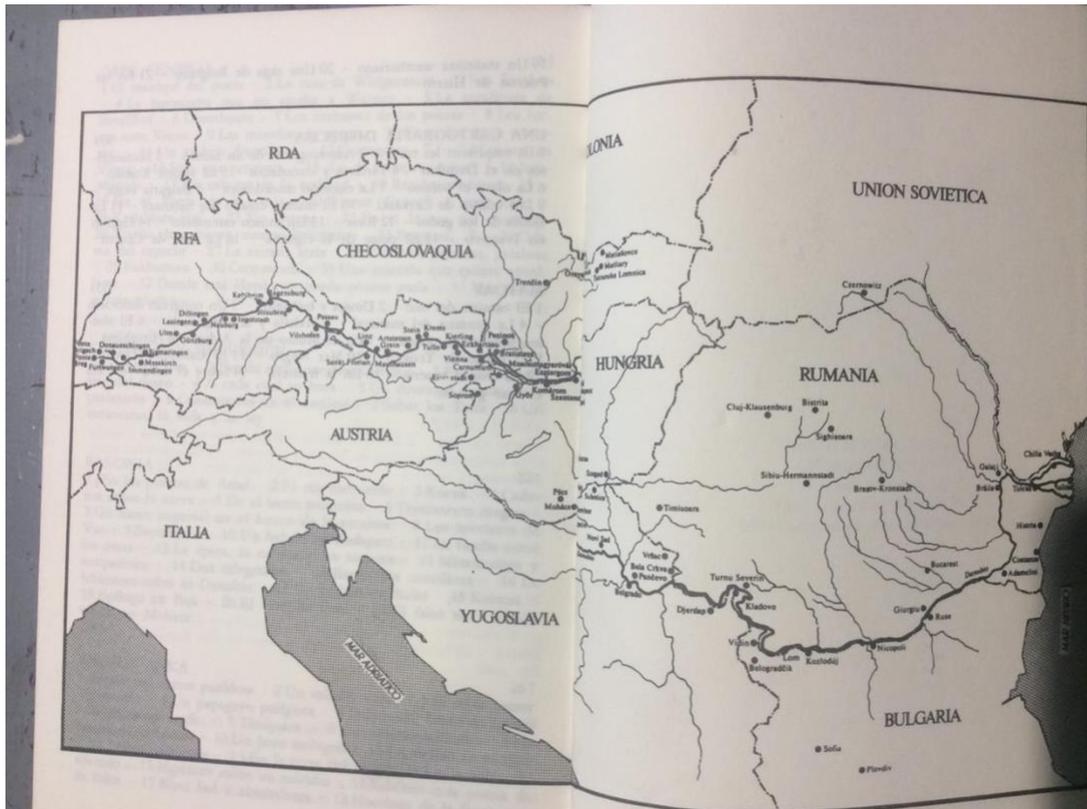


INTERGALACTIX:

against isolation/contra el aislamiento

Estación Intergalactix Station | Map 6



Intergalactix: against isolation/contra el aislamiento | [Estación Intergalactix Station](#) presents

[originally written in Spanish](#)

Genealogy of collaborations: archives, maps, reciprocities

by Helena Braunštajn

And yet there is a fondness that binds to the grave what is
beyond to the grave, the survivor that I am to my forebears.
Julia Kristeva

This text is an attempt to make a map that reflects the paths, the experiences, the collaborations, the artistic practices, and their respective migrations; also, to exorcise the vestiges of corrosive memories, and at the same time, to congregate teachers, friends, ancestors. All (together), because it has long been clear to me that there is no distinct division between private and public life (it is a convenient separation of properties, promoted by the capitalist system). With its subjective and intimate edges, the personal sphere is crisscrossed by professional routes, always as accidental as life is hazardous. Since I barely glimpse the origin and destiny of things, I am playing with the

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genealogical approach as Foucault understood it: "Behind things, there is "something else quite different": not their essential and outdated secret, but the secret that they have no essence, or that their essence was constructed piece by piece from figures foreign to them."¹ Therefore, in this attempt at the genealogical inquiry, there is no ordered line of events, only an interplay between the scenarios and forms through which I have been able to represent some human experiences; unraveling the (co)laboration in which multiple spheres of life, my own and others' (another uncertain distinction), have participated.

