but also unflattens the landscape, opening it out into a further dimension.

As touched on in the previous section, significant attention is paid in both films to journeys and pathways across the landscape. The act of traversing landscape frequently incorporates the distanced viewing of landscape but it is also an act in which the body is obliged in some way to confront the materiality and form of landscape. Walking, driving and cycling (as well as looking) can all be considered examples of what Lorimer calls ‘embodied acts of landscaping’ – processes through which the landscape and the body engage with, affect and
shape each other.\textsuperscript{31} As Tim Ingold writes, movement across the surface of landscape involves a necessarily embodied, rather than detached, vision;

In watching our step, we train our eyes on the ground, not on a virtual simulation of the earth’s surface based on optical information already relayed to the eyes. In looking where we are going, we scan the horizons of the world around us, and not their imagistic or pictorial representation.\textsuperscript{32}

Alberto Ramos has drawn attention to the frequency of journeys in some form or other in the case of El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia, noting that

Lo que el propio realizador ha conceptualizado como “paseos” (mentales, virtuales, a pie, en autos, en ferries...), tiene un peso decisivo en la negociación del paisaje como cuerpo simbólico operada por el filme. Es la densidad casi física de esos recorridos lo que define la auténtica materia dramática de la película, si es que el término procede.\textsuperscript{33}

[What the director himself as conceptualised as “journeys” (mental, virtual, on foot, by car, by ferry...), have a decisive weight in the film’s negotiation of the landscape as a symbolic body. It is the near-physical density of these paths that defines the film’s real dramatic material, if it can be called that.]

\textsuperscript{31} Lorimer, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{32} Ingold, p. 196.
\textsuperscript{33} Ramos.
Many of these sequences draw on generic shot setups of motion across often empty landscapes or towards horizons (e.g. taken through a car windscreen or rear view mirrors, following a truck or cyclist on a winding road). These types of shots might suggest a connection in some form with the trend of “road movies” in Latin American cinema in the last two decades which has been identified by Neil Archer, Sara Brandellero and Natália Pinazza, among others.34 The most commercially successful of these include Walter Salles’ _Central do Brasil_ (1998) and _Diarios de motocicleta_ (2004), Alfonso Cuarón's _Y tu mamá también_ (2001) and Carlos Sorín's _Histórias mínimas_ (2002) and _Bombón: el perro_ (2004). The genre, Louis Bayman writes in his foreword to Pinazza's analysis of Argentine and Brazilian examples, is ‘defined by narratives in which the journey is an end in itself, in which traversing the natural landscape becomes a means of self-discovery and of questioning our relationship to our social background by somehow removing ourselves from it’.35

However, the journeys undertaken in _El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia_ and _Verano_ are not loaded with the narrative impetus that underpins the road movie as a genre that ‘favours character development’ or enables ‘cultural critique – undoubtedly a recurrent feature of Latin American roadies’, in the words of Cynthia Thompkins.36 Instead, the movement across landscape in these films resists narrative significance or character development. The motorcyclist in _Verano_, who pauses to take in the view from the roadside, has no name or other marker

35 Pinazza, p. ii.
of identity as a character. As far as the spectator is concerned, no information is revealed about his journey’s beginning, end, or motive; its only purpose might even be the appreciation of that view. Shots composed in the rear view mirror or through the windscreen suggest the point of view of unidentified drivers who the camera joins and leaves without narrative purpose, rather than the perspective of developing protagonists on a journey of personal discovery. Even the sequence where Ana and Verónica drive Marta home after rescuing her from the sea (another commonplace shot composition, looking into the car through the windscreen) offers no dialogue and very little in the way of narrative development, despite showing the aftermath of the moment where the film comes closest to conventional drama (Figure 8). When the car breaks down, the event’s repercussions for the characters (who remain silent) are not made visible. Instead, the sequence cuts to a long shot of the stationary vehicle, almost swallowed between the wide band of grass in the foreground and the dense group of autumnal trees that mask the horizon (Figure 9).

What, then, is the function of the films’ attention to the act of travelling, of moving across the landscape? To think about some of these sequences, it helps to understand them more as being shaped by the landscape itself, in place of being narratively-driven. One of the early sequences from El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia shows drivers and foot passengers gathered around a jetty, waiting for the arriving transporter ferry. Not only does the scene confirm the island topography of the film space, it also shows how the daily activities of the islanders are spatially and temporally inflected by the landscape. The landscape, rather than human desire or narrative demands, is what defines the
possibilities of movement; as Carolina Urrutia observes, ‘la naturaleza se interna en la sicología de los personajes y marca sus velocidades’ [nature penetrates the psychology of the characters and makes its mark on their speeds]. In these long-takes, in which human figures are rendered static or slow by the constraints of the landscape, the film reaches towards a non-human chronology, a kind of “deep” ecological time, which Adrian Ivakhiv has defined as a temporality which responds to ‘the enfoldment of objects or processes within other processes, all of which unfold according to their own durations’, so that human activity is enfolded with the timescales of its physical environment whose durations are longer and might frequently go unperceived in the day-to-day of human existence. This enfolding of rhythms and timescales – of geological, environmental, biological and human histories – within the cinematic landscape is a question which this thesis returns to explore further in the chapters that follow, particularly as the thesis moves on to examine films such as Matar a un hombre and Manuel de Ribera where human designs are resisted and derailed by these differences of temporal scale.

In Verano, meanwhile, movement across the landscape is still more detached from narrative than in El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia and is one of the aspects of the film that brings out the embodied experience of being in (rather than simply looking at) the landscape. This is most pronounced when the camera turns its attention to the various holidaymakers; their movements are slow, wandering and fairly aimless, which allows space to open up in which the landscape can be experienced as material and tactile as well as visual. Whether climbing up to

38 Ivakhiv, pp. 304-5.
wash in a spring, wading barefoot through a stream or pausing to enjoy the breeze on a rope bridge spanning the river valley, the pauses, interruptions and detours in these movements allow the film to draw out the landscape’s textures and vital elements. Throughout the film, beginnings or endings of journeys are frequently left unseen and purposes and motivations are often unclear; the focus remains on the immediate, multisensory and embodied experience of moving through the world.
Of the three films under discussion in this chapter, it is Raíz whose narrative has the clearest connection to the movement of its characters across landscape. The meandering journey taken by Amalia and Cristóbal in search of the boy's absent father suggests a clear narrative impetus behind their movements, even if the object from which that impetus emanates remains unseen and unknown for much of the film. Despite bearing the hallmarks of a search for origins, however,
their journey does not reach its presumed natural conclusion with the discovery of Cristóbal’s father. Finding his father incarcerated and unable to fulfil paternal responsibilities, the encounter feels as more like a further uprooting than a moment of closure, with Cristóbal finding a renewed absence at his journey’s supposed end.

The traversing of landscape in search of an absent person can, in the context of Chile as a postdictatorial society, be viewed through the lens of the search for those disappeared by the military regime. The persistent effort to resolve an absence in landscape and the sense of being confronted by that absence’s perpetual renewal can be contextualised amid both the historical experience of those whose loved ones are still missing, as well as the recurrence of the theme on screen, whether in a documentary mode, as in Guzmán’s depiction of women searching for the remains of loved ones in the Atacama in *Nostalgia para la luz*, in the dramatic retelling of real disappearances (as in Pablo Perelman’s *Imagen latente* [Latent Image], 1987) or in the metaphorical reconstruction of these erasures in the form of the tidal wave in Larraín’s *La frontera*.

Along the way towards this final frustration of the journey’s purpose, ruptures and diversions in the journey are embedded into the cinematic landscape of *Raíz*. When Sra. Chela offers to accompany Amalia and Cristóbal to where Cristóbal’s father has been living, her voice is heard off-screen during a long shot of the river, warning them that while it may appear beautiful, it is also dangerous and cannot be crossed yet due to the heavy rains. The boat used for crossing is shown sinking almost entirely below the water as it fills with rain, making a visible reminder of nature’s indifference to human ambitions. At
times, the landscape seems to be framed in a way that passes beyond this indifference to take on a more uneasy seductiveness; when Amalia stops to ask for directions, Cristóbal slips away into the forest that borders the road. The camera splits between Amalia as she calls his name from the forest’s edge and Cristóbal as he quickly becomes immersed in the verdant surroundings, as though almost in another world; both are watched by a stray black dog, as if all three figures have somehow been drawn into the woods. This sequence carries a clear sense of being apart from the main thrust of the journey, creating a dreamlike mood which is broken only after dialogue restarts with a cut to Amalia reprimanding Cristóbal as they exit the trees and return to the car.

While the film’s narrative perpetuate the journey’s sense of an aim almost until its end, the digressions of the camera in Raíz reveal a much more sustained restlessness and ambiguity of purpose throughout. The camera in Raíz, most notably in the sequence where Amalia loses Cristóbal in the forest, becomes uncoupled, seemingly distracted, at times from the characters and the focus of narrative; in these moments, it seems to take on its own intimacy with the landscape, casting an intense close-up gaze on raindrop-covered lichens or tiny ferns about to be trampled underfoot in the forest. These shots make no dramatic discovery and no narrative impact; instead, Rojas’ sequences seem to insist on our attention to the minutiae of lives which inhabit scales and temporalities out of step with human movements but which nonetheless remain part of the entanglement of matter that makes the landscape.

Although movement through the landscape carries differing narrative weight in each of the films, Verano, El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia and Raíz all incorporate
journeys, pathways and crossing into the human interaction with landscape in a way that, firstly, sets the observation of landscape into motion, breaking down the fixed and distant point of view that conditions the painterly landscape and, secondly, allows landscape to emerge as a presence in itself, rather than remaining a view to be appreciated or a backdrop against which narrative can be staged. The interaction of human subject and landscape become more complex and more reciprocal than that of observer and object. Movement across landscape’s form gives rise to instances of tactile proximity as well as shifting views, creating a sense of being immersed in, rather than distanced from, the external world. This step beyond observation, this entry into landscape as more than image, recalls cultural geographer John Wylie understanding of landscape not only as ‘a projection of cultural meaning’ or as ‘simply something seen, a mute external field’, but rather as ‘the entwined materialities and sensibilities with which we act and sense’.39 The final section of this chapter considers how such ‘materialities and sensibilities’ are brought out in these films by the capacity of film as a medium to engage the spectator in sensory experience of landscape’s auditory and tactile aspects, as well as the visual.

**Multisensory Landscape**

In the roundtable discussion transcribed in *Landscape Theory*, Jessica Dubow suggests that from a phenomenological perspective, landscape is

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not just about an optical sight or symbolic mediation, but about all those more hidden sensory and affective processes that allow a view to ‘come into being’ for a subject.40

Having considered landscape as an ‘optical sight’ or view in the first section of analysis, the chapter has subsequently argued that these film’s all make use of movement across, through and into landscape as mechanism that allows the landscape to ‘come into being’ for the spectator. Here, the discussion penetrates deeper into the function of the senses in bringing the landscape into being cinematically, focusing on soundscapes and haptic imagery and the ways in which these details of landscape representation challenge the ocular-centrism that position landscape to be viewed from a distance, rather than felt and experienced.

Landscape as a multisensory experience is immediately apparent in the opening sequence of El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia. In long shot, the camera observes a girl playing with a dog – the low angle is blurred by mist and broken up by the stems of plants in the foreground moving in the breeze. The misted landscape takes on a sepia tone and in the following shot the camera initially tracks the girl and her dog as they move across the field; however, after a few moments both figures move out of frame, while the camera continues to move on the same pathway and at the same pace. The sound of footsteps crunching on leaves out of shot is sometimes heard over the sound of the wind that sends occasional leaves drifting from the autumn trees. This sequence is dominated by a

40 Jessica Dubow, in DeLue and Elkins, p. 104.
multisensory attention to the landscape and the presence of the girl and the dog seems increasingly coincidental as the sequence progresses.

Finally, the camera arrives at a close-up of a section of the bark of a tree in the foreground and begins a slow pan upwards into the branches. As the visual field of attention narrows, the soundscape becomes deeper and more layered; thunder can be heard in the distance, while the rain that falls around the tree grows heavier, its sound mixing with bird calls. In the foreground of the shot, a dead brown leaf dislodges in the breeze and can be heard rustling as it falls out of shot. This sequence not only brings out the auditory and visual layers of landscape – sound and image also create a sense of texture, weather and movement – and in this sense it is typical of Torres Leiva’s engagement with landscape in his films. The entirely diegetic soundscape combines both visualised and acousmatic sound (that is to say, sound whose source is not visible)\(^41\), which expands the spectator's imagination of the landscape beyond the section of it which is framed by the shot at any one moment. The use of acousmatic sound enhances the immersive mode of spectatorship since it requires the imaginative engagement of the spectator, forming a nexus in what Harper, Doughty and Eisentraut refer to as the 'interpretive points of engagement and release' in the film and visual media soundscape more broadly.\(^42\)

With similar duality of distanced and immersive landscape experiences, in *Verano* the landscape is registered both through the views and panoramas

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sought out by the holidaymakers and through a closer, more intimate contact with the matter that makes up landscape. Through this play between proximity and distance, *Verano* combines landscape-as-view with the sensing of landscape through haptic visuality, in line with Laura Marks’ classic formulation of a mode of viewing in which ‘the eyes themselves function as organs of touch’, operating ‘not to distinguish form so much as to determine texture’. To think in the terms laid out earlier from Mitchell, a haptic view of landscape is not so much a ‘mandate to withdraw’ as it is an invitation to make contact, to join the film’s characters in seeking tactile, sensory engagement with the “stuff” of landscape; the landscape becomes another body to touch and to be touched by. As Marks argues: ‘By engaging with an object in a haptic way, I come to the surface of my self...losing myself in the intensified relationship with an other that cannot be known’. In extreme close-ups of water-wrinkled finger tips, in the glare of sunlight through trees and windows and as the camera lingers on the slightest movements of hair, clothing, leaves and curtains stirred by the breeze, *Verano* draws figure and landscape into a relationship of bodies which are mutually affecting and in doing so brings skin and screen into contact through the production of ‘intimate, detailed images that invite a small, caressing gaze’.

In sequences where skin, hands, hair, feet and mouths are brought into contact with the organic matter of landscape, haptic imagery reflects Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about the body as a fold in “the flesh of the world”, where sensibility is revealed:

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43 Marks, p. 162.
44 Marks, p. 169.
my body is made of the flesh of the world (it is perceived) and moreover
this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world reflects it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world...they are in a relation of transgression or of overlapping.\footnote{Maurice Merleau-Ponty, \textit{The Visible and the Invisible} (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 248.}

By bringing body and material world into this type of intimate contact, Torres Leiva collapses the distance on which the traditional landscape view depends and the totality of “landscape” is broken down into matter; into dirt, air, water, vegetation, geology. Carolina Urrutia has suggested that the tactile approach to nature taken by several recent Chilean films, including \textit{El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia} (as well as \textit{Manuel de Ribera} and \textit{Turistas}, which I return to in later chapters), allows sensory experience to emerge into the gaps left by minimalist narrative:

Como si en la imposibilidad de encontrar contención o consuelo en el entorno, la narración se sintiera obligada a \textit{hacernos sentir}, a instalarnos en la experiencia, sin manipulación, simplemente a base de la insistencia en el plano.\footnote{Urrutia Neno (2013), p. 117.}

[As if in the impossibility of finding containment or consolation in the surroundings, the narrative feels obliged to \textit{make us feel}, to install us within the experience, without manipulation, simply on the basis of the insistence in the shot.]

This ‘insistence’ on the senses plays out clearly as Ana makes her way home after working at Toro’s house. When she pauses en route, the camera moves in
from watching her walk towards it to a close up of her feet as she puts down the plastic bag of apples she is carrying. Ana is visible only from the knees downward as she empties half of the apples out onto the ground. Not only does the sequence make the weight of carrying the apples palpable and audible as they fall noisily into the crisp leaves, it also moves away from Ana's face, so that the spectator's sensory experience is direct and unmediated by its effect on the character. In a long pan across the fallen leaves that cover the ground, the apples disappear out of frame, foreshadowing their return to the soil as they rot away with the surrounding leaf litter. The haptic nature of the image thus draws the spectator into a relationship with landscape on its own visual and temporal terms, which decentres human activity, privileges the minute details of nature and offers an intimacy with the world beyond the human.

These attentively constructed sensory impressions, of details which would remain invisible and imperceptible in the long view of landscape, are also woven into Raíz, particularly in those moments where the progress of the journey that forms the film's narrative thread is stalled. In one such sequence, shots of Amalia bathing in the thermal springs are intercut with shots of Sra. Chela and Cristóbal in conversation on the riverbank [although their dialogue is masked by music]. At this point, Amalia and Cristóbal's progress has been disrupted because they are waiting for someone to bring another rowing boat to substitute for the one that has been sunk underwater by the heavy rains. During this narrative temps mort, the camera watches Amalia, with particular emphasis through partial close-ups on the points of contact between skin and rock, water or steam. The effects of this contact (ripples on the water surface,
reddened skin) evoke the crossing-over and the tangle of the sensing and the sensed that makes up what might phenomenologically be considered the ‘flesh’ of landscape.

On the bank opposite Amalia, Sra. Chela appears to teach Cristóbal about the wild plants that grow alongside the river. With the conversation silenced by the overlaid music, focus is more directed toward the movements of the two bodies, in particular to the two pairs of hands that touch the leaves and stem of the plant that is passed between them. This tactility carries with it the conveying of knowledge from the woman to the young boy, an exchange which develops the relationship between the two people, as well as suggesting a greater closeness to the nature that surrounds them. Here, engagement with the material specificities of a shared landscape provides a kind of triangulation point between two strangers; the idea that film can make landscape visible as a nexus in human relationships is revisited on larger scales in later chapters, most notably in Chapter Four where conflict arises from competing visions of and interactions with landscapes.

Beginning from a position which understands the landscape experience as one which is dynamic, embodied and multisensory, this chapter has affirmed cinema’s capacity to engage with the idea of landscape as more than simply an image (or sequence of images). Between the three films selected for discussion in this chapter, there are a great many other instances which could be used to exemplify further the points made about the cinematic representation of landscape as an audible and tactile experience, as well as a visual one. However, what this section has intended to do is offer a starting point for thinking about
the cinematic landscape as more than a succession of neatly framed views, beginning a line of thought which resurfaces in later chapters. The expanded notion of landscape is essential, as the thesis will go on to demonstrate, to understanding how the concept functions in relation to the thematic concerns of Chapters Three (materiality and mortality), Four (territory and possession) and Five (temporality and change). Maintaining this attention to landscape’s multisensoriality and the immersive possibilities of its cinematic representation, Chapter Three begins the pattern of connecting these ideas to broader thematic concerns in contemporary Chilean cinema, as it explores the interrelationship between death and landscape in *El año del tigre* and *Matar a un hombre*. Here, notions of materiality and embodiment are shown to be central to provoking and sustaining the mortal anxieties at the heart of both films, revealing a darker side to the landscape experience which cannot be reduced to the symbolic or imagined plane.
CHAPTER THREE

Having used the films of Torres Leiva in the preceding chapter to foreground the tension between landscape as the distanced object of vision and landscape as an immersive multisensory experience, the remaining chapters of the thesis will demonstrate how, through varying combinations and inflections of these modes of cinematic landscape, other recent works of Chilean cinema develop landscape as a site for broader existential, political and social questions. This chapter begins this exploration by recalling that the mutually affecting contact of body and landscape which was central to Chapter Two has a darker dimension; that it is not only the living body that makes contact with landscape, but also the dead body. The presence of death in the film landscape is both spectral and material; by opening up questions about the inherent mortality and vulnerability of the body in its contact with landscape, this chapter explores landscape in a way which accentuates the transience of our presence within it and makes visible the overlaps at the boundaries of the human and the natural.

To illustrate this dimension of landscape, this chapter draws on close analysis of two recent Chilean films – *El año del tigre* and *Matar a un hombre*. Engagement with the natural landscape in both films is narratively framed by the protagonists’ immediate confrontations with death – in the form of the lethal danger of an earthquake in the former and in the aftermath of a murder in the latter. In formal terms, both films structure the landscape experience of the spectator in a way which precludes a settled perspective, frequently shifting between intimate sensory details and bodily immersion in the materiality of nature and the detached position of an observer of landscape as image. Various
bodies (human and animal, alive and dead) move into, out of, and across these landscapes. By examining how bodies and landscapes mark one another in the processes and exchanges of living and dying, this chapter sets out to demonstrate that an inescapable connection is forged between mortality and landscape, but one which is open-ended and multivalent, and which therefore troubles the boundaries that we locate between human and nature, living and dead.

As well as addressing these universal dimensions of the relationship of landscape and mortality, it is also important to bear in mind that another commonality between these films is that both directors took inspiration from past events in Chile – the earthquake which hit central Chile in 2010 in the case of *El año del tigre* and a real-life revenge killing in the case of *Matar a un hombre*. In light of this, this chapter not only analyses these films in terms of a universalised or abstracted concept of death but also acknowledges that this is interwoven with a certain specificity to the Chilean context. In doing so, the chapter understands landscape as a site which allows the coming-together of the universal and the particular. In light of this, it is worth noting here that the association of landscape and death in Chilean cinema is not in itself new (although this chapter argues that the films considered here represent a new and distinct articulation of this ongoing relationship). The connection can, for instance, be traced in what is perhaps the best known work of the Nuevo Cine Chileno, Miguel Littín's *El Chacal de Nahualtoro*. Based on real-life events in which a Chilean peasant killed a woman and her five children, the film includes extended sequences in which the eponymous murderer is shown wandering the
desolate rural landscape of south-central Chile, spatially evoking his social marginalisation in a manner that Hamid Nacify describes as ‘protoexilic’, that is to say foreshadowing the filmmaker’s and others’ experience of exile from Chile in 1973.\(^1\) The same region was recast in Littín’s second film, *La tierra prometida* (*The Promised Land, 1973*), this time traversed by dispossessed peasants searching for land on which to found a collectively organised settlement, only to later be massacred in an act of brutal government repression.

Remote landscapes were once again the site of state violence in the early post-dictatorship cinema of the 1990s. In Ricardo Larraín’s first feature *La frontera*, the idea of the remote, rural landscape as a space of exile returns through the story of a schoolteacher who is condemned to internal exile in Southern Chile. Cinematographer Hector Ríos (who also worked on *El Chacal de Nahueltoro*) paid close attention to the misty coastal landscape that marks the exile’s separation from society; the sea later rises in a tsunami which claims the life of his lover and her father, an elderly Spanish Republican displaced from his own nation, who refuse to be airlifted from the island. In *Amnesia*, meanwhile, Gonzalo Justiniano turns the camera’s attention to the deserts of Northern Chile, where a low-ranking soldier is compelled by his sadistic officer to participate in the murder of political prisoners and the burial of their bodies in the sand. In both films, as discussed by Deborah Shaw who refers to the film’s use of ‘the full metaphorical potential’ of their ‘extreme geographical settings’\(^2\), remote landscapes at the margins of the national territory become spaces where people

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disappear, sites marked by absences, amnesias and erasures. More recently, Sebastián Sepúlveda’s *Las niñas Quispe* [*The Quispe Girls*] (2013) brought the Chilean altiplano to cinema screens in a retelling of the true story of sisters Justa, Lucía and Luciana Quispe, members of the indigenous Colla people who have lived on the mountain plateaus around the borders of Chile, Bolivia and Argentina since before the arrival of the Inca in the 1400s. Rumours reach the sisters that the Pinochet government has passed laws restricting goat-herding in the region, threatening to curtail their livelihoods and extinguish a traditional way of life. A sense of place, tradition and belonging attached to this isolated location and stark landscape is central to the film’s narrative and to the events that occurred in 1974, resulting in the sisters’ suicide. Cinematographer Inti Briones, who also worked on *Matar a un hombre*, captures the bleak, dusty landscapes of the altiplano in shots that emphasise its expansiveness, its solitude and its emptiness.

It is important to understand, particularly in the post-dictatorship context, that these landscapes not only have strong symbolic and metaphorical power to evoke ideas about death but are also grounded in historically specific relations with death and absence. As the soldiers are ordered to do in *Amnesia*, the vast Atacama desert was used as a burial ground for executed political prisoners, leaving many relatives of Chile’s *desaparecidos* still without information about their whereabouts. A group of women searching the desert for the remains of relatives who disappeared during the dictatorship are the subject of Patricio Guzmán’s 2010 documentary *Nostalgia de la luz* here, the desert is a landscape which simultaneously conceals (in its vastness) and preserves (in its climate)
the material remains of state violence. The marking of the Chilean landscape by brutality is also the subject of Guzmán’s most recent film, *El botón de nácar* (2015), which explores the historical memory of violence carried in the waterways and coastlines of Southern Chilean Patagonia. The documentary combines stunning images of glaciers, lakes and islands by cinematographer Katell Djian (who also worked on *Nostalgia de la luz*) with the director’s narration and interviews that testify to the brutality of past events in that same landscape. The documentary recalls the clandestine disposal of the bodies of the disappeared in the Pacific Ocean, as well as those incarcerated as political prisoners in the Dawson Island internment camp but it also draws on the memories of surviving members of the region’s indigenous peoples, whose populations and traditional ways of life were devastated by disease, famine and genocide over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the Chilean state fought to convert its landscape prospects into national territories. As well as a sense of the layered histories that are threaded into the Chilean landscape (particularly, with regard to this chapter, histories of violence and crisis), Guzmán’s most recent documentaries mobilise landscape in its capacity to hold multiple and opposing investments in tension; the universal and the conceptual are brought into dialogue with the local and the material, and personal narratives and human histories play out against the overarching vastness of ecological time (an idea which will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Five).

Although neither film explicitly engages with these historical events, the discussion of body, mortality and landscape in this chapter takes in some
aspects of both films that resonate at the national historical level. The presence of dead bodies in both films, and in particular the washing away and returning ashore of the body in Matar a un hombre, can be read as being suggestive of the regime’s efforts to conceal the bodies of the disappeared (buried in the desert or thrown in rivers, lakes and the Pacific ocean), as well as these bodies’ insistent return to the national conscience. Both films are also marked by the invisibility and the inefficacy of the state, suggesting the shrinking away from social intervention and the heightened individualism that can been seen as part of the lasting legacy of postdictatorial neoliberalism. In El año del tigre, the most visible state institution, the prison, is broken apart in the earthquake, releasing Manuel into a semi-feral, clandestine existence – amid all the chaos and desperation of a natural disaster, the state only re-engages when he delivers himself to the authorities. The judicial system is also depicted as ineffective, almost ludicrously so, in Matar a un hombre as Jorge is driven to murder after the police fail to protect his family from their tormentor, despite his repeated appeal for justice. The state’s active intervention is only triggered by his own crime, as Jorge in turn becomes a suspect in what the police describe as a ‘disappearance’. While these postdictatorial references are not the specific focus of the chapter, they should nevertheless be marked out here as part of the complex set of relations between body, death and landscape.

This chapter considers the relationship of mortality and landscape in ways that shift focus away from allegory, metaphor and historical memory and towards a focus on the material, the sensory and the ecological. In doing so, it brings wider conceptual ideas about death, the body and landscape to bear on the textual
analysis of the films. The aesthetic significance of the presence of death in the landscape has stimulated much discussion in the wider interdisciplinary field of landscape studies. However, the precise character of the relationship between death, nature and the landscape is the subject of differing stances among scholars of landscape. Landscape architect Simon Bell argues, for instance, that ‘[a]n aspect of ecology that needs to be understood in aesthetic terms is that of the appearance of the landscape as a result of natural processes such as disease, decay and death’, since ‘nature is not nature without death’. Bell positions death firmly within the natural shaping of landscape, countering it with human endeavours ‘to ameliorate the perceived visually intrusive results’.

According to Robert Pogue Harrison, the very act of place-making and marking is in itself an act which references human mortality. Harrison suggests that

a place is where time, in its human modes, takes place. A place cannot come into being without human time’s intervention in nature’s eternally self-renewing cycles – the cycles of “bird and bush”, as it were. What intervenes in natural time is human finitude, which is unlike other finite things in that death claims our awareness before it claims our lives. We dwell in space, to be sure, but we dwell first and foremost within the limits of our mortality. When we build something in nature, be it a dwelling, a monument, or even a fire, we leave a sign there of our being mortal sojourners on the earth.

