



des-bordes # 0.5
www.des-bordes.net
june 2009

Manuel Hernández

Cantos cívicos: the trap

Translated by Jordi Tovilla

I. The trap

The cover shows two kids. They seem to be holding hands and dance turning around to the rhythm of a festive puerile song. The catalog of *Cantos cívicos* (*Civic chants*) is a metonymy of the work it shows, without directly revealing that to which it is pointing. Or at least not entirely.

The swastikas joined to the dollars signs in a continuum, and the white playful rats keep the kids company.

When the national university (UNAM) made room for *Cantos cívicos* at the MuAC¹, it agreed to be questioned. Not only within the frame in which much of the discussion has been developed, but also in one much more precise and directly related to it: in the emblematic slogan of the *alma mater*, that was forged by José Vasconcelos, a self-declared filonazi; the presence of race, as well as the strong nationalism that springs to mind, cannot pass unnoticed anymore.

José Vasconcelos was in charge of the rectorship of the University and he also was the Secretary of Educación, no less. Once again the University has proven not to have a totalitarian character in as much as it permits to be questioned in the most fragile spots where the questions raised by *Cantos cívicos* can cut deeper.

The work by Miguel Ventura explicitly locates the texts published by Vaconcelos in *Timón* (either as an author or as an editor) as a “return of the repressed”. That association, at present almost completely

¹ This work and its predecessor by Castelló can be visited virtually at <http://nilc.lcda.org/>

split from the national hero, returns and shows itself. Any remaining innocence the public may still had, would be eliminated by such documents, given of course, that they are read. However, in every single occasion in which I was in front of that work, I saw the people passing by such texts without stopping to read them.

The question embedded in that text is not *What does "Cantos cívicos" mean?*, nor *What does it represent?*, but rather *What does it do?* Such ability for action requires the activation of the work itself, a process in which the audience of the MuAC is partly responsible.

Loosing one's innocence without knowing, just as it can happen to a sexually abused child, could be a formula to precise what is going on that rattrap that is *Cantos cívicos*. Its viciousness is exactly there: it configures an erotic device that activates several resources to corrupt the presumed innocence of the spectator, whether they are children or not. *Cantos cívicos* states that children are, at present, a battleground for the legitimization and factual powers.²

Cantos cívicos questions the notion of pedagogy itself, παιδαγωγός, or at least the components of manipulation and maliciousness inherent to the "conducting of children". The question is not restricted to that underage, but also to any other who allows himself to be conducted as a child within the consumption society guided by the hand of spectacle, of which the cultural industry is no exception.

Device, experience, practice

An erotic device, that is what *Cantos cívicos* is. That who enters the work, is sadomizing a rat.

A ludicrous vendetta of the "Man of the rats", *Cantos cívicos* goes beyond and deals with various forms of penetration. Surprisingly this is not easy to detect. Even as the start is as such, the subsequent proliferation of images and objects impact the eye overwhelming it with thousands of

² Let us not discuss the insidious labour of drug traffic. Instead, it is interesting to note that nobody seems surprised by the implications that CTM is no longer the workers union rallying for the party-in-government, nor that it has been replaced by the teachers union, directly in contact with children. This observation was done by Ernesto Priani Saisó.

stimuli. To be left exposed to those stimuli has been too violent for some who have detested the piece; the visuals won the match, and they parted.

This work represents such an amount of elements, and it is so un-transparent, that it can be easily misunderstood. It does not communicate anything clearly. Perhaps that is why it has been so talked about.

There is language amongst animals that is no longer in doubt. In order to explore the territory bees have individuals that locate the spots where food is available. These individuals then communicate this knowledge through a series of perfectly coded movements in which the relevant information, such as distance and direction to the food source, the amount of food and its nature, is conveyed.³ The rest of the bees can then find the food even at large distances from their beehive. In contrast, human language is characterized by its ambiguity, its puns. The polysemy of each word generates an eruption of meanings and of resonances that enrich poetry, jokes and life in general. Nevertheless, such a slippery ground seems to have provoked repulsion for *Cantos cívicos*. It has been demanded objectivity from the piece as an historical account forgetting that this is neither its objective nor its adscription. As a work of art it cannot be expected that *Cantos cívicos* adopts the positive side of knowledge, instead it opts for the production of a critical discourse. The real question is to measure how much of that *Cantos cívicos* accomplishes, if it does at all.