My methodology: I have asked some professional and emotional collaborators, real, apocryphal, or imaginary, to give me some clues or traces they keep of our interactions. This material remains (photos, phrases, paragraphs, audios, or whatever has come to the surface of their memory) makes up an archive from which a thousand possible maps can emerge; one of them is the one I am tracing here in writing. Genealogical figures are formed between paths and connections (footnotes, fragments, quotes, links), not precisely a tree, but something like a [geometric scheme](#) that I have found somewhere. Perhaps a "squaring of the circle," obsessive and impossible.

The footnotes are the card catalog, while the body of the text is made up of the associations that emerge between the clues and the autobiographical anecdotes (the collaboration does not always correspond to the association, the collaborator to the reflection; everything is mixed, randomly connected), where the biography, to paraphrase Danilo Kiš, is like a cenotaph: an empty grave.

["Playing blind"](#) a clue by [Miguel Angel Nava](#)²

At [some point](#), with six hands, Aguazal Producciones wrote: "(...) we prefer to place ourselves in our own conceptual framework: new dependencies, interdisciplinary contaminations, soft data, and diverse creative affectations.

We work in the community context, where the concept of "empathy" is already implicit; it binds the community together, it is an essential element. Empathy is not a pre-established issue, neither a Catholic-Christian promise of salvation, nor an institutional quota, much less a public policy. Empathy is a collective task and responsibility in which the individual is not educated to compete but to cooperate, that is, to collaborate. Consequently, our way of being in the world is not related to rhetorics nor individualistic simulations. In Aguazal Producciones we build experiences body to body, we immerse ourselves and let ourselves be affected by the reality with all its contingencies and waste (...)

We seek those ideas, actions, disciplines, and methodologies manifest their permeabilities and contaminate each other. We produce contemporary community art; we think from multiple perspectives; we depart from and with difference, incorporating obstacles as an essential creative energy. (...) to experience the creative process in collectivity.

We are currently working with (...) the pluri/transabilities, as we propose to call them, because to name them "disabilities" would be to deny their ontological and epistemological importance within

¹ Translated from Foucault Michelle. *Nietzsche, la genealogía, la historia*. Pre-texts, Valencia, 1992. p. 18.

² The first time I let myself be guided blindfolded through the streets and building interiors was with Miguel Ángel Nava and his friends from the National School for the Blind. In [Planos corporales](#) (Body plans) the blind inquiry was about architectural spaces and our bodies; in [Detonación no-vista](#) (Unseen detonation), the accent was on the smells and textures of the piece *Mina* (Mine) by Jerónimo Hagerman; while in [El rosario deshojado](#) (the stripped rosary) we made a radio-novel written by Miguel and interpreted by blind, visually impaired and normative-vision people; the radio story subtly revolved around the question: what is normal, what is abnormal and what is paranormal? With Miguel I have learned to see the world with my whole body.

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the world we cohabit. We distance ourselves from the rhetoric of inclusion and integration because we know that we all have different perception schemes and we understand that people with these abilities are the ones who include us in their world and teach us to experience it with other sensibilities, intuitions, and potentialities, which can transform our individual, collective and material relationships.

For example, in 2017 we did *A ciegas, caminero sonoro* (In the dark, sound wanderer), with National Radio for Blind People (Spanish acronym ENC Radio), Foro Mutante - CCEMX- Casa Vecina. In these sound walks through the Historic Center streets in Mexico City, the blindfolded participants were guided by blind people. (...) The goal was to exchange perceptions and put ourselves in other people's shoes. An exercise of trust, dedication, and commitment, important fragile points of the society in which we live, the raw material in the construction of new dependencies; and trust in another who has different capacities from ours, in a world governed by the apparatus of corporal normativity power".

"[Creating a landscape together](#)" a clue by [Jerónimo Hagerman](#) ³

I understand that contemporary artistic practices are creative acts of resistance. To go beyond the borders that outline the strict field of art and fully immerse oneself in political and community contexts at the crossroads of ancestral and current times; to migrate and contaminate oneself with "non-art" and get involved in local struggles; to impregnate oneself with knowledge and techniques, with the life of other species; to discover and practice the "apocryphal" sciences that have been displaced by the knowledge established by patriarchal power; to do "brujería" (witchcraft) by tracing circuits of receiving to share with nature; to mark pauses for the clock of hyper-productivity and the vertiginous speeds of neoliberalism; not to take all the works inside museums, art fairs and galleries and to create new landscapes together in the open air; to make itinerant community gardens; to sing in native languages, to [express ourselves in other languages](#), to listen to crickets, whales, secret resonances of the earth, our forgotten maternal wombs; and death, listen to it also from other public spaces in the skies (where [Marcelo Balzaretti's UFOs](#) circulate); stop practicing cultural extractivism and create a new culture of interdependence (someone has what you lack, they will give it to you; and vice versa) and proliferation of genders, races, ethnicities and their polyphonic perspectives. Decentering the "I" as the only point of gravity and letting a new, diverse, and powerful "we" emerges.

