

# RIVER RAIL



MAILINGLIST

---

River Rail

January 18th, 2018

## The Go-Between

Dear David,

It's been a little over a month since you replied to my initial letter. As I let you know in my brief thanks-for-your-reply email, your refusal to accept my propositions came as a (surprising) relief. What you don't know is that, since then, I embarked on the task of fictionalizing you.

Originally, I wanted to steer clear of speaking on behalf of the people and things whose stories I want to see televised, so I rejected the early suggestion by my advisors that I should write scripts to get the web series going. As I described in my previous letter to you, I argued instead for a more experimental process of ethnofiction filmmaking, advocating for casual interviews, playful reenactments and analytical editing techniques as my chosen methodology. This process has already advanced the web series in many ways, and has allowed it to draw on factual interactions as its basis (no matter how these might be later reimaged or reinterpreted). But your unwillingness to be interviewed has forced my hand; I feel obliged to assume authorship in a way I initially thought was unnecessary, to develop a form of scriptwriting to keep you alive as a character. I'm writing this letter as just that: scriptwriting. So even though it is addressed to you, I won't be sending it, because it's not simply a letter, but an attempt to unearth your seminal<sup>1</sup> role in the ecopolitics of Tierra del Fuego, and to understand why I find your story so compelling.

It is certainly nothing new to say that every documentary practice fundamentally involves elements of fiction,<sup>2</sup> but to fictionalize an interview with you requires that I confess and measure up my own contextualising gaze. I've tackled this through a series of self-reflexive exercises which I'll describe, but before I do I want to quote Michael Taussig, an Australian anthropologist who teaches at Columbia University and whose class, "Anthropology as Avant-Garde Art Form" (on the likeness between ethnographic and artistic strategies), impacted me as a young master's student in 2003. You might have heard of him: he is known in his discipline for his unconventional work on shamanism, colonialism, and mimesis, but he's useful here for another reason. He writes on exactly the procedure of self-contextualization that I'm attempting to undertake here, arguing it should be one that "admits of our presence, our scrutinizing gaze, our social relationships and our enormously confused understandings of history and what is meant by history."<sup>3</sup> This, he says: "is not autobiography. This is not self-indulgence. It is neither of these things because first it opens up to a science of mediations & neither Self nor Other but mutual co-implicatedness & and second because it opens up the colonial nature of the intellectual relationship to which the contextualized other has for so long been subjected."<sup>4</sup>

As a privileged, white, American male, you are not a common subject of the contextualising gaze &frac34;in an ethnographical sense&frac34; and though you have not been exempt from scrutiny, my intention, as expressed in my first letter, was to have a dialogue with you, a studio visit in fact. Since I did really want to meet you in person, David, and as I still believe that a conversation between the two of us would have resulted in some good, I decided—despite your refusal—not to drop my impulse of interviewing you. Inspired partly by Chris Kraus’s fictocritical novel, *I Love Dick*, in which she insists on writing letters to a man she calls Dick, who never, or hardly ever, responds, I’ve gone ahead and interviewed you.<sup>5</sup>

How you may ask? Well, aided by fiction. Fictional role-playing in fact: asking three people to allow me to interview them as if they were you. My only direction to the David stand-ins was that they reply spontaneously, not pausing to give much thought to what you might say, simply responding. To assist them with this direction, I described an exercise fashioned by the psychiatrist Adrianna Schnake, as detailed in her book *The Voice of the Symptom*, in which she gets her sickly patients to interview their diseased organ. Encouraging them to speak “organically,” or put in other words, in a visceral manner, Schnake’s suggestion intends to bring to consciousness what might not be in the field of awareness of the patient.<sup>6</sup> The method, which evolved from an elaborate understanding of psychodrama, performativity, neurology, psychiatry, philosophy, physiology, and Chinese medicine (just to name a few of its many underlying disciplinary references) is a sophisticated one and I certainly am not claiming to know how to deliver a therapeutic experience of this kind. But by invoking this exercise I simply place emphasis on my interest in performativity and my developing curatorial practice of ‘speaking with’ things that seemingly don’t talk back (organs, people, and non-humans).

