Photography & Aesthetics:

A Critical Study on Visual and Textual Narratives in the Lifework of Sergio Larraín and its Impact in 20th Century Europe and Latin America

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Nora Alegría, in deep gratitude for her infinite love, resilience, and support, and my son, Ian Brandt, for the unexpected hope. Thank you.

DISCLAIMER

Due to the inability to secure the reproduction rights of Sergio Larraín's photographs, all images used for the reader's ease of reference have been removed. Nevertheless, the reader can always find the list of figures in use and additional information about the analysed images in either in-text references or footnotes. Alternatively, photographic copies of the original photographs are kept in the original version of this thesis, available only for internal use.

ABSTRACT

The main focus of this study is a theoretical exploration of critical approaches applicable to the work of the Chilean photographer Sergio Larraín (1931-2012). It presents analytical tools to contextualise and understand the importance and impact of his work in photographic studies and his portrayal of twentieth-century Latin American and European culture. It inspects in depth a large portion of his photo work, which is still only partially published and mostly reduced to his "active" period as a photojournalist, aside from the personal photographic exploration of his early and late career (C. Mena). This extended material creates a broader scope for understanding his photographs and him as a canonical photographer. This study analyses the photographer's trajectory as discourses of recollection of historical memory in time (Mauad) to trace Larraín's collective memory associated with his visual production. Such analysis helps decode his visual imagery and his projection and impact on the European and Latin American culture. This strategy helps solve a two-fold problem: firstly, it generates an interpretive consistency to understand the Chilean's photographic practice; secondly, it explores the power of images as an aesthetic experience in the installation of nationalist ideologies and the creation of imaginaries (B. Anderson 163).

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INTRODUCTION

1 General context

It is vital to understand Sergio Larraín's formative history to evaluate his figure from a unique socio-cultural background. The photographer's trajectory goes back to the 5th of May 1928, the day that two aristocratic Chilean families were united by the marriage of Sergio Larraín Garía-Moreno and Mercedes Echeñique Correa. Their wealth allowed them, among countless other benefits, a year-long honeymoon in Europe. The couple brought back from their trip memories, presents, and substantial interest in France's artistic movements and Germany's golden era of the Weimar Republic regarding the Bauhaus and the formative social art (Leiva 15-6). As the Chilean aristocratic circle was somewhat hermetic in the early 1900s, Larraín's parents were among the most influential intellectual and political thinkers. This politico-cultural influence was so significant for Larraín's father that he incorporated the contemporary view of the architect Le Corbusier in Chile, a vision he as an architect eventually applied to his designs for urban interventions and buildings.

Sergio Larraín's parents strongly influenced him as both an individual and photographer, for his education took place in one of the most culturally stimulating environments anyone could ever be (Moreno, "El legado de Sergio Larraín, una clase magistral de fotografía"). Here he discovered photography and learned about art, philosophy, politics, and most importantly, he met influential people within artistic and intellectual movements. Concerning the biography of Larraín, Gonzalo Leiva wrote an entire section called "Los referents del entorno cultural" with the idea of bringing out the tremendous influence Larraín's family had had in terms of cultural heritage. Some of their closest friends were Tristan Tzara, Andre Bretón, Roberto Matta and Pablo Neruda. Original paintings by Roberto Matta, Enrique Zañartu, Nemesio Antúnez, Camilo Mori and even Picasso and Matisse were part of the house gallery. Books by Cartier-Bresson such as *The Decisive Moment* (1952) with original photographs by the author, *Moscou* (1955), *D'une Chine a l'autre* (1954), *Les Dances a Bali* (1954), *The Photographs of Henri Cartier-Bresson* (1947), and Brassai's *Seville en Fete* (1954) were also in the family library. Larraín's household was commonplace for the artistic avant-garde national movement, a place where the European vanguards and Larraín García-Moreno's pre-Columbian art collection coexisted (20-2).

Notwithstanding, equally important are Larraín's emotional and spiritual conflicts that little by little made him resent his family, their wealth and, at a later stage of his life, even photography, to the extent that he ended up living a life of contradictions and solitude. Media reports depicted him as, for example, one who exchanged the brightness of an international and acclaimed career for dust and loneliness in a lost town in Valle del Limarí (R. Mena), or the "experimental Chilean photographer whose short career resulted in a string of inspirational images" (Hopkinson). The photographer Josef Koudelka mentioned about Larraín that “yo pienso que Sergio tenía un talento enorme, pero se qumó. No ha hecho un trabajo completo. No explotó sus capacidades” (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*). Sebastián Moreno's film *Sergio Larraín: El instante eterno* (2021) attempts to address the photographer's familiar tensions and his sudden retreat into mystical practices (Valdivia). However, although his photographic production spanned his entire life and was not only reduced to his active stage as a photojournalist (C. Mena), Larraín's years of contemplation and spiritual practices have never been addressed from a visual approach.

Today, specialised critique acknowledges Sergio Larraín as Chile's most renowned photographer and one of Magnum's most acclaimed artists (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*). However, it was not always that way. Even though during the 1960s the Chilean photographer was internationally considered among the "world's finest photographers" (Kinzer 1-3), his name was barely known in the local sphere (Ríos 131). Mainly because of Larraín's "desire to destroy everything" and his "poor opinion of the photography world", he was always reluctant to exhibit publicly, and many of the photographers and media who tried to convince him to do so would wind up "irritated by Larraín's insistent proselytising" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 29).

Nonetheless, this changed radically when, in the late 1980s, Magnum's former director Agnès Sire discovered boxes filled with filed contact sheets from Larraín at the agency. Sire's participation in building up Sergio Larraín's imagery is crucial since she was the first and only person whom Larraín trusted for such an endeavour. Their relationship as pen pals lasted over 30 years (Recontres-D'Arles, "Sergio Larraín Retrospective").

During that time, Sire managed to put together a consistent visual narrative beginning in the early 1990s through different exhibitions and publications and culminating in 2013, a year after the photographer's demise, with the most outstanding exhibition ever made on his behalf, "Sergio Larraín Retrospective" in Arles, France. The

exhibition travelled to South America for the first time in 2014, to Santiago de Chile. It moved to Buenos Aires in 2017 and finally arrived in Brazil in 2019. Hence, for the first time Larraín's name was acknowledged by critics and the regional community as "el hito más importante en la historia de la fotografía" (UAH, "Mesa 2: Callejeo y hallazgo: las ciudades del fotógrafo"), as Dr José Pablo Concha stated in 2014 apropos Larraín's exhibition.

Nevertheless, although a tremendous effort was made to bring Sergio Larraín back from oblivion and enshrine him as a canonical photographer, his visual narrative divided the specialised critique into supporters and detractors (Valdivia). The Chilean photographer and Larraín's close friend, Luis Poirot, recalls that Larraín's retrospective presented him as a Magnum photographer and that his real work was much more extensive and complex than this compilation (Hartung). Poirot is correct in his affirmation. The photographer's archive remains in Magnum Paris, and because of a matter of legal rights, no further studies have been possible. In this regard, Agnès Sire is paradoxical when she recognises that Larraín's work "is, however, still not very well known" (*Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 29) but that his most relevant period was the three or four years he travelled working for Magnum (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*). These approaches are partially seconded by the academic Valeria de Los Ríos when she writes that behind the photographer's history, his photographs remain little studied, unknown even (131).

2021 is another remarkable year for the photographer. After a few years of collecting records and material, the documentarist Sebastián Moreno launched his documentary film *Sergio Larraín: El instante eterno*, a production that, under similar premises, presents the figure of the photographer from his most human and personal side. It tells Larraín's story as a compilation of memories and anecdotes of those who were closest to him and invites the viewer to rediscover the person behind the photographer. For the documentarist, to have had access to Magnum's archive to "declassify" all Larraín's contact sheets meant a finding as significant as to "unlock the treasure chest" (Moreno, "El legado de Sergio Larraín, una clase magistral de fotografía"). However, such findings are not genuinely revealed in the film and only play a shallow role in the pursuit of understanding Larraín's human processes, keeping the photographer's visual corpus at a minor level of importance. In a different interview the same film director recognised that this film is only a small fraction compared to what is left (Moreno, "Conversación con Sebastián Moreno: Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno").

The case of Catalina Mena, one of Larraín's nieces, is similar. She published the book *Sergio Larraín: La foto Perdida* in 2021. Despite the title, the book is a biographic narrative that tries to rebuild the figure of Sergio Larraín, not the photographer but the uncle, by retelling family stories.

Overall, even though for the past years there has been an increasing interest and intellectual production regarding Sergio Larraín, so far there is still very little inspected about the visual production itself of the photographer. Most of what has been written revolve around a biographical dimension. Larraín's imagery is built on fragments, traces of what seems to be a coherent piece of history, whereby the more one reads about the photographer, the less one knows about his visual work.

All things considered, the principal goal of this study is to establish a holistic approach as a robust and multi-layered exploration of critical viewpoints and theories concerning a more extensive portion of Sergio Larraín's photo work, contrasting the published material versus the unprecedented one. Through this particular archive compilation and analysis, the study looks moreover to decode Larraín's visual imagery and his projection and impact on European and Latin American culture. As a result, it will also evidence the importance of the Chilean photographer's archive in exploring and rescuing local memory and political imageries in Chile, Latin America and Europe.

Finally, this project aims to become the first formal visual study on Larraín's photography, a type of analysis based exclusively on image studies never done before.

2 Methodology

Methodologically speaking, this dissertation divides its main objectives into five chapters that analyse Larraín's visual production through the relationship between aesthetic-political aspects and photography. It holistically considers Mauad's notions of the "photographer as an agent" to inspect Larraín's general work through concepts of community (people, images), trajectories (collectives and individuals) and projects (field of possibilities). For this, this work establishes the role of the photographer as an individual within a community and as an artist whose work belongs to the historical composition of the collective and contemporary memory (Mauad, "Imágenes Contemporáneas: experiencia fotográfica y memoria en el siglo XX" 43).

In this regard, it becomes necessary to mark and define critical concepts the study operates with, which intertwine in building a holistic approach about Sergio Larraín's work.

Accordingly, the use of the term "holistic" in this study denotes the practice and research that takes into account the "whole person" (Gause and Coholic 2), including physical, geographical, institutional, professional, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the photographer's life experience. In this particular case, this holistic inspection includes, i.e., Larraín's Magnum phase, influential characters, his figure as a photographer, his spiritual phase and the development of Satori photography as an unprecedented projection of his trajectory.

In equal importance, collective memory is drawn from Maurice Halbwachs' understanding. The concept refers to a social group's shared reservoir of memories, knowledge, and information firmly attached to the group's identity. It can be created, shared, and passed on by large and small social groupings, such as generations and communities. "Collective memory" is not a given but rather a socially constructed notion to the Frenchman. Therefore, it does not lay in one singular event or group but the multiplicity of them, converging and diverging constantly, yet manifesting through individuals that, when located in a specific group context, remember, or recreate de past (Coser). In Larraín's case, this collective memory flows through family, social classes, corporations, public institutions, and so forth. Every instance has distinctive memories that its members have constructed over long periods, and Larraín's photographs help visualise it.

Similarly, the notion of "generation" is understood, in Lewis Coser's terms when reading Halbwachs, as a community or social group that belongs to a specific context in time and becomes conscious of itself in counterposing its present to its own constructed past. However, past generations may become present when present generations recreate imaginatively (or in Larraín's case: visually) the past, re-enacting it (24).

The study to continue reads Larraín's work from a global perspective which considers both European and Latin American approaches to his work and challenges established views when necessary.

For example, among the many perspectives, there is a reductionist tendency to recognise Larraín as the Chilean who portrayed the poverty in Latin America and "la

injusticia social" (Esquiaga); who uncovered the Sicilian mafia in 1959 and the "inalcazable capo de la mafia Giussepe Genco Russo" (Calvo); as "um dos fotógrafos mais importantes da América Latina" (Parizotto); or as an eccentric who ditched everything "while at the top of [his] game to become a mountain yogi on the advice of a Bolivian mystic will do wonders for [the] spirit but not much for your profile" (Usborne).

These numerous tensions, as well as the ones attempting to place Sergio Larraín into only binary categories such as photojournalist/artist, documentary/street photographer, mystic/poet, are considered in terms of human learning areas that "complement rather than oppose each other, and together each can contribute to a holistic view" (Jarvis and Parker xiii) concerning learnings about the photographer.

For this reason, the study will divide into five fundamental and explorative chapters that help understand Larraín's imagery from the reconstruction of his collective memory.

Chapter I, "Understanding Magnum", is a sort of genesis, serving as a political and cultural anchoring of Larraín's work by introducing and outlining his professional development and success and contextualising his photography within the framework of Western European visual culture. Covering a significant portion of Larraín's professional, newsworthy output in Europe, the segment is an expository work that analyses the influence and impact of the Magnum Photos agency on the perception of the Chilean photographer's figure and his most well-known photo work. Four main analytical approaches cover most of Magnum's historical early settings and Larraín's personal life and work: (i) visual translation of tragedy (ii) the *auratical* value of technology, (iii) sense of freedom and visual territory and (iv) media long range and photography truth claim.

Chapter II, "Agnès Sire", explores the relationship between Sergio Larraín and the French curator, her influence in promoting the Chilean's work, and how, for the first time, the figure of the photographer embodies a visual narrative that still endures. It analyses the impact of influential writers and photographers such as Roberto Bolaño and René Buri in collaborating to expand Larraín's international recognition within and beyond the field of photography. Therefore, the chapter is divided into five sections that track the origins and development of Larraín's public figure through the chronological analysis of publications and exhibitions: (i) the figure of Agnès Sire, (ii) the image of Valparaíso, (iii) the argot of Larin America, (iv) the image of London, and (v) the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM) and the archetype of Larraín.

Chapter III, "Larraín's photographic imagery", focuses on the photographer's key concepts throughout his career. The first section analyses the importance of Larraín's sense of "magic" in developing and promoting his work and how it is intertwined with personal readings on photography. Secondly, the section explores the historical context in which this phenomenon materialised in the photographer's philosophy and visual production and analyses the global meaning behind photographic magic. It inspects specific case studies on the photographer's most iconic work: "Les petit filles". Finally, it contrasts and analyses how magic is revealed in the context of global photography. The second section explores Larraín's most famous series, "the street children" and analyses how pain and cruelty reflect and materialise in the photographic act and modify visuals codes in their interpretation. Additionally, the section explores the relationship between the photographer's work and his self-recognition as a suffering agent as both observer and producer.

Chapter IV, "Satori photography", focuses on the critical analysis and exploration of Larraín's most underrated and belittled photo work: Satori. This terminology responds to a spiritual practice the photographer has brought into photography as a way of celebrating the quotidian, the normal, utilising photography as a medium for "contemplation".[1]

Somehow the Western European gaze has considered this visual exploration as unworthy; while the Latin American gaze never had the chance to make own approaches. While harbouring an anachronic and far-reaching production of images, Larraín's Satori observations have received only limited coverage in minor reports. Since this photo work was never a tangible photographic category, never published, and never archived under indicatives labels, this study contributes to putting together the photographs from Magnum's archive to effectively engage in Satori photo work as a real case study and archive. As should every photographic visualisation – documentary, artistic or otherwise – this chapter examines Satori photographic style and its implications for artistic output and sociocultural visibility. Likewise, the connection between texts and images and how they interact in shaping collective memory and individual perspectives is analysed. The concepts of Satori, Zen, enlightenment concerning religion in photography and visual

[1] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legends 1969 onwards. August 2019.

representations constitute a theoretical structure that helps clarify pertinent aspects of Larraín's photographic experience.

This section is divided into four principal sub-sections. "Satori and Sergio Larraín" contextualises Satori as a photographic practice and its relation to Oriental symbology and examines its relationship with the photographer's personal experiences. "Satori and subjective photography" section inspects the subjective power in Satori representation at a moment when Larraín's artistic output was being evaluated not by this particular work but by his old photographs as a photojournalist. Consequently, it reads "subjective photography" in Otto Steinert's terms, where the nature of the practice lies on the subject's "power of vision" (Valentin 172), which continues "developing the *avant-garde* photographers' emphasis on experimentation" (Biro 357). "Zen photography" explores the relationship between Sergio Larraín's Satori and Thomas Merton's Zen photography as an intellectual bridge in the definition of conceptual photography practices. Finally, "Haiku, reality, and Satori" section explores artistic and poetic devices in Larraín's photography. It analyses and contrasts them to similar outputs and referents in the field as a way of evidencing the relevance and dimension of his work through newer and more novel approaches.

Chapter V, "Photography in the study of religion", explores Satori photography as a tool in the study of religion and visual exploration of communities. Larraín's interest in the assimilation of Oriental spiritual practices through photography is framed as an attempt to challenge the traditional canon of visibility and epistemic systems which enable, on the one hand, their comprehension and, on the other, the understanding of the photographer's self-knowledge. Thus, the chapter expands the practicability of the photographer's archive and offers critical approaches as a way of recovering Larraín's unpublished material as something crucial for the examination of his whole imagery.

In conclusion, Larraín's trajectory and traces respond to the socio-political circulation and impact that both the photographer and his photographs have had over time. Here Larraín, as an agent, takes an upfront stand on the social reality he is shooting (Mauad, "Imágenes Contemporáneas: experiencia fotográfica y memoria en el siglo XX" 48) and his photographs become images and "also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask" (Sontag, *On Photography* 154).

CHAPTER I: Understanding Magnum

1 Overview

In 1947, in the aftermath of the Second World War, four visionary photographers founded one of the most prestigious photo agencies in the world: Magnum Photos, Inc., with branches today in Paris, New York and Hong Kong. This photo quartet was initially formed by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, George Rodger and David Seymour. Each of them had been a wartime photojournalist and "profoundly affected by what they had seen" (TATE). However, Capa, the principal founder, due to his memories of his time in the Spanish Civil War, "had been envisioning the agency's creation since the 1930s" (Manchester 418). This particular and traumatic experience is a phenomenon that for Rodger verges on "the unique qualities we ourselves had acquired during several years of contact with all the emotional excesses that go hand in hand with war" (Manchester 118).

This chapter is an expository work that analyses the influence and impact of the Magnum Photos agency in the perception and development of Sergio Larraín's photo work. It is divided into four analytical approaches that cover most of Magnum's early historical context and Larraín's personal life and work: (i) visual translation of tragedy (ii) the Auratical value of technology (iii) sense of freedom and visual territory and (iv) the long range of media and photography truth claim.

The chapter considers the basis on which the agency was created in 1947 to react to the implications of the Second World War and establishes a socio-political criterion to understand Sergio Larraín’s participation in it.

These implications relate to the "commercial venture" focused on what George Rodger recognises in his article "Random Thoughts of a Founder Member" regarding Robert Capa's work as "the unique qualities we ourselves had acquired during several years of contact with all the emotional excesses that go hand in hand with war" (Manchester 418). This technological, emotional, political, and moral revolution allowed the photographers to see, record, and recreate the atrocity of war and misery with artistry and determination, constantly feeding media tabloids and collective memory as a result.

Such a revolution allowed the expansion of photography practice and aesthetic experience across the world, enabling the visualisation of new territories and cultures under a witnessing lens. In the following years, the same possibilities led Sergio Larraín to document, for instance, misery on the streets of Santiago, Chile, a form of misery that perfectly fit with the newsworthy condition Magnum craved for. Poverty in forgotten,

exotic countries represents an opportunity where other people's tragedies are awaiting to be denounced and publicised to the rest of the world. As Susan Sontag says, being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 16).

To set up the basis mentioned, the study compares Magnum's publications that define its role in the contemporary world and exposes them sequentially to give the full scope of the meanings of the agency.

Geoff Dyer, for instance, recognises the agency as an entity in charge of a trove of historical images hidden in the world. He even points out that part of Magnum's mission is to enable people living history as such, "urging us to look here, at this, to go this way, not that way … and somehow, incredibly, enabling us to go – and see – everywhere at once" (Hoelscher vii). To the author, Magnum represents an archive that helps reconstruct and teach, supposedly, the meaning of the life and death of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Fred Ritchin, in his publication "What is Magnum", looks for a vaguer yet more sincere definition. He focuses on Magnum's founder photographers and defines it as *méfiance*, a French word loosely translated as ‘defiance’. The definition, however, tries to formulate a more profound understanding. It looks to manifest the sense of disobedience and resistance of Magnum photographers "to occupy the periphery, not constrained by the centres of power, the conventional points of concern. It is a sense of *méfiance* that is true not only about their coverage of the world but to their experimentation with the traditions of photography" (Manchester 443).

Additionally, the chapter considers Clément Chéroux's approaches to the compelling new face of humanism. The author explores the implications of geopolitical boundaries' reorganisation, marked by the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, to depict the pursuit of communal values like "liberty, equality and dignity that were so dear to the photographers" (Chéroux 14).

This way, the chapter seeks to recreate and understand the implications through which Sergio Larraín earned a place among the most renowned photographers in the world of the twentieth century. In so doing, the study deconstructs Magnum's foundational principles on tragedy, technology, freedom and photography truth claim to grasp the importance of the work of the Chilean within this context.

2 The visual translation of tragedy

The term of photographic translation is taken from Nathanial Gardner's essay "Photography Translation: another way of looking". The author explains it as the technical and humanistic reproduction system that conveys unique knowledge when representing the omissions of other systems. Hence, this study considers "visual translation of tragedy" as a visual representation taken from an inimitable source related to tragic and unique historical moments. This type of photographic translation transforms the three-dimensional experience into a two-dimensional one by compressing cultural elements and generating new narratives (Gardner 2). Magnum Photos has been one of the twentieth century's most important institutions to be branded and modelled by this principle of tragedy translation. Even though they have never described their work in this particular sense, the evidence collected has most certainly proved this relationship, in which Sergio Larraín, later on, found his way as a world-class photographer. This section analyses the relationship between the visualisation of tragedy in twentieth-century Europe, Magnum Photos, and Sergio Larraín as the catalyst of the photographer's work under newer aesthetic principles.

The visual translation of tragedy has its roots in the mid-nineteenth century, when photography got onto the battlefield for the first time, entirely changing the perception of the suffering of others. The tragedy was no longer something exclusively to read or hear about, but instead to observe, enriching the corporeality of war: guns, ammunition, uniforms, landscapes of death moved out of a fictional, unimaginable world into reality. The first warlike conflicts ever documented were the Crimean War in Russia (1853-1856) and the American Civil War in 1861 (Wells 81-2), becoming the starting points of visual assimilation and consumption of war tragedy "through the eyes of a score of photographers" (Carlebach 63).

Later on, in 1914, in the leadup to World War I, the American company Kodak attempted to encourage soldiers to take cameras into battle, feeding the modern desire of (a) consuming realistic, far-distant experiences and (b) recording wars, "even though this was strictly forbidden by the authorities" (Wells 160).

An accurate reflection in response to this relationship between commercial tragedy and photography comes in Susan Sontag’s claim that "wars are now also living room sights and sounds. Information about what is happening elsewhere, called news, features conflict and violence — 'If it bleeds, it leads' runs the venerable guideline of tabloids (…) to which the response is compassion, or indignation (…) as each misery heaves into view"

(*Regarding the Pain of Others* 16). The author understands that how humanity started to perceive others' pain had radically changed because of photography. Photographing and visualising suffering had created a social pulse, a sudden interest, in which photographers, institutions and viewers are all intrinsically bonded by a new experience of pain.

Magnum Photos's foundation is not an exception to this flow of war-related events. Almost a hundred years after the first explorations, the agency was conceived under a similar structure: a sense of tragedy and denunciation of the world's atrocities. Fred Ritchin, in his essay "What is Magnum", tells the story of Magnum's founder George Rodger, who decided to abandon war photography after being sent to cover the liberation of the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen in Germany. The photographer recognised as "obscene" the practice of recording the suffering. However, despite becoming Rodger's self-motif for abandoning war photography, this sense of obscenity is shown by Ritchin as an incentive to form the agency, along with other founders' experiences (Manchester 417-8).[2] The consciousness of tragedy became a fundamental value in Magnum's foundation, not only in the pursuit of their photographers but also as a newsworthy, institutional criterion. The writer Gerry Badger is even sharper when commenting on the foundation of Magnum and the "concerned photobook" of tragic events:

> Magnum was founded in 1947, just after World War II, by war veterans and much of its business since has been closely connected with the reportage of conflict and strife. It has been noted by cynics that the agency needs a war somewhere in the world, or a famine, or inequality and suffering. This implies that it is always in business. In other words, the concerned photographer's concern is largely with human misery and the world's ills (Parr and Badger, *The Photobook: a History* 236).

A similar criterion of human cruelty put the name of Sergio Larraín on the world photography map for the first time early in 1959, when Henri Cartier-Bresson called him to become a member of Magnum Photos. This sense of finding beauty in tragedy or the "pain

[2] In the same article, the author recognises that Magnum would have never existed if André Friedmann, also known as Robert Capa, had not been exiled from his hometown in Hungary for anti-government activities and forced to give up his career in agriculture to help his family as a journalist.

of others", a phrase Susan Sontag coined in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), was initially applied to Larraín's work by the Swiss photographer René Burri when they first met in 1958. Burri evaluated and considered Larraín's series on the street children of Santiago de Chile not only for the artistry behind Larraín's work but also for his social commitment.

This particular photo work had been printed and used by charitable organisations in the 1950s. However, it was not until Burri's appearance that the photographs acquired artistic value. In this case, the artistry responded to candid moments found and extracted from others' suffering and the social commitment to an emotional involvement with others' misfortune to visualise and denounce social injustice. On the one hand, this artistic-social criterion convinced Burri to introduce Larraín to Bresson as a promising photographer and,[3] on the other hand, structured itself as an institutional yardstick for several young photographers.

Similar to Larraín's case, the same inclination for exotic misery and otherness added the work of the Brazilian Sebastião Salgado in 1979 and the Swedish Kent Klich in 1998 to Magnum's collection.

In an article in the *British Journal of Photography*, Neil Burgess (founding director of Magnum Photos London and bureau chief of Magnum New York) could not have summarised these institutional criteria better. When remembering Salgado's work, *Gold*, he praises the value of his images "in the midst of violence and danger, and others at sensitive moments of quiet and reflection". He continues by saying, "it was a romantic, narrative work that engaged with its immediacy but had not a drop of sentimentality" ("Sebastião Salgado: Gold"). Here, Burgess refers to the visual translation of post-industrial communities.[4]

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[3] The story began, almost by chance, when in 1958 Larraín ran into the Swiss photographer René Burri on Copacabana beach, Rio de Janeiro, and told him that he was a photographer, that he had decided to meet Bresson at all costs, and that he was taking off for Paris the next day, just to do it. Burri, moved by Larraín's work, gave him his film rolls on Rio and an introductory letter addressed to Bresson. This event became the start of the relationship between Sergio Larraín and Magnum (Leiva 32).

[4] In the same article, Burgess recognises that they should have paid more attention to the socio-political uncertainties they "glibly" called post-industrial communities. This explained his relationship with and

This reality was well explored, too, by Klich, who recognised that his ten years of exploring Mexico City had finally paid off. He says, "I guess that the Mexican work was of great importance for my entrance [to Magnum]" (Klich), since not much time had passed after he returned from Mexico before the agency invited him to join. Only one year after his incorporation, Klich published his most famous documentary book with Elena Poniatowska in 1991, *El Niño: Children of the Streets, Mexico City*. This photographic project exploring the symbolic elements of abandoned children's marginality found only rejection in the Mexican capital but found a place outside the Latin region.[5]

Notwithstanding, Leiva recognises these events meant to Larraín "un reconocimiento a su persona, pero también la reafirmación de su aporte a la fotografía", since the Chilean photographer was "el primer latinoamericano en sumarse a esta agencia" (Leiva 32). This was an acknowledgement from Magnum to Larraín for his photo work that, under the modern European gaze, exposed the deepest side of poverty and abandonment in Latin America and that was simultaneously a protest, in Agnès Sire's words, "against the invisibility of these abandoned children and a homage of their freedom" (Larraín, *Valparaíso* 182) in 1950s Chile.

Larraín meant neither to explore poverty nor to expose injustice as other photographers did (J. P. Brandt 75-6); this quality in the photographer's work fits perfectly within the modern European institutional criterion concerning the visual tragedy. As the

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rejection of Salgado's early project *Workers* (42 different stories on manual labour around the world) because it would be "hard to sell". The *Workers* project was not newsworthy back then, or at least it was not until Burgess saw Salgado's photographs about the Serra Pelada mine gold in Brazil. What remains as significant, aside from Salgado's artistry, is what the Pulitzer Prize winner Matthew L. Wald, regarding Salgado's South America photography, calls "a wondrous portrait of that continent's poor and common folk" ("Sebastiao Salgado: The Eye of The Photojournalist"), a photo-work later published in Selgado's *Other Americas* and *Gold*.

[5] In Gardner's essay, he explains how Klich, even though working intermittently in Mexico for over a decade (1984-1994) for the respectable charity Hogares Providencia, run by the well-known Priest Alejandro García Durán, becoming an active intellectual in the country, and planning an exhibition alongside the world-renowned French-Mexican journalist Elena Poniatowska on the visualisation of the marginal, never found the support he needed to publish their project in Mexico. Gardner mentions that upon the conclusion of this project, Klich's publisher decided to reject Klich's final work and cancelled the exhibition ("Photography Translation: another way of looking" 6-8).

photographer Luis Poirot recalls, Larraín had to assume his role as the photographer of the poor and misery for the sake of Magnum's agency (Poirot, "About Sergio Larraín"). Similar to his colleagues, the photographer found acceptance in a foreign institution that saw in his work the potential to explore an exotic tragedy.

To this end, throughout the following image selection, the study analyses social commitment and invisibility concepts through symbolic elements in Larraín's visual representation. It explains in parallel Magnum's interest in this specific work.

This photography series (Figure 1) was first part of a public charity campaign in Santiago de Chile in 1953, called Hogar de Cristo, a humanitarian foundation created in 1944 to help people in extreme poverty. This charity focused on the deplorable conditions of these abandoned children and used dramatic images to sensitise the parishioners to increasing daily donations: "ser generoso en la colecta de mañana" (*Diario El Mercurio*). In 1965, the same photo work was requested to support the charitable foundation Mi Casa to increase public and private donations.[6] The photo work appeared in a booklet called *En el Siglo XX*, published in the same year, in which Larraín offered more than just poor children: his sharp, extended material showed the intimate face of abandonment. In a close-up frame, Larraín shot the children in their natural condition, with dirt on their faces and hopeless expressions. This visual exploration allows the viewer to understand poverty as it is commonly known today and humanise the precariousness of their social system.

Figure 1 – Booklet En el Siglo XX, Santiago, Chile (1965)

The photographs were displayed so that the text accompanying the images helped set up an emotional narrative. Gardner mentions a similar strategy regarding Poniatowska's essay concerning Klich's photographs on Mexico's street children: the written element imbues spaces with meaning that the visual cannot, providing a vital profundity in the narrative formation of this experience ("Photography Translation: another way of looking"

[6] An organisation created in 1947, in Santiago, to protect and give shelter to dispossessed children.

7). In Larraín's case, this "profundity" aims to trigger self-consciousness in the viewer, relating specifically to the pain of the other.

The writing "la calle para vivir" appears first. It is a section that shows four images of children in bad condition, carrying bin bags and wearing no shoes, running and spending time under a bridge, with no hope. Then, on the upper-right side of the facing page, comes a portrait of two boys staring directly at the camera, or the viewer, as a spectator of their uncertain situation. At the bottom is the phrase "depende de usted". One of them is wearing noticeably older and dirtier clothes, with messy hair, whereas the other is in better shape and smiling. The visual composition points out that the meaning behind the phrase (it is up to you) is that the children's fate relies on other people, the audience, putting their misery in our hands in a passive-aggressive manner. In the lower-left frame comes the vindication, with the phrase "a ayudarlos", as if the tragic story of these children could be sorted by the foundation and the viewer's help. The characters now are no longer children but young men helped by others: laying a hand on someone's shoulder in the first picture or helping another with his tie in the last one. For the first time in the composition of the images, the children are not by themselves but with helping hands. Finally, the phrase "a hacerse hombres" (to become a man) appears, accompanied by photographs of suited men getting married and having children. The images in the booklet show the rhetoric of life from which tragedy is an avoidable option which is up to "us", and Larraín's images doubtlessly help denounce it.[7]

The presence of Larraín at Magnum contributed to the social and cultural scene at the time. Likewise, this sense of social protest and denunciation had come a long way worldwide, forged as a consequence of war implications along with the beginning of the disintegration of the Eurocentric system of imperialism. This system was partly based on an exploitative colonial strategy now under threat through countries taking back control over themselves: "Throughout Africa and Asia, oppressed people now aspired to regaining their independence. Devastated by the Second World War and embroiled in new conflicts brought about by decolonisation, Europe surrendered much of its supremacy to two new

[7] These photographs in the booklet are only a small part of the original series that Magnum holds to this day, while many of them have been parts of larger exhibitions and publications, further studies of which should be considered.

superpowers: The United States and the USSR" (Chéroux 14). From this scenario of permanent political conflicts and threats arose a new form of humanism, centred in safeguarding and protecting human rights, making space for the creation of international institutions to foster cooperation. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1944, the United Nations (UN) in 1945 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949 are only a few of these.

During the same period, the Chilean charities previously mentioned, among many other institutions in Latin America, were created. However, this consciousness of tragedy and the new face of humanism was politically sealed in the aftermath of the Second World War, in what Clément Chéroux in *Magnum Manifesto* recognises as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. This declaration had a socio-political impact on the preservation and protection of human rights and the cultural sphere, promoting the visualisation of tragedy through photography.

One of the most extraordinary paradigm/humanist shifts began in 1955 at one of the largest photography exhibitions ever held, *The Family of Man*, commissioned by the Luxembourgish-American photographer and former director of MoMA's Department of Photography Edward Steichen.[8] This exhibition acted as a role model for Magnum's most appreciated values: freedom, social commitment, and humanism. However, the critique was not particularly keen for either Steichen or the exhibition. Roland Barthes, for example, greatly influenced the scholarly reception of this event. In 1957, the French criticised the exhibition as an essentialist depiction of human experiences from birth

[8] Curiously, Larraín's career had one of its first international acknowledgments in 1954, when two prints of his personal collection of 1952 were purchased via the Edward Steichen Fund, and three others were included in MoMa's collection as gifts of the artist. Now, even though popular knowledge and the media have claimed Steichen's interest for Larraín's street children series, recognising the humanist condition in both the curator and the images, the reality is somewhat distant in this regard. The archive collected by Sarah Meister (2019), MoMa's curator since 2009, shows that the acquired prints were not only not related to the Larraín's street children series but not to any humanist glimpse whatsoever. The five photographs show fragments of the streets of Valparaíso and perhaps Santiago, shadows and angled and vertical composition, which means that Steichen's criterion to consider Larraín's photographs in the first place was not humanist but purely aesthetic. This may explain to some degree why Sergio Larraín did not participate in *The Family of Man* exhibition in the first place and opens the possibility of further studies with regard to Larraín's aesthetic in the early 1950s and its relation to the American cultural scene.

through work to death, removing any historical specificity from the depiction (Tīfentāle 4). The author, in his book *Mythologies* comments:

> Everything here, the content and appeal of the pictures, the discourse which justifies them, aims to suppress the determining weight of History: we are held back at the surface of an identity, prevented precisely by sentimentality from penetrating into this ulterior zone of human behaviour where historical alienation introduces some ‘differences’ which we shall here quite simply call ‘injustices’ (101).

The English writer and curator of photography, Gerry Badger, draws upon Barthes' approaches to talk about the power of the editor-author. He claims that Steichen's exhibition "took many fine individual images by many fine radical photographers and neutered them politically, turning them into a giant, candy-coated pill" (*The Photobook: a History* 207). Nevertheless, despite the intellectual-political turmoil Steichen generated, it is undeniable that this exhibition became a photographic event that "changed the way we view photographs today" (Dunmall), a statement made by Anke Reitz, conservator of *The Family of Man* in Luxembourg, paying exceptional attention to Magnum photographers. This exhibition crowned Steichen as "the epitome of the modernist photographer" (Parr and Badger, *The Photobook: a History* 207).

This same exhibition set the basis for the Latin American version called *El Rostro de Chile* in 1960, led by the humanist photographer Antonio Quintana, the father of Chilean photography (Poirot, "About Sergio Larraín"). This exhibition included Sergio Larraín as one of its participants and he was recognised by his national peers for his humanist work (Leiva 70).

Larraín's work responded directly to worldwide concerns at the time and an exploration of the visual translation of tragedy, shooting what Magnum saw as the portrayal of Latin American poverty, an institutional criterion strongly reinforced by the

agency upon their photographers,[9] that bound them all in what Chéroux terms a "common denominator that transcends all frontiers" (Swartz), a sense of shared humanity.

The use of Larraín's photographs, either under this charitable gaze or Magnum's paternalism, automatically changes our status from naïve and passive viewers to accomplices, partners in crime of the tragedy the photographers and viewers are witnessing. This institutional awareness of the political ways of seeing and the power of images became one of the most common resources to manipulate viewers' reality in the twentieth century. The fact that Sergio Larraín was the photographer of the poor in the 1950s, picked by Steichen in 1954, considered by Burri and Bresson in 1959, and included by Quintana in 1960, eventually positioned the 29-year-old Larraín among the most renowned photographers of all times (Leiva 30).

3 *The auratical* value of technology

In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin discusses photography's profound impact on the cultural conceptions of art. He argues that the mechanical reproduction of images through technological devices such as photo cameras diminishes the unique qualities of the work of art because of an inherent lack of human/artist interaction with the immediate medium: the *aura*. With time, however, the refined definition of images has brought certain disagreement in this regard. It showed that the *aura* had left the exclusiveness of the fine arts to move into a different world, where the uniqueness of a photograph may set a new *auratical* value in the aesthetic experience of the real. This section explores the importance of technological development in the relationship between Magnum Photos and Larraín's work and analyses the symbolic elements behind the uniqueness of photographic production in the mid-twentieth century.

Sergio Larraín, like many other photographers, benefited from the technological sedition of photography of the twentieth century’s golden age of photojournalism. The development of smaller, lighter 35mm cameras and flashbulbs of the 1920s helped

[9] In 1959, Larraín was sent to cover the Algerian war as one of his first requests by Magnum, and a year later to infiltrate the Sicilian mafia.

incubate this renaissance period for photojournalism when it first took off, where "the likes of Cartier-Bresson presented candid images of their life and times" (Violette). Even though some scholars like Professor Terence P. Moran argued that the golden age of photojournalism took place roughly between the 1930s and 1950s (181), history has proven this period spans at least until the 1970s. Technology and public interest aligned to push the field to new heights. During these decades, photo-driven magazines like *Berliner Illustrate Zeitung*, *The New York Daily News*, *LIFE*, *Paris Match* employed large numbers of staff photographers and used the photo essay as a means to disseminate news, at least until television sets (Hoelscher 2). Coincidently, Larraín was an active participant in these magazines in the 1950s and 1960s (Leiva 57-69).

Nevertheless, enjoyment of this benefit of new technologies and quick dissemination power was neither easily nor rapidly gained; it was rather complicated. Technology penetration and the manipulation of either targeted scenes or photo-framing fostered discussions about contents veracity and the value of the photographic experience. Liz Wells called this period problematic because the practice of "authentic documentary" in the pursuit of truth was marked by a series of conventions or attempts to validate a certain professional ethic in the field. For instance, "printing the whole of the image with a black border around it to demonstrate that everything the camera recorded was shown to the viewer. At another time, scenes lit by flash were deemed illegitimate, as only the natural light that fell on the scene should be used" (91). Additionally, Hoelscher recognises this period as critical. New technologies had disrupted the traditional means, and the objectiveness of the photographer as a witness was progressively called into question (1).

The authenticity of the photograph was at stake. However, the first generation of photojournalists of this period, led by Cartier-Bresson, was encouraged by Bresson's "decisive moment" to turn away "from attempting to record what would formerly have been seen as [their] major subjects. Instead, [they would begin] to concentrate on exploring cultural life and popular experience, and this often led to representations that celebrated the transitory or the fragmentary" (Wells 91-2). Hence, the second generation of photojournalists, of which Larraín was part, inherited this photographic paradigm shift.

The *auratical* value of technology responds to Bresson's decisive moment principle and, later on, Larraín's sense of magic (or grace) through the way each of them sought to compress the immediate world under postulates of producing visual information while

being aesthetically appealing,[10] a composition with a sense of otherworldliness or uniqueness that the American critic Allan Sekula describes as the aesthetic photographic experience that "is thought to be art when it transcends its reference to the world, when the work can be regarded, first and foremost, as an act of self-expression on the part of the artist" (864) . Yet, it is only possible due to the technological development of faster and far more accurate photography cameras, a technological revolution that, over time and by the hand of gifted photographers, opened artistic possibilities for photography for aesthetic exploration, challenging Benjamin's notions of uniqueness:

> Looking backward, at the art-world hubbub about "photography as a fine art," we find a near-pathological avoidance of any such questioning. A curious thing happens when documentary is officially recognised as art. Suddenly the hermeneutic pendulum careens from the objectivist end of its arc to the opposite, subjectivist end. Positivism yields to a subjective metaphysics, technologism gives way to auteurism. Suddenly the audience's attention is directed toward mannerism, toward sensibility, toward the physical and emotional risks taken by the artist (Sekula 864).

The successful introduction of the German Leica camera to the market in the early 1920s, its initial mass production and its successor models Leica Luxur and Leica Compur accounted for 60,586 units in 1925. This provoked the pioneering of photo cameras and microscopes due to their cutting-edge lenses and sophisticated technology.[11] In Pierre-Yves Donzé's studies on the competitiveness of the Japanese camera industry, the author gives insightful reflections on this regard. He proposes that the rapid growth of technological development in Germany and the emergence of the industrial nations in Asia after WW2 catalysed a competitive market in the world that inspired companies such as

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[10] For more information on the subject, see Chapter III Section 1 on “Larraín’s magic images”.

[11] The German inventor and photographer Oskar Barnack, after starting off working at Erns Leitz-Wetzlar in 1913, dedicated his spare time to building a portable camera while simultaneously experimenting with 35-mm cine films. In 1913, he finished his first prototype camera of the 35-mm Ur-Leica. Even though its production was delayed because of the First World War, the camera was finally introduced to the world market at the Leipzig Spring Fair in 1925. The outcome was successful, allowing the development of the models Leica I-III between 1930 and 1933.

Canon in Japan to catch up with Germany between the 1930s and 1970s. The Japanese company attempted with all available means to recreate and replicate Leica's technology to design and produce a "Japanese Leica". Leica technological development of high-quality cameras was so revolutionary at the time that Canon's first technician, Yoshida Goro, dismantled Leica cameras to produce accurate replicas, in what Donzé says was a "typical reverse engineering process" (Donzé 32-3).

Nevertheless, Leica cameras had already taken the market and become more than a technological device: an object of desire. Sergio Larraín recalled when he bought his first camera in 1948: "When I was 17, I went to study forestry, in the US, in Berkeley (…) There [in California], washing dishes I saved my first money, and bought my first Leica, not because I wanted to do photos, but because it was the most beautiful object I saw that one could buy" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 381).

This way, in the field of photography, the technological (and aesthetic) revolution regarding the development of smaller, more attractive photo cameras and refined viewfinders allowed the cameramen and the audience to experience life and death vividly in a way never seen before. In the article "Random Thoughts of a Founder Member", Magnum's co-founder George Rodger remembers the importance of the technical devices in the agency's early explorations. When thinking of Robert Capa's performance, the author says that "he recognised the unique quality of miniature cameras, so quick and so quiet to use (…) [Capa] saw a future for us in this combination of mini cameras and maxi minds" (Manchester 418).

Similarly, Susan Sontag, in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, recognises that in their first attempts at recording wars, due to the impractical weight and size of the equipment, the camera awareness always remained outside the combat field but present in the depictions of the aftermath. She refers to the visualisation of piled-up corpses, devasted villages and traces of where the war had passed through. The author explains that this photographic practice remained the same until professional equipment was updated in the late 1930s, when the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) was covered in a modern sense, becoming the first war to be "witnessed" (18).

Leica cameras, a brand almost patented by Magnum's photographers (including Larraín), brought the concept of lightweight and quick-to-operate devices. The photo cameras used 35mm films to allow greater exposure of the background depth, capture the totality of the scene, and shoot 36 times before needing a reload. This new technological

instrument allowed corps of professional photographers to witness war at the line of military engagement and in towns under bombardment (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 19), a technology that "transformed photography forever" (Popham) says online newspaper *Independent* regarding the centennial anniversary of the Leica camera.

The evidence shows that Magnum was created under this enterprise of technology and new visual reality, yet these conclusions were not always as evident as they are today. Fred Ritchin, in *Magnum Photobook*, tries to recreate the context in which photographers started to deal with technology in the shape of tools, and in a world where a consciousness of technical artefacts was even more challenging to acquire than it is today. The author remembers that the founders had begun their careers in photography around 20 years earlier than the agency's foundation. During that time, the development of their artistry and education was "supported by the introduction of highly disruptive technologies: the portable small – and medium – format cameras combined with the more light-sensitive films that gave photographers enormous mobility and flexibility in engaging with their subjects" (Ritchin 6).

With no time for complex technicalities but only for action, it was as if technology had come a long way to simplify life, as many advertising slogans said. Susan Sontag, when writing about the influence of technology on the reproduction of reality, acknowledges that although some image-makers were not fully aware of the implications of technology in their lives, these newer technologies provided the photographer with the means to record a continuous feed of the tragedy in the most spectacular way (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 96).

Even though many photographers never really gave significant credit to the technical device as such, because of it they did share and agree on an abstract sense of astonishment and critical engagement as image-makers, the same sense of "making some caustic comments on the incongruities of life" (Miller 211) that Philip Jones Griffiths mentions in *Magnum: Fifty Years at the Front Line of History* and that Hoelscher recognises to be a principle that "holds for everyone connected with the Magnum project" (Hoelscher 4).

In this regard, Robert Capa was asked in a 1947 radio interview about the story behind his most famous picture of all, The Fallen Soldier (or Death of a Loyalist Militiaman), on the Cordoba Front. The photographer recalls that they were being shot at by one of Franco's machine guns, and while jumping from trench to trench, he said, "I just

kind of put my camera above my head and even didn't look and clicked a picture when they moved over the trench. And that was all. I didn't ever look at my pictures there and I sent my pictures back with a lot of other pictures that I took" (Dhaliwal). If Capa had used an older, heavier stand camera, needing longer exposure time, he would never have had the chance to take that picture. Therefore, Capa's photograph's uniqueness can be broken down into two great approaches: the technical complexity and accuracy of his camera and the artistry, or luck, of shooting in the right place at the right time. The technological immersion harbours this *auratical* value that, after the Second World War, changed the understanding of photography as purely informative and centred on reading photography as an image with a cultural and artistic meaning (Wells 58), as in the cases of Capa, Bresson, Larraín and many other Magnum photographers around the world.

Photography has always had to take its place within a range of discourses and visual practices. While in the nineteenth century, the truthfulness of immediate, fleeting representations of reality was one of the leading concerns of photography, the twentieth century was marked by questioning the relationship between photography and art.

For instance, when Liz Wells discusses the penetration of photography into social life, the author understands that the veracity of the camera was readily accepted in the nineteenth century because "photographs appeared to confirm ideas about the world that had been the subject of other artistic and cultural forms" (Wells 96). However, she recognises in early studies that the "debate about the nature of photography as a new technology was the question as to how far it could be considered to be art" (Wells 14).

The debate was mainly rooted in the duality of photography. Images mechanically produced and reproduced had a praised and irrefutable accuracy of reality, in which human participation is free of any discrimination affecting the capture. Aesthetically speaking, the lack of human interaction within the mechanical procedure appeared to override the artist's creativity for the critique. One of the pioneers and first detractors was the French poet Charles Baudelaire. The author, in his 1859 essay "The Modern Public and Photography", begins by complaining that "the exclusive taste for the True (so noble a thing when limited to its proper applications) oppresses the taste for the Beautiful". Moreover, because photography can reflect the truth more accurately, this new medium becomes automatically, he continues, "art's mortal enemy" (Berman 140). It is as if photography, as a life-less tool, could not overcome the existentialism of its inhumanity, becoming a

"cheap method of disseminating a loathing for history" (Baudelaire qtd. In Sontag, *On Photography* 69).

This artistic venue was first explored by the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz, regarded as "one of the most significant contributors to the history of photography" (Oden) for his contribution to scientific and artistic studies, to help to incorporate photography into the artistic world. Stieglitz was the first to bring photography into art galleries in 1905 when he funded the Photo-Secession Group. Along with the original members, Edward J. Steichen, Gertrude Kasebier and Clarence H. White, the group pursued their goal of detaching from conventional expectations and exploring the aesthetic potential of photography. On his own, Stieglitz founded and named the first photography gallery The Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, a name soon shortened to Gallery 291,[12] a space giving unequivocal support to young American modernist painters (Voorhies). As a result, the intellectual debate about whether photography should be considered art or not continued until the mid-twentieth century.

Even though photography was not yet officially established as a form of expression or artistic genre, the aesthetic experience regarding photography found in this period several American, European and Latin American photographers who considered the technical device as a medium for artistic purposes. Some of these photographers have been related to Larraín's artistic practices in an attempt to understand his work, partially due to some personal letters the photographer wrote and declarations he made to his friends, family and some media, transforming them in Sergio Larraín's benchmarks.

Edward Weston mentions that Larraín learned in his youth that “la cámara debe ser utilizada para la grabación de la vida, para la representación de la misma substancia y quintaesencia de la misma cosa, ya sea de acero pulido o carne palpitante” (qtd. In Leiva 37). From Bresson, he learned the camera is an eyesight extension that composes images within the viewfinder, always considering the negative space and avoiding the trap. From

[12] “The small gallery was originally an outlet for exhibiting work by Photo-Secessionist photographers, but subsequently it became a preeminent center for the exhibition of modern European and American artists. With the aid of advisors Steichen, Marius de Zayas, and Max Weber, who had connections with artists and galleries in France, 291 became the first venue in America to show Auguste Rodin and Henri Matisse (in 1908), Paul Cézanne (in 1910), and Pablo Picasso (in 1911)”, The Met Museum.

the Hungarian-French photographer and colleague in Magnum, Brassaï, he learned that the camera candidly records the tenderness of night, the same photo-technique that Larraín shows in his book *Valparaíso* when creating portraits of the bohemian port life of prostitutes, homeless men, lovers and dancers (Bieger-Thielemann 82).

It is unsurprising to visualise these learnings, or experiences, combined and put together constantly and differently in many photographs by the Chilean photographer. These images show the persistence of both human and technology participation in the pursuit of Benjamin's *auratical* value: this uniqueness or "artistic transcendence" mentioned above regarding Sekula's comments on the artist's self-expression.

The following selection made for analysis centres on Larraín's book *El Rectángulo en la Mano* for three main reasons: first, Magnum still holds these images in very high regard;[13] second, because this book represents a self-manifest about Larraín's intimate approaches to photography; and third, it works to exemplify the *auratical* value in his work. For this analysis, the "Matronas" photograph is inspected under three different approaches: contextual, technical and cultural.

The "Matronas" photograph (Fig. 2) was taken in 1957, in Potosí, Bolivia, on one of the many trips Larraín took through Latin America, which Leiva recalls being a period of significant production and exploration for the photographer (Leiva 57). In this single b/w picture, very little can be said about either Bolivian cultural practices or the location as such, even though some clothes are visible. As a simple observation, it is a photograph of two women on the pavement walking in opposite directions, wearing what presumably are typical hats and *ponchos*. The clothes, however, do not portray any exclusive Bolivian custom, since without necessarily have advanced knowledge, it is relatively easy to know that in South America, plenty of native people across some southern countries have similar features. Aymaras, Quechuas, Incas, Araucanos, to name a few, are cultures to be found in Bolivia, Perú, Chile, Argentina, and other countries to the North.

[13] The book is composed of extracts from Valparaíso series, Chiloé, Street Children, Bolivia, Peru, Bs.As, and London. Aside from the original copy of the book from the 1960s, every category previously mentioned is thoroughly kept as part of the institutional archive at the agency. Archive work, august 2019.

Figure 2 – The "Matronas", Potosí, Bolivia (1957)

The information the photograph gives is only contextualised by the label "Bolivia" and, perhaps, the widespread Eurocentric knowledge of Latin America; otherwise, the photograph itself lacks any trace of contextual and historical background. In the background, only a concrete wall fills the rest of the composition. The photograph only acquired documentary value among the rest of the series that Larraín himself labelled as "Potosí (Silver Mine Tocon) Bolivia". This documentary series held by Magnum includes 18 contact sheets with 550 single photographs.[14] The "Matronas", nonetheless, never achieved a significant impact alongside the Potosí series since it was never published as a whole. However, it appeared as a single image in the book *El Rectángulo en la Mano*, and again in every other retrospective or exhibition of Larraín's work.

