

Introduction

Beyond the Pink Tide

ART AND POLITICAL UNDERCURRENTS
IN THE AMERICAS

*Un oceanografo me enseñó que la actividad de pensar se parece al océano. Las leyes del pensamiento son las mismas del agua que siempre está dispuesto a amoldarse a todo.**

Patricio Guzmán, *The Pearl Button* (2014)

This book cautions against our overinvestment in any one model of political change and shows the limitations of liberal democracy. It offers what the Brazilian theorist and educator Paulo Freire called “critical hope” by reaching beyond the crashing ebbs and flows of national elections and political defeat to instead perceive how art and social movements fundamentally remake the world. It asks us to perceive the profound desires and critical expressions of social justice in the Americas; it also pushes us to move beyond the limitations of area studies to learn

*“An oceanographer taught me that the activity of thinking is like the ocean. The laws of thought are the same as water that is capable of accommodating everything.”

from the rich and living archive of social movements, political experiences, and expressive arts in the hemisphere and beyond. Reflecting on recent documentaries, music, performances, and exhibitions, I show how these modes of doing politics experiment to give primacy to emergent worlds. Taking cues from artists, musicians, and activists helps us organize new forms otherwise according to innovative and embodied models of change, rather than defaulting to well-oiled political machines.

By using the metaphor “beyond the Pink Tide,” I refer to getting past the recent disappointing experience with progressive states in Latin America. Rather than slide into a state of political despair, we might recognize and bolster the already existing practices and the continual nonlinear movement toward sustainable and equitable futures, practices that represent an ocean of radical potential.¹ As I show throughout the Americas, artists and activists often reinvent politics by reaching deeper into historical and structural inequalities and by imagining beyond the traditional affairs of the state. Creating non-normative worlds of political being, these efforts queer (*cuir*) the nation.

As José Quiroga proposes for the Americas, “All politics is, or should be, queer politics, just as all forms of artistic expression should aim to queer the public sphere. Somewhere between the dilution of homosexualities and its specificities lies the future of inclusive forms of social action.”² Following Quiroga’s lead, a focus on embodied forms of relating through artistic visions can lead us out of the confining, normative, and often stifling politics of the nation-state. We might call this the future of queerness to refer to the future of non-normative modes of social and political life.³ For scholars and students as well as activists and artists, this means moving to a model of politics that does not

accommodate capitalism and the oppositions embedded in liberal democracy. Rebecca Schneider importantly asks, “How can scholarship learn from the body and overcome the habits of rendering relations as mutually exclusive opposites?”⁴ Pursuing the generative forces of politics that exist beyond the Pink Tide is one way.

AS DEMOCRACY RECEDES: A BRIEF HISTORY

In a wave that Geraldine Lievesley and Steve Ludlam describe as an experiment in radical political democracy, over the past twenty years Latin American citizens voted for social democratic governments, or what the US media dubbed “the Pink Tide.”⁵ These governments ranged from authoritarian populism, as modeled by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, to the horizontal assembly processes in Bolivia that resulted in the election of Evo Morales, the nation’s first Indigenous president. Uruguayan president José Mujica perhaps pursued the most radical political agenda. Widely touted as the world’s humblest president for his modest demeanor and small living quarters, Mujica promoted gay rights and legalized marijuana and first-term abortion, in addition to offering a range of economic alternatives to neoliberalism.⁶

As political commentators celebrated these changes, rising debt, new authoritarianisms, widening criminalization, environmental degradation and crisis, and the expansion of extractive and military capitalism threatened Latin American experiments with radical democracy.⁷ For instance, by referring to centuries of colonial theft, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador made Earth Rights central to their electoral campaigns. Once in power, both rewrote their nations’ constitutions to grant

rights to majority Indigenous populations.⁸ In contradictory fashion, they granted mega-contracts to Chinese, Canadian, and European state enterprises in hydroelectricity, mining, minerals, and petroleum while actively deflating social movements.

Both presidents contended that the closing off of resource extraction would only perpetuate economic dependency and foreign debt.⁹ Following a similar pattern of developmental thinking, rather than redress Mapuche land claims, Chilean president Michelle Bachelet expanded corporate and military control over the BíoBío region and increased prison terms for Indigenous activists. For Native peoples in the Americas, the difference between Left and Right governments diminished when decolonizing rhetoric turned into anti-Indigenous state practice.