I recorded the interviews. You won’t be surprised to hear that they are bizarre, and it’s very unlikely that they sound anything like you. However, receiving responses to my questions helped me come to terms with three critical issues that I now see as defining my curatorial framing of the web series, namely: maleness, whiteness, and wealth.

If you were looking at me right now David, you might think: “Well, she seems to share some of these traits” and you’re right, I do. I am very masculine, and though I identify as a woman, I feel quite man-like. Certainly I can behave like a man or show traits commonly attributed to men: I can be highly rational, over-competitive, and self-centered. As the first-born child of an extremely functional and ambitious man, an Olympic athlete in fact, I was trained to perform this nascent masculinity from an early age. This may risk sounding harsh, except it wasn’t: my education was very loving, and today, I continue to take pride in the discipline, determination, and logic that I learned from my father. But there’s also a flipside. An unexpected result of my upbringing can be measured by the strong aversion I’ve developed to the patriarchal history of men like you (and he, my father) who venture to far off lands to initiate Heroic projects of conquest.

I made the association between you and my father in the first play interview, a conversation between the cinematographer of the web series, Benjamín Echazarreta, and myself. Like you, my father makes investments in foreign countries and sets up companies that utilize natural resources on other people’s land in “good faith.” Both of you are so steeped in your masculinity that you are condemned to unreflexively enact it without ever noticing how the mastery over nature, women, and others—performed by those of your gender—is predicated on radical exclusion and hyperseparation.<sup>7</sup>

So, from this first play-interview I distilled the following curatorial principle: mind difference, remaining vigilant to exclusionary dualisms. This is really an ecofeminist frame, or as Val Plumwood called it, “a thorough grounding for a feminist environmental philosophy,”<sup>8</sup> and as such, an essential foundation for the web series *Distancia*.

The second interlocutor was Bill Hannan, my neighbor. As a young man, in the late ‘40s, Bill joined the Victorian teaching service and later led the educational reform revolution, which he called the Great Expansion.<sup>9</sup> Aside from being an educator, activist, writer, and father, Bill is also known for having co-founded an income sharing commune with his wife, Lorna Hannan, also an academic, and a group of approximately sixteen other people, all of whom shared the Hannan’s keen sense of social justice and culture. Asking Bill the questions that I would have asked you provided me a lesson in the ways in which ambition for power and money gets instilled in the young, and particularly in young men, through the secondary schooling system that equates skill with the accrual of goods. Bringing to the process a sense that your own character in this regard might have been set by your schooling, Bill—an educator—helped me understand why so many of the affluent explorers of Tierra del Fuego could have expressed the awfully mistaken view that the “skill level” of the Fuegians was inferior to their own. Often, I’ve mused quizzically over the conclusions their travels so quickly solidified within them. Take as an example the following incongruent statement scribbled by Darwin in his journal while voyaging on the HMS Beagle:

The perfect equality among the individuals composing the Fuegian tribes must for a long time retard their civilization...In Tierra del Fuego, until some chief shall arise with power sufficient to secure any acquired advantage, such as the domesticated animals, it seems scarcely possible that the political state of the country can be improved. At present, even a piece of cloth given to one is torn into shreds and distributed; and no one individual becomes richer than another. On the other hand, it is difficult to understand how a chief can arise till there is property of some sort by which he might manifest his superiority and increase his power.

I believe, in this extreme part of South America, man exists in a lower state of improvement than in any other part of the world. The South Sea Islanders, of the two races inhabiting the Pacific, are comparatively civilized. The Esquimaux, in his subterranean hut, enjoys some of the comforts of life, and in his canoe, when fully equipped, manifests much skill. Some of the tribes of Southern Africa, prowling about in search of roots, and living concealed on the wild and arid plains, are sufficiently wretched. The Australian, in the simplicity of the arts of life, comes nearest the Fuegian: he can, however, boast of his boomerang, his spear and throwing-stick, his method of climbing trees, of tracking animals, and of hunting. Although the Australian may be superior in acquirements, it by no means follows that he is likewise superior in mental capacity: indeed, from what I saw of the Fuegians when on board and from what I have read of the Australians, I should think the case was exactly the reverse.<sup>10</sup>