How many, from those who have rejected the piece, accepted the implicit invitation to get on all fours and enter the maze? To penetrate it, to travel it, to laugh, to watch the videos that explain how meticulously the rats are kept and trained, and then the shooting of the artist dressed as a Nazi as he crawls shepherding diverse animals through the maze? A small experience proposed to the visitor that, if accepted, makes him no longer a *spectator*, such as that who watches TV passively adding up to the spectacle society. To go through the maze is to set the own body in action, to accept the game proposed and to play it.

³ “Apis mellifera”, Wikipedia, http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apis_mellifera

With the possibility to take part in the work itself, *Cantos cívicos* proposed a device that enables experience. Experience insofar it touches and transforms, in some extent, someone's existence. However, *to make an experience possible* does not guarantee that it will take place, nor it decides its magnitude, let alone its meaning. In this case the device propose an experience independent of speech, although it can hardly be located outside language.

It is a pity that those who have rejected *Cantos cívicos* do not say anything about their participation in the device during the performances. They do not say whether they participated completely or if there were parts they rejected or just omitted. Was it entering the maze? Was it to watch the rats at work? Or to read the posters of *Timón*? In any case they could even say why they omitted certain parts. What is evident is that *Cantos cívicos* has encouraged more than one to relate what happened whilst within the piece. This is decisive. To give an account of an experience is something specific to Lacanian psychoanalysis, especially in respect to the psychoanalysts. Someone does not become Lacanian by solely using the Lacanian slang. The analyst becomes able to sustain both a position and a practice as an effect of experience, which in turn depends on accepting a certain device.

Cantos cívicos also puts forward an experience that depends on a device. Without yielding to it. How then can its corporal effects be detected? The piece exhibited at MuAC is no foreign to the physical body as an encounter place between politics and sexuality.⁴

That erotic dimension is quite serious; it turns anyone who goes through the piece into a rat. This animal has no univocal value within the piece, and it is not possible to accept a simple association between rats and Jews, a common place in the anti-Semitism that Art Spiegelman shaped with a *camp* touch in the graphic novel *Maus*.⁵ To object it, is enough to point out that the first element of the work is a footage of the artist characterized as a Nazi who is singing as he turns into a rat. In this way, the artist, the Nazi character, and the audience, we all turn into rats. It is not a humans that we converge, but as rats. What does it mean, then, the inclusion of live rats into the device?

⁴ José Luis Barrios, "De la fábrica transparente a la máquina defecadora de arte contemporáneo", Catálogo de *Cantos cívicos*, UNAM, México, 2008; Lourdes Morales, "El juicio a *Cantos cívicos*", <http://cantoscivicos.blogspot.com/search?q=lingua+franca>

⁵ Art Spiegelman, *Maus. A Survivors Tale*, Pantheon, N.Y., 1973.

It is possible to venture a reading of the work, that is, to follow the tracks of the thematic threads until their articulation is attained. To accomplish that it is compulsory to enter the device, not as a glance but as a subject.

The components of devices are, thus, visibility lines, enunciation lines, subjectivation lines, and even rapture, fissure and fracture lines that entangle and twist up while some of them incite the others through variations or even mutations in the array. From this circumstance two important consequences for the philosophy of devices emerge. The first one is the rejection of the universals.⁶

This complexity is present in Ventura's work. It casts a doubt on the universals, for instance the humanism that bears the dignity of "every human being". Is it possible to still consider man, or to be human, as an undoubted value? Is the human exempt of any interrogation? Lyotard indicated that humanism "has even authority to suspend and to prohibit interrogation and suspicion, the all corroding thought"⁷ Questions, as rats gnaw on everything. But humanism is tough. Hence the importance not to stifle the questions raised by *Cantos cívicos* ahead of time.⁸

The erotic device of the work has already been disclosed along its eschatological face.⁹ Jacques Lacan invented in the sixties something quite surprising with the object *a*. An object that is outside of the transcendental Kantian aesthetics and that is not an object of desire, but rather an object *cause* of desire. Versatile, the object *a* responds to the body's orifices; it can operate in the shape of a breast, faeces, eyesight or voice. There is not a desiring subject without the determination inflicted by object *a*. Nonetheless; such objects incite sex without sexuation.¹⁰ The subject under the influence of object *a* is touched by a sexual desire that is neither feminine nor masculine in itself. It is desire.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, "Qu'est-ce qu'un dispositif", *L'Unebévüe*, n. 12 L'opacité sexuelle, Epel, París, 1999, p. 10.