This rationale leaves Leiva's notions on Larraín's explorations somewhat inconclusive since so far, the photographer's work functions only through text/image interaction. Due to the social documentary trend of the 1950s and 1960s, most of Larraín's photographs and his colleagues' works are read and understood in these terms too and by their commitment to reality (Baeza 41). They respond to a mode of representing and recording life for what it is, usually as a form of visual and textual narrative, while exploring far-distant realities. His work, although commonly labelled under journalism and documentary categories (due to its capability of revealing the real), in further studies develops a different understanding that allows the viewer to see more about the subjectivity of the photographer, an authorial gaze (Leiva 9-10).

This subjectivity is strictly related to the reproduction of visual phantoms or fragmented momentums that respond to the visualisation of *auratical* appearances of the real, possible to be captured only by technical processes of light control of newer, modern photo cameras. Larraín, like many of his colleagues, understood the camera as a tool, a medium to "solidificar ese mundo de fantasmas cuando encuentro algo que tiene resonancias en mí", from which "la realidad visible es la base del proceso fotográfico, y también es el juego de organizar un rectángulo: geometría, con el rectángulo en la mano (la

[14] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive. August 2019.

cámara), yo busco. Fotografía: ello (el sujeto) dado por la geometría" (Larraín, *El Rectángulo en la Mano* 9).

The photograph shows not only two presumably Bolivian women, but two elements under different lighting: the first one is an older woman standing in front of the camera, covered by a traditional *poncho* and completely static, as evidenced by her feet and clothes that show no movement at all; the second one is perhaps another woman, placed at the same distance from the camera as the first one. This second woman is out of focus and looks like a shadow; no significant features can be recognised for her. The background is sharply divided by the light, separating the image in two worlds about to collide: the first woman belongs to the shadows and the second to the light. However, either light or both women converge at the same vertex, creating the illusion of one shape's projection into the other. The photograph creates a sense of strangeness. Visually speaking, the scene Larraín shows is highly unusual, where the first woman looks at the camera as if posing, while the other seems to be moving straight onto the first one, even touching her, as if transitioning from one state to another.

Although not many studies are found on this particular topic, similar academic readings have been made previously on this technological exploration of Larraín. Concerning this same picture, for instance, Luis Weinstein, curator and organiser of 2014 Sergio Larraín retrospective in Chile along with Agnès Sire, recognised in a guided visit to the exhibition, that "Todo está perfecto en esta imagen y nos solemos encontrar con esta idea de blanco y negro, y de contrastes (…) Parece que fuera un doble" (SL-Exposición), emphasising this sense of dualism. Sire compares it to a similar photograph of the same series, saying that "Sergio tenía imágenes increibles. Esta por ejemplo, si la quisieramos sacar tendríamos horas de estudio para poder ver las sombras, los cuadrados, la sombra en el sombrero. Todo esto lo debe haber echo en 3 milécimas de segundo" (SL-Exposición). It is as if both were trying to understand the underlying aesthetic in the work of the photographer on Bolivia and Perú series, since it all indicates a visible pattern among specific photographs.

The "Matronas" photograph, like most of the pictures in this book, represents Larraín's self-exploration through photography, a duality between space-time and light that uses individuals as mere elements within a geometrical composition and not necessarily in a documentary sense. This phantasmagorical geometry usually escapes the common eye but not the camera's fast shutter.

This special quality about lighting work and duality appears throughout Larraín's work in intriguing images that carry the essence of Larraín's technical exploration and the revelation of the *aura* that, to Walter Benjamin, are the contemporary masses' desire to bring things closer, spatially and humanly (Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* 9), and to Bresson, his *decisive moment*, another Magnum's founding principle. In his philosophy and work, Larraín embodies Magnum's fascination with the aestheticisation of reality, utilising technology to explore multi-layered possibilities regarding photography as a way of telling visual stories with a distinctive signature. Larraín evidences this in a 1988 letter to his nephew Sebastián Donoso: "learn to adjust the aperture, change the foreground, saturation, speed, etc. Learn to play with all the possibilities your camera offers. You will come close to poetry" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 380).

Larraín was in every way Magnum’s material, and so René Burri remembers it when writing in 1999 about the first impression Larraín made on him: “recuerdo cómo las fotos de Sergio ejercían un efecto algo perturbador en mí. Yo, en mis fotos, trataba de captar la verdad, las suyas eran poéticas, de perspectivas insólitas, muchas veces con personas o animales en el borde de la imagen ligeramente desenfocados” (Monzó 9).

Technology, therefore, allowed Magnum's photographers, including Larraín, to explore a new reality from the authenticity of a moment rather than the reproduction of ordinary events towards infinity. This technological and aesthetic development of the photographic experience over time put the "old hierarchies" of documentation and art, as Liz Wells says, up for debate, trespassing onto each other with no permission or structure, "capturing information beyond that which concerned the photographer" (17), yet allowing expositive artistry in the making. The unforeseen uniqueness regarding the *auratical* value in photography is provided by the juxtaposition of artistic expression and technological means for which Magnum photographers are usually known.

4 Sense of freedom and visual territory

The idea of freedom is one of the most desirable and considered values Magnum treasures. Different from the other founding principles previously studied, this one has been publicly advertised as a political strategy for the safeguarding of authorial rights. It meant basically that authors owned their work, holding “copyright as authors of their imaginary”

(Hoelscher 2). The English curator of photography and writer Gerry Badger, in his attempt to describe what a Magnum photograph is, explains the importance of retaining the photo rights after the stories were published, emphasising that "this was not the general practice then". He understands that Magnum's cultural penetration was fierce, due primarily to this principle of freedom. Magnum, Badger keeps saying, "was not only about exploiting markets, it was about photographers banding together to work on the kinds of assignments they believed in and, importantly, retaining the copyright" (Lardinois 8-9). This new scenario allowed Magnum photographers to be seen in multiples contexts around the globe, have far-reaching exposure and develop long-term projects that showed their personal artistry and interest, yet always under Magnum's global criterion: an ethical-political principle that Badger says, "demands that they [the photographers] maintain a certain standard, that they work as independently as possible within the constraints of whatever commercial sphere they choose" (Lardinois 8).

This section examines the implications of Magnum's sense of freedom in the work of Sergio Larraín and the visual representation of local territories under Magnum's political standard of otherness and exoticism through Larraín's symbolic language. The study draws on Edmund Burke's theory of the origin of the sublime and of beauty to explain Magnum's inclination towards rediscovering the world on its own terms and its fascination with exploring the distinctness of remote cultures.

Magnum photographers, at least in the agency's early years, were able to control and refuse, if they wanted, to have their photographs published or sold to a media that did not share their political views. For these reasons, and the possibility of an expanded commercial venue, many photographers at the time were tempted by the offer. That was the case of the Swiss photographer and journalist, Werner Bischof, who became a full member in 1949, the first new photographer to join the founders. Bischof, who at some point had declared that "leading a satisfying life of plenty had blinded many of us to the immense hardships beyond our borders", discovered because of Magnum's proposal that he had the opportunity to roam free and "felt compelled to venture forth and explore the true face of the world" (MagnumPhotos, "Werner Bischof"). It is precisely the exploration of the "true face of the world" that tacitly steered this flourishing generation of new photographers to act as discoverers and conquerors of the unknown.

The Irish philosopher Edmund Burke, a leading character in aesthetic-political studies of the eighteenth century, conveys that this devotion Bischof mentions for what is

new is one of the most natural and ancient features among men. Curiosity is the most superficial of all affections because though it has a sharp appetite it is easy to satisfy, implying the execution of certain powers and passions upon what it desires (E. Burke 31-3). Magnum's freedom may be referred to as this active power, which through simple curiosity and the novelty of leading new markets empowered the photographers to exploit the unknown and the otherness in the pursuit of aesthetic pleasure.

This sense of freedom was not uniquely philosophical but political as well. With time, the empowerment of freedom turned into a marketing campaign calling for new commercial and cultural possibilities. One of the most important was the idea of generating an archive of the world, "rediscovering" it under Magnum's eye, "fulfilling the role of providing geographical information", as Steven D. Hoelscher writes in *Reading Magnum*, a geographical project that changed the aesthetic of the world after the atrocities of the Second World War. The strategy to fulfil Magnum's vision was to assign each of Magnum's founders a world region: "David 'Chin' Seymour would cover Europe; Bill Vandivert had the United States; George Rodger was assigned the Middle East and Africa; Cartier-Bresson had Asia; while Robert Capa was free on roaming assignments wherever stories might appear" (140). They were meant to be free people, independent enough to tie themselves to only one project or not. This way, the novelty of new worlds and shooting remote places became, and remains until today, what Badger calls the "traditional Magnum style".

Even though Magnum was never a static organisation but evolved alongside the markets, the seminal images commonly associated with the agency are strictly related to this innovative otherness, where "war, political strife and disaster [are] staple subjects for Magnum" (Lardinois 9). A photographic imagery of worldwide proportion derived precisely from photography's golden age, of which the most renowned authors, including Larraín, were part.

This freedom of travelling around and authorship played a dual role for Magnum photographers, since, on the one hand, they were free to rediscover the world on their own terms, but on the other hand, they were attached to the labelling of that otherness, becoming brands and signatures through their own roaming. This was the case with Sergio Larraín who, under this same premise of freedom, became the photographer of a melancholic, exotic Latin America, a geopolitical region in which, although the audience and spectators saw protests and oppression, Larraín shot the life that had gone underground

due to the political turmoil at the time: nightclubs, tango joints, bordellos and so forth (Farago).

This privilege that Magnum awarded its photographers allowed Larraín to keep working for one of the most prestigious magazines in Latin America with international impact at the time, *O Cruzeiro Internacional*, in which the photographer published his first reportages as the author of both images and texts. In this magazine, Larraín published a heterogenous work centred on the diversity of the visual territory while exploring his personal photo style, marked by non-traditional compositions. Regarding Larraín's exhibition "Um Retângulo na Mão" at the Instituto Moreira Salles in Brazil, Miguel del Castillo remarks on the strong presence of the floor, often occupying most of the composition; a top-down view, which seems to be a strong feature; blurred figures in the foreground while the main scene unfolds in the background; inclined horizons; people in motion uniquely caught. It is an extended colourful photo work that, on the one hand, remains underground in comparison to his commonly known black/white work for Magnum and, on the other hand, illustrates a large part of Latin America, such as Santiago, Chiloé, Potosí, the Chilean Patagonia and Cuzco, to name only a few (Castillo).

One particularly interesting photo work is "La Ciudad Colgada de los Cerros" (the city hanging from the hills), published in 1959 in *O Cruzeiro International* magazine. This early homage to the city of Valparaíso depicted, through only a few photographs, Larraín's personal approach and its relation to the European canon's sense of novelty, accompanied by his own writings. This photo essay became part of the Valparaíso series, remaining one of Magnum's treasures. The photo work (Fig. 3) is not exclusively a reportage in comparison to others in the same magazine, since it does not reveal any specific story; it is more a multi-layered aesthetic exploration of the city, based exclusively on Larraín's personal view.

Figure 3 – "La Ciudad Colgada de los Cerros", Valparaíso, Chile (1959)

When examining the texts, it becomes evident the photographer experiences Valparaíso as a place of "dimensiones verticales", a man-made creation in dialogue with the Andes Mountains' indomitableness. The photographs do not necessarily show the process of the buildings' architectonic development but the challenge of nature by the

sedition of vertical, artificial shapes instead. In this relationship between artificial and natural forms, people are not subjects of interest; on the contrary, they seem to be a vanishing point in the composition, as another element in the framing work.

In both pictures similar narratives can be found, where people are meant to reinforce the sense of verticality and deepness: the one on the left is a high-angle shot, while the one on the right is low-angle. A dialogue is created between the images, not as a story, but as a statement about the Valparaíso experience, as if the only possible way to experience the city is to climb through it, uphill and down. When the city is finally seen, it reveals its immanent beauty, like women that only need "un par de ojos negros, una mata de ondulantes cabellos, y unos rojos labios para deslumbrar".

To Larraín, Valparaíso is like a woman whose beauty lies in the mystery of a thousand streets going up and down and growing directly down from the hills; it is the colours, the sense of being enchanted and embraced by the city. Larraín manages to evoke a certain vast, delicate melancholy out of a sharply outlined scenario, from which it is possible to visualise both the photographer's aesthetic experience and the local territory. Valparaíso, through these pictures, represents part of the disturbing beauty the photographer says Chile has, in what he calls "el imperio de los Andes"; beauty that comes to us as the visual translation of Valparaíso territory under his own aesthetic and photographic experience.

Of the utmost importance in this photo essay is that, even though Larraín shows a personal exploration of the region, the symbolic language he uses seems to be aimed at a broader, non-local audience; outsiders. The photo cover of this reportage (Fig. 4) shows a different photographic style. It is a panoramic image, focused mainly on the cobblestone ground. The photograph is a classic Larraín-style take: pigeons gathered in the foreground, a blurred couple in the back, and a low-angle take that allows the ground to occupy half of the composition. Nothing in this image relates directly to the ones that follow (such as the vertical photographs previously analysed), even though it is the same city. Larraín uses this image as a bridge towards a European view. He writes:

> El escenario compuesto de un banco y dos personajes dramatizando la vejez; las farolas colgadas de los postes de cemento y el panorama de grúas en la penumbra del 'fog', nos dan un aspecto del amanecer en Londres. Sin embargo, esta instantánea fue tomada a millares de millas de la capital londinense. Es sencillamente un aspecto del puerto de Valparaíso, balcón

chileno frente al Pacífico, la ciudad que también tiene claros amaneceres y mediodías pletóricos de sol.

Figure 4 – Article cover "La Ciudad Colgada de los Cerros", Valparaíso, Chile (1959)

The photographer is saying that even though a thousand miles away, this far-away land and its culture do not have to be entirely unfamiliar to the viewers. Larraín is offering a link, a passage to this new reality, in familiar terms. He compares the port city of Valparaíso to London, the largest city in the United Kingdom, as to say: they do look like their spectators, yet a fascinating difference is worth seeing. The way of learning about exotic otherness is always through traditional codes. Similar to the visual translation of tragedy, the global audience sees and feels on its own terms, and the photographer's job is to facilitate the symbolic elements for self and global recognition.

Similar elements repeat for example in Larraín's reportage on Tierra del Fuego, published in *Paris Match* magazine on 24th September 1960,[15] one of the most emblematic print media magazines of the mid-twentieth century that helped to catalyse photography in Europe. Tierra del Fuego (the land of fire) is a Chilean-Argentinean archipelago at South America's southernmost end. In Chile, it is one of the four provinces in the region of Magallanes and the Chilean Antarctic Territory and is popularly known these days as "the end of the world". In the reportage, mixed symbolic elements are utilised by the photographer to describe and contextualise the images of the local area: texts and images. The origin of this particular nickname remains unknown, yet Larraín used it at the time as the headline of this reportage, "Je Reviens Du Bout Du Monde", which means "coming back from the end of the world".

The seven full-colour photographs in the photo essay (Fig. 5) are focused on the geographical features the region has to offer, such as dramatic landscapes, mountains, glaciers, tundra and wind-shaped trees. Most importantly, the reportage emphasises the

[15] Founded in 1949, in the aftermath of the Great War, the French magazine covers until these days major national and international news along with aspects of celebrity lifestyles.

sense of abandonment and remote locations within these geographical elements, from which reality Larraín as a reporter excludes himself to rediscover it. In this scenario, the photographer unconsciously made three different statements about otherness when he shot Tierra del Fuego. i) As the title in French says, he is a returning agent, someone who went through different realities but then came back to his place in Europe; ii) Larraín explores the region from an the-end-of-the-world perspective, as an outsider, through which he deliberately centres on wrecked and sunken ships, a random animal skeleton just off the mountains or a burnt forest: "Voici quelques-uns des soquelettes de ce vaste cimetière de bateaux que furent, pendant trois siècles, le sinistre cap Horn et le détroit de Magellan, terreur des équipages et des capitaines (…) Ces arbres avaient resisté aux vents charges de sel, aux tempêtes de neige, aux ouragans"; iii) in one of the photographs he shows a young person under bad illumination. The boy is sitting on the ground with different unclear objects around him. Larraín told a story about this image in which he met a boy whose name was the same as his, yet everything else was different:

> J'ai rentrontré ce petit Indien près de Farway. Il porte le même prénom que moi: Sergio. Sa famille appartient à la tribu des Alacalufes, pêcheurs de coquillages et chasseurs de lions de mer. Ills vivient en nomades sur cette terre désertique au climat inhumain, mais la toile à voile a remplacé sur leur tente les peaux de phoque traditionnelles.

Larraín detached automatically from the boy and came to understand that even though both of them were Chileans, the kid belonged to a native tribe called Alacalufes, a nomad tribe that lived their lives in constant movement and facing "inhuman conditions".

Figure 5 – "Je Reviens Du Bout Du Monde", Tierra del Fuego, Chile (1960)

In both reportages, "Valparaíso" and "Tierra del Fuego", similar elements play a crucial role in Larraín's photography. In both, the Chilean North and South are defined by a sense of megalomaniac and dramatic landscapes, labelled under ideas of melancholy and solitude. The indomitable presence of nature is recurrent in the photo essays, usually in the clash of nature and man. Either as a city "hanging down the hills" or as a strait at the edge of the world along with frantic squalls that could tear ships and life apart, the scenario

Larraín rescues represents a terrifying otherness with a strong foreign appeal. Burke, when reflecting on his manifest about the ideas of the sublime and beautiful, recognises this contradiction found in Larraín's work as a sort of tragic beauty, in the way the idea of strangeness and unknown danger leads to an irrevocable sense of sublimity:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience (E. Burke 45).

Larraín's work shows evidence of this same contradiction of tragic beauty. His work is close enough to distinguish the smallest bits of otherness and tragedy; however, it offers enough symbolic distance to appreciate it as delightful as harmless, yet never losing focus on keeping an uncanny resemblance to the old world, their language and codes.

The importance of freedom became a personal concern in Larraín's life early in his career, and his personal inclinations are not related to Magnum. One person who was responsible for the photographer's wanderings was his close friend and supporter Jorge Opazo, a Chilean photo-portraitist close to the Larraín-Echeñique family. Opazo was the one who introduced photography to the young Sergio Larraín, who, in a few lines on the publication "El Escribidor Intruso", recalls: "mí gran amigo, con quien compartía la aficción fotográfica y me alentaba (…) mí afición por la fotografía – esta profesión que estaba destinada a darme la libertad – creció hasta llegar a transformarse en una vocación" (Donoso 66).

Photography freed Sergio Larraín from his attachments to his family and let him step away from his privileged social condition and his highly conservative family, marking him for good (Leiva 23-4). This pursuit of freedom led him, eventually, to Magnum, where, in almost perfect synchronicity with Magnum's political views, as Badger mentioned, he was able to explore the cities of Latin America uniquely, without editorial attachments, yet usually for a foreign audience.

Despite Larraín's many attempts to be a free spirit, his social structure was always

marked by an educated eye and influential friends, which intrinsically linked part of his photographic production to where photography led the Western's cultural scene at the time: France. Therefore, Larraín's work embodied the Western appreciation for beauty which is inherent in dualities such as pain-pleasure, joy-grief or clearness-obscurity, to which qualities Burke responds "by which they cause love or some passion similar to it (…) that satisfaction which arises to the mind upon contemplating anything beautiful, of whatsoever nature it may be, from desire or lust" (E. Burke 125-6), which is exactly what happened with Larraín's photographs. In other words, Magnum's considerations for Larraín's work on Latin America were not necessarily for his capacity to expose or reveal specific places, nor the possible stories behind them, as a reporter commonly does. His work was appraised by the agency as an aesthetic experience of otherness that can still be shared by an entire community today, a European community. Larraín's work on Latin America, the street children, Sicily or the like, remains on a concentric pathway towards Magnum and the Western gaze.

This political-philosophical movement of freedom and authorship provided the political means for Magnum to become the most influential modern institution of visual representation, where photographers "share a vision to chronicle world events, people, places and culture with a powerful narrative that defies convention, shatters the status quo, redefines history and transforms lives" (MagnumPhotos, "Overview").

It does not matter if Larraín did not make these photographs strictly for Magnum at first, but because of the agency, he got his pictures widely published while owning full rights to them. This explains how Magnum holds the majority of Larraín's work as part of an institutional archive. Even though Larraín was a wanderer who roamed free across the world and had his own photographic style, his name and hence his photographs always have been (and always will be) credited in most publications as "Sergio Larraín-Magnum", as seen in the magazines studied.

5 Media's long range and photography truth claim

Another fundamental feature that played a significant role in Magnum Photos' early success is directly related to the unique quality of images being printed out and published in different media, with time becoming historical archives. Before television sets in the 1980s, the golden age of photography was strongly linked to the dissemination of popular knowledge through the materialisation of these images in what is known these days as

print media (media printed on paper). Magnum has covered the world's most significant events and characters since the mid-1930s, documenting warlike conflicts, industry development, politics, culture, public spaces, and so forth. This massive work of documentation would have meant much less without a photographic presence in media. This documentation nonetheless does not always align with the editorial-political criteria, so not all the photographs become valuable objects and not all published photographs align with their original function. Therefore, this section inspects how some photographs react in the physical world in comparison to others that do not get to circulate freely as objects but remain veiled as archives. It analyses the claim to truth in Sergio Larraín's performance while working for Magnum to explore the political value of published photographs.

To see certain photographs was to see certain bits of personal truth, a way of learning and experiencing life out of it, due to the "esprit de finesse" Barthes mentions we use to gift images with meaning (38). The academic Hoelscher, on the importance of the Magnum archive, says that certain groups of images share similar principles since they are all subordinated to a double meaning. He refers to the capability of, on the one hand, representing decisive and critical moments and, on the other, becoming physical objects. This claim could be one of the most important approaches ever made to a more sincere understanding of photography and its influence in the modern world.

Studies throughout time have focused on the value of the image from fields such as arts, philosophy, history and aesthetics. Yet the political value of photography has been studied very little. The author goes deeper into a less explored value of Magnum photo-archive, the relationship between the photographic function as an object "that carries social and cultural meaning" (Hoelscher 6) and its place in the material world. Once a photograph is published, it is a point of no return after a life abstract event acquiring form within the physical world, which is when some reality becomes popular knowledge.

Fred Ritchin, in *Magnum Photobook*, writes extensively about the implications of Magnum technological development on sensitive films and large-format photographs to sustain the importance of political visualisation through mass-circulation media. He refers specifically to magazines such as "*Vu*, *Regards*, *LIFE*, *Look* and *Picture Post* that provided an effective means of photographic reproduction and widespread distribution in numerous countries" (Ritchin 6). These magazines meant an organic growth for the agency and its photographers and were a fundamental distribution channel during Magnum's golden age, between the outbreak of the Second World War and the last quarter of the twentieth

century, with the introduction of newer transformative technologies: image-manipulation software and television. Such magazines were a political voice where photographs were not only seen in their original function but also read and understood under specific contexts along with specific narratives that, in some cases, transformed and deformed the photograph's claim to truth, to become desirable, newsworthy objects with political value.

In such exciting times for photography, many photographers, including Larraín, saw their work come under close scrutiny before getting the committee's approval. The committee's reasons were not purely aesthetics, artistic or up to the photographer's expectations, but political instead.

Ritchin recognises this in *In Our Time,* when takes Philip Knightley thoughts on Capa's "The Fallen Soldier", questioning the value of the image as if the photograph captioned "a militiaman slips and falls while training for action", instead of *LIFE* caption "the instant he is dropped by a bullet through the head" (Manchester 421-2).

This clarifies that the impact of a photo is commonly subjected to the political ways in which we are taught to see it. Traces of antagonism between the photographers' intention and the magazine editor's political viewpoints have existed from the beginning since it is undeniable that for photographs to be part of a certain publication, they must be biased to favour one and only one form of subjective truth.

One of the oldest cases that have come to light in this respect is Yousuf Karsh's famous portrait of Winston Churchill in 1941. William Manchester saw the image at the moment the photograph was released and in his first impression, he wrote: "the prime minister's defiant expression seems to reflect England's resolution as she stood alone, facing the prospect of defeat at the hands of a merciless Hitler" (Manchester 13), a convenient and accurate interpretation since that was exactly what the photograph was used for: a call for victory. Nonetheless, Karsh later shared what really happened that day:

> Churchill's cigar was ever present. I held out an ashtray, but he would not dispose of it. I went back to my camera and made sure that everything was all right technically. I waited; he continued to chomp vigorously at his cigar. I waited. Then I stepped toward him and, without premeditation, but ever so respectfully, I said, 'Forgive me, sir,' and plucked the cigar out of his mouth. By the time I got back to my camera, he looked so belligerent he could have devoured me. It was at that instant that I took the photograph (Fielder).

Magnum's photographers were not free from editor manipulation either. Hoelscher's essay draws on Susan Meiselas' Nicaragua images of the Sandinista Revolution in 1978 and James Nachtwey's photographs of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 to present photographs that, because of their extraordinariness, "help break the news" (4), and acquire meaning and value over time beyond their own context.

The American documentary photographer Susan Meiselas, who was associated with Magnum Photos since this project in 1976, comments on the impossibility of documenting the entire context behind the pictures: "I spent six weeks there principally, because all I could feel was that I wasn't doing anything that gave a feeling for what in fact was going on there. Not going on in the world of events, but going on in terms of how people were feeling… I'm really interested in how things come about and not just in the surface of what it is" (Molocha).

This documentary work, even though it has had major publications and exhibitions over time, has one particular photograph that has stood the test of time better than the rest. I refer to her famous "Molotov Man" (Fig. 6), a photograph that, after the Sandinistas took power, "became the defining symbol of the revolution" and a worldwide trademark, remarks made by the editors of the *TIME* team about Meiselas' photograph, now part of the *TIME 100 Photos* project. The "Molotov Man" was "eagerly disseminated by the Sandinistas [and] became ubiquitous throughout Nicaragua, appearing on matchbooks, T-shirts, billboards and brochures" (Gibbs 77).

Figure 6 – "Molotov Man" by Susan Miselas, Nicaragua (1979)

To Thomas Hoepker and his now-famous photograph from 11th September 2001 (Fig. 7), the political scenario was very similar. It took him five years to have his photograph published. The main reasons were that his work did not have a sense of drama and tragedy in comparison to his colleagues' photographs. In 2006 the photograph caught the critics' eyes for its controversial and iconic image, representative of the American culture of dissociation, a reading the photograph had not had until that moment. The *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich wrote in his column "Whatever Happened to the America of 9/12":

> Mr. Hoepker's photo is prescient as well as important — a snapshot of history soon to come. What he caught was this: Traumatic as the attack on America was, 9/11 would recede quickly for many. This is a country that likes to move on, and fast. The young people in Mr. Hoepker's photo aren't necessarily callous. They're just American. In the five years since the attacks, the ability of Americans to dust themselves off and keep going explains both what's gone right and what's gone wrong on our path to the divided and dispirited state the nation finds itself in today (Richi).

Figure 7 – "9/11" by Thomas Hoepker, New York (2001)

Not long after this photograph was published, two of the people in the photograph showed up, challenging what was written by Richi and explaining they had been "in a profound state of shock and disbelief" and that it was "genetically impossible to be unaffected by this event" (Hoelscher 6). These comments were not strong enough to change the new reality this picture had brought, because the representativeness of the image's political narrative was far beyond the real people in the photograph. The photograph had acquired a renovated meaning and presence for American culture at that time.

This reality came to life in 2006 because the photograph made it to the physical world, it was published, and the critics gave it a voice, a reason to be. Hoepker's photograph started as an irrelevant, not-newsworthy image, but today "it has become a picture about history, and about memory. As an image of a cataclysmic historical moment, it captures something true of all historical moments: life does not stop dead because a battle or an act of terror is happening nearby" (Jones), an image with a social value far beyond the *New York, September 11*th editor's curatorial criterion and therefore Hoepker's expectations.

For many photographers, the uncertainty of being published, rejected, or assuming an emotional-political (sometimes) detachment to their work was part of a game they were all part of. Sergio Larraín was one of the few who always disliked media manipulation and felt constantly overwhelmed by it. In 1965, in correspondence with Cartier-Bresson he wrote, "I do what I want the way I want. I feel that the rushing of journalism – being ready to jump to any story, all the time – destroys my love and concentration for work" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 387).

Something in published photographs, a mediatic value codifies a new function for each new photograph. This means two possibilities for a photojournalist: either push yourself towards a newsworthy production or keep the artistry you work with, hoping your work will be recognised by the market you work for.

For Larraín, losing the original meaning of a photograph to get it published or pushing himself into a "soulless" form of work was like losing himself to the markets. Photographs in time run away from the photographer's intention and become bits of social truth in the process of interpretation. Larraín used to say "je veux que ma photographie soit une experience immédiate et non une mastication. La photographie, comme n'importe quel art, on doit la charcher au fond de soi" (qtd. in Larraín, *El Rectángulo en la Mano*). The photographer demanded no deliberation of his work, and even though he rejected this politico-commercial way of understanding photography, his photographs have, until now, projected political awareness far beyond his own inclinations.

One of the best-remembered of these photo works is the one on Algeria in 1959, to cover the Algerian War of Independence against the French forces, a reportage Leiva recognises as one of his most successful reportages, along with his coverage of the Sicilian mafia, both part of Larraín's initiation at Magnum (33).

One conflict zone to cover was Casbah, a warzone where the Battle of Algiers took place after it had been taken under control. Larraín sent around 38 contact sheets with more than 1350 single photographs, labelled in three main film rolls, "Algerian Farmer", "Algeria General" and "Patrol in the Casbah".[16] When Magnum launched *Magnum Revolution* in 2012, Larraín's work on Algeria's conflict was included. In the present publication, Jon Lee Anderson writes in "Blood and Hope" about the relation between Magnum's photographers and war. He explains that the book is a summary and declaration of the documentation of a "world in conflict", and that despite the early death of Magnum's original founders, their legacy will continue through the new generation of photographers, allowing coverage "about a time of revolution" (6).

Larraín belongs to this second generation of new photographers who perpetuated this "legacy", and three of his photographs were considered as a portrait of "Algeria's

[16] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive. August 2019.

uprising against the French colonial rule" (J. L. Anderson 224). When looking at Larraín's photo selection alongside his colleagues Erich Lessing, Marc Riboud, Kryn Taconis and Nicolas Tikhomiroff, the reader can easily feel the sense of violence, takeover and hostility in the essay, as if the revolution aesthetic were already sorted. At least, that is how it is reflected when Anderson states at the beginning of the article: "The notion that colonialism was inherently violent, and could only be reversed through violence, inspired freedom fighters across the developing world" (224).

To Larraín, the experience around his photographs was somehow different. He did not focus on the violence or the hostility; he looked for people and places as he did in the past. In the original series held by Magnum, the bulk of the photos show people in their natural context, portrayed under Larraín's gaze, similar to the Valparaíso series. The photographs are taken in low/high angles and people are used as vanishing points, their faces are usually blurred or not shown and/or they have their backs to the camera (Fig. 8).

If it were not for some symbolic elements that pop up in the series, significant differences from other photographs from, perhaps, a different series could not be recognised. Hence, the main difference between what is seen or perceived in the photographs lies in the political way of reading the images or the revelation of the claim to truth. The symbolic elements are first: dressing gowns and traditional hats are worn by the people in the pictures; an Arabic influence can be detected in the architecture of some buildings; and some French-language commercial signpost or posters remain, as seen in the picture below: "Café El Baraka" or "La France reste". Second is the context of violence and revolution in which the photographs are inserted. These elements are the only politico-cultural barrier at the moment of reading the photographs; otherwise, the photographs could have a completely different orientation.

Figure 8 – Coverage of the Algerian War of Independence (1959)

Leaving aside the premise of violence for a while, when reading Larraín's role captions on Algeria,[17] his own approaches are marked more by a humanist outlook than by a raw, objective reportage. Concerning a farmer family, for example, his understanding is that "their main problem is keeping the ever-increasing Moslem population fruitfully occupied to prevent *fellagha maquis* from recruiting them and taking over the region", Larraín wrote. In his pictures, the photographer was trying to understand people's situations regarding the political conflict at the time, a psychological kind of violence, perhaps, but not the standardised one concerning gun power and mass destruction. Larraín even utilises the expression *fellagha maquis*, an Arabic expression for anti-colonial guerrillas (*fellagha* refers commonly to the Algerian nationalist in French North Africa, and *maquis* to the FLN *maquisards*, which stands for the rural soldiers of the National Liberation Front). He got involved in people's problems and assimilated the multi-layered and humanitarian context of Algeria, where despite the conflict, locals had to keep on with their lives: "family at dinner / in father's office after dinner… atmosphere of tension, keeping close together for protection… putting up iron shutters for the night / Bernard in his own library with his books".

This is why these photographs do not necessarily show the means of revolution Magnum writes about. The images correspond to a different narrative: the first one is a high-angle of a narrowed line with a fully covered person in the background, wearing a white dressing gown and veil, carrying a few items; the line is shaped by heavy concrete walls and contrasted with asymmetrical lighting work; in the foreground, a donkey head pops up from the right side as if approaching the person at the back. The next picture shows a soldier, wearing a rifle on his back, control-checking a person with his arms raised. The last picture is a lower-angle of a commercial line; different varieties of fruit are seen on sale, and people seem to be spending a regular day in their lives; one soldier is leaning over a fruit stand in the middle of the composition; he is the only character that stares directly at Larraín's camera. Nothing graphic enough reveals either violence or revolution in Larraín's work.

However, these photographs, as any other, placed in the right context and by the

[17] Binder n5, "Algerian Farmer Roll Caption and Information (for NYT)", Sergio Larraín archive. Magnum Paris, August 2019.

right speech, may articulate a guided visual narrative in specific directions that, in this case, becomes an aesthetic of the revolution.

The long-range spread of media is a phenomenon where Magnum found a channel for the materialisation of cultural meaning through photographs, without necessarily considering the photographer's ulterior motive at the moment of shooting, the photograph's claim of truth, but the image quality and potential for a bigger visual narrative instead. The rationale flow hence subtly reveals Magnum's participation in the materialisation of imaginaries, as an institution that does not create but allows and gives contents partial and restricted access to our world.

For Larraín, Magnum Photos, even though a second-to-none experience in his personal and professional formation, meant an irreversible wound in the usage of his work, changing the original claim of the photographs: the case of Algeria and the portrayal of revolution, the poverty through the street children series and the reportage on the Sicilian mafia are only a few examples of this. As mentioned by Magnum's editorial team, "when you picture an iconic image, but can't think who took it or where it can be found, it probably came from Magnum (…) Magnum Photos reaches a global audience and has established itself as the authentic, storytelling photographic brand" (MagnumPhotos, "Overview").

In conclusion, Magnum is not precisely its photographers; it is a complex organic institution that "for over sixty years has been responsible for taking some of the world's most memorable photographs, images that have become an instantly recognisable part of our cultural landscape" (Lardinois 8).

Like the work of Yousuf Karsh, Susan Meiselas, James Nachtwey and Thomas Hoepker, Larraín's work has constantly been subjected to certain deformities of its original meaning, transforming the figure photographer into an uneasy, tormented professional. Nonetheless, this phenomenon has been established as an increasingly commercial aspect for Magnum.

As with the work of many other photographers, Larraín's photographs have helped to recreate visual experiences of history and truth. However, the primary function of the collected material has so far failed to exhibit its condition as objective and unique photographs but has succeeded as mega-narratives, keeping the photograph's claim of truth in most cases completely veiled.

CHAPTER II: Agnès Sire

1 The Figure of Agnès Sire

Agnès Sire, Doctor in Philosophy and Aesthetics, has always been involved in the French artistic scene. She worked for the Alexandre Iolas Gallery in Paris before joining the photographers' cooperative Magnum Photos in 1982. Twenty years later, after being promoted to special projects and as artistic director, she created the Foundation Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris (2003). Soon, she was appointed director of the foundation in 2004, curating most of the exhibitions presented ever since up to these days. Among these names, for example, are the photographer Bill Brandt in 2005, Helen Levitt in 2007, Robert Doisneau in 2010, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Sergio Larraín in 2013. However, while working for Magnum, Sire engaged in numerous collective projects as associate curator and co-author, such as *A l'Est de Magnum*, *Magnum Cinéma*, *Guerras Fratricidas*, in addition to individual projects like the ones on Bresson. One particular project that would become a milestone for some in her career is that on Sergio Larraín. Because, unlike Cartier-Bresson, Larraín, when Sire came across his work, had almost disappeared from the artistic and photographic scene. Therefore, this section lays the groundwork for understanding Agnès Sire's participation in developing Sergio Larraín's figure as a world-class photographer and explores the narratives and articulation of his work from Sire's appearance onwards.

In this respect, even though some local critique may remark that Sergio Larraín's imagery is a convenient, French construction of his work, as Poirot states in a 2018 interview, "I believe Magnum damaged Sergio Larrain deeply. Even today, the Sergio Larrain that we think to know —and I underline this much 'we think to know' —, is the Sergio Larrain that Magnum wants to show us. There is a view, I would say, very colonialist about the Latin American culture seen from Europe" (Poirot, "About Sergio Larraín"), it is undeniable the fact that, biased or not, Sire was the one who brought the Chilean photographer back to the public and local eye. The same reason and work that appointed her as the most knowledgeable persona about Larraín's work until these days.

The Sergio Larraín archive has been an enigmatic trove held by Magnum since the photographer's death in 2012. The archive is supposed to harbour the totality of Larraín's work, leaving aside only family albums kept these days by his daughter and nephews, Gregoria Larraín, Sebastián Donoso and Gonzalo Puga, and photographs that the same Larraín gave as a present to his closest ones.

Larraín had two significant periods, peaks, during his career – so to speak: the 1960s and 1990s. This first period relates to the moment Sergio Larraín starts working for Magnum Photos in 1959, gaining international experience and appreciation. During this time, he also keeps publishing on the most relevant graphic magazines in Europe and The Americas, such as *O Cruzeiro* in Brazil, *Vu*, *Regards* and *Paris Match* in France, *LIFE* in the United States, *Look* and *Picture Post* in the United Kingdom, among others. Larraín's work, at the time, acquired international mobility and a long-range spreading, placing his name among the most renowned photographers in mid 20th Europe. Nonetheless, due to his reluctance to exhibitions, interviews, and public appearances, Larraín never had a notable media impact beyond his published work, thus transitioning from a photography hotshot to an oblivion period of almost 20 years.

To illustrate, during the 70s, the photographer decides to turn into a recluse of his hometown's countryside, Ovalle, to dedicate most of his time to meditational practices and thus leave commercial photography aside. His goal was using meditation and physical exercises for "getting out of contradiction and purifying oneself", Larraín wrote in 1977 as part of a photo story he sent to Magnum.[18] A practice led by the Bolivian teacher, Oscar Ichazo, who teaches Larraín the learnings and traditions of the Arab school from Kabul. Nonetheless, one of the many "contradictions" Larraín dealt with during his life relates directly to the conflict of constantly getting let down by the commercial implications of photography. In a letter from 1962 to Cartier-Bresson, the Chilean writes, "I [tried to adapt] myself since I entered your group [Magnum] in order to learn and get [published] (…) there is the problem with markets… of getting published, or getting money… I am puzzled as I tell you and would like to find a way out for working in a level vital for me… I can't adapt myself longer" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 386).

As a result of this emotional paradox of love and disappointment, his presence in the photography sphere started off vanishing little by little. During the decades of the 70s and 80s, some of his old work kept on having "minor publications" (Leiva 82) in some

[18] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legends 1969 onwards. August 2019.

international magazines, cover books, and Magnum edited books;[19] at some point, it stopped, and no one would hear from the Chilean in a long time.

It was not until 1990, the second period, the name of Larraín is put back in the cultural scene, in what it would be the second wave for the appreciation of his work; yet this time, by the hand of Agnès Sire, Magnum former artistic director.

In this regard, apropos the 2014 exhibition in Chile, "Retrospectiva de Sergio Larraín", commissioned by Sire, in one of the talks, she openly reveals for the first time her encounter with Larraín's work. In the 80s, amid the turmoil of Magnum's digitalisation processes, she found almost by chance thousands of contact sheets lost in one of the agency's stores under the label of Sergio Larraín. The story is the following:

> en los años 80 magnum empezó a digitalizar todo su fondo, y yo descubrí a Sergio Larraín porque había unas cajas de tirajes en las repisas y así fue como lo descubrí. (…) estos tirajes se reproducían en la prensa, a menudo no se devolvían, entonces lo que quedaba era lo menos bueno. Me preguntaron si yo me quería encargar de Sergio Larraín y dije: por su puesto. Retomé todas las planchas contacto, todavía había un laboratorio en esa época en la agencia. Entonces, yo hacía copias y se las mandaba [to Larraín], y él me decía: sí, no, sí, no. Y así fue como llegamos a tener un conjunto bastante coherente de fotografías que él mismo había elegido y reconocido como suyas. Porque para mi no tenía ningún sentido elegir una foto que un fotógrafo no ha elegido. Para mi no tiene sentido. Una foto que existe es un click en una foto, pero no tiene vida, no es digno (CNCA, "Conversación entre Agnès Sire y Luis Weinstein sobre Sergio Larraín").

Perhaps, the starting point of this flow of events could be set somewhat earlier, in 1989. William Manchester and Magnum team considered Larraín's work to be part of the exhibition *In Our Time.* An exhibit meant to be "the first comprehensive survey of the

[19] It seems that Leiva understands Larraín's "minor publications" as those from books covers or small magazines, since he recalls, in this respect, about a scratched photograph from the Chilean mime Enrique Noisvander at the cultural warehouse, Casona Arrieta, in 1957. This photograph, it is said, was re-utilised in Ana Vásquez's book cover *Abel Rodríguez et ses frère*s in 1982, Paris.

work of Magnum Photos, Inc" (Manchester 7), as Myrna Smoot, former director of the American Federation of Arts, claims it to be. The author is not wrong, since the album is (if not the first) public declaration about the visual readings Magnum has compilated over time, in what they coined to be *The World as Seen by Magnum Photographers*; namely, the assimilation of the world by Magnum photography.

Larraín participated in this publication with two photographs that are nothing like each other, either timewise, context or style. The first photograph is from Paris (1959), where a dog strikes a pose about urinating on a wall while looking at the camera; just off the lower-right corner, another dog is starring the situation. The second photograph corresponds to “Les petites filles” from 1952. [20] These two iconic photographs lack substantial context, yet they both seem to respond to the singularity and the uniqueness of places the book tries to explore.

Following the same line of thought, Leiva says that this book begins with a historical review of photojournalism to introduce the story behind Magnum's founders regarding their Annual Magnum Meetings and finally end up with a review on the rest of its members (83). As if the book was a visual representation of the political structure and views of the agency.

Due to this event, in 1990, Magnum started to publish mass-editions on the best of its collection as visual heritage, considering Larraín as part of it under different themes such as landscapes, documentaries, political conflicts, or worldwide events. To this extent, the opening of this commercial venue of mass visual consumption might have facilitated Sire's efforts to re-insert the figure of Sergio Larraín at the end of the 20th century, even though the French curator would only consider Larraín's most mature and conventional work.

This way, the 1990s account for a critical decade in the photographer's life, a sort of the renascence period of his career. During this decade, Sire helps publish Larraín's most renowned books, reaching worldwide acknowledgement as one of the most influential photographers globally, becoming the only Chilean photographer ever

[20] The study on the photograph “Les petite filles” is fully addressed in the Chapter III.

mentioned in hosting one of the most significant Latin American retrospectives on photography (Leiva 82).

Leiva, above, refers to the 2013 touring exhibition "Sergio Larraín Rétrospective" at the Arles photography festival, which in 2014 arrived in Chile for the first time. The exhibition culminated in the Chilean's retrospective book *Sergio Larraín: Vagabond Photographer*. The book is an extensive compilation of around 300 images, including early photographs, drawings, handwritten correspondence, the digitalisation of old booklets, and essays by the same Sire and the academic Gonzalo Leiva.

Concerning the retrospective at Santiago's Museo Nacional de Bellas Arte (2013), Crystal Bennes, in the article "Homecoming: Sergio Larrain's photographs on display in Chile" for the international magazine *Apollo,* comments this exhibition "is particularly poignant for Chileans as it marks the first time Larrain's photographs have been shown in his own country since the 1960s" (Bennes). Similarly, the local media *El Mercurio* writes, “sin duda el fotógrafo más destacado y misterioso de Chile, cuya obra por fin podrá ser apreciada por sus connacionales” ("Sergio Larraín: La sensibilidad y el ojo avezado de un mito de la fotografía").

Therefore, this study centres on the 90s decade and analyses the influence of Agnès Sire in building and promoting a global reading on the photographer's work. For this, this section considers Larraín's published books and photographs with the goal of visualising the construction of his visual narrative chronologically. It considers hence Larraín's work on *Valparaíso* (1991), the constitution of a Latin American argot, the visualisation of London through *London 1958-59* (1998), and finally Larraín's most important exhibition in his career, "Sergio Larraín" at the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, in Spain (1999). This last exhibition hence accounts for the archetypical construction of the photographer's figure and imagery.

2 The imagery of Valparaíso

Valparaíso city has always been a significant place for Sergio Larraín. It was a place of discovery, amusement, and experimentation, and it was precisely in this seaport city that the photographer found the potential and clearness of his "magical images".[21] Larraín shot Valparaíso since early 50s to the late 90s, almost interruptedly, becoming hence his strongest and largest work. Every time he had a chance to be there, he would. Nonetheless, even though this work has been regarded as one of the most meaningful artistic-aesthetic explorations on the city during the 20th century, only small fragments of this 40-year photo-work were seen before 1991, until Agnès Sire's intervention. Such involvement gave way to the first compilation on the Valparaíso series ever made. This section looks to inspect the political impact that *Valparaíso* book has generated in promoting Valparaíso's global and local identity while produced and launched in France. Additionally, this section also analyses text/image narratives to understand the symbolism behind images' visual function.

In Larraín's biography, Leiva recognises that within the 90s are the years of most significant consideration concerning the photographer's work. During this period, and for the first time, a great bulk of photographs and essays would be published as an attempt to exhibit his authorial gaze solely (Leiva 82).

In the early 90s, for instance, with the "Encuentro entre dos Mundos" motif, different artistic and cultural practices took place across several countries. [22] This commemoration aimed to celebrate ethnic diversity, cultural mingling, and religious syncretism within the 500 years The Americas had incorporated into the occidental practices. As part of this commemoration, one particular publication of the *Camera International* magazine from New York would focus exclusively on the visual

[21] The concept of "magic images" is fully addressed in Chapter 2, 1st section "Magic and Meaning: the case of 'les petit filles'".

[22] Most of the Spanish speaking countries in The Americas know the "Encuentro entre dos Mundos" as "El Día de la Raza" – race day. In Chile, however, in 2000 the law number 19.668 renamed this to Día de Descubrimiento de Dos Mundos, commonly celebrated on the 12th of October.

representation of this cultural hybridity (Leiva 53). In this edition, eight of Larraín's photographs display the bohemian city of Valparaíso (Larraín, "Sergio Larraín" 40-9).

This publication, however, would become a prelude to what will be one of the most significant events out of these commemorations' series – at least in photography matters. In 1991 Éditions Hazan and Agnès Sire launched the book *Valparaíso* in Arles, France, along with Larraín's solo exhibition. The event takes place at the *Rencontres d'Arles* photo festival, one of the most relevant centres related to worldwide photography at the time (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 372), marking Larraín's work in a way never seen before. The book *Valparaíso* represents, until these days, the most extensive compilation ever made by the photographer since the 1950s and edited for the first time more than 30 years later. Hence, the series is summarised in a rustic publication with 38 images of children, the seaport, streets, and angled lines as a topographic exercise about the city (Fig. 9).

Figure 9 – Display of Valparaíso book, original edition (1991)

Valparaíso book would have a reedition in 2016 by the same Sire and Xavier Barral. Nevertheless, this time it includes quite a few more photographs Larraín took until 1992 and short writings by the photographer itself.

In one of the captions from 1977 about the city that Larraín used to send to Magnum there is an old, printed sheet with the transcript of the poem "Oda a Valparaíso" by Pablo Neruda from his book *Odas Elementales* (1954). Larraín's idea was to cover Valparaíso visual story with some textual narratives as he used to do with the work he sent over. The poem begins with the text: "Valparaíso // qué disparate // eres, // qué loco // puerto loco, // qué cabeza // con cerros, // desgreñada, // no acabas // de peinarte, // nunca".[23] The poem sees Valparaíso as an unfinished seaport city, messy yet

[23] Extracted from binder "Captions – Legendes 1969 onwards" on Sergio Larraín archive at Magnum Paris. August 2019.

charming, built among the hills. This way, when seeing Larraín photo work on Valparaíso, it is impossible not to relate Neruda's poem or its descriptiveness to this work.

The book structures under no exclusive narrative, yet it seeks to be thoroughly expressive. However, the photographs might still show a subtle dialogue between them throughout the pages, not necessarily about the city itself but about the photographer's style and aesthetic experience instead (Fig. 10).

Figure 10 – Valparaíso book, boy and "petit filles" (1952)

The first photograph in the original book is a high-contrasted image that shows a boy at the lower-end angle with his head inclined, and only his head is visible whilst the rest of his body is fully cropped out of the frame. In the background, there is not much information either. There is a wall on the left side, a streetlight in the middle, and a window on the right. Nothing abnormally notorious at simple sight, except that Larraín printed the photograph in a smaller format than the others and accurately centred – like an entry towards the inside, one might say. The second photograph is, once again, the "Les Petite Filles" from 1952. This, hence, corresponds to the first dialogue. Although there is nothing radically similar between images, both act as a framed dimension into the book's content, a passage. Both show movement, either the inclined angle of the first one or the displaced elements of the other (the twin girls). Both are evidently children, yet the boy stares at the camera from inside the frame in the first image. The girls turn their back towards the photographer and walk away into an unknown scenario – out of the frame viewing.

It is a sequence in motion not only inside the photographs but in the whole composition too: smaller/whole-page frame, boy/girls, starring/turning backs, lights/shadows. There is a transition from one dimension into another given by geometry and elements, or as Larraín's writing mentions in *Valparaíso* (new edition), "opening the moment with the rectangle" (26). The "opening", therefore, is given by these photographs that introduce the "moment" that is yet to come: Valparaíso city.

The following sequence (Fig. 11) responds to what the photographer recognises as "wandering around", a feature that the poet Pablo Neruda shares in many of his writings

and, most evidently, in his poem “Walking around”, allegedly from 1935. The segment, this way, is a linear succession where, in three photographs, Larraín gets to talk about the figure of the wandering boy, innocent, curious, hands inside the pockets, walking straight, looking at the horizon up above yet outside the frame. The next two images are streets. The photograph on the left is a low-angle shot, almost taken at ground level, and shows high inclination and curvy edges. The ground utilises most of the frame, and nothing can be seen beyond. The photograph on the right side is a high-angle shot that shows a downhill with a dog in the middle and some people in the background walking uphill. Here, once again, every photograph has a particular style, yet attempt to illustrate the aesthetic experience of walking around Valparaíso, under the eyes of a child, as Larraín writes in the same book: "in your hands, the magic box. You walk in peace; aware, in the garden of forms (…) horizontal and vertical contemplation" (*Valparaíso* 28, 39).

Figure 11 – Valparaíso book, boy (1953) and streets (1963)

Larraín's wanderings are portrayed in the dimension of a local kid calmly walking down moving streets. As if the photographer would have seen himself within these images, allowing thus exploring the city as a personal aesthetic experience from within Larraín's immediate space.

The “garden of forms” responds to another mark in Larraín's imagery (Fig. 12), yet this time followed by the writing "tranquillity" (Larraín, *Valparaíso* 112). This might respond to forms of contemplation, which has nothing to do with the city's structure but the photographic experience apropos the city. Thus, "Understanding form as present time" is what Larraín explains to be later in in the new edition, the expression of Satori, a meditation to be "awake in the present", putting the "attention in the Kath point (4 cms. Under the navel)" (171).[24] Therefore, it is not unusual to find low-angled takes throughout Larraín's work. Part of his practice as a photographer is to represent the forms of the "present" in ways his entire body is experiencing the space, not exclusively his eyes.

[24] For further analysis on Larraín and Satori photography, see Chapter IV.

Accordingly, the sequence shows a close-up of a palm tree trunk on the left side and a stone-made passage on the right.

These are the only two photographs related exclusively to forms in *Valparaíso* original version. The new one includes many more: close-ups from streets, concrete, streetlights, water, plants. However, many of these new additions are randomly placed throughout the book, losing somehow the sense of "present" and "no-rush" the photographer attempts to express.

Figure 12 – Valparaíso book, tree and cobble pavement (1952-1963)

Finally, since the original edition does not include any writings alongside the pictures, the following sequence comes from the new edition. In this case (Fig. 13), the image is not about magic or movement as the previous ones. It is neither about textures, lighting, nor shapes; there are no stray dogs around or children sleeping rough. It is a photograph that only shows the simple act of holding a handrail while, allegedly, walking downstairs. The image shows three main elements in great contrast: the shadow of a hand-less arm that leans upon a handrail, the handrail bar, and the reflection of a nearly human shape. A significant part of the background is only a wall with some graffiti on it and stairs at the bottom outlined by a sharp shadow. Even though it portrays the local practices of Valparaíso's famous stairs, the photograph by itself does not harbour much of a documentary value. It does not show even if the arm belongs to a stranger, a friend, or himself. However, its closeness reveals that Larraín took it at a very short distance – allegedly less than a metre away.