I can now stomach these crass Darwinian descriptions with a sliver of hope, because if what Bill says is true—that the colonial, capitalist relationship between mastery over nature, wealth and property gets instilled through education—then perhaps there is something that can be done for future generations? Maybe racism and speciesism can stop being taught? Maybe the malformed “market individual” that you embody doesn’t have to be the character type endorsed by our education systems. But, I’m not going to take on the education system, or not just yet. I’m only thinking about how a *serialized*, ecofeminist account of the human geography of Tierra del Fuego can counter the mythification of characters like yours. I’m imagining that by the power of fiction your type can be dismantled; ‘David’ re-imagined counters the mythical David, fashioned by his own biography.

I hope it's clear that I don't want to vilify you, David, I'm simply trying to get to know your make-up. For the sake of not coming off as biased I will cite here a description of your character from the book *Taking Back Eden: Eight Environmental Cases that Changed the World* written by Oliver Houck, a professor of Law at Tulane University:

Syre was used to taking chances, and winning them all. Tall, soft-spoken, and personally charming, even his adherents used the word “aggressive” when speaking of his ventures. Syre had fought his way back from polio at an early age to a series of investments that put him, then in his early fifties, at the top of a \$450 million enterprise that stretched from Alaska to the tip of South America. He started out in real estate by building a 176-unit condominium complex near Glacier Park, then a shopping mall in his hometown of Bellingham, Washington. He purchased “at fire sale price” large chunks of downtown Denver, Vancouver, Ketchikan, and Anchorage. He opened a business park named Cordate and a nearby resort called Semiahmoo. He did nothing by halves here, not even the names.<sup>11</sup>

My response to this comes in the form of a second curatorial principle for the web series: it is not-for-profit. The web series sides with the stories of people struggling to resist the destruction of nature and advocating for a dissociation of the notion of nature from that of resource. For these matters to transpire I acknowledge that a coherent rule of conduct for the process of capturing these ecological struggles is that they be told without marketable ambitions. My own embedment in both social and ecological communities in Tierra del Fuego is founded on a not-for-profit ethics. This not-for-profit framework (which for years I referred to as an ethics of the “useless”<sup>12</sup>) has proved essential for the advancement of non-instrumental narratives of contemporary environmental issues and for the explication of such key concepts as friendship, acting in solidarity with, caring for others for their own sake, and recognizing the other's intrinsic value.<sup>13</sup>

As you know, it was Ivette Martínez, a Fuegian local and dear collaborator of mine, who suggested I get in touch with you, for she had hoped that you and I could have met. She believes that if you and I were to have met we would have gotten along, and she imagined that I would have been a good go-between the Chilean stakeholders—who continue to be skeptical about your current Fuegian projects—and yourself. Naturally, I asked her to play interlocutor too. She read, and was critical of, the first letter I sent you; saying that I laid all my cards on the table at once or as she put it: “tiraste toda la carne a la parrilla” (which literally translates to “you threw all the meat on the barbeque”); her way of critiquing my lack of “strategy.”<sup>14</sup>

Conversations with Ivette are always eye opening. As an informant, she has taught me so much about Chilean political history; illuminating, with her first-hand experience, the ideals and real battles that she and her *compañeros* fought during the military dictatorship. Her participation in the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) still informs her thinking (though she exhibits sharp critical distance too) and her grassroots community organization skills (which helped take your corporation to court) shine bright when we are doing fieldwork in Tierra del Fuego. Nevertheless, in our interview she drew a very clear distinction between you and another American businessman, conservationist, and philanthropist, Douglas Tompkins, someone with whom I had previously equated you. Both of you white Northerners investing in far off Tierra del Fuego, strike me as the contemporary version of the conqueror who masks his intentions in the guise of environmentalism and social responsibility. Though Ivette had ill words to say about Tompkins, she made a different, more sympathetic case for you, stating that although you are wealthy, your working-class background makes you a more simple and honest man. I took her point, but as I learned through interviewing you via Bill, it's not just being born wealthy that instills in men the

view that they can master the world. Alongside education too, there is, of course, also the privilege you've known due to your whiteness. Certainly, you enjoy the benefits of belonging to the dominating race? Is this something you are aware of?