³ "[Here and now. Jardín radial](#)" was an itinerant public art project in which I collaborated with Jerónimo Hagerman. Thanks to it I have been able to see our relationship with plants, their power to congregate and produce community, place us in other scales and temporal dimensions, rethink our anthropocentric relationship with other species, explore the public space from its organization, mutation and, above all, its emotional and affective framework and many more experiences of friendship and art shared through this project and other writing collaborations, books, interviews, and presentations.

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"[A research center in a public garden](#)," a clue by [Daniela Lieja Quintanar](#) ⁴

What happens to this "we" in times of calamities (pandemic, forced empathy: I am in the place of the other without asking for it; security and immunity are now not individual but collective issues), war, uncertainty, political or economic violence, lack of love and abandonment? It happens to me, but to others as well. In the context of neoliberal globalization, I am no longer the only one that needs saving.

This same globalization—that promotes the free transit of capital and goods— has destabilized states and national borders (already artificial and obsolete) with large mobilizations of the population, causing social inequality on racial and ethnic grounds, wage and labor discrimination of migrants, exploitation and illegal status of human beings who migrate without finding a better place. An example that serves well: "Women fleeing across the Mediterranean are never victims of a single executioner: they flee from patriarchy, from conflicts, from their recruiters and the sex industry, from traffickers, and not least from the regime of European borders which, by preventing them from escaping, would like to bind them to their status as victims."⁵

What happens to this "female we" in the urban fabrics with their obvious regulations and invisible powers, their spaces of consumption, and obscene spectacles of capitalism? How to make public spheres, bubbles, if nothing else, foams of community, cooperation, and genuine empathy within the machine?

For all this, we tried to develop a Research Center in a public garden; we supported the "[Office of Documentary Embroidery](#)" in the squares; we learned from [people deported](#) from the United States; because of our increasingly palpable condition of "slaves" of the machine, we went to jail to make art.... And now, we seek to recognize that the network of resistance exists and works; we want, and we work to potentiate this space of "Intergalactix".

"[Embroidery: those who stay](#)," a clue by [Roger Adam](#) ⁶

Thus says Julia Kristeva: "In crossing a border (... or two) the foreigner has changed his discomforts into a base of resistance, a citadel of life. Moreover, had he stayed home, he might perhaps have become a dropout, an invalid, an outlaw... Without a home, he disseminates on the contrary the

⁴ We met in a workshop I shared on security *versus* political mobilizations in public space that I called "Demophobia". Later we coincided in Lugar_cero to continue signifying and building creative spaces of pause within the public space. In this project Daniela Lieja Quintanar was in charge of a research center and organized presentations, talks and interviews in the squares of the Historic Center of Mexico City; in addition to co-curations, consultancies, texts and nightly assemblies with the rest of the team. Her fresh critical stance, her rebelliousness, her cooperative energy and great friendship have motivated me throughout my many years in Mexico.

⁵ Rigo, Enrica. "What kind of asylum? Women and international protection in the European border crisis" in *from the philosophical to the social: the facets of migration in the context of globalization* by María del Socorro Castañeda Díaz. [Desacatos, Mexico, n. 59, Apr. 2019](#). Accessed: 17. 09. 2020.

⁶ Another great Catalan friend. We made a book together in which Roger Adam helped me to summarize several projects of many years, all their processes, assemblies, research, itineraries. He taught me how to make paella, to dance and sing with [Acid Arab](#), he took me to the Biblioteca Social Reconstruir, an anarchist cultural heritage in Mexico, among many other collaborations and experiences. He continues to give me the gift of his patience, affection, hospitality and his brilliant sense of humor.

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actor's paradox: multiplying masks and "false selves", he is never completely true nor completely false. (...) This means that, settled within himself, the foreigner has no self. Barely an empty confidence, valueless, which focuses his possibilities of being constantly other, according to others' wishes and to circumstances. I do what they want me to, but it is not "me" — "me" is elsewhere, "me" belongs to no one, "me" does not belong to "me," ... does "me" exist?⁷

Fine stitch embroidery of the "I": it is [borrowed](#) and lent, made and remade piece by piece, trial and error, incessantly.