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In contrast to Bell, Pogue Harrison’s perspective establishes human mortality as something which is, at least in part, outside of the natural order of things, as a disruptive force in ‘self-renewing’ nature. Elsewhere, he includes even the interpretation of nature within the framework of landscape as indicative of this ‘human finitude’:
Such places – be they homes, buildings, cities or landscapes – are recesses of mortal time in which we go about inhabiting the earth historically rather than merely naturally.5

Bell and Pogue Harrison’s views are just two differing examples from a growing body of thought on how death mediates the human-nature relationship. The cinematic representation of this already complex set of relations adds a further dimension to this idea of a mediated relationship. As Martin Lefebvre (2005) reminds us, any cinematic landscape results from various processes of narrative, aesthetic and formal construction; it can never be considered as entirely natural as it is always the product of certain choices. By engaging with theoretical perspectives around the question of death and landscape with close readings of the selected films, my aim in this chapter is both to understand the particular ways in which film as a medium is able to make this relationship visible and tangible and to consider how broader theoretical considerations can help us to explore this aspect of cinematic landscapes more profoundly.

The chapter begins by considering how the co-existence of living and dead bodies in landscape further complicates the bodily experience of landscape discussed in Chapter Two. Framing the discussion within Maurice Blanchot’s thoughts on the symmetries between cadaver and image, it will be argued that the choices made in the cinematic depiction of the corpse in *Matar a un hombre* brings into relief certain anxieties about the living body’s place within

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landscape, reviving latent sensations of vulnerability and powerlessness. The powerful triangulation of cadaver, living body and landscape is then developed in the initial discussion of El año del tigre, which will demonstrate how the tension of this interrelationship is formally and aesthetically sustained through the play between distance from and immersion in landscape.

Having thus anchored death as a presence in the landscape of both films, the first part of the chapter continues to introduce the notion of landscape's relationship to the animal body (and its survival or demise) in El año del tigre. Considering the ways in which the film casts human and animal bodies in a common relationship to landscape in life and death, I suggest that the presence of the animal urges a rereading of the human body's place in landscape and its vulnerability to the external world.

The second part of the chapter gives further consideration to locating death within both the landscape and the body; to how mortality, decline and decay are embedded into the landscape but can also be traced across the assumed boundary between body and world. In its attention to the post-seismic landscape of El año del tigre, this section also begins to consider how landscape becomes a site where the specificity of the geographical context is interwoven with wider-reaching concerns and concepts, a line of thought which continues in relation to the thematic concerns and contextual specificities of the films in the remaining chapters. Through an engagement with Merleau-Ponty's idea of flesh, the chapter concludes by drawing together the ways in which dead and dying bodies give renewed and reconstructed significance to idea of embodied contact with landscape.
Bodies in the Landscape: the Cadaver

*Matar a un hombre* is Alejandro Fernández Almendras’ third feature film; his previous fiction feature releases are *Sentados frente al fuego* [*Sitting in Front of the Fire*] (2011) and *Huacho*, which is discussed in detail in Chapter Five. The film tells the story of Jorge, a hardworking family man, who lives in a working-class neighbourhood with his wife and two adolescent children. After Jorge is robbed and humiliated by Kalule, a delinquent figure in the neighbourhood, his son decides to try to recover his father’s hard-earned money. Kalule responds by shooting Jorge’s son, who narrowly escapes death. Kalule is released from prison after just two years and embarks on a campaign of intimidation against Jorge’s family, eventually sexually assaulting his teenage daughter in the street.

When the police tell him, yet again, that there is nothing more they can do, Jorge seeks out justice on his own terms, kidnapping and murdering Kalule, before fleeing with the corpse, which he initially hides in a half-built house near the “Centro de Investigación Forestal” where he is working as a forest ranger. Later, just prior to the arrival of police officers investigating Kalule’s disappearance, Jorge attempts to dispose of the body by pushing it from a cliff into the sea. However, Jorge soon finds the body washed back up onto shore; he loads the body back into his van and the film ends as he wordlessly opens the back doors of the vehicle in front of an officer at the police station.

The figure of the cadaver casts a long shadow over the narrative, initially as an imagination that feeds Jorge’s fear and then as a terrible reality. Before the killing occurs, death is foreshadowed in unconscious bodies, which linger on the
line between life and death. In one form, this semi-death is found in the image of the still, sleeping bodies of Jorge and his family in their home, engaged in an activity that is simultaneously both quotidian and mysterious. As Norman L. Cantor observes, the natural similarities of death and sleep are also culturally reinforced by funeral practices; undertakers and embalmers typically strive to reconstruct the dead body as a sleeping body, to create a ‘memory picture’, to ‘cultivate a palatable last image’. However, when death becomes real, a crucial aspect of Fernández Almendras’ portrayal of the dead body is precisely that it is not palatable and it does not sleep. The emphatic refusal of the cadaver to be “laid to rest” means that it continues to decay in plain sight, becoming ever more grotesquely different from the living body.

The persistent resurfacing of death and decay is played out in the movements of Jorge and Kalule’s bodies, one dead, the other living, as they shift in and out of view within the landscape. In one particular scene, in an otherwise tranquil coastal landscape, a man can just be made out descending hurriedly down an embankment towards the shore, scrambling over rocks and twisted tree roots. Amid the dark trees silhouetted against the sky and the jagged relief of the rock formations that mark the meeting of land and sea, the human figure appears diminished and would be hardly noticeable, were it not for his movement in an otherwise largely static scene (Figure 10). If our gaze strays for a moment from the moving figure, we might be drawn to the other field of motion, lower down in the frame; the tide, which flows steadily in and out from the sands, washing with it a yellowish, patchy something which contrasts with the dark rocks. The

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6 Norman L. Cantor, After We Die: The Live and Times of the Human Cadaver, p.86
fact that this unidentified form is the reason for the man’s evident haste is not immediately apparent from the image alone.

![Figure 10: Jorge hurries to the shore in Matar a un hombre](image)

For the film’s spectator, of course, this image does not operate alone. We recognise the figure running towards the beach as Jorge, the film’s protagonist, we have already seen him pushing the swollen corpse out to sea and we have observed his discovery of the boot washed up further down the shore. Our suspicions are ignited as the form is shifted by the waves to reveal a human shape and confirmed with the cut to a close-up of a shoeless, rotting, blackened human foot on the sand, the rest of the body lying out of frame.

Maurice Blanchot suggested that there was an association between the image and the cadaver, that
the cadaver's strangeness is perhaps also that of the image. What we call mortal remains escapes common categories. Something is there before us which is not really the living person, nor is it any reality at all. It is neither the same as the person who was alive, nor is it another person, nor is it anything else ... Where is it? It is not here, and yet it is not anywhere else. Nowhere? But then nowhere is here. The cadaverous presence establishes a relation between here and nowhere [...] The cadaver is its own image. It no longer entertains any relation with this world, where it still appears, except that of an image, an obscure possibility, a shadow ever present behind the living form which now, far from separating itself from this form, transforms it entirely into shadow.?

In this image (Figure 11), the "cadaverous presence" looms so large that it cannot be contained within the frame and cannot be comprehended in its entirety. The foot alone is enough, decontextualised against a blank background of pale sand, to form a synecdochal connection with the nowhere-ness of the corpse. Here, the landscape and the living world have disappeared from view, drawn into and obscured by the shadow which is given form in the dead body. Even when Jorge reappears into the frame, his presence comes about only in service of the cadaver, as he tries to replace the lost boot; despite his efforts, the stiff, dead flesh of the body remains unyielding. The stubborn and resistant materiality of the corpse in this sequence makes visible the residual power of the body over

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its still living killer, troubling the power relation between the two and making death a constant anxious presence in the landscape.

Figure 11: Kalule’s decomposing foot in *Matar a un hombre*

However, in the preceding sequence, the dead body had been little more than part of the landscape. Camouflaged among the colours and forms of the natural landscape, it does not yet project ‘its own image’ as Blanchot imagines. Caught up in the ebb and flow of the tide, it is mobilised only by the same cycles of nature that shape the rest of the landscape, putrefied by the same water that erodes the rocks on the shore, washed in and out like driftwood. Here, there is none of the strangeness that Blanchot ascribes to the image of the cadaver. The dead body is, instead, *naturalised* by its contextualisation within the landscape.

In the juxtaposition of these two shots, we are confronted with a tension between life and death, between being somewhere and nowhere, between the body hidden in the landscape and the landscape obscured by the intensity of our focus on the body. The balance of visual power shifts dramatically between
the two shots and in doing so calls into question the very possibility of a settled relationship between life and death and between human and nature. Rather than making a definitive statement about these relationships, these two shots alone point towards questions which resurface at other points in the film’s contemplative mode of spectatorship. Is death an integral part of nature and the landscape image or is it an external force that intervenes in the aesthetics of nature? To what extent is human mortality experienced as separate from nature? Does death return us to a more intimate connection with our environment or sever us from it?

Many of these same questions also arise from the presence of the dead body in El año del tigre (2011), Sebastián Lelio’s third feature film, following La sagrada familia (2006) and Navidad (Christmas, 2009), and preceding the more widespread international acclaim that accompanied the release of Gloria in 2013. The film follows Manuel, a convict in a prison in southern Chile. When an earthquake hits the region, Manuel seizes upon a chance to escape. Returning to his home, he finds that a tidal wave has swept away his wife and daughter. As Manuel continues to wander as a fugitive through the devastated landscape, the confines, tragedies and struggles of his new-found liberty become ever more apparent. Further on his journey, he comes to his mother’s house where he finds her dead body. After digging a grave and burying his mother, Manuel continues to move across the countryside. A while later, he finds a circus tiger, still trapped in its cage, the rest of the troupe seeming to have either escaped or drowned in the tsunami. Seeming to identify some similarity in their situations, Manuel breaks open the cage to free the animal. Later, he finds the tiger has
been shot dead. Starving, he stumbles across a pile of maize in a nearby field and begins to eat. He is quickly accosted by the farmer, who eventually offers Manuel food and shelter in return for work. One night, the two men get drunk together and the farmer tells Manuel that he found and shot a tiger that was roaming the countryside after the earthquake. Angered, Manuel stabs the farmer with a piece of broken glass. Before fleeing, he steals the shoes from the dead body. After attending a public mass outside a church in a local town, Manuel breaks down. After causing a disruption in the street and damaging an army vehicle, he is last seen handcuffed, being transported back to prison.

Jorge Ruffinelli has observed that in El año del tigre Sebastián Lelio’s visual narration tends more strongly towards the mode of myth or fable than in his previous films; here, Lelio takes the opportunity for philosophical and existential reflection offered by the end-of-the-world scenario. For Ruffinelli, it is this fable-like storytelling that separates Manuel’s rural wanderings from those of the protagonist in the Chilean classic El Chacal de Nahueltoro. Whereas the Chile of Miguel Littín’s film was ‘un país con proyecto’ [a country with a project], Ruffinelli argues that ‘el terremoto y el tsunami de 2010 fueron dos realidades y dos símbolos que sellaron la orfandad popular absoluta’ [the earthquake and the tsunami of 2010 were two realities and two symbols that sealed the absolute orphanhood of the people].

Even if we are to take Manuel as an exemplifying protagonist of this ‘absolute orphanhood’ – which, in broad terms, we might consider as a reference to the shrinkage of pre-dictatorship emancipatory horizons and the historical and social dislocation of the individual

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in the neoliberal social structure inherited from dictatorship - we do not immediately feel a sense of compassion for his state. From the start of the film, there is a hardness to Manuel’s character which seems to align him with certain animalistic features. He rarely speaks and seems lacking in verbal and non-verbal expression. Even during a visit from his wife, their sex is wordless and aggressive. As spectators, we cannot know whether this mode of behaviour is part of some “criminal nature” we might ascribe to Manuel or whether he has become a product of the harsh environment of the prison; no details of his crime or his past are ever revealed.

The dead body in the catastrophic landscape of *El año del tigre* first appears when Manuel, already grieving over the disappearance of his wife and daughter, visits his mother's home to find her dead. The body is visible to Manuel, before it can be seen by the spectator, momentarily blocked from view by the protagonist's body in the doorway. As he turns, the body becomes visible, lying on the floor among scattered possessions and debris strewn by the earthquake, giving the impression that the life of the body has been extinguished as easily and indifferently as the rest of the buildings' contents have been upended. Manuel takes a seat in a dilapidated armchair around a corner, turning his back on the corpse as though to reassert his separation from death as a living person. However, from the spectator’s point of view, this impulse is undermined by the arrangement of the shot (Figure 12), which still allows both dead and living to be observed in a single glance, occupying a continuous space.

Before burying her, Manuel returns to embrace his mother's body (Figure 13), in a gesture which inevitably lacks the reciprocity with which it is normally
associated. In the previously discussed shot, Manuel's position (in spatial and visual terms, at least) was one of greater separation and detachment from the dead body than that of the spectator. In this sequence, it is the spectator who is most uncomfortable with the presence of the corpse. There is a sense of intrusion here, of witnessing a private and intimate moment of grief that should have gone unseen. Again, the presence of the dead body and its contact with a living person becomes a means of removing the spectator from a certain or secure position of observation.

Figure 12: Manuel in his mother's home in El año del tigre.
Reflecting this anxiety about “intruding” on a private moment, the camera remains inside for a few seconds as Manuel carries the body outside, as though keeping its distance, framing him in the doorway as he takes the path that leads away from the house. As he continues down the path, the camera remains behind him; we hear him sobbing, but do not see his face. In the burial sequence that follows, both living and dead body are brought into closer contact with the materiality of the rural landscape. On his hands and knees, Manuel digs a rough grave, using a saucepan lid as a makeshift spade, in ground that is covered with dead leaves from the surrounding woodland; once his mother is buried, the dead matter of nature will shield the decay of human matter from sight. This process of returning the body to the earth has particular resonance in an increasingly secular society: as Douglas Davies argues, this symbolism may provide
an authentic basis for understanding both life and death for those for whom either “heaven” or “memory” is an unbelievable or inadequate means of making sense of life and of death. 9

The effort that Manuel goes to, even given his limited resources, to enact the burial ritual would seem to indicate that the process offers a degree of ritual and emotional closure. Unlike Kalule’s body in Matar a un hombre, this body is one that can be laid to rest, a death that can in some way be accepted through the reintegration of the body into nature. However, if this sequence suggests that the dead may in some way return to a more settled relationship to the landscape (and that the still-living may find some consolation in this), the following sequence suggests that in order to survive in landscape, the living body must maintain a more dynamic and cautious position. During and immediately after the burial, Manuel is shown resting on the ground, firstly alongside the dead body and later alone, asleep under the same blanket he used to shroud the corpse. Upon waking, Manuel almost immediately begins to cover his tracks, scraping leaves across the patch of ground where he had been sleeping. We are reminded of the danger of his situation by the sound of a helicopter overhead, which might well be searching for the escaped prisoners. It is only the cover offered by the trees that conceals Manuel from surveillance; the form of the natural landscape here protects him from the repercussions that await him in civilisation. This assertion of a logic of survival in the human’s relationship to landscape is reinforced in El año del tigre by the simultaneous existence in the landscape of both human and animal bodies.

Through its relationship to the visibility and tactility of the body, particularly in the form of the cadaver, the landscape in both *El año del tigre* and *Matar a un hombre* reveals itself as something more than a backdrop to the processes of living and dying (as well as the human acts that end or sustain life) that take place within it. Instead, the landscape is part of these processes, with the body and the external world caught up together in processes of exchange and sites of overlap. In line with the overarching argument of the thesis, the landscape bears a far more intimate relation to mortality than simply one of metaphor or allegory. Death is woven into the landscape at the level of matter and reveals itself in points of contact with the living body, a dark thread running through the sensory fabric that was brought to light in Chapter Two. Through this approach to the cinematic landscape, this section has begun to show how the stories of two particular men in two particular landscapes are represented in ways that concern a more universal interconnection and vulnerability of the mortal body to the external world. As the following section demonstrates, this connectedness to landscape in life and death plays out in a manner that also troubles the boundary between the human and the animal.

**ANIMAL BODIES**

Donna Haraway has claimed that as humans our engagement with animals is a way in which we try to observe ourselves, that ‘[w]e polish an animal mirror to look for ourselves’. 10 Haraway’s line of thought provides a useful analytical

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starting point for the analysis of the animal body on screen and the ways in which its representation is constructed to provide some reflection or illumination of the human experience. My own analysis here is particularly concerned, as previously stated, with the location of bodies in the cinematic landscape; my questions regarding the animal body therefore concern how it functions in relation to the human-nature relationship which is central to the concept of landscape.

The figure of the tiger provides an important counterpoint to the human protagonist in the landscape of El año del tigre. Before any animal (human or non-human) even appears on screen, the film’s title invokes the tiger of the Chinese Zodiac, an abstraction of the mortal animal into an eternal symbol, which transcends the earthly cycles of life and death. In contrast to this rarefied tiger-sign, when the tiger is finally encountered by Manuel it is in the form of living and dying flesh, not spiritual but firmly bound into the materiality of the world. The tiger in El año del tigre not only contrasts with the astrological tiger of the title but also with the image of the species which is generally familiar from cultural sources like wildlife documentaries. In its typical cultural manifestation, the tiger is powerful, majestic and dangerous and we are frequently encouraged to observe it with a sense of the sublime. Giovanni Aloi describes this mode of the sublime as “animal-fear”, arguing that it stimulates ‘an instinctive connection with our prehistoric ancestors, for whom nature was not a subjugated entity in which to indulge, but an all-encompassing system of life and death, where death could come at any time, in the shape of a larger
predator'. In *El año del tigre*, the tiger is a more complex entity; it retains something of the predatory fear with which it is customarily associated but, ultimately, its captivity, liberty, survival and death are shaped by human actions and modes of thought.

The strength of Manuel’s emotional response to the tiger is evident from their first encounter. As spectators, we first become aware of the tiger in the same way as Manuel, when we hear a low almost-roar, produced from somewhere out of sight. As Manuel wades towards the cage, the camera focuses not on his face, but on the ground/water level, showing the debris of human lives left behind after the earthquake – a broken television set, childrens’ toys, old furniture. Among these abandoned items, the animal body is one more commodity littering the landscape, one more discarded plaything. Gregory R. Smulewicz-Zucker argues that commodification by humans ‘transforms animals from objects within the sphere of nature into objects whose value is produced for the sphere of exchange’. According to this view, in these shots *El año del tigre* depicts the tiger as apart from nature, a perspective which is reinforced by its existence in the Chilean countryside, distant both geographically and environmentally from the species’ native habitat.

The first time we see the tiger on screen (Figure 14), we are visually unable to distinguish whether it is dead or merely sleeping – it is only the sound that confirms for us that it is alive. As Manuel shakes the cage, the motion seems to

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reanimate the animal. As Manuel peers into the cage, the camera’s position reverses, now looking out of the cage towards Manuel on the outside. However, in a shot of this distance, the interior-exterior perspective is diminished; Manuel himself is momentarily re-imprisoned behind the grid of the enclosure, producing an image which potentially equalises human and animal.

Manuel’s emotional investment in the tiger becomes most visible when, against all rational considerations for his own safety and survival, he uses a piece of metal debris to break open the locked cage. This is a moment in which Manuel’s personal ethics are revealed – having been freed from captivity himself by a chance event, he appears to want to “repay” this liberation to another captive being, a desire for reciprocity which suggests a relationship of equals.

Figure 14: First sight of the tiger in El año del tigre.
As his journey continues, Manuel becomes more animalistic in his movements and interactions with the landscape – scooping water to drink from a stream, creeping through vegetation. The relationship of body and landscape is one of the crucial markers of his increasing proximity to an animal state, a state of bare life. This becoming-animal intensifies the emotional charge of the sequence in which Manuel finds the tiger dead, having been shot. This encounter is immediately tactile, with Manuel kneeling down to stroke the tiger’s coat. As his hand moves gradually across the body, as though tracing its form and markings, the shot shifts to an extreme close-up of his fingers as they reach the gunshot wound (Figure 15).

The gunshot wound is a fatal violation of the exterior-interior boundary of the body, one that would be as equally fatal to the human and the non-human animal. The attention given to the bloody detail of the wound emphasises the vulnerability of the body (the tiger’s body, Manuel’s body, the spectator’s body,
any living body) to the deadly threats that co-exist with it in the landscape. The skin that marks both the border with the outside world and the point of tactile contact with it is shown to be fatally fragile. The image of the wound is a haptic image, which as Marks states, is constructed to ‘encourage a bodily relationship between the viewer and the image’. In this example, the relationship of the spectator to the screen image is laden with anxiety; we are sensorially connected with an image of a non-human dead body but a body which nonetheless has come to be imbued with certain elements of human experience, and which therefore is an experience of contact with aspects of our own mortality as animal life.

It is the discovery of the dead tiger that drives Manuel to commit the most drastic act of his brief period of liberty and the act which ultimately propels him towards reincarceration. In releasing the tiger from its cage, Manuel had also released the tiger into a landscape that contains the threat of death as well as the means of survival and a sense of guilt engendered by his unwitting complicity in its death seems to remain with him. After the farmer, who briefly employs Manuel after catching him stealing corn to eat, drunkenly tells the story of how he recently shot a tiger in the nearby countryside, the next morning Manuel stabs him in his sleep with a piece of broken glass, presumably debris from the earthquake. Before leaving, Manuel places a slab of concrete on the body’s head, as though he has been killed by falling rubble; he also helps himself to food and replaces his own worn shoes with the dead man’s sturdy boots. Whether the man has been purely as a means of maintaining his secrecy

as a fugitive, or whether there is an element of anger or vengeance for the death of the tiger is not clear; however, the calm and deliberate manner in which Manuel commits the murder, lays false signs of an accident and obtains useful items as spoils of the death indicate that it is at least partly connected with a desire for self-preservation and sustenance.

The act of murder and the instinct of predation become intertwined here. On the one hand, the tiger’s predatory potential (as a threat to livestock and humans alike) is what prompts the farmer to shoot it; on the other, Manuel’s reaction to the tiger’s death and the imagining of the creature as mirroring his own desire for liberty invest the death with an emotional charge which locates the threat to survival in human actions rather than animal instinct. This conflict is deepened by Manuel’s actions (freeing the tiger, killing the farmer) which negate the primacy of human solidarity and are instead driven by something closer to a certain cross-species empathy in the demands of living, which Cary Wolfe describes as a ‘a shared trans-species being-in-the-world constituted by complex relations of trust, respect, dependence and communication’.\textsuperscript{14} \textit{El año del tigre} promotes an animal commonality in line with that proposed by Laura U. Marks, who argues that ‘[in] disavowing any commonality between self and other, one renders the other a screen for projection, whether it is to project noble-savage fantasies on other humans or bestial-animal fantasies on beasts’.\textsuperscript{15}

The presentation of this commonality is not a Disney-fication of the animal or a naïve and sentimental anthropomorphism of the sort that concerns Marks. Instead, the human-animal commonality that can be perceived in Lelio’s film

\textsuperscript{15} Marks, pp. 24-5.
allows the contemplation of human activity to form, alongside animal activity, part of a contemplation of nature. The discussion so far of the ways in which the representation of both human and animal bodies can reveal the complexities of our relation to nature in life and death leads us towards the question which occupies the second half of the chapter, namely that of locating death within the external landscape and within the body itself.

**Locating Death**

As stated earlier, both films take their inspiration from real events; events which already bear some connection to the landscapes in which they were situated prior to those landscapes being brought onto the screen. On the one hand, *El año del tigre*, in its depiction of the 2010 earthquake, deals with an event with national repercussions, experiences, memories and responses. On the other, *Matar a un hombre* takes its inspiration from an event on a far smaller scale – a news report of a case where a father killed a man who had been harasing his family. This connection to reality reaffirms the significance of the films’ treatment of bodily vulnerability and mortality – the threats and dangers which stalk the cinematic landscape also exist outside the cinema and beyond the screen and the worlds in which Manuel and Jorge dwell haunt us precisely because they are facets of the real world. Similarly, the ambiguity of the spectatorial position in relation to the events of the film gives us cause to reflect on our confrontation with mortality and vulnerability in real life. Questions of the division between what is inside and what is outside are, in various forms, central to the analysis of the films in this chapter. In particular, questions arise
as to whether the human lies inside or outside of the realm of the natural and on the issue of death’s double existence as both internal and external to the body and to the landscape. Part of the reason that these two films raise these concerns is that there is an ambiguity not only in the protagonist’s relationship to his surroundings but also in the spectator’s relationship to the world on-screen.

In terms of spectatorship, cinema as a medium inevitably renders this relationship of body and landscape more complex. According to Alphonso Lingis in the preface to his translation of The Visible and the Invisible, ‘[t]he flesh is the body inasmuch as it is the visible seer, the audible hearer, the tangible touch – the sensitive sensible: inasmuch as in it is accomplished an equivalence of sensibility and sensible thing’. Following Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the body as both sensitive and sensible in its dimension as flesh, we can interpret the privileged position of seeing without being seen as the distancing of ourselves from this universal category of flesh. If we observe the landscape without being able to be observed (or heard or felt or smelt) within it, we in some way rise above the rest of its materiality, whilst still remaining within its space. This is, of course, the position of the spectator of a cinematic landscape, recalling Metz’ notion that the relationship of cinema spectator to screen was one of voyeurism, with the spectator finding pleasure in the power and privilege of being an unseen observer of the world on screen. Both directors complicate this seen-unseen dynamic by constructing the landscape aesthetic in ways that continuously shift the spectator between positions of detached

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16 Merleau-Ponty, p. liv.
exterior observation and an embodied sensory experience. In doing so, their films stage a more complex and involving engagement with the anxieties of mortality, by combining immersion and contemplation in an unsettled and unsettling fluctuation.

The tension inherent in this ambiguity is strongly conveyed in the opening pre-title sequence of Matar a un hombre, which initially contains no human activity. From the dark interior of shadowy woodland (Figure 16), a shaft of sunlight is visible, barely penetrating the gaps between the straight, slender trunks of Chilean pines. In patches of light, splashes of green are visible, illuminating tiny details of life amid a forest of dark silhouetted shapes. There is no birdsong, no animal calls, no rustling leaves or wind in the trees; instead, we hear only ominous, lingering notes, building steadily and emotively, an auditory code of classic cinematic suspense which plays on convention to suggest a sense of fear, or at least foreboding, in the spectator.

Figure 16: From the opening sequence of Matar a un hombre.
This, clearly, is a filmic space which contains a threat. Yet our starting position is one of ambiguity. We know nothing of the identity of the being with whose gaze we are aligned and nothing of what lies beyond the trees. Does the wood shelter “us” from an outside threat? Or are we ourselves the danger, lurking unseen within, awaiting the arrival of prey or victim from the exterior world? The perspective offered by the camera is one of interiority, of being hidden and vigilant inside the forest, but the non-ambient sound which accompanies it recalls us to our exteriority. Jay Appleton (1975) describes what he calls the edge-of-the-wood phenomenon, in which a woodland is usually depicted with an unenclosed, penetrable edge and often a path, or paths leading invitingly into the tree. The effect is enhanced by accentuating the details of symbolism in either half; the prospect is distinguished by clarity, distance and sometimes falling ground, the refuge by an impression of the darkness, depth and capaciousness of the woodland in which the observer can, at his own choosing, be swallowed up.\(^{18}\)

The difference between this classic edge-of-the-woods image and the opening shot of *Matar a un hombre* is stark. The woodland on screen is not viewed from a prospect but from the inside; there is no detachment of the viewer from the woods themselves, as they occupy a position that could otherwise be taken by another tree or shrub or forest creature. Refuge has already been taken, we are

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already inside the wood. We cannot tell if there was any ‘choosing’ involved in this swallowing-up on the part of the protagonist; there certainly has not been any choice for the spectator.