⁷ François Lyotard, *Lo inhumano*, Ed. Manantial, Buenos Aires, 1998, p. 9

⁸ Wouldn't it be possible that it is precisely the humanist sector of intellectuality the one that has condemned the UNAM for hosting this work of art?

⁹ Cf. Lourdes Morales, op. cit.; José Luis Barrios, op. cit.

¹⁰ Manuel Hernández, "Sexo sin sexuación. Un breve paso por la intersubjetividad", *Me cayó el veinte*, Number 1, *Erotofanías*, Epeepe, México,

As the presence of the faecal object in the piece has already been mentioned, it seems indispensable to finally discuss an element that, even as it has been disregarded until now, it is shown in the forefront of the piece.

Civic chants, that's its name. It is not only about the music, but also about the voice. Such is the object *a* that is being so insidiously activated within the piece, specifically by the rats. Rats, with a genome quite similar to humans.¹¹ In Ventura's work, a group of rats was educated to go through a plastic maze and to reach their food as a mixture with chocolate. Chocolate has been employed by Ventura before, it is given the value of shit, and, in context with a footage in this work that shows a Nazi officer forced to swallow something ceaselessly, it evokes the oral drive.

At some point a second group of rats joins in, they have been painted to make them easily identifiable, and they have also been trained, by the first group of rats, to find the food through the maze. How would one fail to see in this group phenomenon an analogy of the handling of the population promoted by the Nazis, both within the German population and within their victims? Leni Riefenstahl's films give a good account of the *en masse* phenomena occurred in Germany, whereas Hanna Arendt pinpointed the blind involvement of the *Judenrat* in the extermination toil.¹²

There are two choirs, one composed by children and the other by adults. As the rats go through the maze they trigger signals indicating what song each choir will sing. The melodies include *Die Fahne hoch* (*With the flag high up*), a song sung by both choirs and which also was the hymn to the Nazi party, *Falangista soy* (*I am a falangista*), and the 80's hits [Life is life](#) by Opus, and [No controles](#) (*Don't control*) by the later Mexican pop band Flans.

The effect that the music has on the audience is an intrinsic part of *Cantos cívicos*. Did those who hated the work witness the festive atmosphere of the concerts? Feeling how one's body is transported by music, being amazed at hearing the children singing sweetly those songs of horror. Isn't that a part of the piece?

¹¹ Cf. "Ratón de laboratorio" ("Laboratory rat") at Wikipedia, http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rat%C3%B3n_de_laboratorio (Spanish), searched on 6 April 2009.

¹² Hanna Arendt, *Eichmann en Jerusalén*, Lumen, Barcelona, 1997

Ears have no lids. They are orifices without any protective barrier. The substantiation by Pascal Quignard in *The hate to music*¹³, allows us to realize that through the choirs in *Cantos cívicos*, we have been penetrated anew. Penetrated by the music. In face of it we become defenceless without noticing that we have been raped; we listen to the music and we do as we are told. In this context the choirs' songs provide with a valuable code to read and reveal the meaning of the whole piece.

If it is true that *Cantos cívicos* operates from schizophrenia¹⁴ it is due to the music and the voice. A mad man despairs as he hears voices in his head, imposed voices. Those voices have no meaning, and if they do it is enigmatic. In the case the voices have a clear meaning, the orders they convey can be terrible: "kill your son, he is the devil". A mad man believes in such voices and feels compelled to act in obedience. Music and voice keep a close relationship with hallucination, as they are also impositions. Who has never been tortured by a pop song that "sticks" helplessly in the head? That song comes when it feels like, and sets us free when it wishes so.

Quignard threads upon that with a song, a sound, and a speech.¹⁵ They constitute, as a matter of fact, a pursuing series that subjectivates us even before we are born. "Ancient sounds have been hunting us. Before we even saw. Before we even breath nor yelled. We heard."¹⁶

The fascination brought about by music allows to find the mystery of the voice within, which is in turn the object cause of desire and of irruption of the superego.¹⁷

¹³ Pascal Quignard, *La haine de la musique*, Gallimard Folio, París, 1997. Citations in the present text taken from the version in Spanish by Manuel Hernández.