This way, even though the photograph seems to avoid falling into objective descriptiveness, it does inspect the photographer's aesthetic qualities, engaging thus in the exploration of ephemeral moments on Larraín's self-experience. The experience of intimate ordinariness.

Figure 13 – Valparaíso book (new edition), man's silhouette and handrail (1963)

This experience, nonetheless, also exposes one of the most renowned photographer's features: the portrayal of absence, the representation of what is not there,[25] like "the wind's portrayal" in Manuel Álvarez Bravo's imagery by finding the essential in what no one else sees ("El retrato del viento: Manuel Álvarez Bravo" 1062), as Elena Poniatowska claims. Larraín forged this idea from the beginning of his work, yet it was never truly explored. Until this new edition, where Sire includes the following quote on the facing page: "… opening the gate of time, with geometry", evidencing thus the idea that the Sergio Larraín's photography intrinsically deals with fleeing time. Similar sense of eternity the Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño mentions in "Los Personajes Fatales" when writes that "Larraín fotografía calles vacías y esas calles parecen estar emergiendo del ser o de la nada, sin ruido, como si el fenómeno sucediera en el espacio exterior" (Monzó 49). Moreover, in "Solo la Piedra es Inocente", Sire comments on the stone's disturbing reminiscence in Larraín's work, recognising the stone is prevalent in the Chilean's photography since people seem always to fade away. She says, "siempre se encuentra la misma ligereza del tiempo suspendido sin énfasis" (Monzó 24). This feature has become a signature in the photographer's work, One feature out of the many above mentioned, and this photograph illustrates and embodies them all in its own.

Along the same line of thought, and after a thorough analysis of the photographs, there is enough evidence to understand certain aspects of Valparaíso, such as the idea of movement, the hills and endless stairs, port-like situations, or the nightlife. However, the symbolism in Larraín's photographs has enhanced a strong sense of the city's local imagery that transcended the objectiveness of the photographs for collective subjectivity. Roland Barthes explains this phenomenon as the fulfilling quality of a photograph, when this is capable of surpassing the original reference in its meaning irreversibly, referencing its *mortality*, possible only by the death of the primordial and true subject (*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 92-4), precisely as the case of Valparaíso.

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[25] In this regard, even though authors like Manuel Bravo Álvarez had explored these aspects long before Larraín did, Sánchez-Fung does not overlap them but categorise them into two categories, Bravo as a "conceptual innovator" and Larraín as an "experimental innovator" (Sánchez-Fung 1-6). The author understands that while Bravo tends to use artistic production to convey ideas and emotions, Larraín progresses cautiously in a learning-by-doing process. Nonetheless, such definitions are far from conclusive, and the similarities between Larraín and Bravo are worth further inspection concerning Latin American studies.

On this wise, Leiva suggests this occurrence is somehow related to a concept he coined as the “mythology of the rescue”, in the sense that Larraín's work has proved to prevail time, enriching thus the hidden qualities of a location and transforming them into a complex visual world:

> Sus estremecedoras iconografías del terremoto del sur de Chile, sus imágenes de Valparaíso, ciudad portuaria en decadencia, todos esos rincones que capturó, son escenarios de naufragios, débiles proyectos de humanidad, espacios desamparados, aislados, arrebatadoramente bellos (…) No importando la oscuridad, ni los años, ni el silencio prolongado: el imaginario de Larraín está al lado nuestro pues sus mitologías sobreviven y terminan por amanecer una y otra vez (35).

Valparaíso, little by little, is revealed as a hidden, decadent yet always beautiful gem that, throughout time, has become a cultural highlight in Latin America. This phenomenon was only possible by the robust romanticism and rhetoric of the poet Pablo Neruda's representations, the photographer Sergio Larraín's aesthetic surrealism, and other artists or intellectuals who, with their work, unlocked the city of Valparaíso to the world.

And so it occurred, only a year after, in 1992 with the case of the French publication *L' Argot d' Eros* by Robert Giraud. A publication that would consider Larraín's photographs on Valparaíso to explore the language of visual eroticism in photography as well as helping to shape the aesthetics of Latin-America's argot in 90s Europe.[26] This became a recurrent situation since the launch of *Valparaíso* photobook. Valparaíso popular imagery would expand even up to these days. As Simon Willis wrote for the international magazine *Financial Times* in 2017, Larraín is "the poet of Valparaíso", obsessed with the "crumbling Chilean port, drawn as much by its sordid side as its romance". Willis keeps saying, Larraín "found a way of bringing the edgy energy of these places into the pictures themselves" for the picture were "furtive and snatched, a drama of stolen glances" ("Sergio Larraín: the poet of Valparaiso").

[26] For the complete study on the *L' Argot d' Eros* in context, please see the following section “The Argot of Latin-America*”* of this thesis.

Therefore, from 1991 onwards and because of *Valparaíso* publication and exhibition, Larraín's work begins to shape itself more towards the photographer's subjectivity instead of only considering its documentary qualities. It becomes evident hence neither Larraín nor Sire intended for *Valparaíso* to be a photographic report. On the contrary, it meant the photographer's return and a newer gaze on Latin America. Agnès Sire shares this affirmation when she writes in "Planet Valparaíso" (essay part of *Valparaíso* new edition) that "the idea of trying to get this work published at last, accompanied by Neruda's text, was too good an opportunity to miss" (Larraín, *Valparaíso* 185). Similar is Martin Parr's thoughts when he recognises to Magnum that "*Valparaíso* is a great body of work, starting as a magazine assignment and turning into a full personal project. He captures an atmosphere of the city which feels both personal and heightened" (MagnumPhotos, "Sergio Larrain: Valparaiso").

Larraín's work on the city is not necessarily a photojournalist's photo report about landscapes, people, and social practices; however, some would say it is more like a visual and open poem. Professor David Foitzik, for instance, regarding Larraín's poetic vision of reality, is keen on the idea that the photographer represents the subaltern in "deterritorialised" locations, since the argument of their photographs on Valparaíso does not necessarily reveal the qualities of any particular territory, but the story that is inside the framing shot: "Larraín capta y nos ofrece, el espacio que logra crear entre el ojo, el encuadre, la posición de sus brazos y de su cuerpo y la presión del dedo sobre el obturador. Ese espacio que el fotógrafo nos ofrece para encontrar lo poético que él intenta mostrar" (Foitzik 69).

This way, an essential part of Larraín's photographic personality, such as the idea of movement and displacement, sharp angles, textures, meditation, and blurred people out of the frame, finds a significant ground basis to start off configuring the photographer's figure in the direction that is currently known.

3 The Argot of Latin-America

The revival of Larraín's unpublished archive by Sire has helped re-visualise Latin America from the Chilean's photography to the world. Having exceptional attention to the differences between worlds, the now published photo-work has engaged in a specific visual language that the study addresses as "the argot of Latin America". This research

addresses this concept as a societal expression that helps unify the region for a none-local appreciation to understand and read the otherness from the “qualities that have the potential to excite the target recipient viewer” (Gardner 4). Additionally, this time, the local critique struggles attempting to detach the photographer from European readings without realising its roots are too deep. For example, Luis Poirot, in the Chilean magazine *Diseño* (1992), brings out the importance of the photographer for facing the challenge of breaking the international lack of knowledge about the Latin American scene while gaining his own space in it (Poirot, "Fotografía de autor, una mirada personal" 120-3). Therefore, this section explores the increasing publications the photographer had during his comeback in 90s Europe and analyses the implications and challenges in the context photographs were published. Additionally, it compares the selected published work to the original archive to understand the political use of photography and how Larin-America has been re-discovered and explored through the photographer's work.

The old continent has widely fostered this phenomenon of re-discovering the Americas while particularly interested in the Latin region. At least in photography, from the very beginning of its practice, it easily dates deep into the 19th Century. Natalia Brizuela and Jodi Roberts, in their book *The Matter of Photography in the Americas*, critically engage with the question of reality and authenticity about *costumbrista* images. The authors affirm that between the 19th Century and mid 20th, many artists, photographers, scientists, and writers, mainly European migrants, set eyes in America's southern region. They "began to haul unwieldy equipment into rural communities and unsettled territories to record native customs, lifestyle and landscapes" to merchandise "an exotic other"; to experience the "authentic Latin America" (Brizuela and Roberts 62). Therefore, while the 19th Century Latin America is marked by a strong European sense of experiencing the new world regarding local physiognomies and social types, the 20th Century's second half, after WW2, would be marked by a political sense of development, progress, and humanism. There is a switch in the paradigm on how the photographed subject is perceived. Consequently, the work of Sergio Larraín helps define such perception and shape it in what the study proposes to be "the argot of Latin America".

3.1 The politicisation of Peru’s imagery

In 1991, to begin with, *Granta* magazine n36 publishes “la totalidad del reportaje realizado” (Leiva 83) on Cuzco city, Peru. Students originally founded this magazine at

Cambridge University in 1889. However, it has expanded its horizons up to these days, becoming one of the "most celebrated for its 'Best of Young' issues, released decade by decade, which introduces the most important voices of each generation – in Britain, America, Brazil and Spain – and has been defining the contours of the literary landscape since 1983" (*Granta*).

This particular issue is not precisely about Larraín's work or photography but worldwide politics and literary fiction instead. This time, the magazine addresses this issue to Peru's elections in 1990, with the headline "Vargas Llosa for President". On the magazine cover, an image of Vargas Llosa's face on a picket sign that says "Libertad, el Peru con Vargas Llosa". The issue primarily centres on Peru's political turmoil in times of elections, where Peruvians had shown their unhappiness with the way Peru's former president Alan García had ruled.

In this scenario, among different articles on related subjects, the magazine publishes Sergio Larraín's photo essay "In the Andes" to depict Peru's local costumes and context. On this wise, the "totality" Leiva mentions about the reportage on Cuzco is not as such since *Granta* publication considers barely seven photographs out of more than 1400 single images from Larraín's archive that himself labelled as "Peru Cuzco" and "Inca empire".[27] However, in the 90s, *Granta* firstly and partially publishes this work, around 30 years apart, publicly acknowledging hence such an archive for the first time.

The English magazine publishes the following series of everyday life in Cuzco city (Fig. 14). The specific features of the photo-essay relate to, as Leiva recognises, "un exhaustivo registro antropológico" (83), which refers to local people and cultural practices, like taking a taxi, as shown in the first image while seeing wild llamas on the road through the taxi's windscreen. In this sense, it is important to point out that even though wild llamas are possible to find across the South American region, they concentrate primarily within the Peruvian borders. [28]

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[27] Binder 1, 2, 9 and 11 on Peru (1957-60). Sergio Larraín archive. Magnum Paris, August 2019.

[28] In her article "Hollywood stars, high-paid llamas, and car shows", Erika Doss explores the evolution and implication of Magnum's cultural project in the 50s and 60s. She mentions that even though there was a strong rebellion of Magnum photographers against the "moronic cultural interest stories" that influent magazines such as *Life* commonly assigned, the growing interest for popular culture and shallow stories on Hollywood stars,

Figure 14 – Cuzco (1957-1960)

This visualisation may represent a sense of territorial and symbolic belonging as opposed to a Western landscape. Similarly, the rest of the images focus on people and specifically visualise local activities and family. The photographs reveal them in traditional clothes, inhabiting the space, carrying bags, collecting water, and walking over unpaved paths just off the iconic, megalithic stone walls, highly recognised within the Saksaywaman area. The complex of Saksaywaman is in the northern outskirts of Cuzco city, famed for its large dry-stone walls and perfectly cut, polished boulders, fitted together without mortar and stuck together only by wedging.

The magazine displays the photo sequence so that, similar to *Valparaíso* book, one could say the taxi's windscreen in the first image is another transition from one dimension into another. The dimension of getting to know Cuzco's local life from the taxi's inner, hermetic and industrial space. Effectively, Larraín addresses an anthropological work here. He informs, with artistry, about a situation, fulfilling the photojournalist label he was invested with as a reporter during the 60s.

However, this is not the same photo style or gaze he used in *Valparaíso*. This one is not uniquely expressive but informative instead. Larraín reveals this more professional inclination in the captions and contact sheets he sent to Magnum with the writings:[29]

singers, and artists had taken most of the magazine covers at the time. One particular case the author mentions is Magnum's photographer Inge Morath. She comments that after considerable time the photographer spent learning about a menagerie of animal actors who lived in Manhattan, their trainers, and the political commitment, *Life* magazine in 1957 trivialised Morath's photo work. They headlined "high-paid Llama in Big City" (Hoelscher 200-1), to emphasise the exoticism and eccentricity of finding llamas in the core of one of the most multi-cultural and glamorous places in the world: Manhattan. Therefore, this relation between exotic animals and exotic cultures at the time might also be vital in understanding *Granta*'s decision to select that particular photograph as Larraín's photo-essay cover.

[29] Binder 1, 2, 9 and 11 on Peru (1957-60). Sergio Larraín archive. Magnum Paris, August 2019.

Cuzco zone- group of Indian going in mountain;

Cuzco - peru - Capital of Inca empire - old Inca wall and modern street lights;

Urubambava valley of the incas - Vilcanota river Cuzco streets;

Cuzco old Inca walls – marvellous stone work.

In contrast to those writing about Valparaíso, these are synthetic descriptions. These reveal the professional and journalistic attempt of the photographer at the time to engage in the story.

This reportage does reflect the anthropological gaze Leiva mentions, namely, the documentary relation between people and landscape. However, none of these images relates to the magazine context whatsoever. Larraín took these photographs 30 years prior to the Peruvian elections, yet all this artistic-anthropological richness was never truly considered.

For the magazine, a global image was at stake, basically due to Peru's climate of politico-cultural change. Within this context, Larraín's images end up becoming another facet of Latin American poverty rather than a cultural-artistic exploration. Consequently, *Granta* inserted Larraín's photographs in such a political context that none of them would have the means to be seen otherwise. All of the most outstanding stylistic features of Larraín's photographs, such as cut-off and faded people, out of focus, low angles, textures, were overlapped, shadowed, by the contrast of the political and social change subjected to Vagas Llosa's text "A Fish Out of Water". This early transcript of the Peruvian writer's memoir explains the political implications that led him to run for president, remarking ideas on poverty, democracy, and global politics (Vargas-Llosa 15-76), enhanced and swollen all by the photographs of the Chilean.

3.2 Valparaíso, erotism and decadency

In 1992, to continue, the French publication *L' Argot d' Eros* by Robert Giraud once again includes Larraín's photographs, in a publication this time about the language of eroticism. Here, the Chilean photographer participates with two photos about his work on Los Siete Espejos from the 50s-60s. This subseries from *Valparaíso* book shows the bohemian life of

a nightclub located in the seaside town of Valparaíso, Chile. Larraín's archive originally includes more than 110 contact sheets, 3170 single photographs,[30] on the subject, from which Agnès Sire considers 122 single images for *Valparaíso* (2017) new, extended edition.

Los Siete Espejos saloon is, in Valparaíso's history, the most famous and relevant brothel from the early 20th Century. Vessels arrived at this bar from everywhere in the world to reach the port with hundreds of sailors who would find a place to rest for a few nights before getting back on board after months of sailing. The place was located at the heart of Valparaíso's Chinatown (Leiva 104-5), a commercial area conditioned by the port city's bohemian nightlife. Therefore, for these qualities, there have been different attempts to illustrate the brothel's vibe and everyday life at the time.

Larraín discovered this city early in his life when he was only a boy. The numerous multi-layered stories behind the bar's *mirrors*, the fortuitous encounters of men and women, the music, it all seduced the young photographer early in the 50s. Because of this, the series shows candid moments of human interaction, where people kiss, talk, dance and drink, thus capturing "an atmosphere of the city which feels both personal and heightened" (Parr qtd in Sánchez-Fung 13). For this, the photographer commonly focuses on developing a mirrored perspective. As if the mirrors told the many stories behind the wrecked walls, and every reflection accounted for a different story.

The series thus is not only documental but expressive as well, since it addresses people's social and emotional codes, fleeting stories, rather than the place basic features. Alternatively, as Foitzik says concerning the same series: "Larraín simplemente nos muestra seres que se salen de sí mismos y del contexto donde ocurre la fotografía, seres fugitivos e infinitos; nos retrata la no pertenencia del referente o su desterritorialización, pero a su vez carga la fotografía de un sinfín de espiritualizaciones y materialidades irreductibles" (70). Similar also to Barthes' understanding on the capacity of transforming subjects into objects that, even though they are neither subjects nor objects necessarily, are subjected to experience "a micro-version of death", when the photograph presents them (or the story) as a "parenthesis" between the living-present reference and the lifeless print

[30] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive. August 2019.

(*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 13-4). Larraín's work on Los Siete Espejos responds, therefore, to this "parenthesis" full of "fugitives and infinite beings" that detach from themselves and their context to give place to a subjective world.

Conversely, the film work *À Valparaiso,* released in 1963 in Paris, directed by the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens, and written by Chris Marker, gives more staggering feedback on the city. Under a strong ideology, the opposite vision of this film documents the implications of the port life at night, portraying stereotypical figures as a consequence of a decadent city led by vice. One of them is the figure of the "Choro del Puerto", a troublesomely tough man born and bred at the seaport, a working-class representative, led by aggressive inclinations that, in the film, incites a knife fight with another man for territorial marking (Leiva 106). The characters in Larraín's photo essay, on the contrary, seem to respond to a more intimate and human condition: the lovers, the dancers, the loneliness, the fleeing romance, and the spectacle.

However, Robert Giraud, neither does he offer the means to analyse Los Siete Espejos brothel; on the contrary, he utilises Larraín's work to explore the vocabulary of love, fed by the wanderings of life. When talking about eroticism, the author presents views on the rites, fantasies, games, excesses, and camouflaged abandonment. These views Giraud expresses in entertainment forms refers to the communicative act of social sexuality through language and visual representations. The author, throughout 25 photographs, draws up the social slang regarding the language of pleasure across the world, from Pittsburgh to Las Végas, via Valparaiso, Bangkok, or Paris.

With this in mind, Sergio Larraín participates with two photographs (Fig. 15):[31] the first photo is a naked show-woman dancing and wearing nothing but high heels; the other is a couple kissing passionately. None of these photographs is more significant than the rest of the series, yet because of an interweaved textuality of different readings and contexts, Larraín photo essay on Valparaíso acquires "una nueva marca cultural" (Leiva

[31] Larraín's photographs are published along with his fellow colleagues from Magnum, such as Cartier-Bresson, Burri, or Erwitt, among others. From outside the agency, names like Brassaï or Doisneau also appear in the table of collaborators.

83), transcending thus the photographs' own limits. Just as the case of Peru and its intertextuality on poverty and development.

Figure 15 – Los Siete Espejos bar, showwoman and kissing couple (1963)

3.3 The characterisation of the other

In 2004, Magnum Photos in *The Photobook: a History* by Gerry Badger and Martin Parr, includes, once again, Larraín as part of an extensive photo compilation. The importance of this publication may seem shallow at simple sight, compared to others. However, this photobook was meant to be the first of its kind. In the introduction of the first volume, "Between the Novel and Film", Parr comments on the exceptional qualities this photobook represents: "it has a specific character, distinct from the photographic print, be it the simply functional workprint, or the fine-art exhibition print". It is a piece of art in itself that harbours the visual "history of photography". Although, most importantly, the photobook considers its photographers/authors as "auteur", in a sort of cinematic sense of directing their own takes: the authorial gaze (Parr and Badger, The Photobook: a History 6-7).

In this context, Magnum considers Larraín for his work in *El Rectángulo en la Mano* (1963) and *Valparaíso* (1991). The photos respond to "Les Petites Filles" in Valparaíso, "The Matronas" in Bolivia and, an old elevator in the seaport face-paging the image of a vagabond child alongside a stray dog, both laying on the street of Valparaíso (Fig. 16).

Figure 16 – "petite filles" (1952), "matronas" (1957), lift and vagabond boy (1963)

Nonetheless, these photographs are all part of the subsection "Other Territories", which attempts to demonstrate individual photographers' point of view concerning "their culture and the world around them – finding out who they are, where they came from, and where they hope to go" (Parr and Badger, *The Photobook: a History* 95). This way, Sergio Larraín participates in this segment along with photographers and authors such as Rafael Larco and his *Cusco Historico*, Manuel Álvarez Bravo in the portrayal of the

"mexicanidad" (98), Nacho López also illustrating Mexico City, Dave Heath depicting the fractures of post-war America, Ernest Cole and his experience with the apartheid in South Africa, Mayito (Mario García Goya) and the face of Fidel's Cuba, or Enrique Bostelmann and Paolo Gasparini and the Latin America's injustices and the representation of the mestizo, among others.

Respectively (Fig. 17), hence, like Larraín's images, the section empathises with the exotic other in the context of their otherness. Non-traditional-like characters displayed usually under traumatic circumstances, dressed up in their local garments or, in some cases, undressed, are drawn upon to talk about the photographers' context and unfamiliar human conditions. The publication thus humanises the otherness from afar, yet never as their own.

Figure 17 – Larco, Álvarez, Lápez, Heath, Cole, Mayito, Bostelmann and Gasparini

In Larraín's professional profile review, presumptively written by Badger, there is a clear intention of relating his work to some familiar, influential names. The text points out the similarities between Larraín's *El Rectángulo en la Mano* and Cartier-Bresson's *The Decisive Moment*, both as an "aesthetic manifesto". Lately, he contrasts it to Robert Frank, since both practised a "kind of sharp-eyed improvisation, reliant on spontaneity and chance, a photographer of hints rather than certainties" (102). Either way, the author makes these comparisons to contextualise and validate Larraín's fascination for the uniqueness and strangeness of South America. Accordingly, the writer validates the Chilean's artistry from a local reading about the otherness of his work.

To conclude, in 2011 the Spanish photography curator Horacio Fernández, in his book *El Fotolibro Latinoamericano* attempts to understand photography's Latin American scene based on a compilation of the best Latin American photography books. Inspired by Martin Parr's publication, Fernández recognises that he considered only a few Latin-American photographers for this book. The Chilean photographer was one of them, with a full display of his book *El Rectángulo en la Mano* (1963) as well as the booklet *In the 20th Century* (1965) with the series on the street children (Fig. 18). Even though Fernández is not entirely accurate in the information he shares, the author does give compelling

reflections on how the appearance of these photobooks can alter the canon of the history of photography (Fernández 15).

Figure 18 – Display of El Rectángulo en la Mano and In the 20th Century

In this respect, the author is correct. Either in Parr's or Badger's book, Fernández's or any other publication previously mentioned of this period, Sergio Larraín, as many other photographers in the European artistic scene, has been cornered off as the photographers of a Latin American resurgence, poverty, or progress.

For the Cuban writer Edmundo Desnoes, the visualisation of the Latin American children in photography is a "powerful sign because, in the midst of the agony, the changes in the region, [the children] stand for an unknown future, a future that seems always endangered" ("Six Stations of the Latino American Via Crusis" 11). Fernández, in this regard, is more pragmatic and straightforward than Desnoes, and comments, “la mirada del fotógrafo posee un tinte más social y muestra también la desigualdad, como sucede en *El Rectánculo en la Mano* o *La Ciudad de México III*, donde los niños ya no son metáfora de esplendoroso porvenir sino méndigos desposeídos, y la arquitectura que se observa es también cartón y contrachapado de las viviendas más humildes” (*El fotolibro americano* 79).

In summary, it becomes evident that, from the 90s, Sergio Larraín's work on Latin America has had a particular interest in certain European contexts, gaining cultural relevance to some extent. Reportages from the 60s and 70s were mainly descriptive, accompanied by a fixed editorial line on either political conflict, iconic characters, or misery – like the ones on charity houses in Santiago, the earthquake in Valdivia, the Tirana celebration in Bolivia, or the 1962 World Cup in Brazil. However, in the 90s, the specialised critique begins to consider Larraín's work not as a testimony of reality necessarily but as a subjective reading of the world – specifically in Latin America. In addition, the work of the Chilean starts to be understood and read under humanist approaches, allowing to "know more” about the distant world Latin America was at the time.

Additionally, local media to some extent also attempted to make some space for intellectual approaches thereof. For example, Manuel Pertier in *Piel de*

Leopardo, publishes Larraín's photographs in the article "Sergio Larraín, La Cámara Lúcida", which focuses on critical studies on literature. This time the photographs considered are, once again, from the Valparaíso series. The publication attempts to emphasise the relationship between Larraín and Ronald Barthes' publication *Camera Lucida*, one of the foundational books about critical reflection on photography in the 1980s. The author here raises awareness about the camera as a medium. He says the device (the camera) does mean the same for both Larraín and Barthes: a symbiosis between the photographer, the camera, and the photographed object. Furthermore, the author describes Larraín's photographic act as a corporal gesture where the photographer's eye turns into an extension of his arm through the rectangle the camera shape is (Pertier 32). The same feature that Cartier-Bresson claimed regarding the decisive moment, where the camera became an extension of his eye; and similar also to John Berger in *Ways of Seeing* when says “the photographer’s way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject” (10).

Either way, publications such as *Diseño* and *Piel de Leopardo*, although local magazines, emphasise the European-known qualities by which the photographer has grown a name among the locals – without paying much attention to his work. This means that, even early in Larraín's comeback period, his work on Latin America never overcame the Eurocentric readings and established thus as a prestigious and international, yet unquestioned and unstudied, brand.

These many publications in 90s Europe and early 2000s have generated and shared thus a particular language, a personality, about far distant communities that have reduced layers of complex societal qualities into narrowed Eurocentric approaches on wealth, progress, and human rights. A cliché within the 20th Century "exacerbated by a legacy of poverty, oppression, and social injustice (Richardson Foreword), which for this study accounts for "the argot of Latin America". The figure of the “exotic other” hence has now changed: they need to be rescued, rather than only exhibited or re-discovered, and Sergio Larraín's work happened to have "a psychological edge, a drama", in Badger's words, for the job. A psychodrama that would give to the world "sailors, bars, brothels, prostitutes and gangsters, shot in the most seductive stream-of-consciousness style – blurred, grainy, angular and using the frame edges superbly well" (Parr and Badger, *The Photobook: a History* 102).

4 The imagery of London

In 1998 Agnes Sire and Martin Par publish another important photo work on Larraín's production in the shape of a photobook: *London 1958-59.* The publications were launched initially in Italian, English and French, being this last one published by Éditions Hazan, the same publishing house that produced *Valparaíso* in 1991. Sire originally presented the book in the month of Paris Photos, the world's top photography fair, alongside an exhibition at the FNAC Montparnasse store. Both the book and the exhibition display the photographs Larraín took back in the 50s, a photo work sponsored initially by the British Council to portray the Londoner culture at the time. Therefore, this section explores the impact of Larraín's work on the perception of London, almost 40 years apart, and the photographs when published. Additionally, it also analyses the photographer's aesthetics in developing a shared language about the city.

In Leiva's book on Larraín's biography, the author notices that, among the three different versions of *London*, despite accounting for the same image number and displaying, two of them have different introductions. While the English art critic, Mike Seaborne, oversees the Italian and English versions, the French critic, Alain Bergala, undertook the French one, thus proposing a different interpretation concerning image reading (116-7).

For Seaborn, for instance, the images come to show the drastic changes London went through in the late 50s. He mentions that by the time of Larraín's visit, "traditional values still largely prevailed, even though, as some of his photographs suggest, change was definitely in the air (…) The top hats and tails in Larraín's photographs remained a common sight in the city even until the 1960s when large-scale modernisation caused many of the old formalities to disappear" (Larraín, *London 1958-59* 3-4). Seaborne gives local insights for what he could read on the photographs, centred in the convulsive city of London rather than the images as such, a city firmly rooted in tradition moving towards a new decade. He brings out the idea of tradition and modernity as a self-evident approach where the Chilean represents the city by its sense of "atmosphere" and candid nature; terminology used compared to Bill Brandt's work *A Night in London* (1938).

For Bergala, on the other hand, *London 1958-59* is a self-reflection of Larraín's photographic act. This is an interesting interpretation of image contemplativeness and photography's role, from which Larraín captures the absence and flicking moments of aimless presence in London. Additionally, and more importantly, the author ventures into

the suggestion that the photographer masterfully establishes a political way of seeing instead of politicising what is constantly seen. Nonetheless, the French review had already coined this political way of seeing concerning Larraín's work over the previous years. Agnès Sire, in this regard, has been persistently referring to this idea since 1987, when in *Aperture Foundation* article writes for the first time that "we learn to see in his wake what we would not see without him" (Sire, "Sergio Larraín" 28).

Furthermore, in 2014, around 30 years later, with motif of Sergio Larraín retrospective in his own country, Sire sets a talk series called “Mostrar a los otros lo que otros no miran: Perspectivas en torno a la fotografía de Sergio Larraín” at Chile's Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. Bergala's readings thus reveal a no minor feature by which Larraín is in high regard within the French culture. The idea of visualising what "is not there" seems to be significantly more critical than the documentary reportages on local history that Seaborne writes on.

However, Larraín organises the book's narrative in such a fashion that both reading, Seaborne and Bergala, and no matter how distant from each other they might be, would fit in the imaginary proposed by the photographer – being both perfectly valid viewpoints. Therefore, *London 1958-59 (*1998) expresses both the local interests regarding historicity and the relevance and presence of the Chilean photographer's authorial gaze within the European context, a crucial point that sets photography within broader literary and critical issues.

The book begins with an angled photograph before the introductory text (Fig. 19), taken in the middle of the main street, right where vehicles pass by. Due to the verticality of the image and narrowed composition, it is clear that it is not precisely a landscape photograph. It evidences movement, occurrences, and suspended time as if attempted to bring the entire local circumstance together in one image. The photograph is divided diagonally by the angle of the horizon. On the left side, it shows a series of taxis steering towards the camera, likely to be a Beardmore Mark 7 or one of Austin FX4's series, with the sign of "for hire" on top. An older man is wearing a beret on the right side and allegedly pulls a rickshaw. The man and vehicles share the foreground as if the cameraman was in the middle of both. Behind the man, in a vertical sharped angle, it raises a traditional English building complex (four floors, high narrowed windows and small balconies) that covers half of the composition. Retail stores, restaurants, and convenience shops occupy the complex as traditionally functioned until these days.

Figure 19 – London 1958-59 book, car and man on the street (1958-1959)

It is understandable the penchant in both readings. The photograph offers a multi-layered dimension of meaning, where Larraín portrays the clash of modernity and progress under traditional and symbolic elements. Larraín, therefore, may have used this vertical image as both (i) a visual introduction towards the rest of the content – as commonly evidenced in the previous publications – and (ii) to humanise the city through its circumstances as the photographer usually does with people.

The photobook intersperses different vertical photographs in the visual narrative. They commonly focus on people while inspecting cultural diversity and social practices. In the first selection (Fig. 20), even though none of the images seems to share any specific photographic technic, they share a sense of composition and local experience. The photographs evidence the inhabitation and use of public space without specifying any particular geography. The high angle of the photographs, allegedly possible by the photographer's height, and the close-up takes of the subjects, also indicate the photographer's nearness and detailed composition.

Figure 20 – London 1958-59 book, woman, men, and priest (1958-1959)

Symbolically speaking, all the images intertwine cultural elements where Larraín captures everyday life under specific, local contexts. As simple as it sounds, people wearing hats is a solid cultural indicator of social codes. For example, the pillbox hat on the old lady of the first image was a fashionable article specially designed for women in the early Twentieth Century but viral between the 50-60s.

The picture in the middle illustrates two non-related men crossing paths in an intersection. The man on the right is on his side and wearing an Indian turban. He stands there holding his own hands. On the left side, another man walks away from the camera. From this man, it is only visible a long, brighter coat and a dark top hat. In the background, there is a concrete wall with phrases like "Est. 1866" and "milk delivery" as a form of advertising from a grocery shop, relatively standard at the time.

In the last picture, a man (likely a priest) holds a crucifix while standing before another man wearing a beret and paying full attention. The location is presumptively at the Hyde Park Corner.

It is not strange, therefore, that the authors read this series under historical approaches. It all demonstrates the diversity of gender differentiation, traditional values, social practices, cultural codes, and development. Most of the photo-takes are related, in significant part, to the Indian migration wave from 1950 that, following the Second World War and the breakup of the British Empire, increased rapidly in the coming decades.[32] The series thus continues showing people in their daily life walking, standing, buying, sharing the public space: a kid in a turban, women in coats or uniforms, businessmen, officers.

From a different perspective, the following photo sequence shows unalike photoshoots and graphic styles as well. This time, the artistic intention seems to be related to the absence of people since they all look intentionally cut off or blurred – a rather common feature in Larraín's work. Particularly in *London 1958-59,* however, the photographer utilises symbolic elements to show, perhaps, the opposite. Here, the photographer seems to be focusing on city inhabitation and people's relationship to the place instead of solely portray individuals. There is evidence of human participation and action, which he subtly displays in the composition.

In the selection (Fig. 21), the first image is taken at a high angle. It shows a typical gambling game called Crown and Anchor, commonly played by sailors of the Royal Navy, the British merchant sailors, fishing fleets, and even people on crowded streets. People and players would gather together and try to beat the dealer, or "the banker". It would be easy to tell that Larraín focuses exclusively on the board game, but he is not; he aims at the gambling scene. There is a money transaction occurring above the game board and the betting coins.

[32] The migratory wave was partially possible due to the British Nationality Act 1948, that enabled migration from the Commonwealth, increasing thus the British Indian population from 31.000 to 375.000 within 1951 to 1971. More information can be found at nationalarchives.gov.uk and Abbas, Tahir (2005). *Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure*.

Figure 21 – London 1958-59 book, board game, the "tube", and mist (1958-1959)

The following image in the same selection is from the London *tube*, inside one of the wagons. Larraín takes this picture using an extreme low-angle shot where only people's feet are seen. The caption is not sharply defined to distinguish the many differences in their shoes or clothes. However, one can easily tell people are all seated, both men and women waiting for the train to get to the next station, leg-crossing or reading the newspaper. This is a social practice culturally perpetuated until these days. The photographer evidences it as the projection or repetition of an occurrence just off the vanishing point in the composition, as if people were an extension of the inhabited space.

Lastly, the third image exhibits a foggy street where Larraín only reveals statues silhouettes, a streetlight, and a cut-off man in a top hat. Once again, the composition cuts people out of the frame. However, the partial human absence becomes evidence of their relationship with the dense mist – a London's branded feature that embraces foggy landscapes as a sort of cultural cliché reinforced throughout time since William Blake's writings. Because:

> Writing about London has often been inspired by thus jumble and complexity, or what Samuel Johnson described as the city's 'wonderful immensity'. Dickens, of course, and Gissing in the nineteenth century, Patrick Hamilton in the 1930, Martin Amis, Peter Ackroyd, Ian Sinclair and Will Self more recently. One effect has been a swollen, imaginary London, larger in the mind than in reality (Jack 7).

Therefore, Larraín, in the transition of the 50s and 60s, was one of the first photographers capturing this Londoner imagery, visually, without documentary pretentiousness but highly aesthetics instead. A type of work only anteceded by Bill Brandt *A Night in London* from 1938 and Robert Frank's *London* from 1951. Photo works that, although years apart, would inevitably share visible aesthetic principles. As a result, it is not difficult to identify Larraín's photographs with Bergala's writings. It is understandable how this artistry of reaching unforeseen spaces through photography help visualise the means of a shared imagination; the visual experience of the no-corporeality, the absence, as a way of human interaction through local experiences.

In this respect, only a year after the book launch, in 1999, *Granta* magazine utilises a photo batch of thirteen images from *London* for another publication about London city. In the issue n65, "London: the lives of the city", the international magazine looks to recreate a visual narrative on how London got to "figure in the league table of great cities", in comparison to, for example, great cities such as Mexico City, Bombay or São Paulo, to finally place itself into the quarter of "global cities", just like Paris, Tokyo or New York. The focus of the publication explores the circumstances by which the London population grew exponentially at the time. It also emphasises the discussion on "money and the financial institutions and companies" (Jack 6-8) as variables that would lead London towards rising progress.

In the subsection "London then", Granta magazine considers Larraín's work cultural evidence of this demographic change and sense of progress. Larraín's section and the English photographer Stephen Gill's "Soho Now" are the only photo essays in the magazine. Both sections are the counterpoint of each other by contrasting London's different gazes in time. This way, even though Gill's photographs show a fresher, more contemporary look on the streets and the city, Larraín's photographs are the ones that set the aesthetic tradition of the city: “The Chilean photographer Sergio Larraín came from Paris to London in 1958 and caught the city at a time of change: among the smog and bowler hats were new immigrants from the Commonwealth and young ‘bohemians’ in jazz clubs, heralding the city of the next decade” (Jack 277-290).

Therefore, *London 1958-59* photobook responds either way to a homage and visual documentation of London cultural heritage in the mid-twentieth century. Larraín represents either the city or its inhabitants in such a fashion that any approach in addressing this work is valid to explore its connection to the local reality, historically, ethnographically, or sociologically. Most importantly, however, is the impact and relevance of Larraín's work within the British community despite being an outsider, a South American with a non-local view.

The lucidity of Larraín's proposal escapes from traditional stereotypes. It installs his uncanny poetic of unusual perspectives, lighting, and transgressive framing, making his way towards the heart of the social circle: their self-recognition. In this regard, Leiva recognises that Larraín’s work, one way or another, survives in the race against time, because “no importando la oscuridad, ni los años, ni el silencio prolongado: el imaginario de Larraín está al lado nuestro pues sus mitologías sobreviven y terminan por amanecer

una y otra vez" (48). In this work, the photographer focuses on streets, people, and public spaces to reveal an aesthetic of the city under a non-documentary gaze yet highly emotional and dramatic instead. Once again, Larraín, instead of producing a societal report, invites the viewer to observe his personal gaze, to see as he did back then.

As with many other photographers' works, Larraín's visual production on London reaches a second life thirty years after its realisation. However, this time, by the support of the French curator and Magnum artistic director Agnès Sire.

5 IVAM and Larraín's archetype

1999 would be a sort of closure regarding Larraín's comeback since 1989. However, far from being a low point in the photographer's career, this closure meant quite the opposite. 1999 would mean the structuration of the photographer's archetype for the first time in history for what he was recognised for, as an artist and individual, gifting him with an extended personal narrative personally made by writers, intellectuals, and other fellow photographers. The phenomenon thus takes place in the largest solo exhibition the photographer ever had during his life: "Sergio Larraín" at the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM) in Spain. The exhibition, commissioned by Agnès Sire, had two main objectives: firstly, it is an attempt to evidence different sides and personal projects that compose the photographer's visual narrative; and secondly, to establish the name of Sergio Larraín as a trademark by naming the exhibition after his own name. To this extent, this section inspects visual and literary narrative in the photobook to understand how the figure of Larraín was structured and perpetuated in time. It also explores how text and image dimension intertwines, creating new realities, and setting the photographer's archetype in the history of photography.

The original exhibition shows 112 images displayed in three main groups: the vagabond children, Valparaíso, and London, alongside the photographer's early work on Argentina, Bolivia, France, Italy and Iran (IVAM), with the goal of looking for the aesthetic key about the visual universe created by the photographer (Leiva 118). This event comes along with the launch of the book of the same name, *Sergio Larraín.* The book includes the photographs exhibited, a selection of writings by Larraín himself, and essays and texts by Agnès Sire, Juan Manuel Bonet, René Burri, Josep Vicent Monzó, Roberto Bolaño and Pablo Neruda.

Nonetheless, even though worldwide media had widely published Sergio Larraín's work, alongside many other renowned photographers, this particular photobook represents a different type of acknowledgement for the photographer. IVAM publication is the book that gave Sergio Larraín a personality by the hand of Magnum as well as cultural value and validation by the writers' names that show up alongside his images. Under no circumstances it is said that Larraín's work had no significant impact before this book, but the opposite. The tremendous impact Larraín photographs had in the 20th Century's second half finally had a face to be recognised with, and this book became a homage and narrative of it.

First, the book cover illustrates a train station scene from Buenos Aires, Argentina (Fig. 22). It is a dynamic photograph made in 1957, and it shows people in movement, running even. If it were not because the description says it is from a train station, it would not be possible to recognise the location or context. The relevance seems to focus on the photograph experimental expression regarding lighting and positive/negative shapes. The light beams get into the frame from the right-upper side to the left-lower one, whilst human-shaped shadows, in the other way around, move inclined from the right-lower side to the left-upper one, interweaving shadows and light beams in the composition.

Figure 22 – IVAM book cover, Buenos Aires train station (1957)

The photograph, one might say, becomes a symbol in Larraín's work perception, a statement about what is yet to come, which, alongside the book's title *Sergio Larraín*, is the time in motion suspended by the photographer. The first page after the photograph includes the first selected text from Larraín and it writes, "Traigo paz, entren adentro" – I bring peace, come inside. The text is used as an invitation, an opening quote, to Larraín's intimate space and work, based on peaceful moments, moments of grace, as he would say.

Equally important is to mention that this photograph, in contrast to the ones inside the book, never had meaningful public exposure in printed media. The image belongs to an equally unexplored archive on the city from 1957 of around 160 single images on streets,

people, landscapes, and his friend Dr Raúl Carrea.[33] This means the decision for this photograph to be in both book and cover is primarily aesthetic and curatorial, looking to explore thus the authorial gaze of the author rather than any other quality.

To continue, the first photograph inside the book, right after the text, responds to a portrait of the photographer made by the Swiss René Burri in 1967, one of the most renowned humanist photographers of Magnum Photos. Burri, who also participates in constructing Larraín's imagery, engages in a subsection called "Sergio Larraín". He mentions something "disturbing" in Larraín's photographs, not related to the sense of truth he used to work with. On the contrary, the Swiss relates this disturbance to a poetic value regarding the uncanny, sharp angles and cut off and blurred people as if they were running away from the frame (Monzó 9). It is precisely this poetic value and photographic artistry Juan Manuel Bonet, IVAM's director, claims it in the introductory text when he writes that Larraín is "fotógrafo de culto, pero secreto" (Monzó 7), a secret photographer yet to be revealed.

The second photograph is the classic (now) image of "Les Petite Filles", the emblematic image of the two little girls at Bavestrello passage. Hence, the first two images present a similar composition to *Valparaíso* book in how they are displayed (Fig. 23). Both books begin with a small-framed photograph leading to the "Les petite Filles" photograph. The previous analysis of the first book presents a small photograph as an introduction. It may represent an entry window to the rest of the content, a visual narrative about wandering around (as Larraín used to do – as a child would). In this particular case, the reading could be the same. However, instead of being a cut-out boy standing inside the window, this time it would be Sergio Larraín himself who is inside now. He is the one inviting the reader to wonder around his images; through him, no longer a boy, towards a well-aged, matured work.

Figure 23 – IVAM book, Larraín portrait (1967) and "les petite filles" (1952)

[33] Binder 2 on Buenos Aires city (1957). Sergio Larraín archive. Magnum Paris, August 2019.

Josep Vicent Monzó, the other commissioner of the exhibition, while recalling his experience regarding Larraín, reveals another feature of the photographer that is worth mentioning. In this respect, Monzó, after summarising the photographer's life, education and interests, comments that the Chilean utilises photography, particularly the camera, as a medium to change reality, transforming it under a personal experience. He claims for the aesthetic value of photography and the capacity of images of becoming poetic objects:

> como un arma para cambiar la realidad que nos circunda, obteniendo unos objetos en los que la combinación de este compromiso con el ordenamiento visual y estético de su contenido pueda ofrecer una imagen que hable por sí sola, emocionando al espectador para posicionarlo en la misma situación que la que su autor vivía cuando apretó el obturador de su cámara fotográfica (Monzó 16).

The photograph at the end of Monzó's text is one of the Potosí collections in Bolivia (Fig. 24). The photographer took this image in 1957 and a large portion of the material about the South American region. The image includes many of the common elements Larraín is known for: it is a high-angle shot of two Bolivian women walking down the street, wearing traditional clothes, and both contrasted by the duality of white and black tones, similar to that one photograph where one woman seems to be the shadow of the other only because of the lighting work: "The Matronas", also in Potosí.

Figure 24 – Larraín's silhouette self- portrait and two Bolivian women (1957)

This time, the main difference is that the photographer's presence reveals itself in the composition as an integral part. Larraín's shadow is reflected by the sunlight in the middle of the composition, almost dividing the two women in a vertical half. Larraín's shadow would become the most contrasting element within the image configuration: it is a neat black tone striking the photographic pose of holding the camera with one hand whilst aiming with the other. This kind of photograph is lesser frequent when thinking of Larraín's imagery or even the Potosí series. However, in this case, it works to exemplify Monzó's idea on Larraín's artistry and poetic objects, thus becoming the photographer's self-inclusion a poetic device.

Moreover, Monzó concludes by attributing Larraín's artistic freedom to the core of his exploration as a photographer, out of the mainstream. He presents Larraín as an artist rather than a photographer. Like an artist, for instance, who breaks the photograph's traditional making by imposing the reflection of his own shadow in the composition. The author finishes quoting an extract of one of Larraín's poems that goes, "Como no hay tiempo, siempre es el momento de corregir y empezar" (16), emphasising the intrinsic value of Larraín's photographic expression of organising and correcting the visual world one lives in, inside out a photograph.

Agnès Sire, in the book's subsection "Sólo la Piedra es Inocente", gives an accurate analysis of Larraín's development as a photographer while giving personal and critical insights regarding her professional reading. This section also incorporates a text/image sequence that begins with a photograph of Machu Picchu in 1960 and finishes with a small text that goes "queremos un mundo ideal y no miramos el que hay" (Fig. 25). In this case, Sire anchors the idea about "the innocence of the stone" through both photograph and text. She says that what had impressed her the most was that Larraín's photographs offered her nothing outstanding in documentary matters. For the French curator, in Larraín's images there was no sense of "history" but "una viva agudeza, una especie de terrible coincidencia con el tiempo" instead. (Monzó 23).

Figure 25 – Hand and local stone, Cuzco (1957-1960)

For Sire, when reading Larraín's photographs, there is no story to tell or reveal; it is a bare expression. The author sets the rhetoric of "stone" as a backbone in Larraín's imagery. She emphasises this as an invariable element that remains throughout his photo-work, just like the photographer himself remains suspended in time: "la misma ligereza del tiempo suspendido sin énfasis. Inhabitual para un sudamericano" (Monzó 24).

The photograph reinforces Sire's idea that in the work of the Chilean, every element is constantly in movement, changing, even the topics. Nevertheless, the only element that remains unaltered is the stone, perhaps, as a metaphor for the photographer's resistance to change. Therefore, the photograph shows nothing but a bare hand, almost playing with its own shadow, by the classic, sharp-angled Cuzco stones. A visual reinforcement about the fragile presence of life compared to the solidness of what does not move or change.

Similarly, the phrase that calls out the world one does not want to see acts as a conclusion of Sire's view on Larraín's artistry: the prevalence of seeing beyond what is evident to the eye.

Lastly, the Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño in his "Los Personajes Fatales", describes the photographer as a proper Latin American writer would do, in a highly rhetoric yet beautiful way, complementing the photographer's imagery with literature resources. He talks about Larraín as a fictional character that, with his camera, reveals the world we identify with, captioning timeless spaces. In this regard, Bolaño says that he has lived through some of Larraín's photographs: "por alguna de sus forografías yo he pasado (…) he visto los suelos como espejo (…) me miraron aquellos a quienes Larraín miró" (Monzó 46). As if the photographer would make him accomplice, a partner in crime, of the photographic act.

However, Bolaño refers to Larraín's *London* book, and none of the photographs in *Sergio Larraín* publication is from this series. The curatorial team was inclined to show the ones from Paris instead. Therefore, when Bolaño talks about Larraín's capacity to reveal intimate yet shared universes, the images selected are both from 1959 Paris (Fig. 26).

Figure 26 – Handrail, La Ruche, and stray dog, Paris (1959)

The first photograph is a high-angle shot of a centred double handrail; while the one on the right shows a dog leaned on a wall, posing as if it was about to urinate. The photographs have nothing to do with each other whatsoever, either by the type of shot, angle, or subject. What anchors these images to Bolaño's text is nothing but a full rhetoric about Larraín. The writer's readings on Larraín's *London* were removed from its original city and moved to another, gifting Paris, in this case, with the mysticism of London, yet always under the gaze of Sergio Larraín.

To conclude, Larraín's archetype may be defined in two critical aspects: aesthetically and rhetorically.

Aesthetically speaking, Larraín's composition and style deal with space and time (sometimes separately and sometimes together). Both elements act as reminders of the

eternal absence of immutable places and fleeting forms; the presence of movement and lights. Additionally, Larraín's work challenges the original referent, the subject, and transforms it by investing it with personal experiences that end up being shared by entire communities.

Rhetorically speaking, Larraín's complex aesthetic work is usually overlapped by the powerful figure created out of his own. For example, the "peace" Larraín mentions at the beginning of the book as an invitation to self-reflection and his inner aesthetic space is quickly overshadowed by Burri's appreciations. The idea of how "disturbing" Larraín's photographs are for the Swiss automatically outweighs the Chilean's own reflections. Because Larraín's sense of beauty seems to be related more to an underworld reality, unconventional, rather than to a traditional (say European) photographic style of documenting the real.

Similarly, Agnès Sire presents the photographer as an unnatural South American, whose work does not have an elemental, documentary continuity but, on the contrary, is unusually overloaded with expressiveness. As if trying to locate Sergio Larraín somewhere within the traditional avant-garde photography yet always as an outsider, whose artistry is competent enough to place him among the giants of photography.

In any case, even though colleagues and the specialised critique praised the Chilean's work, he would always be invested by the personality of a stranger, an unusual, eccentric man. A personality that was directly trespassed to the totality of his work and perpetuated finally after his death in 2013 with the launch of his retrospective *Sergio Larraín: The Vagabond Photographer*, edited by Agnès Sire. Monzó, Bonet, Bolaño and Sire help swell this archetype by enriching the photographer's imagery through extravagant approaches. These are usually about how magic and unusual Larraín's photographs are, making it almost impossible to get close to his work without the preconceptions of his mystic and melancholic figure.

Therefore, even though the same Larraín stated in the book "Este es mi trabajo actual, hacer textos. Impersonales. Objetivos. Sin yo" (Monzó 151), he could never remove his own figure from his visual narrative. Most of Larraín's imagery presented in this book will be harboured in the popular knowledge from that moment on, projecting his figure way beyond his death. That is why the Chilean photographer Luis Poirot always resents losing his friend “Queco” to the French and not having the opportunity to have access to the totality of his work and, individuality, as an artist: “es una visión cautiva de una

curadora francesa [Agnès Sire] Entonces nos devuelven a un Sergio Larrain a la Magnum, primero, y a la francesa, segundo; vale decir, el fotógrafo que ellos quieren que sea, el fotógrafo de los niños pobres, del exotismo de Valparaíso" (Wastavino).

CHAPTER III: Larraín’s photographic imagery

1 Larraín's magic images

1.1 Origin and context: the case of "Les petit filles"

Sergio Larraín (1931-2012) was a Chilean photographer whose skyrocketing career in the field, influential admirers and introverted personality have maintained a mystical status for his work, in which "many legends (often false) have grown up around it" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 29). This idea of mysticism is supported by a two-fold rationale: first, the photographer's own philosophy and self-reflections on magic images and God's grace, with comments like the ones in the article "un chileno entre los ases fotográficos" from 1960, where he says "the perfect photograph is a kind of miracle that appears in a blaze of light" (Donoso); and second, his reluctance to exhibit publicly and his desire to for a secluded life of meditation and religious practices (Mekss). When it comes to photography the name of Larraín often surfaces as something of layered importance, on the one hand, as "uno de los fotógrafos más famosos de Chile [and] uno de los fotógrafos más reconocidos de la agencia Magnum" (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*), and on the other, as a seeker of "magical instants" (Foitzik 64) and "poetical emancipation" (Leiva 55). As a result, part of Larraín's work has been labelled and acknowledged by media, artists and critics as mystical or magical, creating an underlying value that has surpassed many times the merit of the photograph itself, what Lutz and Collins called "the reader's gaze" (56). This inclination to perceive either the photographer or his visual work as supernatural or rhetorical is far from casual, but it has implications yet unexplored that may help understand in-depth the importance of such visual production. This section studies how an image may become significantly and socially magical and the meaning behind such a phenomenon.