The very image of dark and secluded woodland is an image which, like the suspenseful soundtrack, already carries a dark emotional charge for the film spectator, having appeared time and time again in the US horror genre, arguably to the point of cliché. As Bernice M. Murphy notes, the “backwoods” are an archetypal horror setting in what she terms a ‘rural gothic’ aesthetic. According to Murphy,

>a key component of this perception lies in the belief that the forest beyond the settlement is the place where the representatives of ‘civilisation’ are pitched against forces that embody ‘savagery’, and order – moral, psychological, and geographical – is opposed to ‘chaos’.19

In this opening scene of Matar a un hombre, we feel as spectators that some element of savagery or chaos must be present. What is not clear, and what arguably remains unclear throughout the film, is whether our perspective aligns us with savagery or civilisation, with chaos or order, whether we watch from within the landscape of the film or outside of it – and the maintenance of this difficult uncertainty is perpetuated by the juxtaposition of urban and rural landscapes in the film.

Although this thesis is predominantly concerned with films that engage with rural and natural landscapes (albeit with the understanding that the boundaries of these categories are difficult to define precisely), it is important in the case of *Matar a un hombre* to give some space here to understanding the relationship that Fernández Almendras sets out between rural and urban spaces and how this relationship contributes to the film's overall treatment of killing and dying. The film shifts continually between the unnamed urban neighbourhood where Jorge lives with his family and the rural area where he works as a forest warden and where he eventually tries to dispose of Kalule's body following the murder. However, Jorge is never seen travelling between the two zones and the spectator never glimpses a rural-urban fringe or transitional space. Instead, the shift is abrupt, with a cut from Jorge leaving the front door of his house in the city or from the enclosure of the hospital courtyard to Jorge at work in the forest. These sudden transitions create a visual separation of the urban and the rural which reinforces them as two aspects of a dichotomy, rather than a spatial continuum. With such minimal connection between the two spaces and little means of establishing a sense of distance or proximity, the spectator's understanding of the film's space is encouraged as one of a built environment versus a natural one. Even in the brief moments where Jorge is seen travelling either by bus or in the van he uses to move Kalule’s body, either the camera focuses on the vehicle interior or the world beyond the windows is blurred by speed or obscured by darkness. As spectators, we are aware that the material remnants of events in one space later come to mark and be marked by the
landscape of the other; however, the connection is forged through the presence of the protagonist on screen, rather than through transitional sequences.

Urban life in *Matar a un hombre* demonstrates a failure of the structures of civilisation (in this case, the Chilean state, as represented by the police force and the legal system) to protect from bodily harm, as the neighbourhood becomes a legal and moral wilderness in which Kalule and his accomplices act as predators and Jorge’s family is reduced to prey. With the police appearing as both disinterested and powerless in the case of Jorge’s family, the urban margins operate in a kind of juridical vacuum, the space of barbarity on which civilisation is founded, where the law-abiding are predated with impunity by the law-breakers; it is this breakdown in civil order which prompts Jorge to resort to what we might think of as “natural justice”.

Our first encounter with the urban landscape in *Matar a un hombre* takes place as it is seen from the windows of the bus that Jorge rides on his way home from work. The images of the streets and buildings outside are blurred. The city is relegated to the role of a background to the personal affairs of the protagonist – in this case, a conversation with his wife, Marta, about a birthday cake for their son, which is heard over the calls of a street vendor aboard the bus. At first, the urban environment is depicted as a place where the routines and rhythms of everyday life play out with minimal interruption – the daily schedule of work and the return home, the marking of the passing years. However, this initial expectation of mundane tranquility is quickly challenged by the following sequences which take place in Jorge’s neighbourhood after dark. These sequences firmly establish visibility as a central factor in the patterns of anxiety
and threat that mark landscape. Fernández Almendras’ aesthetic approach to the urban nighttime is to create a sense of agoraphobia, in contrast to the enclosure of the family home. Whereas the protagonist previously appeared in sharp focus in the daylight images, Jorge is now reduced to a shadowy figure moving between a few scattered lights in the dark neighbourhood, more visible by his white plastic carrier bag than from his own face, body or clothing; at times, the white bag is almost the only thing visible, a tiny patch of sight in a blacked out view. The darkness which characterises the urban scenes in *Matar a un hombre* consigns the neighbourhood to an invisible margin, masking both perpetrator and victim from social visibility. The urban world becomes divided by the relative safety of the interior space and the menace of the exterior. The escalating aggressions suffered by Jorge and his family take place primarily in anonymous spaces of circulation – roadsides, pathways and stairwells – rather than spaces of engagement or activity.

In *Matar a un hombre*, the rural-urban distinction is deliberately underscored in a way which adds weight to its treatment of the boundaries of the human and the natural. This boundary is especially important in terms of examining the movements of the living body and the dead body across this unseen threshold. Following the title frame is a close-up of an open case in Jorge’s hands, which contains a blood glucose monitoring kit. Contained within this simple point/object shot is an extra emphasis on the fragility of life. According to Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic*, in modern pathological understanding death now appears
as the source of disease in its very being, that possibility internal to life, but stronger than it, which exhausts it, diverts it, and finally makes it disappear. Death is disease made possible in life.20

By marking him out as a diabetic, Fernández immediately situates death within the protagonist’s own body; the continuation of his very existence as a living, breathing organism is made dependent on the inventions of civilisation, adding an elevated dimension of peril to the wilderness. From this perspective, disease signals to us the ever-present potential for death within our living bodies. In this sense, Jorge’s disease is natural, being that the life-disease relationship ‘is not one of nature and counter-nature; but, in a natural order common to both, they fit into one another, one superimposed upon the other’.21 The image of medical technology serves to naturalise the disease; it is only through artificial technological intervention that Jorge’s life is able to contain and suppress the disease which is internal to it. For Jorge, displacement from the civilisation that makes this possible, into the wilderness, would also be the restoration of Jorge’s body to its natural fate. Here we find another example of the complexity of the very notion of nature; inescapably, it is in the nature of Jorge’s body (and, by extension, all human bodies) to die, yet it is a form of naturalness which stimulates anxiety rather than acceptance. The equally “natural” impulse to survive operates in a perpetual and hopeless antagonism with the death that Foucault situates not outside but inside life itself. This imbrication of life and death also implies a certain interpenetration of inside and outside, since the

21 Foucault, p. 7.
balance of these forces within the body fluctuates in response to its interaction with the exterior world, to its position in the landscape; death's progress over life can be accelerated or impeded by exterior factors and both the living and the dead body has an effect on the material world with which it is in contact.

The same flesh that once constituted living body in the city is transformed in its shift to the countryside; the dead body is no longer simply the living body made still but now comes fully into its cadaverous form. While urban death inspires fear and anxiety, its rural counterpart produces revulsion and disgust. As William Ian Miller writes:

> What disgusts, startlingly, is the capacity for life, and not just because life implies its correlative death and decay: for it is decay that seems to engender life. Images of decay imperceptibly slide into images of fertility and out again. Death thus horrifies and disgusts not because it smells revoltingly bad, but because it is not an end to the process of living but part of a cycle of eternal recurrence. The having lived and the living unite to make up the organic world of generative rot – rank, smelling, and upsetting to the touch.²²

In this sense, the dematerialisation of the body through decay is also its re-naturalisation in the stuff of this ‘generative rot’. In the decaying cadaver, as opposed to the seemingly-asleep dead person, we are forced to confront the possibility that our horror stems not from death as finality, but from the fact

that life germinates within dead matter. What horrifies here is that although the distinction remains between the human body and the external matter that we conceptualise into world/nature/landscape, we are not the securely bounded entities that we might imagine ourselves to be. The film’s venture into rural space exposes both protagonist and spectator to the organic horror of death and decay, the recycling and recomposition of matter between the interior of the body and the exterior landscape in which it lies.

The film’s treatment of the rural landscape is thus tinged with the anti-pastoral, in terms of what Jonathan Rayner describes as ‘a retreat from civilization which is brutalizing and regressive rather than pacifying and progressive’, or which at least strips away the veneer that elevates the human into the latter category. Immersion in nature is not an antidote to the ills of civilisation; nature instead reclaims the body into its own cycles, indifferent to the impotencies of the state or the moral uncertainties of the individual. Understanding the relationship between the urban and the rural in Matar a un hombre in this way allows us to further trace mortality across the contact of body and the landscape and to thereby see how landscape resonates with questions of death and mortality beyond serving narrative as a backdrop or symbol.

**Seismic Landscape**

In El año del tigre, death not only takes place within the landscape but erupts violently from beneath its very surface. The film’s representation of the central Chilean landscape presents a very real and recent reflection of the aftermath of

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the earthquake and tsunami which hit the country on 27\textsuperscript{th} February 2010. Registering a magnitude of 8.8, the earthquake was the sixth largest ever recorded and the strongest to have occurred in Chile since the Valdivia earthquake of 1960. The official death toll reached 525, with a further 25 people listed as “missing”. With around 370,000 homes damaged, thousands of families were left homeless in the aftermath of the disaster. In the film’s narrative, Lelio draws on two sub-events that occurred amid the devastation of the earthquake – the escape of 269 prisoners from a jail in Chillán and the discovery of a group of big cats (including a tiger) who had survived after a tidal wave destroyed the Los Montini circus in the small coastal town of Iloca. In the film’s focus on these certain aspects of the earthquake’s aftermath, Lelio adopts a more intimate perspective on a fictionalised version of events and embeds these stories within the landscape in a way that stimulates questions about its potential to both endanger and sustain life.

As touched upon in Chapter One, the threat of seismic activity has historically informed cultural impressions of the Chilean landscape. In February 1835, having witnessed an earthquake in the Chilean city of Concepción, Charles Darwin wrote:

\begin{quote}
It is a bitter and humiliating thing to see works, which have cost men so much time and labour, overthrown in one minute; yet compassion for the inhabitants is almost instantly forgotten, from the interest excited in
finding that state of things produced in a moment of time, which one is accustomed to attribute to the succession of ages.²⁴

Darwin’s experience reminds us that the phenomena of the earthquake has long shaped the recording and representation of Chile’s natural environment and has been one of the major factors that has drawn, and continues to draw, those interested in the natural world to the country. Where we might be tempted to think of nature as a kind of backdrop or container for human activity in the world, Darwin is struck by how the occurrence of an event as cataclysmic as an earthquake produces a kind of exceptional moment, where nature and the form of the world itself is no longer a constant.

It is, of course, common to interpret cinematic representations of natural disasters within the conceptual framework of the sublime. However, I would suggest that this is not a helpful analytical tool in the context of *El año del tigre*. Aside from the comparatively short sequence in which Manuel escapes from prison, the earthquake as a phenomenon is mostly perceived as its aftermath, through its secondary effects and is not presented as a spectacle in itself. Instead, it is more productive here to consider the catastrophe of a natural disaster such as an earthquake as an exceptional moment which disrupts the established order. According to Carsten Meiner and Kristin Veel,

> Through consequences of varying severity, catastrophes and crises change and subvert what we have become accustomed to as the normal

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state of things, thereby exposing what was previously taken for granted.25

What is previously ‘taken for granted’ and exposed in this catastrophe is twofold. Firstly, the human domination of nature (and the doctrine of human exceptionalism which this entails) is called into question. Secondly, the perception of the natural landscape as a constant and settled backdrop to human activity, one which fluctuates only in predictable and eternal cycles and seasons, is undermined. In an earthquake, the landscape is wrought apart by the release of interior forces; natural forces reassert their power over the human world, at the same time as the landscape is subject to sudden and unpredictable change.

In *El año del tigre*, the traces of this devastating event are everywhere. Dead bodies (animal and human), derelict buildings and discarded objects are scattered throughout Manuel’s journey across the post-disaster landscape. However, the lethal power of the natural disaster is signified not only through presence, but also through absence. When Manuel returns to his family home, he cannot locate his wife and daughter, and so cannot confirm them as dead or alive. The empty house and the floating debris along the shoreline suggest that the house has been hit by a tsunami which has swept away the inhabitants. With its alignment to the events of 2010 and the aesthetic attention to the material aftermath of the disaster, the representation of the tsunami’s devastating effect on the landscape in *El año del tigre* is far more closely grounded in the reality of physical destruction than the earlier cinematic tidal

waves that sweep away Maite's family in *La frontera* (Ricardo Larraín, 1991), which bears strong allegorical allusions to the victims of the dictatorship who were “disappeared” and the ongoing grief of the relatives left with only absence instead of bodies to bury. However, there is nevertheless some hint at the significance of physical remains of the mortal body in *El año del tigre*. Seeming to have spotted his daughter in the water, Manuel wades out into the sea, calling her name. However, as he emerges from the waves in the next shot, it turns out that he is carrying a shop mannequin, which he flings back into the water in a mixture of grief and rage. Leaving Manuel out of shot, the camera remains focused for a couple of seconds on the plastic mannequin bobbing around among the rocks (Figure 17). The mannequin here functions as a kind of prosthetic corpse; in this sequence, human and non-human and organic and inorganic debris become momentarily amalgamated in the levelling destruction of the disaster.

![Figure 17: A mannequin floats among the debris of the tsunami in *El año del tigre*.](image-url)
The disaster as an exceptional event also makes death more visible and more exposed, as the placement of the dead body in the exterior landscape also places the human back into nature. However, this connection between human and nature is not a harmonious union, not a romantic state of being “at one”. Instead, it is deeply unsettling and the root of fear, horror, revulsion and mortal anxiety. These responses are both bodily and psychosocial in an age where, as Neil Smith argues, “[t]he domination of nature is a generally accepted reality, whether it is viewed in awe as a measure of human progress or in fear as a tragic warning of imminent disaster”.26 This “reality” is undermined by the exposure of the dead and decaying body, which reinstates the human as subject to nature, rather than transcending it or manipulating it. As Vivian Sobchack suggests, human social and cultural experiences of death have increasingly removed it from nature:

Initially a social and public event, what is today uncomfortably called “natural” death has over time become an antisocial and private experience – all the more shocking when we are confronted with the sight of it. At the same time, we are more familiar with the public sight of accidental or violent death, death thus seen less in the natural order of things than as an aberrant, if frequent and highly charged, dramatic event.27

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The reinsertion of the human body into this ‘natural order of things’ reaffirms its materiality and therefore a certain commonality between body and environment, which allows uncertainties to resurface. The relationship of the matter of the body to the matter of landscape is resignified and reordered by the natural disaster, which unleashes new destructive forces into the landscape, destabilising the place and status of the bodies within it. By exploring *El año del tigre*’s approach toward a specific incident in the seismic history of the Chilean landscape within the broader conceptual intersection of body and landscape, this discussion demonstrates how the film addresses not only its national context but also simultaneously speaks to wider concerns about the place of the human and the vulnerability of the body within landscape. In the final section of this chapter, which returns to *Matar a un hombre*, this precarious body-landscape relationship is subject to further phenomenological exploration through the Merleau-Pontyian notion of flesh.

**BODY AND LANDSCAPE AS FLESH**

One of the aims of this thesis is to demonstrate how the conceptual enrichment of the idea of landscape can provide greater insight into its on-screen representation. With regard to locating death and mortality within the cinematic landscape, the analyses made in this chapter regarding the internality and externality of the body, as well as what happens at the points of contact between body and landscape can be drawn together with reference to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of flesh [*chair*]. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, he claims:
My body is made of the same flesh as the world (it is perceived), and moreover this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world *reflects* it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world.28

By conceiving of flesh as an inclusive reversibility of both the lived (sensed and sentient) body and the perceived (sensed but non-sentient) world, Merleau-Ponty’s concept makes the body ‘an object in nature alongside other objects’ and recognises that ‘we can be affected by the world precisely because as embodied organisms we are not separated from its “flesh”’.29 Crucially, however, the flesh of the living body retains a certain degree of distinction within the “flesh of the world”, making it once part of and apart from the larger concept. Elsewhere, Cataldi concurs that dead flesh’s ability to repulse the living person relies on the fact that that ‘there is overlapping “element” between us serving as a medium of exchange’.30 Although both living and dead bodies are ‘both caught up in the same fabric or same skin – the same *flesh* of perceptibility’,31 our horror stems from being able to perceive at once ‘the two sides of *flesh*, this bifurcation’.32

When the dead body remains as a perceptible and material feature of the landscape, rather than being interred or burned or concealed inside the funeral home or the morgue, this now constitutes for us an exceptional event and sight. When the cadaver is in full view, we are unsettled; the swollen, discoloured,

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28 Merleau-Ponty, p. 248.
31 Cataldi, p. 192.
32 Ibid.
misshapen image of dead flesh is one that we feel we ought not to have seen. Furthermore, when a film provides haptic, sensorily engaging images of this prohibited flesh, we approach even more closely the taboo of contact with the corpse. Troubled that we can no longer fully compartmentalise life from death, man from nature, flesh from world, as spectators of the dead body we become anxious about our own relationship with the world. Simon Bell describes the two poles of opinion (both problematic) which arise from the Cartesian mode of separation of self and world. Firstly, he argues, ‘we tend to regard it as a thing or opponent, to be conquered or tamed, especially when unruly forces of flood, fire, earthquake and storm conspire to destroy our own handiworks, usually perceived as more important’.33 On the other hand, Bell explain, there is a perspective from which ‘humans are seen as the enemy of the environment, damaging and destroying “it”’. By troubling this separation of self and world, these films elude either viewpoint, not settling firmly in either camp. The landscape combines elements of both threat and vulnerability, yet is never fully contained by either.

The dead body lingers on the boundary of this distinction. It is no longer able to sense the world around it and so it is thus returned to the ‘flesh of the world’, to be sensed rather than to sense. However, as long as the flesh remains in its bodily form, the perceiver immediately identifies it as once having been sentient flesh. If ‘[i]t is by the flesh of the world that in the last analysis one can understand the lived body’,34 then the once-lived body has a particular resonance in this understanding. The relationship of living body, dead body and

33 Bell, p. 65.
34 Merleau-Ponty, p. 250.
world is emphatically visualised in the sequence from *Matar a un hombre* in which Jorge is shown sitting on the shore alongside the grisly return of the corpse from the sea (Figure 18).

![Figure 18: Jorge sits opposite Kalule's corpse in *Matar a un hombre.*](image)

For a moment, as Jorge pauses briefly beside Kalule’s supine corpse, Fernández plays with a symmetrical opposition within the frame. Despite their proximity, the living body and the dead body seem to cleave the frame in half, each occupying separate but adjoining spaces. By situating the two bodies within the never-living stuff of the landscape, the image presents them as at once starkly opposed and eerily similar, manifesting the dark but unbreakable tie that now irrevocably binds Jorge’s life to Kalule’s death. However, the tense confrontation between living and dead body in this image is only temporary; the anxiety that stems from the return of Kalule’s body will inevitably propel Jorge out of contemplation and into action. Once this transition occurs – once the body becomes an object to be dealt with rather than an idea to be comprehended –
there is also a dramatic shift in the aesthetic dimension of the body-landscape relationship. In a subsequent sequence, Kalule’s corpse in its plastic shroud is no larger and appears no more striking than the dead tree trunks which also lie in the grass (Figure 19). Here we are forced to confront the reduction of the human corpse to just one more dead thing in the landscape, to acknowledge that it is this imaginative, contemplative dimension which attributes to it a greater significance, a significance which stems from the understanding of the living body inherent in the perception of the dead body. In this reduction of the individual body in the broader scales and patterns of the matter of natural landscapes, we can find a point of dialogue with the search for human remains in the Atacama desert in Nostalgia para la luz. Guzmán’s film underscores the scale of the arid sands in which the bodies of the disappeared may lie but also makes a further move towards the reintegrative possibilities of the common cycles of matter between bodies and stars, positioning the temporality of the cosmos around the open ruptures in historical memory. Here, scales are extended outward, beyond even landscape, in order to allow some form of imagined emplacement for the disappeared within the cosmos.

The question of a bodily experience of landscape is relevant to our understanding of landscape’s relation to death since, as Catherine Waldby argues, death is ‘a scandal and intolerable limit’ to the living body which demonstrates ‘the indebtedness and vulnerability of “Man” to a contingent and wayward embodiment’ which ‘exceeds or refuses to act as agent for conscious projects and desires’.35 When some aspect of the representation of the

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landscape on screen functions to make us, as spectators, aware of our own embodiment, we then also become implicated in death as the ultimate limitation imposed by that embodiment. By not allowing the spectator to remain in either a fully embodied or fully detached relationship to the cinematic landscape, the film compels the spectator to both experience this embodiment and to contemplate its significance. Through this dynamic, film is able to counteract what Bronwyn Davies has called ‘the obviousness, the taken-for-grantedness, the general invisibility of body/landscape relations’.36

![Figure 19: Jorge drags Kalule’s corpse in Matar a un hombre](image)

Building on the position established in Chapter Two, which framed cinematic landscape as experiential, embodied and multisensory, Chapter Three develops this enriched conceptualisation of landscape to address questions of death and mortality which arise in *El año del tigre* and *Matar a un hombre*. In doing so, the chapter has drawn on further phenomenological perspectives, particularly Blanchot’s notion of the cadaver and Merleau-Ponty’s idea of flesh, thus

36 Bronwyn Davies, *(in)Scribing Body/Landscape Relations*, (Walnut Creek, CA.: AltaMira Press, 2000), p. 15.
contributing to the thesis’ overall effort to demonstrate the insight that can be gained from enriching the critical and conceptual framework around cinematic landscapes. By using these perspectives to analyse how the presence of the dead body on screen and the treatment of the seismic landscape work to unsettle and reconfigure body-landscape relations, the chapter has shown how these films draw our attention to aspects of this relationship that might otherwise be taken for granted. In its pairing of two films which draw on real-life events, the chapter has also begun to show how the representation of landscape has the capacity to simultaneously hold a connection to a specific time and place while also resonating at levels that extend far beyond any particular temporal-spatial moment. This double address of landscape is explored more fully in Chapter Four, where the thesis considers how the conceptual issues of territory and possession arise in the cinematic representation of landscapes which bear the markings of specific territorial claims and contestations in both the past and the present.
CHAPTER FOUR

Before moving into this chapter’s analysis of Christopher Murray and Pablo Carrera’s *Manuel de Ribera* and Marcela Said’s *El verano de los peces voladores* and the way these films represent “landscape” as “territory”, it is important to understand the conceptual relationship between these terms. In addition, it is necessary to begin with an understanding of the particular ways in which this relationship has been – and continues to be – culturally constructed in Chile, including the ways in which the production of landscape images in visual mediums has been crucial to the construction, legitimisation and naturalisation of a national territory.

The land that falls within Chilean borders today has a complex territorial history and remains subject to numerous disputes, both internally with indigenous communities and along its borders with other nation states. Historically, the southern regions of the country have been the site of persistent and violent conflicts for territorial control, both before¹ and after² Chilean

¹ From the first Spanish strongholds established by Diego de Almagro in 1536, ventures further south were intercepted and repelled by the Mapuche at the Battle of Reynogüelén, forcing the entire Chilean expedition to return via the Atacama to Peru; this event is generally considered the beginning of the long-running Arauco War between the Mapuche and the Spanish. A further phase of conquest under Pedro de Valdivia took place in the 1540s-1550s, during which Valdivia pushed further south to confront the Mapuche. Ultimately, the Spanish failed to subjugate the Mapuche and in the uprising of 1598 the Mapuche destroyed all Spanish outposts south of the Biobío. Following a brief challenge to the Spanish by Dutch forces, a shifting and hostile frontier around the Bio Bio between the Spanish-controlled land in the north and the unconquered indigenous territory in the south was maintained throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Following a series of parliaments with the Spanish authorities, by the late 18th century Mapuche lonkos tolerated an increased presence of Spaniards and Creole haciendas north of the Bueno river.

² In the wake of Chilean independence from Spain declared in 1810, land south of the Bio Bio was increasingly bought up by non-Mapuches, fuelled by a wheat boom in the expanding
independence and these roots surface today in the ongoing contestation of land rights in ancestral territories between Mapuche communities and non-indigenous landowners. The issue of territorial control over landscape will be explored in relation to these two films from two angles; firstly, in the sense of a desire for control over the physical integrity, form, enclosure and right of access to landscape (and its resources) and, secondly, in the question of who has control over the representation of landscape and how representations of landscape can in themselves be acts of exploring, colonising and delimiting territory.

**CONCEPTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF LANDSCAPE AND TERRITORY**

The concept of “territory”, like landscape, has multiple facets and meanings at different level but at the grandest scale, territory is understood in geopolitical terms as the area of land falling under the jurisdiction of a state; however, recent writing on the relationship between landscape and territory has demonstrated that representations (particularly symbolic or emblematic) of landscape are crucial to building the legitimacy of territorial ownership in the minds of the national community. Bernard Debarbieux, describing a ‘triangular relation between state, nation and landscape-territory’, outlines the political mobilisation of landscape as territory by modern nation states which have ‘construed their visibility and their legitimacy through landscapes emblematical...
of the territories on which they exercised their sovereignty'.

Selected elements of landscape could be mobilised as part of a national symbology; landscape thus provides materials for the process Kenneth Olwig has described as *mindscaping* – ‘a means of training the mind to envision the country in particular scenic, spatial terms’. According to Olwig, the extent of landscape’s conversion to mindscape is so great that ‘[t]he identification of country as a polity has become subordinated, in many ways, to the idea of country as scenic physical landscape’. Similarly, Homi K. Bhabha has also emphasised the political power of landscape imagery as a means ‘to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression’, referring to the ‘recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity’. In appropriating the visible environment as national landscape and thus as a reaffirmation of territorial control, nation states thus have the potential to erase, overwrite or side-line other ways in which the natural environment is understood and assigned meaning and value. In Chile, as Alex Latta explains, ‘western conceptions of socio-ecological space’ are at odds with the ‘multi-scalar territorial imagination of the Mapuche’, based on a ‘cosmovision as a cultural expression of assembled human and more-than-human agency in the landscape’. Consequently, the imagined national landscape is challenged by

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5 Olwig, p. xxxii.


what Fabien LeBonniec describes as an ongoing ‘physical and symbolic reconquest’ of landscape representation by the Mapuche, in which references to landscapes in the public, political and scientific discourses produced by the Mapuche, while drawing on the dominant representations, are clearly opposed to them, by virtue of the contexts in which they are produced.\(^8\)

Stereotypes of a privileged Mapuche relationship to nature – the trope of the ‘ecological Indian’ – can, as LeBonniec explains, be reappropriated and put to use in campaigns for land rights and territorial autonomy and can be discursively connected to other conceptualisations of the physical environment (such as the mapu)\(^9\) and alternative geographies such as the trans-Andean territory of the Wallmapu, now bisected by the Chile-Argentina border. Nevertheless, these counter-hegemonic discourses emerge within persistent racial and economic inequalities, meaning that the unequal balance of power remains an essential consideration when analysing representations of contested landscapes.

**LANDSCAPE IMAGE-MAKING AS A TERRITORIAL ACT IN CHILE**

In the Chilean context, this connection between the production of landscape images and the consolidation of territory is perhaps most frequently explored with reference to the 19th-century territorial expansion into Araucania and the territorial gains made in the War of the Pacific, during which period a

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\(^8\) Le Bonniec.

\(^9\) For a discussion of the concept and the difficulties of translating mapu from Mapudungun, see: Pablo Marimán, Sergio Caniagueo, José Millalén and Rodrigo Levil, ¡...Escucha, winka...! Cuatro ensayos de Historia Nacional Mapuche y un epílogo sobre el futuro, (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2006),pp.28-36.
determined effort was made to represent the new territories as ‘scenic physical landscape’ through the visual arts, particularly through the genre of landscape painting, which also served a scientific and geographical purpose. As part of exploratory and surveying expeditions in Chile’s diverse ecosystems

el trabajo de las ilustraciones fue un elemento central, a fin de cumplir una función que estructuró un orden y normó la experiencia visual que se recogió en estas expediciones.10

[the work of illustration was a central element, whose purpose was to create structure and order and which regulated the visual experience gathered in these expeditions.]

