Rhizomatic Writings on the Wall:
Graffiti and Street Art in Cochabamba, Bolivia,
as Nomadic Visual Politics

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Politicized graffiti and street art are omnipresent in the Andean city of Cochabamba, Bolivia, invading stratified urban spaces and overwriting official speech and symbols. This article aims to build on scholarship that understands graffiti and street art as a potent creative form of recovering space, building counterpublics, and challenging structures of exclusion and oppression. A Deleuzean rhizomatic approach is used to investigate the visual politics of graffiti and street art as they travel nomadically through Cochabamba, breaching exclusionary public gridded space and legacies of colonialism. Analyzing photographs taken in Cochabamba during 2012 as a case study, this article argues that graffiti acts subversively to write through, between, and over dominant images and narratives in the city.

Keywords: graffiti, street art, nomadic visual politics, rhizome, Bolivia

Cochabamba, a metropolis located in the Andean region of Bolivia, was built within a long history of colonialism and discrimination against rural indigenous peoples. During the period of Spanish colonization of the Andean region of Latin America, colonizers overlaid their visions of ideal urban organization over existing indigenous structures, constructing colonial cities that reflected their civilizing objectives and priorities of order and control (Goldstein, 2004). Such is the case for Cochabamba, a city with colonial roots whose organization reproduces "the hierarchical racial and political-economic organization of society itself" and whose design was meant "to be highly ordered, regular, and governable" (Goldstein, 2004, p. 6). Maps of Cochabamba demonstrate the way these ideals are manifested in its system of grids and radiating streets, which navigate nearby hills with purposeful curves and intersecting lines. Yet, the actual living population of the city does not always adhere to the strictures of city planning, and as rural–urban migration has increased in Cochabamba over the last century the city has been altered by extensive informal economies interwoven into its centers and unofficial settlement patterns at the city's edges (Goldstein, 2004; O'Hare & Rivas, 2007).

In Bolivia, state neoliberal reform and modernization policies in the last half of the twentieth century spurred a wave of migration from rural to metropolitan areas, an increase that has continued into the new millennium (Goldstein, 2004; O'Hare & Rivas, 2007; Shultz, 2008). Further, the distribution of

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Date submitted: 2016–10–25

resources and income levels is highly stratified in Bolivian urban populations, with the richest 20% earning over half of the income and the poorest 20% earning just 4% (O'Hare & Rivas, 2007). In the past two decades, Cochabamba has witnessed a surge in civil unrest, political upheavals, and grassroots activism in response to the tensions between the Bolivian state, urban White and Mestizo elites, and indigenous peoples and other historically marginalized groups (Goldstein, 2004; Shultz, 2008). Perhaps the most well-known and influential manifestations of these tensions was the Cochabamba Water Revolt in 2000, when over the course of several months protesters and community-based organizations took over the city in response to the privatization of the city's water supply, an act that disproportionately harmed the indigenous and peasant communities organized around the city's margins (Assies, 2003; Shultz, 2008). The defeat of fraudulent politicians, unresponsive bureaucracy, and international private interests through popular unrest has had a lasting impact on Cochabamba's daily political life and consciousness (Assies, 2003).

Amidst an urban environment of sociopolitical tensions and patterns of popular protest, graffiti and street art are ubiquitous in the city. Stencils, paint, and posters cover Cochabamba wall-to-wall, speaking disapproval of the city's oppressive past and present loudly. The striking omnipresence of Cochabambino street writing and artwork is the departure point of this article, a phenomenon observed and photographed by the author during a trip hosted by a nonprofit organization. Scholars and theorists have tackled graffiti in a variety of ways, ranging from romantic retellings of subcultural activities to reaffirmations of its deviance. The global presence of graffiti in a variety of urban settings has led scholars to question why this writing is happening, what it is in reaction to, and what it is achieving or hoping to achieve (Carrington, 2009; Halsey & Young, 2006; McCormick, Schiller, & Schiller, 2010).