"[Five-pointed star and red eyes](#)", a clue by [Valeria Caballero](#).⁸

пионери малени. In the first years of school, in socialist Yugoslavia, they applied to us the rule: 'one week, the Cyrillic alphabet, another, the Latin alphabet'. Everything was handwritten. I don't deny it, I got my wires crossed because some letters I liked better in Cyrillic, others in Latin, and I wished to see them together. My letter š looked better as ш, or the "h" as "x". But it was not a matter of my taste but authoritarian rules of language. Other regulations: [our uniforms](#) of little pioneers—who sang love songs to Marshal Tito ('comrade Tito, white violet, you are loved by the whole youth, comrade Tito, blue violet...')—were simple but without mistakes: navy blue skirt/trousers, white shirt; on the collar, bright red handkerchief, and on the head, navy blue cap with a red pentagonal star. Thus dressed, we made a collective body that reflected 'our' flag. I was just another dot in the school choreographies, sometimes part of the blue stripe, sometimes the red. (Sadly, I was never touched by the yellow of the rays that fringed the star.) I could not check with my eyes where I was inside the revolutionary figure made of our bodies, but I had been trained to believe that someone from above was looking at the whole picture. On one occasion, after long hours of rehearsing in the bright sunshine a show for the birthday of the great Comrade, I fainted. My spot disappeared, altering the whole picture. What a shame! How beautiful. It was my first non-collaboration with the system (involuntary and, perhaps, my unconscious secret purpose). However, to this day, I feel (with apparent ambiguity) the red five-pointed star, which has marked my forehead throughout my childhood. Valeria knows it; we have talked about it in many projects; in some, we have played and subverted its meanings.

"[The names of the stars](#)" a clue by [Irene Dubrovsky](#).⁹

⁷ Kristeva Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. Plaza & Janes Editors, Barcelona, 1991. p. 17.

⁸ The first meeting and the beginning of a multiple and fruitful collaboration with Valeria Caballero was in [Casa Vecina](#) (Mexico City) whose orientation was to generate community projects together with artists from different latitudes of the world. Later, Zonas de obra, and then we founded [Aguazal Producciones](#) (Valeria Caballero, Aisa Serrano and me) whose first line of work has been to explore the possibilities of art from different capacities, retaking knowledge, sensitivity and creativity of people with disabilities. In this context we produced a radio soap opera, blind visits to museums, four-handed texts and we drew some rejected projects, which we still like very much. Valeria is a photographer; through her images she has taught me the beauty of transition between black and white; and she has always generously given me enormous emotional support.

⁹ Some coincidences have put us in contact with our wandering roots and forgotten mother tongues; we have searched for them in astral maps, coded languages, loves lost on the roads, clandestine lives. Irene Dubrovsky lived her first years in Hungary, she is Argentinean and "naturalized" Mexican. She has taught me, in a discreet way, how to nurture, expand and sustain a bond of friendship.

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While I investigate and make maps for some "apocryphal" sciences, among Giordano Bruno, Julio Fírmico Materno (what a name!), Maria Magdalena, Elena or Eleno de Cespedes; among trans, converts, witches and other subversive thinkers whose bodies and wisdom burned in public squares of the most shamefully "advanced" Europe. I wonder: what course would we have taken if, while teaching us in schools the Pythagorean theorem, they had also told us about the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis, that is, of the trans-migration of souls (souls are travelers, pilgrims, migrants, from one body to another, from one species to another), because of which there is a kinship between all living beings? The voices of tradition tell of Pythagoras (whose school was identified with the five-pointed star), who, passing once by a puppy that was being mistreated, said, "stop beating him, for it is the soul of a friend that I recognized when he cried out."

I continue mapping and I come across an astrological fact of the present moment: the planet Uranus will be in the sign of Taurus until 2026. This means, in an image: the roots in the air of an uprooted tree; the inverted tree. Or better: the plants growing on antennas, electric cables, roofs; the aerial plants.

Thus we, confined, and at the same time, all migrants.