Works by “traveller artists” such as Johann Moritz Rugendas, Karl Alexander Simon and Claudio Gay (as discussed in Chapter One) formed part of a broader connection between landscape art and national identities in Latin America and beyond, as has been explored by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra who introduces his discussion of 19th-century Mexican landscape art by arguing that landscape paintings frequently provide us with ‘privileged windows through which to peek into processes of nation building’.11 In post-Independence Latin American nations, governments sought artistic representation as part of state-sponsored expeditions to facilitate the geographical exploration of the national territory, motivated by ‘the need to know, in order to govern’ as Stanton L. Catlin

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explains.\textsuperscript{12} In the case of 19\textsuperscript{th}-century Chile, Catalina Valdés describes how landscape painting came to fall under 'la rúbrica de género nacional' [the rubric of a national genre] as the confluence of political, aesthetic and historiographical operations contained within it came to be encompassed in the vision of a stable and permanent national territory.\textsuperscript{13} In 1873, publication of the first complete map of Chile, commissioned by the Chilean government from French geologist Amado Pissis, was accompanied by a selection of annotated illustrations of the Chilean landscape, from the Atacama desert to the southern lakes and forests. Pissis' work provided an integrating and ordered vision of the national territory in an era where cartography in the Americas functioned as 'un elemento civilizatorio que superaba a la barbarie' [a civilising element that overcame barbarism].\textsuperscript{14}

The function of landscape image-making as a register of conquest in the remotest parts of national territory was further developed with the arrival of photographic technology in the latter part of the 19\textsuperscript{th}-century, as explained by Ronald Kay:

las vistas fotográficas del interior de un desierto, las instantáneas panorámicas de la selva o de los extraños de la Antártida, no son reflejo de su consuetudinaria tenencia, sino que implican abruptas irrupciones en el continente desconocido, allanamientos y violaciones visuales de un espacio tramado por mentes otras, aborígenes. Estas tomas son señales

\textsuperscript{13} Catalina Valdés, \textit{Cuadros de la naturaleza en Chile: la pintura de paisaje y su literatura artística durante el siglo XIX}, (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2014), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{14} Martínez, p. 193.
ópticas de puntos geográficos descubiertos; constituyen piezas de prueba de su real (y no fantástica) existencia; son la noticia documentada de su conquista. A la vez connotan el inventario de lo por dominar, por ocupar, por explotar. Son en cierto modo blancos. Gráficamente, la toma fotográfica en el Nuevo Mundo efectúa una toma de posesión.

[photographic views of the interior of a desert, the instant panoramas of the jungle or the strangeness of Antarctica are not a reflection of their habitual possession, but instead imply abrupt irruptions into the unknown continent, visual raids and violations of a space laid out by other minds, indigenous minds. These shots are optic markers of points of geographic discovery; they constitute pieces of proof of their real, rather than fantastical, existence; they are the documented news of their conquest. At the same time, they suggest an inventory of what is there to be dominated, occupied, exploited. They are, in a sense, targets. Graphically, the photographic shot in the New World is an act of taking possession.]

Early landscape photography also played a role in projecting the status of the newly independent territories as nation states on the world stage. Alejandra Uslenghi observes the ubiquity of photographic material in Latin American exhibitions in late 19th-century world’s fairs, noting that photographs were used primarily ‘for showcasing the exploration, assimilation, and visual conquest of

national landscapes’.\textsuperscript{16} The travelling photographer could be deployed, like the traveller-painter, to make use of this new image technology in surveying, documenting and organising knowledge of national territories for both political and economic ends; ‘photography was bringing the remote territories of the nation under visual control’, Uslenghi explains, and the images of landscape it produced ‘would eventually facilitate resource extraction and regional assimilation’.\textsuperscript{17}

The interrelationship of territory and landscape continues to play out in contemporary Chilean visual art, both in the works themselves and in the logic of their exhibition. In 2014, a four month exhibition entitled “Puro Chile: paisaje y territorio” [Pure Chile: Landscape and Territory] was held at the Centro Cultural Palacio La Moneda in Santiago. The exhibition brought together over 200 works of art – from 18\textsuperscript{th}-century drawings to 21\textsuperscript{st}-century video installations – relating to the Chilean landscape from collections across the country, uniting them in ‘un solo espacio abierto a la ciudadanía’ [a single space open to the citizenry].\textsuperscript{18} Although CNCA president Claudia Barattini Contreras framed the collection as evidence that ‘Chile avanza desde todas sus regiones, acelerando el desarrollo territorial, descentralizándose’ [Chile is making progress in all its regions, accelerating territorial development, becoming decentralised]\textsuperscript{19}, the location of the state-funded exhibition re-enacted historical patterns of the accumulation of landscape imagery by central

\textsuperscript{16} Alejandra Uslenghi, \textit{Latin America at Fin-De-Siècle Universal Exhibitions: Modern Cultures of Visuality}, (Basingstoke, UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 68.

\textsuperscript{17} Uslenghi, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{18} Claudia Barattini Contreras, ‘Carta Institucional’, in \textit{Puro Chile: paisaje y territorio}, ed. by Daniela Berger Prado (Santiago de Chile: Fundación Centro Cultural Palacio La Moneda, 2014), p. 6 (p. 6).

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
government in its efforts to consolidate and unify its diverse and unwieldy national territory. Although the exhibition was promoted as showcasing ‘la destreza de nuestros creadores que trabajan siempre por reflejar, cuestionar y reinventar el territorio nacional’ [the skill of our artists who are always working to reflect, question and reinvent the national territory], the words of the CCPLM’s director about the exhibition seemed to promote the idea of an overarching sense of nationhood, capable of encompassing

[distintas perspectivas que se integran y han evolucionado a través de los tiempos y que, desde distintos lugares geográficos, nos unen en las ideas de nación e identidad, pero también nos fortalecen en el reconocimiento de la diferencia y la riqueza cultural y social que esto significa.]

[different perspectives that join together and have evolved over time and that, from different geographical locations, unite us in the ideas of nation and identity, but also strengthen us through the recognition of difference and the cultural and social richness that this signifies.]

These words echo the rhetoric of the Fundación Imagen de Chile, a government organisation created in 2009 to promote Chile’s “marca país” internationally. The nation-branding strategies it oversees draw heavily on Chile’s natural landscapes as a marker of identity and one of the four “pillars” of the brand centres on the geographical diversity encompassed within Chilean territory:

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20 Barratini Contreras.
Somos una geografía de extremos, donde conviven el desierto más árido del planeta con milenarios hielos, la inmensidad del océano, sus costas y extraordinarias islas, con fériles campos y la cordillera, columna vertebral que une a todo el territorio.\textsuperscript{22}

[We are a geography of extremes, where the driest desert in the world sits alongside ancient ice formations, the immensity of the ocean, its coastlines and extraordinary islands, with fertile pastures and the Andean mountain range, the backbone that connects the whole territory.]

This image of Chile as a body composed of various differing physical environments, like organs which are nonetheless connected along its length by the metaphorical spinal cord of the Andes (and presumably coordinated from the “brain” of Santiago) is a clear echo of older writing on the Chilean landscape. Mariano Latorre wrote in his 1947 work \textit{Chile, país de rincones} that it was these same mountains that ‘dominan el paisaje y le dan su fisonomía’ [dominate the landscape and give it its physiognomy].\textsuperscript{23} The characterisation of the Chilean territory as the unification of an unrivalled geographical diversity has persisted across the decades, with visual culture frequently being put to work as a means of circulating such imagery both within and beyond national borders.

\textbf{CINEMA AND TERRITORY IN CHILE}

The contemporary national self-image of unification and interconnection of diverse geographical regions has also been taken up by the Chilean film

\textsuperscript{22} Fundación Imagen de Chile, ‘La Marca Chile’.
\textsuperscript{23} Latorre, p. 7.
industry, most prominently in the new distribution programme established in 2014, ‘Chile Territorio de Cine’. Created by the promotional agency CinemaChile, a public-private partnership with partial funding from the CAIA, ‘Chile Territorio de Cine’ aims to develop new audiences for Chilean cinema and to secure more screen time for a wider range of Chilean films in local cinemas, with a view to supporting films which would ordinarily be excluded from commercially competitive markets. The Santiago-based organisation constitutes the most important distribution channel for non-commercial cinema in Chile and lies at the centre (both geographically and organisationally) of a network of more than 40 cinemas, which stretches from Tarapacá in the north to Magallanes in the south, with around 20 clustered in the Región Metropolitana.

As a thematic concern, ideas of territory and territoriality are undoubtedly in conceptual circulation within Chilean filmmaking and have surfaced in various guises within fiction cinema since the 1990s. In the postdictatorship transition cinema of the 1990s and early 2000s, territorial imaginations most prominently arose in a metaphorical-allegorical register (Larraín’s La frontera, and Justiniano’s Amnesia, for instance) as a means of situating the confrontation with traumatic memory, or within cartographies of urban marginalisation and social exclusion, as in Caluga o menta [Candy or Mint] (Justiniano, 1990) or Machuca (Andrés Wood, 2004). Over the last decade, the films of the novísimo cine chileno have included a current which explores the private spaces of the (sub)urban home as a personal domain, marked by a kind of territorial domesticity which is hostile to incoming strangers and seeks to maintain a fragile seclusion from exterior pressures, as exemplified in La nana, Metro
cuadrado [Square Metre] (Nayra Illic, 2011) and Las cosas como son [Things as They Are] (Fernando Lavanderos, 2012). However, the films discussed in this chapter – *El verano de los peces voladores* and *Manuel de Ribera* – open up very different perspectives on the formation, contestation and consolidation of territory, strongly rooted in particular formal and aesthetic approaches to exterior landscapes in their rural and natural dimensions.

In this chapter, I examine how these films present two different moments in the resignification of landscape as territory, a shift which is shown to be processual, contested and unstable. In *Manuel de Ribera*, we witness the originary moment of territory as it comes into being, as the narrative charts its protagonist’s obsessive attempt to secure a personal island domain, whilst struggling against both natural and human resistance. Murray and Carrera’s film, which straddles the documentary-fiction boundary, also calls into consideration the territorial workings of the filmmaking endeavour itself; I will argue that it is as much the filmmakers as their protagonist who seek to stake a claim on the landscape. Following on from the precarious foundational moment of territory, the chapter considers how *El verano de los peces voladores* negotiates the ongoing need to reaffirm territorial control in the face of contestation. Framed by Mapuche demands for rights over ancestral land, the landscape of Said’s *El verano de los peces voladores* is at once a contested physical territory, a valuable commodity and a material surface which becomes inscribed with the social and political relations which traverse it. Having explored how the landscape-territory relationship is both narratively and aesthetically constituted in these films, the chapter concludes by reflecting on the power relations of territorialisation that
are made visible in these films – between coloniser and colonised, between man and nature, between filmmaker and subject. Here I will demonstrate that these films direct us towards bigger questions about the politics of landscape representation; who has access to landscape, who shapes its form, who creates its images, who views them.

**Manuel de Ribera: Possession and Presence**

*Manuel de Ribera* is the feature debut of both Christopher Murray and Pablo Carrera, who trained as filmmakers at the Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago. The film debuted at Rotterdam in 2010 and was screened at various film festivals both in Chile and on the international circuit. Its eponymous middle-aged protagonist arrives alone in the Calbuco archipelago off the coast of Puerto Montt in the Los Lagos region of southern Chile, making his way by boat to an uninhabited island. Manuel arrives from the mainland with no family, no job and little backstory, although he later reveals that he abandoned his family in Santiago to go and work as a caretaker on country estate in the south. Having been given ownership of the island as an inheritance from his former employer, Manuel has a plan to found a community on the island and begins encouraging locals from the struggling fishing communities on neighbouring islands to join him. Apparently tired of living on society's terms, Manuel's frustrated desire for autonomy is soon manifested as a will to dominate his neighbours and his environment.

Produced by Santiago-based filmmakers and having received funding from the national government’s FONDART competition (but under the rubric of an ‘obra regional’ [regional production]), as well as regional government funding from
Los Lagos and financial support from the digital cinema programme at the Santiago arts centre Lastarria 90, *Manuel de Ribera* occupies, even in the crude terms of finance, an ambiguous position in relation to the region it represents. Working through an experimental mode of production for fiction cinema and occupying areas of common ground with documentary filmmaking, Murray and Carrera arrived to film on location in the archipelago having written only the first scene of the film. The rest of the work was completed over a three week period of alternate writing, filming and improvisation, with one filmmaker directing the shooting of each scene while the other was writing the next one. Carrera has suggested that through this approach the film ‘cobró rumbo propio, se fue a la deriva y en base a todo eso encontró su propia reflexión’ [drifted along on its own course, and on the basis of all that found its own reflection]24. An outline of the project in the filmmakers’ production notes emphasises that the majority of the cast are ‘los habitantes reales de la zona’ (the real inhabitants of the area) encountered by actor Eugenio Morales in the role of Manuel during the location shoot and that these interactions will be incorporated into the developing narrative, in order that ‘toda escena estará entregada al propio devenir de aquellos personajes’ (every scene is given over to those characters’ own process of becoming).25

In Manuel, Murray and Carrera present a figure whose ‘process of becoming’ is inextricably connected to his territorial ambitions. His own name – Manuel Ribera (*ribera* being the Spanish word for bank or shore, as well as a not

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uncommon Hispanic surname – becomes “Manuel de Ribera” in the film’s title, echoing the toponymic names of many of the conquistadors (e.g. Gonzalo de Córdoba, Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Hernando de Soto). His surname contains within it both his origin (on one side of the water) and his destination (on the other), while also denoting the natural boundaries of his newly claimed territory. The possibility of controlling the space where he lives and works and being able to define the terms of others’ inclusion or exclusion seems to offer Manuel his own particular “island paradise”; an existence outside of the obligations and relations of the mainland society with which he has become so disillusioned. However, the protagonist is all too aware of the gap that stretches between his legal proprietary entitlement to the land and the difficulties of establishing “on the ground” the conditions that would enable him to control and shape it as territory. After Rodrigo, the boatman, signals that Manuel is visibly incongruous amid the surroundings he is laying claim to (“No tenís la cara de la gente acá” [You don’t look like people round here]), Manuel confirms his status as an outsider from Santiago and, referring to the lands he has inherited, tells Rodrigo “Tengo que hacerlas mías, poh” [I’ve got to make them mine]. Manuel’s words articulate the difference in his mind between the legal status of ownership and the act of ‘owning’ as a process. Fundamental to this process is the exploration of his new territory. Several early sequences in the film show Manuel exploring the fields and woodland of the island, acting out his belief that ‘Para domar, hay que estar allí’ [To gain control, you have to be present].
This walking, covering and discovering the form and content of the landscape that is the medium of his new project is essential to Manuel’s mapping of the island, the product of which is shown twice in the film; once when he makes his initial cartographic expedition around the shore and again when Inés tells him about the Isla Virgen, an island on a distant edge of the archipelago (Figure 20). Mapmaking subdues the complexities of the islands, smoothing away ragged edges and delimiting them into analysable and communicable two-dimensional forms. In Tom Conley’s consideration of the relationship between mapping and cinema (as both being visual and ideological tools that structure the spatial imagination of the viewer), the appearance of a map on screen marks a shift in the spectator’s relationship to the cinematic space: ‘A map becomes the fictional territory of a film, but its alterity in the field of the image establishes a point
where an effective critical relation can be inaugurated’. Following Conley’s alignment of film and map as being not only referential images but also ideological ones, if we consider Manuel’s map as an opening towards such a ‘critical relation’, I would suggest that its appearance and extension across several moments in the film are points at which Murray and Carrera open to scrutiny the workings of the territorial gaze on landscape, a series of invitations to reflect on the potential complicity of filmmaker and spectator with the more explicit and forceful territoriality of the protagonist. As such, these moments can be analysed as an axiographical contemplation of the territorialised landscape, as proposed by Bill Nichols in his work on documentary ethics:

Axiographics […] is an attempt to explore the implantation of values in the configuration of space, in the constitution of a gaze, and in the relation of observer to observed.27

Understanding the representation of landscape as representation in which a set of values might come ‘to be known and experienced in relation to space’28 presents a means to engage with cinematic landscape as a contested site, connecting the production of images to the communication of codes which both shape and respond to the experience of landscape beyond the screen.

Landscape’s potential resistance to ‘the implantation of values’ can be traced in those sequences where space can be considered to have been ‘freed from eventhood’, which Martin Lefebvre suggests is the pivotal moment in which

26 Tom Conley, Cartographic Cinema (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 3.
28 Nichols, p. 77.
landscape distinguishes itself from setting. In common with the mapping of the island, these are moments of alterity which open the possibility of critical consideration, although they operate at a different scale. These landscape images exist outside the flow of narrative, engaging the spectator in a spatial experience that transcends Manuel’s territorial framing and as such provide a moment of critical distance. For Carolina Urrutia, the long takes of landscape in Manuel de Ribera are imbued with

la densidad de un tiempo, ya no solo presente en el plano, sino físicamente en la edad geológica de dicho paisaje. El sujeto aún no lo manipula, no lo domina, el paisaje es independiente y esa separación opera también desde su retórica narrativa.

a temporal density, present not only in the shot, but also physically present in the geological age of that landscape. The subject does not manipulate or dominate it, the landscape is independent and that separation also operates through the film’s narrative rhetoric.

In one such scene, the film cuts abruptly from observing Manuel’s building project to a camera moving (with a smooth, disembodied motion that disconnects it from any human point of view) into dense woodland. For over half a minute, the only sounds that can be heard are the low tones of the wind and the intermittent chirping of unseen birds; while Manuel is in one corner of the island imposing his own vision on the land, the cinematic image is being recaptured by nature, which succeeds in masking human activity. Another

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29 Lefebvre, p. 20.
dimension to this critical emancipation of landscape from the designs of the protagonist is that these sequences allow other voices to be heard. With the camera still moving further along its uncharted path into the woods (Figure 21), a man's voice is heard over the image, mixing with the diegetic sound:

Acá siempre andan inventando historias de hombres solos, de personas solas. Porque está lleno de lugares vacíos nomás [...] Pero hombres solos hay en todos lados. Y lugares vacíos también. ¿Por qué venir tan lejos?

[Here they are always making up stories about lonely men, about lonely people. Because it’s full of empty places [...] But there are lonely men everywhere. And empty places too. Why come so far?]

Figure 21: The camera strays into the woodland in Manuel de Ribera.

Although it is not clear who the voice belongs to, this sequence is one which might be interpreted as allowing the landscape to speak back to its coloniser. The juxtaposition of this contemplative sequence with the previous narrative
sequence of Manuel restoring the derelict cabin situates him within a much longer time-frame, in which stories of lonely men perpetually circulate, coming and going, resurfacing in the islands ‘empty spaces’. The filling of the frame with a dense tangle of trees, concealing heard but unseen fauna, puts pressure on the idea of the islands as empty space; empty only if we discount what pre-exists human activity. The voice’s final question is one that could equally address Manuel, the filmmakers or the spectator, all of whom have travelled (either physically or imaginatively) to this edge-of-the-world location.

The disembodied voice is a repeating feature of the film; it returns to melancholically retell stories of the islands’ past inhabitants (even those who leave seem to fated to return to die); to lament loneliness and emptiness; reinscribing the names of little known places into the landscape. The position from which it speaks is unknown, but by allowing it to resonate against landscape without visible human activity, Murray and Carrera open up space for multiple readings of its significance. It might, perhaps, suggest the island giving voice to its own history – a merging of temporalities, as discussed further in Chapter Five, or the confessional tone of the secrets of a ‘repentant’ landscape, giving voice to a marginalised account of the past.31 Drawing on the potential postdictatorial interpretation of landscape as offering some possibility of a kind of therapeutic emplacement, perhaps these sequences in the film are an opening out of the island landscape to where repressed memory can be

31 The notion of ‘repentant landscape’ is drawn from the work of 20th century Chilean poet Maria Bahamonde (who called northern Chile ‘a repentant landscape in the middle of a heroic history’) by Lessie Jo Frazier, who uses the term to signify the struggle to mobilise the past amid the ‘abandonment and anachronism’ of histories, movements and connections that cannot be reconciled with the state’s vision of post-dictatorial memory.
spoken – or, on the other hand, they may serve to underscore landscape's indifferent absorption of historical tragedy, trauma and violence.

The repeated writing out of human activity from the landscape image helps to create the film's deep tension between man's desire to make himself a presence in landscape (which Manuel explicitly links to the idea of controlling that landscape as territory) and the ever-present threat of being made absent, erased and territorially impotent. John Wylie's critical work on landscape and absence questions the 'initial presumption of connection and immersion' from which he and other leading theorists of landscape have tended to set out their thinking. Wylie questions its association with a romanticised account of being-in-the-world, one troubled by both myths of primitivism and baleful notions of authentic or proper dwelling – a coincidence of people with both the land and themselves.32

In its critical approach to spatial control, *Manuel de Ribera* troubles the idea of 'coincidence' between person and land, by repeatedly allowing landscape to evade the frame of territory – that is, the frame place around it as it is imagined and designed upon by Manuel. As Carolina Urrutia has noted, there is a displacement of protagonism 'desde el cuerpo, hacia el paisaje' [from the body, towards the landscape], exemplifying what she describes as a 'centrifugal cinema' where '[y]a no hay un centro inmanente en el sujeto' [there is no longer an immanent centre in the subject].33 Further to this, the film inverts the

33 Urrutia Neno (2013), p. 120.
territorial dynamic (in which the human captures, encloses and imposes limits on an expanse of physical space), to present the constraints imposed on human activity by the physical and material conditions of the landscape. This is most evident in the many sequences which depict coastal landscapes, at the very point where territorial ambitions are hemmed in by the dissolution of land into water. The act of crossing water is frequently the subject of long takes, with tracking shots following Manuel’s boat as he moves across a seemingly interminable expanse of grey water. In another sequence, a voiceover relates the failed attempt to build a lighthouse on the shore of one of the islands, as the camera observes Manuel from behind, seen hunched over in his raincoat at the water’s edge, seizing handfuls of stones from the water in front of him, before casting them aside, where they fall back among the others and are covered by the water (Figure 22). The objective of this seemingly Sisyphean task is unclear, but the sequence firmly places Manuel’s endeavours within a history of ruptured, derailed projects. This chain of failures is not only written into the landscape allegorically but also historically; offering a nationally specific reading of the landscape as a surface where territorial projects are inscribed, Juan Eduardo Murillo’s analysis of Manuel de Ribera situates the film within a historical pattern of failure and defeat within its shooting location in the Calbuco archipelago.

Chile mismo, a partir de Calbuco, es un proyecto de país fallido. Diego de Almagro primero, Fitz Roy después, y el más desgraciado de todos, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, reflejan en sus diarios la tragedia que sobrevino siempre al argonauta cuando se aventuró al sur del canal de Chacao.
Lugares bautizados como Seno Obstrucción, Isla Desolación, Bahía Inútil o Puerto de Hambre dan cuenta de una gesta trágica, sin sentido, vergonzosa.34

[Chile itself, from Calbuco onward, is a failed country-making project. The diaries of Diego de Almagro, then FitzRoy, and, the most unfortunate of all, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, reflect the tragedy that inevitably befell the Argonaut who ventured south of the Chacao channel. Places baptised as the Gulf of Obstruction, Desolation Island, Useless Bay and Port Famine recall a tragic, senseless, shameful exploit.]

Figure 22: Manuel moving stones at the water’s edge in Manuel de Ribera.

For the locals, Manuel is the latest in a series of outsiders who have come to the archipelago in the hope of a new beginning or looking for space in which to act out their own particular territorial fantasy. As well as relating the collapse of

the lighthouse project, at another point the voiceover also tells the story of a 
*gringo* who bought land on one of the islands of the archipelago and tried to 
gather livestock from neighbouring islands into a collective smallholding. Add 
to these the timber-merchant turned evangelical pastor who believes that God 
told him to build a church there (right down to the exact measurements), and it 
is clear that the islands have a strong appeal as a blank canvas for those who 
aspire to grand projects or new beginnings. This is usefully articulated by Deleuze in his analysis of the cultural persistence of the island:

> Dreaming of islands – whether with joy or in fear, it doesn’t matter – is 
dreaming of pulling away, of being already separate, far from any continent, of being lost and alone – or it is dreaming of starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew.35

Geographically, Manuel’s is a *continental* (as opposed to *oceanic*) island. Deleuze 
draws on this distinction to characterise the continental island as

> accidental, derived islands. They are separated from a continent, born of 
disarticulation, erosion, fracture; they survive the absorption of what once contained them [...] Continental islands serve as a reminder that the sea is on top of the earth, taking advantage of the slightest sagging in the highest structure.36

Given this struggle for dominance between land and sea, for Deleuze it is 
*‘philosophically’ normal*’ that an island would be deserted, since ‘[h]umans 
cannot live, nor live in security, unless they assume that the active struggle

36 Deleuze, p. 9.
between earth and water is over, or at least contained’.\(^{37}\) The soundscape of the film is permeated by the constant sound of rain and the land is dotted with puddles of water, a continual suggestion that land and therefore human life is failing to gain the upper hand in this struggle.

That Manuel’s endeavours conclude with the cabin in the same state of disrepair as it was found (having been destroyed by a local boatman in retaliation in a dispute) settles the narrative events of the film into a wider ecology of island relationships (both human-human and human-landscape), which can seemingly only be disrupted so far before balance is restored. Murray and Carrera’s aesthetic and formal choices work to open up critical distance from the narrative of territorialisation, through the diversion of spectatorship away from human activity and towards, at one end of the scale ‘inusitados protagonismos de lo minúsculo, de lo recóndito’ [curious protagonisms of the miniscule and the hidden],\(^ {38}\) and at the other, an awareness of the insignificance of human preoccupations in the face of the nonhuman forces and structures which find material form in the landscape.

Of particular interest to the analysis being made in this chapter is the attitude and approach taken by the filmmakers to the landscape in which they worked. As well as remaining open to the influence of the location’s inhabitants, the filmmakers’ reflections on the process also express an equal openness to the project being shaped by the environment, taking on ‘una forma de aproximación abierta y libre, no solo con su guión sino también con el espacio físico que lo determina’ [a free and open form of approach, not only towards the script but

\(^{37}\) Ibid.

\(^{38}\) Corro Penjean, p. 156.
also towards the physical space that determines it.\textsuperscript{39} Even the directors’ lexical choices took on the maritime spirit of their location: ‘no habrá otra alternativa que la de naufragar por la deriva que el relato vaya tomando’ [there will be no alternative but to become shipwrecked by the story as it goes adrift].\textsuperscript{40} These same production notes make clear that, despite the titular importance of the protagonist, place and territory were at the heart of the project from the outset:

Cuando partimos al sur a rodar, sabíamos que queríamos realizar una reflexión sobre la soledad y los territorios, entendidos como lugares de pertenencia. Ése era el cruce fundamental.\textsuperscript{41}

[When we set off for the south to shoot, we knew that we wanted to create a reflection on loneliness and territories, understood as places of belonging. That was the fundamental point of intersection].

This intersection of place with social relations (loneliness and belonging, but also power and domination) echoes Robert Sack’s understanding of human territoriality as ‘the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area’.\textsuperscript{42} Although much of the language used by the directors to convey their methodology suggests a reluctance to impose formal structures or narrative direction, at other points the directors themselves express a self-conscious understanding of a more active impulse towards capture and control, summarising the project as

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{39} Jirafa, p. 6.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
[u]n leve intento de dominio sobre ese territorio, una leve conquista sobre la riqueza de ese lugar y esas personas, una búsqueda tal como la de Manuel de poder fundar forzosamente algo para sentirse dueño.\(^{43}\)

[a little attempt at control over that territory, a little conquest of the richness of that place and those people, a search like Manuel’s to be able to forcibly establish the feeling of ownership over something].

In parallel with their protagonist, the directors articulate a desire for spatial control; the desire to lay claim to territory. The rural space of the islands is perceived by the urban dweller as one of natural richness; just as Manuel, arriving without money, family or work, assumes that the island will provide the raw materials for his self-sufficiency, so the director arriving without a script assumes that his project will be sustained by an organic and intrinsic narrative that lies within the rural space waiting to be released and which will yield itself to be appropriated, reformulated and made intelligible as a cultural commodity for urban consumption. As such, Murray and Carrera’s approach has been critiqued by some commentators as the construction of a gaze which colludes in the exoticisation of the rural ‘other’. For instance, an emotive response to the film’s screening at Rotterdam in 2010 from Chilean critic Pamela Bienzobas describes

\[ \text{la sensación de estar observando un terrario poblado de personas modestas – a veces miserables – reducidas ante la cámara a un rol de bichito curioso.}^{44} \]

\(^{43}\) Jirafa, p. 6.
[the feeling of observing a terrarium populated with simple – sometimes wretched – people, reduced before the camera to the role of strange little creatures].