The difference that Left and Right governments made to gender rights during the Pink Tide was also sometimes difficult to discern. Revealing the masculinist orientation of Pink Tide politics, Maria Galindo and Mujeres Creando rewrote the new Bolivian Constitution to include the perspectives of Indigenous women, lesbians, sex workers, single mothers, and trans women.¹⁰ Through a series of radio shows and actions, they pointed out how new governments in the hemisphere excluded their female populations and also tended to perpetuate heterosexual norms and normative moral codes.

In Argentina, gender rights activists noted that regressive reproductive politics were a hallmark of Christina Kirchner's administration.¹¹ As Kirchner denounced foreign control of the economy and helped legalize gay marriage, she supported the strict abortion ban under a failing health system that did not guarantee universal contraception.¹² Further, even as Kirchner and Bachelet touted health care reforms and broadened pro-

grams for public transportation, they continued a fast-paced neoliberal agenda that skewed income toward the global rich.

In both cases, obstruction and corruption scandals depleted the gains of progressive social policy, particularly as a willing news media spread these stories.

Of the Pink Tide governments, Brazilian Left states most directly addressed the long-standing concern with anti-Black racism and land concentration in the Americas, even as legislative efforts were partial and incomplete. The 2010 Racial Equality Law offered land titles to *quilombo* (runaway slave) communities, in addition to confronting institutional racism, though such efforts fell short of fuller measures for racial redress. By 2012, one hundred public universities and one thousand private universities had passed affirmative action laws as new discourses of racial difference circulated in the nation.¹³ Brazilian progressive administrations also initiated a tax structure to benefit hundreds of thousands of workers, dispossessed peasants, and Indigenous peoples, leading to an intense political backlash led by agribusiness and corporate elites. Overall, the Brazilian white privileged minority reacted with fierce retribution to the broad demand for more economic and racial justice.

Though the media's commonplace explanation for the turn to the Right in Brazil was that the Left did not deliver on its promises, a more complex set of provocations led to the "witch-hunting" processes in Brazil and ultimately to the impeachment of President Dilma Rouseff. Paul Amar explains how the newly empowered right wing launched a series of accusations against the Left using the term *bandidolatria* to make Pink Tide movements seem inherently corrupt and anti-Christian.¹⁴ Referring to Dilma's removal, Noam Chomsky commented, "We have the one leading politician who hasn't stolen to enrich herself, who's being

impeached by a gang of thieves, who have done so. That does count as a kind of soft coup.”¹⁵ As the experience of Pink Tide states illustrates, even prior to the xenophobic right-wing turn in the United Kingdom and Europe and the explicit racist rhetoric in the United States, progressive political agendas in Latin America were directly challenged by the rise of the global Right.

Indeed, the military coup against Honduran president Mel Zelaya in 2009, the parliamentary coup against Paraguayan president Fernando Lugo in 2012, the recent electoral victory of Macri in Argentina, and the return of Sebastián Piñera in Chile all evidence the conservative counterwave that forced the Pink Tide to recede. In Brazil, as in Honduras, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina, the phenomenon of fake news, obstructionism, and political infighting diminished the possibility for deeper progressive gains. Candidates who promised a profound challenge to globalization soon privatized, defunded, and accelerated the neoliberalization of their national economies.¹⁶ In general, the Pink Tide could not solidify lasting political transformation within neoliberal societies that had opened the door to new forms of state violence and vulnerability.

The conservative commentator Jorge Castañeda wondered if this failure represented the death of the Left in the Americas.¹⁷ Yet to name the failure, or so-called death of the Pink Tide distracts from the profound structural inequality in the hemisphere. It also ignores the persistent attacks by conservative forces on redistributive policies rather than a hoarding economy that benefits those who already have access to power and resources. Finally, despite the recent global turn to the contrary, we might consider if liberal democracy is up to the task of social, racial, multispecies, and economic justice. A better way to think about the Pink Tide is to note the fundamental

Eurocentrism and failures of liberal democracy with respect to real justice.