[Research I couldn't finish for some impossible project](#)

After the Bosnian war in the 1990s, rape was seen, for the first time, as a weapon of war, used for ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The strategy of the so-called "ethnic cleansing" in the occupied territories by Serbian paramilitaries (now old and abandoned war veterans) was to exterminate Muslim men and rape Muslim women and girls. It was called "genocide by procreation": in concentration camps, women were systematically raped for a long time to conceive and give birth to the children of their rapists, thus ensuring, according to the criminal and abysmally patriarchal psyche, that they would beget Serbian children. They believed that the womb is an extension of the land to be occupied and raided.

Mass rapes were seen as an arsenal of militarized patriarchy in all wars; however, in this case, they were used as a calculated strategy of genocide.

The children of the enemy rapist now live in Bosnia; they are about 25 years old.

"[In dislocated places that make a little piece of everyday space where you always are](#)" a clue by [Michelle Aguilar](#)¹⁰

In public, private, intimate, anonymous, or everyday spaces, "there are only networks of resistance, which are the networks of complicity", says Deleuze in his Alphabet, in the part that corresponds to the letter [R as "resistance"](#). I don't remember well, but I think he also said something like: "The territory is valid in relation to a movement by which one leaves it. There is no territory without an exit vector, without a deterritorialization".

¹⁰ [Lugar cero](#) was our first major collaboration. For this project, Michelle Aguilar Vera developed and implemented "experiential workshops" that took place in the "Radio Garden" that we installed in the public space of the Historic Center of Mexico City; she also served as co-curator, advisor, artist, photographer, writer, participant in the nightly street assemblies. She is a great friend who has helped to make the Spanish language a playful and familiar space for me and who gives me the certainty that in her home and her affection there is always a refuge.

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Collaboration is the possibility of building a temporary territory woven and embroidered with these networks. And to build its exit. Of being able to deterritorialize oneself.

Although "collaboration" is often said, it is not only co-working but also and above all, co-acting, co-affecting, co-existing. Therefore, it cannot be a mere artistic strategy (skill, maneuver, tactic), it cannot be a premeditated act of cultural extractivism (appropriation of some community good, of the stories of other people's lives, of the character traits, tears and exotic loves brought to the galleries), but it is the constant creation, by trial and error, of new ways of living together. The deterritorialization of the "I" (it is a danger, it is a necessity) and its frequent splitting into a communal "I", a "we". Identity with its vector of exit to otherness.

[There we continue to collaborate without you knowing it](#)" a clue by [Helena Fernández-Cavada](#) ¹¹

"We are united with one another. This is not always a joyful and happy experience," Judith Butler reminds us of an obvious fact. In this "between" of the union of one another, even if it seems narrow, there is still a space wide enough to tint it and draw it in different colors and shapes. We collaborate. We converse. We build together times and atmospheres. Symbiosis, associations, dependencies. There is always someone else who teaches me, helps me, takes care of me, or participates in the realization of my ideas, which then cease to be mine. Our works (and often thoughts and feelings) are inevitably collective. Through exposure to the links, our porosity, openness, temporariness, or lack of control, we become aware of the vulnerable nature of existence. The circle closes and spins back around: knowing that we are vulnerable requires us to recognize that we are dependent and linked to the other, a being out in the open, because they are outside of themselves (a removable roof, on every corner of the road, a temporary home) and their ontological openness pushes them to outline their identity through otherness. This relational character of our existence, when recognized and potentiated through creative and intentional practices, becomes a political-affective program of production of communities and networks of connection based on the recognition of the other, of mutual protection, responsibility, collaboration, interdependence, construction of a common time of conversation and exchange, gratitude."

(An excerpt from the text I wrote for the exhibition "Hey you, out there in the cold. Tell them I got up and went for a walk" by Helena Fernández-Cavada at Krognoshuset Lund, Sweden, 2019).

[First the orgasms, then the truth, at the end the love](#)" a clue by [Mireia Sallarès](#) ¹²

¹¹ Conversations, texts, interpretations of the I Ching, interviews, presentations, editing a book, a [workshop on biocultural diversity](#), bursts of laughter, comforting broths in the early mornings; there are countless occasions to coincide aesthetically, politically and effectively with Helena Fernández-Cavada. She has given me the gift of the depth of understanding of time; the opportunity to read the touching correspondence with her mother; the care, nutrition and its processes, as the earth does.