Perhaps because of those aspects of its production and aesthetic which are reminiscent of documentary filmmaking, there has been a particular ethics-focused angle of questioning from critics of the representation of place and inhabitants in *Manuel de Ribera*. Marcelo Morales, writing for Cinechile.cl, outlined the division of opinion provoked by *Manuel de Ribera*, explaining that the interaction of lead actor Eugenio Morales with island locals was

[u]n cruce que para algunos hace frotar momentos de real autenticidad alcanzando un tono antropológico plausible; para otros la aparición de lugareños borrachos en una cantina o narrando sus vidas sin tener real conciencia de su retrato ante una cámara estaría más cerca de una caricaturización. Un safari rural, un exotismo.45

[an interaction that for some brings out moments of real authenticity, achieving a convincing anthropological tone; for others the appearance of locals getting drunk in a bar or narrating their lives without having any real awareness of their portrayal in front of the camera is closer to a caricature. A rural safari, an exoticism].

The interpretation of the film as a ‘safari’ across a distant landscape, which seeks out and exposes ‘strange creatures’, who all the while remain unaware of

their own portrayal, raises some of the same ethical questions of agency that surround the intersection of nature and wildlife filmmaking and the observational practices of ethnographic documentary work – genres which are close relatives. Following David MacDougall’s frequently cited definition of an ethnographic film as any film ‘which seeks to reveal one society to another’46, we can understand Manuel de Ribera as driven (at least in part) by the purpose of revealing the social life of these rural island communities to geographically, socially and economically distant metropolitan audiences, both Chilean and international. However, this ethnographic project is not simply cinematic costumbrismo, as it is complicated by the relationship of the local residents to the camera, to the filmmakers and to the narrative– do they really appear, as Morales and Biénzobas seem to suggest above, without being conscious of their own representation, like animals in a nature documentary? Walter Goldschmidt defined ethnographic film as being built from ‘shots of people doing precisely what they would have been doing if the camera were not there’;47 however, most of the conversations and remarks included from the islanders are deliberately cultivated material, provoked by the interventions of Eugenio Morales as Manuel. Sequences such as the moment where an old man offers drinks to the crew behind the camera or where a woman turns away from her conversation over mate around the kitchen table to stare directly into the camera indicate that the presence of the camera is not forgotten by those it captures, whether we read them as non-professional actors or documentary subjects. These acts bring the spectator back to an awareness of the fact that

they follow the camera as an outsider to these spaces, whether as unwelcome intruder, tolerated presence or welcome guest; it is a reminder that the landscape of Manuel’s (and, by extension, other) territorial ambitions is not a blank canvas but an inhabited space already inscribed with other meanings and feelings of belonging.

Manuel de Ribera’s straddling of the boundary between narrative and observational cinema places the spectator in an uncertain position. Are we being asked to align ourselves with Manuel as protagonist (albeit it an unsympathetic one), to share his view of Calbuco as a ‘típico pueblo de huevones medio dormidos’ [typical town full of half-asleep idiots] and to sympathise with the frustration and failure of his project? Or does the film instead set out to undermine even the possibility of establishing a territory in a strange landscape, casting Manuel as a sad outsider in an environment he cannot understand, whose ruin is the natural end of a project without foundations? In the midst of this ambivalence, the landscape comes into its own, subsuming human life into the motions of wind and water and its palette of greyish hues, transcending attempts to reconstruct and possess it as territory.

EL VERANO DE LOS PECES VOLADORES: CONFLICTING VIEWS OF LANDSCAPE

The release of El verano de los peces voladores (Said, 2013) was accompanied in the mainstream Chilean media by headlines which announced the arrival of the so-called “conflicto Mapuche” [Mapuche conflict] into cinemas48. Centred

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48 See, for example: The Clinic, “Mira el trailer de “El Verano de los Peces Voladores”, el conflicto mapuche llega al cine de manos de Marcela Said”, 30th June 2014 <http://www.theclinic.cl/2014/06/30/mira-el-trailer-de-el-verano-de-los-peces-voladores-el-conflicto-mapuche-llega-al-cine-de-manos-de-marcela-said>[accessed 14 July 2015].
around a lake owned by a wealthy *latifundista* Pancho Ovalle, the film explores the tensions between the Ovalle family and the local Mapuche community through the eyes of his teenage daughter Manena. The territorialisation of the landscape and the exploitation of its resources are at the heart of this conflict, which grows tenser as Pancho becomes ever more determined to restrict local access to his land. The personal dilemma experienced by Manena beings to the fore ethical, environmental and political questions about the relationships and histories interlaced into the landscape.

The sense that the presence of the Mapuche and other indigenous groups in Chilean cinema remains remarkably scarce is echoed in recent scholarship. In terms of participation in the cinema industry, Miriam Ross has highlighted the scarcity of the ‘predominant use of indigenous languages or the participation of peripheral communities in the production process’ in 21st-century Chilean cinema.49 Simultaneously calling attention to issues of indigenous representation in Chilean cinema, while also echoing the integrationist language that Roelf Foerster and Jorge Iván Vergara have argued is associated with more conservative political attitudes towards the Mapuche in Chile50, Felipe Maturana, writing for *LaFuga* argues that:

> como sociedad no hemos podido evolucionar de la idea de lo indígena como algo pasado, negándoles la posibilidad de una existencia actual y

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urbana, que posibilite su integración real e imaginaria a nuestra sociedad chilena.\textsuperscript{51}

[as a society we have not been able to evolve beyond the idea of the indigenous as something from the past, denying them the possibility of a current and urban existence, that would make possible their real and imaginative integration into our Chilean society.]

Maturana’s comments critique discourses in Chilean society marked by a “denial of coevalness”,\textsuperscript{52} which perpetuate the idea of Mapuche and other indigenous groups as being temporally distanced from the rest of Chilean society. However, his emphasis on the incorporation of indigenous people into “our Chilean society” also recall integrationist discourses which have been resisted by many Mapuche who reject what might be interpreted as a call to \textit{awinkarse} [“to become more \textit{winka}” and, therefore, less Mapuche]. The resurfacing of such lines of thought in reviews of the film strikes a problematic note; it is possible to see this extended to the idea that indigenous actors, communities, histories and issues are being absorbed into “our cinema”, especially given that the representation of indigenous communities in fiction cinema is particularly rare. Gastón Carreño, in his study of archive film of the Aymara and Mapuche peoples notes that ‘prácticamente la totalidad de las producciones audiovisuales sobre pueblos originarios son documentales’ [practically all audiovisual material about indigenous people is in the form of


Like Maturana, Carreño concludes that the filmic portrayal of Chile’s indigenous groups is highly stylised, reductive and non-specific: ‘se manifiesta el peso de las convenciones en la representación de lo indígena, por cuanto culturas con enormes diferencias son reducidas a una misma entidad’ [the weight of conventions is clear in the representation of the indigenous, in that cultures with enormous differences are reduced to a single entity]. In his study of the comparatively small number of Chilean fiction film representations of indigenous peoples, Francisco Gallardo characterised these as taking an ahistorical and mythologising approach to their subject matter: ‘el nativo del cine chileno no es un ser en el mundo, es un signo, un ícono, un objeto de colección depositado en un museo’ [the native of Chilean cinema is not a being in the world, he is a sign, an icon, an object placed in a museum collection].

Alongside the problematic nature of indigenous representation in Chile’s film history, there is a limited but growing project of cinematic self-representation among Chile’s Mapuche communities. Although not as developed as indigenous cinema in other parts of Latin America, Mapuche-Chilean filmmakers have over the last three decades participated in the biennial international festival organised by CLACPI (Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Cine y Comunicación de los Pueblos Indígenas), with the festival hosted in Santiago in 2004 and co-hosted in Temuco in 2015. Following a successful 2015 event, preparations are underway in Temuco for second edition of FICWALLMAPU (Festival Internacional de Cine Indígena de Wallmapu) in November 2016. Indigenous

54 Carreño, p. 94.
cinema, which has also become more visible at Chile's largest film festivals, although it is primarily confined to specific strands outside the main competitions, such as FICValdivia’s “Primeras Naciones” [First Nations] strand which, according to the 2015 festival catalogue seeks to facilitate ‘un encuentro multicultural y un espacio de reflexion sobre nuestra condición plurinacional’ [a multicultural encounter and a space for reflection on our plurinational condition]. Work by indigenous filmmakers has also appeared in similar dedicated strands of international festivals outside Latin America, including the NATIVE section of the Berlin International Film Festival, although as Peirano notes, the role of the major international festivals as “gatekeepers” of world cinema remains a subject of debate among those involved in the production and distribution of indigenous media. Prominent Mapuche filmmakers of recent years include Claudia Huaiquimilla (who released her feature debut Mala Junta (Bad Influence) in 2016), documentary-maker Jeannette Paillán (Wallmapu, 2001) and Francisco Huichaqueo, who works primarily in short film format.

Given this cultural history of cinematic representations into which it emerged, it is understandable that El verano de los peces voladores was anticipated with interest as an addition to that corpus; the film approached the historical matter of Mapuche territory through its current social and political resonances and was shot on location in southern Chile with Mapuche actors. One of these actors, Roberto Cayuqeo (Pedro) indicated in an interview for The Clinic that Said’s film might help to dispel clichéd ideas about Mapuche culture in Chilean society by showing ‘cómo estás sociedades se enfrentan y cómo estas nuevas

generaciones se van encontrando’ (how these societies come face to face and how these new generations encounter each other).\textsuperscript{57} Cayuqueo has praised Said’s efforts approach to generate awareness of the Mapuche conflict:

Marcela Said se atrevió a tocar el conflicto mapuche que muchas veces es olvidado por la sociedad chilena, porque solamente se acuerdan cuando es el 12 de octubre\textsuperscript{58}, de que tienen ciertos problemas con su pueblo originario, o cuando muere algún dueño de un fundo por estos conflictos de tierra.

(Marcela Said dared to work with the Mapuche conflict which is often forgotten by Chilean society, because the fact that they have certain problems with the indigenous people is only remembered on 12\textsuperscript{th} October, or when some estate owner is killed in the land conflicts).

While Cayuqueo reflected on the film’s impact on domestic audiences, fellow actor Gregory Cohen (Pancho) suggested that the film’s treatment of the specifically Chilean issue of the Mapuche conflict actually speaks to its international audiences of more universal issues, albeit ones which take on various localised manifestations:

Lo bueno de la película, es que además de que se entiende el conflicto mapuche, se entiende que hay muchos equivalentes en el mundo: en


\textsuperscript{58} The celebration of “Día de la Raza” (Day of the Race) on 12\textsuperscript{th} October became a public holiday in 1922. Along with many other Latin American countries on this date, Chile commemorates the first sighting of the Americas by Columbus’ crew in 1492. Although the day is promoted as a celebration of the country’s mixed indigenous and Hispanic heritage, recent years have also seen protests from activist groups demanding the release of indigenous political prisoners, greater autonomy for indigenous communities and the return of ancestral lands.
Irlanda con los ingleses, Palestina con Israel, en Ucrania con los rusos. Los problemas de invasiones y de culturas dominantes con las etnias están en todas partes.59

[The good thing about the film is that as well as dealing with the Mapuche conflict, it also has to do with the fact that there are many equivalents in the world: in Ireland with the English, Palestine with Israel, in Ukraine with the Russians. The problems of invasions and of dominant cultures and ethnic groups are everywhere.]

Said herself, in an interview for The Clinic, described the film as a continuation of themes raised in her documentary work, as a critique of ‘los mismos problemas sociales, a la misma clase burguesa inconsciente, abusiva e ignorante’ [the same social problems, the same thoughtless, abusive and ignorant middle class]. When asked what she hoped her new film would achieve in socio-political terms, Said stated that ‘solo espera que la película contribuya al debate en Chile, y a explorar otra mirada respecto del problema (mapuche)’ (she only hoped that the film would contribute to the debate in Chile and explore another perspective on the [Mapuche] problem).60 Similarly to the comments from Maturana discussed previously, Said’s choice of language in referring to the ‘problema Mapuche’ could, however, be held to reinforce

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problematic ideas about the position of the Mapuche as presenting a ‘problem’ to the rest of Chilean society.

However, when it came to audience responses, the beauty of the film’s landscapes seemingly threatened to side-line political considerations. When asked about the reception of her film among international audiences at Cannes Directors’ Fortnight in 2013, Marcela Said specifically mentioned that ‘[l]es encantan los paisajes’ (they love the landscapes). This remark is not, in itself, surprising. Said worked on location alongside cinematographer Inti Briones to capture the verdant woodlands, misty lakes and steaming hot springs of Araucanía, nurturing a sense of place which is simultaneously vibrant and haunting, and the depiction of natural landscapes was frequently cited as a strength of the film by commentators. Ana Josefa Silva, for instance, writing for La Segunda, opened her review by summarising Said’s film as dealing with ‘[e]l espinoso tema de lo que se ha dado en llamar el conflicto mapuche, pero desde la magnífica naturaleza del sur como centro – la niebla, el agua, los bosques, la lluvia’ [the thorny issue of what has come to be known as the Mapuche conflict, but by taking as its centre the magnificent nature of the south – the fog, the water, the woods, the rain].

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62 The impact of these images was such that Briones’ contribution to the film won him a fourth Pedro Sienna prize for Best Director of Photography, having previously won in 2012 (Bonsai), 2010 (Ilusiones Ópticas) and 2009 (for another landscape-oriented film, El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia). Briones’ involvement in the film drew critical attention in its own right, following the Peruvian cinematographer’s past work with some of Chile’s most acclaimed directors, including Raúl Ruiz, Gonzalo Justiniano and Ignacio Agüero.

The beauty of the depictions of southern Chilean landscapes in *El verano de los peces voladores* involves a tension between the serenity and apparent detachment of their representation and their centrality to the violence and conflict at the heart of the narrative. The spectator is drawn into a tension between aesthetic contemplation and ethical implication; the experience of landscape as visually and sensorily pleasurable is constrained and countered by the awareness of complicity in a territorial regime of enclosure and exclusion. The cinematic experience of landscape is made available to the spectator through the act of framing it as a succession of images, an act which is intrinsically territorial. Elizabeth Grosz argues that in image-making (whether in cinema, art or architecture) ‘[t]he frame is what establishes territory out of the chaos that is the earth [...] [w]ith no frame or boundary there can be no territory’64. The selective framing of a landscape image as a section from an expanse of land stakes out a visual territory, with the boundaries of the frame marking the line between enclosure within and exclusion beyond.

From the positioning of the spectator in relation to these landscapes (which can also be the creation of a viewpoint from which to survey territory), arises the question of whose landscape exactly we are seeing, since ‘[m]ost interest groups dealing with the same territory of land see different landscapes’.65 The contestation of territorial authority among such groups, according to Stuart Elden, is to be distinguished from conflict over other resources or issues, since ‘conflict over land is twofold: both over its possession and conducted on its

terrain. Land is both the site and stake of struggle. At points in the film the spectator is granted distance from landscape but at others is immersed within it. By positioning the spectator within the same landscape that they observe, the same section of land which is 'both the site and stake of struggle', Said ensures that there is no neutral or objective view to be had of such a landscape, since we are located within it, amongst its inhabitants, those engaged in that struggle. Denis Cosgrove's *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* juxtaposes the position of the insider and the outside to landscape:

A disinterested and objective, scientific geography is the apotheosis of the outsider's view of the world. It embodies in formal rules the perspective of one who can consider spatial organisation the objective outcome of objective processes and who can separate himself literally and theoretically from the object of study. It is the opposite of the insider's experience, of one engaged by necessity in making and living in a landscape.

The central characters of *El verano de los peces voladores* can all be considered insiders to the landscape in the way that Cosgrove outlines, in that their way of life is in some way (whether socially or economically) bound up with the landscape. It is therefore crucial to an understanding of territorialisation in the film that Said mediates our initial impressions of these characters through a sense of their differing relationships to the landscape (or even to 'different

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landscapes' as Antrop characterises the varying interests of territorial stakeholders).

![Figure 23: Pedro on the jetty in *El verano de los peces voladores*.](image)

The first person to appear in *El verano de los peces voladores* is Pedro, who is seen from behind, standing on a small wooden jetty extending out into the lake; this is also our first view of what will become a recurring site in the film, which returns repeatedly to the image of the jetty and the lake, as though it exerts a kind of magnetism. At first, Pedro’s demeanour is brisk and workmanlike, as he transfers carp from a trap attached to the jetty to a small plastic bucket (Figure 23). However, leaving the fish flapping erratically in the bucket, he then pauses to survey the body of water in front of him, which appears grey and horizonless in the mist. Said eschews close-ups, dialogue and even the sight of Pedro’s face, choosing instead to introduce us to the character by situating him alone in front of the lake which will become the central space of conflict driving the film’s narrative, confirming from the outset his stake in the landscape. With the lake shrouded in mist and the figure with his back to the camera, there is a gesture of
distancing at work in this opening sequence, a visual replication of Jean-Luc Nancy’s suggestion that ‘[t]he landscape begins with a notion, however vague or confused, of distancing and of a loss of sight’.68 The almost-silence of the sequence is echoed with an almost-blindness in this shot, which denies a clear view of the landscape prior to the complexities that will unfold across it with the progression of narrative; the obscuring of the horizon constitutes a dissolving of one of the ‘parameters of place-worlds’ within which landscape comes to be known and seen.69 This is a different kind of distancing from that which Cosgrove suggests might produce knowledge or objectivity; here, the spectator is confronted with unfamiliar country, where ‘one feels estranged, unsettled, uncanny: one no longer knows one’s way around, there are no more familiar landmarks, and no more familiar customs’.70

The sense of the uncanny that lingers in the landscape of El verano de los peces voladores is drawn out more strongly in our first encounter with Manena. The teenager initially appears in long shot, walking through the woods that surround the lake where Pedro is working in the early morning. Shifting the spectator’s attention from figure to landscape, the camera lingers on the trees for a couple of seconds after Manena exits the frame. The camera then shifts to follow behind Manena as she walks, moving into a close-up as she calls her dog, Efa, who is heard panting out of frame. As Efa and Manena make their way through the trees, the vegetation shifts in and out of focus with the motion of

70 Nancy, p. 54.
the handheld camera, creating a textured mosaic of greens and browns. Manena emerges from the cover of the trees as the camera turns to face directly into the sunlight, silhouetting her against the white glare, with the wider landscape again becoming obscured from sight by the elements.

With its shift in musical tone, unsteady handheld camera and a teenage girl alone in the forest, anxiously calling a dog that has disappeared, the sequence picks up on recognisable horror film tropes to reiterate the idea of the landscape as containing an as yet unknown threat. To return to Murphy’s explanation, mentioned in the previous chapter, the archetypal menace of the woods stems from ‘the belief that the forest beyond the settlement is the place where the representatives of “civilization” are pitched against the forces that embody “savagery”’. The allusion to this confrontation not only prefigures the violence of conflict in the film’s narrative but also the uncanny manner in which this conflict returns colonial discourses and performances of territory to the landscape. With Manena’s face and voice (seen and heard unlike Pedro’s) registering enjoyment that turns to anxiety, we encounter a protagonist who finds herself alone in a landscape which, despite its pleasures, remains opaque, unreadable and perilous. This unsettling vision of the countryside through the eyes of a young adult shifts the landscape towards what Michael Leyshon and Catherine Brace have called ‘dark ruralities’ which upend the idea of the rural

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71 Murphy, p. 16.
idyll in favour of a mode of representation that ‘uses rusticity to foreground the primitiveness of rural life’ in ‘an aberrant other countryside’.72

Traces of this dark vision of the rural landscape persist, intruding into the sheltered familial space of the home. Manena returns as the rest of the family and their domestic employees go about their morning routine; she tells her father Pancho that she has been for an early morning visit to the hot springs: “Estaba exquisito. No había nadie” [It was lovely. There was nobody there]. The aura of danger created around Manena’s isolation in the previous sequence is here transposed into a positive, as she attempts to dispel her father’s disapproval. At Pancho’s request, the family’s Mapuche maid Ester tells Manena “Tiene que tener cuidado. Se puede nublar. Se puede perder.” (You should take care. It could get foggy. You could get lost). Ester’s ominous words as she serves the morning coffee are followed by a further warning that it is impossible to escape once the mountain becomes covered by the mist. Pancho’s recourse to Ester to caution his daughter against the dangers of the wilderness is a curious outsourcing of authority, one that is perhaps based on the belief that Ester, as a member of what is frequently referred to in the film as ‘la comunidad’ (the community), possesses a privileged insider knowledge or understanding of the landscape. Manena, however, dismisses the warning, asking her father if he believes “esas historias” [these stories]. The sequence establishes Pancho in his role as the (sometimes frustrated) patriarchal head of the Ovalle household, seeking control as both father and employer, surveying the landscape from the privileged position of his holiday home balcony. We see an extension of this

desire for control as the sequence hints at his attitude towards the surrounding landscape as a potentially dangerous entity which must be controlled; it is Pancho’s growing obsession with enclosing, dominating and regulating his own slice of territory within this landscape that provides the impetus for the film’s ultimate tragedy.

The most pressing of Pancho’s territorial concerns is the desire to rid his lake of an infestation of carp. Even before Pancho ventures out to take charge of the lake himself, he has already set his employee Pedro the task of catching the unwanted fish and the matter is the subject of much dinner table conversation among the upper-class family, particularly between Pancho and his brother-in-law Carlos, from whose father Pancho took over the estate. The desire to exterminate the carp seems to form part of a performance of authoritarian masculinity, to the exclusion of Manena and her mother. When Manena’s mother suggests simply draining the lake and letting the carp die, in order to then refill it, Pancho dismissively and sarcastically points out that there is no straightforward way of draining the lake; Manena’s protests against her father’s plans are repeatedly ignored. The origins of the unwanted fish are unclear. According to Pancho, the carp originated from a river on the border of China and Russia and were brought over in special fish tanks and introduced deliberately by Cucho to get rid of some problem algae. The problem was that no-one had foreseen how fast the fish would breed. Carlos disagrees, saying that his father made this up and in fact the carp have always been there. Pancho keenness to establish the carp as alien to the landscape seems to be of emotive rather than practical significance, a justification for their extermination. Pancho
seems happily unaware of any ironic reflection of his own status (from the view of the Mapuche community, at least) as an outsider presence in the landscape, a view that falls outside his own proprietorial understanding of his territory.

As if to emphasise Pancho’s frustration, the carp (even once dead) persistently reappear throughout the film, often in shots where no human faces are shown. In one such sequence, a lone carp trapped and struggling to breathe in a puddle of muddy water is poked at, kicked and finally killed by a group of children, who are part-amused and part-horrified. The fate of the fish seen earlier in the trap is revealed when the camera observes a hooded Pedro, at a distance and partially shrouded by trees, burying a wheelbarrow load of silvery carp in an out-of-the-way spot. Later, in a close-up of bare earth, sticks moved by unseen hands poke cautiously at the soil. After a few seconds, a blackened fish head emerges from the earth and the stick begins working more purposefully to disinter it, until a buried carp emerges gruesomely from its shallow grave (Figure 24). As the land is worked and reworked by different interest groups, it regurgitates what it has been made to swallow, uncovering what was intended to remain concealed, offering a warning that Pancho’s actions will not be easily forgotten.
As the film progresses, Pancho’s attempts to control his territory escalate and, with them, the divide between the Ovalle estate and their Mapuche neighbours becomes ever clearer. When Manena asks him about a rumour she has heard from “a guy from the community” about a plan to install electric fencing around a section of the estate, her father retorts that ‘el campo es mío’ [it’s my field] and that Manena should count her blessings, a veiled warning not to become involved in the matter. Within the security of the family home, Pancho’s attitude towards relations with the Mapuche community is condescending and arrogant.

As maids Ester and Rosa are preparing food in the kitchen, they are accompanied by the sound of conversation and laughter out of frame. The camera confines the women to background activity as it cuts to the balcony where Pancho and a group of other well-off looking middle-aged men are gathered, laughing at a joke about one of the group’s mother-in-law. One of Pancho’s companions remarks that he cannot understand the Mapuche claim to land rights and questions the idea of a ‘deuda histórica’ (historical debt),
arguing that the Mapuche have never actually owned land, as their ancestors were primarily hunter-gatherers rather than sedentary agriculturalists, recognising usufructory rather than proprietary rights to the land. The men laugh that almost everyone now claims Mapuche ancestors. Pancho jokes that he might change his name to “Huallipan or something with a double L” and responds with faux-annoyance when one of the others reminds him that his surname (Ovalle) already has a double L. Knowing that Ester and Rosa are working just out of shot and seeing that the joke does not let up when the older male employee enters to serve food, the spectator is fixed in an uncomfortable position of complicity alongside Pancho’s inner circle.

Although his bravado means he is happy to make light of the issue over drinks on the balcony, a later sequence by the lake reveals a tenser side to the standoff between Pancho and his opponents. Bolstered by the presence of a silent Carlos, he mentions to Pedro that the cages being used to trap the carp have come loose and sunk to the bottom of the lake and asks that he repair them. As Pedro turns to leave, Pancho calls him back saying ‘Parece que me mandaron un mensaje’ (It seems like they sent me a message). Pedro, back to the camera, is silent in the face of this esoteric comment, prompting Carlos to turn from the lake and address him (‘¿No oye?’ [Don't you listen?]). The conversation is tense, as Pedro explains that the community are unhappy that their right to hunt on the land (the very same usufructory right earlier cited by Pancho’s friend to downplay the issue) is being restricted by the fencing. Pancho tells Pedro to take a message to the Huentrun brothers, local organisers, telling them to speak directly to Pancho if they have an issue. Again, Pedro turns to leave and again he
is called back, to hear Pancho say ‘Necesito pirañas’ (I need piranhas) and then to be mocked by Carlos for having no sense of humour about the remark. The staging of this conversation right beside the lake visually “grounds” the conflict in the reality of the territory which is at stake, with Pancho and Carlos asserting ownership and authority and Pedro being pushed towards the limits between his responsibilities as an employee of the Ovalles and his allegiance to his family and community.

The foregrounding of the physical landscape (both aesthetically and narratively) in El verano de los peces voladores is politically significant, given the centrality of the land-landscape-territory nexus to the issue of indigenous rights in Chile today. The historic debt of land rights has been reframed in a contemporary context so that ‘[l]and and territory lie at the heart of the Mapuche’s postcolonial experiences, informing evocative and powerful agendas for change’,73 although this would could more accurately be referred to as an ongoing experience of ‘internal colonisation’ throughout the history of the independent Chilean state. Although the role of the state is downplayed in El verano de los peces voladores in favour of representing the contestation of land primarily at the level of family and community, its hand in the issues at stake is nevertheless visible through the role of the local police officers, who protect the timber convoys from activists and who are also seen early in the film making violent arrests among a group of young Mapuche men. The camera records the scene from within the Ovalle family’s car, looking out from behind the separation of the windscreens; Manena is shocked by the brutality of the police,

but her father and his companion, frustrated by the inconvenient obstacle in their way, are satisfied that those being arrested must have done something to merit that treatment. While short and offering little in the way of context, the sequence frames the police (and, by extension, the state) as a force which protects the interests of particular sectors of the community while posing a threat to others, imbuing the territorial conflict with a particular imbalance of power.