Larraín's magic history manifested gradually throughout his life from the time he was a teenager. Insightful triggers may be found that could have put Larraín's cognitive and emotional state of mind in a more supersensitive mindset. Leiva's study mentions that 1952 was an extremely complex year for the Chilean. After coming back from a family mourning trip to Europe, due to the sudden death of his younger brother Santiago, Larraín was convinced he had to do two things: become a professional photographer and find God. From this trip, Larraín brought back the inspiration of the Italian Giuseppe Cavalli's photographic technique of exploring dimensions of reality through poetry and light as a new aesthetic key (Leiva 27). Emotionally speaking, he had found a sense of austerity and

self-recognition. Larraín decided to isolate himself at a family home in the countryside outside Santiago and started practising oriental philosophy and meditation. As a symbolic act, he shaved his head and eyebrows, gave away most of his belongings and took a vow of chastity. Within this same period, he was inducted into the national service of Chile, which left him "broken and humiliated" (Larraín qtd in Leiva 28). All things considered, being in presence of something magic, spiritually transcendental, may have been a response to a personal and aesthetic (and perhaps traumatic) experience of magic as a Freudian dimension of individual reality, where a man's attitude turns "something fearful into an uncanny thing" (Freud 243) in the attempt to describe incidents where a familiar event is encountered in an unsettling, eerie context.

His first photographic milestone occurred in the same year, 1952, in Valparaíso, and established his "Les petite filles", or "niñas", photograph (Fig. 27) as a sort of radical backbone. The photographer was barely 21 years old and had just started his exploration of photography. However, the sequence of events surrounding that one-click-only meant an utter breakthrough into something greater, magical. It was noon, Larraín was taking his usual walks up and down the city's famous stairs, particularly at the Bavestrello Passage, when suddenly "a girl in a pale dress, [with] dark hair in a bob, walks down the steps carrying a glass bottle. The photographer asks her to stop so he can take her picture. As he is preparing his shot, another girl walks past him, also going down the stairs, also wearing a pale dress with her hair in a bob, also carrying a bottle" (Willis). Larraín once said of this situation and this picture that it "was the first of the 'magic' images that came to [him]" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 252) and "more than perfect [he continued] it was a magic moment" (Leiva 52-3), giving way to an extended production of kindred images later swollen by critics and media.

Figure 27 – "Les petites filles", Valparaíso (1952)

The "Les petite filles" photograph, during its first years, circulated exclusively in some family albums Larraín used to give to his father as presents with the most significant photographs he had taken at the time, albums that belong these days to one of his closest nephews, Gonzalo Puga Larraín. The photograph in those albums sometimes has a different framing than we know now. Sometimes it is thinner and leaves lots of elements

out of the composition, focusing exclusively on the two girls; in others, it is considerably wider and the photograph is square-shaped. [34] To Larraín, no photograph is fixed to its frame; instead, they are malleable. A moment in space-time is exclusive to itself, yet each simultaneously coexists with multiple others. The photograph became evidence of some of those infinite occurrences. Elements in the composition could expose multiple singularities depending on the framing work, the "rectangle" as Sergio Larraín used to say, to understand the possibilities of a moment. Josep Vicent Monzó in 1991 quoted Sergio Larraín at the end of his introductory text "El Camino de Sergio Larraín", recalling the poetic liberty Larraín had at the moment of facing photography: "Como no hay tiempo / Siempre es el momento / De corregir y empezar…" (Monzó 16).

It was not until 1963, 11 years later, that the photograph of the two girls was published for the first time the way it is known today. Larraín used the picture as the opening image of his first authorial book *El Rectángulo en la Mano*, a small, personal photo book with only seventeen single photographs and of which only a few copies were made. On this matter, Leiva recognises the "radical importance" (56) of the "Les petit filles" photograph for its connection with Larraín's idea of magic with an aesthetic principle seen throughout the publication, becoming an essential part of his work. It was the first time the photographer found himself as an artist through photography.

After years of stealthy circulation due to Larraín's photojournalism work and elusiveness, the "Les petit filles" photograph finally achieved media impact in 1991 at the "Rencontres d'Arles" festival, almost forty years after its creation. Responsible for this was the French curator Agnès Sire, who organised and curated Larraín's first retrospective on his photo essay "Valparaíso" (Recontres-D'Arles, "Sergio Larraín") and launched Larraín's second photo book, also called *Valparaíso*. As a result, the "Les petit filles" photograph started circulating on different media and not exclusively about photography matters.

For example (Fig. 28), in the same year, the photograph was considered for the cover of the specialised magazine *Photographies* (n34), whereas in 1997, the expansive

[34] Access to Larraín's family archive granted by his nephew Gonzalo Puga Larraín, in February 2019, Chile. Due to a family agreement, this particular material can neither be published nor utilised in further studies for now.

power of the photograph got it on the book cover for the novel *Het woord Jood* by Rosetta Loy: the image was used as the writer's subjective approach to the portrayal of her dual perspective on the Holocaust, as both a child and an adult. It was an uncommon perspective that looks to reconcile the author's memories of a happy childhood with her mature knowledge, using the visual displacement of the little girls in the black and white tones of the photograph. It is an iconic photograph loaded with a multidimensional meaning that for good reason accompanied the work of the photographer throughout his career, becoming "l'un de ses clichés les plus emblématiques" (Sparks).

Figure 28 – Photographies cover (1991) and Het Woord Jood cover (1997)

The image did have a particular appreciation within the cultural world, but that is not all. It had certain institutional support or marketing, so to speak. In 2013, Agnès Sire published Larraín's full retrospective book *Sergio Larraín: vagabond photographer* and considered the photograph of the girls for the cover. In 2016, the same picture was republished in the extended version of the album *Valparaíso*; this time the photograph was the first image inside the book. Along with "Les petit filles" appears the phrase "Alhamdulilah!", which means praise to God, a sort of mantra the photographer used to repeat to entrust his late work to this supreme force.

Curiously, though, the 1991 *Valparaíso* original edition did not have this phrase or any other text on the pages, nor Larraín's magic photograph of the little girls as the opening image, but the photograph of a boy staring straight at the camera from the lower edge of the frame. As irrelevant as this anecdote might sound, it harbours a deeper meaning. Whether a conscious/editorial/curatorial decision or not, Larraín's "Les petit filles" photograph has been escalated to a matter of importance in the imagery of the photographer and swollen by rhetoric connotations, generating a sense of amusement, a lead, on where to steer attention.

Since the release of the "Les petites filles" to the media world, increasing interest in magic and mysticism has arisen around both Larraín and his work. Led mainly by Sire's comments, *The Guardian* newspaper published the article "Sergio Larraín obituary: Experimental Chilean photographer whose short career resulted in a string of inspirational images" days after Larraín's demise in 2012. Here, Amanda Hopkinson refers to the

photograph as “a striking image of two little girls running down a flight of stone steps, their white frocks and rectangular bobbed haircuts a microcosm of the stark geometry of black shadows and noonday sun” (Hopkinson). The description followed references to both Larraín and Sire, who commented the photograph “was a magical image” (Larraín qtd in Hopkinson) and taken in "not so much a decisive moment as in the state of spirit" (Sire qtd in Hopkinson).[35]

The international magazine *Eye* in 2017 elaborated a more complex analysis of the photograph, yet it could not remain indifferent either about falling into mystical readings:

> Two girls, who could be sisters, are walking away from the camera and although no steps can be seen it is obvious they are descending, with the photographer positioned slightly above them. The girls have the same bobbed hairstyle, and both wear short-sleeved dresses so that the nearer girl seems almost like a younger duplicate of the other. The partially enclosed space has a complex vertical geometry and the structure casts a long-angled shadow that clips the first girl, accentuating her descent. In a few seconds’ time, she will have disappeared from view and the second girl will occupy the same position (…) Larraín knew at once that he had produced a magical image and the picture is one of his masterpieces (Poynor).

In the same year, the photograph once again appeared on another magazine cover, this time the specialised magazine *Leica Fotografie International* (LFI - Eng. Edition), which celebrated through a special edition the first 70 years of Magnum Photos. With special attention paid to the photographers Fred Herzog, Tomaso Baldessarini, and Danny Wilcox Frazier, Larraín’s image was selected to act as a symbolic hinge for the attachment of traditional documentary photojournalism and the independent fine-art projects of the new generations. Magnum Photos’ acting president Martin Parr recognises such a diverse

[35] In this phrase, Agnès Sire alludes to Cartier-Bresson’s decisive moment to make a distention between him and Larraín. The original meaning of Bresson’s decisive moment makes more sense in its authentic French “images à la sauvette”, which means those images that come quickly and rarely. In this sense, what Sire is emphasising is that the great difference between the two photographers is that Bresson catches those significative moments, while Larraín enters a state of “grace” which allows him to inspect those moments, as in the case of “Les petit filles”.

variety of photographs and photographers as the “archive of the world” ("Opus Magnum" 27).

Larraín’s photograph presents intriguing features in its composition that make it a desirable object, of which one is a strict sense of compositive value, while the other responds directly to its capability of being subjectively approachable. The chance of the moment led by a group of possibilities within light, space, geometry, and interactions made plausible certain optical and appealing illusions such as the little girl displacing into the space as a spectrum projected through light and shadow and the two almost-identical individuals, dressed in a strange yet similar manner, where one of them fades away walking down the stairs into the unknown, while the other one stands still in the shadows. Therefore, Larraín’s encounter with his “Les petit filles” meant a liminal story of magic and meaning that, with time, has concreted subjective and fixed responses on the subject. The idea of magic has surrounded this image ever since and has constantly been fostered by both media and critics, placing it in a relevant position on the cultural circuit and transforming it into a sort of trademark.

1.2 Magic, meaning, and history: A brief introduction to magical images

Finding different media references about Larraín’s work under magic and mystical connotations is not difficult, not only about his most renowned picture “Les petite filles” but about an important part of his visual production. Gonzalo Leiva, who wrote Larraín’s biography in 2012, dedicated a whole section to reviewing the published work of the Chilean titled “El recorrido de sus fotografías mágicas”, introduced with the following quote from Larraín himself: “Tenemos una tendencia hacia la luz, lo vasto y misterioso, lo ágil y liviano, lo bello…” (53). This idea is reinforced in the reedition of the 2017 book *Valparaíso*, where Agnès Sire in her article “Planet Valparaíso” reviews the history of the photographer where “miracles started to happen and [his] photography became magic” (Larraín, *Valparaíso* 182). Every text, news, or article found attempts to approach Larraín’s idea of magic as a sort of tacit agreement of something beautiful or well-done, avoiding in-depth inspections of what magic images could be. This section looks to understand and explore the idea of magic in photography and how the work of Larraín may be subjected to it as an aesthetic outcome.

First, to understand Larraín's magic imagery is it important to point out what magic means. The most scholastic, easiest way to understand the idea of magic is the Cambridge Dictionary's various definitions, such as "the use of special powers to make things happen that would usually be impossible", "the skill of performing tricks to entertain people", "a special and exciting quality that makes something seem different from ordinary things", or "happening in an unusual or unexpected way, or easily or quickly" (CambridgeDictionary). This set of ideas and definitions, as shallow as they may sound, have accurately intertwined the work of scholars or artists in this very regard during the twentieth century.

A more specialised theory has evolved when it comes to photography. In 1931, the German Walter Benjamin, in his essay "Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie" (Little History of Photography), commented that something in the photographic reproduction transcends the value of a painting and places us in a newer and stranger dimension. When describing the photographs of David Octavius Hill and Max Dauthendey, for instance, Benjamin refers to "something that goes beyond testimony to the photographer's art, something that cannot be silenced [and gives] its products a magical value, such as a painted picture can never again have for us" (Jennings, Eiland and Smith 510). To the German, magic represents *that* haunting quality of a photograph that urges the viewer to search the uncanniness, the here and now, beyond past reality and therefore the subject.

In 1980, the sense of magic was brought back, this time by the French theorist Roland Barthes, who in his *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* theorised on photography authentication by discussing the photographic paradox in which a photograph mechanically replicates to infinity what has occurred only once. The author mentions that "the photograph does not necessarily say what is *no longer*, but only and for certain *what has been*". Henceforth the "noeme" of a photograph, as an irreducible unit of meaning, has nothing to do with analogy since it is not a copy of reality, but an "emanation of past reality: a magic, not an art" (*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 85-8). To Barthes, the idea of magic in photography is subjected to the power of authentication of fragments of time, not necessarily objects. That is why he called photographs "trick pictures" (87) because they evoke reality but will not produce it, similar to the definitions of magic already mentioned.

In similar terms, in 1983 the Brazilian Czech-born philosopher Vilém Flusser described "magic" as a realm of reconstructed spaces (and times) that belongs particularly to the image. This realm responds to the product by which a photograph abstract "surfaces

out of space and time [and projects] them back into space and time", a "world of magic, a world in which everything is repeated and in which everything participates in a significant context" (8-9).

Like Benjamin, in 1985 the French Gilles Deleuze brought back the aesthetic experience to talk about the uncanniness of visual situations. To the Frenchman, a pure optical provocation will not lead to any radical action, but once found *that* "something too powerful, or too unjust, but sometimes also too beautiful, and which henceforth outstrips our sensory-motor capacities (…) a beauty which is too great for us, like too strong a pain" (18), only then, because of *that* something intolerable and unbearable, it will make the viewer unconsciously grasp.

As observed, twentieth-century critical thinking, in this regard, includes notable theoretical trends of which the work of Larraín collectively is part. It is plausible to notice, for example, that Benjamin's inclinations advocate for viewer's experiences apropos a photograph particular value. This definition responds to a sense of uniqueness in the image object like that of Deleuze's, which projects beyond visually objective appreciation. These views approach the question of magic in terms of "emanating" *that* incognizable something that reveals through some images. At the same time, Barthes and Flusser seem to project the idea of magic on photographs' unique qualities to bring back *those* echoed, emulated fragments of a past reality. In this particular scenario, Sergio Larraín's photographs place as a visual hinge that embodies these critical approaches in the visual representation of what can be understood as magical images.

The Valparaíso series, for instance, which includes the photograph of the two little girls, has an iconicity that relies not only on the photographer's self-recognition, but also on its presentation of an alternative and, perhaps, surrealist reality. This is not necessarily about the documentary construction of the region, but about the Latin American political imagery concerning collective and cultural perceptions. In the sequence (Fig. 29), neither the girls nor the men can see each other; they are separated in space and time, by lights and shadows. Individuals suddenly stop being individuals and become bodies, a fracture of the landscape, and then, merely elements in the composition. Everything is divided and broken in these pictures: people, objects, the left-side from the right-side, the upper-side from the lower-side, diagonals, lights from shadows. Magic, in these scenarios, presents in what the academic Bruno Cuneo understands as a political representation since this type of photograph operates consciously upon the material and symbolic construction of a newer

sensitive community that obligates breaking “las formas impuestas o dominantes de ver y sentir” (UAH, "Mesa 2: Callejeo y hallazgo: las ciudades del fotógrafo").

Figure 29 – Girls, man and sailor, vagabond boy, and ship. Valparaíso (1952-63)

This political representation places the idea of magic on a dual dimension, where both human experience (Benjamin’s and Deleuze’s) and representational qualities (Barthes’ and Flusser’s) can be seen from different perspectives.

As the city of Valparaíso “hangs from the hills” (Larraín, "La Ciudad Colgada en los Cerros"), as Larraín himself defined it in the magazine *O’Cruzeiro* in 1959, the visual narrative looks to represent the contrasts and fortuitous encounters from the very top of the hills to the seaport’s depth where “the city drowns in the sea” (Moscardó). With sharp angles and defiant elements, the photographer evidences different hues that symbolically engage the local audience in a collective experience.

For example, in the case of the little girls, their location is the Bavestrello Passage. This is one of the most emblematic lanes in Valparaíso, in the heart of Cerro Alegre, that connects hills and streets. Its singularity is due to the central stair that connects the L. Bavestrello building (built by the architect Emilio Cuneo in 1927) with two different landscapes as if the passage transported you from one scene to another. The passage is an iconic place in Valparaíso where the people circulate daily, similar to the scenes when arriving sailors meet the locals at the local shops or clubs every time a ship docks. Or, when walking down the hills, poor people are spotted laying on the pavement, asking for spare change, accompanied only by stray dogs.

This dualism and contrast belong to Valparaíso everyday life, yet the chance to visually acknowledge this is what Gonzalo Leiva recognises as a “synchronic and polysemic act” that exhibits a “visual paradox” (Leiva 56). This visual paradox responds to those unique moments represented by the singularity of the photographer’s eye, which reveals these archetypal spectrums that do not have any specific face but impersonate the local memory through surreal landscapes.

All things considered, analysis of Larraín’s photographs shows communicative patterns that intertwine his visual work and help deconstruct the magical elements within.

For instance, in a 2018 interview, the photographer Luis Poirot refers to Larraín as one “ahead of one’s time” ("About Sergio Larraín"). He comments on the singularity of the photographic composition that, out of the traditional canon, always remains as a part of intimate self-expression (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*), figures and shapes that should not be there according to the eyes, and others that the eye misses within the composition, a sense of estrangement. Agnès Sire, concerning Larraín’s retrospective at Les Rencontres d’Arles in 2013, commented “for me, he is often interested in what you don’t see” (Conway). These thoughts appeared in the 2016 *Valparaíso* album when she wrote that the photographer “had no fear of what lies beyond the frame, what is yet to become, bold diagonals, blur, bright sunlight or darkness. His images are not closed, the people in them are often moving away, elusive and fleeting, as resistant to being fenced in as Larraín himself” (Larraín, *Valparaíso* 182).

These unseen elements or estrangement, therefore, as described by Sire and Poirot respectively, act as a compositive quality that breaks what John Berger calls the photographic meaning: “photography has no language of its own (…) the language in which photography deals is the language of events” (Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* 20). When Larraín removes the visual elements by which spectators acknowledge ordinary events, the image becomes familiarly mysterious and indecipherable: magical.

1.3 Magic and the uncanny: case study

Another element worth considering in deconstructing the idea of magic in the photography of the Chilean is the relationship between Sigmund Freud’s notions on “the uncanny” and Larraín’s sense of “resonance”. To the Austrian, one of the instances of the *unheimliche*, the uncanny, is the mental process characterised by an animistic conception of the universe. Here, magical practices take place among people’s figments of the imagination to explain reality. This cognitive process, explains the author, remains in the contemporary mind and manifests as something familiar yet unfigured (12-3). Larraín, in similar terms, understood that miraculous images happened in an “instant of light”, when reality finds its counterpart in someone’s inner world, magically (*El Rectángulo en la Mano*, foreword). Therefore, certain principles about Freud’s underlying sense of familiarity are found in the production and perception of Larraín’s photography as a visual form of identifying oneself to a certain reality.

This sense of unusual familiarity that helps to explain the unknown is addressed by the critic John Berger in *Ways of Seeing.* Here, he establishes that the increasing consciousness of individuality accompanied by increasing awareness of history and culture had as a result a well-trained society, under a European gaze, of perceiving the world in fixed terms since the beginning of the Renaissance (9-11).

Individuals have become structurally adapted to look for certain features in the visual world. They have been taught to recognise facial expressions, empathise with feelings and emotions, and project situations and emotions on an intelligible level. In the first stage, either art, beauty, fear, or taste (just to name a few) tend to stimulate a standardised reaction; however, the wound (or alteration) of any of these archetypical ideas will commonly put the spectator into an uncomfortable and unpleasant zone. Larraín's uncanny images represent precisely *that* something that should be there, but it is not. The missing piece of a puzzle, either the photographer or the spectator, completes each one's unconscious knowledge, from Berger's shareable way of seeing.

For example, apropos the "Les petit filles" photograph, at first sight, nobody ever thinks these two girls and the photographer met randomly. Either by the angle of the shoot, lightwork, or composition, the photograph is not meant to be either utterly familiar or natural. Since the girls are captured from their back, the photograph cannot be a portrait. Because of the lack of cognoscible natural space and format, it cannot be a landscape either. Moreover, since the photograph was not intentionally made, it can neither be a proper artistic production. The photograph itself is out of the common zone, and it has no evident context to be read and seems artificially set up. In this regard, the photographer Michel Gasarian in 2016 made an analytical reading of the picture:

> Les deux petites filles sont en mouvement, mais ce mouvement est suspendu. Cet arrêt sur image produit l'effet magique de la scène. Mais il n'est pas seul, la magie opère ailleurs: dans la troublante ressemblance entre les deux figures. On les croit jumelles, comme dupliquées, ou mieux encore, comme si la seconde était l'émanation lumineuse et accomplie de la première, elle même surgit de l'ombre (Gasarian).

Perhaps, this kind of artificial nature is where Larraín's magic lies, in the "freeze-frame" and the "disturbing resemblance", as Gasarian comments. It is what cannot be seen that makes Larraín's work worthy of consideration. The uncanny feature for the Chilean

was a resonance of himself; for the Frenchman, the photograph was a disturbing coincidence.

Larraín's magical work, however, goes deeper than haunting and subjective interpretations. It reveals a communal way of recognising one another through magic. For instance, the scholar Levi Strauss brings out the work of the Brazilian Sebastião Salgado for related readings on the subject. To the author, the aesthetic of pain and suffering may reveal the beauty in unexpected, socially awkward contexts, challenging the moral code of feeling aesthetic pleasure when looking at the face of tragedy. Strauss draws on the concept of *aestheticisation* to validate the authenticity of the aesthetic representation in photography, saying that "to become legible to others, these imaginings must be socially and culturally encoded" (*Between the eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics* 9). In Larraín's case, the *aestheticisation* of the absence through universal codes is what makes the uncanny popping up so vivid and exotic.

The following image belonging to the street children series and *El Rectángulo en la Mano* is called "Niños vagos durmiendo" (Fig 30). It shows two children in a close-up angle asleep, one on top of the other. However, the picture shows much more than that. The lumps in the upper-left corner seem a few more heads on top of the children and garment remnants, almost entirely out of the frame. Towards the bottom, there is some ground ventilation system and a reticulated paving stone. Differently from Salgado's case, in Larraín's "everything happens in the limit. Everything is overflowing the frame" (Luzco qtd in Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*), which activates a sense of involving oneself in the unseen.

Figure 30 – Vagabond children, Santiago (1955)

On this, the Brazilian poet Thiago de Mello comments that the Chilean's eye has captured the human and geographic face of the South American continent (Larraín, *El*

Rectángulo en la Mano 8).[36] This is not precisely about tragedy, but about what Roberto Bolaño says is an "inerme" quality of Larraín's work, that defenceless feature that makes of his work an "arborescent mirror" of society (Bahamondes). A component of revelation and discovery in photography can either guide the one seeing it or mislead them into confusion. In Salgado's photography, the viewer tends to look for beauty through Salgado's *aestheticisation* of tragedy or distress. In Larraín's, by contrast, the viewer gets lost within the elements inside the frame, looking for people or situations that remain unseen, which triggers what Freud calls "figments of the imagination" (13): the *aestheticisation* of what is missed.

Larraín, as a character, is as "inerme" as his photographs, and his resonance usually orbits in the spectator's imagination. This magical phenomenon is meant to reach someone else's experiences in forms of art and knowledge and create collective memory.

For example, when in 2014 Pedro Milos made a reading of Larraín's "A boy with a basket on his head" photograph (Fig. 31), he did not recognise the poverty that most people might see in the picture, but the innocence of a child playing with a basket on his head as a helmet, casually walking, just like many children used to back in those days: "esos canastos ya no existen, se los aseguro. Eran de plástico medios flexibles con dos asas. Haciendo la misma tontera que hacíamos con mis hermanos y que era fuente de disputa porque todos queríamos usar al mismo tiempo la canasta" (UAH, "Mesa 3: Lugares comunes y otros sitios: Chile en la fotografía de Larrain"). The photograph has a few visual elements that bring out the uncanny in it.

The locals recognise something about Santiago city in the 1950s that is not particularly the streets or the building façade. Nor is it the action of the child looking straight at the cameraman. The uncanny manifests in the sense that the spectator reflects themselves into the unseen boy they once were, perhaps walking around similar streets, touching similar façades, as in the case of Milos.

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[36] Thiago de Melo is a Brazilian poet and translator who was Minister of Culture of the State of Amazonas in Brazil. He served, on many occasions, in important diplomatic posts in several countries, including Chile and Bolivia.

Figure 31 – Boy wearing a basket (1957)

Similarly, Pablo Walker, in his talk about "Formas de reconocimiento: exclusión y alteridad en las fotos de Larraín", mentions that one special quality in visual poetry is the affinity that lies in the relationship between the images and oneself. The author comments that this element of the uncanny is a "mysterious connivance" between actors, a "resonance" (UAH), as Larraín once said. When inspecting Larraín's photograph of Chonchi Island in Chiloé 1961 (Fig. 32), the author emphasises that the cliché of a sympathetic face is not what triggers this magic resonance. Rather the stones are what provoke affinity, textures of a familiar and remote life:

> Es el muro raído de moho de la Isla Grande de Chiloé despierta en nosotros afinidad. El pedazo de caballo descuartizado que está ahí y ese encuadre despierta en nosotros afinidad. Que esa no es la fotografía de una niña institucionalizada, sino que es un temperamento, una personalidad, raíces campesinas, que tenemos que descubrir poco a poco. Y la fotografía de Sergio Larraín hace esta llamada a ser descubierta poco a poco (…) No sólo las caras son metáforas, las piedras son metáforas, las siluetas son metáforas, los lomos de caballo son metáfora (UAH, "Mesa 1: Formas de reconocimiento: exclusión y alteridad en las fotos de Larrain").

Figure 32 – Girl, Chonchi, Chiloé Island, Chile (1961)

Agnès Sire, in the guided visit of the Sergio Larraín Retrospective in 2014, mentions the sense of "complicity" the photographer exhibited when composed the image in this photograph with unusual angles and vividly captured kids (SL-Exposición). In this case, magic acts as a performance in the recognition of one another, where poetic images reveal hidden cabinets in the perception of the spectator's reality.

It is undeniable that when inspecting Larraín's photo work under Freudian notions of the uncanny, the idea of magic starts to build up a coherent explanation towards a civil imagination. This relates to a form where a community identifies itself emotionally and metaphorically, where usually the codification of reality is wounded by the photographer and cryptic. This lack of literality nonetheless is one of Larraín's visual strengths. The threadbare texture of his photographs or the unfocused or bokeh effect helps to compose

the images in a manner more venturesome than exclusively figurative or symmetrical, giving a place to unusual elements from unusual angles:

> Larraín se sumerge en alturas y profundidades que dejan en claro la naturalidad de quien se mueve por la ciudad con la indiferencia hacia las postales archirreproducidas, con una mirada que nos transporta al horizonte de asfalto, haciendo notar que un cuerpo abandona la erguida comodidad detrás del lente. Son imágenes que nos noquean, dan con nosotros al piso y nos hacen mirar todo desde allí, como quien se mira a sí mismo tristemente pequeño, insignificante (Quezada).

Magic, therefore, becomes a relatable explanation of what is not being understood satisfactorily but which makes one speculate on *what* one is seeing. Sometimes it responds as an artificial nature, as in the case of "Les petite filles", sometimes as the *aestheticisation* of the unseen, sometimes as a mysterious connivance between the photographer, the photographed, and the viewer. Whatever the case is, through Larraín's uncanny images, the idea of magic projects into individual and collective experiences and might be perceived as moments of self-recognition within a timeless collectiveness.

1.4 Magic as extraordinary moments: a case study

From within the world of photography, the concept of magic has not remained distant either; on the contrary, it became the epitome of good photography during the golden age of photojournalism (1930-1970) (Stewart), primarily by the hand of the Frenchman Cartier-Bresson, who while making images "mysterious" and "magical" helped "to define photographic Modernism" (Strickland). Sergio Larraín, who worked intensively as a photographer for the most reputed magazines in Europe and Latin America such as *Life, Paris Match, O'Cruzeiro*, *Vu* magazine or *Du* (Quezada), was often known as "un illuminé (…) mystique" whose photography was "une activité qui tient de la magie" (Guillot). This section explores the relationship between Larraín's magical images and Liz Wells' "extraordinary moments" (118) to understand the role of magic in street photography and its implications in the definition of good photography.

Whether in South America, North America or Europe, post-war civilization, along with a rapid economic and cultural growth, started to develop a certain intensity, a tough

energy, and an unorthodox vitality proper of a modern metropolis that could be found only on the streets (Goldberg and Silberman 148-9). This "energy" is what Larraín treasured about urban spaces, which always fascinated him because "in [their] work of hunters of miracles [they] have the happiness of the magic, but also the impossibility to control it" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 385).

Streets meant a symbolic environment from which artists and visual producers found inspiration. It was a tacit revival of Baudelaire's understanding of the nineteenth-century modernism, where streets and boulevards created a primal new scene where individuals and artists could be amazed by the private space while in public. The French poet referred to the amusement of changing streets and boulevards, a transitory and fugitive modernity "whose metamorphoses are so rapid [that] must on no account be despised or dispensed with" (Baudelaire 13).

Marshall Berman, in his book *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, agrees with this idea by remarking that "in this environment, urban realities could easily become dreamy and magical" (152).

Like the Chilean photographer, to Wells the streets of the new (twentieth) century were subjected to a similar sense of liminality or energy, and the role of photography in this context was to rediscover the fragments of this magical transition, that moment when people are caught in a remarkable situation within their ordinary life (118). Streets meant a universe to the photographer, through which he could wander, roam free and, under the right circumstances, have magical images coming to him. Furthermore, he had to be prepared to capture those images from that very universe: " The perfect image is like a miracle that takes place in an instant of light, form and subject matter and a state of perfect lucidity – one presses the shutter release almost without realising, and the miracle occurs" (*El Rectángulo en la Mano*, Foreword).

The first generation of street photographers was active in Paris between the 1920s and 1930s. It was led by Robert Doisneau, Willy Ronis, Cartier-Bresson, Brassaï, and Robert Capa, whom Sergio Larraín considered first-handed referents (Leiva 37-8).

One particular idea that took off remarkably was Bresson's explorations of unexpected and unpredictable situations that enshrined "in the collective photographic consciousness, shaping several ensuing generations of photographers" (O'Hagan). The Frenchman coined this photographic notion or practice the "decisive moment": "the

simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event and of a precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression" (Cartier-Bresson Introduction).[37] In this sense, *that* something extraordinary, decisive, Bresson mentions is seen in Larraín's visual composition and argument about magic images.

For example, when analysing Bresson's photographs in Hyères, France, in 1932 and Abruzzo, Italy, in 1951 respectively (Fig. 33 left), it is impossible not to notice some similarities with Larraín's photographs from Valparaíso 1952 and 1954 (Fig. 33 right).[38]

Figure 33 – Hyères (1932) and Abruzzo (1951) by Bresson, and Valparaíso by Larraín

In the sequence, every photograph plays a distinguishable role that relates to the fleeting magic of extraordinary moments. None of them implies a descriptive labour of any of the cities; on the contrary, when they are together, France, Italy, and Chile merge into a greater, surreal, and coherent composition because they all utilise local landscape's elements and high angles to reinforce a sense of depth, where geometrically shaped handrails, stairs and decayed walls show the infinite levels of a fragmented universe and the people, as victims of the shooter, become transient presences, faceless, as the pivots of movement and time. What makes any of these moments extraordinary or magic is the decision of *where, what, when,* as a way of finding a transcendental value in what Bresson says is "expresión poética" (Hill and Cooper 79) and Larrarín "La réalité visible" (*El Rectángulo en la Mano* Avant-propos).

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[37] Cartier-Bresson used the phrase "decisive moment" as the title of his most famous monograph, *The Decisive Moment*, published in the United States in 1952, and simultaneously in France as *Images à la Sauvette*. An extensive reflection and definition of this concept is given in his introduction to the book.

[38] One of the many books in Larraín-Echeñique's family library was the original version of Bresson's *The Decisive Moment* (1952), a book of Larraín's father, the architect Sergio Larraín García-Moreno. Luis Poirot noticed that this book was crucial for Larraín's personal and professional growth. He got this same photo book in a family auction knowing that it was one of Larraín's favourite books, which he himself had cut out some pages from with the photographs he liked the most to make photo albums to compare his work with (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*).

By the 1950s, street photography had started to grow in the United States, a movement led by Robert Frank, Roy DeCarava, William Klein, Helen Levitt, Joel Meyerowitz and Diane Arbus, although the mood about the American streets was somehow different this time, less poetic, more frenetic, and with a "harsh or satiric vision" (Goldberg and Silberman 147). Sergio Larraín, even though emotionally and technically linked to the first generation of photographers, belonged to this second generation of photojournalists and the hues of this caustic vision can be found throughout his work.

To exemplify, when Robert Frank published his most famous book *The Americans* in France in 1958, in the same year Larraín began to be acknowledged for evoking a similar visual narrative apropos his work in London.

Through the eye of the Swiss, American life, which was supposed to be an "idyllic world of suburban homes, each with a station wagon parked in the driveway, steaks sizzling on the patio grill, and a brand-new television set in the living room" (Goldberg and Silberman 147), is shown under a light of dark spontaneity. Americans were seen in a deep-rooted sense of psychological isolation, marked by racial and class divisions, often numbed by glimpses of dejection or joy. For this, the specialised media condemned and criticised Frank for his piercing vision and cold critical assessment of the United States at mid-century (Greenough 176). He saw the US as everyone else did by then, finding extraordinary and uncomfortable moments to which nobody wanted to pay attention.

Similarly, Agnès Sire mentioned that Larraín was often called "the Latin American Robert Frank", due to the remarkable coincidence of thinking and living photography and their capability to explore the unseen. They both used photography "in the same way" (*Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 30), which meant the apparition of blurry, misty images, out of focus, that intensified a sense of instability in the photographs (Leiva 117).

When analysing the following sequence about London (Fig. 34), this "same way" Sire mentions becomes visually evident. The extraordinary moment in both cases is marked by caustic comments on urban spaces. The first two photographs on the left, from Frank's work, display the same feature in Larraín's, on the right, and are similar to the case of Bresson to some extent. These extraordinary moments seem to focus on the bystanders, seen as flagrant suspects of irreverent situations, yet highly quotidian. About this particular visual narrative, the poet Charles Simic comments that from all the interesting-looking people found on the streets, the spectator feels like taking imaginary snapshots of a few of them. They stick in the memory because something about them cheers or troubles the spirit

and “at times, compassion and fear make us identify with them. We find ourselves in their shoes for a moment, living a life we have read in their faces” ("Strangers on a Train").

Figure 34 – Rober Frank’s London (1951) and Sergio Larraín’s London (1958-9)

Like Robert Frank, Larraín’s imagery of magic moments expanded everywhere, particularly in South America and especially Chile. However, because of a fixed selection of his photographic archive, similar explorations of Santiago (or other cities) cannot be seen. In this retrospective book, aside from the 23 single images about the street children of Santiago, only eight photographs were about his hometown. Nonetheless, this subject accounts for a major archive of more than 100 contact sheets and over 2500 single photographs held at Magnum Paris,[39] and Larraín’s exploration of these extraordinary moments keeps a coherent line of visualisation that comes and goes interruptedly from the early 1950s to the 1990s. The following sequence from 1963, taken from Larraín’s unpublished archive on Santiago (Fig. 35), revives a similar aesthetic proposal, yet from a city over 7000 miles away. The metropolis is caught in the rush of the moment and people appear to be witnessed from a close distance. The men reading the newspaper, the ones getting their shoes polished and those having a conversation by the “Hotel Crillón”,[40] show not only the versatility of the city that in this scenario is not about street children but about what Simic reads as the “unforeseen” ("Strangers on a Train"), as a quality of the beautiful.

Figure 35 – Santiago, Chile (1963)

[39] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive. August 2019.

[40] The Edificio Crillón, also known as Edificio Larraín, is a building in Santiago de Chile from the early twentieth century. The building, formerly known as Hotel Crillón, was designed by the Austrian architect Alberto Siegel, and originally built as the home of the Larraín García Moreno family, Sergio Larraín’s family.

In South America, part of the previously mentioned cultural mutation is related to a clear political influence of both local and international agents that made the cities a newly rich environment for the unforeseen and unexpected.

From the late 1950s onwards, the United States used political propaganda, among other mechanisms, to win the Cold War against communism. This endeavour implied an international tendency to pursue and portray the collateral devastation of Fidel Castro's regime as a sort of exotic truth. *Life* magazine, which at the time was the leading general interest publication in the US, was one of the media mechanisms by which the government of John F. Kennedy tried to build up a South American imagery based on tragedy instead of the modernization of foreign urbex (Lowndes), while the US, had to remain the saviour of the Third World.

In 1960, *Life* magazine published Larraín's photo reportage about Chile's greatest earthquake, which reached Chiloé Island, and highlighted: "El gigantesco avión norteamericano posado sobre una pista de Santiago de Chile (arriba) y la niña que lleva en brazos al hermano inválido (derecha) simbolizan los eternos recursos humanos de un pueblo abrumado por un desastre nacional: generosidad y valor" (Jackson 17).

The extraordinariness of these photographs is neither the calamity of natural disasters nor random occurrences in Chile (Fig. 36), but the juxtaposition of two different realities colliding in a few shots. The imposing structure of the "US Air Force" aeroplane on the back is radically contrasted with the apparition of farmers with their horses in the foreground and a shoeless local girl carrying an invalid boy.

Figure 36 – Larraín's earthquake reportage, Chile (1960)

Part of this cultural charm, about cities and local cultures, as the historian Soledad Zárate recalls, had a lot to do with the apparition of these non-urban people, *campesinos*, in the modern urbex due to gentrification processes (UAH, "Mesa 1: Formas de reconocimiento: exclusión y alteridad en las fotos de Larrain"). The idea of their portrayal is related neither to exposing the local poverty nor the misery, but to their visual inclusion in new landscapes and representations as an organic part of life and "progress".

In the same period, the Brazilian magazine *O'Cruzeiro* retaliated against *Life*'s South American portrayal on two different flanks: by evidencing the US's state of poverty and inequality and by capturing the daily life, landscapes, and people of modern Brazil and the rest of the region (Lowndes). The magazine dedicated multiple issues to Larraín's work, particularly from Chile, displaying similar people and costumes as in *Life* but using a different approach.

For example, two years previously, in 1958, the magazine had published a photo essay from the same island titled "Chiloé Isla de Leyendas" (Fig. 37). The reportage, in nine single photographs, exhibited how hospitable and generous people the locals were, where "la paz es la norma de vida [and] la sonrisa el signo de la convivencia" (Del Campo 50). The images exhibited from a more local perspective a sense of extraordinariness given by vernacular constructions and local people in their daily life. They are often seen in their natural context, riding horses, shoeless, where local children play football with the local priest, enjoying themselves, working, living in their city.

Figure 37 – Larraín's "Chiloé Isla de Leyendas" reportage (1958)

Whatever the case, magic, in these scenarios, anchors something mundane and ubiquitous that reveals something extraordinary and surrealist. For the academic Bruno Cuneo this quality responds to a place, a city, offering fortuitous encounters with mysterious relationships "que configuran una realidad alternativo-maravillosa, que sin embargo no es una realidad fantástica porque no está lejos del mundo, sino que es una cualidad de nuestra vida aquí, de nuestra vida cotidiana" (UAH, "Mesa 2: Callejeo y hallazgo: las ciudades del fotógrafo").

In conclusion, street photography has been studied as one of the consequences or components of modernity's development, where magic accomplished a role in changing landscapes and specifically in Paris, where in the first decades of the twentieth-century photographers felt amazed by the magic of the urban changes and cultural mutations. Department stores grew all over the urban sphere, and print media had significant participation in its coverage.

This urban life filled with changes brought the intention of illustrating social points: helped by the French humanism, the unemployed man sat on a bench holding a newspaper, or the shoeless child playing around as the icon of poverty and desolation, both symptoms of progress (Wells 117-9). People and streets were changing drastically and the interaction between them within these new scenes became something of utmost importance.

The urban world ended up being pushed into newer situations and boundaries. New possibilities and complex realities arose, and photographers played an essential role in their documentation. Sergio Larraín was not indifferent to this worldwide movement. Magic developed through his work as motivation and local identity. It privileged local imageries of people in transit, not as an anthropologic exploration but as the reiteration of daily and quotidian observation. This was the same pursuit of the unexpected of which Robert Frank says “it’s a surprise (…) you couldn’t make it happen” (SFMOMA).

This observation gives credit to something greater, to that extraordinariness of reality itself, which is out there awaiting to be seen.

Consequently, Larraín's images reveal the rhythm of the urban space where inhabitants dialogue with their surroundings. The wanderers leave tracks and traces of their past time, resisting their evanescence and evidencing, on the streets, the photographer's poetic art of the extraordinary.

2 Pain and Cruelty: The Case of the *Abandoned Children* Series

2.1 Introduction

In his book *Understanding a Photograph*, John Berger suggests that one of the most relevant relations in the world of photography is the photographer's relationship with reality in terms of space and, above all, time. A reality built by an endless number of temporary elements, such as wars, revolutions, or poverty, that intertwine specific historical contexts in which we inhabit. Berger says that "a photograph bears witness to a human choice exercised. This choice is not between photographing X and Y: but between photographing at moment X or moment Y"- what the author calls: "I have decided that seeing this worth recording" (18-9). In Sergio Larraín's case, his “human choice” puts in evidence a two-fold consideration: the revelation of Santiago's human misery and the photographer's attitude as a revealing agent of the pain of others that reproduces fleeting moments in life that will never repeat existentially (Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 4-6). Within this reality of time and space, there are also the predominant styles and subjects of interest, which Wells recognises, through Westerbeck and Mayerowitz, as "candid images of everyday life on the streets" (Wells 118): bars, parks, cafes, and the like. In Larraín's work, this naivety of which Wells speaks, apart from being present in visual representations, seems to be strongly linked to a specific and restless moment in his life. Luis Poirot understands this phenomenon in similar terms and reads this naivety of the photographer's work as a visual projection of his most painful side:

> las fotografías de Sergio Larraín, como la de todos los grandes creadores, son autorretratos. Él habla de su soledad, habla de su desamparo. Esos perros *huachos* de Valparaíso son él, porque la foto es tomada a nivel de tierra. Los niños desamparados, e incluso las mujeres del prostíbulo de los Siete Espejos, esas miradas de inmensa tristeza (Wastavino).

Larraín overturned the disgust and dissatisfaction of an accommodated life for a solitary experience in communion with Santiago's dispossessed and abandoned children.

Consequently, this section explores this relationship between Larraín and photography in the representation of public spaces. Here, Santiago’s reality inspection

reveals different aspects and instances of the human condition. For instance, in the case of the Chilean photographer, this relationship is explored through notions of cruelty, pain, and self-recognition. Likewise, for this study, Larraín's work is analysed in four central angles: (i) It lays the ground basis for defining the principles of pain and its relationship with photography. (ii) It analyses the pain regarding the photographer in photography. (iii) It explores the idea of pain and performance in the photographic experience. (iv) Lastly, it sets a counterpoint of self-recognition concerning the *other* in the representation of poverty. The analysis, therefore, addresses readings of historical, political, and aesthetic context, answering questions regarding Larraín's vagabond children series such as: what does a photograph denounce in the portrayal of poverty, how does the pain is read in an image, what is the role of cruelty in the photographic essay, and if there are ethical outlines regarding cruelty in the representation of the misery of the others.

2.2 The Pain in Photography

Cruelty and pain have been constant over time and they have materialised in each of the temporary elements previously mentioned, like unprecedented calamities, political conflicts, or natural disasters, becoming thus a timeless phenomenon to these days. These elements coalesce through symbols and cultural conventions that reflect in collective memory by, for example, intellectual discourses or aesthetic representations. More specifically, Susan Sontag, on her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, recognises that it is not easy to make an effort to think about how a person can suffer (sense of injury). The author thinks ignorance upon historical contexts only allows to move the spectator away from that reality and, therefore, from the ethical and moral principles that could help get closer to it. However, when images are inserted as part of historical contexts, people understand differently; they comprehend ("Understanding our culture: conversation with Susan Sontag"). Furthermore, the pain that was not previously perceived and seemed not to exist – invisible –, appears latent - visible -: "something becomes real – to those who are elsewhere (…) – by being photographed" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 19).

In this regard, when photography appeared for the first time on the battlefield - and consequently into the public eye -, it quickly established formally in the field of photojournalism. This phenomenon changed the perception of the suffering about "the

other" at that time, and tragedies like wars began to have "faces and names" (BNC).[41] The first war conflicts ever photographed in history were the Crimean War in Russia (1853-1856) and the Civil War in the United States in 1861.

In Chile, nonetheless, the first photographic records were not entirely posterior in comparison. Between 1879 and 1884, in the War of the Pacific (also known as the Saltpetre War), the photographs of Carlos Díaz Escudero and Eduardo Clifford Spencer captured much more than mere events of the war zone. They portrayed the surviving soldiers mutilated in battle, and each one of them would pose heroically in front of the camera.[42] A sort of life tribute that revealed the mutilation of men and the raw cruelty of war while veiling the "sense of injury" – as mentioned by Sontag – behind a sense of national pride or patriotism.

However, at more than 130 years of the war, the political readings on the historical occurrences and the photographic series are considerably more critical and remain afar from patriotism. In the article "Mutilados por la Patria" published in *The Clinic* newspaper, it is stated, "ganaron la Guerra del Pacífico, pero su única inmortalidad fue ésta: posar frente a un fotógrafo para conseguir una pensión de gracia o un implante ortopédico. Bajo cada foto y con caligrafía cuidada, alguien anotó el nombre, el rango y la forma en que fueron mutilados. Eso es todo lo que se sabe de estos hombres" (Barrera).

Access to new information and photographic reinterpretations opens the cognitive field towards the world we inhabit, thus redefining the moral codes through social images - in this case, the cruelty. Photography allowed uninformed individuals to become knowledgeable about the inhumanity in its most brutal forms, especially news. However, the sense of pain seems to remain veiled.

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[41] War photography begins with a mission, a misfortune: the Crimean War. Roger Fenton was recognised as the first war photographer, who in turn was entitled as the "official" photographer of that war, as the British government sent him to Crimea in 1855 at the command of Prince Albert (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 36-52).

[42] For more information, see the album *Los Mutilado de la Guerra del Pacífico*, partially available in the digital archive of Memoria Chilena.

19th Century media began to proclaim photography as the image of denunciation par excellence, after visualising the Crimean War in Russia and the United States' Civil War. This phenomenon established a visual and collective understanding about the atrocities of the modern world concerning war's warlike imagery (armaments, trenches, piled up corps), politics (military speeches, operation management), or misery (human poverty, devastated places). Therefore, this visual understanding of human despair would lay the foundation for projecting an aesthetic of tragedy. Likewise, being a spectator of these calamities regarding these wars, or any other situation of cruelty in any country, has become, as Sontag emphasises, the “quintessential modern experience” (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 16).

For example, although some agencies, such as Magnum Photos, claimed to be created as "an endorsement to empower photographers" (Manchester 418), it is undeniable that the agency's founders established its basis the implications of the Second World War. Namely, the visualisation of tragedy, on the one hand, as a newsworthy item for consumerism (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 16-35) and, on the other, what Clément Chéroux recognises as the new face of humanism. A form of new humanism supported by four significant events: Firstly, the relationship between the 1948 Declaration of Humans Rights and photography where both entities pursued the same values regarding "freedom, equality and dignity" (Chéroux 14). Secondly, the technological development allowing the debate about the old hierarchies on documentation and arts, making one transfer to the other and vice versa, without structures or permits (Wells 14-8). Thirdly, media expansion. It opened the dialogue on photographic function as an object, where photographs, aside from carrying a social and cultural meaning, find, when published, a place in the material world (Hoelscher 6).

Thus, wars and suffering seem to call to action or an awakening of consciousness. After all, "war was and still is the most irresistible – and picturesque – news" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 43). For this reason, it is not a coincidence that in 1936 – almost 100 years after the first photographic records of war – Robert Capa photographed what it would be, according to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, "the most famous war photography" (TheMet): “The Falling Soldier”. Such a photograph portrays the exact moment of the death of a soldier in the Córdoba Front while Capa was covering the Spanish Civil War.

This way, based on understanding the importance of pain as a human condition for self-recognition, the debate opens to discuss the visualisation of cruelty and its importance in creating communities.

“The vagabond children” or “Niños del Mapocho” is an iconic work by Sergio Larraín, "para muchos un trabajo refundador de la fotografía chilena" (Leiva 29), which reveals for the first time the intimate face of poverty in Santiago de Chile in the 50-60s. This photo essay portrays the destiny of the "other", the subordinate, at the mercy of the idea of progress. Larraín presents these children as what society heartlessly left behind, living their reality apart from the world around them, under their own rules - unlike "us". The photographer reveals the children from the otherness, from the cultural distance of dressing and acting, outside normality and social codes. Without the need for further analysis, one can notice worn-out clothes, dirty skins and poor hygiene, bare feet, and a series of conditions understood as miserable or inhumane for a child.

The series represents an aspect yet unexplored concerning pain and cruelty. It is a kind of cruelty not necessarily induced by the wills of war itself but by a social agreement on alienation and detachment. An agreement that, however, is similar to that of a war. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, in his study *The Social Contract*, attempts to understand the power of monarchy regarding the evolution of the culture of the capital. Here, the author refers to slavery as the loss of the status of being a man and that war turns man into enemies by accident: "war is not a relationship between men but between states" (Rousseau 4-5), where the status of man changes to that of a soldier. Like a slave, soldiers, or abandoned children, they all lose their human condition and can be subjected to humiliating labour, die in war, or live in inhumane conditions. As for the children, for example, Larraín commented that, despite their young age, they worked for older men who used them to beg and taught them bad habits and to commit crimes. The children would meet in clans, often led by older boys who exercised sexual control over them (MagnumPhotos, "Sergio Larrain").

This kind of misery, like war, responds to the agreement about sacrificing the other for the 'common good' and the 'lesser evil'. Likewise, the photographic act of witnessing and recording cruelty and infamy participates in this same unspoken agreement concerning the pain of others. Because, by the simple fact of happening - photography - it validates its existence. In terms of human capital, the only difference between a soldier and these children is that a child does not have any utilitarian function within the dominant system –

unlike a man called to arms -, only speculative and restricted to the family. If the family rejects the child, the system disposes of them since they lose their utilitarian projection. Therefore, accepting death and misery becomes the tacit agreement, while photography becomes visual evidence of the human decision to validate pain.

2.3 Observing from with-in

The evidence shows that Sergio Larraín never considered himself a street photographer. However, he photographed an essential part of his best-known work about the streets regardless: Santiago, Valparaíso, Potosí, Sicilia, London, Tehran, or Paris, to name a few. Streets were often a place of comfort and amusement for the photographer, especially those of the main cities of his home country. Nonetheless, aside from the many cities where he worked as a photojournalist, it is in Santiago and Valparaíso where Larraín forged his most intimate works: the Valparaíso and abandoned children series.

Early in the 1950s, when Sergio Larraín was only a young person, he already showed photographic concerns about what was happening on the streets. Being barely a twenty-year-old photographer, he began to capture and raise awareness about these children. Undoubtedly, Sergio Larraín was neither the first photojournalist at the time nor the first one to portray the marginality in the streets. One of his predecessors and references par excellence was Antonio Quintana, the father of social photography in Chile - or humanist. However, a newer element in Larraín's photography made him more significant than the rest, even at his young age. In this regard, it would be beneficial to understand that the path of the street photographer usually divides into two possible directions. For example, if documentary photography is essentially observing "from without" (Larraín, *London 1958-59* 1), then street photography could be understood, by extension, as the practice of observing “from within”.

Under the street photography category, photography has a disposition and spontaneity that involves the person behind the camera and their target in an intimate relationship. The street forces the photographer to become an agent who follows and participates in the flow of actions and interactions without interrupting them. Those interactions, however, do not correspond to any previous inclination – what the photographer desires to find –, as in a documentary sense, but rather to the encounter of furtive moments within specific situations – what finds them.

For instance, in the vagabond children series, Larraín shows a sequence of children in extreme poverty conditions in Santiago, and photography here objectifies them as disposable items without any social function. The kids are seen in complete abandonment, sleeping rough on the asphalt, corners, under bridges, in the cold, with nothing but themselves and some dirty clothes. Pain, as socially known, can be perceived through the photographs, especially in its most intimate condition: from the inside of misery.

This form of pain enables symbols and cultural conventions that make it both appealing and empathic. The method in which viewers read either pain, cruelty, or any other form of abstract emotion on images is self-recognition.

Psychologically speaking, observers refer to their special moral codes and project them onto what they see. For example, in Larraín's series, some children appear to be smoking along with their companions. Some other kids, in the cold, seek shelter and warmth in a campfire. Others sleep altogether piled up over a ventilation grill, like a heap of inert bodies left to their fate. Pain becomes visually cognisable, relatable. Nonetheless, it could be different if the subjects inspected were mature men, murderers, or felons instead of children. Alternatively, if Larraín had taken the photographs from afar, they would not have had the same connotation either. In this case, viewers would probably recognise the elements of misery, yet their perception about the pain of "the other" would be affected.

Culturally speaking, people react to these forms of suffering for two fundamental reasons. On the one hand, societal learnings show that no child or person should ever subjugate to such conditions. People understand from the beginning that the situation is inhuman and unacceptable. Furthermore, although spectators may have never undergone such misery or any other, they can now experience it mainly by the immediacy of images (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 21-2). Abandoned children are that "other" for whom people tend to feel sympathy because they have no guilt or decision regarding their condition. On the other hand, the proximity in Larraín's photography allows the viewer to generate a certain intimacy concerning the misery that transcends poverty. The pain, belonging to the experience, is what engages. Anyone who has ever experienced cold, hunger or fatigue could assimilate, as their own, the body and symbolic language in the visual translation of the photographs.