This article aims at investigating the significance of graffiti art in the specific location of Cochabamba, Bolivia by asking what it does to the city's landscape within its social, political, and historical context. In hopes of avoiding speculation on possible intentions of the artists, or of making assumptions about the effects on the city's inhabitants, the guiding question is rather what this political street art and graffiti does to the city itself. How can we conceptualize its pervasive presence in this urban landscape in relation to its history and continued legacy of colonialism and racialized, gendered, and classed discrimination? And how might this phenomenon inform understandings of subversive forms of visual political production? To answer these questions, the analysis focuses on photographs of graffiti taken in May and June of 2012 in Cochabamba, constituting an archive which functions as evidence for this article's chief argumentative suppositions. These photographs were taken as a visitor to Cochabamba, an image-gathering project that followed the author everywhere as she wandered the city with a camera in search of graffiti yet to be discovered. The act of photographing these urban artworks was driven by an intuition that this unending graffiti must have an impact on the city, and, although unsure as to what its importance was, that its spectacular visibility had meaning beyond the art's explicit aesthetics and messages. Placing this archive into conversation with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notions of nomadic art and rhizomatic becoming, this article argues that Cochabambino graffiti subverts the sedimented, hierarchical grids of the planned city. Politicized stencils, posters, and artwork create solidarities and connections with groups struggling for recognition, whereas even the most apolitical aestheticized graffiti transgresses the strictures of Cochabamba's ordered spaces and colonizing impulses. Moving nomadically through a striated urban landscape, Cochabambino graffiti smooths space, opens new potentialities for movement, and imagines fields of inclusivity.

Methodology

The graffiti photographed was predominately from central Cochabamba and its suburb of Tiquipaya. The method of gathering the images was a combination of directed sampling and accidental encounters while traversing the city and its proximate areas. Initially the author took photographs of graffiti as she found it while walking through the city's streets, an intuitive exploration that began in its central locations. At times sampling was guided by the author noting large murals and pieces while traveling, and later revisiting the area to take photographs and explore the immediate surroundings. Eventually, the sampling method became more directed by a process of questioning and following the recommendations of Cochabambinos, a sort of snowball approach for finding areas that were particularly saturated with graffiti. Images were also intentionally taken in the city's most heavily traversed thoroughfares, including central plazas, churches, shopping districts, and markets. One area of special note that was targeted due to it being a popular location visited by a cross section of socioeconomic groups was the city's football stadium and its surrounding area, which were covered end-to-end with graffiti. The method of gathering graffiti images was driven by the desire to take a thorough survey of Cochabamba's most trafficked and public spaces, as these tend to be the areas targeted most by graffiti artists with various styles, media, and intents (a pattern that has been documented in graffiti literature worldwide).[1]

The methodology for analyzing these graffiti images follows Victoria Carrington's (2009) approach, a research design centered on her collection of photographs and experiences of the graffiti she encountered while walking in several metropolitan centers. As in Carrington's work, this article considers graffiti to be a sociocultural text that can be mapped "as material artifacts of the dynamic of social life and contestation in urban sites" (p. 411). Similarly, the collection of images from Cochabamba is approached here as a photographic archive of artifacts, and examined in relation to the traces they carry of the complex and volatile social tensions in the city. However, Carrington applies her method in cities in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, and thus her approach is shaped around her exploration of uniquely Western manifestations of graffiti culture. Graffiti culture is global in its scope, but numerous scholars have described the ways in which the dynamics of specific locales factor into the variety of graffiti manifestations (Ganz, 2004; Schacter, 2013). Thus, Carrington's approach might tend to obscure place-based differences between cities, states, and regions of the world in favor of portraying a horizontally globalized subculture. In order to counteract this possibility, this article continually historicizes the graffiti in question as an expression of global culture, but also as a distinctive manifestation of local politics, geography, economies, and social structures. Carrington's approach provides a useful means of accounting for the intimate experience of walking through a city and coming into close contact with graffiti in often surprising ways. Thus, her experience-based approach is used in this article to provide a thicker analysis than an exclusively textual approach offers, as well as to sketch a more complex understanding of the ways that graffiti interacts with and alters the shape of the city itself.

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[1] For more information about these trends, see Ganz, 2004; Lee, 2013; Macdonald, 2001; McDonald, 2013; McCormick et al., 2010; Schacter, 2013.