As new trends point to yet another wave of momentum by the political Left,¹⁸ my main point in this book is to have us move beyond the ebbs and flows of conservative and progressive governments. The artists, thinkers, and activists I study pursue *otros mundos*, or other and submerged worlds of collaboration. These worlds imagine politics beyond the narrow confines of the nation. Three short examples explain what I mean by moving beyond the Pink Tide.

ISLAND PERSPECTIVES

The work of a Puerto Rican artist collective called Occupy Museum, featured in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, illustrates why we must orient our view toward minor, island, archipelagic, and submerged perspectives. Ten Puerto Rican artists, Gamaliel Rodriguez, Melquialdes Rosario, Nibla Pastrana Santiago, Sofia Maldonado, Celestino Ortiz Jose Soto, Gabriella Torreres-Ferrer, Adrian Roman, Yasmin Hernandez, Norma Vila, and Chemi Rosado and Bea Santiago (who participated independently) created *Debt Fair*, an exhibition that grew from the Occupy Wall Street movement and powerfully addressed the island's subordinated position to the US mainland. Using symbols of the less visible yet structurally present aspects of the global economy, the artists placed a small Puerto Rican flag against a powerful anti-debt manifesto that rejected the PROMESA legislation and its heavy austerity measures.

By 2015, and prior to the events of Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico had a massive national debt that paralyzed the island's economy by more than \$70 billion. PROMESA created the Fiscal

Control Board and charged it to reduce Puerto Rico's debt by enacting fiscal austerity measures.¹⁹ The exhibition specifically names the First Bank of Puerto Rico as routinely underwriting Wall Street's biggest banks.²⁰ Through videos and wall text, the exhibition details how Wall Street dividends exacerbated the neo-colonial condition, forcing tens of thousands of young people and professionals to migrate to the US mainland, even before the recent devastation. *Debt Fair* artists asked the viewer to consider the embedded role of Global North art institutions in Puerto Rico's financial institutions, making visible how MFA programs in the United States saddled artists with insurmountable student debt.

As *Debt Fair* illustrates, growth models in the Caribbean are deeply rooted in the structures of colonialism and imperialism in the hemisphere.²¹ With rising interest rates and shortened debt repayment plans, Latin Americans found themselves drowning in US financial dependence, austerity regulations that were imposed by multinational lending agencies.²² As early as 1982, the Mexican government announced that it was not able to repay its ballooning loan with skyrocketing interest rates, leading to panic among international lenders and direct intervention by the International Monetary Fund and the Central Bank.

Debt Fair, like this book, argues for moving beyond debt dependency on the global market and for naming economic, political, and social chains that have constrained the Americas since the fifteenth century. Given the workings of disaster capitalism on the island after Hurricane Maria, *Debt Fair*'s political message is even more necessary.²³ An archipelagic viewpoint can decenter the continental thinking that organizes the US nation-state and the power relations that (il)legally constitute islands as colonies. To move with the flow of trans-solidarities is another way to unmoor the taken for granted normativity of the nation.

TRANS-SOLIDARITIES

In 2015, the Colombian artist Carlos Motta countered binary gender norms by inviting over two hundred trans women that included a diverse group of mestizxs, Indigenous peoples, sex workers, and performers, to an independent art space in Guatemala City. For this presentation, Motta collaborated with RED-MMUTRANS, a trans-multiracial organization that worked collaboratively against the acute experiences of social, racial, and economic discrimination. In a multiracial society where anti-Indigenous racism and trans phobia is pervasive, RED-MMUTRANS offered a venue for countering gender and sex norms to challenge the strict binary gender codes in Guatemala that date to the Spanish colonial era. The objective of the work was to raise the visibility of trans people within the violent public sphere that privileges binary gender assignments.