Peggy McIntosh writes, "I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege." Later she adds, "I have begun in an untouched way to ask what it is like to have white privilege, and I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing each day, but 'about' which I was meant to remain oblivious."<sup>15</sup>

Often I am asked: "Where does your accent come from? To which I reply, "Chile," knowing by now to expect the all too common follow up question, "But you don't look Chilean. You must have some German blood? Or other European ancestry?"

Perhaps I do, but to the best of my knowledge I am mestiza, born into a family that can't quite track its "pure" lineage back to European settlers, though some do litter our family history and make my skin white. I am not making a case for my indigeneity here—I'd probably have to get my DNA tested to prove it anyhow<sup>16</sup>—because the stories of racial mixing are still very obscured in my clan. But I can't avoid queering questions of identity, nationalism, and subjectivity in light of this personal experience that repeats itself so often enough in my life to make me precociously aware of the issue of skin privilege.

During my pre-teens, I coped with this recurring, unsettling question of why I didn't resemble my ethnicity by imagining I was a chameleon in disguise that changed her skin color to blend in. In my teens, I learned that "blending in," or being white, meant that I could go unnoticed. I began to profit from not standing out, from knowing I'd be let off the hook from all the privilege of looking the part of a normal white girl, nondescript and harmless. I'm inclined to think it was at this stage that I started practicing the art of the go-between, because I consciously toyed with this "ability" to fit in, actively accessing spaces of white privilege, while also becoming aware of the inequitable confidence that this ability gave me to walk into non-white spaces. As my understanding of the privileges and discontents of my unstable identity matures, and I try to forge a more responsible analysis of how to conduct myself in the world, I'm awestruck by how the current, white, patriarchal world order is no more than five hundred years old on the American continent and that it was only one hundred and eighty-five years ago, on December 17th, 1832, that Darwin wrote this biased entry into his travel journal:

Having now finished with Patagonia and the Falkland Islands, I will describe our first arrival in Tierra del Fuego. A little after noon we doubled Cape St. Diego, and entered the famous straight of Le Maire... While entering we were saluted in a manner becoming the inhabitants of this savage land. A group of Fuegians partly concealed by the entangled forests were perched on a wild point overhanging the sea; and as we passed by, they sprang up and waving their tattered cloaks sent forth a loud and sonorous shout. The savages followed the ship, and just before dark we saw their fire, and again heard their wild cry...A single glance at the landscape was sufficient to show me how wildly different it was from anything I had ever beheld. At night it blew a gale of wind, and heavy squalls from the mountains swept past us...

When we were on shore the party looked rather alarmed, but continued talking and making gestures with great rapidity. It was without exception the most curious and interesting spectacle I ever beheld: I could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilized man; it is greater than

between a wild and domesticated animal, inasmuch in man there is a greater power of improvement. The chief spokesman was old, and appeared to be the head of the family; the three others were powerful young men, about six feet high...Their only garment consists of a mantle of guanaco skin, with the wool outside; their skin is a dirty coppery red color.

The old man had a fillet of white feathers tied round his head... His face was crossed by two broad traverse bars; one, painted bright red, reached from ear to ear and included the upper lip; the other, white like chalk, extended above and parallel to the first, so that even eyelids were thus colored. The other two men were ornamented by streaks of black powder, made of charcoal. The party altogether closely resembled the devils which come on stage in plays like *Der Freischutz*.

Their very attitudes were abject, and their expression of their countenances distrustful, surprised and startled...The language of these people, according to our notions, scarcely deserves to be called articulate. Captain Cook has compared it to a man clearing his throat, but certainly no European ever cleared his throat with so many hoarse, guttural, and clicking sounds.