The author photographed graffiti wherever she found it, creating a large archive of hundreds of images to pore over and analyze. The writings, paintings, stencils, etc. that might be considered 'street art' were overlapped with markings that might be distinguished as *graffiti* (a distinction this article will problematize), so that apolitical scribblings, aestheticized stylings, and overtly political calls to action were intertwined and side-by-side. Regardless of the neighborhood or location (churches, schools, centers for commerce, etc.), self-promotional tagging was connected over and underneath outcries against governmental policies, racism, consumerism, and sexism. These works seemed in conversation, and thus were photographed together and given equal treatment. Although overt political messages are distinct from self-promotional efforts and apolitical aesthetics, there is a subversive quality that marries these writings on walls in relationships with each other.

Making Sense of Graffiti

Just as there is a multitude of ways of executing unauthorized painting, writing, and pasting on city walls, there are multiple ways of researching and interpreting these acts. Whether described as *graffiti*, *street art*, *post-graffiti*, *urban art*, or a range of other descriptors, there is no consensus about the best terminology or delineations for these categories. Much of the trouble with parsing out these definitions has to do with the overlapping of different mediums used, genres expressed, and motivations for acting. Schacter (2013), for example, describes these "contemporary aesthetic practices" (p. 9) as ranging from vandalism to fine art, taking a variety of cultural and environmental variations. As he writes, "there are as many different motivations, styles, and approaches within this artistic arena as there are practitioners themselves—a 'street art' for every street artist, a 'graffiti' for every graffiti writer" (p. 9). Complicating matters, graffitists who start off with simple tags used primarily to mark territory or self-promote often progress into making complex, skillful pieces (masterpieces) as their graffiti career progresses (Macdonald, 2001). And even the most subversive and political of graffiti artists have often been inspired and influenced by the innovative methods and styles of seemingly apolitical graffiti crews (McDonald, 2013).

There are important distinctions in style to be made, which range from colorful and bold to muted and demure, from total abstraction to photorealism, from allegorical surrealism to blunt calls to action (Ganz, 2004; Schacter, 2013). Perhaps the most recognizable styles associated with the word *graffiti* are those that evolved from New York City hip-hop culture in the late 1970s and 80s, including foundational lettering techniques such as the bubble styles, block-lettering, and the famous *wildstyle* of intertwining and twisted names (Ganz, 2004). Most graffiti scholars trace the origins of contemporary forms of graffiti back to the rise of hip hop culture in the Bronx, which continues to saturate and influence graffiti subcultures globally decades after its origins in spray-painted tagging on subway trains in the 1970s (Carrington, 2009; Ganz, 2004; Miller, 2002; Snyder, 2009). Hip-hop–influenced graffiti became increasingly popularized in the 1980s and 90s, and since has become a global phenomenon in urban spaces all over the world (Miller, 2002). The typologies have been expanded and vernacularized according to local cultures and histories, and have spread and influenced the dominant hip-hop–descended writing styles (for example, the Brazilian tagging form of pixação, whose long and lean lettering are now internationally recognizable) (Ganz, 2004). It is also important to note that although the dominant manifestation of contemporary graffiti culture (including that which is overtly politicized) is connected to

its global emergence with hip-hop culture, the act of writing, painting, and posting political messages on walls predates the 1970s by millennia.

There are distinctions to be made between media used to paint, draw, and paste on walls, such as spray paint, chalk, stickers, stencils, and wheat-pasted posters (Ganz, 2004; McDonald, 2013). Likewise, there are differences in purpose and communicative content, which range from explicitly political to primarily aesthetic, with a spectrum of satirical, metaphoric, allegoric, imaginative, and self-expressive work that blurs these boundaries. Nonetheless, many scholars agree that even seemingly apolitical graffiti has a subversive, or at least an antiauthoritarian, character innate in its existence in privately owned spaces and resolutely illegal intent (Ganz, 2004; McCormick et al., 2010; Schacter, 2013). Although graffiti is often interpreted or perceived as senseless and anarchic, even the seemingly destructive or gratuitous tagging that is associated with vandalism is rife with purpose and meaning for the writer (Macdonald, 2001); a proclamation of self and identity and a quest for recognition, there is something decidedly agentic and perhaps resistant about declaring that one is here (McCormick et al., 2010).