Processes of land acquisition continue to unfold and provoke conflict today since, as George Holmes explains, both national and international NGOs and businesses, as well as Chilean state actors, continue to buy up land in Patagonia (whether for commercial or conservation purposes), on a scale that could be considered a ‘land grab’. In reference to the etymological connection (Mapu [land]-che [people]), Andrew Webb emphasises that ‘[t]he land in question is specific; to call oneself Mapuche means to invoke an essential tie to particular geographic and spiritual spaces located within what is today called Chile’. Given the role of landscape imagery in the conversion of indigenous land into Chilean territory outlined earlier in this chapter, the representation of landscape in *El verano de los peces voladores* can be understood as necessarily political. Within the context of Said’s film, the land that harbours this ‘essential tie’ is visually constructed and offered to the viewer as the same landscape in which Manena lounges in the thermal springs, the same landscape in which Pancho wants to set up explosives, traps and electric fences, the same landscape

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that is crossed by timber convoys flanked by police escorts. A darkly beautiful landscape is constructed out of land which is transected by the projections of various territorial imaginations and differently founded claims to ownership, whether these are historical, judicial-legal, political, social, financial or cultural.

The aesthetic of *El verano de los peces voladores* simultaneously immerses the spectator in a landscape which is the site of territorial conflict, while hiding from view exactly what is at stake, creating an unseen shadow-world of action that rarely enters the frame. Perhaps the most pivotal events of all – those immediately preceding Pedro’s death – are entirely obscured. Having only been visible when at work or with Manena, we experience Pedro’s death too only through the eyes of his employer’s daughter, significant primarily as a tragedy on her terms. The spectator is presented with Pedro’s covered body for just long enough to register the identifiable sneakers before the shot is pulled out of focus. When we see Manena for the final time, she floats face down in the water of the springs as though dead too; in the moment where she turns face-up, however, we realise she is simply bathing. The tranquillity of clear water, bright sunshine and green leaves is troubled by the persistent musical refrain from the discovery of Pedro’s body, a sign that this memory indelibly (if invisibly) marks her relationship to the landscape in which she quite literally immerses herself in search of solace.

This criss-crossing of overlapping and conflicting perspectives returns us to the central question of what we might consider as an ethics of landscape representation: whose landscape (and, thereby, whose reality) are we seeing on screen? The events of the film have clear contemporary referents beyond the
screen. Pedro’s death in an accidental police shooting has clear echoes of the killing of young Mapuche activist Matías Catrileo in 2008 and the agitated talk amongst Pancho and his fellow landowners of trespassing and arson attacks on property is the stuff of regular headlines in the Chilean press. Said’s cinematic landscape remains, however, untainted by physical evidence of such events. Until Pedro’s body appears underneath a police tarpaulin, the conflict leaves little material trace; actions take place beyond the visibility of the frame and circulate across the landscape as an ether of suspicion, tension and rumour. The seductiveness of the southern Chilean landscape images that impressed critics and audiences at Cannes is inseparable from its concealment of the materiality of violence.

Setting out from an understanding of territory and landscape as distinct but closely interwoven concepts (whose meanings may, additionally, be historically, politically and culturally inflected), this chapter has demonstrated that while the cinematic landscape is often the subject of a territorialising gaze, its representation may also contain elements which resist total subjugation to this gaze. In earlier chapters, I have argued that an attention to the conceptual richness of landscape opens up the cinematic landscape to an enhanced examination of its aesthetic, formal and narrative details. Here, my aim in applying this approach to the analysis of landscape in Manuel de Ribera and El verano de los peces voladores has been to show how it can be put to work to answer questions about the political and ethical dimensions of landscape representation that arise from its relationship to territory and how such a

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76 Catrileo, 23 years old at the time of his death, was killed when police opened fire on demonstrators at the Santa Margarita estate in the Araucanía Region. Police officer Walter Ramírez was later charged by a military court with “unnecessary violence resulting in death”.

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reading can be developed in dialogue with the specificity of the films’ Chilean context.

This effort to work together landscape’s conceptual breadth and its contextual specificity is continued in the next chapter, in which I explore the plural temporalities of landscape. Chapter Five considers how the Chilean landscape is shown to register the coexistence of tradition and modernity in *Turistas* and *Huacho*, but also demonstrates that these anthropocentric notions are layered among non-human and more-than-human time patterns. Here, the cinematic landscape is shown to be capable of registering multiple temporalities, the markers of which are revealed as we broaden our understanding of landscape beyond representation, image and surface and into experience, process and depth.
CHAPTER FIVE

Martin Lefebvre has suggested that temporality is a defining feature which marks out the cinematic landscape as distinct from other forms of landscape representation:

in the end it may be that the medium’s contribution to the idea of landscape lies in its ability to combine, in the spectator’s gaze and consciousness, the *pictorial* landscape with the *temporalized* landscape.¹

Through close readings of Alejandro Fernández Almendras’ *Huacho* and Alicia Scherson’s *Turistas* (both 2009), this chapter will consider how these films show landscape’s relationship to questions of temporality. Before entering into close analysis of the films themselves, however, I want to preface this discussion within some perspectives on the interplay of time and landscape from beyond film studies, in order to locate the films and Lefebvre’s argument within a richer theoretical context.

LANDSCAPE AND TEMPORALITY

Although the analysis of pictorial landscape privileges the spatial facet of landscape, any undertaking to analyse the cinematic landscape must, as Lefebvre argues, take into account that film represents landscape not only as an expanse but also as a duration; a discussion of film landscapes, therefore, is incomplete if temporality is not considered. The readings of *Huacho* and *Turistas* which follow in this chapter will demonstrate how these considerations

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can be enriched by engaging with work on landscape's temporality from multiple academic disciplines.

In recent years, anthropology has been a productive disciplinary source of efforts to rethink and refine understandings of landscape as a concept with an essential and inseparable temporal dimension. For Barbara Bender, it is impossible to fully disentangle landscape from its existence and transformation across time:

Landslapes are created out of people’s understanding and engagement with the world around them. They are always in process of being shaped and reshaped. Being of the moment and in process, they are always temporal.²

Bender’s understanding of landscape’s temporality is based on two opening premises:

The first: Landscape is time materialized. Or, better, Landscape is time materializing: landscapes, like time never stand still. The second: Landscapes and time can never be “out there”: they are always subjective.³

With regard to the subjective experience of landscape as a materialisation of time, Bender qualifies her second proposal by noting that

To say that landscape and time are subjective does not require a descent into a miasma of cultural relativity. It simply means that the engagement with landscape and time is historically particular, imbricated in social

² Bender, p. 103.
³ Ibid.
relations and deeply political [...] Nor does the recognition that landscape is subjective mean that it is passive [...] Human interventions are done not so much to the landscape as with the landscape, and what is done affects what can be done.⁴

Bender’s work thus provides two important points about landscape and temporality which will be taken forward in this chapter. Firstly, while landscape both precedes and endures beyond any particular moment of human intervention, the ways in which it is experienced in that moment are historically and socially specific. Secondly, these interactions with landscape are part of an ongoing process of configuration and signification. Echoing this emphasis on processual formation, Tim Ingold finds time and landscape to be connected through the understanding of both life and landscape as processes: ‘[f]irst, human life is a process that involves the passage of time. Second, this life-process is also the process of formation of the landscapes in which people have lived’.⁵ In his approach, Ingold describes the need to

move beyond the sterile opposition between the naturalistic view of the landscape as a neutral, external backdrop to human activities, and the culturalistic view that every landscape is a particular cognitive or symbolic ordering of space.⁶

Ingold makes use of what he refers to as a ‘dwelling perspective’ which centres on the idea of landscape as a record and testimony of individual lives and experiences and privileges ‘the knowledge born of immediate experience’ and

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⁴ Bender, p.104.
⁶ Ibid.
‘the understandings that people derive from their lived, everyday involvement in the world’.

Even where people move and engage with landscape in cyclical patterns in the course of their day-to-day behaviours and routines, ‘[t]he places which represent the stations within our personal histories are continuously being re-evaluated and re-interpreted by their users’.

Because landscape both endures and changes over time, temporality becomes pluralised; it is a site where pasts, presents and futures are layered and enfolded together. Like Ingold, Paul Cloke and Owain Jones have also used “dwelling” as a conceptual basis from which to understand landscape as a temporal, as well as spatial, phenomenon. Cloke and Jones characterise dwelling as being 'about the rich ongoing togetherness of beings and things which make up landscapes and places, and which bind together nature and culture over time'. They argue that approaching the study of landscape with this concept in mind helps to uncover the ‘time-depth’ of landscape ‘which relates the present to past futures and future pasts’. This idea of landscape as being constituted in the activities of multiple actors over time is reinforced by philosopher of social science Theodore Schatzki, who describes how ‘[t]he temporalspatial nature of landscapes consists in how landscapes are drawn into and anchor the

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7 Ingold, p. 152.
10 Cloke and Jones, p. 664.
(interwoven) timespaces of people's activities as they carry on social practices'.

From another disciplinary perspective, landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn argues that we need to recognise landscape's temporality as extending to timescales which are both more fleeting and more enduring than the human experience of time. She argues that 'landscape's nested quality' means that we must take into account that various 'scales of time' are embedded within it:

from the length of a deep breath, to the time spanning the lives of people known to a single person, to the time of the earliest surviving landscapes shaped by humans, to the age of fossils.

Whiston Spirn's idea here prompts us to consider landscape as marked by temporal processes on scales which transcend not only the human lifespan but also the existence of the species. Taken together, the approaches outlined here demonstrate that landscape is in any given moment the site of operation of not one but many temporalities; we should therefore be conscious that the representation of landscape in cinema will intersect with temporalities which are formed through both human and non-human activity and which are frequently subjective, processual and multiscalar. Informed by such an understanding of landscape's multiple temporal aspects, this chapter applies this perspective in its approach to Huacho and Turistas. Beginning at the level of day-to-day activities of human life, the first section considers how landscape is

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part of both the routines of work and the escapism of leisure and demonstrates how the two films render these differently temporalised domains of activity within landscape. In the second section, the chapter broadens its view to consider how these everyday landscapes can also be considered as sites of interplay between tradition and modernity and to explore how the landscapes in these films are frequently positioned between preservation and transformation; in doing so, the chapter shows landscape to be subject to a combination of both globalised and locally specific processes. Finally, the chapter expands its view to non-human and more-than-human temporalities – to consider how the same landscapes that serve as the site of our daily activities and of historical transformations are also the space in which other lifespans play out and are shaped by processes and cycles beyond human control.

**LANDSCAPE AS TASKSCAPE: WORK, REST, PLAY**

Both *Huacho* and *Turistas* depict both inhabitants and visitors to landscape engaged in familiar activities and everyday routines, involving both work and non-work activities. However, as I will demonstrate in this section, these activities (and the relationship between work and leisure) are represented very differently in the two films, not least because of the ways in which human activities differently structure the temporal experience of landscape in each case.

Before taking a closer look at the films themselves, I want to give further thought to Tim Ingold's work – as mentioned in the previous section – on the relationship of landscape and temporality, in particular into his ideas of a ‘dwelling perspective’ and the ‘taskscape’. Working at the crossroads of
anthropological and archaeological involvement in the study of landscape, Ingold proposes that we adopt what he calls a ‘dwelling perspective’,

according to which the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves’.13

Through this perspective, Ingold brings to light a pattern of dwelling activities which take place within landscape, which he refers to as the ‘taskscape’, and which he suggests as a means of exposing the inherent temporality of landscape. In Ingold’s usage, a ‘task’ is defined as ‘any practical operation, carried out by a skilled agent in an environment, as part of his or her normal business of life. In other words, tasks are the constitutive acts of dwelling’.14 The range of tasks that we witness in Huacho and Turistas include building fences, feeding farm animals, watching birds, putting up tents and taking photographs; regardless of whether we consider them “work” or “leisure”, all can be considered within Ingold’s idea of the taskscape.

The temporality of the taskscape is perceived by those who dwell within it ‘not as spectators but as participants, in the very performance of our tasks’15 – that is to say, its subjective temporality arises from the midst of the processes which take place within it. As film spectators, we are therefore at a remove from this direct temporal experience of the taskscape; however, in this section I will draw on key sequences of the two films which demonstrate that the extent of this

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13 Ingold, p. 152.
14 Ingold, p. 158.
15 Ingold, p. 159.
distancing from the taskscape is variable, with particular formal and aesthetics moves being made by the filmmakers to shape our relationship to the tasks we witness on screen.

Regarding the relationship between the taskscape and the landscape, Ingold proposes that ‘the landscape as a whole must be understood as the taskscape in its embodied form: a pattern of activities “collapsed” into an array of features’\(^{16}\).

Furthermore, Ingold also emphasises the processual nature of landscape:

> Since, moreover, the activities that comprise the taskscape are unending, the landscape is never complete: neither ‘built’ nor ‘unbuilt’, it is perpetually under construction [...] the forms of landscape are not pre-prepared for people to live in – not by nature nor by human hands – for it is in the very process of dwelling that these forms are constituted [...] Thus the landscape is always in the nature of ‘work in progress’.\(^ {17}\)

Ingold holds landscape to be ‘the congealed form of the taskcape’\(^ {18}\) – to perceive landscape is to perceive the cumulative effect of various taskscaping processes that might be underway at a given moment.

*Huacho* and *Turistas* both explore the encounter with landscape of subjects whose experiences of rural space can both be thought of through the lens of the taskspace. The chapter brings into its analysis the lived experience of rural space of both the *campesino* (peasant)\(^ {19}\) and the tourist; subjects whose

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\(^{16}\) Ingold, p. 162.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) I use both the Spanish-language term *campesino* and the English *peasant* in the rest of the chapter. Where I reference work written in Spanish or where the discussion draws on particular social, political and cultural meanings attached to this term in the Chilean and broader Latin American contexts, I use the untranslated *campesino* to acknowledge this. However, where I
taskscapes may coagulate within the same landscape but who experience those landscapes in very different ways. For the spectator of *Huacho* and *Turistas* (typically urban, educated, middle class), the representations of these subjects also speak to different understandings of and associations with the landscape in which they appear. Whereas the figure of the *campesino* or peasant mobilises traditional (as well as stereotypical) visions of the countryside (with specific resonances of traditional national identities for the Chilean viewer, as will be discussed later), the tourist broadens the category of ‘rural subject’ in a way which troubles the idea of binary oppositions which might be constructed between the rural and the urban. As Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield explain:

> there are other subjectivities that fall between or outside these polarized realms that also require examination: these are the tourists, visiting friends and family, or members of a diasporic culture who feel both connected to and alienated from the rural milieu and its people and who, by virtue of their interstitial position, bring critical attention not only to the boundaries demarcating between urban and rural and between inside and outside but also to the sliding scales of values assigned to them.\(^\text{20}\)

Recent sociological perspectives on the figure of the *campesino* in Latin American societies have questioned how this subject identity, while remaining tied to notions of “the rural”, nevertheless reflects the changing nature of this

category in the 21st century. Mexican sociologist Armando Sánchez Albarrán has examined how the campesino is being redrawn amid ‘la transformación gradual, pero firme, de su cultura, costumbres e ideología promoviendo el surgimiento de nuevas identidades rurales’ (the gradual, but steady, transformation of their culture, customs and ideology, giving rise to new rural identities).21 The broader forces at work in these transformations will be brought into the discussion in more detail in the next section of this chapter, where this section’s discussion of Huacho as a filmic representation of intertwined taskscapes while be tied into landscape’s relationship to shifting patterns of tradition and modernity in rural Chile.

In its treatment of rural subjects, Fernández Almendras’ debut feature film Huacho reprises many of the themes and reinterprets several sequences from Lo que trae la lluvia [What the Rain Brings], his 2007 short film about the effects of globalisation on a small rural community in the south of Chile, which was nominated for Best Short Film at that year’s Berlinale. On the back of the short film’s festival success, the director received a funding award in 2007 from the Global Film Initiative and was selected for the 2008 Sundance/NHK International Filmmaker award to support the completion of Huacho. Huacho was chosen to open the 2009 International Critics’ Week in Cannes and was one of two Chilean films (alongside Ilusiones ópticas (Optical Illusions) by Cristián Jiménez) selected for the Horizontes Latinos strand of the 2009 San Sebastián film festival. It also received the prize for Best First Feature at the Santa Cruz Iberoamerican Film Festival in Bolivia. The film had its official domestic

premiere on 14th January 2009 but was rescreened by the Centro Alameda in Santiago the following year. Its North American premiere took place at the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival and it was later shown at the Palm Springs festival in 2010.

Alongside Lo que trae la lluvia and his later feature film Sentados frente al fuego, Huacho forms part of an ongoing concern with the day-to-day of rural lives in Fernández Almendras’ early work. The film was shot in the countryside of the Southern Chilean province of Ñuble and its capital, the small city of Chillán, in the summer of 2008. Agriculture is the primary economic activity in Ñuble and over a third of the population lives in rural areas (well above the national average of around 13%). The cast is comprised of local inhabitants as non-professional actors and the film follows, from sunrise to sunset, four members of a poor rural family. Huacho begins in the early hours of the morning with the family – Alejandra, her pre-teen son Manuel and her elderly parents Clemira and Cornelio – waking in darkness and gathering around the table for breakfast.

The structure of the film follows the activities of each of the four characters, with Fernández Almendras opting to present each character’s day as its own section in the film (rather than intertwining the narratives), returning to the breakfast table at the beginning of each new perspective. The grandmother, Clemira (Clemira Aguayo), is shown first, feeding chickens and buying milk to make into cheese to sell at the roadside. This is followed by Clemira’s daughter Alejandra (Alejandra Yáñez), who goes to work in the kitchen at a local tourist spot and then makes the journey to Chillán to pay the family’s electricity bill. Her young son Manuel (Manuel Hernández) is shown next, also making the long journey to Chillán for school and spending most of his day trying to persuade
his classmates to lend him a videogame. In the final segment, Manuel’s grandfather Cornelio (Cornelio Villagrán) spends a solitary day labouring in a nearby field before making his way to the local bar. The family’s narratives are reunited when Clemira, Alejandra and Manuel come to take Cornelio home from the bar and the film closes with the family’s evening meal and the routines of the end of the day.

The family represented in *Huacho* clearly coincides in many aspects with the meanings ascribed to the term “peasantry” as an object of academic study, being ‘small agricultural producers who, with the help of simple equipment and the labor of their families, produce mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfilment of obligation to the holders of political and economic power’22. This prompts the question of where *Huacho* can be considered to fall in relation to the scope of dominant generalised understandings of “peasant cinema”. In her discussion of the Québécois director Albert Tessier, for instance, Gillian Helfield briefly sketches the characteristics marking out “peasant cinema” as a kind of sub-genre of rural cinema, to describe films which engage in a similar memorialisation of the past as found in the pastoral imagination, which ‘reach back to the old time, the strong time of a culture or nation, to represent and thereby reenact its traditions’.23 Including in her description a consideration of the inverse or anti-pastoral view, Catherine Fowler observes that ‘there are two

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dominant portrayals of the peasant: as marker of a golden age or as marker of a
dark age.24

In Huacho, however, rural life is represented in a way which does not adhere to
either of these poles on a pastoral/anti-pastoral spectrum; nor is the figure of
the peasant privileged in Fernández Almendras’ work as a repository of
national identity, tradition or virtue. Huacho also eschews the tradition of the
campesino as a revolutionary figure in Latin American societies, which was a
particular feature of the New Latin American Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s in
works such as Glauber Rocha’s Deus e o diabo na terra do sol (Black God, White
Devil, 1964), Nelson Perreira dos Santos’ Vidas secas (Barren Lives, 1963) and
Yawar Mallku by Jorge Sanjinés (Blood of the Condor, 1969). Furthermore, the
film also departs from previous incarnations of the figure of the campesino in
Chilean national cinema. It is not aligned, for instance, with Raúl Ruiz’s complex
mixture of nostalgia, folklore and anachronism in Días del campo (Days in the
Country, 2004). Neither does it mobilise the figure of the campesino as an
indictment of the failings of the nation and its institutions or as an explicit
affirmation of the peasant as a potential agent of history, as is found in Miguel
Littin’s classic of the New Chilean Cinema El Chacal de Nahueltoro. In the
simplicity of its visual style and its combination of cinematic traits from
documentary and fiction, Huacho could be more readily characterised as
docufiction, drawing on the conventions of direct cinema, cinéma vérité and
ethnographic filmmaking to convey its narrative of everyday routines.
Fernández Almendras’ observational cinematic style and the film’s depiction of

24 Catherine Fowler, ‘Symphonie Paysanne: An Embodied and Embedded Picturing of the Land’,
in Representing the Rural: Space, Place and Identity in Films About the Land, ed. by Catherine
traditional associations alongside modernisations in the life of the rural family mean that it also avoids the satirical or romanticising tendencies of *costumbrismo* traditions in Chilean pictorial and literary representations of everyday rural life, entering Chilean culture in the 19th-century work of writers such as Jotabache (the pseudonym of journalist and author José Joaquín Vallejo, who is often considered the “father of *costumbrismo*” in Chile).

However, although the subjects of *Huacho* may not serve a symbolic function as embodiments of national identity or fulfil our expectations of the revolutionary *campesino*, the category of “peasant”, in a less nationally-specific sense, becomes analytically useful in regards to one particular aspect which is central to the overall concerns of this thesis: the relationship of inhabitant and landscape. Framing “peasantry” in a radically different mode to the political, ideological or *costumbrista* frameworks outlined above, Jean-Luc Nancy describes the peasant (*paysan*) as ‘someone whose occupation is the country and the land. He occupies it and takes care of it, and he is occupied with it: that is, he takes it in hand and is taken up by it’. Nancy discerns a reciprocal ‘culture and cultivation’ between peasant and land, with each shaping the other; at the core of this reciprocity is belonging as a constant process of making and growing rather than a fixed relation. There are clear echoes here of the process-based concept of the *taskscape*; for Nancy, as for Ingold, the landscape is not simply a pre-existing container for human activity but is made and remade through the activities which take place within it.

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25 Nancy, p. 55.
The spectator of Huacho is encouraged to contemplate this relationship through the depiction of the working routines of Clemira and Cornelio, the two older members of the family – the time devoted to observing simple, undramatic activities in these sequences exemplifies the meditative quality that Asbjørn Grønstad, among others, has suggested forms the ‘recognisable poetics’ of slow cinema. The inherent slowness of rural life is presented as an unescapable factor which shapes each of their daily routines. Clemira spends much of her day searching (for the ripest tomatoes, for eggs in the henhouse) or waiting (for passing cars, for the return of the rest of the family who spend their days away from the home). Her manner of waiting and searching, though, is not hurried or pressured; it is conducted patiently, a function of the rhythms of other lives, routines and cycles which intersect with her own. The camera frequently closes in on the smallest of actions that go towards the tasks in her day, whether focusing on her weathered hands gathering fruit among the tomato vines, or the careful, methodical preparation of cheese in her kitchen. Similarly, time is dedicated to showing Cornelio unpacking his back, pausing to eat a piece of corn and taking a midday nap under a tree, as well as to his actual activities of work, as he cuts timber and produces stakes to be used as fence posts in a dividing line across the field. Although work is the essential activity which gives form to the day, the actual productive operations are decentralised, brought into line with all the peripheral moments of preparation, waiting, resting and observing. However, when the family return to eat together at the end of the day, Cornelio complains that he is no longer able to work as quickly as he had been in the

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past, calling into question the sense of ease that we might have felt on watching the previous sequence. That Cornelio is troubled by slowing down with age conveys an anxiety about falling out of pace with the rhythm of life around him; a reflexive suggestion, perhaps, that the allure of this contemplative mode of spectatorship itself belies the demands of rural life which weigh on the characters.

The sequences depicting rural labour, particularly those featuring Cornelio at work, are similar in both subject and style to those found in *La libertad* (2001) by Argentine director Lisandro Alonso, in which the camera almost exclusively follows a lone woodcutter named Misael as he goes about his work and daily routine. In addition to a preoccupation with everyday activities in a rural setting, *La libertad* also shares with *Huacho* the use of non-professional actors (Misael Saavedra is, in real life, a woodcutter). In terms of the film’s relationship to conventions of depicting rural labour in Argentine cinema at the intersection of poverty and *costumbrismo*, Gonzalo Aguilar argues that Alonso ‘is not concerned with the conventional narrations to which cinema has accustomed us’; neither is he concerned with ‘deconstructing *costumbrismo*, nor with attacking it’. Instead, Aguilar suggests that ‘[a]s witness, observer, or outsider, he goes in search of an innocent gaze, of a pure experience, of an uncontaminated surface’. A crucial point of divergence, however, is that in *La libertad* the camera moves away from Misael when he rests from his work and ‘takes to the woods on its own [...] a gaze-being on the hunt for images’. In contrast, in *Huacho* the sleeping Cornelio who lies down on the ground to take a

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28 Andermann, p. 88.
mid-work nap is treated with the same attention by the camera as Cornelio at work; the camera is not released to explore the landscape, which always remains bound into its relationship with human activity. Misael’s direct stare towards the camera in the final part of La libertad is another crucial difference in composition; Jens Andermann argues that this moment, which disrupts the position of the spectator, ‘briskly cuts off any empathetic affective investment’. Huacho, on the other hand, maintains the illusion of its subjects’ obliviousness to being observed and does not unsettle the position of the spectator in the same way.

While Cornelio labours outside, Alejandra, meanwhile, works in the kitchen of a countryside estate, preparing traditional Chilean specialties such as chancho en piedra, chupilca and sopaipillas for foreign tourists. Alejandra is at one point seen collecting eggs from the estate’s chicken coops, viewed through the geometric pattern of the chicken wire, visually echoing a similar shot of Clemira earlier in the film. This shot incorporates a point of connection between the two generations of women which brings into relief the otherwise contrasting realities of their working lives. Unlike her mother, who makes her cheeses in the household kitchen using simple wooden frames and traditional cheesecloths, Alejandra produces her dishes in a kitchen full of stainless steel and modern electrical appliances. Whereas her mother works alone, producing for herself and her family, working on the family’s own basic smallholding, the colonial-era country house where Alejandra works (and which her boss describes to visitors as “la perla de la granja” [the pearl of the farm]) is an aestheticised representation of a quaint, rustic life constructed for the service
industry. Eva, the waitress, dresses in a bright floral dress, typical of those worn by the *huasa* in performances of the *cueca*, the Chilean national dance and the house is decorated with unused, ornamental relics of this imagined rural lifestyle. Crucially, this is an imagination of the rural in which Alejandra is invisible. In their discussion of the ethics of representing and studying the rural ‘other’, Cloke and Little emphasise ‘a sense in which the familiar, natural belonging so often associated with the home and hearth of rurality has lurking within it relations and positionings which are unfamiliar, strange and literally uncanny’. In interview, Fernández Almendras has described his vision of the countryside as

[m]uy lejos de lo que siempre el campo fue en Chile, el costumbrismo apoltronado, hecho desde la mirada del patrón y con una mirada estigmatizada de los pobres, de los campesinos.

Very far from what the countryside has always been in Chile, lazy *costumbrismo*, seen from the landowner’s perspective, with a stigmatised view of the poor and the peasantry.

In *Huacho*, Alejandra’s job at the country estate opens up this view to a critical gaze. In this touristic recreation of ‘the home and hearth’ of reality, Alejandra’s relationship to the rural world is inverted as she is positioned as ‘other’ to the customer-facing image of the countryside, defamiliarised from a pastoral caricature of her own surroundings. She is never seen interacting with the

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guests, whose accented voices can be heard as their tour passes the henhouses or in the dining room as Alejandra eats alone in the kitchen. At one point, her boss is overheard telling a tour group that large houses like the one they are visiting were built every 25km or so along the roads in the colonial period, because that was as far as one could walk or ride on horseback in a day: “Recordamos que en ese tiempo no habían caminos como hoy” [Remember that the roads at that time weren’t as they are today]. It is clear in this moment that the image of rural Chile which is played out for the tourists is one which is nostalgic for a pre-modern landscape.

By beginning the analysis of landscape in Huacho from the idea of a “taskscape” – that is to say, from the idea of landscape as it is constituted by the activities of those who dwell within it – we are able to expose the layering of these interactions with landscape and the economic realities and social relations in which they are embedded. Crucially, this approach demonstrates how Fernández Almendras’ docu-fiction aesthetic and slow-cinema attention to duration and detail reveal the work that takes place behind the constructed image of the rural landscape as a connection to romantic tradition.