¹⁴ Ari Volovich cites Miguel Ventura: "Critics don't recognize *Cantos cívicos* as a work of art, but as a historical thesis from a historical point of view, too literal and stiff. They haven't ceased to advice me on how the exhibit should be; for example, they have asked me to show scenes of the Holocaust and, as I keep refusing, this means for them I deny the existence of the Holocaust. Their interpretations are canonical views set in our time of ethical and moral dilemmas, but they do not question the *status quo* as *Cantos cívicos* intends to: from the schizophrenia". <http://cantoscivicos.blogspot.com/2009/03/ari-volovich.html>

¹⁵ Quignard, op. cit., p. 11

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 23

¹⁷ Jacques Lacan, *L'angoisse*, 22 de mayo de 1963. Esta sorprendente conjunción amerita un despliegue específico que pasa por la locura y por la forclusión del Nombre-del-Padre, es decir, por la disolución de su bicomposición. No por casualidad el seminario que debía seguir a *L'angoisse* debía llevar por título *Les noms du père*.

What supports the presence of the analyst as the patient lies on the couch? Isn't himself but the voice emerging from the field of the Other? It strikes as odd that from all types of object *a*, the least studied by Lacan was the voice. In one of the few occasions in which he extended on the matter he said:

The voice at hand is the voice as imperious, as it commands obedience or conviction, for it is located unrelated to music, but related to word.¹⁸

In contrast, Pascal Quignard points out that: "to listen, is to be touch at a distance. Rhythm is linked to vibration. [...] To listen is to obey. The Latin for listening is *obaudire*. *Obaudire* has derived in French under the form *obéir* [to obey]. An audition, the *audientia*, is in fact an *obaudientia*, an obedience."¹⁹ It may be because of his attempt to split the voice from the music that often, when the study of the voice seemed called for, Lacan postponed it.

The field of power is not only negative, legal. Foucault put it quite clearly, as he warned the analysts.²⁰ There is not a single power, power is multiple and is all about specific powers whose principal objective is not to prohibit, but "to produce an efficiency, an aptitude, to be producers of a product".²¹

Indeed, the study of such "technology of power"²² was started, according to Foucault, by Bentham and then by Marx in the second book of *Das Capital*. It is not about a personal discipline, but about mechanisms, as the school for example, where the possibility to classify the pupils was crucial in the control of the student population.

There is a form of power that attains the means to control, to direct, and to channel, not a single individual, but a whole population, in order to get a product out from it.²³ The most immediate way to organize the bodies unanimously is by altering and coordinating their own rhythms. For that reason, before discussing the subject of shit in *Cantos cívicos* as a product of the system, it is convenient to mention the voice as the commander of the production of shit, the regularity of the production, the due

¹⁸ Jacques Lacan, *L'angoisse*, 5 de junio de 1963.

¹⁹ Pascal Quignard, *La haine de la musique*, op. cit., p. 119

²⁰ ibidem

²¹ ibid., p. 1006

²² ibid., p. 1002

²³ ibid., p. 1006

hygiene, and the final destiny of the waste. A power that motivates the production, to *do*, as it is clearly shown by the obsessive symptom of oblativity. For example, in the field of love there is the idea that one can only be loved if he or she *has done* something to deserve it, as in the present field of work the concept of “loosing time” is unacceptable. It is not only about an anatomo-politics, but of a bio-power, for although it affects the individual bodies, the regime deciding the children’s education in treatment and destiny of the waste is key to public health.

The long educational process of human beings starts with their own sphincter control, sphincters that respond to an impervious voice.

The techniques of power imply a heterogeneous arrangement of the force lines, and since the industrial revolution, technology plays a crucial role in them. But above all there is a rhythm. In fact, Pascal Michon maintains that “*le pouvoir est un médium rythmique*” (“power is a rhythmic medium”).²⁴

Power acts through rhythm. Michon develops this decisive thesis precisely in regard to the institutions referred to by Michel Foucault: the school, the hospitals, the army, and the workshop. In there, whomever imposes the cadence in which things are done, is in charge. It is necessary, then, to stop at that “singular object”²⁵ which is music and singing, in as much as, just as voice does, they command, they force obedience. What is our relationship with that single object? We incorporate it, Lacan said. A voice cannot be assimilated, it is incorporated, and, for that, “it can model our life”.²⁶

The voice, then, is the instrument in which the desire of the Other is manifested... along with the desire of the superego.²⁷

When Lacan first located with precision the production of object *a*, it was through a topological operation, dividing a *cross-cap* in a Moebius band and a residue. It states:

²⁴ Pascal Michon, *Les rythmes du politique*, Les prairies ordinaires, Paris, 2007.