¹² It is impossible to count the numerous occasions to collaborate with Mireia Sallarès. In Mexico ("[Las muertes chiquitas](#)" about women's orgasms and violence), in Venezuela ("La verdad se escapó desnuda", about political, philosophical, everyday truths), in the Balkans ("[Kao malo vode na dlanu](#)", a project about love that started in Belgrade, Serbia and expanded to Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Croatia); different texts (some four hands), presentations, [interviews](#), trips, telling and interpreting dreams.... The friendship we built throughout our shared wanderings and years has been deeply transforming for me, in all dimensions.

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I did not know what to tell her about my orgasms, much less how to answer the question about my mother's sexuality and whether she had experienced orgasms. However, I remembered very well that my mother often talked to me about another subject that now catches my attention: that German was my "mother tongue". A mystery about this matter of the language of my ancestors that my mother did not teach me to understand or speak. So, I think, my mother tongue is like a nebula kept between the layers of my existence, never reached, utopian. I migrated from mother's womb to an unstable Central European land and my first spoken words (in Serbo-Croatian or Serbian, as it was called later) were in a foreign language. I wrote about something similar in "[Notes for a dictionary of love infinities](#)", published in *Kao malo vode na dlanu*, a project on love in Serbia by Mireia Sallarès: "There is then that other abyss that opens up in the body and what has been its interior: there is the abyss between the mother and the child. What is the relationship between me, and even more modestly between my body and that internal fold graft which, once the umbilical cord has been cut, is another inaccessible one?"¹³ The matria is the internal place of departure, without geographical coordinates, without cities or landscapes; the first sound of the mother tongue; but also, it is the permanent condition of banishment and exile from one's own body, from one's own language. Even so, with the pain and the abyss of exile included, it is wrongly said that unconditional love...

I often forget what I have had to learn since I was a child; for example, about the gravitational force of words (one would think that the word has nothing to do with these laws of matter) and sometimes, I make them very heavy. I still can't get the story of that great-grandmother: just at the time of the first great war, some army over there had mobilized her new husband; she was 19, and her belly was getting bigger and bigger... Later, out in the open, (Slavic countryside, in the background, sounds of some distant bombardment), standing and leaning against a walnut tree, she gave birth alone. A couple of years later, she gave up hope of ever seeing her husband again (my ancestor with the non-existent face), deciding that the only man by her side would be her son. He was her center and her world. Whenever she felt any threat to her offspring, she would throw out that serious word that few around her understood because she spoke an archaic, rabid German. I did not want to believe it, I was afraid to accept it, but my last dive into the family archives and dates have confirmed it: her word of revenge, the curse made of the pain of an abandoned woman, of the unconditional love of a wounded mother, had a deadly power.

And I do not know what to do with so much density that I suddenly make in my "mother tongue", not only in the words but also among them, that I only wait for the breath of the wind to lighten their passage.

My participation in "Amor en Serbia" (the title became "Como un poco de agua en la palma de la mano" (Like a little water in the palm of the hand)) began shortly after my father's death. I mourned him (without witnesses, on the sly) at every step we took through the homeland which clouded, hindered, or clarified the encounters. In the last phase of Mireia's project, my mother also left us. I remember, while I took care of her and listened to her mother's words disarticulated, while I washed her legs and her icy hands, my body, which will not be a mother, was tearing itself apart, menstruating: long hours of letting go of what is no longer mine, what can no longer be.

"Love is also for those who leave us irretrievably."

[Crumbling of a country](#). a clue of Yugoslavia

¹³ Kristeva, Julia. "Stabat Mater" in *Stories of Love Siglo XXI* Editores, Mexico, 1987. p. 244.

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The war was upon us. Many weapons, little food. Excesses of misery and nationalist exacerbations. From the outside, an economic embargo was imposed by almost two-thirds of the world, while inside the country (it was still called Yugoslavia), all production was turned to war needs. Even today, I still cannot understand the speed with which sugar factories, for example, were converted into military factories. I lived in Subotica, a town on the Hungarian border. At that time, because of high suicide rates, the Hungarians were forbidden to sell alcoholic beverages, while on our side, despite all the shortages, alcohol was not lacking. Because of this circumstance, we started to engage in smuggling. We, very young women, did not arouse much suspicion. We would hide a few bottles of pure alcohol in various nooks and crannies of the car and cross the border. Two friends, innocent faces, except for our passports, hardly checked us at all. The business was already set: as soon as we crossed, a crowd of buyers awaited us in Hungary and the clandestine transaction flowed smoothly. With the money earned from the sale of alcohol, we bought sugar, oil, coffee, the food that was not available at home. Afterward, we would share these smuggled items with the family, among friends. An authentic criminal act of collaborating for survival.