Different scholars and practitioners define and term these acts in different ways. Some find utility in separating street art from graffiti (Lee, 2013), whereas others use terms such as "uncommissioned public art" (McCormick et al., 2010) or "independent public art" (Schacter, 2013) to spotlight the connections of style, intent, and intervention amongst these artistic activities. *Graffiti* itself has been used as a general term to indicate a range of methods and styles, although graffiti is commonly used to describe stylized and abstracted practices of tagging and *street art* is often used to describe broadly more representational forms of illicit public art. However, these distinctions flow into each other and rarely manifest in entire isolation. Carrington (2009), for instance, uses *graffiti* as an umbrella term to describe a range of "unsanctioned texts" written on the walls of urban space. Carrington describes graffiti as a textual practice of writing alternative imaginings of the self and society into public space, and in so doing creating counterpublics. She interprets graffiti as a significant method of contestation because it "provides evidence of an alternative city and alternative textual practices. It is loud: it screams from the walls 'I am here and I want you to know.' It screams 'I don't respect your boundaries—textual or spatial'" (pp. 417–18). This article, like those by numerous other scholars, will use *graffiti* as an umbrella term to describe all of these expressions and methods, including markers, spray paint, stencils, stickers, posters, and oil paint. These artistic works are united by their public expression, by their availability and visibility to urban populations, by their unsolicited nature, and by their transgressive impulses.

An important distinction at this contemporary moment of transnational capitalism is to distinguish between (a) the development of commercialized graffiti culture, which has transformed graffiti art into mainstream popular and high art commodities (Kinnamon, 2013), and (b) the continuing phenomenon of politicized and subversive graffiti writing that unlawfully invades cityscapes, which is the subject of this article. In the latter case, the illegality of the activity is an integral aspect of the character of the graffiti culture, which retains an illicit identity reliant on the perceived danger and antiauthoritarianism that comes with breaking rules and regulations (Macdonald, 2001). Even when cities create designated sanctioned graffiti zones where writers and artists can paint freely without fear of reprimand, it is significant that city officials did not enthusiastically create these spaces out of an innate love or appreciation of graffiti and street art, but rather out of a desire to control and legitimate the form when

faced with its persistent ubiquity. In Cochabamba, for example, there are large wall spaces designated as official or sanctioned graffiti zones in centralized urban areas, and these spaces are filled top-to-bottom and end-to-end with pieces and tags. However, the graffiti spills outside of these parameters and the city is nevertheless entirely covered with graffiti, most of which maintains rebellious attitudes expressing opposition to state authorities, political leaders, and transnational commercial companies. Globally, graffiti culture has been appropriated in various ways by neoliberal consumerism, in particular its youthful reputation, rebellious attitude and style (Kinnamon, 2013; Lee, 2013). However, there are nonetheless strong currents of relentlessly illicit, anticonsumerist, and counterhegemonic graffiti and artists who purposefully make their work available for free and for the public (McCormick et al., 2010).

The connective thread in these different scholarly approaches is the understanding that graffiti intimately changes its landscape, working against the status quo and particularly against processes of modernization and neoliberal privatization. These scholars recognize a performative, embodied, and affective dimension to graffiti (Halsey & Young, 2006), and appreciate the potential of graffiti and street art to reimagine an urban space and contest control over the city's continuous processes of becoming through their transgressive materiality. These themes are present in Cochabambino graffiti, where various mediums and styles twist together, layer over one another, and refuse to respect the boundaries imposed by the city.

Urban Stratification in Cochabamba and Its Nomadic Graffiti

With a better understanding of the historical and contemporary contexts of global graffiti cultures, how now might we make sense of the ever-present graffiti covering the walls of Cochabamba, Bolivia? Although Latin America has been spotlighted as a prominent region practicing and influencing graffiti culture worldwide (Ganz, 2004; Schacter, 2010), Bolivia itself is often overlooked. Much of the work describing the importance of Latin American graffiti focuses on artists and works from Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, with little attention paid to the presence of thriving graffiti cultures elsewhere. And yet, Bolivia has a network of graffiti artists connected in their local cities (La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz in particular), regionally, and internationally via social media and art collectives and organizations. The Facebook group Arte Urbano Bolivia, for example, features the work of prominent Bolivian artists (including El Dengue from Cochabamba) as well as visiting international artists (Blu, for example, is a famed Italian muralist who has worked in Bolivia). According to Cochabambino urban art collective Motivación Violenta, the city is "a place where art can have real influence, because the people believe in real action" (Irwin, 2013, para. 2). Such "belief in real action" is related to the success of the Water Revolt in 2000, which remains a point of pride for Cochabambinos. These events were even memorialized in Mona Caron's mural, "La Lucha Por El Agua Continúa," a commissioned work that depicted the popular mobilization defeating privatized water (and that caused a public outcry when it was replaced with an advertisement). And despite such an appreciation for *street art*, the smatterings of stencils, posters, and paint throughout the city are frequently perceived as a nuisance. Even appreciators of uncommissioned Bolivian street art express this tension; as an example, a magazine praising a La Paz graffiti campaign asserts that this work is "a far cry from the mindless taggers and handymen of rival gangs" (Maksimovic, 2014, para. 5). Cochabamba is a prime site for grappling with some of the tensions interwoven into globalized graffiti culture, which itself creates a hierarchy of location, artists, and artwork. Cochabamba's