They are excellent mimics: as often as we coughed or yawned, or made any odd motion they immediately imitated us. They could repeat with perfect correctness each word in any sentence we addressed them, and they remembered them for some time... All savages appear to possess, to an uncommon degree, this power of mimicry.<sup>17</sup>

David, would you agree that by not accepting my request for a studio visit you chose distance? That by not accepting to participate in the proposition to have your version of the story entangled with that of other Fuegians in the web series you chose to distinguish yourself from those very Fuegians whose lands beguile you? I am driven to think this is so, and that you—probably in fear of being mimicked—decided to enact your individualistic freedom, your right to privacy, by actively ignoring the preconditions of your privileged existence. Since your refusal to be interviewed means you're not going to contest this assumption, I am left to analyze the statements you make in the YouTube trailer of your own film project, *The Peace Trail*, to figure you out,

When you move through this valley you will experience a landscape that has been untouched by humans as if the ice has just left. Guanacos are abundant here. Very, very healthy animals. Very unusual animals. Birds with long special beaks and big wing spans so that they can lift in this harsh environment. I've seen as many as twenty or thirty condors in one place in this valley. And they soar and you feel like they are going to lift you into heaven. And then as you move through the valley to the spiritual area which is the headwaters of the San Pablo, that is where the owners had their Hain celebrations and those celebrations are particular just to the people, the native people, of the area.<sup>18</sup>

That ludicrous first statement, and the ones that follow too, strike me as condescending as those penned by Darwin. Perhaps they are worse, given the alternate perspectives now available. But before getting into the thick of it, who are you talking to David? You clarified in your response to my introductory letter that your plans are to create land art, not an eco-tourism trail. I can only assume that by land art you mean artwork in the tradition of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* or Richard Long's *A Line Made by Walking*. If that is the case, then is the trailer to the film that documents your making of the *Peace Trail* addressed to someone like me, a curator and potentially a prime land art enthusiast? You must admit it's hard for me to believe that; your descriptions could only appeal to the most naive of tourists: romantics whose desire for the "untouched" is an active choice to remain oblivious to the genocide of

indigenous Fuegians at the hands of sheep farmers and blind to the radical environmental effects that those very farms have had on the landscape.

But, back to your own desire for privacy, if we can still call it that. I am still going to have to call you out on your statements, despite your unwillingness to enter an in-studio curatorial dialogue with me about the *Peace Trail*; not only because they make me certain that your white privilege blinds you to the framework you endorse (that you are the first ever human to walk the landscape of Tierra del Fuego!), but because of the even more troubling way that through that statement you bury the history of your own entrepreneurial logging of the island. Are you wanting us to forget that your logging company's demise happened thanks to a group of fervent environmental activists who took you to court in the name of the constitutional right of all peoples to live in an environment free of pollutants?<sup>19</sup> Your film trailer, and by extension your land art piece, oppresses the complex ecopolitical struggles that makes Tierra del Fuego such a unique place—the very complexities that I believe should be highlighted, not entombed once again.

To sum up my critique of your trailer: firstly, you make yourself out be the lone adventurer who discovers untouched country. Then, by crudely describing the guanaco, you claim a naturalist interest in Tierra del Fuego. Moving on to exhibit your missionary streak, you read the bird's flight as a gateway to heaven. Finally, in an incoherent turn a couple of fumbling sentences later, you revive the very 'natives' you disregarded, reanimating them, as specters, as owners even (which they themselves never claimed to be) of a reduced area of the island, in order to advance your romantic concept of the spiritual/heavenly qualities of Tierra del Fuego. By ending with the clumsy description of the Hain as a celebration, you ultimately personify the amateur ethnographer who ignorantly interprets a sophisticated cultural ceremony as a party. In a mere few sentences you align yourself with all the colonial forefathers of the archipelago.

You are the archetype of the conqueror. From now on you are no longer David, but the Archetype. Tierra del Fuego has for too long been a stage for men like you "who conceive of themselves as the self-contained center of their needs and desires" in whose projects "there is no non-eliminable reference to the welfare or projects of others."<sup>20</sup> In response to this, I declare my third curatorial principle: no representation of Tierra del Fuego is complete without acknowledging the sovereignty of Fuegians, the brutal genocide to which they were subjected, and its consequences which continue to be of great significance for those concerned with the ecological custodianship of TDF.