After crossing multiple times like this, our "innocence" vanished in front of the eyes of the border control. They checked everything: while they were dismantling our car, 30 or 35 suspicious bottles began to come to light, one after the other. They confiscated everything, didn't let us cross the border, and, in addition, put us on a 3-year entry ban to Hungary. Our passport was stamped with the mysterious Hungarian word "Tiltott!"

"[Touch Sustain](#)" a clue by [Julian Monroy](#) ¹⁴

Within the project on love in Serbia I collaborated in Belgrade with the association "Ignorant Teacher" ([Ucitelj Neznalica](#)), a self-learning platform created in 2011 that engages in legal counseling, politics of memory, cooperatives, review of critical social events, building up an archive of books and texts of Yugoslav humanism, etc. They are specifically involved with various sectors of the population that have been violated, such as, for example, veterans of the wars that took place throughout the 1990s in different territories of the former Yugoslavia; their status as "veterans" does not legally exist since the Serbian state does not recognize (blatantly) having participated in such war conflicts; therefore, former soldiers (generally with serious psychological and economic problems) do not have any support from the Serbian government. Another important project carried out by this association is legal advice to former workers in the factories that were collectively owned (Yugoslav socialist system contemplated collective, state, and, to a lesser extent, private ownership); these workers, because of the privatization policy (rough transition to capitalism) initiated by the Serbian government after the collapse of Yugoslavia, lost their factories, their jobs and sometimes even their homes. Faced with this, they daringly denounced the state for these privatizations in international courts for the crime of "human trafficking", since they consider that they themselves were also sold together with the factories and their machines.

¹⁴ Art (and life in general), apart from great research and creativity, is made of concrete acts. The organization, the schedules, the appointments with authorities, the permissions, the conversations, the agreements and the distribution of tasks; all this sustains the creative processes and makes them operative. And then, the concrete repercussions: touching experiences, touching the other, reversing points of view and, above all, recognizing and sustaining urgent struggles. All this I have learned from Julian Monroy who was in charge of managing and helping in the realization of several public art projects of Lugar_cero.

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Local struggles are recognized and sustained; because even if they are local, no one is spared. With all of them, we wanted to talk about love; we proposed a debate based on the questions: What is the relationship between love and work? Can we establish labor and love relationships outside the framework of capitalist functioning? The purpose was to build reflections and proposals collectively. For this occasion, Mireia and I wrote: "Both love and work bring us into contact with the question of ownership. The question whether we can love someone or something without owning it has long resounded. That love escapes this capitalist logic of practicing bonds reminds us of Lacan's statement: love is to give what one does not have to someone who does not need it. Or Nancy's: "Love is to fill my emptiness with another emptiness". Love operates in a paradoxical and asymmetrical way: there is no calculable transaction, no possible symmetrical exchange since properties are not exchanged. One could say, one gives oneself, but one does not fully possess oneself either. It is the short-circuit that love makes with the system of capitalist relations, which conditions and forces us to understand ourselves as owners of ourselves and owners in relation to others. Because here, the calculation of mercantile values becomes absurd: the potential and productive force of love (and of labor as well), is not inscribed in any order of possession and transaction. In a system of the collective property of socialist Yugoslavia, which practiced forms of workers' self-government, what value did the concept of love have and on what was it based?"

[Anhele-Helena](#) a clue of a Utopian Love

If you fall in love, it's like when you cross the border on foot and illegally: on the other side there is always a foreigner and an u-topos, with its pros-cons, attention-distraction, [heaviness-lightness](#). But you naturally desire, you desire it. Amazingly, the stage is set with floripondios, a crescent moon ("croissant", he tells you) and a jukebox in the background.

You translate, they guide you a little, they let you go. You get lost. Clinging to the unsustainable bubble of your emotion, foreign to yourself. It expands and bursts your heart into fifty thousand little bubbles. Foam. And not that this is a bourgeois melodrama (despite the above scenario): you didn't understand, you weren't understood, you slipped, and your heart fell out. Foamed in an impossible place, what can you do?

Anhelé tanto (You deeply yearn)¹⁵, you think, for an impossible rooting, even when Anhelé (from anhelare, "to breathe with difficulty") is also, as Julia Kristeva says, to "settle into itself". And you will continue to love him - far away, hidden in his hut - because you know that "the encounter balances the wandering"¹⁶. In the crossing of two alterities (namely: your voice in his ear, his kiss on your belly), in that place of "between", in the encounter, is your transformation and his; your utopian love and your exile again.