As an internationally recognized artist, Motta intervened in art worlds that had historically excluded trans bodies. Carlos Motta described his role in the project this way: “I’m not so concerned with labeling this action as art but instead with developing an ethical artistic practice that reconsiders the act of representation.”²⁴ Motta insists here on not separating artistic autonomy from the history of representation. Indeed, as a cis-gendered artist he expressed weariness with the use of trans and Native bodies as ethnographic spectacle and in my subsequent interview with him was careful to narrate his own positionality vis-à-vis this project. Instead, Motta resignified the gallery to make evident the contemporary state of emergency for gender-nonconforming people. And he reconsidered the political stakes of contemporary art in Guatemala, set within the afterlives of civil war and its political violence that includes feminicide,²⁵

genocidal violence, and vastly unequal economic conditions. Finally, by refusing the surveillance eye, as there is safety in numbers in the gallery space, the performance challenged the very real threats that trans women face on a daily basis in Guatemala.

How might we think about the role of trans activism in relation to the project of social change? During and after the Pink Tide, a newfound visibility for queer and trans peoples swept the hemisphere and moved LGBTI identities from the periphery of politics into the spotlight of public debate and legal recognition. Yet, as I elaborate in chapter 2, “How *Cuir* Is Queer Recognition? A Manifesto from the Sexual Underground,” in relation to trans and queer identified movements, the future of queerness lies in attending to and reinvigorating earlier alternative sex and art worlds.

FREEING BODIES

Libertad para las 17, or Freedom for the 17, provides my third brief example of undercurrent political activities. Libertad para las 17 is an important trans-feminist movement that rejects a capitalist economic system that feeds itself by criminalizing Black, Indigenous, mestiza and female bodies. Drawing from abolition movements throughout the Americas, anti-prison activists in Central America show us a mode of hemispheric politics that challenges both the prison industrial complex and the political conservatives who aim to control their gendered bodies.

In 2014, the Salvadoran group was founded during an international meeting in Nicaragua organized to free a group of female prisoners imprisoned by ultraconservative laws. These laws include an absolute ban on abortion that penalizes those

attempting to end their own pregnancies, even in the face of life-threatening medical conditions. Alongside the Citizen Group for the Decriminalization of Abortion, *Libertad para los 17* thinks and organizes with other feminist groups in Central America against the carceral logic that moralizes and legislates against Brown and Black female bodies. Through marches, legislative battles, artistic expression like poetry slams, and direct action, *Freedom for the 17* has made important inroads that challenge how women's bodies are claimed by the state, redirecting the meaning of *libertad* toward embodied autonomy.

These three instances of creative praxis—Occupy Museum, the collaboration between Carlos Motta and REDMMUTRANS, and *Libertad para las 17*—demonstrate how to deepen our critique by expanding the horizons of possibility, starting within artistic and political imaginaries.

TRANSNATIONAL AMERICAS STUDIES

In this book I call for a Transnational Americas Studies that learns from the intersections and crosscurrents of interdisciplinary formations and pushes beyond the Cold War architecture of area studies. As Walter Mignolo asks in *The Idea of Latin America*, is it possible to uncouple “the name of the subcontinent from the cartographic image we all have of it?”²⁶ Transnational Americas Studies responds to this question by reorganizing the normative flow and geographies, bodies, and identities of politics.

For instance, Trans-Pacific Studies considers the broader oceanic space of Pacific geographies where histories of conquest and exchange occur within dynamic flows of goods, peoples, and commodities.²⁷ And Caribbean and Andean Studies has

long theorized the intersecting histories of racisms, colonialism, and decolonization.²⁸ New work in Central American Studies develops transnational American studies through grounded examinations of US Empire, migration, aesthetics, and political disobedience.²⁹ As Lisa Lowe rigorously models in relation to undoing coloniality, reading across archives rethinks the liberal nation-state.³⁰ Bringing together these critical crosscurrent approaches is central to the Transnational Americas Studies I highlight throughout this book.

Latin American and Caribbean cultural knowledge formations also directly inform my mode of study in *Beyond the Pink Tide*. During the 1980s and 1990s, cultural studies scholars explored the making of social worlds even in the face of state violence.³¹ And they challenged strict Marxist orthodoxies that defined art as epiphenomenal, or of a secondary order to the capitalist economy, instead pointing to creative praxis as its own site of theory production. Latin American cultural studies troubled the nation-state and lifted modes of marginal critique and world making to the center of making politics anew.