A couple of days after leaving TDF, Darwin wrote once again about the Fuegians:

Young and old, men and children, never ceased repeating the word "yammer schooner," which means "give me." After pointing to almost every object, one after the other, even to the buttons on our coats, and saying their favourite word in as many intonations as possible, they would then use it in a neuter sense, and vacantly repeat "yammer schooner." After yammerschoonering for any article very eagerly, they would by a simple artifice point to their young women or little children, as much as to say, "If you will not give it to me, surely you will to such as these."<sup>21</sup>

This constant 'yammerschoonering', translated by Darwin as a plea for goods and trinkets, became so odious to him that he later added:

On leaving some place we have said to each other (he is referring to Captain FitzRoy here), "Thank Heaven, we have at last fairly left these wretches!", when one more faint halloo from an all-powerful voice, heard at a prodigious distance, would reach our ears, and clearly could we distinguish—"yammer schooner".

What Darwin failed to understand was that this call was a plea not for goods but for recognition: as missionary Thomas Bridges later learned, whilst living amongst Fuegians, the proper translation for 'yammer schooner' was not "give me", but "be kind to me."<sup>22</sup>

Darwin, I mean David, I know I asked a lot from you in my initial address and that you found my proposal unstable, unbound from any legible cultural order that made any sense to you.<sup>23</sup> I suppose that my own "yammerschoonering" even irritated you, reminded you of your otherness, and finally also cast me as a panhandler. I am guessing this because I argued that if you agreed to entangle yourself with the project of televising TDF's human geography you would be drawn into a network of devotion. A network that would require that you become a producer of the web series, alongside everyone else "authoring" it. Others who have read the first letter I sent you have pointed out that you probably took it as a petition for financial support, a cry for a button, which it was, but only in so far as you would come to care for, and so value, the experience of mutuality and difference that I outlined as the basis for the making of the web series.

It's so telling that kin, kinship, and kindness all share the same Old English genus *cynd*, because when I imagine the Fuegians that Darwin describes as pointing to everything, even buttons, I see them asking Darwin to recognize the kinship between himself, them and all things; asking Darwin not for charity, but for him to consider being kind, kind of like them even.<sup>24</sup>

## Notes

Seminal is a word that feminists tend to reject (for its obvious associations to semen and semen's influential power) and often replace with the term germinal. I explicitly use it here because I'll make the point later that your actions, which have strongly influenced later developments in Tierra del Fuego, predominately derive from your maleness.

Trinh T. Minh-Ha said this in her book, *Framer Framed*, referencing how interviews, which occupying a "dominant role in documentary practices", are "actually sophisticated devices of fiction." Minh-ha is a germinal figure for me (I've said this before, but I don't tire of acknowledging the female voices that influence me) and her films, especially *Viet Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, 1989, set a precedent for the kind of work I dare to do. Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Framer Framed* (New York & London: Routledge, 1992), 193.

Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 44-45.

Ibid.

In the afterword to the 2016 edition of Kraus's classic book, *I Love Dick*, Joan Hawkins writes, "When Chris finally does give the letters to Dick, "things get pretty weird" (162). But by that time, the letters have become an art form in and of themselves, a means to something that has almost nothing to do with Dick." I suppose this might be the case with this letter, but only time will tell. Joan Hawkins "Afterwords" in *I Love Dick* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2016), 251.

Adriana Schnake, "Enfoque HSE," Anchimalen Centro de Terapia y Desarrollo, accessed May 28, 2017, [http://www.anchimalen.cl/sitio/?page\\_id=571](http://www.anchimalen.cl/sitio/?page_id=571).

The Australian ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood postulates that "the polarizing treatment of gender characteristics in Western culture provides a good model" of the "dualistic construal of difference" that "aims to maximize the number, scope, or significance of distinguishing characteristics," this is not done "in a random way, but usually by classifying characteristics as belonging exclusively, as far as possible, to one side or the other, thus setting up sets of complementary qualities formed through exclusion and denial of overlap. Thus the master claims for himself reason, contemplation and higher pursuits, and disdains the slave's merely manual occupations, while the slave is forced to exclude from his or her makeup the characteristics of the master, to eschew intellect and become submissive and lacking in initiative. These very qualities then confirm the slave's different nature and fate, for she or he is "a slave by nature." Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), 50.