Consequently, people read and understand pain as it is their own. Nevertheless, the sympathy towards the dispossessed exhorts them from all complicity and guilt regarding

the pain caused (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 91-2), transforming cruelty into an act of repudiation, but pain into an aesthetic pleasure (E. Burke 55-8).

Another critical element to consider in Larraín's work is the inclusion of symbolic elements regarding collective memory. In studies on Kent Klich, for example, and his photographic representation "El Niño" regarding the marginalised children of Mexico City, Nathanial Gardner affirms that visual patterns in Western representation are key in cultural processes identification. He refers to the inclusion of aspects such as "national cultural identity", "exoticism", and the idea of "becoming us" (Gardner 4).

For example, in one of the series' photographs, two children – perhaps friends, brothers or simple life companions – are seen smoking (Fig. 38). Nothing self-evident in the image represents graphic pain as such. However, Larraín's intimate gaze "from within" reveals something else. These children should not be over ten years old, but their attitude and body language make them look considerably older. The high-contrast photograph shows the child on the left under poor lighting; yet the brightest sections expose critical elements: his facial expression with numerous wrinkles or expression marks, mainly on his forehead, that make him look like a man of mature age. Also, there is some dirt on his fingers, and the sleeves of his coat are wholly damaged. The boy on the right is smoking in front of the camera, posing a rude and defiant attitude. Despite the lack of clear signs of any explicit form of suffering, the pain becomes factual evidence of the cruelty regarding a lost innocence.

Figure 38 – Street children, Santiago (1955)

Something similar happens in the following photograph. Here, children are sleeping altogether, one on top of the other trying to catch some warmth, and all of them dressed in old and worn-out clothes (Fig. 39). However, in this representation, the primordial feeling is that of helplessness and abandonment. Likewise, the next photo, on the right, shows allegedly the same children, but this time all warming themselves around an improvised fire pit.

Figure 39 – Street children, Santiago (1955)

Larraín took all these photographs at a high angle and no further than a meter away, which means the photographer was an integral part of the situation. He was not observing from the outside, as perhaps a photojournalist would do; on the contrary, he was probably in similar cold conditions and clothing as the children were. Pain, therefore, is represented in part through the misery of the marginalised from the most apparent elements of poverty: dirt, ill-fitting and damaged clothes, and the feeling of abandonment and injustice.

This way, Larraín's artistic-dramatic form of photography (black and white tones, natural and poor lighting) reinforces these elements mentioned above through the children's expressions, which helps to promote a feeling of empathy regarding pain. Likewise, the photographer intertwines elements of Chile's national identity and the exoticism of poverty to strengthen the hyperbole about belonging and misery. The photographs, this way, show spaces and localities of the most iconic river in Santiago, the Mapocho River, along with the children and their clothing, or the lack of it. For example, as in the following photo sequence, Larraín focuses on the Mapocho bridge's geometry to visualise children's dirty, old clothes and shoeless feet while they inhabit the local bridge (Fig. 40).

Figure 40 – Street children, Santiago (1955)

Lastly, the idea of "becoming us" presents in the sense of community and camaraderie. In the series, Larraín captures the children seldom alone. They accompany each other, and the photographs become evidence of certain hierarchies within the fellowship, just like "we" have, where the elders always seem to be the leaders or the protectors.

2.4 The figure of the vagabond

The idea of wandering around and becoming, in some way, the places one inhabits – this photographic experience mentioned above – has been described by Larraín as "vagabundeos". This notion of vagrancy helps understand social practices and usages within particular places at a unique moment (Wells 117-23). Larraín wrote in 1982 to his nephew Sebastián Donoso that being a vagabond "is going out to find an adventure (…) or

walking in the streets all day; wandering, always wandering through unknown places (…) to get away from the world that one knows, to find your way in places and things that you have never seen (…) and little by little, you will discover things" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 379).

This embodiment of the world one inhabits, coming from the vagabond character, is one corporeal form of the pain and an aesthetic translation. For example, there is another level of pain compared to what is seen firstly in the photographs. For the viewer to appreciate the dramatism and closeness of the subjects in the images, they must consider the photographer's role within the scene without hesitation. So, when looking at the photographs in detail, it is not difficult to notice that Larraín shot them all from an indisputably confidential space. The photographer's proximity, as well as his disposition, allowed him to wander inside the children's habitat. In this regard, according to Gonzalo Leiva, the photographer "welcomed those who wandered the streets of Santiago (…) he became one of them - his friend, his advisor, one more strolling soul" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 341). The camera's eye is right in front of the children as if the viewfinder were more like an X-ray than a photographic lens.

Additionally, the immediacy of Larraín's shots does not allow an elaborated framing work. However, it does enable a highly expressive capture, as evidenced in the following photograph of the same series, from 1955. Here, in a landscape format, Larraín shows the children's barefoot feet on a floor's rack (Fig. 41). Despite the little information provided in the photo, it is possible, objectively, to rescue a series of elements that do not go unnoticed. These feet are indeed children's feet. There is evidence that they are children's because of their small size and weak development of their limbs. The visual narrative also denotes explicit readings on the filthiness of their feet and poor hygiene. Part of a pair of equally dirty trousers is also partially spotted at the top. While the viewer cannot be sure whether that place was the children's daily shelter or not, they do know that the kids are, in fact, on the floor, huddled.

Figure 41 – Street children, Santiago (1955)

In the subsequent years, Larraín shares some more information with Magnum and writes: "Children sleeping on a grid that is heated from below" (MagnumPhotos, "Sergio

Larrain"). Thus, this grid responds to the extract ventilation of Santiago's underground ducts, which releases hot air from the inside periodically. Likewise, from what is known and what the image exhibits, Larraín was probably reclined on the same rack, feeling the same blast of heat as the children did.

To mature as a photographer in the context of the otherness, Larraín had to become an aesthetically sensitive vagabond and feel a similar pain to that of the children's. At least to look at it head-on and grieve for the victim's pain (Sontag qtd in J. P. Brandt 72). The images within the photographs exhibit both the cruelty of children's abandonment, on the one hand, and the pain that comes after witnessing the photographic act and the questioning of its moral limits, on the other hand. Because, although Larraín felt in utter harmony with the children, to represent the pain and accumulation of suffering, either through words or images, he "requires a keen, unflinching detachment" (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 66). Namely, pain empathises with pain, generates communication, and can converge in similar ways despite never being the same. Larraín was never an abandoned child, but that kind of pain was what represented him the most.

Cambridge Dictionary defines a vagabond as "a person who has no home and usually no job, and who travels from place to place ". However, such a description does not do full justice to the rhetoric behind the addressed concept. Under the lens of the photographer, to be a vagabond is to become part of the environment, like an inanimate object that does not interrupt the flow of everyday life. A vagabond is someone that people see as much as trees or buildings but who is never observed. Therefore, Larraín, while among these abandoned children, "managed to feel invisible for the first time" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 341).

Witness par excellence, eyes and ears of the underworld. Undoubtedly, a contemporary version of Baudelaire's *flâneur*, for which "crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes (…) amid the ebb and flow of movement (…) to see the world, to be in the centre from the world, but remaining hidden from the world (…) is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito" (Baudelaire 9).

Using the term vagabond, however, is not a coincidence in Larraín's work. It was coined as a rhetorical figure by the poet Pablo Neruda in his work *Memoirs* in 1977. Here, the poet describes himself as a vagabond, in a poem titled "El Vagabundo de Valparaíso", a vagabond reporter of the streets of his beloved Valparaíso. Neruda wrote about old

friends and situations, settings and landscapes, and how he felt about those memories, thus establishing the same terminology:

> Valparaíso es reservado, sinuoso. La pobreza se derrama sobre sus colinas como una cascada. Todos saben cuántos comen, el número infinito de personas en las colinas y cómo se visten (y también cuántos no comen y cómo no se visten). El lavado colgando para secar las cubiertas de cada casa con banderas y el enjambre de pies descalzos que constantemente se multiplica traiciona al amor inextinguible (Larraín, *Valparaíso* 10).

There are similar components in both figures, the vagabond and the *flâneur*. Both, for example, aspire to become wanderers of the world, "citizens of the universe", and roam incognito in the streets, looking, observing, and becoming part of them. In the case of Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin also analyses the figure of the *flâneur*. He describes him from the condition of modernity, which questions the development of the city and leisure as a phenomenon:

> The principle that explains the colossal parade of bourgeois life began in France. Everything passed in review. Days of celebration and days of mourning, work and play, conjugal customs and bachelors' practices, the family, the home, children, school, society, the theatre, types, professions. The leisurely quality of these descriptions fits the style of the *flâneur* who goes botanising on the asphalt (*Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* 36).

To Neruda and Larraín, the idea of the vagabond is, however, different. In this regard, a vagabond would be the opposite of the *flâneur*, a person without privileges and without greater pretensions than wandering through common spaces, not a "prince". For Larraín, having a vagabond lifestyle is a way of dealing with the discomfort of his affluent life, unbearable family, and social pressure – a search for the truth. Both Larraín and Neruda also share this well-off lifestyle and strong social circles – although none of them ever refers to that. Each one of these vagabonds, or *flâneur*, receive some form of gratification from that otherness that is not exactly theirs. So, even though their motivations may differ, their situation and social circumstances regarding other realities

are perhaps similar. There is always an engaging component in particular contexts to "see" differently through the eyes of the "other".

Therefore, a vagabond becomes the mimesis of the world surrounding him, image and likeness; it is war, street, joy, and despair. These children for Larraín, Agnès Sire comments, "were like mirrors of his own personality and an expression of his longing for social change" (Larraín, *Valparaíso* 182). Thus, the vagabond is that mirror and the photograph hence the reflection. Consequently, the viewer not only sees Larraín through abandoned children, but the children, in turn, saw themselves through Larraín. His work allows seeing them both, and the figure of the vagabond consents to appreciate, through photography, the reflection of his gaze, as the perfect tourist:

> El turista medusa al que años de sedimentación en el único país que parece un pasillo y generaciones de vidas chilenas malgastadas, despilfarradas u olvidadas, concedieron una mirada que también es una forma de moverse. Rápido, ágil, joven e inerme, Larraín observa la ciudad que es un laberinto y al hacerlo también nos observa a nosotros. La mirada de Larraín: un espejo arborescente (Bolaño qtd in Monzó 46).

2.5 Self-recognition in photography

According to the documentary *Street Photography: Documentary 2017*, the imminent involvement between agents is irreversible (ShutteRev). When practising street photography, the focus, the subject of interest, directly affects the composition of the subjects in question. However, each personality and agent need a particular influence or motivation to develop a sense of belonging to a specific group, place and community. Photographs are witnesses to this. According to the art critic John Berger, whenever images emerge in whatever art form possible, the way people look is inevitably affected by a whole series of learned notions about art, such as the idea of beauty, truth and even taste (*Ways of Seeing* 11). Similarly, when creating images, say photographs, the actor who creates them is imminently affected by Barthes' phenomenology of "affect and power" (*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 20). Namely, the desire, revulsion, nostalgia, or pain involved, play a fundamental role in image creation and perception – what accounts for the photograph's mood.

Sergio Larraín had an introverted and melancholic personality, moved by specific events in his personal life. The most crucial turning points, one could say, are: (i) the distant relationship with his father and the constant search for the paternal figure, (ii) the conflict of a traditional, conservative, and wealthy home, versus the austerity and contemplative life that Larraín craved to find, (iii) the death of his younger brother, Santiago, in 1951, after abandoning his studies at the University of Michigan, where he never felt adapted, to devote himself entirely to photography, (iv) and when in 1952 he was drafted by the Chilean Military Service to be part of the infantry corps, where Larraín admits winding up emotionally wounded and humiliated, with his self-esteem and confidence wholly broken. Gonzalo Leiva, in Larraín's biography, recognises that these fractures in the photographer's life were the key that motivated Larraín to take to the streets seeking self-recognition: "In this scenario, his anguished spirit identifies with the reality of the violated beings, with the destinies broken by the poverty and abandonment" (25-8).

This way, Larraín's photographs could show more of the photographer's perplexed situation rather than the poverty of one country alone – as is commonly seen. The displacement of society, otherness, community sense, and re-significance of urban space could become a window to understand the photographer's work concerning others.

This relationship with the other and the sense of belonging is, in many cases, similar to other photographic experiences. For example, Vladimir Milivojevich – also known as Boogie – in his 2006 work, *It's All Good*, photographs the miserable lives of drug addicts and gangsters in the streets of Brooklyn. This episode meant a tremendous experience for the photographer. Boogie had to earn the right to be accepted into their circle and belong to them. Not as a photojournalist but as a friend, as one of them. In this regard, he acknowledges that "at that point, it was no longer about taking photos, [he] just got stuck in being there" (ShutteRev). He continues explaining that he could not quickly recover from what he had experienced, having spent all that time living and sharing with them. In an interview with *Dazed & Confused* magazine, he explains:

> I was bored in the neighbourhood I lived in, so I started walking deeper and deeper into Brooklyn's rough areas. In an abandoned parking lot I saw a bunch of homeless people, I asked them if I could take their picture, and one of them, Christina, who was just out of jail, said yes. I started hanging out with her and a week later she told me, 'Hey Boogie, my friend will stop by to smoke crack tonight, do you wanna take some pictures?' Two weeks later, that friend asked me to take photos of her shooting up heroin in her bathroom. It just went deeper and

> deeper from that point on. I would meet drug addicts, hang out at their homes and play Xbox with their children. I am not trying to be shocking; I just shoot what I see (Boogie).

For the American photojournalist Martha Cooper, who studied anthropology, the photographic experience retains a handful of resemblances, although her focus is radically different. In 1975, working for the New York Post, she marvelled along the streets on her way home from her office one day. She decided to photograph regularly using all the remaining films from her day at the NYP. The street life she found there was, from an ethnographic perspective, influenced by her idea of people and the use of public spaces. Although the photographer never tried to portray the poverty or landlord's wickedness, she says, the indicators of half-naked boys playing in the streets were irrefutable.

Notwithstanding, the author portrays the children playing, having a good time among the rubble of the place. They play with old tires and sometimes look inside the hood of a dismantled car as if they were mechanics of some sort. They jump on a discarded mattresses or even ride a broom like a horse (ShutteRev). In this context, Cooper was yet another participant in the games and shared the same scenario. She, in some way, felt a similar amusement as the children, keeping aside, to some extent, the prejudices and pain regarding distress and helplessness.

Another good example is the case of the American photographer Jill Freedman. This time, her social point of view centres on a different community, the police force, which she explores in the documentary work called *Street Cop* from 1981. The photographer used to be obsessed with the heroism of firefighters, so before involving herself in the police, she decided to spend two years in the fire brigade documenting their stories. Freedman's documentary work resulted in a book, *Firehouse*, published in 1977. Because some of her firemen friends had previously been policemen, they helped Freedman recruit herself into a police department. The photographer, who was not a fan of this particular institution, reconsidered the offer and thought that she might find friendly and committed people among them either way.

In the United States, the police force is generally portrayed and perceived as an institution founded on fear and aggression: the bad guys and oppressors. Thus, Freedman came up with the "good cop" idea and worked alongside them hand in hand in this new endeavour. They spent a considerable amount of time together. So much that the photographer gradually set aside prejudices and began to experience first-handed the

implications of being a policeman in New York. In the end, she was as surprised as upset. For her, now, they were gentle, with rude kindness, and had a lot of respect and appreciation for each other. They were like soldiers who would give their lives for the other and save lives whenever they could (ShutteRev).

Freedman recognises herself as a tough person with a strong personality and that these characteristics were excellent and necessary for the context she frequented. There is a particular photograph from the same book that can relate to the photographer's claims. The photo shows two perpetrators handcuffed by the police (Fig. 42), one sitting with his face completely covered in blood whilst looking at the camera. Cigarettes are all over the ground in what appears to be a puddle of blood. Next to him is the other man in a better condition, but he seems to be leaning over the table voluntarily, posing for the photograph.

Figure 42 – Jill Freedman, Street Cop album (1981)

There is a sentimental connection between the participating agents and their problematic situation that transgresses the professional motivations and enriches self-exploration. This exceptional photographic experience does not rely necessarily on the pursuit of reality or commonplaces. Instead, it counts as a visual translation of the marginal subject that does not simply appear to the common eye. It lends a voice to those who do not have it, where “the mundane, the non-aesthetically pleasing, and the ordinary are typically dismissed or simply ignored" (Gardner 4). It is neither a claim for justice nor a denunciation of inequality.

For Larraín, as for Boogie, Cooper or Freedman, it had to do more with the revelation of an experience from the otherness through self-recognition. This act of visual translation of the socially unusual – or from the moral prohibition – allows developing a comprehensive understanding of the human condition in its most questionable forms: pain, misery, corruption, and human decadence.

For example, in another photograph, Larraín again shows a boy smoking in his old clothes (Fig. 43). However, this image was taken eight years after the rest, in 1963. Despite the considerable distance between photographs, the scene, tones, and symbols are profoundly comparable to those from the 1950s. As if nothing could ever change the fate

of both the children and the photographer. This way, in a landscape shot, the photograph shows a child in the foreground, smoking, in old and damaged clothes. The boy looks defiantly at the camera with the cigarette in his mouth. In the background, out of focus, you can see what appears to be one of the many bridges that crosses the Mapocho River.

Figure 43 – Street children, Santiago (1963)

Therefore, this relationship between experience, the urban, and the social begins to show the ethnographic value in Larraín's work, where the photographer's self-recognition empathises with the "other" from their otherness. For example, in *The Return of the Real*, the art critic Hal Foster analyses the artist-ethnographer's paradigm. Here, the author suggests keeping a critical distance is needed “to protect against an over-identification with the other that may compromise this otherness " (Foster 203). However, the ethnographic work phenomenon implies irrefutably entering into the otherness, learning their language, and exposing it in categorical terms, which means that such distance will always remain at stake.

In Larraín's particular case, such categorical elements may account for marginality, community, and suffering denial. In this way, photography enables evaluating from an anthropological perspective and creating visual narratives from a personal experience. The artist's work reveals, through himself, his relationship with the world. Thus, Larraín, who once tried to save the world with photography and who came to the conclusion that he could never achieve it, returns to the misery of a hopeless community that, in many cases, could be, in the same way, his own.

2.6 Conclusions

Larraín proposes a close reading that allows showing much more than Santiag's poverty at the time. It responds to the humanisation of misery, where he brings these abandoned children closer to a language more "ours", from pain, from within, not from the publicity of poverty. Exposing the cruelty inflicted on those who are different, in this case, the children, distances the observers from their own violence, from the otherness. Because the "other", even when not an enemy, is considered only as someone "we" see, not someone

"like us" that also sees (Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* 65). Larraín, from his gaze and pain, manages to reverse this and brings the children closer to the viewer, to "us". Thus, the series represents the photographer's own experience of becoming the experience of the "other", a symbiosis of the photographic performance between agents: the referent, the camera and the photographer.

This way, the “Niños del Mapocho” are also evidence of the intimacy and trust in Larraín's photography. Larraín's shows his quality to shot without being seen or heard as a photographer but as an organic element that does not interrupt the natural flow of the environment. Same as Hugh Edwards expressed once to Larraín in a letter from 1965: "You are always behind the picture, and not before it, and it is easy to see clearly, without interruption, the world you reveal. You offer no college-patented remedies with sociological labels for the human existence" (Edwards).

Sergio Larraín, consequently, identified intimately with the abandoned children, and despite his introverted personality, he could not abstract himself from this experience. Through the photographed children, Larraín reveals himself from the composition's closeness and dramatic shades of black and white tones. Here, every sign of warmth seems inexistent, and all that remains is desolation, vague looks and the notion that time it is non-existent for them – since every day is and will be the same.

To conclude, the “Niños del Mapocho” by Sergio Larraín, is a work of a vastity yet to be explored further. In this regard, it is undeniable that the series denounces 50s Chile's poverty clouded by progress. However, it additionally explores the dispossessed from the revelation of the community, language, and, above all, pain. The photo-work makes a critical and sensitive exploration of abandonment and life on the streets that takes the viewer to learn and get closer to the children. It also allows acknowledging one of Larraín's most intimate facets related to his dissatisfaction with the world he lives in and his deep empathy with these abandoned boys.

Therefore, these children become a scanner of human pain and despair, where, notwithstanding suffering, there is beauty. Sontag refers to this phenomenon as “the dual powers of photography” (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 68), where a photograph can generate both truthful documents and works of visual art. Thus, the work of the abandoned children accounts for a historical-ethnographic record of Chile's precariousness in the 50s and an aesthetic experience regarding pain, communities, and the other, and that involves us, equally, as spectators and consumers of cruelty.

CHAPTER IV: Satori photography

1 The manifestation of Satori: a brief introduction

This chapter is an expository work that focuses on critical analysis and exploration of, what this study will prove to be, Sergio Larraín's most underrated and belittled photo work by the Magnum Photos institution: Satori photography. To Larraín, Satori responds to a form of Asian practice that, among many qualities, enhances the photographic experience. Since "Sergio Larraín was always in the search of himself" (Poirot qtd in Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*), the Chilean hence would engage with this practice for most of his life as both photographer and individual. This particular practice developed in Larraín more like a philosophy for life, a disposition, rather than a particular artistic style. However, since this unique practice has not yet been established as a traditional artistic category or official series, so to speak, part of this study will be to define it. The subjects of this particular visual production and archive have remained dormant at Magnum's headquarters in Paris and re-inspected by only three non-agency-related persons since the Chilean's demise: the academic Gonzalo Leiva in 2012, the documentarian Sebastian Moreno in 2017, and the academic Jean Paul Brandt in 2019.

On that account, this study endeavours to generate a logical yet not-necessarily-chronological pathway, an intellectual understanding, through which this visual production may find a two-folded solution. On the one hand, to complete Larraín's truncated and "still not very well known" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 29) imagery and, on the other, to vindicate its place and impact – not only in the photography field but religion and research as well. Additionally, the study draws upon Larraín's unpublished images extracted directly from the agency to articulate a broader spectrum of his imagery. Therefore, this introduction lays the basis through which Satori starts to manifest in Larraín's life and how it gradually merges into a formal artistic/spiritual experience.

There is proof that Sergio Larraín began with his concerns and conflicts on spirituality at a very young age, and most of them connect directly to his development in photography. For example, once Larraín finishes his studies in humanities in Chile, he moved to the United States to undertake a programme on forestry at the University of California in Berkeley, where he lived from 1949 to 1953 (Manchester 450). At the time, as close to San Francisco as it is, Berkeley was strongly influenced by the ideals of the post-war, which meant a time of civility, peace, and growth of a sense of belonging and community (Guerrero). Along with this, hippieism, psychedelia and artistic bohemia developed rapidly. Even though this was a place for effervescent creativity, the young

Chilean photographer never felt truly comfortable with that lifestyle to develop his photography. In Gonzalo Leiva's biographic study *Sergio Larrain: Biografia / Estética / Fotografía*, he mentions Larraín's needs were related more to a spiritual and mystical quest rather than a hectic and faster way of life:

> A su regreso a Chile, se recluye en una parcela en la comuna de La Reina dedicándose a la lectura de poesía y filosofía, además de reflexionar y experimentar en su pequeño laboratorio donde revela las primeras fotos que realiza en Chile. Es en esta entonces bucólica comuna donde comienza a sistematizar sus lecturas de filosofía oriental. Practica largas meditaciones y mucho silencio, como queriendo separarse de un entorno que no siente suyo. En un acto simbólico, se afeita pelo y cejas, regala sus pertenencias, hace voto de castidad y se retira del mundo. De este periodo, el creador recuerda que fue una "bonita época, en la que aprendí a conocerme a mí mismo" (Leiva 27).

Larraín started his experimental period at an early stage of his life and developed speedily so that both his spiritual quest and passion for photography would merge into one particular stream reflected in his production. The more the photographer experimented in life, the more he assimilated about photography. In the late 50s and early 60s, Larraín himself would recognise, for instance, that because of his constant feelings about being trapped in life, he tried psychoanalysis, group therapy, and LSD when it first appeared. On these experiences, the photographer admits he "had [his] first contacts with the Universe and was completely devoted to become one with God" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 382).

The artist José Samith, one of Larraín's closest friends, confesses in a 2012 interview that his friend, while practising photographing and experiencing the quotidian life, would have encouraged psychedelic experiences searching for inspiration and authentic creation (Leiva 40-1). Larraín and his friends roved along the paths of self-knowledge and spirituality, taking psychedelic drugs such as peyote, San Pedro (both mescaline-containing cacti species), and LSD, acknowledged by the photographer as "truth serum" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 359). The idea, Larraín comments on a brief interview with Amanda Puz, "was to show that the entire universe was all around him and that he was seeing it" ("¿Qué es en buenas cuentas fotógrafo? Un señor que se fija más" 86).

Within this same period, the photographer was already on the cusp of his active career as a photojournalist, working for international press titles and being an active member of Magnum Photos since 1959 (MagnumPhotos, "Sergio Larrain"). However, the European institutional scrutiny at the time kept his experimental work constantly subjected to documentary boundaries. It was not until 1963 that the Brazilian cultural attaché Thiago de Mello publishes what would it be one of Larraín's most lauded and experimental books, *El Rectángulo en la Mano.* Leiva says this book presents the photographer's most lucid perceptions about photography, which is still considered a treasure hard to find (Leiva 99-100).

In 1967, in his quest to keep expanding his spiritual horizons, Larraín begins to consider the instructions of the family friend and psychiatrist Claudio Naranjo, who linked to Esalen organisation would found Esalen-Chile (Leiva 41). Naranjo's teachings, in this regard, did share the *gestaltism* of the German Gestalt on new approaches to psychotherapy. Named directly by the psychiatrist Fritz Perls as one of his three successors (Naranjo-Institute), Naranjo hence oriented his programme towards exploring "human potential through experience, education, and research, [in the search] of a more just, creative, and sustainable world" (Murphy). Larraín, this way, followed these learnings closely.

In the same year, however, Sergio Larraín took on a spiritual pilgrimage under the guidance of a Bolivian spiritual teacher, Oscar Ichazo, at the Arica Institute in northern Chile. A moment the photographer recalls the year "a master appeared (…) and gave us all the knowledge of Orient, on the Universe, which is something fantastic, which changed our understanding of reality" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 382). Fortuitously, the accidental death of Dr Naranjo's son in 1970 prompted the psychiatrist to undertake the same learnings as Larraín to ease his grief. On that account, they both ended up under the instruction of Ichazo in Arica along with a small group of students, learning about "a profound and insightful spiritual and psychological method of personality typing which [Ichazo] called Protoanalysis" (Naranjo-Institute). These learnings, therefore, steered Larraín into his first intellectual encounters with Satori.

The very little known about Satori is what the photographer himself has let know through some writings and correspondence he shared with his closest ones during his life (Poynor). The fact that Larraín was not keen on giving interviews but deeply reluctant to public exhibition and "fearful of media coverage" (Sire qtd in Larraín, *Valparaíso* 185)

made it even more arduous to contour and shape a more profound meaning on Satori formally. As a partial result of this, the European critique and specialised media have constantly constricted Larraín's outlook on the subject, misleading it into the photographer's latest career and making it a cause for his abandonment of photography and the social world.

However, as part of Sergio Larraín's correspondence with Magnum's former director Agnès Sire, the photographer gives exciting insights on the subject. In a 1987 letter, he explains a critical aspect that has remained ignored in assessing his work and would enrich his visual production. Satori, as abstract as it may be, has been part of Larraín's photographic creation from the beginning of his artistic exploration:

> Then back to Chile, I decided to live alone in a peasant adobe house I had rented for a year… I wanted to be alone, and find myself… (now I was 21) … I spent the year barefooted, doing yoga, which I did not know what it was… and reading all there was on that subject… The year's loneliness, cleared my mind, and at the end I had Satori (without knowing it), I was back to be one, with the Universe, like a child being so tranquil and undisturbed (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 381).

Until these days, this practice is still commonly related to the photographer's avoidance state of mind rather than to the artistic production itself or viewer's interpretation, thus overshadowing inquiries on possible photographic outcomes. As an artistic expression, Satori has never been considered worthy enough by Western European critique, particularly by the French agency Magnum Photos, causing it never to find a place among them. Probably, because the contemplative photography of a Latin American photographer was meaningless compared to the agency's newsworthy focus of interest, which for the French historian Clément Chéroux related to the pursuit of the other: "the 'mentally deranged', the 'alien', the 'savage', the 'sick', the 'disabled', the 'inmate', the 'marginal'" (*Magnum Manifesto* 15). Consequently, since Magnum has harboured Larraín's archive heretofore, Satori visual production never had a chance to have any intellectual-cultural space. Satori would not make it to galleries or publications; therefore, Latin-American approaches or studies in this regard have been unable to be made.

For all these reasons, this chapter deconstructs the relationship between Sergio Larraín and Satori. It organises it in sequences that help reconstruct fundamental notions

concerning, for instance, what it is, what makes it essential, and how insightful this particular archive is.

Accordingly, the chapter divides into four general subsections: "Satori and Sergio Larraín", a section oriented to develop contextual aspects on the figure of the photographer and Satori as a formal practice. "Satori and subjective photography" looks to anchor Larraín's Satori within subjective readings on photography at the time, comparing and contrasting them to Larraín's published work. The "Zen photography" section introduces notions on reflective photography as a stylistic style compared to Thoma Merton's approaches. Finally, "Haiku, Reality and Satori" looks to expand the importance of specific artistic outputs in understanding Satori as an artistic outlook.

2 Satori and Sergio Larraín

2.1 Overview

Nowadays, the speculations by which Sergio Larraín retired from professional photography to live a spiritual life secluded from the world are widespread knowledge: deceit, anguish, and eccentricity are only a few (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*). One particular idea, however, that has been weakly developed over time, in this regard, is the photographer's personal inclination towards Asian practices – especially Satori. This spiritual practice is commonly related to the photographer's state of mind rather than his artistic production. Agnès Sire recognises in "Planet Valparaíso" that Larraín's artistic and spiritual explorations on this matter may be more beneficial to "anyone who wants to understand the [photographer's] complex personality" rather than getting any insight on photography. Because Larraín's images on the subject "are sometime a little weak" (Larraín, *Valparaíso* 187-8).

Satori, as aesthetic experimentation, has not yet found a place within any artistic or documentary rubric in Western European criticism. For these reasons, the section addresses Satori as a concept of two-folded importance in the Chilean's work: firstly, it analyses Larraín's pursuit of an "awakened" mind, or "contemplation", to understand both his removal from the world in the 70s and his decision for giving up documentary

photography; and secondly, it lays the foundation for the development of an aesthetic principle in photography concerning Satori practices.

2.2 Definitions and personal context

On a broader scope, Satori is the Oriental archetypical notion of enlightening or knowledgeability about the universe. The concept as such, as well as meditational and mindfulness practices, have been spread initially within the Asian culture. This spiritual practice originated in India in Shakyamuni Buddha's era (The Awakened One of the Shakya clan), around 500 BC, first documented at least two and half thousand years ago. It then spread to China and later to Japan, and in the 20th Century, it came to the West, Europe, and America (Gabrys and Daizan 1-19). As a result, the practice is sometimes known as Chinese Wu or Zen Buddhism in Japan. Nonetheless, the term Satori itself is a Japanese word corresponding to the English concept of epiphany or "aha" moments of insight and enlightenment (Torrance). For the Japanese scholar Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki in his book *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, he understands Satori as acquiring a new viewpoint in Zen. This practice, he explains, "is decidedly not a system founded upon logic and analysis. If anything, it is the antipode to logic" (38). Instead, it is an "intuitive looking-into, in contradistinction to intellectual and logical understanding" (88). It also implies an intellectual and emotional reorganisation of the individual concerning the universe. More importantly, this aesthetic practice suggests a striking similarity to an existing Western tradition concerning modern art that provides a compelling point of theoretical and empirical comparison (Pelowski, Akiba and Palacios 237-8), which in this case relates directly to photography as an artistic expression.

As to this practice and the Western artistic experience, the way of understanding and perceiving the world and oneself is radically affected. Additionally, this spiritual state is usually reached by extended meditation and oriented concentration, interrupted only by moments of clarification or epiphanies (spontaneous revelations of truth): the breakthrough. Namely, what Gabrys and Daizan understand as *kensho*, which means "literally seeing or experiencing your true nature – a blissful realisation where a person's inner nature, the originally pure mind, is directly know as illuminating emptiness, a thusness which is dynamic and immanent in the world" (8). Hence, such a state of clarification usually culminates in disrupting both artist's and spectator's preconceptions to give way to new means of perception or insight. "To produce unique works of art, artists

must unlearn a little of the conventionally right way of doing things", since this aesthetic experience "must violate standards more or less deeply internalised" (Becker qtd in Pelowski, Akiba and Palacios 240-1).

When talking about Oriental practices, it is essential to note that these many influences are also significantly related to Buddhism. For example, in this particular practice, the notion of enlightenment refers to achieving one's self-nature, yet not as a one-time experience, but as a layered exploration towards maturing that revelation through repetition. Enlightenment should be continuously experienced through several practices and trials to become finally pure knowledge: the Buddha (Yen). In related terms, when Larraín tries to explain his photographic outcomes, he constantly touches similar basis. To the Chilean photographer, some images are the unintelligible result of truth. The magical moments Larraín says come "from a state of grace" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 384), a process of physical and emotional endurance and contemplation. Hence, if Satori practices were translated into photographic experiences, there would only be specific photographs capable of representing the truth, just as only certain spiritual practices would reach enlightenment.

In an even deeper comparison, in both cases, Buddhists and (Satori) photographers must be prepared by rigorous discipline, helping themselves commonly with the use of *koans* and meditation to concentrate and keep focus. *Koan*, or, in Chinese, *kung-an*, which means "public case", is the term used to refer to dialogues or small conversations between students and masters or individuals to generate doubt, questioning the material and three-dimensional world and the cultural convention of old social codes. Yoel Hofmann, for instance, in *The Sound of the Hand*, understands this method as an educational process with "verbal and physical techniques to arouse their students to the elusive truth" (21).

Larraín undertook these practices in many aspects: as a student, teacher, father, or friend. As a photographer, nonetheless, his teachings were more straightforward and more structured than the rest. In 1982, Larraín writes a letter to his nephew Sebastián Donoso where he explains the relation between inner instinct and an excellent photographic practice: “If you’re sure a photo is no good – throw it away! Take the better ones and stick them a little higher up on the wall (…) Holding on to the mediocre ones will condemn you to mediocrity. Keep the ‘hits’ only – the really interesting images, throw out the rest because everything you keep will be retained in the unconscious”. Namely, everything that

lacks positiveness should be disposed of. Because one and one's photograph is as good as what lies deep in the consciousness. "Continue living quietly", he continues, and "when you are ready to start again, you can set off on other voyages and wanderings" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 379).

In the same line of thought, in 1987, Sergio Larraín writes a letter to Agnès Sire as a response to the question of quitting photography, in which the photographer addresses his concerns about the subject: "my reasons for doing, or not, photography", he says, are linked to quite a few significant events in his life. Especially in 1967, when "a master appeared" (Oscar Ichazo) and "gave us all the knowledge of Orient, on the Universe, which is something fantastic, which changed our understanding of reality". Therefore, this reality relates to the feeling that the world is over the edge towards chaos and self-destruction and that the only solution is to "go to another level of consciousness" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 381-3). Namely, Satori, an estate of awareness and contemplation given only by meditation and detachment.

However, for a deeper understanding of Larraín's significant life events mentioned above, this study finds four dominant pressure points in Gonzalo Leiva's text which help understand what lead Sergio Larraín into mortification and solitude. These triggers would also contribute to comprehend the nature of his work and his transition into a spiritual practitioner.

Firstly, trying always to run away from a more violent and consumer world, Sergio Larraín, cognitively speaking (i), could not stand witnessing the increasing capitalist tendency of people and institutions that only cared for profit and would not help to solve any humanitarian/ecological issue. In emotional terms (ii), he realised photography would neither save nor change the world nor generate any positive or immediate impact in society. For instance, occasionally, Larraín would come back to the place of his street children series and realise that pain and suffering are still out there on the same streets.[43] This suffering for the other helps trigger an urge to turn his senses onto nature contemplation, religion and yoga, thus developing avoidance behaviour. On a more personal level (iii), there is evidence that shows Larraín was profoundly affected by a life

[43] For a deeper analysis on the street children series, see Chapter III, “Pain and Cruelty: the case of the abandoned children”.

of repression and exile provoked by the military coup in 1973 in Chile, where the national armed forces tracked down, arrested, and disappeared many of his friends amid political persecution. Lastly, Larraín's emotional conflicts come to an end in what Leiva points out as "self-preservation" (iv), a state of extreme disappointment of the world he once knew, where the Chilean deliberately opts for detaching himself from cultural and social traditions (44-6).

All these life's triggers find common ground since 1967, when Larraín says he met his spiritual master, Oscar Ichazo, and catalysed his experiences onto a spiritual scene, including photography. In this time, the photographer finally settles at a slower rhythm of life while he starts living in austerity.

Ichazo, Larraín's master, as he calls it, is a Bolivian teacher who would found the epistemology institute Gnoseología Arica of Oriental, mystical culture and communal living experiences (Aguilera 52). Such an event would become a breakthrough in Larraín's life. Because from that moment onwards, he would begin his retirement not only as a professional photographer but from the world too. In 1969 Larraín moves to Arica city to become a formal and active student under Ichazo's instruction in Northern Chile. Here, Larraín, along with his classmates, is trained in what Ichazo has coined as *psychocalisthenics*, a combination of respiratory practices and corporal movements. Since Arica, the last residence of the photographer would be in Tulahuén, a small village in the region of Limarí, Chile. Here, Larraín ends up living in complete isolation. In this life process, Larraín looks to ritualise his experiences through personal images (photographs and drawings) and the learnings he constantly tries to instruct the only son he took with him, Juan José. The Chilean, it is said, would get out his house uniquely to send letters and pick up correspondence, or in occasions to “realizar sus clases gratuitas de yoga en la sede de Bomberos o bien para la compra en el cercano almacén Santa Alicia: lista acotada a cereales, frutas y verduras” (Leiva 45).

Satori undeniably implies a much more complex ideology to the photographer and his context than reductionist explanations upon his disenchantment from the world, including photography. Not to mention the full exploration about the discipline and practice that, until now, remains uninvestigated. Furthermore, what makes it of utmost importance, is not necessarily how complete or enlightened Larraín got to be because of this practice, but how relevant it became in the development of his artistic exploration. Without being an Asian practitioner, Sergio Larraín, as a world-class photographer,

decided to step aside from the traditionalism of Western visual culture to explore a new aesthetic related to, on the one hand, Satori practices and, on the other, intimae explorations on self-recognition.

2.3 Obstacles and approaches

As set forth, popular knowledge has enormously grown when it comes to Sergio Larraín's mysticism. Such growth, nonetheless, has not only enrichened certain specific qualities of the Chilean, but it has also had an obstructive effect upon his work as a photographer. It does not take much effort to find, either on the web or printed media, sensationalist comments on the photographer's inexplicable life decisions, such as "Sergio Larrain was on the cusp of photographic greatness but gave it all up for a spiritual life" (Usborne). All these publications, nevertheless, do have some basis, to some extent, to shallowly depict the Chilean's decisions and his alleged retirement from photography. Magnum agency, who officially published Sergio Larraín's profile after his demise, writes a public announcement saying: "In 1968, he (…) virtually gave up photography to pursue his study of Eastern culture and mysticism, adopting a lifestyle in keeping with his ideals" (MagnumPhotos, "Sergio Larrain"). Larraín's closest ones nonetheless also contributed to swell the photographer's mystic side. For example, Paz Huneeus, [44] in a 2012 interview for the national newspaper *La Segunda*, points out that in the 70s Larraín "empezó su distanciamiento de la fotografía: privilegió su vida mística, se dedicó a practicar yoga y a llevar un mensaje filosófico a un grupo de discípulos" (Valdivieso).

These kinds of comments, either written or spoken, besides the swollen commercial mysticism that has been left upon both Larraín's work and his public figure, have also proven to harm the photographer's legacy. Satori work, for instance, has deliberately been left out of the photographer's photographic visual production and presented almost exclusively as a mystical exploration of his state of mind at the end of his career. This phenomenon, undoubtedly, has left Larraín's imagery incomplete (Poirot, "About Sergio

[44] In 1969 Sergio Larrarín becomes a member of the mediation group Arica, in which he meets his partner Paz Huneeus, who would become the mother of his son in 1973. The parents baptised the boy as AO, but he would eventually change his name to Juan José. (R. Mena).

Larraín"), truncated to only his utilitarian work, making it impossible to understand it as a whole and giving way to all sorts of speculations.

Agnès Sire, in this respect, has been persistent in saying that because Sergio Larraín's career only lasted 15 years, he was always considered a genius within that time, thus emphasising that everything that falls outside those fifteen years is not a worthwhile contribution. In the conversation series "Mostrar a los otros lo que otros no miran" (2014), the French curator compares Cartier-Bresson's retirement to Larraín's and reinforces the idea that there is a moment in anyone's career that the smartest choice is to stop and step back. Mostly in photography because, otherwise, as it happened to Bresson, the artist would keep on repeating itself. In Larraín's case, this repetition, for Sire, is related to Satori. She understands the poetic value in Larraín's work only when the photographer's abstractionism engages with documentary, as in the case of Valparaíso. Without documentary value, she says, "caeríamos en lo que hizo al final de su vida, en los *satories*, que no sabemos dónde estamos", because to represent "solo fotos de rosas, o solo fotos difíciles de interpretar no daría el mismo resultado" (CNCA, "Conversación entre Agnès Sire y Luis Weinstein sobre Sergio Larraín").

Agnès Sire again emphasises this sentiment in Larraín's retrospective in Chile 2014. In a guided visit through his photographs, the curator explains Larraín's "last" photographic manifestation through a small section on Satori. The exhibition is displayed chronologically. The visual pathway ends precisely in a scaled-down exhibition wall segment disposing of eight black/white photographs and ten drawings in small format about this spiritual experience (Fig. 44). On this regard, Sire remarks that this is the time where Larraín chooses "aislarse en el Norte de Chile en Tulahuén, practicando meditación, yoga, hacienda dibujos, pintando, y sin más deseo de viajar, sin más deseo de estar en el mundo de la comunicación" (CNCA, "Visita guiada a exposición de Sergio Larraín").

Figure 44 – Agnès Sire at the Satori segment, Larraín's retrospective (2014)

In a similar fashion, the Czech-French photographer also member of Magnum Photos, Josef Koudelka, recalls about his time along with the Chilean photographer and says "yo pienso que Sergio tenía un talento enorme, pero se quemó. No ha hecho un trabajo completo. No explotó sus capacidades". By the time he engaged in Satori,

Koudelka continues, he personally “me mandó fotografías y no eran tan buenas, o al menos no me gustaron” (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*).

These kinds of comments, made either by influential European critics, artists, or simply mass media, have explicitly overlooked the work of the Chilean, excluding a considerable part of his artistic production and thus fostering an obtuse imagery about his figure. Understandably, spiritual and artistic explorations had very little to do within the margins of a hegemonic corporate institution like Magnum Photos was at the time. It makes sense since documentary and commercial photography were the backbones of photography practices in the 20th Century, principally in France and England. Nonetheless, arbitrary decisions in the pursuit of a Western aesthetic sense have handicapped the legacy of different artists, such as the case of Sergio Larraín and his visual exploration of Satori. In this regard, for example, Luis Poirot, in a 2012 interview, expresses his fears upon the photographer's death:

> Más allá de la desaparición del ser humano, queda la obra (…) la obra está depositada en la agencia Magnum en París, y son ellos quienes han hecho la selección y han publicado las fotos de acuerdo a la visión que ellos tienen de su obra. Pero es mucho más grande de lo que nos han mostrado (…) me daría pena que Sergio Larraín terminara siendo el fotógrafo de los franceses (Hartung).

Contrary, one compelling approach to understanding the incorporation of Larraín's physical performance into spiritual photography is vaguely mentioned in the local magazine *Piel de Leopardo* in 1995 and Leiva's Larraín biography. They both attempt to explore the traits by which the Chilean utilises the photo camera as an expression, a sort of body language visual experience. For example, the magazine published the article "Sergio Larraín, La Cámara Lúcida" as referencing the work of Roland Barthes. Here, Manuel Pertier analyses Valparaíso series and recognises that one of the photographer's features as an image-maker is that Larraín's sight protracts from his hands into the viewfinder, "el rectángulo", and that his finger obturates the viewer, which also sees. There is no one-only eye in the photographic experience but an entire body performance in the moment of seeing (32). Similarly, Leiva writes about the way Larraín deconstructs the ways of seeing. To the academic the photographic experience seems to be part of an organic symbiosis

between individuals and devices in utter communion, in which "el ojo no solo está en la cara, también está en el cuerpo, en la mano, en la extensión de los brazos" (Leiva 129).

However, even though these approaches are insufficient and shallow for a severe image-making exploration, they help open the discussion towards the photographer's unexplored artistic expression. Because, for some colleagues like Poirot, Larraín remains a "stranger", an unknown poet who wore a fake name (Poirot, "About Sergio Larraín"). After all, it is undeniable that, apart from the figure of the "roving" and “mystical” photo-journalist Sergio Larraín was known for, the photographer, either way, did incorporate a personal philosophical stand onto photography. He systematically re-signified the photographic camera into a medium for contemplation. "He wasn't interested in photographs as reportage", comments the photo critic Rick Poynor in a 2017 article about Satori, "what he wanted to discover with the camera, as with the rhyming girls, are instants of quietly fortuitous revelation". Because, as Larraín used to say, "art is an approach to the state of satori" (Poynor).

Larraín graphically expresses a part of these learnings and expressions in his triangle of life, what he calls "The kingdom". This triangle responds to a drawing of a pyramid of concepts the photographer built allegedly from the 60s onwards, when first approaches began to be seeing in letters addressed, for example, to Cartier-Bresson (1965), his nephew Sebastian Donoso (1982), or Agnès Sire (1986-7). The photographer used such an image as a visual, spiritual path and would send it also to his closest ones through letters or handmade leaflets (Fig. 45). Hence, this image represents the guide Larraín drew on in his pursuit of Satori, not only as an intangible, unmaterial practice but as a visual exploration too. The author describes seven steps in order to reach harmony and a state of grace within the kingdom of knowledge: 1) Unite to God through yoga; 2) connection with farming and gardening; 3) community values; 4) Limited population; 5) to produce no waste; 6) agriculture as social service; 7) consciousness for environmental health.

Figure 45 – Larraín’s “Piramid of Reality”, The Kingdom

Nevertheless, even though Larraín never explicitly relates such principles with photo styles or visual explorations, it is indisputable that this guide relates to many images

made by the photographer in this same context. In this regard, this means there is a direct relationship between Larraín's spiritual practice and his photographic exploration of Satori.

To illustrate, the following sequence, from a contact sheet series from 1975, evidences that some of the mentioned concepts show up as a symbolic inspection of one of Arica Group retreats (Fig. 46).[45]

Figure 46 – Photo sequence from Arica School (1975)

The sequence is composed of four single images only and two different successions. The first two show a group of symmetrical leaves in the foreground while leaving a blurred background. In this succession, Larraín seems to compose using three main variables: leaves, light and counter form. In the background, there is a yard covered by grass and surrounded by trees. In the middle, at the tip of the leaf, there is a kneeling man's silhouette, yet hardly seen. Larraín took these photos from the inside of a structure, probably a house, towards the outside. In contrast, the following succession shows a similar man-shaped figure also praying and practising while prostrating. Nonetheless, the man is in the foreground this time, and a few people seem to follow his moves. Larraín took these pictures from the outside into the inside, while a window frame frames the composition with flowers.

The sequence, even though short, may reveal the visual manifestation of the mentioned principles – not necessarily as reportage but as a representation instead. In only four images, Larraín's pyramid of reality comes to light and exposes a visual exploration of harmony and Satori. It also establishes a visual dialogue, a *Koan*, between the outside and the inside. Larraín takes the external learnings into an intimate scene through repetition, from teacher to student, from the universe to the community, from God to himself.

[45] The current Arica School of Knowledge, formerly a vernacular institute of gnosiology, was founded by the Bolivian Oscar Ichazo in 1969, aiming to look for the perfect man. Through returning to nature and expanding skills, the founder attempts to awake their students “del estado de semi-inconsciencia en que todos vivimos (…) logrando la felicidad total” (Sierra).

To this extent, the evidence shows that, although Larraín has been persistently considered an exceptional photographer, his exploration of Satori was neither accepted nor explored as an artistic expression worthy enough to be shown. In fact, the photographic collection has remained inexistent since it has been constantly argued that the Chilean gave up photography because of this specific practice – which this study evidences the opposite. However, few media, less sensationalist in this regard, have remained somehow more objective. *Time* magazine in 2013, with the motif of Larraín's first retrospective at Rencontres d'Arles festival, mentions: "Larrain stopped taking pictures professionally in the 1970s (…) though he continued to take some pieces in the 1980s" (Conway).

Larraín effectively stopped working for Magnum and, consequently, any other media related to documentary or photojournalism; yet, he never indeed stopped taking pictures. Proof of this is that, regardless of what specialised media and critics have already said, Larraín's archive at Magnum is dated uninterruptedly until 1995, with photo works on Tulahuén, Ovalle, Valparaíso, Chiloé, Santiago and Algarrobo, among other Chilean locations.[46] All of these pieces relate directly to Larraín's understanding of Satori as a photographic practice. Therefore, even though the concrete manifestation of Satori imagery has proved to have a lifespan of around twenty years – and a lifetime longer if considering Sergio Larraín's pre-Ichazo production –, its archive and categorisation have remained dormant at Magnum Paris until these days.

3 Satori and subjective photography

Presently, Magnum's official statement made it widely accepted that Larraín abandoned photography after he came into contact with Bolivian guru Óscar Ichazo to continue his study of oriental culture and mysticism adopting a lifestyle consistent with His ideals (MagnumPhotos, "Sergio Larrain"). However, there is evidence that his work would have kept circulating and gaining appreciation among international and national critics, including even part of his experience in the Arica group. Furthermore, this particular appreciation will not focus this time on the documentary traits Larraín used to be known for back in the 60s, but on the subjective potential of his work. Such recognition would

[46] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive. August 2019.

consider not only part of his most outstanding work but also some of his less commented photographs. Nonetheless, even though these publications did an exceptional job on subjective reading, they only considered Larraín's old work from the 50s and 60s, thus omitting the photographer's newer and more subjective production on Satori. Concerning these publications, Leiva recognises that in considering only Larraín's active work, the photographer generated a resistance discourse rooted in the collective memory. He claims that Larraín's work is a constant manifestation of a mechanical metaphor that contemplates the complexities of a continent and a country drifting away – regarding Latin-America and Chile (127). Therefore, the inclusion of Satori work (if known) within these same margins could have considerably opened the Chilean's visual spectrum. Consequently, this section starts in the same year Larraín meets his spiritual master, from 1968 onwards. Through readings on the subjectivity of his work, this study looks to generate an analytical and comparative context by which Larraín's Satori exploration may find its potential in the field of subjective photography.

The singularities by which the Chilean begins to receive such recognition are far from merely isolated events concerning his work but a complex structure in response to the debate on categorical photography.

During the 50s, for example, the German Otto Steinert would champion in Eastern Europe the now international movement on “subjective photography”, disrupting thus the structure of modern art and objective expression such as documentary photography. Steinert defined it as "humanised, individualised photography" (Steinert qtd in Valentin 177) oriented to capture a picture out of an individual thing that is compounded by its nature and emphasises “the photographer’s subjective and transformative vision” (Biro 356).

Steinert was a professor of photography at the Saarbrücken School of Art and Crafts and organised the first of three international "subjektive fotografie" exhibitions (1951, 1954 and 1958). In the 1951 introduction, he wrote that subjectivity is about a "personal creative moment of the photographer (as opposed to "applied" photography serving every day or documentary purposes)", where photographic creations are "moulded in form and content" to finally mould "the visual consciousness of our age" (Valentin 170-1). The academic Andreas Valentin considers these references and reads the German movement as a social manifestation attempting to reconstruct the German subjective view after the Second World War and Western Europe's, by extension: "a new photographic style is one of the demands of our times (…) only a photography sympathetic towards

experiment can provide the means to the shaping of our visual experiences" (Steinert qtd in Valentin 159).

At first glance, there may not be any relationship between this movement and Sergio Larraín; except two. Firstly, the Italian Giuseppe Cavalli,[47] whose photographs "gave him new ideas about photography" (IVAM) such as the tendency to "transform the subject in image" (Gautrand 672) , and who also "hacía suyos los postulados de Otto Steinert con la 'Subjektive Fotografie' donde proponía una estética de estructura y contraste que serían asumidos por el colectivo artístico italiano La Bussola" (Leiva 39) . Secondly, the German Bill Brandt, one of Larraín's most admired photographers and exponents, "who he cherished" (Lehmitz), and from which Mike Seaborn relates to the Chilean due to their shared sense of "candid nature" and "atmosphere" (Seaborne qtd in *London 1958-59* 7).