[Kati Horna](#)'s clue

When she was born in 1912, the country was called the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and she was called Katalin Deutsch. She later borrowed the surname Horna and the Hungarian and Mexican nationalities. More anarchist than surrealist (as she is often labeled in Mexico), she was a Spanish

¹⁵ *Anhelé* is the past verb of yearn. The author also is playing with the anagram of her own name.

¹⁶ Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. Plaza & Janes Editores, Barcelona, 1991. p. 19.

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against isolation/contra el aislamiento

Civil War photojournalist documenting the side of those most affected: women, children and the elderly. The archive of her 500 negatives (taken between 1937 and 1938) belonging to the Anarchist Syndicate traveled from Barcelona through France and England to reach Amsterdam. A migrant archive. On her part, fleeing from the Nazi invasion, she took some 250 more negatives to exile in Mexico in a small tin box. A few years ago, 5 or 6 years ago, I don't remember well, all the images were made public. And she was no longer there.

I would have liked to collaborate with Kati Horna. To make an endless exhibition of multiple breasts swollen, round, black, pink, breast feeding; and, about the generosity of the udder of all the cows, goats and sheep in the world.

For such a project, among my notes, I have jotted down a quote from Danilo Kiš: "Let the gland be, and the gland was. Let the milk flow, and the milk flowed through the pulpy mouth of the breast. Saving life with mouth to mouth. A kind of military ranch ration enriched by a special procedure with all the elements necessary for the organism (thus the problem of transportation is solved and the problem of feeding is simplified)."

"[This Transit Is Not a Cage](#)" a clue by [Elizabeth Ross](#) ¹⁷

At some airport:

-Helena Braunštajn, where are you from?

-From Serbia.

And why this passport?

-Because it's mine, it's still valid, isn't it?

-But it is from Yugoslavia, and this country no longer exists!

-That isn't my doing. You can't deny it, it is still a valid document.

-Actually yes, because of the date...But now, instead of this country, we have many; there are passports from Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia... So where exactly are you from?

-I am from Yugoslavia. Although now it's called Serbia and Montenegro, and likely to change its name again soon. We are crumbling, falling apart, you understand....

-I am not here to understand your problems. Please step out of line and wait a moment. I need to verify this, because at the moment you might be an undocumented traveler.

-Yes, might be ... My flight leaves in 15 minutes. I hope to catch it.

¹⁷ We are united by many collaborations of affect, sometimes also at work; transits through various stages of life, carnivalization of old age, menopause, moving, uncertainties.... Always accompanied by feminism, migrant creative acts, and the struggle not to conform to cages. As part of her artistic project "Transvase territorial", Elizabeth Ross conducted [an interview](#) with me where I spoke, perhaps for the first time publicly, about a love that saved my life. Literally.

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Helena Braunštajn

Her professional training includes studies in civil engineering (Serbia, ex-Yugoslavia), Undergrad in Fine Arts (Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana, Mex.) and a master's in philosophy (UNAM). Through teaching, research, and curating, she has specialized in contemporary art and culture, with an emphasis on community creation, collaborative, and public art projects. She has collaborated in various specialized publications and various artistic projects (for example, "Las muertes chiquitas" (The short deaths) and "Como un poco de agua en la palma de la mano (As little water on the hand palm), Project on love in Serbia" by Mireia Sallarés, etc.). As a curator, she has developed mainly in public art projects, highlighting Lugar_Cero, which consisted of various interventions in urban space over several years. She directed cultural center "Casa Vecina" in Mexico City from 2015 until its closure in 2018; She is currently co-curator of Aguazal Producciones, an art research and production platform in conjunction with various communities and from different (dis)abilities. In addition, she collaborated in the Community Program of the Federal Ministry of Culture (2019), developing consultancies and workshops in the "Territories of Peace" program in areas with violence in different municipalities of Mexico. She has published the research *El mapa del Centro Histórico: imaginary territories*, FCH, México, 2008.; Also, she has been editor of *Lugar_Cero. Polyphonic reflection on art and the city*. FCH, México, 2012. For Ediciones Manivela she wrote the essay "Public art. Some reflections" from Volume 6 *Where is art exhibited and protected?* For *Intergalacticx: against isolation / against isolation* at LACE, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibition, he produced the written map entitled "Genealogy of collaborations: archive, maps, reciprocities".

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