Mindful of these contributions, the critic Mabel Moraña writes:

The fact is that, despite the value of the contributions that have been made in this field from the perspective of cultural studies, one of the problems that should remain at the center of our work is the reconstruction of a political articulation capable of coping with (and coordinating) distinct agendas, subjects and programs that exist in Latin America and consequently in the international field of Latin Americanism. Perhaps one should analyze not only the causes of the progressive exhaustion of cultural studies, but above all the alternatives to it in order to launch, from what remains of its foundation, a joint effort for the reconstruction of political platforms in order to approach society and culture.³²

Here Moraña recognizes the particular exhaustion with institutionalizing cultural studies in the hemisphere. And to this I would add that studies of Latin America, and area studies more broadly, have unevenly attended to Blackness, Indigeneity, disability, and gender nonconformity, dimensions of social life and oppression that have been omitted by focusing too narrowly on poststructural theories and disciplinary norms.³³ Elsewhere I discuss how a decolonial and queer methodology, such as work by Emma Perez, intimately frames global race, gender, sex, and political economic formations to move beyond these limitations.

In my own research, I have found that there are crucial lessons to be learned about how to analyze cultural and political intersections, in part by building on diverse radical art and intellectual inheritances. The artists and social movements I study in this book include spaces and formations across the Americas as divergent as music in the Palestinian diaspora (chapter 1), submerged sex and art worlds (chapter 2), art and performance in the shadow of the US-Mexico border (chapter 3), and cultural memory in Indigenous Patagonia (chapter 4). When new alternatives seem impossible, we might reorient our study toward the creative praxis and submerged perspectives that are found beneath or at the edge of the dominant political tide.

Two questions guide my discussion. First, how exactly can we move from the Cold War inheritances of Area Studies, whether it be American, Latin American, or otherwise, to open a generative space that foments rather than colonizes our political imaginations? I am constantly surprised by the capacity of academic institutions to reorganize and sort our knowledges into disciplinary and geographic regions of containment. Second, what theories and methods actually take social justice seriously? To consider these questions, Indigenous studies, Black

studies, critical ethnic studies, queer and trans of color critique, transfeminisms, and decolonial methods need to be at the forefront of any thoughtful examination of social justice today, as does a focus on Palestinian justice, as Angela Davis recently suggested.³⁴ Indeed, Transnational Americas Studies asks us to remain vigilant about radical equality, such as undoing the concentration and occupation of land, property, and natural resources that has long plagued the Americas. We must also abolish the prison industrial complex, an acute form of military and extractive capitalism that disproportionately criminalizes Black and Brown peoples. During neoliberalism, it continually expands its security apparatus to capture more populations in its cages, as *Freedom for the 17* shows.³⁵

Transnational Americas Studies, informed by new American Studies, pays attention to states of emergence³⁶ and the social formations of justice-oriented political imaginaries. In equal measure it has the capacity to address how gender and sex norms bolster patriarchal states and societies. For instance, the recent Christian Far Right protests against Judith Butler in Brazil, which violently burned their effigy, shows how gender nonconformity continues to threaten binary and heteronormative ideologies.³⁷ By considering the histories, contemporary struggles, and world-making practices of social movements and art production, we can find creative and new/old ways to dismantle and queer, as Quiroga puts it, the nation.

UNTAMED GEOGRAPHIES

Though Latin America and the Caribbean are often ignored within the purview of “American” politics, the continent and islands haunt the US imaginary as geographies of valuable

resources whose peoples are often represented as untamable and ungovernable. The seventeenth-century Black slave revolts and revolutionary energies of the anticolonial Caribbean culminated in the 1798 Haitian Revolution, with constant reverberations through the present day. Histories of primitive accumulation, transatlantic slavery, property, land, and national independence as historical debt motivated powerful insurgent movements throughout the twentieth century, including the pivotal 1910 Mexican Revolution and the 1959 Cuban Revolution.³⁸ In fact, we might read the history of the Americas through the dynamics of debt, racial, and extractive capitalism in the context of counterinsurgency.

The Doctrine of National Security is a good example. It justified the US intervention in Iraq even as it was first practiced in Guatemala, Chile, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador, from the 1950s on. And, as Greg Grandin argues, it was in Central America “where the Republican Party first combined the three elements that give today’s imperialism its moral force: punitive idealism, free market absolutism, and right-wing Christian mobilization.”³⁹ From Puerto Rico to Mexico to Central America to South America, US militarism and economic dependency followed in the footsteps of Spanish colonialism to construct the western hemisphere as *terra nullius* and ungovernable regions so that racial capitalism and US Empire could take hold.