To continue the debate on categorial photography, the academic Liz Wells establishes that within the 70s and 80s, the concerns of academics and critics turned their interests onto institutional structures. She says they would replace the study about the immanent image for social theories on the implication of representation and power (66). The author refers to the symbolic exchange of meaning in photography that comes particularly along with the theories of Foucault and Lacan that promote subjective analysis on the use of photography towards social anthropology. Similarly, Sarah Graham-Brown and Allan Sekula would also use a photographic angle to explore political-ideological practices to "using photography to define social types viewed as different or other" (Wells 67). Some authors such as Ian Jeffrey have criticised these inclinations for bringing only "a macaronic writing" (Jeffrey qtd in Wells 67). They argue that this social phenomenon neglects the primary object of study in photography that is the photograph itself. Nonetheless, even though they may be correct in their claims, there was a sort of global understanding that the intellectual object of photography was changing.

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[47] Giuseppe Cavalli was an Italian photographer from the early twentieth Century who would embody, in his photographs, an aesthetic of high-key style and lighting to reduce shadows. Despite being vaguely known outside his country, Cavalli was a joint founder of the photography group La Bussola (The Compass) in 1947 and later of the photography group Misa in 1953. This aggrupation caught the eye of Larraín by their transcendental philosophy of understanding the creational power of the photographer to transform the subject into an image.

To Larraín, in the same line of thought, “la fotografía subjetiva abría una brecha creativa, posibilitando encontrar imágenes también en lo insólito y lo emocional” (Leiva 39) – situation that contributed also to lay some intellectual and visual basis for the work of the Chilean. Hence, the incursions on subjective photography could have meant a great deal for Larraín's Satori exploration, yet none of this work has ever been mentioned as a real photographic contribution. In this context, the similarities between Larraín's active and professional work and Satori will help evidence this visual correlation and publications on subjective analysis. For this, the study brings out six categories by which national and international press made subjective, critical approaches about Larraín's old photographs, thus unacknowledging his most reflective, suitable, and contemporary work.

3.1 On duality and contrast

In 1968, to illustrate, the American magazine *Photography Annual* acknowledges Sergio Larraín as one of the most influential photographers of his time, along with renowned names such as Robert Doisneau and Elliot Erwitt. The issue focused on the experimental technicality within an excelled, “international portfolio” (Durniak 4). The editorial team selected "The Matronas" photograph from Bolivia (Fig. 47 left).[48] Such photograph exposes, in its singularity, both Larraín's subjectivity and features for photographic research. In its description, the experts recognise "Sergio Larraín had the vision to record this encounter between two Bolivian women, one with pale-coloured clothing contrasted against the other clad in dark garments, the light and shadow in the background carrying on their own contrast" (Durniak 203). In contrast to this aesthetic reading, the magazine also inserts Larraín's photo camera technical specs to declare too what made possible the nature of the photograph: "Camera: Leica IIIF with 50-mm f/2 lens; Exposure: 1/125 second at f/2. Film: Plus-X, rated at 125. Developer: Microphen. Lighting: Natural" (Ibis). This photograph, as other similars, has been untiringly repeated in different media under similar readings and approaches.

[48] For a complete study on “The Matronas”, look up Chapter I “Understanding Magnum”, sub-section “*Auratical* value of technology”.

The following image (Fig. 47 right) is taken from the series "Simple Satori", a subsection attached to Larraín's retrospective book. Like others from the series, this image shares similar features to *Photography Annual's* readings – like working directly with the camera's technical specs and natural lighting to visualise balance and contrast. The Satori photograph is a rested image that also presents a duality of forms and lights. Here, Larraín shoots at the feet of a person whilst walking. Nevertheless, he focuses on the person's shadow projection onto the asphalt, which loses any resemblance to a human-shaped figure. However, the organic shadow contrasts with the lower half of the photograph, showing a patterned-ceramic floor. Hence, both photographs play with contrasts and movement, lights and shadows, persons and elements.

Figure 47 – "Matronas", Bolivia (1957) and Simple Satori

"Simply satori" is also part of a more contemporary (70s-90s) and extensive sequence on everyday life compared to "The Matronas" (1958). Satori work could have suited better among the narrative and authors in the magazine issue. However, because of the unawareness of its existence, it never had a chance among Larraín's already published work.

3.2 National landscapes

Similarly, in the same year, Editions Rencontre in Switzerland launches the book *Chili L'Atlas des Voyages*, in which Larraín participates with the totality of the photographs in. The book's narrative includes more than 100 images, and they all respond to Larraín's trips across Chile – all credited to Magnum. Now, even though the publication looks to be more descriptive than artistic, the author Jean Mayer uses Larraín's photographs in a profoundly subjective way to describe his experience across the country. These photographs are neither organised nor read in any documentary fashion; on the contrary, they are employed as a visual translation of the experiences and readings of the French instead:

> Un pays où se succéderont le torride, le chaud, le tempéré, le froid, le glacial, le désertique, le sec, l'humide. Comment d'emblée pourrait-on prendre ce donné aussi insolite pour un trésor ?

> Passe encore pour la terre ferme, dont il faut déjà rejoindre les vallées, percer les forêts, sonder les déserts, apportant pain et travail, école et logis, hygiéne et goût de vivre à des compatriotes disséminés comme fourmis sur la pierre chaude (Mayer 6-10).

Mayer, to exemplify, writes about a natural "treasure" out of contrasts. He uses a panoramic photograph in elevation on the Andes Mountain where Larraín captured the rhythm of rock formations and hill textures, given by natural lighting and contrast (Fig. 48 left). Plenty of these images are attached to Mayer's subjectivity, but Leiva nonetheless recognises that Larraín's signature can yet be seen: "se puede apreciar en las imágenes el sello deconstructor del fotógrafo, pues si bien muestra clichés del país, estos se encuentran siempre tensados por otras imágenes que compiten con los estereotipos tradicionales atribuidos a la identidad nacional" (Leiva 75). This French atlas, which intertwines information about Chile's history, its people and landscapes, from end to end, could have ideally included Larraín's topographic exploration on Tulahuén, Valparaíso or Central Valley while he worked on Satori. However, these images did never come to light.

For example, in the late 60s, as part of Larraín's spiritual exploration, the photographer builds up a series under the label "Chilean Landscapes" (Fig. 48 right). Here, Larraín, along with few friends, covers regions like Matanzas, Los Vilos, Algarrobo, Petrorca, Central Chile, Copiapó, Magallanes, Atacama Desert, Chañaral, Arica and Santo Domingo, just to name few. These photographs about rested Chilean landscapes extended from the 60s to the 90s, and for the photographer, these "were done in a moment where reality opened itself".[49]

This series, that account for a similar quality in production and composition matters, may not have surpassed perhaps Larraín's early documentary work. Nonetheless, it would have definitely increased and enriched both photographer's and country's visual exploration.

[49] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legends 1969 onwards. August 2019.

Figure 48 – Andes Mountain and "Chilean landscapes"

3.3 The sedition of shapes

In 1969, to continue, the same magazine that praised the name of Larraín a year ago, *Photography Annual*, now publishes "a selection of the world's finest photographs" (Kinzer 3), compiled by the Editors of Popular Photography. As collaborators, essential names such as Ernst Haas, Eugene Smith, Robert Doisneau and Harry Callaham appear on the payroll. Larraín, hence, is also part of this selection, this time with a photograph of a young couple hugging by the sea in Chiloé, Chile (Fig. 49 left). Here, once again, Larraín does not offer an image of any particular newsworthy impact by itself, necessarily. Instead, he works on an aesthetic loaded with the reflectiveness of a romantic kind of painting sinking in the horizon employing unpredictable light beams, of which Larraín recalls about the couple in the sailing boat that they "were passengers like [he] was" (Kinzer 203-6).

The entire magazine gives space to photographs' expressiveness rather than erstwhile documentary traits. Here, none of the displayed pictures is meant to articulate truth necessarily but to swell up the artistry behind the composition instead, as clearly seen in the work of Robert Doisneau and Christiane & Dieter Hinrichs, respectively (Fig. 49 middle).

In part of Larraín's production on Satori, he also intensively explores the unusual articulation of shapes when contrasted with lighting and camera technical specs. In 1968, for instance, there is strong evidence in this regard, where the photographer keeps on searching for the sedition of shapes (Fig. 49 right), utilising in this particular case the streets gadgets as the focus of this exploration and leaving individuals as deconstructed elements within the composition. Similar are the cases of Chiloé and the rest of the images inside *the Photography Annual* issue that, because of their interest in their artistic and cultural output, could have enabled and enriched Satori possibilities in the field.

Figure 49 – Chiloé (1957), Doisneau and Hinrichs, and Larraín's Satori photo

The exploration of shapes in this regard transform into a relevant part of the Satori practice Larraín develops, for which further analysis is worth to be inspected further. Most

of all, if understanding photography, in the German August Sander's terms, as a universal language to communicate thoughts, conceptions, and realities. To the German, through photography, the photographer can reproduce all such experiences and make themselves understood in that way. In Satori, Larraín shapes the world's image while inhabiting the foreground of all events. Hence, as Sander mentions, "we can see the human spirit of a particular age expressed in the landscape, and we can comprehend it with the camera" (Sander 678). Likewise, Larraín's exploration of Satori may revolve around a "subjetividad poblada de espectros lumínicos que mantienen la hoguera imaginativa" (Leiva 9).

3.4 Visualising spiritual practices

Between 1971 and 1973, the visual representation of spiritual practices brought little attention to the national press. Within this period, the Chilean magazine, *Paula*, asked Sergio Larraín twice to publish something about personal growth and spiritual understanding. However, both reportages would focus exclusively on the documentary exploration about different subjects rather than Larraín's visual production.

In 1971, the reporter Malú Sierra first came up with the "En Busca de la Felicidad Total" reportage. This publication was an inspection of Arica Group and Ichazo's physical exercises and spiritual practices, in which Larraín participates with a small photo essay. Coincidently, this is also one of the few moments Larraín clearly shows pictures of his master. Larraín shows Ichazo in the special process of physical improvement that allows the connection between body and inner consciousness – what the master calls "mentaciones" (Sierra 97). Along with the texts, there is a picture where Larraín presents his master whilst contortions a tripod headstand pose (Fig. 50 left).

Later, in 1973, a different reporter, Amanda Puz uses the photographer's images this time in the article "La Psicodanza, Bailar Para Alcanzar la Felicidad", a spiritual discipline based on dancing practices. In this regard, Leiva ventures out in saying these photo-essays are an exploration of a "psychedelic aesthetic" (78), presumptively for Larraín's observation on human body, colours and movement (Fig. 50 right). To Puz nevertheless the reportage is all about understanding “el hombre musical que existió hace siglos cuando el ruido y la estridencia todavía no cumplía su maquiavélica tarea de corromper al humano y transformarlo en ente desvinculado a sí mismo, a los demás y al universo” (Puz, "Bailar Para Alcanzar la Felicidad" 63).

Figure 50 – Oscar Ichazo (1968-71) and Paula magazine cover (1973)

This way, Sierra and Puz use fifteen photographs in total in both reportages. The photographic compilation has enough information, to some extent, to do justice to Leiva's claims on Larraín's psychedelic aesthetic. However, no analytical information is shared neither on photography matter nor Larraín. Both reportages use Larraín's photographs for what the articles primarily are: visual evidence and reportages on certain spiritual practices, not precisely Satori or photography.

Therefore, such omission attempts directly against what Suzuki, for instance, remarks about the subject, where "whatever the definition, Satori means the unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistic mind", generally marking "a turning point in one's life" (88-93). Namely, the visualisation of the producer – in this case, the photographer – is of the utmost importance. Thus, the fact that these publications occurred in a Chilean magazine could have reinforced the relevance of Larraín's Satori visualisation from a local gaze; however, the oversight of this visual exploration has only left a void in his imagery.

3.5 Nature, oneself, and the sublime

In 1975 Kodak company launches a photo reportage about the power of nature called “Arbres” (trees), when first concerns about environmental care would begin to grow. In this book, Larraín's photograph is a full-colour image of the enormous roots of a tree titled "Les raciness géantes du fromager" (Legay 6), which also reveals the subtly figure of a man walking among roots (Fig. 51 left). This particular publication is crucial for this study for two reasons; it places Larraín's work in a concrete artistic scene and exposes the long-standing relationship of Larraín's reflective work at the time. About this singular image, nonetheless, Leiva recalls that it is likely part of Larraín's reportage on Juan Fernández Island in the 60s (80).

However, the Kodak editorial team has brought it back 15 years later under a different perspective because of no-explicit reasons. Kodak photobook is not a documentary reportage per se. It is a compilation of images of the expressiveness of trees. Here, the Chilean shared space with the French filmmaker and biologist Claude Nuridsany and the German photographer Manfred Kage, which places Larraín's work in a highly

artistic circle. Additionally, the photographer's work in “Arbres” is one the few that he had published in colour – since documentary photography in the 60s had strong inclinations for monochrome photography due to its high contrast and sense of dramatism (and printing price).

Although, more importantly, is the fact Larraín had been working on these types of photographs long before they were published (if) or re-published. Gigantic, indomitable elements contrasted to extremely small individuals have been one of Larraín's less explored traits, including Satori. However, this is the first time this work reaches appreciation due to its subjective expressiveness, making subjectivity a channel to facilitate its inspection in the field.

In 1951, to exemplify, because of the death of Larraín's younger brother, Santiago, Larraín's family decided to mourn their loss travelling altogether around Europe. On this trip, Larraín similarly shot many photographs like the one used by Kodak. In one of them, Sergio Larraín photographed his mother at the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona; the other picture is from Mount Athos in Greece, where he captured the small figure of his father by an enormous tree (Fig. 51 right). On these photographs, for instance, Larraín's sister, Bárbara, recalls:

> mi mama es superada por los acontecimientos, por la vida. La pone tan chiquitita, yo creo que mi mama se sentía así además. El Queco captó como estaba ella, o como él la veía; él quiere alomejor ver a mi papa así, tan chico para que no le de tanto miedo. Porque le tenía susto a mi papá. No sé si susto, pero le tenía rencor (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*).

Figure 51 – Juan Fernández (60s), Sagrada Familia and Mount Athos (1951)

All these photographs seem to operate under similar principles. There is a megalomaniac and melancholic gaze Larraín has explored throughout his career. Aesthetically speaking, this photo style may respond to Edmund Burke's magnitude notions concerning the sublime, when artists "put a generous deceit on the spectators, and effect the noblest designs by easy methods" (105). Larraín composes these photographs by extreme contrasts of light/shadow and human/building shapes, generating a sense of

heaviness and solitude given by small human-shaped figures caught alone among indomitable landscapes.

Either Kodak's photograph or the ones from Larraín's family are intrinsically related in form and content to Larraín's matured stage of Satori, or photographic reflectiveness, where the subjectivity in the production allows to re-signify the depth of the subject and also reveal the photographer's inner explorations. In this regard, the sublimity of the subject may also become another aesthetic principle concerning the reflective exploration of Satori. Here, Larraín transforms his subjects into a source of the sublime and exacerbates the building's greatness with the reduction of the subject. However, subjectively speaking, this particular inclination may also reveal more about Larraín's coping mechanism when practised Satori while emotionally dealt with his family conflicts.

3.6 A melancholic imagery

In 1976 the French magazine *Le Nouveau Photocinéma* publishes a reportage exclusively on the Chilean titled “Sergio Larraín: souvenir du Valparaíso”. Here, the interviewer Lyliane Boyer writes about the constant deceits Larraín carried while in Magnum Photos because the agency was no longer the face of humanism and all the artistry behind their photographers was subjected to profits. The sublimation about the real for the photographer seemed to be understood as something to pay for, to consume – like tragedy: "L'autre déception de Sergio Larraín, c'est la presse... insupportablement médiocre sans âme et sans respect" (Boyer 51). Along the lines Koudelka suggests in the same note, "se compromettre et vivre de sa photographie ou être vagabond" (Ibis); either you live off photography or live long enough to become a vagabond – which was precisely the case of Larraín. The Chilean got to live long enough to become a hermit, isolated from the world and suspicious about cultural and political institutions. Ironically, the reportage presents Larraín's work as a "souvenir", a collectable memory from a distant location, from the photographer's eye to the world.

Under this argument and view, the photographs in the reportage were meant to show anguish, solitude and shocking images of 1960 Chile's misfortune – and not only from Valparaíso. Here, cities such as Santiago, Valparaíso and Chiloé, were displayed as a rhetoric of Larraín's melancholic tones and emotional deception rather than a documentary exploration which, in this particular selection, is non-existent.

Satori work, in this regard, responds to similar aesthetic principles on, say, loneliness and contemplation – as seen, for instance, in the photographs collected by Agnès Sire for Larraín's retrospective (Fig. 52 right). Compared to *Le Nouveau Photocinéma's* photographs (Fig. 52 left), Boyer's rhetoric becomes clearer when contrasted to Satori work rather than the original images.

Figure 52 – "Sergio Larraín: souvenir du Valparaíso" (1976) and Simple Satori

The first photograph in the magazine is the formation of a volcano where a mushroom cloud rises from the earth. The second picture is from the street children series, where kids are catching the warmth of a pit fire on the streets. The following four photographs are from Valparaíso and show a boy wandering the streets, blurred shadows down the city's endless stairs, and two more photographs from the brothel Los Siete Espejos. The last two images are from Chiloé and evidence a barefoot native woman by the beach coast close to other two people turning their backs away from each other.

Contrary to the connotation of tragedy or natural disasters, Satori images also evidence an exploration of solitude in what Larraín calls "convent": candlelight in the dark, a pair of sandals in an empty room or light beams brightening a bench or some isolated objects. It is a rested work that reflects on the absence of the individual but shares critical elements in the composition. Larraín's photographs, as usual, take the places out of the familiar zones and stereotypes and always consider lighting work and bold angles. However, this is one of the first times an author draws upon Larraín's journalistic photographs to connect the photographer's loneliness and the imminence of time – detaching them thus from their political and documentary context, from which Satori work has a lot to show about.

3.7 Conclusions

During the 70s and the 80s, Larraín's old photo work keeps circulating and collecting positive reviews under subjective readings, either in magazines, books covers or Magnum publications. These publications outlined a series of principles upon the Chilean's work that transformed his photographs into subjective experiences. This phenomenon helped

build a visual based on Larraín's old documentary work, thus obscuring his more contemporary reflections on subjective photography. Nonetheless, the subjective approaches of these publications on Larraín's old documentary work reveal more about Larraín's Satori aesthetic principles on the expressiveness of landscapes, urban/human shapes, or melancholic or reflective imageries than any other thing.

Two particularly significant events as closure to this last decade were two international exhibitions, in Paris and New York. The first one is the opening of "L'Amerique Latine vue par Magnum", an exhibition organised by the same agency to visualise the human presence. Commissioned by Magnum former gallery director Lélia Salgado, Sebastião Salgado's wife, the exhibition presents part of Larraín's Valparaíso unpublished work, which also included the photographs "Les Petit Filles". Lastly, in 1987 the American magazine *Aperture* launches the monography *Latin American Photography*, in which Larraín collaborates with fourteen photographs along with Agnès Sire's writings. An exhibition that shows similarities in the images, such as “presencia humana, niños y adultos retratados desde encuadres con perspectivas no tradicionales” (Leiva 82). Here, once again, the subjectiveness of the subject remains in Larraín's old documentary work even though the pertinence of time and subject are closer to Satori.

In summary, the evidence shows that Larraín could overcome the reductionism of descriptive and documentary photography to enter into his work's artistic/personal exploration. Moreover, while Larraín is at the peak of his spiritual exploration, during the 70s and 80s, he developed a substantial bulk of content related to a new aesthetic concerning photographic Satori. Nonetheless, this spiritual/artistic practice, aside from the shallow insights of *Paula* magazine, never had a chance to be explored and examined neither as a valid photographic contribution to the field nor as to the photographer's self-recognition. Furthermore, the ultimate aesthetic principle in either Larraín's early work as an "active" photographer or his late work as a self-isolated hermit is subjected to similar technical and emotional approaches such as melancholy, loneliness, nature and absence. Consequently, Satori exploration becomes a serious inspection on subjectivity, denoting a considerable amount of expressiveness so as not to be considered in the terms the work of the Chilean was once seen.

4 Zen photography: the case of Thomas Merton

4.1 Thomas Merton and Sergio Larraín

Thomas Merton (1915–1968) was an American theologian and scholar of comparative religion from the early twentieth century, principally known for his writings, poetry and for being a social activist; above all this though, for being a Trappist monk who decided to explore the aesthetic experience of religion through photography. Merton was never a photography professional; nonetheless, he managed to communicate his insights through writing and photography with excellence. He opened the field of what will be known until these days as meditative or Zen photography, which may be synthesised as the "visual awareness which helps to express the process of an individual of giving up his own identity in favour of a greater collective identity (…) beyond the influence of traditional iconography" (Meatyard 124-125). In this regard, both Merton and Larraín were somehow contemporaries in a critical moment of their life and history. Zen and Satori's styles converged and looked in the same direction, oriental practices, matching perfectly in what Meatyard also addresses as "contemplative photography" (126). For these reasons, this section aims to inspect the relation between Satori photography and Merton's exploration in order to understand and expand the potential of Larraín's photography outside traditional and documentary margins. Firstly, it examines the spiritual lifework of Merton and its relationship with photography to finally analyse the artistic outputs of both authors in their pursuit of contemplative photography.

Although several similarities between Merton and Larraín will be exposed in the following argument, it is of utmost importance to point one particular difference instead. Sergio Larraín, who was educated in arts and had a lauded career as a professional photographer, always had alternative studies on religion and spirituality. Unlike Larraín, Merton educated himself in photography as a self-taught apprentice due to his "great friendships with intellectuals and artists" (Malits 104); however, he was greatly acknowledged for pioneering a cultural and religious syncretism (or interfaith) among religions. Thus, he promoted intellectual and cultural exchange with eminent Asian figures, such as the Dalai Lama and the monks Buddhadasa or Thich Nhat Hanh (Jacobs). Namely, while Larraín excelled at photography, Merton did at religion, having both special interests in their counterpart. As a result, they both developed and shared a similar photography style in either Zen or Satori photography in their spiritual lifestyles.

As the Director of the Thomas Merton Centre, Paul M. Pearson, recognises, the beginnings of Merton's travels through photography remain still "unclear", but there is also an absolute certainty that Merton's spiritual life events led them directly to it (4). In 1948, in the aftermath of the Second World War, Merton published his most famous work *The Seven Storey Mountain.* This book is an autobiographical work that illustrates, sometimes graphically, the problems of traditionalism and the liberation of cultural syncretism to become a Trappist monk – a Roman Catholic contemplative religious order of cloistered monastics monks and nuns. Since 1949, he was ordained to the priesthood and given the name of Father Louis for his many humanist qualities as a religious man devoted to pacifism and send scores of war veterans, students, and young ones to monasteries across the United States of America. By then, unlike Merton's friends like Griffin, Shirley Burden, and Eugene Meatyard or renowned photographers like Minor White, Aaron Siskind, or Harry Callahan, he hardly considered himself a photographer. However, the photo-historian and art critic Deba P. Patnaik conveys that, either way, he was known for possessing "a keen and curious eye" and having "the gift of a photographer's sensibility" (10).

Concerning Larraín's disappointment in people and institutional photography, in Patnaik's study, Merton is also seen as a troubled person. The author recognises that between the 50s and 60s was the conflictive period of searching for the Christian monk, where he "yarned for a normal human balance" (11) and that photography was a way of finding such a balance. Additionally, Eugene Meatyard's son, Christopher, claims in his essay on the relationship between Merton and his father that the monk never really developed any plan of action, as he states in his essay. On the contrary, Christopher writes that Merton "had no programme" (Meatyard 125), and neither did Larraín with Satori. This practice for the Chilean "is a state where one has emptied the mind of associations, and arrives back to reality, as when one was first born".[50]

Both Satori and Zen function more as an inner spiritual experience rather than a measurable and methodical exploration. In the same line of thoughts, while Merton discussed the "Zen camera" virtuosity, Larraín preached about geometry. To Merton, this

[50] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legends 1969 onwards. August 2019.

rhetorical camera refers to "that other level of acuity which is a non-standard, non-institutionalised, inwardly free awareness" (Meatyard 126). To Larraín, in similar terms, the camera is a "rectangle" to open up "the moment": "in your hands, the magic box [the camera], you walk in peace, aware, in the garden of forms" (Larraín, *Valparaíso* 24-30). Therefore, under these spiritual experiences and reflections, Merton developed and coined the practice of Zen Photography in the Western world, from which similar, if not exact, concepts might be found in Satori Photography.

When in the 70s Sergio Larraín briefly explains what Satori was for him in one of the correspondences addressed to Magnum, he mentions, "Satori is Zen Buddhist name for the state of awakening".[51] He understands Satori as an integral part of the Zen training and Satori photography as the culmination, a visual climax of the process of "contemplation". Zen philosophy, in this regard, also comes from the Japanese school of Mahayana Buddhism and centres on the value of meditation and intuition.

Zen Photography as explored by Merton, Larraín's counterpart, responds to a spiritual and visual practice, which is defined in the chronicle "The Zen Photography of Thomas Merton" as an exercise that "its purpose is to make us wonder and to answer that wondering with the deepest expression of our own nature. To learn to see the extraordinary in the ordinary, what Thich Nhat Hanh would call the miracle of mindfulness" (Bellarmine). In both reflections and styles, Zen and Satori, if we were to make a distinction, primes a sense of the present moment and learn to contemplate the singularity in everyday life under no pressure.

In the same article, Merton is mentioned for professing to "stop looking" and to "start seeing", which are basically the same Larraín's teachings when encouraged his closest ones to "remain with nothing to distract you, where nothing is as expected (…) wanting to see (…) you will photograph what you find with great care" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 380). Differently from Larraín nonetheless, Merton had an impact that heartened peers of the holy tradition and photography. His work has invited specialists to reconsider religious life as an expanded existential exploration. Furthermore,

[51] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legends 1969 onwards. August 2019.

his photography style has penetrated the field towards an aesthetic for the apparently insignificant or mundane transcendence.

In a different article from 2018, "Exclusive Look: Thomas Merton's contemplative photography", Daniel Esparza writes about Merton's experience regarding photography and his early years as a photographer. The author here mentions the story of which how Merton's friend, the civil rights activist John Howard Griffin, lent his Canon FX camera with the idea of helping him to cooperate "in the creation of the new world" (Esparza). Hence, it is impossible not to notice the similarities these photographers, Merton and Larraín, share, even though they always remained worlds apart.

Furthermore, when Esparza summarises the critiques upon Merton's work, he claims that "all these authors share, to a certain extent, the same opinion: Merton's gaze on objects, through the camera, was always precise, simple, non-intrusive, never contrived. It was a specifically and distinctive *monastic* – even more, Trappist — approach to photography" (Ibid). The author emphasises the manifestation of a photo-style or photographic approach yet utilises the same concepts and ideas that have been anchored to Larraín's work throughout time.

This way, the most straightforward answer to why such similar authors were never related by the specialised critique, even though contemporaries, is due to photography's institutional worth. Larraín has always been acknowledged and cornered as a Magnum member: a gear part of a cryptic system that facilitates the agency to be "a world in itself" (Chéroux 9). Therefore, any other exploration unrelated to the agency's visual/philosophical orientation would remain off the records. However, through Merton's comparison, the concrete qualities Satori photos could have will be analysed and explored in the following case study concerning the visual narrative of both Merton and Larraín.

4.2 Visual narrative: the case of the seven-day spiritual journey

For a more applied comparison, Merton's work is presented in this section as a counterpoint to Larraín's visual production on Satori, evidencing considerable similarities to understand Merton's photography and Larraín's by their poetic value. Here, two significant cases are addressed in the pursuit to set the basis for a comparative study on contemplative photography. The first case is the famous Esther De Waal's *A Retreat with Thomas Merton: A Seven-Day Spiritual Journey* (1992) due to its intimate inspection

within Zen practice and the quality to subjectively drawn on Merton's photographs to illustrate the spiritual condition of the soul. Secondly, breaking down one of Merton's and Larraín's most prominent aspects in developing their photo style is the inspection and projection on the idea of a monastic style of photography as an artistic/spiritual output. This way, this study uses Waal's readings to explore Larraín's work on Satori when compared, at the same time, to Merton's to outline Satori photos' concrete characteristics.

Waal's book is a visual exploration that contemplates traditional meditational practices through the monk's photographs. This publication is more like a visual narrative than a compilation of his photographs as commonly done, such as the case of Ralph Eugene Meatyard's *Father Louie: Photographs of Thomas Merton* (1991) or Deba Prasad Patnaik's *Geography of Holiness* (1980). In Waal's, the author undertook a seven-day retreat programme centred on an intimate reading of Merton's experiences and aesthetic production, of which each day represents a specific orientation: "The Call, Response, The Solitary Within, Encounter with Christ, The Demands of Love, Ordinary Things, and Integration".

- *Day One - The call*. The section explores Waal's personal experience in a specific moment of the her life, in what she recalls to be a time apart, a time to be lost and start a spiritual journey about contemplation as a response to "the call". The first photograph (Fig. 53 left) is a close-up angle of a tree trunk on the grass. It is a chopped down tree, and the trunk's cross-section is leaned onto the camera. It reveals the concentric pattern of rings, the tree rings, while makes the tree barks and cracks fully visible. The author uses the photograph to reinforce the idea of the journey, putting special attention to contemplation: "the awareness and realisation" (Merton qtd in Waal 39) of oneself in time, as a metaphor of the traces of life.

  One of the opening images in Larraín's Retrospective book (Fig. 53 right) is a black and white photograph of a tree. This tree is not chopped off compared to Merton's, but Larraín photographically cropped and captured it in a low-angle. In Larraín's tree, even though there are no tree rings to talk about the concentric pattern of life, the photograph shows a living tree full of ageing marks, barks, cuts and cracks. These emphasise both the persistence and presence of time in life and that "photography is a concentrated of consciousness" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain:*

Vagabond Photographer 30) – as Sire would remark by quoting Larraín alongside this very picture. In this regard, Waal's allegories might have been even more precise if Merton's tree had not been chopped off or dead. Nonetheless, the expressiveness and value of both images lay in the power of ordinary contemplativeness, giving a place to what is usually unseen.

Figure 53 – Merton's tree trunk and Larraín's tree, Santiago (1953)

- *Day Two – Response*. It represents the immersion into the spiritual experience or, to being more precise, the "compunction". This expression, commonly understood as remorse, is expressed in the book as a monastic concept representing "the experience of being touched or pierced (*punctio*) by the awareness of my true state before God, so at its heart lies a sense of pain, or stinging, a sensation of being pricked" (Waal 51). Waal introduces this sense of guilt or anxiety with a photograph titled "woodcutter's trestle" (Fig. 54 left). The artefact is placed on the grass, covered with plants and flowers as if the object was abandoned with no use, consumed by the surrounding nature. The rotting object represents, for the author, "the response" of facing solitude and one's darkest side, a glimpse to the death: "This is a death in which we have found Him Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We know that this darkness, which seems to annihilate us, is not the darkness of death but, if such an expression can be understood, the darkness of life… if the paradox may be allowed, this frightful death is our first taste of glory" (Merton qtd in Waal 49).

In this scenario, the presence of guilt or death can also be found in Larraín's Satori imagery in many ways. For example, in one of the Arica group retreats, the photographer cuts and captures few flowers by a window (Fig. 54 right). When observing the image, nothing outstanding brings out the ubiquitous condition of the subject. However, the relation between both images is haunting. Larraín manages to suspend two cut flowers against a window that reflects the silhouettes of his fellows on the outside. Larraín places the small flowers upside-down, creating a disruptive continuity among visual worlds: the shareable exterior of nature and people (life) versus the deprived interior of solitude and darkness (death).

Figure 54 – Merton's "woodcutter's trestle" and Larraín's cut flower (1975)

Larraín's compunction, in this case, may reveal the corruption of his own spiritual context. This is an unconformity given by the contradiction and the pursuit of self-interest rather than communal experiences, just as seen in Merton's work. Both authors, Larraín and Merton, see themselves as simple objects within a vast, complex world, being Larraín himself upside-down, broken, by himself. Merton, on the contrary, is a steady artefact, caught by time and life itself. In both cases, visual contemplation starts showing elements and aspects of authors' self-exploration on religiousness, sharing as much as contrasting on fundamental levels of the representation.

- *Day Three – The Solitary Within: The True Self.* This section is oriented to the beginning of the self-discovering journey, recognising oneself in the world. This way, the author's journey starts off with Merton's reflection when comments, "what can we gain by sailing to the moon if we are not able to cross the abyss that separates us from ourselves?" (Merton qtd in Waal 55). The leading picture for this idea is a pockmarked stone (Fig. 55 left). Photographically speaking, and in concordance to the other photographs, there is not much to talk about composition of the image itself, besides the singularity of the subject, which are the marks and fissures on the stone. This singularity, similar to the one in the tree trunk, is captured allegedly to state a parallelism on the exploration of oneself singularity, from which Waal draws on to "recover possession of [her] deepest self, the self that lies beneath the exterior and which can only be found in God and through God" (57).

In his visual and contemplative search, Larraín too felt moved by similar subjects. In the 60s (Fig. 55 right), for example, when he worked along the poet Pablo Neruda, the photographer was described by the same poet as a complicated boy that never cared much about anything, because while Neruda was worried about meeting the deadline with the Spanish publishing house (Lumen), Sergio was amused by shooting seaweeds, tiny shells and rocks by the beach (Poirot, "About Sergio Larraín"). Along the lines, the French Agnès Sire recognises in her article *"Sólo la Piedra es Inocente"* that "la piedra es el motivo esencial,

inevitable, en la obra de Sergio Larraín, la piedra inocente, de las aseras o de los muros, la piedra que se tira, que protege o que hiere. El origen (…) hacia la eternidad (Monzó 25).

Like in Merton's visual exploration, in Larraín's contemplative photography, the presence of stones, rock formations or close-ups to the ground become either way in part of what Waals claims to be the photographer's "True Self".

Figure 55 – Merton's pockmarked stone and Larraín's rocks, Isla Negra (1960-3)

- *Day Four – Encounter With Christ*. This fourth step represents the revelation of God itself through contemplation. The author explains this as God's call "to union with Himself and to one another in Christ" (63). The image in use, in this case, is less metaphorical than the others but literal instead since it is the graphic representation of the holy cross (Fig. 56 left). Merton's photograph shows an old, rustic Christian Catholic cross at a low angle, where reminiscences of time and deterioration are visible.

Unlike Merton, Sergio Larraín was never really a follower of the Catholic church. However, he did photograph what he thought were symbolic representations of his connection with God: yantras (Fig. 56 right). These respond to geometric symbols used to worship deities in temples or at home as an aid for meditation, used for the benefits given by their supposed occult powers based on Hindu astrology and tantric texts.

This way, certain visual revelations in both authors may be directly related to self-experiences of what they understand by God and significant symbolic elements, like yantras or altars in Larraín's case.

Figure 56 – Merton's holy cross and Larraín's yantra (1975)

- *Day Five – The Demands of Love*. The section centres on communion and community, the communion of the love for Christ who unify to whom walk down this path. It acts as a declaration in which seclusion and one's path are to be intertwined by the principle of love. This way, the photograph illustrates a close-up image of a wicker basket from a top view, emphasising the wicker fibres (Fig. 57 left). Under Waals usage, each fibre represents each one's singularity among many others, which together build up one solid community unified under the same structure. Since Merton's subject is the contemplation of a singular basket, Waals' particular approach may force perhaps too much the limits of subjectivity and interpretation. However, there is a sense of communion in Merton's approach to finding God in all things: "If I allow Christ to use my heart in order to love my brothers and sisters with it, I will soon find that Christ loving in me and through me has brought to light Christ in my brothers and sisters, loving me in return, has drawn forth the image and the reality of Christ in my own soul" (Merton qtd in Waal 71).

  All things considered, Larraín's sense of communion may also be found when he claims, for instance, "when one comes back to reality, reality is the creation of God".[52] From the tiny fraction of a single plant in natural light to old, manufactured tools or house elements, like a traditional alarm clock uniquely covered by a light beam (Fig. 57 right). Therefore, this reality or contemplation form responds in both cases, Merton and Larraín, to the immediate surrounding where the presence of God is found in every single element in life.

Figure 57 – Merton's wicker basket and Larraín's plan and alarm clock

- *Day Six – Common and Natural and Ordinary*. This part is a sort of statement, a conclusion of the previous days of reflection and spiritual retreat, the realisation of a journey that comes to an end. The author here recognises that her "calling" places

[52] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legends 1969 onwards. August 2019.

her "in very ordinary circumstances where [she] needs to find God" (79). It is a spiritual wondering that aims to rediscover "time" as well as the "spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life (…) the holiness of created things" (Merton qtd at Waal 79). The photograph used to visualise this encounter is titled "Glove on a Stool" and shows exactly this: a single glove placed on an old wooden stool (Fig. 58 left). The photograph brings out similar properties of every other rested image of an ordinary artefact under some candid illumination. Merton's "created things" respond directly to the author's "common and natural and ordinary".

These concepts, as well as Larraín's "coming back to reality" previously seen, might be one the backbones of what erects both Zen and Satori photography. The aesthetic of a simple woke state of finding the beauty in the ordinary: "not to photograph news, or inform. But just to photograph reality as it is (…) horizontal, vertical, contemplation (Larraín qtd in Sire, *Sergio Larraín: Vagabond Photographer* 319-21). Similar to Merton, Larraín explores in photography what he calls "simple Satori". In a homemade album and never published, with texts and images, the Chilean briefly resumes his visual and "personal cosmogony" (Ibis 316). Here, random photographs of ordinary day-to-day objects and human-less forms are displayed with meticulous artistry. Larraín shows, for example, broomstick's fragments in different lighting (Fig. 58 right) or any other element he likes in the pursuit of Merton's spontaneous astonishment for sacred creation.

Figure 58 – Merton's "Glove on a stool" and Larraín's broomstick

- *Day Seven – Integration*. "Each of us has to find the unity in which everything fits and takes its right place. Each must work out just what the right amount may be. And it varies at different times of our life" (Merton qtd at Waal 87). The seventh and last stage accounts for the ending: Merton's search for unity. It attempts to put together this spiritual jigsaw, now represented by the author with a photograph titled "Stone Wall in Close up". However, this title does not make justice to the selected photograph because the image is a pyramidal rock formation, left-cornered in the composition and circumscribed by numerous concentric ploughed lines (Fig. 59 left). It is a more expressive image compared to others of his same work. It plays with natural lighting and also evidences a sense in the composition. Waals is

explicit in saying the photograph is meant to show Merton's journey: "he [Merton] was so aware of being pulled in many directions. His journey was never tranquil for he was always facing up to tensions within himself, and in the outside world" (87).

In a similar fashion, yet graphically more complex, Larraín also commonly plays with the idea of a closed-up journey, from inside out and vice versa. When the Chilean reflects on the taken path, he understands that "mistakes can be corrected, and the perfection we desire can immediately be created" (Larraín qtd in Sire, *Sergio Larraín: Vagabond Photographer* 329). Larraín often illustrates this relationship using a set of two photographs, from the inside to the outside. This creates a visual dialogue between these images and, sometimes, along with other photographs in between. For instance, in the "Simple Satori" section, this relationship is seen through two black and white photographs from the same sequence (Fig. 59 right). In a low-angle, the one on the left shows a spoon, nearly faded by light, on a table by a closed and cropped window. Differently, the one on the far right shows the outside framed by vines or creepers hanging in the foreground.

Compared to Merton's, Larraín's journey is, visually speaking, more complex and enrichened and his sense of unity seems intertwined within a large universe of forms and shapes. Both, however, express in their visual imagery features that constantly move onto a similar spiritual conception.

Figure 59 – Merton's rock formation and Larraín's table and vines

In summary, this seven-day spiritual journey Waal undertook help outline some Satori photos' characteristics that, one way or another, the photographer Larraín, like Merton, incorporated into his visual production. Although most readings about spiritual practices rhetorise the photographic exploration of both photographers, some definitions and categorisations indeed cooperate in relating photographed elements within a spiritual context.

These Satori images celebrates the natural and ordinary whilst evidencing the relationship between individuals and their surroundings. Additionally, there is an evident inclination that either Satori or Zen photography visually look for the elementary without specifying the kind of supreme divinity involved. Accordingly, Sergio Larraín's extended production on contemplative photography, or Satori, has enough basis to become a formal photographic practice and exploration.

4.3 Monastic photography style

Another vital feature to explore Merton's and Larraín's visual narrative is the development of the idea of a monastic style of photography. At a particular moment of their life and under similar religion and spiritual learnings, both authors resolved that living a monastic life would get them closer to self-realisation and an enlightened state of consciousness – closer even to God. Both also would use photography to reflect this spiritual practice in the translation of their experience. Larraín claimed this particular belief when recognises in a letter to Agnès Sire in 1977 that "reality is the creation of God, is the universe, and one is part of this (…) these photos were done in a moment where reality opened itself, in a period where [he] stayed mostly secluded, and did see no one, keeping completely clear".[53] These associations, Larraín mentions, refer to preconceived ideas and prejudices one must run away from to clear one's mind. For this, there is no better way to do it than living in austerity, secluded (in Larraín's case) or cloistered (in Merton's), away from distractions. Therefore, the resulting photographs attempt to show unusual scenarios and subjects where the search for beauty focuses on personal and non-traditional topics. As Merton wrote to his close friend, the Chinese jurist John C. H. Wu, "Mysticism flourishes most purely right in the middle of the ordinary. And such mysticism, in order to flourish, must be quite prompt to renounce all apparent claim to be mystical at all" (Hamric). Contemplation, thus, does not look to turn ordinary photographs into mystical whatsoever but visually translate one's mystical experiences into concrete images.

[53] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legends 1969 onwards. August 2019.

The following sequence from Larraín's retrospective book, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer*, helps to illustrate what this claustral way of living is all about (Fig. 60). There is an introductory text on the first page where Larraín writes, "Monastic life is solitary life". This monastic life Larraín did carry on is, as previously mentioned, represented by a strong sense of solitude and loneliness, for no human presence is truly evidenced, and most of the pictures account for landscapes from a window or close-up takes of his ubiquitous life. A monastery life has no pretension, and no pretension is what it is seen. The once trait of capturing extraordinary moments of caustic comments seems to be long gone, at least under the appreciation of the French critic that remarks Larraín then "quería salvar el mundo desde Tulahuén" (CNCA, "Conversación entre Agnès Sire y Luis Weinstein sobre Sergio Larraín") – alluding to Larraín's lack of political commitment and professional detachment. To Larraín, nonetheless, there is something extraordinary in those moments and worthy enough to be captured.

Figure 60 – Screenshot from Simple Satori series, monastic life

When looking at the photographs in detail, there is a continuous sense of lighting, where fruit, plants or mundane elements may play a similar role as people used to in Larraín's photographic composition. Even though the subject remains cut off or out of focus, its condition does not interrupt the framing work whatsoever. Another important feature is that there is a certain inclination for Larraín to shoot his own drawings or paintings. Although not with the same eye he uses for the rest of his photographs, Larraín's visual practice still becomes a way to, aesthetically and contemplatively, assimilate his surroundings and own reality.

During the time Larraín secludes himself in Tulahuén, it is customary to find in his photographs the visualisation of persistent elements (Fig. 61). For example, a table contrasting edges, some furniture, fruit plates in a still life painting fashion, close-up takes from illegible ornaments, or the visual presence of light and shadows, sometimes coexisting with each other, sometimes in a chaotic dialogue.

This type of photography characterises another quality of Satori, Larrain's personal, visual, and emotional outputs concerning "[aprender] a mirar, a vivir en la realidad despiertos", as Larraín himself mentioned in one of his captions sent to Magnum in 1994.[54]

Figure 61 – Simple Satori, Tulahuén (70s)

On the other hand, when analysing Merton's photography, there is plenty of evidence of what lies behind this monastic way of seeing and contemplativeness. In a further analysis, for instance, Esparza details the simplicity of Merton's photography and establishes similar approaches seen in the deconstruction of Larraín's visual Satori, saying that:

> The tiny lens in the hands of the monk holding a borrowed camera becomes the strict opposite to the magnificent stained-glass window of the cathedral. Unlike the latter, able to create a metaphysical environment that allows for an architectural display of a spiritual understanding of light as (not only) a metaphor for God's presence in the world, the former is just allowing light to go through it, showing the world *as it is*, in its everyday, physical, common appearance. Both are mystical approaches to light (…) His portraits of ordinary, torn tools – an adobe wall, an old stagecoach wheel, a tall wooden cross in the middle of the field, a lonely chair where no one is sitting, an abandoned hammer, a tin bucket — both transmit a sense of the holiness of created things, and the inevitable passing of time. The very "everydayness" of these objects, when not overlooked, was the key that opened the doors of contemplation (Esparza).

Consequently, what Esparza understands about Merton's work is not necessarily a correlation on reflectiveness visual representation. He believes in visualising the immensity of overlooked visual universes from one's aesthetic experiences. A reflection that inevitably coincides with Larraín's photo-exploration on Satori.

[54] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín's archive – LAS Binder n29. August 2019.

To conclude, it is understandable that even though when Larraín shows superiority in the photographic and technical exploration, Merton was, spiritually speaking, more prepared and resolved than Larraín ever was. However, using different techniques and critical readings, both photographs converge in similar principles that the photographers developed from Zen or Satori photography. Their photography displays simplicity and celebrates the normal as an affirmation of the remaining world as it is, along with things as they are. A fragile yet still normality where abandoned objects or elements transmit a sense of sacredness, spirituality, devotion, and the imminence of time. Normality that reveals, in their contemplation, the presence of God himself. Either in their photography or writings, Merton and Larraín convey a reflective understanding of being, drawing on elements and subjects as diverse as life itself: the youth and aged faces, hands and feet, the simplicity of walls, chairs or table, or simply the quietness of the sea, developing thus a sense of holiness from the ordinary. Their work reveals an exploration of sacred and intimate worlds from which their artistry also allows them to inspect their figure as complex individuals and photographers.

5 Satori and poetic outputs

5.1 Haiku and photography

Another essential element worthy of consideration is the relation between Larraín photography and *haiku* as a photographic experience. *Haiku* is a poetic genre originally from Japan that traditionally uses only seventeen syllables divided into three verses (5-7-5), but the Chilean, subtly, attempted to include it into photography. On this wise, in a letter from 1982 to his nephew Sebastian Donoso, Larraín ventures to briefly transfer some of this Oriental knowledge onto him through the photographic experience. He explains that in order to find reality in photography, it is necessary to get lost and run into oneself wandering in solitude, where no one and anything can find you, away from distractions. Larraín encourages him to reflect on particular sub-subjects, fragments, photographing and holding onto them with great care; and once one reached that point, he says, "you will come close to poetry" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 379-80). This is what precisely *haiku* is: a short form of poetry that "represents a direct experience or an instantaneous reflective moment without explication through words" (Nguyen and Roth 115). Similarly, this is partially understood by Agnès Sire, at least to some extent, when

she says, “his rare images became like kinds of haiku or Satori as he liked to call them” (*Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 25). Under these considerations, this section analyses the relationship between *haikus* and photography in the pursuit of new forms of visual poetry and photography, as well as new methods in research and photographic inquiry.

The genre has evolved since the 17th century and is characterised by revealing spontaneous reality yet with any particular linear reading. Some studies, for instance, have broken down *haiku* and poetry functions to, say, creative and narrative writing, reflective learning, and teaching or foster empathy (J. Wright 111-9).

Aesthetically speaking, *haikus* are meant to be self-sufficient, independent from any context. When Milorad Ivanković deconstructs the idea of “beauty” in creating a *haiku,* he relies its potential on an archetypical and transferrable occurrence: “Haiku are born of experience. When crafting a haiku, one should always endeavour to install the same experience in the reader, rather than telling them what they should be experiencing” ("Haiku in English" 7-8). Similarly, in Larraín’s approaches regarding “magic” and that “state of grace” from which he made some of his most significant photographs,[55] he wishes “que las fotos que hago sean una experiencia inmediata (…) sé que a la fotografía, como todo arte, hay que buscarla dentro de sí” (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 22). In this respect, either *haiku* themselves, as those found in Larraín’s Satori work, are intrinsically related to the exploration of metonyms and shareable experiences and, because of this, their possibilities are vast.

The debate on either poetry or photography has had one particular thorn in their path: the question for the meaning. The former honorary curator of the American Haiku Archives at the California State Library in Sacramento, Charles Trumbull, in his essay “Meaning in Haiku”, emphasises that culturally speaking, every time one experiences information condensed in either hearable or readable dimension, there is an automatic assumption relatable to communication and, by extension, “expects meaning” (Trumbull 93). Thus, this meaning may take place in a personal or collective context.

[55] For more information on the subject, see chapter III section 1 on “Larraín’s magic images”.

Nonetheless, in the attempt to vindicate the meaning in poetry, scholastic approaches rely on an artistic condition over a collective one. In *How Does a Poem Mean*, the author suggest the poems should be subjected to analysis of "how" rather than "what" (Ciardi). The impact of poetry sets its basis in the power of excelled words and images rather than a particular meaning. The debate entwines in many aspects with photography and the argument about how social theory has overshadowed the integrity of image studies – what Ian Jeffrey says it has steered the "attention to an excess of sanctifies theoretical texts" (Wells 67).

In his 1970 book *Empire of Signs*, Barthes explores the nature of images and, particularly, *haikus* and explains these are not intrinsically connected to "meaning", yet to the capacity to exist. He also says this poetic expression is open to meaning in particular ways since "the brevity of the haiku is not formal; the haiku is not a rich thought reduced to a brief form, but a brief event which immediately finds its proper form" (75).

The author mentions that the "proper form" gets veiled underneath cultural conventions for any visually stimulated viewer when it comes to images. Since images have become a highly functional language among both intelligible and sensorial worlds, appreciating the original form becomes a challenge inevitably. Namely, it is common in a haiku to quickly pass over the given images (the poem) onto apprehensible nuances (meaning). In photography, the photograph itself represents the poem as a two-dimensional object, which is usually undermined by the power of the reference (meaning).

Haikus are also characterised for a strong sense of juxtaposition and overlapped meaning, given by verbal/visual punctuation marks (*kirejis* or cutting words) to generate a "cut" (*kiru)* in traditional and linear communication. Some *kireji* might express a question mark, an ellipsis or the like, others might express a sense of wonder, and some others even are utterly untranslatable. In other words, Japanese *haikus* are traditionally written in only one line, while in Western practices are commonly written in three, altering the way of reading/seeing significantly. This way, the use of images and rhetorical elements in the poem directly affects the type of kiru or "cut" in the composition. For instance, in Basho's *haiku* titled "Frog", the closest three-lined translation would be:

old pond . . .

a frog leaps in

water's sound

The ellipsis represents the *kireji*, translated initially from Japanese "や" (ya), with no literal translation by any Western character. However, it implies the existence of not-listed items or elements in the narrative or the literary sequence. The "や" character helps thus to isolate "the old pond" from the rest, unifying both the jumping frog and the sounding water in only one image, as an action, juxtaposing the old pond and the lively frog in one new image. While the ellipsis, on the contrary, acts as a pause in time and emphasises the three different images (lines) in one linear narrative, as if the water sounded (effect) for the frog jumped into an old pond (cause). In other words, the juxtaposition and "cut" as a rhetorical practice might also be understood under the figure of speech "oxymoron", where juxtaposition acts in the encounter of contradictory images in creating a new one, which reveals a paradox.

Photographically speaking, a photo can transition into a visual *haiku* under similar principles of contradiction and juxtaposition, altering the way of seeing and perceiving. As Barthes suggests is the referent's wound, a visual *haiku* pushes the photo's "punctum" (*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 25-8), the wound, to provoke a direct relationship between the viewer and what lies within the photograph.

One pertinent case study to exemplify this theoretical discussion is Larraín's still life photography. Still-life and grand, detailed photography are a photographic practice the Chilean has been exercising cyclically during his life, firstly starting when he was a young and inexperienced photographer. He would shoot rocks, plants, and nature and have them printed out in a great format. This early visual exploration had important public recognition in 1958 when Larraín and his friend the American artist Sheila Hicks exhibited their work at the National Museum of Fine Arts's gallery in Santiago. The exhibition had only one purpose, and it was utterly artistic, nothing remotely close to photojournalism. Photographs were meant to explore the expressiveness of nature in Southern Chile (CNCA, "Conversación entre Agnès Sire y Luis Weinstein sobre Sergio Larraín").

This practice would prematurely stop due to Larraín's journalism involvement but later resume as a form of self-recognition and spiritual practice. In these images, Larraín looks for the depuration of the moment through repetition and visual exploration. Here, there is nothing enormously extraordinary in the subject itself. Similarly, *haiku's* briefness would not allow either, by themselves, to systematically explore any meaning related to any historical or social context, except an aesthetic experience.