²⁵ Clément Rosset, *L’objet singulier*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1979.

²⁶ Jacques Lacan, *L’angoisse*, 5 June 1963.

²⁷ This paradox needs a discussion not included here. We shall only indicate that in order to display it, it is essential to go through madness and, specifically through the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father whose bifid workings become, thus, unarticulated.

The residual part is here. I have built it for you, I make circulate... It has a small interest because, I tell you, this is *a*. *I give it to you as a eucharistic bread*, for you will be served from it at a later time. The lowercase *a* is made like that.²⁸

Indeed, the object *a*, and the voice in particular, penetrate the body and is incorporated. Not an imaginary identification, but an outside-inside passage. Ari Volovich, in a commentary on *Cantos cívicos*, notes that: "In one of the paintings we can see a rat offering an *eucharistic bread* shaped as a swastica to the open mouths of a nazi official and a bunch of kids dressed in traditional german clothes."²⁹

The coincidence does not cease to surprise. In *Cantos cívicos* the incorporation of the object *a*, shaped as a musical eucharistic bread penetrating through the body's orifices, is quite effective.

Quignard: "The auditor of language is a speaker: the egophoria sets the "I" at his disposal and the open possibility to respond at all times. The music auditor is not a talker. He is a pray surrendered to the trap."³⁰

That alone is *Cantos cívicos*: a trap that activates the insidious chore of propaganda assisting biopower. How to grasp the full extent of the piece without listening to the concerts?

How not to shiver before the manipulation to which the public is submitted as it watches the kids singing catchy tunes? Or how people keep a face more suitable to a Sunday concert, while the kids are admired, dressed in colourful uniforms that evoke the Hitler Youth?

Quignard again:

Neither internal nor external, the deployment of music cannot be clearly distinguished, what is objective from what is subjective, what belongs to audition from what belongs to the production of sound. Uneasiness particular to every childhood consists of the recognition, amongst the

²⁸ Jacques Lacan, *L'angoisse*, 9 January 1966. Jean Allouch maintains that it is on this date that Lacan invented the object *a*. Words in italics are by the author of this paper.

²⁹ Ari Volovich, "Cantos cívicos", in <http://cantoscivicos.blogspot.com/2009/03/ari-volovich.html>, Words in italics are by the author of this paper.

³⁰ Pascal Quignard, *op. cit.*, p. 122

passionate and quickly embarrassing body sounds, what is born from within and what belongs to the other.

As it does not delimit anything, sound has individualized less ears than those which has brought together. The name for it: earpull. National anthems, local fanfares, religious chants, family chants, they identify groups, they associate those native, they subject the subjects.

The obedient.

Undelimitable and invisible, music appears to be the voice of us all. Perhaps there is no music that isn't beckoning, since there is no music that does not immediately mobilize breath and blood. Soul (lung animation) and heart.³¹

That is how it goes, people grow obedient to music, to its charm, and they group around it. That is why Adorno insisted in the relevance of Schoenberg's music, because it did not armonize with the system. Music after Auschwitz can never be the same, for it was a partner in crime. Music, Quignard remembers, was the one amongst all arts, in collaboration with the execution of jews organized by the Germans.³² Simon Laks has left a testimony of it in *Melodies from Auschwitz*.³³

Pascal Quignard:

After what historians call the "Second World War", after the extermination camps of the III Reich, we have entered a time where melodic sequences exasperate.³⁴

In the presence of music, ears cannot be closed, one remains captive by it. "That was the anguish of those deported, whose bodies rose in spite of themselves. We tremble as we listen to this: naked bodies entering the gas chamber in the presence of music".³⁵

Plato had already mentioned in the *Republic* (book III, 401 d) how "rhythm and harmony are introduced in the most intimate part of the soul" hence "education rests in music". Indeed, music

³¹ Pascal Quignard, op. cit., p. 134

³² Pascal Quignard, op. cit., p. 215

³³ Simon Laks, *Mélodies d'Auschwitz*, Editions du Cerf, Paris, 2004.