During the 1970s and 1980s, authoritarian governments used Christian colonial rhetoric and the methods of torture and disappearance to install market-driven economics throughout the Americas.⁴⁰ Whether in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador, Uruguay, or Paraguay, nations were ruled by powerful dictators as new and militant social movements challenged modernization schemes.

Nonviolent as well as armed movements also struggled against Latin America's neocolonial relation to the United States and the social suffering caused by the economic and political stranglehold of the Washington Consensus.

John Beverley asks an important question to those of us who study the hemisphere: "What is the emergent form of a *new* Latinamericanism, capable of confronting US hegemony and expressing an alternative future for the peoples of the Americas?"⁴¹ Beverley points to the perilous condition of Latin America, historically situated in the shadow of the United States, which has now also become the expanded site for Canadian, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, and Australian extraction and militarized capitalism. As Amy Kaplan famously stated in her American Studies Association presidential address in the wake of the US attack in Iraq, we must speak with increased urgency against US occupation around the world, especially "in its authoritarian incursions against civil liberties, the rights of immigrants and the provision for basic human rights."⁴² With the recent deportation orders of Haitian, Salvadoran, and, potentially, Nicaraguan temporary migrants and the intensification of the global paradigm of war this speaking up and writing against is ever more urgent. Kaplan's move to consider imperialism is central to radical political critique and Transnational Americas Studies. Given the history of the Cold War, militarism, and occupation in Latin America and the Global South, Transnational Americas Studies forcefully raises the specter of US Empire and the new/old expansion of global imperialisms.

Internationalism also advances the movement of political undercurrents. For instance, in Angela Davis's recent interview on the Black radical tradition, she addresses the role of internationalism in antiracist and anticolonial struggle. In relation to

her activism on Palestine that emerges out of imaginaries of Black freedom, Davis reflects:

In 1973, when I attended the World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin (in the German Democratic Republic), I had the opportunity to meet Yasir Arafat, who always acknowledged the kinship of the Palestinian struggle and the Black freedom struggle in the United States, and who, like Che, Fidel, Patrice Lumumba, and Amílcar Cabral, was a revered figure within the movement for Black liberation. This was a time when communist internationalism—in Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Asia, Australia, South America, and the Caribbean—was a powerful force.⁴³

These global histories of solidarity that work in tandem with Black freedom movements demonstrate how to move beyond a focus on elite political change in the hemisphere. Historical and recent calls for decolonization by raising the Indigenous question must also be at the center of our analysis. With the frameworks of Transnational Americas and Global South Studies we might consider how the history of internationalism has always been intertwined with Black radical political critique and the quest for Indigenous sovereignty as well as creating and initiating alternatives to capitalism. To move in the fluid spaces of these other worlds is essential to a renewed vision for a Transnational Americas Studies, or a decolonial American Studies.

INDEBTED: DEEPENING DEMOCRACY?

In their now-classic book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe consider the work of social movements as that of deepening the principles of liberal democracy. In fact, their definition of the political Left is “the radicalization of democracy ...

[that] can include any struggle against a relation of subordination.”⁴⁴ Rather than focus on revolution, Laclau and Mouffe describe the importance of deepening the ideas and values already present within but unfulfilled by liberal democracy.⁴⁵ They propose a praxis-oriented understanding of society and politics that strengthens heterogeneous forms of democratic struggle. Though deepening or radicalizing democracy is certainly a worthy objective, we might note that liberal democracy has structural limitations, because its exclusionary idea of freedom is based on histories of debt, enslavement, theft, omission, dispossession, and obfuscation.