If Huacho works to resist simplistic categorisations and idealised representations of the working lives of the rural poor, Turistas casts a critical eye towards how work such as Alejandra’s is concealed within the framing of the countryside as a landscape of leisure, an antidote to the fatigues of urban life. Alicia Scherson’s ‘nota de intención’ for Turistas on the Cinépata website reveals her own self-reflection on the relationship of city dwellers to “Nature”:
Nacida y criada en una ciudad grande y contaminada, suelo escaparme a la Naturaleza al igual que muchos: en busca de algún tipo de paz y de algunas respuestas sencillas a preguntas complicadas. No es eso lo que encuentro. La Naturaleza no es fácil. No hay nada simple en una cascada o en una araña. Pero aun así sigo volviendo. Sigo confiando en la Naturaleza porque la necesito. Así como necesito la ficción. *Turistas* es una película sobre esa necesidad y esa confianza. Sobre gente de ciudad, confundida y torpe, que se encuentra en un Parque Nacional pidiéndole a la Naturaleza que les de algo y recibiendo a cambio algo distinto.\(^3\)

[Having been born and raised in a large, polluted city, like many people I often escape into Nature: in search of peace of some kind and easy answers to complicated questions. That’s not what I find. Nature isn’t easy. There’s nothing simple about a waterfall or a spider. But still I keep going back. I keep trusting in Nature because I need it. Just as I need fiction. *Turistas* is a film about that need and that trust. About people from the city, confused and awkward, who find themselves in a National Park asking Nature for something and receiving something different in return.]

Foremost among Scherson’s ‘confused and awkward’ protagonists in *Turistas* is Carla (Aline Küppenheim), a well-educated, middle-class woman in her thirties who is travelling from Santiago with her husband for a lakeside holiday in the South. During the journey, Carla confesses to her husband Joel (Marcelo Alonso) that she has had an abortion; he then, in his anger, abandons Carla at the

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roadside. After struggling along the roadside, she manages to hitch a lift with a truck drive, alongside a young Norwegian backpacker, Ulrik (Diego Noguera), who is making his way to the Siete Tazas National Park. As they explore the park, they encounter both staff and visitors, including the park warden (Pablo Ausensi), who is having an affair with a married holidaymaker, and the assistants at the campsite shop, a pair of cousins both called Susana (Viviana Herrera and Sofía Géldrez). As Carla become more immersed in her new surroundings, she is also becomes closer to Ulrik, who she eventually sleeps with. The morning after, Carla confronts Ulrik after finding a Chilean I.D. card for a man named Miguel in his bag. After a rapprochement with Ulrik/Miguel, in which they are both confronted with their own dishonesties, Joel comes to find Carla at the park, but ultimately leaves alone. Shortly afterwards Carla leaves the park with Ulrik. At the train station, she goes to make a note of his telephone number but looks up to find that he has disappeared into the crowd.

*Turistas* opens with the chirps and squeaks of electronic music and a sequence of small white graphic icons (such as might appear on signposts, maps or phone screens) appearing on a black screen: car, hiker, campfire, diver, toilets, canoe. The icons read as a visual shorthand for nature made convenient, available and comfortable, a tourist-friendly version of the countryside in which ‘the idyll is imagined in the minds of the tourist as an entitlement’. Carla’s experience of the park landscape spirals outwards from this ideal image, discovering that both human and nonhuman life in the park has its own ecology of complex relationships, micronarratives and hidden realities which are concealed under

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its escapist projections. This incremental “peeling back” of the surface image culminates in her arrival at the construction site at the edge of the park, where the ideal of a harmonious encounter with unspoilt nature and an escape from the less desirable aspects of urban civilisation is definitively undone.

The most explicit visual signifier of the constructed-ness of the idyllic landscape is the sequence focusing on a miniature model of the park's landscape, complete with painted paths across its slopes as well as plastic trees and figurines. This sequence takes the place of what might more conventionally be an establishing shot of the real landscape. Before Carla and Ulrik are even visible within the confines of the park, this micro-version of the space frames our approach. The space is explored in the first instance in its simplified and idealised form, as the camera tours a parodic replica of the supposed idyll of the park. The movements of its permanently happy visitors (in contrast to the emotional ups and downs of Carla, Joel and Ulrik) are neatly marked out across the landscape in red and blue, but the overall appearance of the model is closer to the scenery of a model trainset than to any serious attempt at cartography, with a naivety that suggests a nostalgic recall of childhood and evokes the permitted childishness of play within the leisure space. Within this model, the experience of the park is not only spatially compact but also temporally frozen; visitors (and Turistas’ spectators) are presented with an uncanny representation of the world outside that crudely mimics its forms and attempts to set out its usage but which ultimately cannot reproduce the dynamic landscape that is constantly in process beyond this slice-of-time approximation.
The final credits of *Turistas* also return to a vision of landscape whose relationship to time and space has been reconfigured for communicative ends, this time in the form of a graphic of a black and white map, with each section demarcated by a regional boundary and the names of the crew written next to the towns and villages along the roads. This integration of the details of the filmmaking process into a cartographic representation evokes the similarities in the two forms of spatial representation, as observed by Tom Conley, who suggests that ‘a film can be understood in a broad sense to be ‘a map’ that plots and colonizes the imagination of the public it is said to ‘invent’ and, as a result, to seek to control’. What Scherson’s film ‘plots’ in the mind of the urban audience it addresses is a consciousness of the landscape they imagine as an escape from the demands of modern, urban life (whether remodelled as tourist site or represented as model, map, photograph or film) as a result of processes

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33 Conley, p. 1.
of construction, which necessarily come intertwined with processes of selection, exclusion and concealment.

The individual taskscapes formed around those who work to produce the tourist experience (whether construction workers, park rangers or shop assistants) remain largely invisible in Turistas, only becoming visible to the spectator at the points where they intersect with Carla's own leisure-based interactions with the spaces around here. The experience of time in the landscapes of Turistas is structured not by a sense of day-to-day working routine, as in Huacho, but through the more open and flexible taskscapes of subjects engaged in play and relaxation. In terms of the temporality of leisure, Tony Blackshaw has commented on the frequency with which leisure is equated to "free time" or "spare time", of time freed from the demands of work and responsibility and therefore offering the potential to 'feel for the time being that our life is our own', as Raymond Williams wrote. Time spent enjoying the landscape on one's own terms as a site of leisure activities is framed, therefore, not only within the working activities of others but also by what "free time" is delimited by the demands of work on the tourist subject's own time. Whereas work and rest are embedded into the routines of Huacho, in Turistas the boundaries of "free time" are further complicated by technology, as represented by the mobile phone which keeps Carla tied into her life in Santiago (whether in conversations with Joel or with work colleagues), even as she attempts to embrace escapism. This intrusion of one kind of activity into space and time that (superficially, at least) seems reserved for quite another returns us to the

idea of landscapes as multiply temporalised, which is explored on a broader scale through modernity’s co-existence with tradition in the following section.

**Tradition and Modernity**

Unlike films such as *Raíz* and *El verano de los peces voladores*, where critics drew particular attention to the striking representation of the Southern Chilean landscape, the reception of *Huacho* was more concerned with the film's evocation of rural life than with landscape *per se*. Following the screenings of *Huacho* at Cannes and Toronto, international critics approached as the film as a realist representation of conditions of rural daily life in “the modern age”. Describing the film as ‘a warm and touching family saga’, Jordan Mintzer writing for Variety felt that the film ‘portrays a world in which even the smallest events can carry great weight for those barely scraping by’, showcasing ‘the minor beauties of the rural setting, as well as the darker plight of peasants trying to survive in a ruthless market economy’.36 Writing for Screen Daily, Jonathan Romney described the film as both ‘an exercise in rural realism’ and a ‘labour of love in the best sense’.37 He goes on to note that although the film draws on the ‘timeless’ precarity of the rural population ‘*Huacho* clearly has particular relevance to the current state of the global economy’ 169. Michael Guillen at Twitch found the film to have ‘a threadbare honesty and intimacy’ which captured ‘the ignobility of work in the modern age’80. Chilean critic Silvio Scapello labelled the protagonists of the film ‘los invisibles de nuestra sociedad’

[the invisible of our society] and also praised the realism of its use of non-professional actors, instead of recognisable faces from Chilean film and television, as ‘[r]efrescante para el espectador que siempre tiene que ver las mismas caras impuestas por un medio algunas veces un tanto cerrado y elitista’ [refreshing for the spectator who always has to see the same faces which prevail in a medium which is sometimes rather closed and elitist.] Building on the preceding discussion of the “taskscape”, this section of the chapter aims to show how the depiction of rural labour, livelihoods and lifestyles which was so central to the reception of Huacho is also bound up with the tension between tradition and modernity and the ways that landscape is accordingly preserved and transformed.

Chilean critic Daniel Villalobos claimed that ‘[n]o hay «otros» en Huacho. La inestabilidad económica de esa familia es también (en general) la nuestra’ [there are no “others” in Huacho. The economic instability of that family is also (in general) our own]. However, while globalising and all-encompassing economic systems may be at play in their lives, the geographical separation of Huacho’s rural family from urban society also marks them with a certain social otherness, perhaps most apparent in the youngest member of the family, Manuel. Manuel’s marginalisation at school because of his rural background plays out in the classroom as his weary teacher chalks up Jorge Teillier’s Edad de Oro [Golden Age] on the blackboard. Teillier, a Chilean poet of the mid-20th

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century, labelled his poetry as “laric” in reference to the Lares, Roman guardian deities thought to have protective influence over their particular location. Teillier’s poetry often laments a lost paradise, a virtuous way of life now abandoned, a forgotten time and he frequently made use of imagery of the Chilean landscape in order to evoke this sentiment. The students disinterestedly copy down the poem (or ignore the work in favour of arguing over a games console) and the teacher simply wants to get through the lesson, suggesting that the nostalgia for this imagined golden era feels anachronistic and emptied out of meaning in the context of the contemporary society which Manuel and his classmates are entering.

Manuel is the character most intensely drawn into life beyond the rural sphere — and thus illustrative of the film’s bridging of the two systems of existence which are brought together in the film. Like his mother, Manuel spends most of his day outside the family home — in his case, at school in Chillán. As the youngest memory of the family, his representation prompts questions about the future for those growing up in rural areas of Chile. In some ways, Manuel is the member of the family who is most at ease with many of the signifiers of a modern, urban lifestyle. He seems unfazed by the long journey into Chillán (a sequence where nothing of the transitioning landscape is visible, suggesting that the journey from one to the other is unremarkable), he enjoys videogames and he proudly brings home for his grandmother an A4 printed sign he has made in his ICT class to advertise her cheeses; he is uninterested in his grandfather’s long anecdotes about bygone days in the countryside and frequently interrupts to ask his mother for money, presumably to spend at the video arcade after school.
Manuel’s status within the school environment is shown to be negatively marked by exclusion and otherness. He is shown to be isolated by his peers, not allowed to play with the PSP being shared around the rest of the group and eating lunch alone at school after the last of his classmates disappears behind the electric gates of their nearby home. At break time, in the playground, the boys pick teams for football, talking about Manuel as “el huaso” and invoking stereotypical aspects of this stock figure in the Chilean imaginary as they mock his football skills: “Huaso, ándate a arrear las vacas mejor” [Go back to herding cattle, Huaso]. In a shot which replicates the composition of those seen earlier of his grandparents and mother, Manuel is shown in shallow focus alone in the foreground, hanging from a set of goal posts in the school playground, looking out of the frame into the distance. In contrast to his grandparents, who are situated against an unbroken view of the surrounding landscape, with no other people present to contest the space, what is most sharply focused in the shot behind Manuel is the netting of the goalpost, which becomes a kind of screen which separates him into another visual plane from the other pupils playing in the background (Figure 26).
Despite the visualisation of a marginalised existence in such a sequence, many aspects of Huacho contribute to a sense of underpinning equilibrium and rootedness. Structurally, the narrative opens and closes with the coming together of the family in the home and follows the course of a single day from multiple (but non-contradictory) perspectives, giving roughly equal weight to each. Although linear in structure, the narrative is understated and undramatic; there are no abrupt shifts or major catastrophes, only the unremarkable micro-events of everyday life, which are largely absorbed into the repetition of daily routines and attentively registered by a camera which feels obsessed with small details. Thus far, the film can be read within the broader recurrence of the cycle as a parallel feature of form and content in rural cinema.\textsuperscript{40} The attachment to routine is noted by Villalobos in his contribution to El Novísimo Cine Chileno, who observes that ‘las personas lucen completamente integradas a sus rutinas’\textsuperscript{41} [the characters seem completely integrated into their routines] and

\textsuperscript{40} Fowler and Helfield, p. 10.  
\textsuperscript{41} Villalobos, p. 142.
each has ‘una pertenencia al lugar en que se mueven’ [a sense of belonging to the place in which they move].

However, Villalobos argues that this is belonging is as ‘terrible’ as it is complete:

_Huacho_ es una historia sobre gente pobre que sostiene la batalla contra la miseria de manera tenaz pero desesperanzada. No hay luz al final del túnel en _Huacho_, ni atisbos de un bienestar material que cambie la eterna rutina de los personajes. Incluso el hijo – un estudiante, o sea, un símbolo clásico de la promesa de ascenso social – está básicamente preparándose para vivir la misma precariedad que le han enseñado sus mayores.42

[ _Huacho_ is a story about poor people that keep fighting against poverty tenaciously, but hopelessly. There is no light at the end of the tunnel in _Huacho_, nor any hint of a material wellbeing that might change the characters’ never-ending routine. Even the son – a student, that is to say, a classic symbol of the promise of social mobility – is basically preparing to lead the same precarious lifestyle that he has learned from his elders.]

Whereas Villalobos seems to read _Huacho’s_ sense of routine as oppressive, I would suggest that a more nuanced position would allow for the fact that this routine is actually not presented in such wholly negative terms. For the family in _Huacho_, their daily activities are undeniably marked by the strains, indignities and limitations of poverty (my intention here is not to position the characters as “noble peasant” figures or to suggest they inhabit a pastoral idyll). However, their routines are also shown as reinforcing friendships and familial

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42 Villalobos, p. 142.
relationships and are anchored within a community and a locality in a way that is often lamented as being lost in the changes brought by modernity. For instance, Clemira’s conversations with the other older women make it clear that long days spent at the roadside selling cheese have forged friendships between them and her regular journey to buy milk from a neighbouring farm culminates in an amiable conversation with the young farmhand that contrasts sharply with the distance and anonymity of Alejandra’s interactions at the shopping mall in Chillán.

Running counter to this general air of steadiness, Fernández Almendras’ film is dispersed by moments which resist the radical breakdown of this equilibrium but which nonetheless appear quietly within sequences like loose threads, gesturing to a pre-emergent feeling of disorder which threatens the integrity of these patterns and routines. The interruption of order posed by these threads is one which cannot necessarily be contained by the expected ebbs and flows that might be weathered in rural life, since its origin is usually external to the rural sphere.

This idea emerges particularly clearly in the second “re-telling” of the day which focuses on Alejandra. Our first observation of her alone is as she pulls a plastic carrier bag from Paris (a chain of Chilean department stores) from under her bed. After looking inside, she goes to search in a drawer and pulls out a pile of papers from under her clothes, before taking one in her handbag as she leaves for the day. Although the specific significance of these items is not yet revealed, this sequence frames her section of the narrative from the outset as being related in some way to urban society, which is represented in its association
with consumerism and the market through the bright blue bag which stands out against the browns, greys and greens of Alejandra’s rural home; like the mobile phone which connects Carla to her Santiago life, irruptions of the modern and the urban appear repeatedly in Huacho’s rural world, whether in the form of the highway where Clemira sells her cheese, the CDs that the farm worker makes and sells, the mobile phone that Alejandra cannot charge due to the power outage or the computer designed sign that Manuel brings home from school for his grandmother.

Unlike Matar a un hombre, in which the movement from urban to rural space largely occurs off-screen, reinforcing the separation of the two spaces, in Huacho we see several journeys made between the rural home and the urban environment. Following the same route taken by Manuel to school (who she encounters on the bus returning home at the end of the day), Alejandra travels to Chillán after work. However, whereas during the sequence showing Manuel’s journey the camera remains focused on Manuel standing in the aisle and the old woman asleep next to him, in Alejandra’s journey we see conventional shots through the bus window where the countryside passes by rapidly, before the view cuts to show a large bridge spanning a river outside the window, before cutting again to urban scenery, with chipboard and concrete walls covered in graffiti and posters, which gives way to a high street full of shoppers, traffic and chain stores. The transition to an urban environment is denoted not only by the changing scenery, which takes in not only the rural and the urban but also its hinterlands and connecting spaces and structures. These passing backgrounds succeed one another with increasing rapidity as the vehicle draws nearer its destination, marking the entry of another mode of temporal and spatial
perception, through this sudden speed of motion which compresses time and space for the observer, accelerating beyond the film’s general rhythm and clearly differentiating itself from the slow progress of the horse and cart that takes Clemira home or Cornelio’s work van on the rural roads.

One of the first glimpses of landscape in Turistas is also seen through a moving window, although in this case it is not public transport but from the private space of a car and it transports city-dwellers to the countryside, rather than the other way around. The opening credits float over a blurred view of a green and sunlit rural landscape from the passenger window of a moving vehicle, punctuated occasionally by the incongruous bright blue of road signs, the orange of safety barriers or the stark black lines of overhead cables, with guitar notes and female vocals adding to the layers of opening music. Carla is first seen on the other side of this car window, looking out past the camera as her husband drives, her face crossed by the reflections of the electricity lines. Sharing Carla’s perspective from the moving vehicle, we are faced with a suggestion of landscape, which is never allowed to come into focus from the lack of a stable point of observation. The roads and cables that connect the city to the (Wifi-equipped) rural retreat are most of what can be made out in passing, with the speed and ease of travel flattening out the contours of the landscape and diminishing the space that separate origin and destination. However, the association with rural space that is sought out as the imagined antidote to the stresses of modernity in this journey is not so much a space of preserved tradition as it is the ideal of unspoiled Nature, as alluded to by Scherson in the earlier quotation. In complicating this vision of the experience
of natural landscape, *Turistas* uncovers forms of temporality that lie not only outside of modernity but which reach into the non-human world.

**BEYOND THE HUMAN**

In his analysis of *Nostalgia para la luz*, Jens Andermann evaluates the significance of the film's juxtaposition of the memory of historical trauma with the vast non-human timescales of the stars and the sands of the Atacama, arguing that in the wake of 'the fracture inflicted on the time of the collective' by state violence only the reference to a non-human – a natural, geological, cosmic – temporality allows one to imagine a renewal of the bond that has been broken, on the level of social time, by state terror.43

Although the films analysed in this are both stylistically and thematically very different from Guzmán’s, the idea presented by Andermann of non-human timescales compensating, relieving or simply allowing a confrontation of some rupture in human temporality can be taken up more broadly. In both films, various ruptures take place in the personal and social narratives of the characters; in both films, the landscape is where these ruptures are set amid the ongoing timescales and cycles of non-human nature. In *Turistas*, Carla’s personal and familial teleology is interrupted by her decision to have an abortion, an act that prompts the breakdown of her relationship with her husband, which subsequently leads to her finding herself in the park. 44 In

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44 The issue of abortion as a source of rupture in social bonds is of particular relevance in Chile, where women were subject to one of the world’s most restrictive abortion policies, following the 1989 legal amendments under the Pinochet regime; these were part of the dictatorship's lasting legacy in social policy, remaining in place until the passing of reforms in August 2017. Within Chilean cinema, the issue has recently been approached in Francesc Morales’ *Apió verde* (2013) and Constanza Figari’s *7 semanas* (2016).
Huacho, the encroachment of the urban world and a globalised, neoliberal economy contribute, as discussed earlier in the chapter, to the generational fracturing of traditional lifestyles, even as the cycles of non-human life continue. These ruptures in the temporality and trajectory of individual lives within the postdictatorial society are enmeshed within landscape’s complex layering of timescales by the films’ attention to the ways in which landscape is constituted from both the human and the more-than-human.

Opening its soundscape to the non-human world from the outset, Huacho opens with the sound of a cockerel crowing among chirping birds and the image of trees silhouetted against the dawn sky. The first sign of human activity is a light coming on behind a curtained window (beyond which the camera is shortly to penetrate), a small glowing square just off from the centre of the screen, simultaneously demarcating the space of human action from its surroundings, while also contextualising its presence within a (dark but known to be present) wider landscape and harmonising its temporal rhythms with those of non-human life (Figure 27). The short opening scene very much sets the tone for a representation of landscape which remains more closely tied to human activity than many of the films in the corpus of this thesis; the landscape rarely escapes from the point of view or the in-frame presence of a character and those non-human lives which attract the camera are most often products of human-oriented agriculture rather than a wild nature. I would disagree in this aspect with, for instance, Villalobos who concludes that Huacho is a film in which ‘los seres humanos, los objetos y el paisaje tienen la misma jerarquía’ [human beings, objects and the landscape have the same hierarchy].

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45 Villalobos, p. 145.
and the living and non-living entities within it are shown predominantly in their relationship to human activities and movements (often through handheld shots which register the physicality of the human operator-observer).

![Image of a scene from Huacho](image)

**Figure 27:** The household awakes in the opening sequence of *Huacho*.

However, this is precisely what gives them their significance (rather than diminishing them) within the logic of this particular representation of rural life. The inseparability of peasant and land is most strikingly visible in the recurring shots which show Clemira and Cornelio looking into the distance beyond the frame (*Figure 28 and Figure 29*). Breaking away slightly from the film’s primarily observational tone, these shots create a moment of aestheticisation which prompts the spectator to consider the image as more than a record of activity. The character is typically situated in one side of the frame, with their gaze extended towards the opposite side. This positioning is simultaneously anthropocentric (with the human figure placed in the foreground, in sharper focus) while still allowing an expanse of space within the frame for the landscape to extend behind them. The exact point or feature of the landscape
which constitutes the object of the character's gaze is not revealed to the film's spectator; instead, a delicate balance is created between character and setting which creates an imagined continuity of landscape which extends beyond the frame. For Nancy, there is not only a spatial but also a temporal dimension to this relationship:

The peasant is also the one who is not at all in his work, the one who gives time and place to operations other than his own, to ripenings and stretches of waiting, to very ancient buried memories or to sudden mutations, to unforeseeable intersections or to the vagaries of the sky.46

Like Nancy’s characterisation of the peasant-land relationship, the theoretical perspectives which have informed this chapter so far have primarily been useful in exploring landscapes as they intersect with human histories and personal experiences. This final section focuses on Turistas in order to extend the analysis into a consideration of how film can also register how landscape is marked by temporalities which are non-human or more-than-human: the geological, the seasonal or the unknowable durational experience of animal life, which Turistas situates both in living nature and in the existence of preserved scientific specimens which transcend the limits of a single lifespan. The extension into the non-human greatly increases the complexity and difference in scale of the various temporalities at work in landscape; however, cinema is in certain ways as a medium which is particularly suited to juggling these numerous time frames. In The Movement-Image, Deleuze explains how the act of

46 Nancy, p. 56.
framing compresses unlike elements into the standardised confines of the cinematic image:

in the final analysis, the screen, as the frame of frames, gives a common standard of measurement to things which do not have one – long shots of countryside and close-ups of the face, an astronomical system and a single drop of water – parts which do not have the same denominator of distance, relief or light. In all these senses, the frame ensures a deterritorialization of the image.47

Figure 28: Clemira at the roadside in Huacho.

The ability of the cinematic sequence of images to register processes and existences taking place on multiple scales within the same frame is also noted by Patricia M. Keller in particular reference to the representation of landscape. Keller argues that

[c]inema thus accesses the dark and most difficult-to-reach corners of landscape’s narrative by loosening or freeing it from the confines of linear understanding of historical time.48

Here, Keller presents the idea that there is some particular affinity between landscape as an object of representation and cinema as a medium. This view of cinema as particular suited to the representation of nested complexes of natural processes is shared by Adrian Ivakhiv when he suggests that

cinematic time bears some relationship to ecological time. Ecology, after all, is about the enfoldment of objects or processes within other

processes, all of which unfold according to their own durations. Often these durations are longer and relatively imperceptible from the perspective of human activities, which is why they are easy to ignore.49

In their discussion of the act of filming archaeological landscapes, Steven Eastwood and Geoffrey Alan Rhodes remind us that the act of representing and interpreting landscape is itself part of the mutually affecting processes and transformations that challenge landscape’s apparent permanence from the human perspective:

Depicted landscapes are always already ascribed, often symbolic, and never neutral in their intention or reception. They may, to our human temporality, seem concretely immutable but they are never fixed in our interpretation.50

The notion of the interpretation of the national park landscape from a human temporal perspective is called into question in Turistas. After Carla’s arrival at the park, a long shot shows her walking around in an open area, her arm raised, looking for phone signal; the signal icon appears superimposed in the bottom left of the screen (just as text messages from Joel did earlier) and the bars of signal increase and decrease as she moves around. Already at this point, the switch to a superimposition of one form of screen media over another reinforces the separate-ness of the film’s spectator, by likening the mediation of the phone screen to that of the cinema screen (or computer / television / tablet screen in line with contemporary film-watching technology).

49Ivakhiv, pp. 304-305.
Following this merging of screens, the camera cuts to look upward at a bird of prey, which gradually goes out of sight behind the tree, under which Carla is talking to Joel. The camera cuts to a beetle moving across leaf litter, then back to Carla who is now overlooked by an inquisitive sheep who has appeared in the middle ground of the shot. Carla starts to tell Joel about the park warden but he hangs up. The camera looks upward into the branches of the tree with Carla and shifts back to its previous position as her phone rings and she rushes to pick up; however, this time it is not Joel but a work colleague. The camera switches again to the bird of prey which is still circling, before cutting back to Carla, then away again to a family of turkeys, then to a close-up of the sheep, then a small yellow bird perched on a branch, then back to Carla, then to another beetle scuttling in the dry leaves; all the while, Carla can be heard explaining the location of a computer file to her colleague. A final landscape shot contextualises the close-ups as part of the same ecosystem, pulling back towards the context of her physical, rather than virtual, environment. Within the duration of a phone call, the camera reveals this stretch of landscape to be the site not only of Carla’s activities but also the presence of various other non-human animals, whose activities take place alongside but without regard to the temporal development of the human-centred narrative.

This sequence is typical of the way in which Scherson divides attention between human and non-human activity in *Turistas*. Where we might typically expect our attention to be wholly focused on the emotional protagonist’s conversation, the camera instead cuts away to close-ups of various animals (each seemingly going about their own, unknowable business). There is no indication that these cuts are necessarily the alignment of spectator and protagonist perspective;
these animals enter insistently into the frame, a levelling reminder of the lives that go on unnoticed in the surroundings of a personal crisis and a restoration of immediacy and attachment to the physical world in a moment where Carla is mentally elsewhere. That the same focus is given to the beetle, the sheep and the bird as to the human protagonist – and through shots in which the camera’s perspective is independent of the attention of the protagonist’s attention – seems, temporarily at least, to level out the coexistence of the human and the nonhuman, a decentring of human narrative which Scherson has touched on in interview:

Lo que tienen los bichos y para mí es muy importante, es recordarle al espectador que su historia es un pequeño relato que se cruza con muchos otros, y que mientras estamos con un drama, la araña tiene su propio drama del que no nos enteramos. Recordarles a los mismos personajes que no son tan protagonistas y no son los únicos que tienen algo que contar.51

What the bugs do, which for me is important, is remind the spectator that their story is a little tale that intersects with many other, and that while we’re in the middle of a drama, the spider has his own drama that we don’t notice. Reminding the characters themselves that they are not the only protagonists and that they’re not the only ones who have something to tell.