³⁴ Pascal Quignard, op. cit., p. 217

³⁵ Pascal Quignard, op. cit., p. 219

captures the human body plummeting into obedience everyone who succumbs to its trapping chant, and that's why cunning Odysseus tied himself to the topmast. For Quignard the Mermaids at the execution fields were Wagner, Brahms and Schubert.³⁶

In order to listen to music, to listen to the other, one needs to shut up. A way of obedience and of renunciation to the person (*per sonare*), in which “the right to express myself” ceases. This side of depersonalization, this inhumanity, is part of the allure of music; it resembles a fishhook for souls.

Quignard:

Why was it possible to “mix” music with the “execution of thousands of people”?

Why did music play a “more than an active role” in it?

Music rapes human bodies. It makes them rise. The musical rhythms mesmerize the corporal rhythms. Once it has found the music, the ear cannot be closed. Music, for being a power, associates to all and every power.³⁷

The ferociousness of music is a good start point to explain how it was possible, for a country where the most refined music is not only loved but also crafted, to get systematically involved in what took place in Auschwitz.

Propaganda and advertisement

To believe that the work by Ventura is grotesque by the endless repetition –in the fashion of Goebbels– of the swastika signs, might prove a costly mistake. Such known and coded images allow us to be on guard once inside the trap. The return of the repressed becomes present in a transfigured manner: the NILC fiction is the parody announcing it and warning us of the risk. What was repressed before does not return in an identical fashion to itself, rather, it takes new shapes that allow it to appear at broad daylight.

³⁶ Pascal Quignard, p. 242

³⁷ Pascal Quignard, p. 221

Propaganda, having started with a religious connotation at the *propagation* of the Catholic faith, was categorically altered in significance with the use given to it by the totalitarian regimes of the XX century.³⁸ Since that moment the term is associated to the control of the public opinion mainly through the mass media.

Inevitably, propaganda was to be implicated with political parties' strategies and with governments perceiving themselves as not totalitarian.

In capitalistic societies commercial advertisement and political propaganda have been hand in hand since the beginning of the XX century until now. Every detail of the voting campaigns is orchestrated by the large marketing firms and their experts.

Let us not forget that the goal of propaganda is to influence the mass, by the power of suggestion and by manipulation of the symbols and of the individual psychology, in order to increase the support (or the disapproval) to a certain position, rather than showing it simply with pros and cons. Is there still any doubt, that the information supplied by the Pentagon and broadcasted by CNN during the Persian Gulf War, wasn't part of the whole war strategy? The objective of propaganda is not to tell a truth, but to convince people: the aim is to bend the general opinion, not to inform it.

For that reason, propaganda messages are presented with an emotional overload, calling upon affection and, specifically, patriotic feelings, summoning the emotional arguments more than the rational ones. Hence, the great service provided by music. Advertisement experts are aware of that when they use *jingles* in ads: "research shows that the main impact of a song [...] can be due to the fact that it curbs counterarguing"³⁹

Advertisement and propaganda add up in the use of every available mechanism to make someone (or a group) believe that decision he takes is his own, when it really is the effect of the manipulation inherent to propaganda. If on the one hand, commercial advertisement seeks to influence the

³⁸ As an instrument of biopower, the use of propaganda cannot distinguish between political colors. This section is greatly backed in the book by Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *La era de la propaganda. Uso y abuso de la persuasión*, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1994.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 190

consumer's choices and the individual political preferences, the *target* (as it is known) of propaganda is to control a larger social group, for example in the face of a threat by war or an epidemic. Propaganda intends to guide the general opinion through the implementation of values around which power pursues to unify population, who embrace such values as their own.

At present times, the frontier between both territories, advertisement and propaganda, becomes blurry, not only due to the presence of business opportunities, both amidst large enterprises and political parties, but also because they share common interests.

No other than Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Education and Propaganda, is credited with the invention of modern propaganda. A look through its principles validates that:⁴⁰

1. **Principle of simplification to a single enemy.** To adopt a single idea, an individual Symbol.

To individualize the adversary into a single enemy.

2. **Principle of the spreading method.**

To group several adversaries in a single category or individual. Adversaries must be constituted as the individualized total of the addition.

3. **Principle of transposition.**

To load upon the adversary the own mistakes and defects, countering the attacks with attacks.

"If you cannot deny some bad news, make up some other news as distraction".