postcolonial contexts, its gridded and ordered design, and the political ethos of the city are interesting dynamics for analyzing the subversive potential of graffiti, both in its political and its apolitical manifestations) and the ability of nomadic action to challenge stratified urban power dynamics.

Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari, Cochabamba can be conceptualized as a striated urban space, and the graffiti that covers its structures as a nomadic form of art, practice, and activism. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe smooth space as the fluid, multiple space of the nomad and of the rhizome, and striated space as fixed, sedentary, and ordered. The two formations of space are distinguishable and dissimilar, but they are also intermingled, constantly transforming back and forth and always present in the other. Striated space exists in a state of stratification—of hierarchically ordered layers or belts—that "consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy" (p. 40). These ordered strata confine and regulate motion, locking things into repetition, pattern, and structured motion. Striated space organizes itself vertically and horizontally, with perpendicular intersections and parallel movements that are fixed, finite, and closed. Deleuze and Guattari describe the modern city as "the striated space par excellence" (p. 481), and yet make an important intervention in the potential for finding "nomadic" ways of living in striated urbanity, for "deterritorializing" these overdetermined structures and smoothing space. Power formations, hierarchized into striated spaces, "act as determining and selective agents" (p. 63), reproducing the machine of the city and its distribution of resources. And although these processes lay the groundwork for the regeneration of differential power, allocated through racialized, gendered, and classed inequalities, Deleuze and Guattari make the crucial assertion that "it is possible to live smooth even in cities, to be an urban nomad" (p. 482). These concepts can illuminate the colonizing patterns structuring Cochabamba as a hierarchical, ordered urban space, organized according to the logics of maintenance of power and control, while allowing for processes of disruption and resistance.

Cochabamba is Bolivia's third most populous city, with one of the greatest rates of growth in the nation ("Censo 2012," 2013; O'Hare & Rivas, 2007). Bolivia is also noteworthy in South America as a country with a majority indigenous population, although historically its Euro-descended population has controlled much of the conventional structures of political and state power (Assies, 2003; Central Intelligence Agency, 2014).[2] Over the past few decades, sociopolitical tensions have escalated in the face of increasing urban migration and the implementation of neoliberal state and economic restructuring. This is evidenced by the contentious figure of President Juan Evo Morales Ayma, the nation's first indigenous president and a former coca grower's union leader. Since becoming president in 2006, Evo Morales has made drastic and often controversial changes, including a new Bolivian constitution that strongly demonstrates his socialist beliefs, retaliates against decades of neoliberal development policies, and reflects his allegiance to indigenous Bolivians.[3]

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[2] According to the Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook, as of 2014 Bolivia's population was Quechua 30% and Aymara 25%, followed by Mestizo 30% and White 15%. Quechua and Aymara are indigenous groups each with distinct languages. Since Bolivia's 2009 constitutional changes, both languages are included as official languages of Bolivia along with Spanish.

[3] More recently, President Morales has faced controversy and scandal involving his personal life, charges of corruption, and a struggle over the ability to run for a fourth term.

To situate Cochabamba's contemporary political and social climate, it is necessary to look not only at these current political issues but also at the historical development of the city. In Daniel Goldstein's (2004) critical history of Cochabamba's construction over time leading to unrest at the turn of the millennium, he analyzes how the city has been structured as gridded and hierarchical since the Spanish colonization of the Andes. Goldstein writes that under the rule of Viceroy Toledo, urban centers in the Andes were designed with physical layouts that would "reflect the hierarchical racial and political-economic organization of society itself" (p. 6). According to Goldstein, Andean cities such as Cochabamba were designed to encourage regulation, uniformity, and governability, and the gridded arrangements of these colonial cities were understood to be fundamental to the civilizing mission of the Spanish. The ideal of an urban grid with centralized plazas and straight radiating streets is evident in the design of Cochabamba, in which there are several large and beautifully kept plazas with ornate fountains and neighboring cathedrals with city streets follow a tightly gridded layout cutting the land into perpendicular angles and lines.