The coexistence of humans with the natural world, the simultaneous connection and apartness, is all the more intense in the park environment. Where nature

has been repackaged as a leisure experience and the natural habitat is a holiday resort, there is always a slightly ominous feeling that the sensory impact of the nonhuman world threatens to be crowded out by the attendant consumer paraphernalia; orange nylon tents, neon yellow shuttlecocks, mobile phone ringtones and life-size inflatable dolphins are all brought in to enhance or facilitate the human experience of this particular version of “Nature”. Scherson nevertheless navigates a delicate path through this landscape of leisure, counterbalancing eye-popping glimpses of synthetic colour with a quiet but determined registering of the tiniest details of what would otherwise blend away into a greenish-greyish-brownish backdrop. The understated mode in which we are presented with a worm’s journey across a wet rock, or a beetle making its way on some unknown mission through the leaf litter, frames the commodity-mediated interaction of human and environment as insincere, inauthentic, even ridiculous.

At the core of Scherson’s treatment of the natural world of Siete Tazas is the emergence of a critical view of the framing of this section of the landscape as what cultural geographer David Bell terms a ‘rural idyll’. For Bell, such a framing ‘often paints the countryside as a place of leisure rather than as working nature, places of consumption, not production’. Bell poses crucial questions about the idyll as ‘a manufactured landscape, the product of a particular moral ordering or act of purification’, asking that we consider ‘what has to be hidden, or denied, to make this idyll? And what things threaten to disturb it?’. In a more ludic manner than *Los peces voladores* but with a comparable attention to concealed mechanisms of construction, I would suggest

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52 Bell, p. 127.
that Scherson’s film is engaged in a constant process of what Bell labels ‘idyll-disturbance’, which ‘always threatens to unsettle our experience, not least by revealing the idyll as manufactured (and therefore inauthentic, which also means un-idyllic).\textsuperscript{53}

The cultural construction of the idyll, as Bell observes, finds an organisational corollary in conservation schemes and protectionist bodies. This facet of ‘idyllisation’ is encapsulated in the Park’s visitor centre, which is Carla and Ulrik’s point of entry into this demarcated segment of the landscape. The visitor centre is presided over by the park warden, who seems to relish his role as a kind of gatekeeper to the space in terms of both knowledge and access. It is filled with taxidermy specimens, miniature model habitats and an array of bugs and butterflies pinned and labelled. The exhibits are a source of evident pride for the park ranger, who is quick to inform Carla and Ulrik that there are more than 150 species of bugs on display and to thrust a pickled tarantula in Carla’s face as she fills out the campsite paperwork. Yet the ordering, classification and reconstruction of the diversity of the nature outside the walls into the personal kingdom of a lonely middle-aged man has rendered it quite literally lifeless; the atmosphere is stifling and overbearing, with the lush complexity and abundance of the living landscape being replaced by simple enumeration of species and cataloguing of components.

Scherson pointedly chooses this space to stage Carla’s terse reunion with Joel; what might have been framed as an encounter between soulmates is instead a cold negotiation of difference, hemmed in by displays about the sexual

\textsuperscript{53} Bell, pp. 149-50.
dimorphism of beetles, beetles who have been coercively paired up for eternity by their human curator. For Foucault, the museum is a ‘heterotopia of indefinitely accumulating time [...] a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages’\textsuperscript{54}; here, the isolation of individuals from the temporality of nature underlines its circularity. Nature is seen to be simultaneously transient and eternal – always in flow but never truly changing – so that, from a human perspective at least, any specimen may interchangeably stand in for its species in the archive. For Carla and Joel, the museum setting calls attention to the way in which human activity is perceived as separate from the endlessly cycling nature which surrounds it. The museum-like atmosphere of the visitor centre is sharply contrasted to the world outside, which, as Carolina Urrutia has observed, is intensely and irresistibly vital:

Carla y su entorno – los saltamontes, las arañas pollito, los distintos tipos de aves autóctonas – funcionan como una polifonía del estado de permanente ebullición del resto, que dentro de sus propios ritmos, corren una carrera de vida o muerte, desbordados por los afectos y las intensidades, las adolescencias; y parecen incapaces de renunciar a eso flujos y desmarcarse de sus consecuencias.\textsuperscript{55}

Both Carla and the nature which surrounds her – the grasshoppers, the tarantulas, the different species of native birds – bubble away in a polyphonic state of permanent activity, all running a life-and-death race according to their own rhythms, all overflowing with affect and intensity;

\textsuperscript{55} Urrutia Neno (2013), p. 54.
seemingly incapable of distancing themselves from these flows and their consequences.

The inertia of this sequence contrasts with their opening conversation, which takes place in a car speeding along the highway, and seems to consign their relationship to the archive, a relic which cannot be re-integrated into “real life”, a captive being which cannot survive the trials of the wild. During this conversation Carla confesses to having an abortion, her response to Joel’s distress and his lamenting of the loss of future plans was voiced in terms of practicalities and procedures. Carla (herself a biochemist) had reverted to a cold scientific precision to remind him that, technically, “less than half” of the embryo belongs to him, describing herself as the “dueña del terreno” [the land owner]. Where Joel is angered and saddened by what he experiences as the loss of a child-to-be, for Carla the embryo seems not to carry this emotive charge; while it might be a living entity, she does not think of it in terms of unique personhood. By locating their subsequent (brief) reunion in a space where the living world is ordered and reduced to the frameworks of biology, Scherson reinforces this breach between Carla and Joel. The sequence ends as their stilted exchange of pleasantries is interrupted by a cut to a close-up of a stuffed mountain lion, its mouth open as though roaring, with the corresponding growl heard over the shot. This shots inverts somewhat the prevailing mood of the sequence, which has treated human relationships with a certain scientific coldness. At this moment, a certain spectatorial pre-conditioning comes into play in which we are drawn to anthropomorphise this shot as a reaction shot, to find humour in the shocked expression we read into the lion’s face. Beneath this surface, Scherson’s playful tone is layered with a sense of the spectral and the
uncanny. As Carla and Joel’s almost already dead relationship struggles to return to the screen, we are faced with what Rachel Poliquin calls ‘the ghoulishness that haunts all taxidermy’; a body that is ‘dead yet animate, known yet unknowable’.56

The visitor centre preserves a miniaturised, mummified, categorised and enumerated inventory of the natural landscape which is alive beyond its walls. While the centre becomes the core of the idyll’s preservation, the boundaries of the park also reveal its construction as idyll. As Carla awakes after losing Ulrik in the woods during an argument on their way back from a party, the rumbling sound of nearby road building is heard again and Carla climbs a fence at the edge of the wood and makes her way in the direction of the sound, which is accompanied by the sound of earth-moving machinery at work as she gets closer. Although the warden has already explained reason for this intermittent noise, this is the first time that the camera ventures to observe it. On top of a stony embankment, Carla passes a workman in a hardhat. The construction site with its various pieces of heavy machinery is then framed in her own camera viewfinder, before the full frame of the film camera returns, still taking in the works (Figure 30). Urrutia has observed the presence of “ground zero” images in contemporary Chilean cinema, including in both Play and Turistas, noting the frequent appearance of works in progress with their attendant machine and manpower, often built on top of the destruction of whatever previously occupied the site. Interestingly, in regard to Scherson’s first two feature films, Urrutia suggests that construction features as both ‘un tópico y un registro’ [a

the theme and a register.\textsuperscript{57} Urrutia explains: ‘esa estructura, en tanto edificación sólida y en obra-en-cursó, está presente visual y formalmente y también en sus tramas y sus discursos’ [that structure, both as solid building and work-in-progress, is visually and formally present, as well as being present in her plotlines and discourses].

![Figure 30: Construction works seen through Carla's camera in \textit{Turistas}.](image)

The road-making project is also the un-making of the rural idyll, part of the process of its deconstruction over the course of the film. Here, the very infrastructure that grants access to the idyll also compromises its status, as it overwrites the natural landscape which the idyll claims to preserve. By cutting in and out of the viewfinder of Carla’s camera to record the scene, Scherson not only aligns the film camera with this touristic gaze, she also makes explicit the process of recording (reflexively playing with the camera’s own complicity in

\textsuperscript{57} Urrutia Neno (2013), p. 50.
this gaze) which constructs the cinematic landscape and the place of the photographic image in the cultural formation of the idyll concept.

Scherson’s use of shifting perspectives – whether this is in the form of extending perspective beyond that of the human protagonist or of revealing the mediation of human perspective through screen technology – reinforces the idea introduced at the start of this section of landscape being subject to constantly changing and plural interpretations, even where it can appear to human eyes as immutable and unchanging by our own timescales.

The capacity of cinema to register the durational as well as spatial extent of landscape is one of the key characteristics of the medium as a means of representing landscape. Although the issue of temporality has arisen from the questions discussed in earlier chapters, this chapter has provided a more thorough examination and a deeper engagement with theories of temporality than has been possible in the thesis so far. Taking its lead from Martin Lefebvre’s understanding of the cinematic landscape as a simultaneously pictorial and temporalised form of landscape representation, this chapter has demonstrated how a careful application of wider landscape theory can be brought to bear on cinema in order to understand the specific temporal logic behind individual films, as well as contributing towards an understanding of the particular temporal characteristics of film as a medium of landscape.

In its analysis of the landscapes of Turistas and Huacho, this chapter has shown how the application of anthropological ideas about the temporality of landscape as it is experienced and constructed through the human activities of work and leisure reinforces the idea running throughout the thesis that cinema is able to
represent landscape as both a process and an experience (which necessarily extend across time), as well as an image of a spatial extent. In addition to this focus on the ways in which landscape may be marked and transformed by human activity, the chapter has also examined how human experience of landscape intersects with non-human and more-than-human temporalities, combining both the transience of individual beings with the perpetuity of natural cycles.

Prior to the closing section of the thesis, the exploration of temporality in this chapter has added a final layer to the overarching investigation of the function of landscape within the corpus and has forged a further point of connection between the close analysis of the selected films and wider questions in the study of cinematic landscape. By demonstrating the particular importance of temporality to this medium of landscape representation, the chapter expands on existing discussions within film studies, while also revealing the tensions that arise between coexisting temporal scales, between modernity and tradition, and between transformation and preservation.
CONCLUSION

This thesis has undertaken close narrative, aesthetic and formal analysis of eight key works of contemporary Chilean cinema and argued for the importance of the representation of landscape in these films, not only in terms of reading the chosen corpus selected from the so-called novísimo cine chileno but also in terms of contributing to the development of a growing scholarly interest in cinematic landscape. Each chapter has explored a different aspect of the cinematic landscape within the contextual and conceptual framing of Chapter One, which placed the selected films alongside a historical perspective on Chilean cultural discourses around landscape and a conceptualisation of landscape informed by perspectives beyond those which have conventionally been applied in the field of film studies. In doing so, the thesis has sought to set out a more nuanced approach to film landscapes by drawing on the richness of interdisciplinary landscape studies and at the same time to shed light on the largely overlooked wealth of cinematic landscape representation offered by contemporary Chilean cinema. Throughout, the thesis has operated through a double movement that endeavours to place the study of the novísimo cine chileno and the broader critical discussion of cinematic landscape into mutually enriching contact.

Asking what the function of landscape in the selected films is, it has found broadly that in aesthetic terms landscape is represented in ways that allow it to transcend the limitations of being held as a distanced “view” and that emphasise its experiential and processual dimension. The landscape image is
invested with great depth, as attention is given to its material details and the ecology of its components, as well as to its overall form. The selection of landscapes within the corpus does not privilege conventional aesthetic evaluations of landscape, such as the picturesque or the sublime, but considers landscapes as they appear up close and in the everyday. This landscape aesthetic was found to be constructed through formal approaches which emphasise the representation of landscape as a multisensory phenomenon. In particular, it was demonstrated that the “soundscape” plays an important role in imbuing the cinematic landscape with depth and complexity, as do cinematographic techniques which evoke haptic responses to the tactile dimension of landscape. The capacity of moving images as a durational medium was also shown to capture the processes at work across landscapes, as well as varied experiences of moving through and engaging with landscape.

In terms of its relationship to narrative, it was shown that a particular autonomy is granted to landscape in the selected films. Landscape is not restricted to functioning as allegory or as a container or setting for narrative but instead emerges as an object of contemplation in its own right. In those films where the landscape is also the source of narrative conflict (as it is when constructed as “territory” in Chapter Four, for instance), it was found to shift in and out of this role, surfacing both within the narrative designs of the film but also retaining an autonomous presence within the work. Throughout, as will be revisited in the next section of the conclusion, a broad range of thematic concerns were located within landscape, including mortality, materiality, temporality and territoriality. Through the close readings, the interdisciplinary
approach to the concept of landscape was proven to enhance our understanding of how these thematic questions were approached in these films. By providing a lens through which to look differently at cinematic landscape, this approach was shown to be a means of engaging more critically with landscape’s construction and composition, as well as connecting the multiple ways it is experienced and interpreted, both on and off screen. The work of the thesis has contributed to broader discussions of film landscape by demonstrating the productive application of this kind of interdisciplinary engagement, as well as throwing light on a body of films which thus far been largely absent from these discussions.

In reaching these findings, the thesis began by providing an outline of salient points in the cultural history of the Chilean landscape and by setting out its conceptual approach to the idea of “landscape” in detail; these discussions served as a contextual and theoretical framing for the close readings of the primary corpus in subsequent chapters. This chapter established Martin Lefebvre’s elaboration of a distinction between setting and landscape in cinema as an important point of departure, which helps to liberate the analysis of the representations of the physical world from the demands and constraints of narrative. Lefebvre’s understanding of landscape as ‘space freed from eventhood’¹ has contributed to the research’s overall approach to these films from the point of view that landscape operates on screen in ways that reach far beyond the limitations of acting as a container for narrative or providing a site for the inscription of symbolic meaning. Beyond this, it was noted that Lefebvre raises questions about the function of landscape representation in cinema

¹ Lefebvre, p. 29.
which echo through the thesis. Firstly, how is the distinction between landscape and setting made apparent within the work of cinema? This question was addressed in particular where the close readings considered points within the films where a shift occurs from a narrative focus (with the surroundings as setting) to the emergence of a more autonomous presence of landscape, such as in the analyses of *Raíz* (Chapter Two) and *Manuel de Ribera* (Chapter Four). Following from this was the question of how landscape, as opposed to setting, evokes particular gazes or modes of spectatorship from the viewer? The discussion of the tensions between proximity and distance to landscape, as well as the role of haptic visuality, in the work of José Luis Torres Leiva and Matías Rojas were part of the particular response to this question in Chapter Two. This chapter established these shifting perspectives on landscape as part of the foundation for the close readings in later chapters, which gave further consideration to what meaning, affect or impression is able to emerge when narrative is displaced by landscape’s autonomy. These analyses showed that it was often in these moments of displacement or shift that the inherent tensions of landscape (as signalled in Chapter One’s conceptual framework were made visible – whether these were the tensions between observation and contact (Chapter Two), life and death (Chapter Three), contested claims to territory (Chapter Four) or conflicting temporalities (Chapter Five).

Throughout, an understanding that the category of landscape cannot be attached to a single form of representation or significance has been central. Landscape as concept has an inherent openness to polysemy and plurality of form and meaning which the thesis has aimed to acknowledge and preserve,
rather than limit, in its application to the selected films. Furthermore cinematic landscapes as representations are, like landscape itself, processual and in flux. Finally, as is described in more detail in each chapter, the application of conceptual framework which emphasises plurality and instability of meaning in the cinematic landscape image has been found to bring certain tensions to the surface, illuminating how cinematic representation engages with the tensions that exist within landscape itself as a site of co-existing and conflicting forces, investments and attachments.

Within this framework, and without discounting the ways in which these cinematic landscapes are marked by local and national cultural histories and socioeconomic realities, the discussion has been guided by the four main research sub-questions set out in the Introduction and by the need to move beyond conventionally allegorical, symbolic or narrative approaches to landscape in cinema. In its discussion of Verano and Raíz, Chapter Two demonstrated how shifts in spectator perspective and subjective alignments in relation to landscape contributed to a representation of landscape which emphasises plurality. The focus in Chapter Two was on exploring landscape at a level before and beyond symbolic meaning or narrative function, primarily through affective and sensory engagement. This chapter showed how the films work to counter the straightforwardness of landscape as a totality to be viewed from a distant point of observation, by creating a more fragmentary and impressionistic representation, thus disrupting the sensory hierarchy which conventionally privileges vision as our point of access to landscape. By establishing a phenomenologically informed analysis, this chapter gave a sense
of film's particular capacity as a medium to evoke the bodily, sensory and affective immediacy of landscape as an experience, freed from its demarcation as the detached object of perception.

Developing from the phenomenological approach which arose in Chapter Two, Chapter Three's discussion turned of El año del tigre and Matar a un hombre was grounded in a focus on landscape as a gathering together of matter, both organic and inorganic. This focus on materiality revealed the power of haptic imagery to evoke the landscape through the broader sensorium and showed how the human body was frequently absorbed into the plethora of matter that makes up landscape, decentring human desire and activity within the physical world. Framed in this way, the contact between body and landscape is enmeshed in particular anxieties about the place and status of the human. This sense of anxiety was shown to be connected to the subject matter of the two films, both of which took inspiration from real events that have taken place in 21st-century Chile and which bring to light breakdowns in the social order. The chapter demonstrated how the physical surroundings of these events were represented in ways which transcended the comparatively straightforward status of narrative setting and which fostered an awareness of mortality, of the vulnerability of flesh amid the dangers of the inhospitality and indifference of the natural landscape. This uneasy awareness was produced by the slippage across the boundaries between living and non-living, between human and nature, and between self and other, which forced a confrontation with the disquieting implications of the material contact of body and exterior world.
Human designs on landscape were brought more firmly back into the centre of things in the discussion of landscape as territory in Chapter Four, which considered *Manuel de Ribera* and *El verano de los peces voladores*. This chapter argued that visibility (often in the form of observation, surveillance and mapping) was central to the construction of landscape as territory in both films and that both films underscored the idea of presence as a means of control in such territorialisation. The identification of a certain territorial gaze in both films was explored in order to show how the spectator themselves, as one who observes the landscape-territory, becomes embroiled in the territorial project. In the context of the films’ production, distribution and audience, the chapter made moves towards the consideration of an “ethics” of landscape representation, by arguing that the act of filming a landscape (and of consuming that filmic representation) can be likened to acts of colonisation and occupation of that landscape. Ultimately, the chapter argued that although both films demonstrated elements of aesthetic and narratives resistance to the territorialising gaze, they remained nevertheless marked by the particular colonial histories of the Chilean landscape and its cultural history.

Although it had been touched upon in previous chapters, the temporal layering of landscape was the key idea in Chapter Five, which centred on *Turistas* and *Huacho*. In both films, the coexistence of tradition and modernity plays out in a way that shaped the physical reality of landscape and which was highlighted in the filmmakers’ strategies of representation. This coexistence necessarily entails ongoing, and sometimes competing, processes of preservation and transformation, which resonate at the human level of anxiety about the
instability of identity, relationships and social structures. By way of this analysis, the chapter showed how landscape is not the enduring repository of meaning and identity that it is sometimes held to be in metaphorical or allegorical interpretations, particularly in relation to the nation. Instead, this chapter explored how the cinematic landscape made changing economic and social contexts visible, as they shape not only human life but also the physical environment. As well as being temporally layered, landscape was shown also to be a multiscalar concept capable of connecting the personal, the local, the national and the global.

Having rearticulated the key contributions made by each chapter, it remains to assess their implications for the overarching questions asked in this thesis. Firstly, as a result of the attentive and detailed analyses undertaken in the central chapters, what can be said about the function of landscape in these films when taken together as representative of tendencies in contemporary Chilean filmmaking?

In returning to reflect on this question, it is worth restating that has not been the intention of this thesis to produce a definitive assertion about the purpose of landscape representation in the novísimo cine chileno or to make the case for a single way of “reading” these landscapes. Such an attempt would risk applying reductive and overly generalised conclusions to a varied body of work and would also fail to heed the emphasis that has been placed throughout the thesis on the multiplicity of landscape’s manifestations and the subjective and contextually contingent nature of responses to its representation. Instead, it has been argued that there are broad commonalities that have emerged across the
discussion chapters and which resurface across the corpus, albeit in aesthetically and thematically varied ways.

The first of these observations is that landscape is represented in the selected films in ways that consistently permit the physical surroundings of a film to exceed the bounds of setting and to take on some degree of autonomy or presence outside the terms of the narrative. This is perhaps at its most explicit in Verano where, as discussed in Chapter Two, the film’s absence of strong narrative structure created space for landscape to emerge not only as the object of a touristic gaze but also as an immersive sensory experience which was neither temporally nor spatially constrained by narrative action. However, landscape also emerged as distinct from setting in those films where the narrative impetus was much clearer. Chapter Three demonstrated the potential of landscape to absorb, rather than provide a stage for, human crises; in both Matar a un hombre and El año del tigre, this was revealed through a combination of long shots which minimised human visibility and haptic imagery which diverted the spectator from narrative interest to sensory immersion.

Landscape in the films under discussion not only escapes simple categorisation as a container for narrative but also resists easy metaphorical or allegorical investment, particularly with regard to landscape as a symbolic representation of national identity or historical experience. While the influence of national specificities has by no means been discounted from the discussions of these films, it has been consistently emphasised that the national is only one scale of social and cultural meaning invoked by these representations of Chilean landscapes, alongside personal, local and global resonances.
It has further been found that landscape is often presented in a way which calls attention to some aspect of what we might think of as its “instability”; that is to say, its unsettledness, its ever-changing form, its being always in the midst of process and flux and its status as the object of conflicting claims and interpretations. In some films, the instability of landscape was manifested in changes to the physical form of the exterior world; in Chapter Three, the discussion highlighted the literal breaking apart of landscape amid the earthquake in *El año del tigre* and in Chapter Five, the transformation of landscape by constructors at the edge of a national park made visible the encroachment of redevelopment even on protected landscapes. In other films, aesthetic approaches gestured towards the fragmentary and incomplete ways in which landscape is experienced; Chapter One argued that the oscillation between landscape as view observed from a distance and landscape as sensory immersion experience from within created a mosaic-like impression in both *Verano* and *Raíz*, reaffirming the idea of landscape as collection of shifting visual, aural and tactile impressions. Chapter Four, meanwhile, addressed the destabilisation of landscape as the object of conflict and the site of expression of territorial desires; in both *El verano de los peces voladores* and *Manuel de Ribera* the process of staking, maintaining and resisting claims to landscape allowed shifting relations of power and control to play out, recalling the history of the Chilean landscape as colonised and contested territory.

Although the selected films all explored the interaction of human and landscape in some manner, another crucial connection between the individual films and chapter discussions is the idea that screen time and space is also claimed, if only
transiently, by the non-human and more-than-human aspects of landscape. In addition to the sideling of narrative already referred to in Verano, other films called attention to the non-human dimensions of landscape through a range of formal and aesthetic strategies. In Turistas, as argued in Chapter Five, this decentring of the human is achieved through the irruption of non-human animal life in the use of close-ups and interventions in the soundscape that interrupt narrative flow and divert the attention of the spectator away from the human protagonists. Chapter Four analysed the use of moving camerawork to give a sense of the camera as an embodied observer drifting away from the human concerns described by the voiceover of Manuel de Ribera and instead moving ever deeper into the woods, as though drawn by a force beyond human articulation. In Chapter Three, it was argued that the use of haptic imagery, particularly in the depiction of the body in death, penetrates beneath the apparent distinction between human and landscape, absorbing the human body and animal body alike into landscape not only as sensory experience but as an ecology of organic matter.

Secondly, in addition to offering analytical insight into key works of recent Chilean cinema, the thesis has also been an attempt to demonstrate the productive use of interdisciplinary perspectives to the work of analysing landscape in film studies. Its contributions are to the existing critical work on the novísimo cine chileno and to work on landscape in film studies more broadly. It has engaged with a nascent and fast-changing body of Chilean work with projection into the international arthouse and festival markets. As discussed in the Introduction and referred to throughout the Chapters, existing readings of
these films have, to various extents, been undertaken by scholars working in the Spanish language primarily from within Chile itself. The thesis has attempted to broaden the scope of critical attention to include several films which have been comparatively underexplored within existing literature, particularly *El año del tigre* and *El verano de los peces voladores*. The particular focus on landscape coupled with the interrogation of the concept from interdisciplinary perspectives has established new critical positions on the films studied, built on existing critical frameworks, such as Urrutia’s in her analysis of *Manuel de Ribera* and *El cielo, la tierra y la lluvia*, and extended the discussion to a wider range of questions.

The work of cultural geographers has been crucial to this approach but the thesis has also shown how these ideas can be brought into dialogue with thinking from philosophy, art history, landscape architecture and anthropology. This framework, the close readings have proven, is a useful guide to looking differently at cinematic landscapes and to produce interpretations which better take into account their complexity and their multiplicity of meaning, as well as their place within a cultural history of landscape representation. Harper and Rayner, whose ideas this thesis partly builds on, suggest that an essential aspect of landscapes is that they are ‘composed of many elements and that these elements interact to create our overall conception and reception’; this thesis has demonstrated the value of broader disciplinary perspectives if we are to enhance our capacity to address film landscapes in this way.

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2 Urrutia Neno (2013).
3 Harper and Rayner, p. 16.
Additionally, this thesis has tried to bring contemporary Chilean cinema into this discussion as a new corpus of case studies for cinematic landscape and to argue that they can be read in ways which speak to questions outside of the national context. Throughout the Chapters, the thesis has demonstrated that the discussion of films from a national cinema does not have to work to the exclusion of more globalised or universal themes. Instead, the chapters have drawn on an awareness of the cultural history of landscape representation in the national context but have considered this as only one element of the significance of cinematic landscape, accepting that it can be a multivalent form of imagery that can concurrently enter into discourses on personal, local, national and global layers, connecting audiences and filmmaker in ways which are influenced but not limited by the specificities of nation.

This thesis has considered only a fraction of Chilean cinematic history and only a relative handful of its cinematic landscapes. There are many striking landscapes that are not represented within the scope of this thesis but which would provide fertile ground for future work. The Atacama Desert, for instance, is not touched upon in this thesis, nor is the Chilean Pacific island territory of Rapa Nui, or the southern tip of the country as it extends into the Antarctic Circle. Indeed, the Antarctic landscape poses its own particular questions as a landscape largely devoid of human habitation but one which remains subject to competing national claims for territory.

The work of this thesis could also be expanded towards a deeper comparative analysis of the cinematic landscapes of this corpus alongside the landscape representations of previous generations of filmmakers. Within this, there is
scope for consideration of how cinematic landscapes are marked by questions of historical memory, particularly within a postdictatorship framework. While this has been touched on as one among many concerns connected to landscape in this thesis, more focused analysis across a longer period of Chile’s cinematic history would present an opportunity to investigate a possible ‘post-symbolic turn’ in 21st century film treatment of landscapes, perhaps from the starting point of the ‘exhaustion’ of landscape’s national allegorical function, as proposed by Jens Andermann in reference to Argentine and Brazilian cinema.

There is also the question of extending the scope of analysis to genre filmmaking (such as the examples of horror, animation and action cinema mentioned in the Introduction), as well as to Chilean documentary representation of landscapes. Although some of the interdisciplinary lenses used to examine the fiction films in this thesis might be applicable in some regards, as mentioned in the Introduction, to the specifics of the documentary mode of filmmaking, the particular cultural history of the documentary in Chile, as well as the complex issue of the ethics of documentary representation, would certainly demand a reconfiguration of the framework used. To cite particularly striking examples that have attracted substantial critical attention, the recent works of renowned documentary maker Patricio Guzmán, Nostalgia de la luz and El botón de nácar have both featured extensive engagement with landscape, with the former centred on the Atacama and the latter on the waterways and shorelines of Patagonia. The planned completion of Guzmán’s trilogy with a film

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about the Andes mountain range promises to extend the filmmaker’s gaze over an even wider extent of the Chilean landscape.

However, the films chosen, and their landscapes, have been shown to raise pointed questions about the ethics of landscape representation and its relationship to colonisation and territoriality, questions which have wide application geopolitically and across other Latin American cinemas. The specific qualities of these fiction films have also allowed the discussion to highlight ideas about affective and sensory landscapes, the materiality of landscape and landscape as a simultaneous repository of both tradition and modernity, as well as being patterned by both human and non-human temporalities. These ideas and the conceptual framework which support them have illuminated the aesthetic, formal, narrative and thematic concerns of these films, as well as the relations of the people and places they represent.
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