⁴⁰ Nevertheless, upon consulting the text where L. W. Doob studies and synthesizes the diary of Joseph Goebbels, it was revealed that Doob singles out 19 principles that do not necessarily match with the 11 presented here. *Cfr.* Leonard W. Doob, "Goebbels' Principles of Propaganda", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Princeton University Press, N. J., Fall, 1950. In Spanish refer to Miguel de Moragas, *Sociología de la comunicación de masas*, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 1982.

4. **Principle of exaggeration and de-figuration.** To convert any anecdote, as insignificant as it may be, into a present threat.

5. **Principle of vulgarization.**

"All propaganda should be popular, it must calibrate its level with the least intelligent amongst the individuals towards it is directed. The greater the mass to be convinced is, the smaller the mental effort needed should be. The receptive capacity of the masses is limited and their comprehension scant; besides, they forget quite easily".

6. **Principle of orchestration.**

"Propaganda must be limited to a small number of ideas and it must repeat them tirelessly, presented once and again from different perspectives yet always meeting at the same concept. Neither fissures nor doubts". Hence the infamous phrase: "If a lie is repeated enough times, it becomes the truth".

7. **Principle of renovation.**

Information and arguments must be emitted constantly and in such a rate that by the time the adversary is able to respond, the public is already interested in something else. The adversary's responses shall never have the power to curb the increasing number of accusations.

8. **Principle of likelihood.**

To construct arguments from different sources, through the so-called probes or from fragmentary information.

9. **Principle of silencing.**

To quiet the topics where arguments are not at hand and to dissemble that news in favour of the adversary. Counter-programming can be used if necessary, and with help from the akin fraction of the mass media.

10. **Principle de la transfusion.**

As general rule propaganda always works starting from a pre-existent substrate, either a national mythology or a complex of traditional hate and prejudice; the emitted arguments must be able to take root in primitive attitudes.

11. **Principle of unanimity.**

To convince a large group of people that they belong to an even larger group who believes just like them. They think "just like everybody else", thus producing a false perception of unanimity.⁴¹

Even as we wrote this paper, we were quite surprised to learn that the Universidad de Málaga asserted the previous 11 principles to be indeed produced by Goebbels. Nevertheless, two of them (points 5 and 6) are intriguingly presented as quotations. The distressing reading of *Mein Kampf* revealed to whom they must be credited. They are both there, intelligibly.⁴²

These principles, a couple of them crafted by Hitler himself, belong nowadays to the basis of any political and commercial campaign in all liberal and capitalistic democracies. From this confirmation and with a minimum understanding of the manipulation mechanisms characteristic of propaganda, the notion of freedom is seriously casted a doubt, as it stands for indetermination and independence of power and or capital.

⁴¹ UNESCO Lecture at the Universidad de Málaga, Spain, <http://www.infoamerica.org/teoria/goebbels1.htm> . No author is credited at the website.

⁴² Adolfo Hitler, *Mi lucha*, Ed. Diana, México, 1953, cf. cap. "Propaganda guerrera", pp. 68-72.

Contrasting with the typical atmosphere in the everyday events, Miguel Ventura allows us two advantages. In the one hand, he generates a fiction, the NILC, and he makes it obvious; on the other hand his plastic production directly presents, or at least evokes, the Nazi iconography, which immediately warns us and might even cause rejection. Such advantages are not allowed by the system.

The repressed returns transformed. As we listen to Flans our body starts to move, yet we do not listen carefully to the lyrics, even as we sing it; we sail happily in a multicolour party, amidst foamies, pics y action figures. A contemporary aesthetics luring children and adults alike. The same aesthetics with which Mac Donald's has been able to ensnare us; the same strategy with which George W. Bush inspired fear into his fellow citizens, and terror to the rest of the world for eight years.

Impromptu: pornography and the art world

The NILC and Gottfried Ohms fictions allow for the creation, within *Cantos cívicos*, of a peculiar space where several images of hardcore sex are related to distinguished members (no pun intended) of the some of the Mexican and international social celebrities. That is the moment at which the relationship between the swastika and the dollar sign seems to be emphasized.

It is located in a nook of the whole installation, some sort of porno-cabin. Penetrations are abundant in all their varieties, there is even *fist fucking*. What is behind such a strange coalescence, seemingly mismatched in the work's puerile aesthetics?