To exemplify, the following images of fruits in a bowl are evidence of the representation of Larraín's immediate environment, where life did happen for him (Fig. 62). A brief exploration of the natural environment's nourishment, light, forms, contrast, and expression. There is evidence of the photographer's imagery in different visual dimensions, such as photography and drawing. Larraín visually represents the same subject repeatedly, yet its singularities project different visual dialogues out of one only referent or experience.

Figure 62 – Simple Satori, still life, drawing and photograph

In photographic Satori, the figure of the juxtaposition is more potent than any meaningful outcome. In the figure, it is possible to understand the few elements given: a fruit basket, some fruits, presumptively a table and a wall. The still-life photograph does not have any linear narrative or specific context by itself; however, it excels its right as an object and makes it possible to see the elements for what they are. The "cut" or *kireji* happens at the moment of a poetic interpretation, when, for instance, the images of nature (fruits) and manufactured objects (table and wall) collide or overlap in one scenario, like a poem. The table, wall and basket, represent the narrative of commonplaces, a home in this case. The place might be abandoned or uninhabited, but the fruit image relates to the presence of someone – as if someone would have made that happen.

Therefore, the fruit represents nature's image in communion with someone's involvement. The outside meets the inside, and the exterior and interior are brought together by someone related to both. Similar to what the "old pond" represents to the action of the frog jumping into the water, Larraín's "🍐" might be the sharp lightwork that brings out the fruit above the rest of the objects remaining in the shadow; a pause that tacitly implies there may be more items underneath.

In both, the objectiveness of the referent loses once again into the viewer's subjectivity and often misleads the author's photographic experience. Either in Larraín's philosophy or *haiku's*, the extraordinariness seems to lay in the revelation of the moment itself. The instant where the “simpleness” of ordinary life is contemplated as a form of visual/verbal reflection.

Photographs can become haiku under circumstances of self-reflection, usually reflected by exploring a metonymic language, juxtaposition principles, or oxymoronic figures. Because of this, although rested images, photographs revolve in contradictory shapes and meanings to reveal a new visual paradigm. Larraín's images, in this respect, alter the way of seeing the normal and, through light, shadow, and contrasting elements, help explore haiku visual experience.

5.2 Satori and poetic devices

Throughout the development of Larraín's imagery, several approaches attempt to place his work in a more poetic dimension rather than artistic or journalistic, yet with no significant explorations. "The poet of Valparaíso" (Willis) who carries a poetic vision of reality (Foitzik) and whose photographs are "silenciosas apariciones plasmadas de poesía" (Leiva 8), is just one idea of what this rhetoric figure looks like. In this regard, in the talk on Larraín's retrospective (2014), when Agnès Sire faces the question about the poetic value of the photographer's work, she is careful in saying that she always tries to remain distant in using this concept. Because, to her, the notion of poetry has become a redundant and ordinary resource, "demasiado usada" (CNCA, "Conversación entre Agnès Sire y Luis Weinstein sobre Sergio Larraín"). The French curator is firm in saying that these poetical approaches about subjective photography may only be intelligible within a more literal context, giving meagre room to poetic inquiries. In this particular scenario, nonetheless, she is not wrong. No matter how many rhetorical discourses have been made upon Larraín's poetical mysticism over the last decades, none of them has made a serious case study out of it, cornering the photographer's work in a fictional, romantic dimension.

For all these reasons, this section keeps on exploring Larraín's poetical traits on Satori and, particularly, visual *haikus*, but this time from what Charles Trumbull recognises as "poetic device". Therefore, the study compares Larraín's Satori work against Trumbull's poetic features to project and understand, partially, the elements of visual poetry in the Chilean's work: repetition, synaesthesia, rhythm, nonsense language, bent language.

When Trumbull analyses the meaning of *haikus*, the author reveals specific characteristics among Western poetry that have been applied to English-written *haikus*. These features would help enhance the interpretative "meaning" of images or metonymical attributes in most cases. Similarly, when analysing Larraín's work on Satori, it is also

possible to confirm elements alike in the composition. The presence of these elements, therefore, would allow as well to read Satori work under these poetic figures:

- **Repetition**: Repeating the source of an image (word or figure) enhances the notion of deepness in the narrative or the image/feeling as such, most of all if repetition aims towards feelings or emotions. In Kobayashi Issa's poem, for example, "A Cuckoo Sings", the *haiku* writes "A cuckoo sings; to me, to the mountain; to me, to the mountain". The last two stanzas or lines radically separate from the cuckoo that sings, generating echoes direction wise, as a continuous loop of the bird's sound between the person and the mountain. For instance, compared to the following photograph (Fig. 63), it becomes plausible to notice repeated elements in the composition.

  The difference this time is that Larraín's repetition does not look for deepness or movement but to generate a sense of normalcy which is drastically disrupted by an anomaly, represented by the missing cobbles in the ground. This way, it is relatable to notice that Issa uses repetition to give direction and continuity to the bird's song. In contrast, Larraín uses repetition to disrupt the normal and to enhance the presence of the singularity.

Figure 63 – Simple Satori, street

- **Synaesthesia:** It responds to the elaboration of a sense impression, typically relating to figurative language that includes mixing senses, such as feeling colours or seeing feelings. For example, Natsume Sōseki's poem "Over the Wintry" shows verbal and visual elements of synaesthesia as a graphic resource when mixing three different images. The second stanza says, "forest, winds howl in rage", attributing animal and human features to a natural element: the wind. For Sōseki, therefore, the wind behaves like a beast full of anger – a strong image that comes to the viewer in similar terms. It would be different, for instance, if the same intensity of the wind blowing is presented as glorious or protective, but this is the opposite. The author characterises the wind as a terrifying beast.

In Larraín's case, it is common to find specific features that intensify the photographer self-exploration. The following image (Fig. 64) shows an alliteration of elements that connect directly with the feeling of solitude and reflectiveness, even though their objectivity only presents them as they really are: a lighted-up candle in the first photograph and a pair of sandals in the other. However, both images are cut by the word "convent", written by the same photographer, enhancing thus the feeling of monastic life.

Therefore, the candle and sandals become images of austerity by the simple fact of the word that intertwine them, gifting them with sensorial attributes relating to spiritual life. The synaesthesia establishes when these objects detach themselves from their objectivity, or referent, to enter into a subjective and sensorial world. The viewer hence identifies them within an emotional dimension. As Sōseki's terrifying wind, Larraín's candle and sandals denote passiveness, seclusion, and desolation.

Figure 64 – Simple Satori, convent

- **Rhythm**: This might be one of the most complex figures relating to images since rhythm tends to be exclusively attached to sound sequence in specific verbal/textual functions. It responds to the presence of patterns that emphasise stressed or unstressed syllables of the words to generate a particular poetic intonation in the reading/spoken flow. Consequently, the most straightforward answer to the question of how images generate rhythm aims to visualise graphic patterns repeated or prolonged onto the canvas, similar to the visual of an electrocardiogram where a continuous line bends up and down to represent the heartbeats. Culturally speaking, this image is easy to understand in this way since these figures are precisely meant to represent rhythm, or the lack of it (arrhythmia).

However, there is nothing least poetic than patterns repeated to infinity. A proper poetic exploration is subjected to how visual poetry can represent rhythm and its role in the subjective dimension. Satori, on this wise, may encompass the answer. The following images are from the same series taken from Larraín's house

in Tulahuén (Fig. 65). Once again, the briefness of the *haiku* and the photographic detail centres on very few elements and gives no much information. Nonetheless, it is possible to spot a particular behaviour of the elements while interacting with natural light and what the photographer has decided to stress out in the take. In Larraín's Satori, the visualisation of light is essential for rhythm representation since it envisions the continuity of elements, the stress of the lighter sections, and the unstressed ones.

Figure 65 – Simple Satori, Tulahuén

This way, in the first picture, it is hard to tell what house section the photographer is standing at or even shooting; yet, it shows an exploration of light behaviour utilising the verticality of the doorknob as a pattern, hence creating a sense of projection. Similarly, in the right-sided photograph, a group of roses and leaves are stressed by light and camera focus, while the rest of the composition remains blurred in the dark. Contrary to the first photograph, rhythm here is not sequenced; it presents itself in a more chaotic presentation, tensing the only rose on the left from the rest of the flowers on the right as if the elements were going in the opposite direction.

It becomes evident that the presence of rhythm in either photography or *haikus* might cause an association between elements (words or images), "which sometimes can be unexpected and yield extra meaning" (Trumbull 101).

- **Nonsense language:** It responds to a form of nonsense literature where certain prosodic elements are employed to enhance the meaning of the poem, when the existing resources (word/images) are not sufficient, sometimes falling in wordplays or stretching the meaning of words beyond the real, into a made-up realm. For example, authors such as Lewis Carrol in *Jabberwocky* or Dr Seuss in *If I Ran the Zoo* have intensely practised this tendency.

In this regard, Larraín could have also been part of such a movement of exploring nonsense language in his photographs since sometimes it is common to let his photographs talk from fictional realms rather than their connection to objective reality.

For instance, the following selection contemplates a few takes from 1975 in Egypt and contrasts them with two others from Tulahuén in the coming years, respectively (Fig. 66). In this opportunity, as usual in his aesthetic exploration, Larraín centres on the projection of lights, the "phantoms" (*El Rectángulo en la Mano* 9), as he calls them, as responding to the manifestation of a fleeting moment's singularity.

Figure 66 – Satori images, silhouette Tulahuén (1975)

These visual presences become a graphic resource for the photographer to show a reality that might sometimes fall into fiction. The photographs are taken from entirely different contexts whatsoever, geographically and temporally. Nevertheless, it is possible to relate similar features, such as the apparition of cognoscible shapes, either human or nature. Although, none of them shows the actual form of any of these ghosting elements. Even when recognised for what they represent, their presence is utterly out of the normal, entering into a fictional realm of humanoid figures lined up against a wall and plants and fruits portrayed as a sort of third-person narrative, just like human figures are. All shadows together are also displayed similarly, under a sense of verticality. Here, there is not much of a background. Only their shadows remain as evidence of their existence, but nothing else, since this time there are no direct referents to shoot at, only phantasmagorical projections of themselves.

This way, nonsense language in Larraín's Satori manifests in similar ways that of stretched or made-up words in poetry, as an allegory of this far-reality and intelligible dimension that is possible to access only through certain language/images.

- **Bent language**: It has certain similarities to the previous point of "nonsense language" in the way that both attempt to manipulate the possibilities and rules of the language to amplify or strengthen the meaning of a poem or poetic production. As in *haikus* as in traditional poetry, it is common to find the resource of "invented words" (Trumbull 103) or the use of unusual grammar. In Trumbull's study, he presents the case of the Western haikuist, Anne McKay, for drawing on this "bent" style in many of her poems. The author, for instance, when she writes "small prints; nightmade in snow; leave me listening . . .", alters the formal structure coining the word "nightmade" in order to intensify the occurrence in her narrative.

When analysing poetry for its visual content, as in the case of Larraín's photography, visual alteration and modification regarding these two points, "nonsense" and "bent" language, seem to work within the same dimension. Nevertheless, it is possible to separate them under structural approaches slightly. Namely, if bent language implies the use of an unusual grammar, which refers directly to an alteration of the bones of any textual composition in any language, bent language in photography would imply, by extension, an alteration of the structural composition of reality. Again, if grammar alters the function of language, the visual composition will alter the function of images.

When analysing Larraín's work in Egypt, there is hardly any information about the Egyptian context (Fig. 67). Larraín had taken these photographs in the early 70s when he took his daughter on a trip as part of a self-assignment. Like many from that period, Egypt photo-essay represents a poetic and experimental work, an aesthetic exploration on reflectiveness and Satori as a way of easing his soul.

It is observable hence that the poetic meaning in Larraín's photographs lies in the alteration of the context of the composition, mainly annulling all the remnants of cultural assimilation. Larraín here makes low-angle takes, avoiding the exterior, shooting the asphalt and people's back and feet.

Therefore, the alteration of the composition becomes too in a sort of "bent language", where the photographer alters the grammar of an ordinary visual narrative to deconstruct his own reality and subjectivity.

Figure 67 – People on the street, Egypt (1970-5)

In summary, the poetic devices proposed by Trumbull allow indeed to understand Satori photography under poetic outputs. Comparing and contrasting Larraín's work with *haiku* attributes, as in this study, places the photo-essay in a yet unexplored visual dimension: the single image as a short poem powerful enough to expand visual imageries and subjective realities. Accordingly, Haiku photography becomes part of Larraín's Satori photographic exploration, thus expanding the relevance of the Chilean's visual production.

5.3 The “spring-tight line” between Minor White and Larraín

The similarities in education and artistic formation and outputs between the photographer Minor White (1908-1976) and the Chilean Sergio Larraín (1931-2012) are also crucial to understand Chilean's work better. Even though both photographers in their career remained worlds apart, their photographic style, the black and white saturation, the exploration of Zen photography, and Oriental philosophy help reduce the distance between them enormously. One distinct and sound artistic output to highlight in this regard is the proximity of Larraín's work to White's and their exploration on reality, or what White has coined as the "spring-tight line" of photography (*Fourth Sequence* Colphon). This specific feature helps to understand some visual representations, such as short visual poems (like *haikus*), in a category that escapes from traditional practices like drawing or painting, for example. On the contrary, it looks to settle in a high-modernistic form or art (Hershberger 199-200), like an abstract of the real: "The spring-tight line between reality and photograph has been stretched relentlessly, but it has not been broken. These abstractions of nature have not left the world of appearances; for to do so is to break the camera's strongest point – its authenticity" (White qtd in Bunnell 231). To this extent, this section inquires on Larraín's exploration of Satori short visual poems through White's work on reality and appearances to broaden the scope on how else to read the Chilean's photography.

Minor White was an American photographer, contemporary to Thomas Merton and Larraín. Although, differently from Merton, White, as well as Larraín, was educated on photography and arts, having studied art history under the art historian Meyer Schapiro at Columbia University in New York (Hershberger 204). White's photography has a wide-

range variety of subject matter, from architecture, people and landscapes to a more experimental exploration of shapes and lights. His technique range, on the other hand, is well known for his punctilious, black-and-white composition and, above all, one of White's unique features: the "preference for the grouping of photographs in a form called the sequence" (Bunnell, "Minor White's Photographic Sequence, Rural Cathedrals: A Reading" 557), a form visual narrative. Thus, the photographer has been known for permeating his interest in Zen philosophy and mysticism into his production focus and formal technique, just like Larraín and his work on Satori.

In similar terms, relating to Merton and Larraín, White was also strongly influenced by his personal and social context. For example, he began his photographic career in Portland (1937), shooting architecture and gaining photographic experience. Later, as part of his plan of nurturing his career, he joined a camera club to undertake later photo assignments from the Work Progress Administration in Portland (WPA) in 1939 (Hawkins). In 1942, he was drafted into the United States Army in the Second World War, yet he never lost his way to return to his photography inquiries. After three years serving in the Philippines, White earned "the Bronze Star for his meritorious achievement in connection with military operations" (Bunnell, Pellerano and Rauch 4). In 1945 he went to New York City to learn museum curatorial procedures at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). In 1946 White managed to meet with the American photographer and modern art promoter Alfred Stieglitz. He was a leader of the avant-garde in America and well aware of European artistic movements. Because of their close relationship and shared philosophy, some scholars like John Pultz would consider White as Stieglitz's "spiritual successor" (28), and thus "one of the most important photographic artists active during the thirty years after World War II" (Bunnell, "Minor White's Photographic Sequence, Rural Cathedrals: A Reading" 557).

Additionally, in 1952 Ansel Adams, Melton Ferris, Dorothea Lange, Ernest Louie, Barbara Morgan, Beaumont Newhall, Nancy Newhall, and Dody Warren founded the progressive photography journal *Aperture* appointing White as editor and production manager. Coincidently, this same magazine would widely promote and celebrate in many times the work of the Chilean Larraín in the coming years for "his experimental process and the raw imagery he produced throughout Europe and Latin America" (Aperture). This would also tacitly stretch the artistic relationship between both photographers.

One particular case that comes in handy for this study is White's "Totemic Sequence". This photo production responds to the last new sequence of photographs between 1968 and 1970, which is one of his most mature and complex image structures in comparison to their first ones:

> Most of Minor White's early sequences, those dating from the 1940s, have a narrative structure, although they are not anecdotal. In 1950 the style of his sequences of easily recognizable pictures, with meanings that closely parallel the literal content of the pictures, began to change. The pictures became more suggestive and broadly symbolic, causing the formation of an impression, a "feeling-state," shaped by White and by the personality of the viewer (Bunnell, Pellerano and Rauch 231).

For example, about White's "The fourth sequence" completed in 1950, Bunnell comments this grouping of ten images was "recognised by most viewers as being highly erotic and utterly revealing of his personal frustration and inner conflicts regarding his sexuality and his attitudes toward women" (*Minor White, the eye that shapes* 6). This is one of White's first explorations on abstract imagery, and, as a result, its artistic output may not have been well-received or fully understood at the time. His introductory text, however, keeps commenting the author is still "his most complete statement to date on the nature of the sequence form and on abstraction in photographic imaging" (6), from which further studies may consider it as their basis – like this one on his "Totemic Sequence" (1974).

This photographic sequence is composed of the US eastern landscape imagery, particularly in Schoodic Point, Maine, a place White himself considered emotionally unique. As mentioned, White constructs these photographs as detailed abstracts of an overall short and visual narrative (Fig. 68). He uses ten images as singular points and counterpoints to express, perhaps, what Bunnell describes as "starkly vivid images of rock forms on which water stains metamorphose into animal forms reminiscent of prehistoric cave paintings" (*Minor White, the eye that shapes* 11).

Figure 68 – Minor White's "Totemic Sequence", Maine (1974)

Leaving Bunnell's indications aside, White's photographs give the imagination a tremendous amount of work since no figurative element is truly recognisable here. Instead, this visual totem engages powerfully in the depuration of forms, creating thus a sequence out of organic and irregular elements made up out of light and the singularity of nature. Perhaps this is the true nature of this short poetry; that liminal "experience", Ivanković mentions, that transcends the referent and lies in the connection between the artist and the viewer (7-8). Additionally, in this narrative, there is also repetition, as in *haiku's* poetic devices. Here, White represents the sequence's opening and ending using the same photographic referent in the first image and the last one. He changes only the effect of lighting when turning the last picture upside down to enclose all remaining forms within a symbolic perimeter that might be the prevalence of time.

Accordingly, White's spring-tight line of reality works also as a poetic device to understand short visual poems, or visual *haikus*, by their abstraction of the real and transferable experience.

The academic Andrew Hershberger studies White's artistic outputs for its quality to orbit in a reality's abstractionism realm – or within the boundaries of reality. He concludes that, for the photographer, "the spring-tight line of photographic authenticity showed that 'real' things have an unappreciated mystical dimension and that mysticism itself has a surprising reality" (220). In virtue of this, *haikus*, or short visual (and sequential) poems, may be linked directly to White's definition of reality. Here, the abstractionism in photographs and poetry accounts for those appearances that belong to the real world rarely seen. Similarly, in his essay on the language of photography and symbolism, Pultz remarks that these "appearances" respond to a newer language that defies description and traditional communication. The appearances, hence, turn into symbols and a revolutionary syntax "to create a poetry full of multiplicity of meaning, vague and evocative, which sought suggestion over clear communication" (…) and to explore the elusive realm of hidden meaning and rare beauty behind sensory appearances ("Equivalence, Symbolism, and Minor White's Way into the Language of Photography" 28).

In Larraín's case, for example, the situation would not differ much as to White's. In this respect, the Chilean also worked with short sequences of images when worked on Satori, allegedly exploring fragments, abstracts, of the real world.

Larraín's retrospective presented in Chile 2014, for example, displays a small section on Larraín's work on Satori (Fig. 69). The wall segment shows eight black/white

photographs and ten drawings in small format about this experience. On the left side of the wall, there a *haiku* made by Larraín himself as to describe the senquence: “Mi sombra va entrando y saliendo de la sombra de los árboles y edificios por la vereda: Conmigo encima. Abajo están los zapatos, arriba, el pelo: entremedio, eso que llamo yo” (CNCA, "Visita guiada a exposición de Sergio Larraín").

This time, considering Larraín's photographs solely, it is plausible to find meaning in White's terms apropos the simultaneousness of reality, where things that belong to the real world may be presented by principles of aesthetic equivalence rather than fixed imagery:

> The Chinese constantly turn things upside down (as we do). The seeing of the Real as reverse of seeing real? In a way then it hit me – the upside-down image of the lens! This is the Reality of a view that our eye has reversed and, it is claimed, that we adjust to an upside-down vision and reverse it. But do we, perhaps we merely pervert the Real world. The ground glass is truer of Real than the customary vision (White qtd in Bunnell et al, *Minor White, the eye that shapes* 232).

Figure 69 – Screenshot of Satori segment of Larraín’s retrospective, Santiago (2014)

In such a manner, White's spring-tight line in Larraín's visual *haiku* also reflects an inspection of the photographer's true self through the melancholy of lights and forms given by a singular leaf cropping the frame instance, or the shape of a sole footprint vanishing on the sand. This is precisely what Larraín's *haiku* reads: what lies between his shoes and hair is himself. Furthermore, in this sense, these photographs become the visual representation of that "self" found in ordinary objects that came across the photographer's experience once. This phenomenon gifts abstractionism with meaning, and the sense of reality and the aesthetic experience becomes an artistic output to understand and, perhaps, measure this poetic and photographic production. A visual mechanism, feasibly, to deploy a transferable experience of the real that has been translated through these visual haikus as to re-experience it aesthetically:

Edward Weston to Minor White:
To a man who knows nothing, mountains are mountains, waters are waters, and trees are trees. But when he has studied and knows a little, mountains are no longer mountains, water is no longer water and trees no longer trees. But when has thoroughly understood, mountains are once again mountains, waters are waters and trees are trees.

Minor White to Edward Weston:
For the first time, the trees were becoming trees.[56]

[56] Correspondence between Minor White and Edward Weston from 1947 to 1956 where Weston prefaces a letter to White with a Zen Buddhist epigraph and White replies eventually "in the context of examining his own 35mm colour slides from his Lobos trip" (Hershberger 229).

CHAPTER V: Photography and Arica religious group

1 Collective religiousness and visual exploration: The case of “massages”

1.1 Overview

In view of Larraín’s uninvestigated archive on Satori and spiritual practices, one particular exploration that is also worth considering is how religion, as a social practice, behaves when executed in specific collective circles. Some studies, in this regard, have been empathic in polarising the predominance of collaborative practices among cultures. For example, Cohen et al. writes that “cross-cultural psychologists might be quick to point out that many Eastern cultures are collectivistic while many Western cultures are individualistic” (1236). However, aside from the dispute about cultural collectiveness, Asian collectivism and the psychological approach have fostered a more transversal understanding regarding spiritual and intellectual growth of both collective and individual when compared to Western spiritual practices. Such knowledge is known for being deeply rooted in ecology, philosophy, and politics. It also attempts to “document, organise, and interpret the understanding people have about themselves and their world” (Kim 146). This is precisely the case of Arica School, which, rooted in Buddhism and integralism, reflects such principles through the photography of Larraín. Therefore, drawing upon such definitions, this section engages in inspecting Larraín’s visual exploration of Arica collective religiousness, paying particular heed to the photographer’s unpublished series titled “massages” from 1975.[57] Inspecting Larraín's most recurrent photographs of this series, this case study divides into three central sub-cases within this particular collectiveness: the value of nudity, the expressiveness of hands, and body rituals.

In her essay about rituals, liminality and emotions, Paula Nissilä chooses to complement this idea of collectiveness and knowledgeability and describes it from a more neutral stance. Through Andrews and Leopold’s definition, the author says collective religiousness responds to events “in which different performances consisting of social interaction, processes, and behaviour are taking place, directed by underlying functions of the event context” (280). This way, the Chilean’s photographic documentation of the

[57] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legends 1969 onwards. August 2019.

Oriental practices brought by the Arica group into the West becomes an organised interpretation that, somehow, considers the approaches of both Cohen and Kim on the learnings of human interaction and the pursuit of visual recognition of collective and corporal experiences.

As any other cultural or religious movement, Arica School was founded in an alliance of people that would share specific interests. In this case, such interests relate to spiritual practices of surrounding and self-recognition instructed by the Bolivian master and founder Oscar Ichazo. These gatherings and spiritual retreats would respond to social celebrations of the community in order to "effect the change needed to face the problems that are unfolding with human dignity, a common purpose and understanding upon the grounds of Unity and Love for all humanity" (AricaSchool), remarks the master Ichazo. This movement to study the "Universal Knowledge", commonly divided into mystical insights, philosophy, and psychology, began rustically in 1956 when the first groups of people formed in major cities in South America. However, it was not until 1968 that Ichazo founded the Arica School of Knowledge in Chile, presenting lectures about *Protoanalysis* theory and the doctrine of the fixations at the Institute of Applied Psychology in Santiago. Sergio Larraín, consequently, would join Ichazo from the very beginning, thus becoming an active member from 1968 to presumptively 1975, not long after Ichazo moved to New York City.

During the time in Arica school, the photographer would produce a significant bulk of photographs and images that would be also send off to Magnum Photos Paris as part of his contribution as a member and collaborator. This particular batch of Arica spiritual retreats is distributed in two different categories, "massages" and "Arica (40 days)", in which around 1,300 single photographs are found. The series is meant to be part of an international retreat from 1970, where Americans travelled to Chile to study with Ichazo. Nonetheless, the agency neither received nor categorised the photo selection until 1975, when Larraín decided to send it over for collection. The complete photo essay, which remains for the most part unknown, contemplates the multiplicity of shapes, bodies and the value of the community whilst doing their activities and interacting with each other.

At first glance, the work celebrates the quotidian, the ubiquitous, and the routine as a primitive form of life while including elements from yoga and nudism – as getting back to basics. "Massages" is an exploration from inside communal experiences, from within towards the beauty in the surface, the natural, mostly avoiding artificial alterations.

"Massage" practice behaves as a communal ritual where individuals or groups express themselves within the community. This particular training type is anchored as part of an extensive training programme titled Trainings of the Realms (which are five of them): "the first is the Vital Realm. Next are the Social Realm and the Emotional-Moral Realm, followed by the Mental Realm, the Spiritual Realm, and finally the Work of the Transcendental State" (AricaSchool). The case of "massages", in this respect, focuses allegedly on balancing the consciousness levels and the transformation of vital energy experienced in the Social Realm and Emotional-Moral.

Given these considerations, the selected images help comprise and represent essential aspects of the series. Furthermore, this visual on collectiveness opens newer dimensions of the photographic and aesthetic experience, where Larraín's work plays a fundamental role as a historical record, humanist and emotional-artistic. This way, Satori photography, besides its poetic value, acts as an aesthetic record of spiritual practices.

1.2 Case study: nude photography

Whether it be painting, sculpture, engraving or photography, all these forms of art, one way or another, have served extendedly to eroticism and the exploration of the human body from their beginnings (Dupouy 18). In this regard, this work of the Chilean, even though still undisclosed, is no exception to the rule. However, among the many photographic categories Sergio Larraín is commonly cornered in, such as photojournalism, landscape, or humanism, his relationship to nudity and body exploration has never been pointed out.

For example, Sophie Wright, former Global Cultural Director of Magnum Photos, when shares her insights on the Chilean's photography, says: "within the broad documentary umbrella encompassing the work of Magnum's photographers, Larrain sits firmly in the camp of the photographer as 'artist'" (S. Wright). Larraín's participation in Magnum Photos has created a specific place for the photographer in the documentary world. Hence, such a view (Wright's) might be one of the most common and known insights in this respect. Some other times, the Chilean is seen as a "mythical" or "mystic photographer" (Zachmann) as the case French photographer Patrick Zachmann that recalls on the magazine *The Eye of Photography* about his relationship with the Chilean.

Differently, the local view, as the case of Larraín's country fellow Luis Poirot, would claim there is much more about the photographer's work than what has been already seen. He comments the work of his friend has been moulded and steered by the French onto a direction that placed him as the photographer of the poor and Latin America's exoticism, mainly for his work on the street children from the 50s and 60s: "la obra está depositada en la agencia Magnum en París, y son ellos quienes han hecho la selección y han publicado las fotos de acuerdo a la visión que ellos tienen de su obra (…) Pero es mucho más grande de lo que nos han mostrado" (Hartung).

In any case, even though nude photography as a spiritual experience during Larraín's time in Arica school is a full-on photographic exploration, as a photographic output, nudity has never been mentioned nor related as part of the work of the Chilean photographer, which this analysis looks to revert.

In 2020 the art critic Tori Campell wrote an article on the pioneers of nude photography. The article does not look to foster any encyclopaedic value whatsoever but focuses on the impact of nude photographs as a source of scandal. Chronologically displayed, the photographer's names are the German Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden, the French Eugene Durieu, the Americans Imogen Cunningham, Larry Clark, Diane Arbus, the German Helmut Newton, the Americans Robert Mapplethorpe and Sally Mann, the Japanese Nobuyoshi Araki and the Thai Ohm Phanphiroj. Nonetheless, the main difference between these pioneers and Larraín is that the photographs selected by Campbell, no matter how scandalous or artistic, are all set up and harbour a political and aesthetic discourse in their creation. From evoking theatricality "ancient myths and allegories" (Campbell) in von Gloeden's to Arbus' unusual subjects and her "ability to photograph her subjects as individuals with rich stories (…) confronting her own prejudices and fears in order to capture their lives with tenderness and dedication" (Ibis); or Araki's inclinations for "portraying women in Geisha costuming tied with bondage ropes" (Ibis).

In this context, Larraín's exploration of nude photography would be less political and traditionally artistic than Campbell's selection but more conceptual and experimental instead. Moreover, even within this same category of nudism, Larraín shows a complex and layered visual universe where either body or sexuality intertwine and converse within the margins of spiritual collectiveness.

In the selection for this section, the first image shows a human-shaped body bent over a sort of blanket (Fig. 70). The body is fully naked and exposes only its back, gluts,

and part of the back of its head. From the top of the body, two leg-shaped forms arise, evidencing another body underneath. Action is happening yet not explicitly evident. Here bodies bend and merge into a similar configuration that of Edward Weston's "Nude - Anita Brenner" (1925) or Bill Brandt's nudes work. In them, Weston's, Brandt's, and Larraín's, eroticism as a form of sexuality is out of topic; however, the focus aims to represent organic forms through body exploration. To Brandt, though, this inspection is related more to optimise the possibilities of photography through photographic results, as he himself recalls in the preface of his book: "photography is still a very new medium and everything is allowed and everything should be tried" (B. Brandt Preface). Perhaps this is one reason why Brandt's work was initially explored in a studio set, and subsequently, different locations. Brandt deliberately sought those shapes and explored them in depth; Larraín, on the contrary, ran into them as exploring the group's collectiveness and spirituality.

Figure 70 – "Massages" series (1975)

The following image is a low-angle take and shows a relaxed male body facing down whilst receiving therapy by a naked woman (Fig. 71). Larraín shows him in *escorzo* (foreshortening) and displays the man's sole feet in the foreground. The man's legs end in his glutes and genitalia, creating sort of perspective lines. His back or head are barely seen due to the low angle of the take. Depending on the context, the male figure could be just an eased body or a crime scene without the woman's action in the composition. However, male's body language and interaction tell differently. Concerning the exhibition "Modern Starf" (1999-2000) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, John Elderfield remarks in the introduction of the book *Body Language* that accompanied the exhibition segment that body language "in its popular understanding, refers to the messages that people's bodies send out unconsciously" (Alexander, Chan and Figura 6), and that in some representations sometimes such messages demand the viewer to infer expressive meaning. This way, it is inferable that the man is in a complete state of relaxation by his activity with the women in the photograph.

Nudity, therefore, unlike the first image and in this particular scenario, becomes a manifestation of a certain communal engagement massage practice is. Furthermore, the

photograph may respond to the exploration of the human body whilst in a state of spiritual connection.

Figure 71 – "Massages" series (1975)

The third image explicitly illustrates a couple and directly represents intimate twosome communication (Fig. 72). This photograph denotes more about sexuality than any other previously seen, yet in a highly subtle manner. Moreover, if considering Cambridge's definition of sexuality as "someone's ability to experience or express sexual feelings", then the image would carry an ulterior meaning: exultation between partners. The characters' body is entirely out of frame, and Larraín this time focuses only on their faces, as in a portrait. The couple lays down on the ground, facing each other, and the woman is on top of the man. The photographer also situates at ground level and shoots the couple from a close distance. The couple nonetheless does not seem to be bothered by the photographer and keeps on enjoying themselves.

In such a way, Larraín gets to capture rejoicing moments while practising their spiritual communication and connecting. The photograph, hence, explores active sexuality from the sexual expressiveness of the characters rather than from explicit sexual and graphic content.

Figure 72 – "Massages" series (1975)

The last photograph, also different from the rest, opens a new segment apropos Larraín's work on nudity. This one has all the means of a traditional nude portrait, more standard, as a decidedly sensual variety (Fig. 73). The scholar Heather Waldroup, in this regard, in her article "The Nude in the Album: Materiality and Erotic Narrative", refers to this particular composition style as "typical academic nude", where "the models pose with their hands raised above their head, or reclining, or with strategically placed drapery, all borrowing from the visual language of painting" (197).

The model, in Larraín's case, is not precisely posing for the photograph. However, it is found in such a manner that, even though he is just resting after a therapy session, his body language assumes its role as a narrative object in the photographer's framing work. The portrait, therefore, shows a naked man seated down on the pavement, on some cushion or fabric whilst leans back against a wall. The man sits bending his knees, spreading his legs, and lays both arms over his thighs, covering his genitalia with his hands. The man also rests his head against the wall and keeps his eyes fully closed. Nonetheless, this man is not a model, which means Larraín did not set this photograph up. What remains uncertain is whether the man knew the photographer was at a close distance shooting at him or not.

In any case, Larraín's academic nude portrayals seem to keep enriching the photographer's exploration of nudity and collaborative practices and without following the visual canon of pornography.

Figure 73 – "Massages" series (1975)

When the French collector Alexandre Dupouy, for instance, explains the implication of nudity in photography and how this particular subject has been present in every artistic circuit since their beginnings, he understands the presence of nakedness as a phenomenon that inevitably detaches the subject from the object into an erotic dimension:

> unlike the other fine arts, the very nature of photography means that it cannot idealise its subject, and when faced with a naked body, the boundary between art, the nude, eroticism, and pornography is very difficult to define given that the differences are so much a question of culture and education (31).

Therefore, Larraín's photographs have never had the opportunity to be under such scrutiny. Nevertheless, his work on nudism and collectiveness explores an extended artistic venue that, if known, would expand both his singular imagery as a photographer and its importance in the field. Nude photography in Larraín's work may not necessarily fit in the most renowned photographer's visual production; yet there is enough evidence that his

Satori exploration reaches several aspects of the photographer that have remained veiled hitherto. Furthermore, Larraín's work helps evidence critical aspects of Arica School's religious understanding concerning collaborative and sexual practices in pursuing an elevated state of consciousness.

1.3 Case Study: hands

As part of Larraín's visual exploration on this particular retreat, another clear input the photographer focused on is the search for hands in specific moments of body experimentation. Many approaches have conveyed the qualities or visual characteristics the Chilean has been known for in the past. However, any of them ever mentioned Larraín's work on hands. Instead, it is recurrent, for example, to acknowledge his inclination to low angles and people's extremities: "his pictures from this time have a nimbleness that became one of his photographic signatures. They contain faces that are both half in and half out of frame, as though taken on the run, or hands and feet poking in from the side or waving through the picture in a blur" (Willis). Agnès Sire, along these lines, also emphasises that the photographer spent most of his time shooting at a ground level (CNCA, "Visita guiada a exposición de Sergio Larraín"). However, because of the persistence of this discourse in time, the tendency to find predominance with regard feet or shoes in Larraín's work would steer viewer's sight rapidly onto Larraín's most well-known work: London, the street children series, or Valparaíso, thus leaving aside further explorations on the subject. However, the photographer's work on hands has been present since the beginning of his career. In this study, such exploration will have another chance. Yet, in this opportunity by the hand of Satori as a collective exploration.

In this regard, the imagery of shooting hands has been widely explored in humanist photography. Many of the most iconic photographers, some of them Larraín's colleagues, have also sympathised with such inclinations. Few cases worth mentioning are the work of Elliott Erwitt, a former colleague of Larraín at Magnum, and Raghu Rai, also a member of the agency. Both photographers, renowned photojournalists, come from entirely different backgrounds, yet they have converged at some point in their work over this specific idea on the expressiveness of hands. Similarly, Larraín also participated in this exploration, even though this was never an incisive focus in their career. For example, regarding Elliott's photograph, "Family at the beach", in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil 1963), the same agency recognises that:

> Human (and sometimes non-human) hands are, with the possible exception of the eyes, the most expressive parts of the body. They ask for more or less, telling us to come or go, asking questions and answering them, scolding, rewarding, searching and finding, and at their most intimate, are loving and lustful. We may take our hands for granted, but Elliott Erwitt does not. In our hands, he sees power and wonder, emotion and feeling. Humanity works through our appendages, and hands have the ability to convey what our words and our facial expressions cannot. Here is Erwitt at his most serious-and-yet-whimsical, giving us the moments that, without hands, would not exist (MagnumPhotos, "Elliott Erwitt's Handbook").

Likewise, although a few years later, is Raghu Rai's work "My Father and My Son" in Delhi 1969 and "Mother Teresa During Prayer" in Calcutta, India 1979. Stark, black and white photographs from which the first one allegedly shows the hands of a child grasping the hands of his father. The second one responds to the exact moment Mother Teresa brings her hands up onto her face to make the pray posture and start praying. Both images have become one of Rai's most famous photo-works, not only for his artistry and great definition but by the emotional, cultural meaning expressed through them. In an interview with Elizabeth Day from *The Guardian*, Rai recognises that he is not proud of his achievements, but neither can he deny how fulfilling it is to understand the layers of complexities of his country. He explains, "I like being among my own people. I merge with them. I don't carry camera bags, I don't wear stylish clothes (…) Either you capture the mystery of things or you reveal the mystery. Everything else is just information" (Day).

For instance, as an even closer referent, in 1954, the Chilean photographer Antonio Quintana undertakes an ambitious project, portraying the Chilean culture through such layered complexity Rai mentioned – though around twenty-five years earlier. The project started firstly with the book *Las Piedras de Chile*, co-authored with his friend Pablo Neruda. Then, "Las Manos de Chile", a large photo-essay recognised as one of the most impacting photo series of the author, where Quintana captures hundreds of hands of workers and farmers around the country (MemoriaChilena).

Larraín's cultural and professional environment had material enough for the photographer to start his inquiries on hands photography. Part of this exploration is commonly seen, for example, in the street children series from 1955. Here, the photographer engages in many activities the children realise throughout their day. One particular focus of attention is their hands, as in the first image (Fig. 74 left). The photograph is a high-angle shot and shows a child's hand interacting to another hand in

exchanging some coins or tokens on the ground, presumptively as part of a game. The following image is from the Chiloé series from 1960. The photographer focuses on a local child's hand sitting on a boulder and another local boy entirely cut out of the frame (Fig. 74 middle). The last image comes from the Cuzco series from 1960, where a single hand looks like passing by the composition whilst projecting its shadow onto Cuzco's famous polished-rock walls (Fig. 74 right).

Figure 74 – Santiago (1955), Chiloé Island (1957), Cuzco (1957)

This thorough inspection, as to encapsulate, is constantly seen as part of Larraín's overall photographic production and hence gets overshadowed by it. Nonetheless, when analysing Larraín's general work, it is possible to find the continuity on this specific feature and see how it becomes a transversal attribute in the Chilean's work up to his latest production on spirituality and Satori.

This way, the "Massages" series from the 70s is not an exception. Larraín's brings out once again his exploration on hands, but this time on collective and spiritual practices. Accordingly, the following photo responds to a selection of hands that account for a small variety of the overall photo-bulk of the series (Fig. 75). Here, unlike the hands previously seen, each photograph by itself does not evidence any explicit context or any particular gender either. However, when looking at the rest of the pictures or sequence, it is possible to infer that it belongs to some of the bodies that lay on the ground whilst receiving or giving therapy.

Figure 75 – "Massages" series, hands section (1975)

Larraín's photographed hands, in this case, are generic. They lack drama and definition. Some of them do not show any specific action either, remain static, as in the case of photographs 1 and 3. In some other cases, hands subtly suggest action, such as massaging a body or holding hands, as in photographs 2 and 4, respectively. In all of them,

additionally, the high-key style denounces very little information about the referent itself. It might be the hand of a random body, perhaps a boy, a woman, or an older man.

According to the photographer's sense of collectiveness, like many others in the series, these hands represent a specific process, an emotional state within the community: communication and interaction. Here, hands answer primarily to the relaxation process of massaging. Their nothingness responds to the moment when individuals free themselves into a new state of consciousness given by this collective spiritual practice. The hands in some movement, on the contrary, represent the other side of the procedure. Larraín shows them as a mechanism that leads and accompanies other hands or bodies across this specific aesthetic experience.

To Larraín, the action (or the lack of it) in his representation expresses a sense of unity and companionship. Hence, these elements concern the Arica group's particular collectivism, where Satori photography documents the community's hands as individuals in communion with the school's spiritual learnings.

Hands have certainly been under the photographic spotlight for years until these days, mainly due to their dramatic quality to express intense emotions, personal traces, and deep marks as footprints. Nevertheless, even though Larraín was fully aware of all these artistic notions on the expressiveness of hands, his exploration goes differently. The hands of Larraín explore an active and social context that usually escapes from individuals and settles within the communal experience concerning immediate surroundings and the communication between one another. Therefore, Satori here plays a dual role. On the one hand, it explores one of Larraín's least explored traits and reveals communicational elements belonging to Arica's spiritual practice, on the other.

1.4 Case Study: body rituals

The last representative selection of images is more an explicit photograph than the previous ones. This time the selection focuses on the ritualisation and performance of the body. In their study on ceremony and rituals, Drew Chappell, Sharon Chappell, and Eric Margolis suggest that images of places and activities from formal institutions "become data for the inquiring gaze" (56). In this regard, some scholars that have studied institutions as mechanisms of cultural memory explain how photography in particular scenarios, such as schools, "can illuminate the visible physical and performative contexts in which certain

educational practice takes place" (Burke and Grosvenor). Chappell's study, on this matter, looks to inspect how social actors build a culture in their category of "human objects" (Goffman). Namely, individuals who, under tacit social arrangements, semi-unconsciously assume specific roles within ceremonies and rituals, thus exposing sets of beliefs and values about the world. Sergio Larraín, in this particular work, even though exposing factual information concerning Arica school practices, does not necessarily evidence individuals in any fixed role as expected. Instead, their portrayal aims to develop the imagery of unorthodox and unfixed roles through body rituals, in which body gesture within the spiritual group narrates the collective's emotional connection. Similar to Much's exploration on desire and inner feelings, as investigated in *Body Language*, Larraín's photographic development on body rituals engages with "people that were alive; that breathed and had emotions, that suffered and loved, rather than simply responding to visual stimuli" (Alexander, Chan and Figura 120).

In the photographs selection, only through the context of the "massages" series it is possible to glimpse and partially understand what social practices and rituals are like in Arica school. However, when analysing Larraín's photographs individually, it becomes clear that the subject of exploration is not precisely the institutional hierarchy or the spiritual practice itself. Instead, Larraín works on exploring the body and spiritual experimentation – thus deepening his study on oriental culture and mysticism and the experience of living in the community (Aguilera 52).

For instance, in the first photograph, a naked woman bends and lays down by a male body, also naked, whilst touching his lower abdomen amid the relaxation massage (Fig. 76). The photograph is interesting not for what it shows necessarily, but for what it does not. For a viewer, it is natural to evidence the interacting couple, even though the male's upper side is cut out and only parts of his legs, abdomen, and genitalia are visible. The woman, on the contrary, is fully exposed, leaving her face, breast, and pelvis as part of the composition. The photograph nevertheless does not aim to be an erotic image, and somehow there is little to say in this regard – other than nudity is fully spotted on.

Figure 76 – "Massages" series, naked woman in massage therapy (1975)

Their performance seems to be a critical photographic target, the ritual of bodies. The male body gives itself to the ceremonial act, and their nakedness acts as a confirmation of their sexuality, provoking a strong sense of relief (Berger, *Ways of Seeing* 59). In this case, the woman acts as the leading actor; she is exposed to the camera while generating the action. However, roles in this specific practice change quickly. What communicates the photograph instead is not erotism but plain trust and concentration in the twosome act. The woman excels in the therapy while exploring her companion's body. Contrary, the male body, which has neither facial expression nor corporal, remains at ease, and there is no indication of excitation whatsoever.

Therefore, with such indicators in mind, it is possible to infer that Larraín's photograph explores the forms of the social ritual. This physical ceremony of the bodies connects one to another towards unity. Even though the primary actor is the only body fully exposed in the composition, the other corporal presence also suggests physical exploration. This way, both bodies explore their nakedness while Larraín, as a spectator, develops a nude image. At the same time, all the actors participate, parallelly, of Berger's naked/nude antinomy of seeing and be seen (*Ways of Seeing* 58).

The second photograph of the same sequence, to continue, is an extreme close-up shot of a man's face (Fig. 77). This photograph could be perfectly part of the mentioned narrative of the woman massaging the male body; both photographs belong to the same contact sheet. However, there is no accurate indication that this is the same couple previously studied.

Figure 77 – "Massages" series, man's face (1975)

Nonetheless, directly connected to the first photograph, this image illustrates the other side of the ritual: the receptor body instead of the giving. The shot focuses mainly on the man's expression that denotes calm, evidenced by the lack of tension in his facial muscles. Larraín captures his eyes peacefully closed; forehead and cheekbones also are entirely loose, and the man's jaw remains slightly open as if it opened by a natural breathing reflex. Like the first image, the photograph subtly suggests another person interacting and touching the man's body. The narrative here repeats itself, the ritualisation

of the body remains connected to corporal communication, yet it only changes the angle and form of the actors.

Finally, in the last photograph (Fig. 78), Sergio Larraín himself self-portraits with one of Arica's young members in a ritual known as "transference of consciousness" (Moreno, "Sergio Larraín y el instante eterno"). Far from any scientific terminology, this term refers to a state, or Buddhist custom, in which a person is entitled with spiritual knowledgeability regarding one another after long sessions of meditation and staring at each other's eyes:

> Se trata de tiempo de conciencia y la velocidad pura es el estado telepático donde se realiza la mayor parte superior del entrenamiento (…) nuestro entrenamiento comienza con el perfeccionamiento físico que permitirá la conexión del cuerpo con la conciencia interior. Nosotros usamos la división del cuerpo en "mentaciones", con las cuales el cuerpo organiza su propio pensamiento. El cuerpo se divide en doce partes independientes que nos dan una valoración física diferente. Así, los ojos tienen una proyección psíquica que es la forma; los oídos son la substancia; la boca y el estómago, las necesidades; los riñones corresponden a la eliminación (el cuerpo y la psiquis deben eliminar, limpiar, o de lo contrario se intoxican); el sexo tiene que ver con la orientación (Sierra 97-98).

In the photograph, therefore, Larraín shows how bodies interact in the ritualisation of one of the Ichazo's "mentaciones" (mentation), in which eyes help divide the body through psychic projection. In addition, Larraín manages to capture himself and his spiritual companion in the foreground and leaves blurred people who are also experimenting with the same ritual as the photographer, thus creating a sense of depth, collective performance, and corporal repetition.

Figure 78 – "Massages" series, Larraín and pupil (1975)

By visualising body ritualisation, Larraín illustrates this programme which aims to develop the three essential human functions: intellectual, emotional, and physical maturing. Therefore, this ritualisation relies on individual and collective practices through

meditation, concentration, and harmonisation techniques to elevate one's consciousness levels of objective perception, community, and ecological awareness.

To conclude, when Sergio Larraín relates Satori's spiritual practice with a photographic experience, he tries to explain the possibilities of intimae interactions towards "illumination" or awakening. In this case, the photographer focuses on massage practices in which he explores the body imagery of Arica school's collective religiousness and healing rituals. In such a manner, this photographic experimentation translates into rested images and organic forms, captured in a high-key style and not necessary as a technical decision but to compose under unaltered and natural light conditions of an open location.

To Larraín, for instance, this is part of a collective reality contemplation towards an awakened state of mind, reached only through "exercises (meditation, etc.), and with a decision of getting out of contradictions, and purifying oneself".[58] Consequently, Larraín visualises collective religiousness in the pursuit of developing "interdependent selves", as Cohen et al. explain. Here, differently from individualistic cultures, "people fundamentally see themselves as interconnected in important ways with close others, and to prioritise good relationship functioning over their own, idiosyncratic goals" (Cohen, Wu and Miller 1238).

The photographer draws upon Arica's collectiveness to explore multi-layered approaches on the human body, communication, and expressiveness. Thus, trespassing the limits of photographic eroticism and religiousness to find a place beyond, perhaps, religion or artistic insights, but close to a body-to-body photographic communication from which Larraín himself is also part. Therefore, Satori photography transforms into an explorative tool by which Larraín inspects both nakedness and nudism apropos being oneself, without disguise, and being on display, respectively (Berger 53-4).

[58] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legendes 1969 onwards. August 2019.

2 Photographic experience and visual methods: The case of “Arica (40 days)”

2.1 Overview

It is essential to point out that this study does not focus on religion as any philosophical-political exploration of any particular practice. Instead, it looks to understand the importance of photography in certain religious practices as a doorway to explore the impact and projection of the Chilean photographer's work Sergio Larraín during his time in the Arica religious group. Therefore, for this section, Michael Pye's study, "Photography in the Study of Religion", helps illustrate a methodological route to set the groundwork for the analysis of Larraín in the context of Satori photographic exploration. Additionally, it lays the groundwork for inspecting both Larraín's religious and Satori indexicality from their *noeme,* or quality of having, irrefutably, existed (Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 76-8). For this, three main categories are drawn upon, photography as exploration, photography as a tool, and photography in the characterisation of religion (Pye 1-9).

Consequently, Larraín's work on Arica school is considered, to a more general extent, to understand Arica's religious practices through the photographer's different photographic approaches. For this, the study analyses photoshoots about landscape, outer and inner spaces, social and individual interactions, and symbolic elements in search of newer, visual structures concerning the Chilean's photographic outcomes.

2.2 Capturing the Satori environment: photography as exploration

It is essential to acknowledge that the main topic in this study is analysing the relationship between Satori and religious practices in discussing photography as exploration. In this respect, the field of exploration responds concretely to a specific religious context: the case of Arica's spiritual retreat. The focus of exploration, on the other hand, relies upon whatever human realities appear to be of visual interest to the Chilean photographer Sergio Larraín, like in accordance to Pye's photographer who was asked "to explore whatever she found visually interesting as a photographer, in the general area of religion" (3). Unlike Pye's case, nonetheless, to not fall into a shallow inspection, Holm's approaches are also drawn upon to understand photography as a research method when addressed by "researchers" (384), as in the Chilean's case. Accordingly, this section explores how Larraín's photographic survey

may also be used to systematically document and produce material to analyse Arica's practices. Here, the inquirer could also explore the religious practices from the photographer's interpretation of reality through his Satori photographic gaze. The segment also considers the 70s a photographic time factor where the photographer is in the most mature moment of his career. Therefore, Larraín's photographic documentation on Arica's religious practices explores institutional and group reality from Larraín's self-experience and matured view.

In Pye's research, the author brings out a compelling study case that is worthy of attention. In this, the brief is to carry out a photographic exploration for the Community Religions Project (CRP) of the University of Leeds, in 1976, with no more specific strategy than to capture some of the "religious activities within an ethnically and culturally mixed urban area" ("Photography in the Study of Religion" 3). Their methodology considers basic information such as time factor (several weeks during autumn); access, since some religious groups were reluctant to be photographed; not working on a calendrical basis; a photographer that was not trained in religion but highly qualified in photographic techniques. Consequently, the intellectual outcome at the end was interestingly revealing. Despite the obviousness of symbolic elements commonly spotted or unconsciously sought, such as building facades, clothes, objects, the reviewers also found commonplaces, such as parking lots, security staff, or streets. Their conclusion remains simple: photography might avoid the trap of semi-unconscious limitations on preconceptions and prejudices regarding the subject matter under certain circumstances.

Engagingly, Sergio Larraín might execute a similar task in this regard and with much fewer politico-cultural barriers to break down compared to different photography-researchers in the field, as in Pye's case, since he is not an outsider in the studied area. Larraín, in this case, was a member of the Arica group and the collective considered his photographs a form of expression and not an inquisitive reportage. For this reason, the Chilean photographer would not have any difficulty accessing, for instance, sacred spaces. In Larraín's work, X spiritual gathering within Y moment can also be considered a time factor. Moreover, in this regard, the photoresearcher (Larraín) is also an exceptionally trained photographer, like his image-maker fellow.