In Fred Moten and Stefano Harney’s *The Undercommons* (2014) debt is reframed to consider transatlantic slavery and settler colonialism and histories of refusing the very terms of freedom engendered by liberal democracy. Thinking at a moment of increasing precarity for racialized populations and the dismantling of tenure at the university, Moten and Harney reverse the meaning of debt to reveal the fundamental way it organizes social life in a negative and positive sense: “They say we have too much debt. We need better credit, more credit, less spending. They offer us credit repair, credit counseling, microcredit, personal financial planning. They promise to match credit and debt again, debt and credit. But our debts stay bad. We keep buying another song, another round.”⁴⁶ When coupled with J. Kēhaulani Kauanui’s historical attention to “the commons,”⁴⁷ Moten and Harney’s rich work, and its recent translation into Spanish, gives us a model for rethinking the ravages of debt and indebtedness that have been at the center of social and artistic praxis in the Americas.

How can we use these insights to think about recent challenges to the Global North’s predatory schemes and growing

consumer national debt? As easy access to credit became routinely available during the 1980s and 1990s, a wider swath of the population experienced the debt economy that made rising interest rates part of the squeeze on daily life. Rather than break with these oppressive patterns during democratic transitions throughout the hemisphere, liberal governments consolidated new market economies that only dramatized social inequalities.⁴⁸ In the financial squeeze that followed, new waves of discontent openly contested privatization and deregulation. Indeed, over the past thirty years, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Bolivia to challenge the neoliberal order and its failures.

In El Salvador, the FMLN (Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional), once a guerrilla organization, became an official party and won national elections with a mandate to contend with the ravages of civil war and the violent imprint of empire in the nation. In 1992, the Zapatista uprisings broke with an elite political consensus that had worked to repeal Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, which protected the *ejido* system of Indigenous collective land rights that had existed since the Mexican Revolution.

The Cochabamba water wars became another focal point of social mobilization and Indigenous resurgence.⁴⁹ During the early 2000s, the Bolivian water wars, a mass antiglobalization protest, denounced the rising price of the precious resource. Through a broad coalition called the Coordinadora por Defensa de Agua y Vida (Coordinator for Water and Life Defense), Aymara Indigenous protesters rebelled against the foreign joint investments of Aguas del Tunari and Bechtel by demanding fair access to water rights.

Within the Bolivian public sphere, protests, horizontal assembly meetings, and artful expression became the global epicenter for antiglobalization alternatives. For instance, amid growing gentrification in La Paz, the graffiti art of *Mujeres Creando* inscribed visible feminist critique on the urban streetscape.⁵⁰

A range of regional and urban popular movements, like those on display in the streets of Cochabamba and Chiapas, sought economic justice and local equity against the visible ravages of neoliberal globality. Throughout the hemisphere, Indigenous movements, Afro-descendant peoples, *Zapatistas*, *feministas*, *ambientalistas* (ecologists), *eco feministas* (ecofeminists), *anarquistas* (anarchists), *movimientos cuir* and *trans* (queer and trans movements), and *pobladores* (urban poor) all mounted important challenges to autocratic and patriarchal states by building consensus and nonhierarchical decision making. And visual arts and creative projects importantly mediated social movements that worked to break the Washington Consensus and root out authoritarian patriarchy. Such movements deepened democracy throughout Latin America and must not be forgotten with the easy phrase that blames the so-called failure of the Pink Tide.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Paying attention to social activisms that are shaped by visual arts, film, performance, and music allows us to see a rising tide of world making. Together the chapters that follow challenge the assumptions of nation-state politics. As I show in the next chapter, musical exchanges build upon diasporic and South-South connections to reject the colonial politics of recognition and occupation. Such creative formats instead search for modes of solidarity, connection, and affinity that form sound bridges

across the Palestinian diaspora and in relation to global Indigenous struggles. Though such locations can always be commodified and appropriated for statecraft, the movements, sonic experiments, artworks, and visual archives I study also point to how to alternatively make and do politics, beyond the electoral sphere and the narrowly defined scope of liberal democracy.

By studying artistic and political undercurrents in the Americas, I challenge the means by which to live and do politics and also reach beyond area studies. Given our troubled times in which politics seems overdetermined, corrupt, and saturated by the demands of capitalism, this book presents other models and languages for how to organize the political. Moreover, this book is meant for students as a way to perceive the transformational impact of art practice when tied to social change. For many activists, thinkers, and artists, going against conventional art categories is the only way to undo coloniality toward shaping another model of the political. The chapters in *Beyond the Pink Tide* together express a sea of political potential.