In the opposite wall there are photographs of youths, half-naked, and whose attitudes indicate that either they promote themselves through Internet chat rooms, or they offer their sexual services *on line*. The latter two parts of the installation seem to maintain a dialogue.

How so? In order to answer that, we need to take into consideration that few months ago, Beatriz Preciado published a book entitled *Testo yonqui* in which she maintains the following thesis:

The sex industry is not only the most profitable market on the Internet, but it represents the model of maximum profitability in the cybernetic market as a whole (only comparable to financial speculation): minimum investment, direct sale of the product in real time, individualized, immediately generating the consumer's satisfaction in and through the visit to the website. Any other website is modelled and organized with the same masturbatory logic of pornographic consumption.⁴³

The author also advances an even bolder theory, "the rePal engine of present capitalism is the pharmaco-pornographic control of subjectivity".⁴⁴ Let us not dwell for long in the drug dealing example, for it does not form part of this work by Ventura, but let us just note that Preciado considers this and pornography as "the two veiled driving forces of the XXI century capitalism."⁴⁵ At least in Mexico they are not concealed, they are just not explicitly recognized, for both enjoy complete exposure.⁴⁶ With an interest in the first person, thanks to the synthetic testosterone dispensed as a hard drug, pharmaco-pornography represents for Beatriz Preciado "the outer edge dark side of the contemporary cultural industry, as well as the paradigm of any other Post-Ford production. In the *über-material* capitalism. Every way of production brings benefits for they emulate the pharmaco-pornographic model."⁴⁷

Against the Nazi hygienism, and in opposition to their ideal of purity, that translated into a condemnation of homosexuality and, according to the thesis by Lourdes Morales, has been stretched in the depurated minimalist aesthetics ruling the art world as an international *lingua franca*;⁴⁸ the NILC

⁴³ Beatriz Preciado, *Testo yonqui*, Espasa, Madrid, 2008, p. 36.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 181

⁴⁶ To the point where the piece presented by Teresa Margolles, curated by Cuauhtémoc Medina at the Mexico pavilion, in the 2009 Biennale di Venezia, was entitled "¿De qué otra cosa podemos hablar?" ("What else can we talk about?").

⁴⁷ Ibidem

⁴⁸ Lourdes Morales, "El juicio contra Cantos cívicos", <http://cantoscivicos.blogspot.com/search?q=lingua+franca>

is endowed with a crammed dirty aesthetics. A sort of polysexuality that the *fist fucking* evokes Foucault's idea of the need for the innovation in the production of pleasure to keep desire existing.⁴⁹

With a drift through alternative sexualities, *Cantos cívicos* works an inquiry to the definite and heteronormative sexual identities.

To put it in Beatriz Preciado's words:

I used to think that only people like me were the ones being really fucked up. Because we are not, and shall never be either *Little Women*, nor a hero from *Río Grande*. Now I know that actually we're all really fucked up, we shall never be either *Little Women*, nor heroes from *Río Grande*.⁵⁰

The presence of some erect phallus and several exposed vaginas is not due to a personal whim of the author; it is at this point where the piece articulates a critic to the biopower allowing the maintenance of the system: "the rise of capitalism is unthinkable without the institutionalization of the heterosexual device as a way to profit from the sexual, gestational, health care, and nursery services, historically carried out by women without any compensation."⁵¹

This is the plot we find thread when the piece gathers the representatives of biopower –and above all the more conservatives-, along with certain artists who profit from "internationalism" the ruler of the art's market, with *hardcore* pornography. Under the fictional patronage of Gottfried Ohms, who has surmounted the art's market, this coalescence does not appear too arbitrary. Assembling the swastika signs with the dollar signs is not just about prestige, but of the solution that the hypertechnological posmodernistic world gives to the crisis produced by the failure of the metanarratives: Money.

Through money power is achieved, and power establishes the criteria of truth and of legitimacy that, in turn, generate... money.⁵²

⁴⁹ Cf. David Halperin, *San Foucault. Para una hagiografía gay*, Cuadernos de Litoral, México, 2000. In particular chapter II. "La política *queer* de Michel Foucault".

⁵⁰ Beatriz Preciado, *Testo yonqui*, op. cit., p. 92

⁵¹ Beatriz Preciado, *Testo yonqui*, op. cit., p. 95

⁵² François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, Les éditions de minuit, París, 1979, pp. 69-78.