However, the main difference between Pye's and Larraín is that the Chilean is also exceptionally trained and versed in this particular spiritual practice on Satori and Universal

Knowledge.[59] This factor of types of knowledge (knowing too much about a subject), Pye declares it as a negative assumption feature, since it might lead to common mistakes of assuming to know where and what to look at when documenting religion. Nonetheless, in this specific case, he might also be wrong. Because even though someone lacked training in a particular field, they would engage in some common knowledge anyways. Since the field to explore is as big as religion is, this common knowledge would automatically reveal itself. Therefore, having difficulties keeping out unconsidered assumptions about what counts as religion is more likely to happen to someone partially instructed – or not at all – in a subject than to someone fully trained, as Larraín was. In such a manner, when someone is trained in their own reality, the otherness does not reveal as something exotic to be captured or sought out. Thus, the immediate environment is normalised, and it allows to rediscover it from within.

The following selection of images, to exemplify, is originally marked as worthy, or of interest, by Larraín himself, using a red marker as seen in the sequence. Here, Larraín, besides using his renowned photographic style to blur and cut people out of the photo frame in search of the absence of coexistence simultaneously (Moreno, *Sergio Larraín: el instante eterno*), he thoroughly inspects a multi-layered dimension on Arica group and their experience as spiritual practitioners within the community.

In the first selection, Larraín wanders around the retreat house's garden and inspects contextual elements from outdoor spaces with which the community is in constant interaction (Fig. 79). Here, there is evidence of flowers, plants, animals, and nature, usually surrounded by some human presence. However, the first photograph is a neat close-up take of a white flower, and in the background, some blurry human presences are diffusely seen. Differently, the second picture shows a group of people at a distance. They lay on the grass half-naked, enjoying themselves, allegedly unaware of the photographer's presence. These people, nevertheless, are out of focus and what Larraín is targeting is a little wooden-made cabin in the background. This cabin might have been a toilet, a cellar, a place for meditation, or whatever the imagination decides it was. There is one certainty,

[59] Oscar Ichazo proposed to understand the Universal Knowledge as mystical insights concerning life, supported by original philosophical theories and spiritual and physical practices for the in–depth understanding of the human psyche (AricaSchool).

though, that this cabin is another element in the experience of this form of religiousness, where people constantly interact with nature. Furthermore, the other two photographs indicate a white cow's presence on the grass feeding in a low-angle and part of a body's person holding a guitar seen from the back, respectively.

The elements spotted whiting the selection of images have scarcely any particular relation between each other; however, they are all involved and entwined as religious means in the spiritual experience to find God (Larraín, *Zop* 3-5).[60] Namely, this particular practice looks adherents to become one with nature and the great cosmos, as Larraín used to say, "to understand this is the Universe, and that it is all what we have, and we have to take care of it, and have love for each other" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 382).

Figure 79 – "Arica (40 days)" series, outdoor spaces (1975)

Additionally, Larraín took these photographs as if he was not participating in the action but at a distance instead. Under this consideration then, the photographer would attain Holm's "researcher" figure. Because either photographers or researchers have a reason for taking a photograph, there is an intention behind the shot. Even though photos do work as research inquiries, it is still the researcher/photographer who sets the tone for what is important to discuss: "it becomes the researcher's interpretation of "reality" that is considered important and analysed" (Holm 383-4).

Under Larraín's perspective, there might be more to say about how surrounding elements interact with nature and human bodies rather than finding evidence of exotic, unknown objects related to religion. After all, part of Satori's learnings is that "lo subjetivo no existe, es sueño, mientras se está es la verdad/realidad, no tienes ningún problema"

[60] This booklet, *Zop*, is part of an extended hand-crafted, unpublished book series Sergio Larraín titled *Kinder Planetario* on photography, Satori, and spiritual practices the photographer himself promoted and delivered to his close ones. This particular edition is a gift from Gonzalo Leiva, who had acquired it from one of the members of Larraín's family and now belongs to a personal archive.

(Larraín, *Zop* 63), as Ichazo writes, and hence, this visual exploration Larraín does on nature and habitat responds directly to what Ichazo preaches on “truth”, which might also help understand more about Satori intellectual engagement.

The following selection focuses on indoor spaces. Similar to the previous exploration, Larraín here concentrates on a greater variety of elements. As an observer, the photographer manages to engage in personal and communal spaces where either people or objects compose the experience of Arica's ubiquitousness.

The first photograph, to illustrate, shows a group of people meditating in a Zen room, a quiet zone meant to foster peace and tranquillity (Fig. 80). Unlike the other spaces and rooms also available for the community, this particular area is exclusively designated to meditational practices, thus eliminating the possibility of visual distractions or stimuli other than focusing on more complex, time-sensitive tasks. As a result, these zen rooms are usually empty spaces, with no furniture or decoration to deviate practitioners' concentration. Additionally, as a sign of respect, the photographer neither enters the room nor interrupts the practice when shooting; instead, he remains outside and frames the photo from a nonsacred outer space. In this case, the participation of Larraín as both a photographer and practitioner allows revealing not only Arica's religious activities but also Larraín's spiritual commitment to the group.

Figure 80 – “Arica (40 days)” meditation room (1975)

The next image is a two-photograph selection where Larraín explores individual intimate spaces. Here, Larraín captures members of the Arica community in their natural environment (Fig. 81). Even though nothing genuinely extraordinary is in their actions, their ordinariness reveals an exciting part of their socialisation and structure. As Riggins mentions, in a well-known context, the researcher, in this case, the photographer, can provide both descriptive meanings as well as stories about each object ("Fieldwork in the living room: An autoethnographic essay"), which can make these types of photographs "very valuable for understanding processes" (Holm 384), such as "social transitions or change by identifying shifts in material objects, dress, and so on" (Mitchell and Allnutt 267).

Figure 81 – "Arica (40 days)" series, indoor spaces (1975)

The intimate spaces of Larraín's photographs tend to show people in what seems to be comfortable, light clothing as if it was a hot summer. The universe of people captured by the photographer is as diverse as it can be; men and women from different ethnical backgrounds and physics are spotted across the entire series.

Therefore, considering such extensive visual material, inferring anything about their personal circumstances would be a mistake. Nonetheless, what they do have in common is how they interact within the margins of their environment. Similar to Larraín's exploration of outdoor spaces, objects and elements bring these people together. As seen in the photographs, they are all circumscribed, united (including Larraín), by Arica's physical and symbolic set-up. The fact people, or the resemblance of them in some cases, appear in similar scenarios like unfurnished rooms, with only cushions on the floor, vernacular tea tables in the corner and, most importantly, with different posters of yantras on the walls, illustrates a complete narrative of the spiritual and physical context they experience.

In this exploration, for instance, it becomes evident that this particular religious aggrupation shares transversal principles about austerity and detachment, given mainly by the illustration of the assimilation of their social environment: "si no se está en el presente, está viviendo en la escala motriz solamente, (tiene que arrancar del cuerpo los elementos para emocionarse y para pensar)" (Larraín, *Zop* 20). In addition, such yantras are also posted and spread all over the place, and it is common to find them across Larraín's contact sheets. This symbolic element, nonetheless, not only delimitates a sort of aesthetic for the given religion but allows to project and visualise philosophical approaches on how this group apprehends the world.

For example, when Ichazo explains the relevance of one particular symbol, the enneagram, he recalls that it is "an ancient symbol dating back to the Egyptians and the Chaldeans, and later Pythagoras derived the figure into his arithmological philosophy and geometry" (AricaSchool). However, its ulterior relevance relies upon how Ichazo utilises this particular symbol as practical and spiritual guidance, becoming thus the precursor of this practice:

> Oscar is the first person in history to apply a theoretical application to the figure of the enneagram. The entire enneagram knowledge presented by the Arica School in Oscar's original Teachings is called the "Protoanalytical Theory, System and Method." It employs 108 enneagrams (the nine-pointed figure shown above) which analyze the complete human being, progressing systematically from the lowest aspects of the human condition to the highest State of Mind. In this State, Unity is experienced as oneness with all humankind (AricaSchool).

In Larraín's photo series, the visual exploration of the immediate environment is of the utmost importance. In this regard, to contextualise, one of the Pye's apprehensions is the limitations of research photography when approaches to "forceful suggestions" (5), which refers to the tendency to fall into popular assumptions about religion, the inaccuracy of the takes, and the physical extension of the data. However, Larraín's variety of takes does not necessarily show what could be expected when discussing religion or spiritual practices. Instead, it evidences the inhabitation of communal spaces, from which one can deduce Arica's spiritual imagery on a first stage.

More related to Holm's inquiries, to ease Pye's concerns, Larraín, in this case, embodies both the figure of the researcher and the "participant". That is to say, when these types of investigative figures produce photos, they also "allow for interviewing about the circumstances of the production, which will give a more comprehensive insight into the participants' intentions" (385).

Consequently, Larraín exploration engages not only with the expression of bodies and shapes, symbols and yantras but also rested, peaceful moments of self-reflection. In the Arica series, Larraín shoots the surroundings, and whatever in it is. His exploration goes through different techniques, angles and elements, and rarely linear sequences can be found among them, thus fulfilling his role as both "researcher" and "participant".

2.3 Photography as a tool for research purposes

Once pointed out the importance of non-forced data collection in photographic exploration, this study deepens the importance of Satori photographic inspection in Larraín's photography as an unexplored aesthetic. For this, the section utilises Holm's approaches in her study "Photography as Research Method" to establish an analytic structure when inspecting Larraín's work. These approaches respond to content analysis, discourse

analysis, and ethnographic analysis. This way, when understanding photography as a tool for research purposes, breaking down its possible usages is of great importance. For this, this research suggests four different approaches to address a concrete investigative dimension: (i) research question, (ii) preparation in visual research, (iii) analytic observation, (iv) inventories. Accordingly, through these divisions, Arica school and its community are explored in order to, on the one hand, expand and understand Larraín's photo-imagery and personal outlook and, on the other hand, help settle a more substantial role for the Chilean's photography apropos religious practices.

.2.3.1 The research question: Satori in the visualisation of religion

The first photo usage responds to the definition of a research question, which in this particular case is related to understanding Arica's religious experience from Larraín's photographic practice: what the Arica religion is all about. For this, a determined selection from the photographer's photo series, Arica spiritual retreat, helps establish a direct and objective knowledge of certain spiritual practices in 1960-70s Chile. In this regard, there is nothing genuinely illustrative that evidence any geographical specs of the country under consideration or the period in which the event occurs. What it does illustrate, nonetheless, is Larraín's inquiries when he himself addresses this particular photo batch as "Arica (40 days)" to categorise the visual elements he found within this religious experience, thus establishing the research question on top of the series (Fig. 82).

Figure 82 – Screenshot of "Arica (40 days)" series contact sheets (1975)

In this scenario, there is evidence that the photographer inspects and collects specific visual information from within the group to generate a significant bulk of content to set the "what" in this photographic research. This way, Larraín reveals the "what" of this visual investigation and divides it into three significant visual categories (community and space, nature and nudity, and symbolic elements) that can be compressed and contemplated in the following selection of photographs.

For example, the first photograph Larraín shows a group of people reunited amid physical and semi-synchronised exercises, some of them stretching or meditating and

others simply resting (Fig. 83). This is a 30-people group, more or less, exercising outdoor, where a number of them are half-naked and seen from afar and elevated distance. As Larraín takes this photograph from a high-angle and inside the retreat house's upper floor, he removes himself from the occurrence and assumes a more investigative role. The second photograph of the same selection represents the second category on nature and nudity, where a variety of elements and scenarios related to nature intertwine along with communal social practices. Thus, the photograph illustrates two shirtless men with their arms wide open towards either the sky or open space. The photograph's format seems to be a medium shot that only shows the upper side of both men. In the background, there is nothing but trees or big bushes, diffused hills, and then the sky comes at last in low-key. Here, once again, the photographer situates behind the men and shoots their backs without them even noticing it. Finally, the last photograph focuses on Arica's symbolic elements through the image of a couple moving, dancing, in front of an illuminated yantra.

Figure 83 – "Arica (40 days)" series, group activities (1975)

This way, if considering that a detailed photographic survey produces data to be analysed rather than photographs for documentary and illustrative purposes (Holm 384), then the development of Larraín's research question can be readily appreciated within the visual information collected.

Through the category on community and space, for instance, the photographer visually displays a sense of togetherness and dimensionality that seems to be of utmost importance in Satori, as if Satori also meant unity: "Nuestra vida, una bala, un solo blanco: Dios" (Larraín, *Zop* 3).

The second category on nature and nudity, to continue, responds to physical interaction, to how these spiritual beings behave when in contact with other bodies, like grass or animals in order to transcend "empujado por la brisa" (Larraín, *Velero* 86), pushed by the breeze, as in utter synchronicity with nature.

Lastly, the third category on exploring the universe of Arica's symbolic elements opens the field for the inspection on how symbols and visuals reunite the spirituality of groups of people under particular knowledge. In this regard, for example, the yantras

mentioned above respond to different meditational (usually geometrical) illustrations, tools that help enter a calm and relaxed state of mind "in which you feel an opening of your heart into a State of Love and your Mind will be filled with Light when closing your eyes at the end of the meditation" (AricaSchool).

All members convey to reach out all these spiritual scenarios and state by repeating certain specific meditations, such as Birth of Light Meditation, Harmonic Consciousness Meditation, Innate Awareness Meditation, Song of the Heart Meditation,[61] to name few.

Larraín's research question in this particular sense reveals Arica's religious imagery under the photographer's inquiring eye. Each of these elements within the categories mentioned above has the potential to become visual data and, hence, evidence for the visualisation of this Ichazo's spiritual religion. Larraín's indagations on religion and photography transform into an objective and visual declaration on communal and physical practices, philosophy and, more importantly, the Chilean's personal aesthetic concerns on Satori as a photographic practice.

.2.3.2 Preparation in visual research

The second usage responds to the preparation of visual research, which relates to the quality and quantity of the extracted data. Pye comments in this regard that well-organised sequences of photographs "can provide preliminary acquaintance with the data to be studied in a way which goes far beyond verbal descriptions" (6), and for this, particular orientation on the subject needs to be instructed. In this respect, since Larraín was never a professional researcher and the purpose of his photographs was nothing close to a scientific document, these photo-sequences might not necessarily be as structured as expected for a research project. Thus, this equation would leave Larraín's photographic investigation, to Pye's understanding, as unsuitable. Contrary, in their study on girls' education, Magno and Kirk analyse only three photographs – far shorter than a photographic sequence or series – to explore how development agencies use images of girls to promote their companies' work concerning the education of the same targeted girls. This study uses an elaborated

[61] These meditational forms are taken directly from Arica School “introduction to meditation” and each one of them looks to canalise energy differently, thus generating distinctive spiritual and physical outcomes.

analysis template that considers six categories so to extract as much data as possible out of the few photographs studied: "surface meaning, narrative, intended meaning, ideological meaning, oppositional reading, and coherency" (353-4), understanding coherency in this case as "whether the photographs and the text argued for the same thing" (Holm 383). Under this new argument, therefore, Larraín's sequence, despite being unstructured for strict research purposes, provides enough information to explore Arica religion under documentary and research conceptions.

The following series from the Arica contact sheets explores numerous elements that carefully inspect the preparation of visual material to generate a complex corpus for research purposes. Hence, this material helps portray Arica school and Larraín's Satori as a religious agency and spiritual practice (Fig. 84). In this scenario, Larraín's documentation on Arica, even though it has not been subjected to any scientific scrutiny of implementation or categorisation, as Pye suggests for a proper diagnosis, does include certain formalities concerning quality and quantity as to become a proper archival record. For instance, out of the 71 contact sheets found on this specific subject from 1975, around 2,500 single photographs can be extracted,[62] in which story progressions, context, sequences, and detail shots account for Arica religion's complex imagery back in the 70s.

Figure 84 – Screenshot of "Arica (40 days)" series contact sheets (1975)

Documentary speaking, to continue, the same Larraín's Arica series can also be subjected to Magno and Kirk's analytical template. On the inclusion of images as factual information, the authors suggest that the use of visual imagery (including photographs) as new forms of research data and representation has made visual culture an essential element of cultural studies (349). In this regard, aside from the authors' six categories of analysis proposed to "stimulate critical thought and reflection" (353), five more of them are included in their "Appendix 1. Analysis template" (362) as to enclose the formality of the research and visual exploration. In such fashion, therefore, Larraín's series may also be catalogued for study as follows: "Document Title": Arica (40 days); "Document Type":

[62] Binder 24 (1975). Sergio Larraín's archive. Magnum Paris, August 2019.

Photography record; "Year of Publication": 1975; "Organization": Magnum Photos archive; "Summary of the Content": Visual representation of Arica religious school on a forty-day retreat in Chile.

This way, the first six categories related to reflective thinking can articulate as follows. For instance, in the following contact sheet extract (Fig. 85), "Surface Meaning" describes the elements in the pictures in their relevance to the context of religiousness. Here, Larraín shows people sharing ideas and symbols, like light clothing, nudity, movement sequences, material detachment, and a sense of community.

"Narrative" responds to organic movements and forms created by the people of the Arica group when exercising and meditating. Larraín captures them in visual rhythmic sequences. They lay on the floor by each other's side, generating a pattern of body limbs or appendages, thus performing one of Arica's physical rites.

"Ideological Meaning", in this case, engages with one of the most common assumptions about Larraín's work: the way how he uses photography "to accompany his writings, as a way of communicating his interest in the matters that he saw as essential (…) leading a life that was virtually monastic in its austerity and orientation" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 25). Therefore, the ideology behind Larraín's photographs responds to the photographer's self-recognition through the visualisation of Arica religious practices about communal experiences towards God and oneself.

Figure 85– Screenshot of "Arica (40 days)" series contact sheets (1975)

Lastly, "Coherency", perhaps the most critical category in this regard since the agency's priorities or perspectives (Magnum's) do not precisely match Larraín's portrayal of Satori or Arica. As seen before, Larraín's visual production on this particular theme has constantly been subjected to his interests in "saving the planet and humanity from the harm caused by unthinking actions and excessive consumption" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 25) rather than a more elaborated photo analysis. Consequently,

the Arica school retreat photographs act more as a visual declaration and documentation of Arica religious exploration than the photographer's self-concerns.[63]

Therefore, Larraín's Arica series responds to this second use of suitability material that would offer more than subjective information but an articulation of familiar-looking subjects through established aesthetic conventions, thus fuelling objective notions on reality and, hence, religion and photography.

.2.3.3 *Analytic observation*

The third approach of use is related to observation as a methodical practice that looks to understand multiple angles of specific subjects. This usage is related to the first one on exploration since this requires the determination to analyse the sub-subjects of the first stage in depth. It is common for this use to include illustrative resources for in-depth analysis. Additionally, it is also desirable to upgrade these views to a precise and systematic technique to check the practical aspects, namely "number, positions, nature or clothing and various articles" (Pye 6). In this regard, Larraín's photographs on Arica's imagery about nature, yoga postures and symbolic elements can still show up. However, as an explorer of his wanderings, the photographer captured more than a religious set and social practices; he also paid special attention to one of the Arica learnings' technical manifestos, the book *24 Lights: Arica Training Material* (Fig. 86). The piece is a highly graphic and illustrated booklet that explains how different exercises affect different parts of the human body, the role of energies and the stimulation and differentiation between male and female genitalia.

Figure 86 – Screenshot of the book 24 lights (1975)

[63] Out of Magno and Kirk's ten categories for photo analysis, two of them had to be left out, "Intended Meaning" and "Oppositional Reading". They will remain uncertain for now since this series has never reached the public eye through official publications and has been only partially and biasedly addressed regarding Larraín's avoidance of reality. Therefore, either intended/editorial meaning or oppositional readings cannot yet be revealed.

In similar terms, the photographer would also focus on the ubiquitous materialism related to Arica. The following selection (Fig. 87), for example, narrows down part of Larraín's observations on several situational objects that caught the eye of the photographer which do not necessarily associate with each other. It is plausible to distinguish detail shots of bare feet, leaves, crockery, and concrete steps in only a few images.

Figure 87 – "Arica (40 days)" series, ubiquitous elements (1975)

For some, like Agnès Sire, these were only trivial elements: "there is no virtuosity, but a lively perception, no distance from the subject, but a subtle engagement" (*Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 30). However, after careful considerations concerning Arica religious activities, these "unvirtuous" images become an anchor for an in-depth portrayal of Arica communal path and Larraín's development of Satori imagery. In this regard, for example, in a Letter from 1987, Larraín wrote to Sire that good photographs or any other manifestation in man would reach gracefulness when their process is accompanied by "shaking off of conventions and learning to frame a shot by concentrating and observing intensely" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 25).

In this respect, the usage of analytical observation is expressed through the visual manifestation of elements and situations Larraín himself understood as relevant in the pursuit of Satori. He would mention on this that in order to bring back the real world given by Satori, the youths will have to bring back their hands into nature, through "bordar, telar, jardín, huerto, cerámica, empastar/textos, cocinar, instrumentos musicales, danza, gimnasia, deportes, juegos, taichi, zazen" (*Adorando a Dios* 11).

Observation in Larraín's work on the Arica series centres on the singularity of experiences by capturing common areas, such as clothing, practices, rituals, or everyday life. More importantly, nonetheless, Larraín digs deeper under layers of visual representation and, through Satori photography, he reveals teaching books and quotidian objects while representing Arica's collaborative engagement.

.2.3.4 *Inventories*

Finally, the creation of inventories responds to the fourth usage. The idea of inventory as photographic use relates to evidence of specialised artefacts or attitudes towards the desired subject. When talking about Larraín's photography through Arica school's religious practices, on that account, it becomes critical to bring out Arica's domestic content by exhibiting what Pye mentions as "religious paraphernalia" (7) and evaluating its place in the location or household. As a reapplication of the images above (Fig. 88), this comprehensive photo selection also works as inventory in Pye's terms since it summarises Arica's material-symbolic universe. Nonetheless, this one does not only focus on human relationships with specific objects, items, or circumstances but, in a more extended way, on ways of inhabiting specific places, locations, and buildings through these materials or objects.

Figure 88 – "Arica (40 days)" series, symbolic elements (1975)

On a first approach, to continue, it is not challenging to enumerate the objects or elements that Larraín spots. These can be easily described as, for example, clothing, cooking pots used as drum sets, crockery, yantras, teaching material, plants, the retreat house, linen and cushions instead of furniture, and the list goes on. Larraín represents inner spaces in the series in concordance to outer spaces, trying not to interrupt the natural flow of the outside. That means that artificial artefacts made outside the sphere of essentialism would mislead humanity into misbehaviour, chaos. The photographer, in this regard, would live up to these same terms and religious attitudes. In his own words, to exemplify, he claimed once that "humanity had to do a jump, to come out of the predator-parasite position, which is destroying everything, and making people fight against each other (…) I move when things come by themselves, if I invent, nothing comes through" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 382).

Most importantly, nonetheless, Larraín's inventory on Arica's religious paraphernalia denotes conclusive data on the most important aspects of either Arica school or Satori spiritual practice or even the Chilean's artistic approaches on the subject. These elements, therefore, account for formal visual scrutiny on Satori, which is also coherent with the learnings, philosophy, and imagery all participants share. In Larraín's *Zop (Kinder*

Planetario), as per evidence, the author describes how these series of "mentaciones" (Fig. 89), or spiritual exercises, look for bringing reality back to oneself, through nature and simple objects, towards God (33-42).

Figure 89 – Screenshot of Larraín's Zop (Kinder Planetario) text

In summary, the extended work of Larraín on Satori offers proof enough to articulate his visual findings in the way of understanding religious practices as an aesthetic experience of which photography plays a fundamental role for a) qualitative data collection and b) personal approaches and technical inclinations as image-maker. Therefore, Satori exploration offers ample evidence on content, discourse, and ethnographic elements to consider Larraín's photographs as a source of valid and robust information concerning social, religious practices.

2.4 Photography and the characterisation of religion

When analysing Pye's studies, certain assumptions would help clarify the possibilities of the photographic practice concerning religion and, therefore, Larraín's visual production. In terms of a sociological explanation, Pye discusses Reed's approaches to assume photography strictly as a tool ("The Use of Photography in Sociological Research") and not as much as a medium as previously studied. The reasons seem to be plausible enough since, for Pye, the "sequence of photographs may be used to analyse the underlying social structure of a group, but the photography itself is subordinate to the explanation" (7). Namely, since a group's objectivity lies in characterising data, patterns and identifiable qualities, a single photograph may only have a more significant structural dimension within a specific group classification. Furthermore, a single image is a victim of interpretations based solely on how much the interpreter recognises themselves in what Barthes claims to be the "spectrum" of what is not there (*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 9-10). Hence, in this scenario, the characterisation can only be subjected to an organised group of data that, sociologically speaking at least, "aims to explain psychological phenomenon by identifying factors that predict particular outcomes and the relationships between them" (Spencer, Pryce and Walsh 84).

For this reason, this section looks to generate a taxonomy of Carreño's transversal connection between photographic representation and religion to inspect Larraín's visual production of Satori photography. Consequently, the section considers the three-way approach in which something religious meets photographic representation: through the characterisation of "the numinous", "the miraculous", and "the sacramental" (228).

.2.4.1 The numinous

The manifestation of the "numinous" accounts for the first facet when characterising religion through photography. To Carreño, the numinous rubric has an artistic pattern in how it has been usually illustrated in time. For instance, evoking dazzling sunlight, darkness presence, threatening majesty, the ghostly, "and also by the communication of the human and the divine, together with the overlap between the beautiful and the sacred, such as in the representation of the person of Christ" (228). However, without falling into reductionist nor exhaustive approaches, the author conveys that these representations tend to move around the uncanny and eerie, most of all when it comes to beliefs and faith. Similarly, Spark understands this numinous manifestation as a form of believing in supernatural beings because the pursuit or symbolic presence of gods is one of the most transparent and outstanding qualities of faith (Spark).

In this respect, Larraín does incur in the representation of Carreño's unusual and mystical takes through the Arica photographic exploration. This visual inspection is vital because, for the first time, Larraín characterises Arica religion through a more elaborated Satori/documentary photography, hence disclosing newer artistic outputs. The following photo sequence, for example, represents different moments within the group practice where Larraín shoots Arica members in explicit physical expressions, thus exhibiting notions on their sets of beliefs and self-exploration (Fig. 90).

Figure 90 – "Arica (40 days)" series, physicality (1975)

The first photograph is a high-contrast image that illustrates the silhouette of a person meditating and kneeling in the centre of the shoot. The set is fully illuminated, yet the person's silhouette and the surrounding elements remain like shadows, creating an

organic yet organised composition. The second photograph is a low-angle take where Larraín shows a group of people stretching. It begins with a blurred face on the top-left corner, leading to a visual effect of repetition. The third image exhibits a half-naked man standing on the back of another man lying down on the grass. Finally, the last picture responds to a close-up take of a man massaging another man's head from the top. In any case, the uncanniness of Carreño's numinosity is indeed represented through Arica's beliefs on spirituality, physical exploration, and most certainly Larraín's work on lights, shadows, and unusual angles.

Therefore, the "numinous" display in Larraín's work revolves around the photographer's motivations and aesthetic exploration in the portrayal of religion. Here, Larraín represents and explores the human body as pure yet unorthodox forms always related to Arica's spiritual religiousness. Sometimes presented as shadows, light forms, or intelligible appearances, the *numinosity* in Larraín's images respond to what the photographer understands as "phantoms or presences" rather than mere bodies. The mysterious or ominous found in the Arica series is not entirely different from what the Chilean has been working on during his career; there is a particular signature. The representation of Satori's religiousness is not limited to documentary or research purposes, but it can be expanded to Larraín's exploration of himself. Because experiencing the numinous through photography harbours a duality in which the visual representation of the unearthly is directly affected by the photographer's experience. As Larraín mentions in *El Rectángulo en la Mano,* "es en mi interior que busco las fotografías (…) [pudiendo] solidificar ese mundo de fantasmas cuando encuentro algo que tiene resonancias en mí" (9).

.2.4.2 The miraculous

The miraculous, to continue with Carreño's second facet of visual characterisation, responds to a three-folded characterisation of photography. Firstly, these are represented under the Catechism of the Catholic Church that defines them as signs of wonder, "such as healing or the control of nature, which can only be attributed to divine power" (qtd in Carreño 229). In other words, the miraculous responds to the "acheiropoieta", as defined by Daniel Grojnowski as the feature or quality "not made by the hand" (*Photographie et langage* 20), that results in miraculously made images. The second characterisation denotes that the power of miraculous images does not necessarily lay on their resemblance

to the divine or underlying artistry; however, it presents itself as a mystery or gift. Finally, the most common miraculous images are the ones that depict miraculous events.

In Larraín's case, trying to find miraculous events in his photography forcedly may mislead the orientation of this study. However, the importance of his work remarks a surprising affinity between his photographs and the Christian tradition of miraculous images, even though his focus was set on a non-traditional spiritual practice as Satori was. In this regard, for instance, there is evidence that Larraín would advocate particular divinity to his work. As to illustrate, in the early 50s, Edward Steichen acquired some of his photos for the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, from which Larraín mentioned that "it was like a visit from the Virgin Mary" (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 381). Furthermore, he would constantly comment that the perfect photograph is like a miracle that appears in a blaze of light as if the miracle happened almost by chance after clicking the shooter (Donoso). This way, through the Arica series, it becomes possible to read the miraculous in the form of glimpses the photographer himself comments God sends to reveal the real.

In the case of Arica, these miraculous images are directly connected to Larraín's exploration of religion. What they show is the photographer's state of contemplation to bring reality and God back. In Larraín's booklet, *Adorando a Dios*, the photographer uses small prints to show the many examples of Satori he wanted to share and guidelines to meditation and self-reflections as a manual for saving the world and oneself. Here, Larraín explains "the illumination" is having all four corporal levels (spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physiologic) unified and clean through physical exercises like yoga: "eso es la meta humana, unirse a Dios" (17).

To visually exemplify this, Larraín imprints the photograph of a flower in high contrast, where de the flower remains in the foreground and occupies most of the composition (Fig. 91 left). When inspecting the Arica series, correspondingly, there is evidence of the same exploration on miraculous images. Throughout the series, the photographer sometimes stops his documentary sequence only to admire nature and explains, "Satori (…) is a state where one has emptied the mind of associations, and

arrived back to reality (…) 'contemplation' (…) Is what religious people do".[64] These photographs, consequently, result in, for example, a detailed shot of a tree branch with flowers in the foreground, popping in from the left side while the background remains blurred (Fig. 91 middle); a macro shot of grass fibbers intertwining the background as if it doodled on it (Fig. 91 right).

Similar to Grojnowski's "acheiropoieta" notions, these photographs revolve around the realm of the mysterious and are presented as unmanipulated "gifts". As Larraín himself would claim: these "photos are mostly of 'being there', the present moment – subject is reality – no story".[65] Miraculous images in the Arica series respond, hence, to Larraín's glance into a peculiar divinity – Satori:

> The terms Larraín uses to describe the state of grace necessary for 'receiving' a good image belong to mysticism, or even spiritualism, as if the images were already present in the cosmos and the photographer acted as a medium: 'freed of conventions', 'purity', 'concentration', 'miracle', and if the conditions are met, 'the images will arrive like ghost, spirits' (Sire, *Sergio Larrain: Vagabond Photographer* 30).

Figure 91 – Flower, Larraín's Adorando a Dios; flowers, "Arica (40 days)" (1975)

.2.4.3 The sacramental

Finally, the last consideration concerning the characterisation of the religious, the sacramental, studies the manifestation of the holy under the representation of pious symbolisms. Here, the research inspects the Arica series by revealing sacred elements and aspects that will help shape their visual portrayal as religion.

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[64] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – LAS Captions / Legends 1969 onwards. August 2019.

[65] Database extracted from Magnum Paris: Sergio Larraín archive – Story List / Texts 1957-1991. August 2019.

According to Carreño, for traditional studies like those in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sacraments are "efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ, and entrusted to the Church" (230). In this line of thought, sacraments are neither a natural phenomenon nor human achievements like representations or symbolisation. On the contrary, sacraments keep the sacred and the mysterious to the "agency of God who remains truly distinct from the world" (Carreño 230). Similarly, in Brinkman's study "The church as sacrament of the kingdom - A reformed commentary", the author remarks that even for Protestants, the idea of Christ as the active subject of the sacraments acts under Christ's institution, and not necessarily the Catholic's. However, even though independent of the agency administering them or the one receiving them, these sacraments "effect salvation only through faith" (309-10). From a broader point of view, the author Muriel Spark says that this difference between the holy and the profane enables direct believers to focus on supernatural and transcendental values as a reminder that there is more to life than the life seen (Spark). Therefore, under these considerations, this section analyses "the sacramental" in Arica's series, not as the exclusive feature harboured by any particular religious institution but as a divine quality that, in this case, Arica school administers to its members through consecrated elements and practices.

Visually speaking, it is essential to acknowledge that all sacraments also involve specific formal arrangements. The religious meaning is corporeally transferred into the believer through verbal or material communication by God's grace. Such an act of divinity or belief cannot ever be genuinely seen but only perceived. Following this logic, therefore, photographically speaking, photography can only reveal the material components and elements by which the sacred is communicated or expressed. That is to say, as usually seen in "oil in flasks, the hand that anoints, unleavened bread and wine, the hand that blesses in gesture" (Carreño 230).

In the following selection, to illustrate, Arica's holiness can be visually characterised under the rubric of four sacred notions that, in this case, account for ritual acts, moral codes, religious feelings, and prayers and other forms of communication (Spark).

This way, the first series evidences that particular actions happen within divine occasions, at moments where the entire participant community engages in respect and commitment (Fig. 92). Therefore, the photographs focus on the ways people follow a determined sequence or choreography to reach and embrace specific spiritual meaning. As

previously mentioned, these physical rituals serve to unify the community with the cosmos and hence to oneself to increase consciousness levels: spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and instinctive (Larraín, *Adorando a Dios* 21). Rituals can be significant elements for any social group, religious or not; yet, Arica's sacredness in this particular case reveals through rituals of communal awakening. This particular ritual is known as "The integral Teaching of the Symbol Yoga Meditation". It is oriented to lead groups to meditate with the Universal Logos – a sacred hexagonal symbol that Larraín shows in the last two photographs at the bottom-right, as a poster on the wall – in the pursuit of the enlightenment:

> When meditating with the Universal Logos or the Objective Symbol of the School and by using the exclusive Arica techniques of practice in The Integral Teachings of the Symbol Yoga Meditations, all the Divine Elements will arise in our Absolute Mind, where the Sacred and Divine Objective Colors, Forms and Sounds abide, present themselves in their pure and absolute terms, and become permanently engraved in our Eternal Continuum as the most profound awakening of the practice of Symbol Yoga. Symbol Yoga prepares us for our Transcendence from the Awakened State into the Bardo/Intermediary State, and therefore it is of the utmost importance to have the brilliance of the Light of the Eternal Presence awakened and stabilized by the School Symbol in our Absolute Mind as an ongoing practice. It is the Light of All Creation that is the Light from which we reincarnate as the Divine Spark back into the Awakened State and to which we deincarnate into the Bardo/Intermediary State and beyond (AricaSchool).

Figure 92 – "Arica (40 days)" series, body sequence (1975)

Moral codes, to continue, are also a significative element when inspecting the sacramental because moral codes demark the margins of the sacred and, thus, act as both religious and social boundaries. To Muriel Spark, for example, only "few religions do not incorporate fundamental ethical code in their teachings. Since religions are usually tropical and social, it is just to be expected that they have instructions about how people ought to act and treat each other, and of course outsiders" (Spark).

Arica school and Satori, in this regard, are not an exception. Sergio Larraín has been emphatic in expressing how important these codes are. Through a series of portraits,

where the photographer includes himself, he looks to remark the sense of unity, fraternalism and, most of all, love (Fig. 93). In Larraín's *La Vida Impersonal (*Kinder Planetario), the photographer attempts to compress the importance of these learnings. To Larraín, these become the medium by which practitioners live and understand the living expression of God within one another: "pero no SOY YO tu mente humana, ni su hijo el intelecto. Estos vienen a ser la expresión de Tu Ser, tal como tú eres la expresión de Mi Ser; siendo ambos, asimismo, fases de tu humana personalidad, de igual modo que Tú eres una fase de Mi Divina Impersonalidad" (13). This way, this "divine impersonality" Larraín's mentions responds to the sacramental feature that lays on the moral codes of the community, assimilated under the biblical commandment in John 13:34: "love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another". Arica's participants were not acquainted with each other. Many of them would not even speak the same language since this particular retreat and series responds to an international event: the "Ten-Month Training in 1970, attended by Americans who travelled to Chile to study with Oscar" (AricaSchool).

Figure 93 – "Arica (40 days)" series, portraits (1975)

Larraín evidences a non-written yet formal set of rules that seek righteous behaviour and collective love. Thus, the Chilean reveals this representative trait as a moral and sacred bond shared by each one of the participants.

The characterisation of religious feelings is another visible feature in the portrayal of the sacramental. According to Spark, "awe, a feeling of mystery, a feeling of guilt, and adoration have been spiritual feelings that are inclined to get aroused in spiritual believers when they arrive from the presence of sacred objects, in sacred areas, and throughout the practice of sacred rituals" (Spark). The visualisation of religious feelings can also be a subject for speculation and misdirection since, ordinarily, such sensations relate to supernatural experiences, often outside the faith field.

In the case of Arica, faith is the core element in the pursuit of Satori. All the physical, spiritual, and intellectual practices are supported by the entire group's strong belief in the greater good. In Larraín's series, therefore, it is not unusual to find moments or captions of people experiencing some stimulation, such as excitement, exhaustiveness, or

simple joy. The following photograph, to exemplify, shows a moment in which a man commits to a spiritual experience and thus religious feelings (Fig. 94). The photograph shows a man receiving a face massage whilst wholly submitted and surrendered to the technique "transference of consciousness" (Moreno, "Sergio Larraín y el instante eterno"), a state in which a person is entitled to spiritual knowledge regarding one another after long meditation sessions. What the man is experiencing is what Oscar Ichazo comments is the second phase of the spiritual journey. Through "protoanalysis" (Sierra 98), Ichazo's technique studies the individual's psychic structure. Here, the person can transcend into a Satori state of mind recognising one's true essential self. This mental state is typically related to great happiness and liberation, which is what Larraín shows in the image.

Figure 94 – "Arica (40 days)", spiritual connection (1975)

Lastly, prayers and other forms of communication account for another critical element when characterising religion under the rubric of the sacramental. Scholars from different fields have long been calling out the dispute about the differences between praying and meditation, and most of all, when meditation comes as a Western practice: "meditation in Western societies is a principally secular, therapeutic, and often individualistic pursuit that is quite distinct from its historical roots in Buddhism" (Bartkowski, Acevedo and Loggerenberg 2).

However, for this research, prayers are studied as Ichazo's teachings on meditations. This communicational act looks to reduce to a minimum the cycle of thoughts, away from associations (Sierra 97-8). In this scenario, understanding prayer as a meditational form responds to channelising communication with God. Here, sincere prayers express their devotion to their supreme Father. Through meditation, moreover, a mental state develops that, to Larraín at least, means to remain in the present, emptied of contradictions: "la realidad y la divinidad son exactamente lo mismo" (*Zop* 20-4).

In the following selection, three different forms of communication are represented (Fig. 95). The first photograph shows a man alone, bent backwards over his knees in one of Arica's training known as self-meditations, and refers to an advanced posture of the "psychocalisthenic" discipline that looks to activate the centres of awareness (AricaSchool). Similarly, in the following photograph, a group of people meditate in a

room, sitting close to each other, committed to unite "individuals with their innate transcendental purpose: Enlightenment for the benefit of all" (AricaSchool). Differently, in the following two photographs, members communicate through the psychodance in front of Arica's Universal Symbol, the hexagon that harbours all divine elements of the absolute mind (AricaSchool). Dance or movements are a corporal and collective activity that promotes personal growth and develops innate qualities in individuals, such as harmony, health, or the joy of living. Its method is based on movements and music and seeks to develop affective integration while strengthening emotional bonds among the community (Puz, "Bailar Para Alcanzar la Felicidad" 63-8).

Figure 95– "Arica (40 days)", spiritual practices (1975)

These forms of communication found in Arica's series show different aspects of how the sacramental manifests as a relevant characteristic when visualising this particular religious practice. Larraín here indeed develops a documentary work, yet always shooting from his own state of contemplativeness, from Satori photography, thus visually indexing the sacramental.

3 Conclusions

Larraín's photography usage as a visual method for exploring religion has enough data and information to become a serious analysis. Such inquiry finds its potential in exploring photography as a research tool, a medium for visual characterisation, and visual indexicality. Additionally, regarding the sense of exploration and photography usages, Larraín's visual exploration of religion becomes a backbone when understanding the photographer's work on a broader scope. Through Larraín unpublished visual essay, it is possible to recreate his artistic outputs and changes towards photography. Furthermore, such exploration also promotes comprehensive visual assessments on this particular religious practice from the 70s that could have had a more significant social and visual impact if known.

To this extent, the robust quality of Larraín's material offers reliable data and evidence as to generate the ground-bases to explore and venture to inspect Larraín's

photography, including Satori, as a religious and intercommunal practice as well as to understand the photographer's inclination as an observer, participant, and researcher. Furthermore, the nature of such an archive allows to size the magnitude of its possible impact in the multiple scenarios and fields the archive intertwines: religion, photography, sociological research, and art. Therefore, its indexicality manifests, on the one hand, in the validation of its existence as a visual archive and, on the other, by a physical, material connection to its object (Doane 1-6): Satori, photography, Arica, and Larraín.

Moreover, a self-exploration on photography is also found in the work of the Chilean, exhibiting thus a detachment of the old visual conceptions that once made him one of the most outstanding photographers ever known, to give place to a state of visual contemplation. A practice, nowadays, considered not worthy for lacking those extraordinary moments. This study, nonetheless, suggests the opposite. The grandiosity of Larraín's work has remained incomplete. A critical part of his photographic exploration is related to religion (Satori) and his realisation of the downsides of commercial photography. Additionally, in Satori, Larraín also appears to use photography to index aspects of the sublime and the abstract, showing confidence in revealing that photos can indeed capture what is often thought of as uncapturable. This way, through his continuous reproduction of moments, Larraín's work on Satori and religion allows him to explore the singularity and diversity of these spectrums of life, thus helping to characterise and complete his imagery.

CONCLUSIONS

"The past is data. The future, possibilities"

Sergio Larraín

1 A synthetic reflection

In spite of the several attempts to collect and re-present Sergio Larraín's enigmatic photography, the evidence shows there is a yet unexplored aesthetic of his work.

The Chilean's visual narrative revolves around a performative and paradoxical dimension, where his photographs today enjoy the same discomfort as his. He lived a wandering life. From his youth to old age, the Chilean managed to have an alternative life, dropping out of his traditional career, hobbies, wealth, and even family. His photographs raise in a body of work that follows, indisputably, in many cases, his similar erratic style. His life was a persistent change, and so it is his visual work. That is what makes it as irresistible as unclassifiable to the cultural criticism in the first place. More than 50 years of visual production reduced to only ten of them. In this study, however, I suggest that the complexity of his work be the starting point of an autobiographical project that exteriorises and empathises with a few of the most common factors in societies: solitude, melancholy, shared imageries, and self-recognition.

The study has presented analytical tools to contextualise and understand the importance and impact of Larraín's work in photography studies and the portrayal of the Latin-American and European culture in the twentieth century.

Additionally, the study significantly and effectively spotted Larraín's trajectory and traces concerning the socio-political circulation and impact that both the photographer and his photographs had in time. It also put together his memories, encounters, and experiences to organise them as a holistic, aesthetic history of his work. Moreover, it favourably presented his trajectory and photo work as an original and methodological visual production in the photography field of Chile, Latin America and Europe. This way, those experiences and outcomes have proved to become, throughout time, collective memory, and a source of knowledge where most of the people heretofore may feel it as their own.

2 Sergio Larraín and Magnum

As the genesis to the understanding of Larraín's impact and aesthetic development, the study successfully analysed the influence and impact of Magnum Photos in the perception of Larraín's figure, which revealed a unique relationship between the role of photography within the Eurocentric interest of the 20th Century.

The visualisation of tragedy phenomenon, concerning the pain others, establishes as an institutional criterion strongly reinforced by the agency upon their photographers. The commercial value of tragedy is evidenced in the exploitation of its visual translation, which in Larraín's case is the portrayal of Latin American misery. A feature that helped project the Chilean's work into the most influential circles. Thus, this customary awareness about the political ways of seeing tragedy as a commodity resulted in one of the most common resources to deliver reality after World War II.

The study also evidenced technological development as a crucial aspect of Larraín's compelling experimentalism. The development of technological specs helped the photographer forge an aesthetic based on self-exploration and the duality between spacetime and light. Here, while Larraín experiments his possibilities of photographic expression, he transforms individuals into compositive elements within a geometrical examination. A phantasmagorical representation of things that resemble something "we" knew, which usually remains unseen until the camera's fast shutter reveals it.

Technology allows Magnum photographers, including Larraín, to explore new realities from moment's visual validation rather than the reproduction of ordinary events. In this way, the juxtaposition of artistic expression and technology confers the uniqueness of the unforeseen in photography, which this research defined as "the auratical value of technology".

The political-philosophical movement concerning freedom and authorship also provided the means for Magnum to become the most influential modern institution of visual representation. As a result, Larraín's work and photo style spread widely across the mediatic world, thus acknowledging the photographer as Magnum's photojournalist agent.

Consequently, through media long-range spreading, Magnum found a channel for the materialisation of cultural meaning through photographs, without necessarily considering the photographers' truth claim but image impact and potential to build more extraordinary narratives, revealing Magnum's participation in the materialisation of imaginaries. In this

respect, although Magnum's institutional endeavour served as a channel for Larraín's personal and professional formation, it also meant irreversible damage in the usage of his work. Thus, it would transform the photographer's humanist approach, for instance, into cruel representations of Algeria's revolution or the misery of Santiago's street children, cornering him off as the photographer of that appalling otherness.

3 Sergio Larraín and Agnès Sire

During the 90s, the French curator Agnès Sire is also evidenced as an anchoring element in developing Sergio Larraín's figure as a world-class photographer. She embodies Larraín's visual revival in the decade and articulates, for the first time, what will be heretofore his aesthetic narrative.

Valparaíso (1991) was the first publication that Sire put together along with Larraín's directions. Such publication revealed exponentially Larraín's most renowned photographic features regarding, for instance, the idea of movement and displacement, sharp angles, textures, and blurred people. However, even though from that moment on, Larraín's work begins to shape itself towards the photographer's subjectivity, it becomes also evident that the publication along with Larraín's solo exhibition in Arles thereof meant the display of a Latin American's fresher, more exotic gaze.

This newer gaze expanded rapidly, from the early 1990s to the 2000s, to the entire region, building what the study points out as "the argot of Latin America". This argot is studied as a shared language and personality about the exotic other of far-reaching communities. Like the case of Perú, Bolivia, or Chile, Larraín's photographs were widely used to reduced layers of complex societal qualities into narrowed Eurocentric approaches on wealth, political progress, and calls for human rights. Thus, the Chilean photographer's artistic attributes would lose to non-local ideals regarding the semi-unconscious pleasure of visualising social injustice in a distant other.

London 1958-59 (1998) work was also a consequence of Sire's participation in Larraín's imagery. As a counterpoint of the Latin American gaze, this book instils the same uncanny poetic of unusual perspectives, lighting, and transgressive framing. However, such publication is not presented under readings on the legacy of poverty but cultural change instead. It uses Larraín's subjectivity to honour London's aesthetic heritage in the mid-twentieth century.

Furthermore, Larraín's exhibition in Spain at the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (1999) accounts for the archetypical construction of the photographer's figure and imagery. Through the elaborated narratives of, for example, Sire, Bolaño, Monzó and Bonet, Sergio Larraín's imagery settles, determinedly, in the surroundings of magical and mystic approaches regarding how unusual the Chilean's work is.

4 A theory on Larraín's imagery

Respectively, the study deconstructed this photographic idea of "magic" in the photographer's work and contrasted it to photography's global context. Therefore, it revealed Larraín's magic imagery as a societal component to understanding the urban world that, in the 20th Century, was constantly pushed into new political scenarios and situations where newer and complex realities became an artistic and sociological highlight for many, including Larraín. Magic developed through his work as motivation and local identity development, privileging thus the apparition of people in transit as remainders of a moment's fragility.

Additionally, the representation of the dispossessed, in the case of the "Niños del Mapocho" or street children, also becomes an anchoring point in Larraín's imagery development. Despite what has been already explored thereof, its vastity remains uncertain. Poverty, despair, misery, and self-recognition are only a few of the most common elements one can easily distinguish; however, there is still room for more. The series explores the dispossessed from the revelation of the community, language, and, above all, pain. It makes critical and sensitive comments on abandonment and life on the streets. Moreover, it also allowed acknowledging one of Larraín's most intimate facets related to his dissatisfaction with the world he lived in and his deep empathy with the dispossessed.

In line with such sensitive photographic, technical exploration, to continue, this study has successfully and drastically expanded Larraín's photo imagery, reaching even what Magnum, along with Agnès Sire, have recognised to be the Chilean's most irrelevant production, Satori photography.

The endeavour to categorise such an abstract archive has succeeded in understanding and defining Larraín's photographic Satori in a broader scope related to photography, religion, and personal growth. The analysis showed that the photographer

overcame the reductionism of descriptive and documentary photography during the 70s and 80s even though his Satori work was never released, allowing the research to scale up its possibilities if it were known.

This particular work displays simplicity and celebrates the normal while intertwining sacred and symbolic elements, spirituality, and devotion as an act of pure contemplation and communication. This phenomenon underlies meaning in, sometimes, an abstract world, where the sense of reality and the aesthetic experience becomes an artistic output. In this regard, Satori work is also explored in its connection to subjective photography, contemplative and monastic photography, visual *haikus*, and photography as a poetic device, revealing thus a substantial visual exploration of photographic outcomes and techniques.

In similar terms, Larraín's unpublished material on Arica religious practices also helps open the discussion of photography usages as visual methods for exploring religion. This endeavour represents a unique aspect of the study since it elaborates a broader understanding of the Chilean's new (to the public eye) and uninvestigated work. Such an archive has proved to harbour enough data and information to become a robust and severe analysis on photography as a research tool, a medium for visual characterisation, and visual indexicality.

The visualisation of Larraín's archive becomes evidence of reliable data to expand Larraín's visual imagery greatly, including Satori, as a religious and intercommunal practice and to understand the photographer's artistic/poetic/spiritual inclinations. Additionally, it places the work of the Chilean on a broader visual range where it also intertwines concrete subjects like religion, photography, sociological research, and art.

5 A closure

In conclusion, all photography is part of the world system photography. The idea of a Eurocentric history of photography has proved to have excluded the development of the regional or peripherical histories, which was precisely the case of Larraín. Photography, within this range, tends to respond either to technical/artistic procedures or cultural analyses. In contrast, photography is understood by an unshakable local specificity in places like India, Africa, or South America.

Through Larraín’s photography, we can wonder about the possibilities of the photographic practices under aesthetic, sociological, and phenomenological analyses. Most importantly, his photography helps understand a considerable part of Latin American and, above all, Chilean aesthetic and cultural history from a local gaze.

The revealing of the text and image dimension in the Chilean's work becomes proof of another missing piece of Larraín's puzzle: the misconception of sociocultural representations and imageries under the prevalence of the Western canon in photography reading.

Sergio Larraín has been one of the few Latin American international photographers recognised for his artistry over his photo reportages. Nonetheless, Magnum Photos has almost exclusively addressed the most significant readings of his work heretofore, which has truncated the possibilities of a local reconstruction.

Larraín's subjects of matter, nevertheless, tended to be people under utter abandonment or in transit. It did not matter whether their conditions were pushed by economic factors, geography, or even merely indifference. One way or another, they were all living apart from this extraordinarily long yet centralised society.

His collection of myths, especially those belonging to spiritual practices, translates into the persistence of technical challenges regarding composing with untraditional elements, fostering surrealist realms. This feature has become a brand or a signature of his work. Larraín's visual heritage seems elusive since all the agents interacting in the scene are generally in constant evanescence. His images are not closed either. The people in them are often moving away, elusive and ephemeral, as resistant to being captured, as Larrain himself.

The humanist side of Larraín reveals by the same evanescence on which, as imminent as time, it cannot be avoided. It seems that time and space are not something that Larraín is trying to challenge, as Barthes claims about the role of photography, but to rescue fragments of life itself in time and space. An intimate practice translated by his personal context of avoiding his privileged upper-class condition probably, in which he also felt shy, invisible, even excluded in some otherness. Hence, the visual rescue of the forgotten or uncovered objects may also be a rescue of himself from a troubled and contradictory life.

Larraín's discomfort and alienation continue dwelling in the many cities he once looked at. Over time, they have become obligatory reading for contemporary Chilean and Latin American photography. Larraín's pursuit of himself and the outside world intertwined his older aesthetic conceptions of the visual with the new ones. They thus evidence a rich inventory of symbolic material that further local inspections are worth consideration. Because even though Larraín had a Latin American input to see the world, he nonetheless had a European output in his photographic production, and both complement each other in embracing a holistic visual exploration of the 20th century collective imagery.

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