Heading to both difference and continuity is a basic premise of environmental feminism or as Plumwood calls it: a fight against the "standpoint of mastery" which she argues involves "seeing the other as radically separate and inferior, the background to the self as foreground, as one whose existence is secondary, derivative or peripheral to that of the self or center, and whose agency is denied or minimized." Ibid., 2.

Bill Hannan, *The Best of Times: The Story of the great secondary schooling expansion* (Northcote, Victoria: Lexis, 2009).

Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle* (New York: Dutton, 1967), 111.

Oliver A. Houck, *Taking Back Eden: Eight Environmental Cases That Changed the World* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2010), 153.

You can read an essay I published on 'uselessness' in the periodical, *Beyond the End*, that accompanied the exhibition by the same name at the Kadist Art Foundation in Paris in 2014 by following this link: <http://ensayosterradelfuego.net/periodical/kiosko-timaukel/>, but in brief,



what I argue for in that text is for the redundancy of art and how art's supposed uselessness can provide an a framework for creating alternatives to relations founded on objectification, commodification, and abuse.

Plumwood, 154.

She has since revoked her critique, stating that she thinks that what I did was "decent". I'm not sure decent is what I was going for but, in hind sight, I think that my 'unstrategic' strategy resembles the logic of the potlach. Described by the French ethnologist, Marcel Mauss, in his book *The Gift*, potlach refer to a set of exchange practices in tribal societies characterized by "total prestations", so a system of "gift giving with political, religious, kinship and economic implications." Maurice Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996), 147–61.

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," in *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg (New York: Worth Publishers, 2004), 188.

Since writing this second letter to you (in May 2017) I have had DNA testing and proudly discovered that 15% of my heritage is Native American.

Darwin, 194-195.

Michael Harris, *The Peace Trail* (Baby Wild Films, 2017), minute: 2:59. Online video viewed on April 8, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/186143047>

The court case I am referring to here is the well-known "Trillium Case", otherwise termed as "the right to a healthy environment," decided upon by the Supreme Court of Chile on March 19, 1997, Decision No.2.732-96, available at <http://www.elaw.org/content/chile-trillium-march-19-1997-espa%C3%B1ol>

Plumwood, 152.

Darwin, 234.

Anne Chapman, *European Encounters with the Yamana People of Cape Horn, Before and After Darwin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 194.

I was privy to a trail of emails in which you asked Michael Harris to ask Kiko Anderson (Ivette Martínez's partner) what my intentions were. And who I was. It's possible that even though I explicitly laid out all my intentions (including telling you of my childhood) you still had doubts about me but I think that if my first letter came off as slippery it is because I was crossing boundaries; identifying with you, while also claiming difference. I took the risk of critiquing you instead of attempting to charm you. Not for the sake of insulting you, but in an effort to set up a less hierarchical relationship in which I could be blunt with you. I defied the convention of skirting around issues of taste and alterity to get at a new sort of communication, to ignite a mode of conversation in which each of us could feel free to express our ideas, even if these are not of the pleasing kind. I am not necessarily well versed in this form of confrontational communication, but I do hope to see it grow through this very project of televising Fuegian stories.

The feminist cultural-theorist, Donna Haraway, has a lot to say about kind and kin. I'll delve further into her theories when I begin to script write with the wind of Tierra del Fuego, but I suggest that you read her as soon as you can.

## CONTRIBUTOR

### Camila Marambio

**Camila Marambio** is a PhD candidate in Curatorial Practice at Monash and received her MA in Curatorial Studies from Columbia University as well as a Master of Experiments in Art and Politics from Science Po in Paris. She was previously the Artistic Director at Centro Cultural Matucana 100 in Santiago, CL, curator in residence at Kadist Art Foundation, and has organized exhibitions at De Appel arts centre in Amsterdam and Exit Art in New York. She is the founder and director of the nomadic research program *Ensayos*, which focuses on the political geography of Tierra del Fuego.

Get the *Rail* delivered to your doorstep.  
Start Your Subscription Today!