Continuing into the republican period of Bolivia, Goldstein traces how these European models for city planning persisted after the nation-state's formal independence. Urban development, he argues, included escalated efforts to rationalize and organize the newly formed national landscape in a manner that would allow the state to classify and govern its people. This led to the mapping of Bolivia's geography according to racialized hierarchies in which indigenous peoples became associated with the rural Andean highlands, and elite White and Mestizo groups with urban centers. However, he argues that recent decades of unprecedented rural-to-urban migration of indigenous rural peoples undermined the ideals of city planners, challenging the state authority's ability to meet its new inhabitants' needs and creating informal economies and settlement patterns. Although indigenous peoples have always had a presence in Cochabamba (prior to colonization and long after), as migration accelerated in the late 20th century, city officials and elites increasingly perceived them to be a threat to the order, sanitation, and safety of gridded urban space (Goldstein, 2004).

In the particular context of Cochabamba, the recent history of the city involves urban tensions between authorities, urban elites, and migrants. These tensions have bred a rise of civil unrest and protest in the Bolivian Andes, in particular in the cities of Cochabamba and La Paz (Shultz, 2008). The most notable of these is the Cochabamba Water Revolt of 2000, where popular uprising took over the city after drastic water hikes (Assies, 2003). The protestors, which included large amounts of indigenous, peasant, women, and child participants, maintained their occupation in the face of violent police and military retaliation and succeeded in their demands for modifying neoliberal legislation and the ousting of a foreign-financed company (Assies, 2003). Later, the popular opposition to neoliberal international oil trade agreements resulted in the resignation of two Bolivian presidents over a period of just three years, culminating in the election of Morales (Shultz, 2008). These events have helped to create an ethos of popular protest in Cochabamba, where demonstrations and city occupations by diverse groups are common.

Writing the Self and Community on the Walls of the City

Graffiti and street art have historically been and continue to be used as a form of political expression, particularly in communities that face challenges in having their voices heard due to economic and social forms of erasure. Carrington (2009) argues that disenfranchisement can prime "DIY biographies" written on city walls, where graffiti acts as a "textual narrative of the self" (p. 420). In Cochabamba, this is particularly evident in one of its numerous public plazas, where the bodies of predominantly women and children have been stenciled in life-sized portraits on the square's columns (Figure 1). Not only are these stencils of women and children, subjects normatively excluded from the public sphere in the Euro-modern division of public and private space, they are also largely portraits of indigenous women and children recognizable by their attire and bundles (Figure 2). As people walk by these figures, they are passing by bodies that have been historically excluded from membership in this urban environment. These portraits not only write themselves into the public space, they point to their official erasure, and, in directing attention to this injustice, they demand inclusion. Even if their pleas are denied and they remain invisible in official narratives and city planning, these painted bodies remain, displaying their resolute presence. By placing these bodies in the plaza, these stencils imagine a space in which these subjects can be present and acknowledged as such. Through these images, the artists call attention to an absence in the present while demanding a presence in the future. It is significant that these images of indigenous peoples filling the plaza recall the efficacy of popular mobilization in the Water Revolt, when the bodies and actions of indigenous and peasant men, women, and children were the backbone of efforts to hold the barricades and occupy public spaces.

Figure 1. Human-sized stencils on columns in a Cochabamba public square.

Figure 2. A life-sized stencil of an indigenous woman and her child on a column.

An image (Figure 3) painted of an indigenous man bent over from the weight of a heavy sack is a public critique of citizenship rights in Bolivia. On the man's sack is written "200 años de libertad para quién?" ("200 years of freedom for whom?"), asking through scathing implication why indigenous members of the Bolivian nation have had their rights systematically denied. The question is burdensome for the man, a corporeal imaging of the legacy of an oppressive load of violence and marginalization that indigenous Bolivians have experienced. The image problematizes liberal ideals of citizenship, revealing that the fact of membership in a nation does not guarantee liberty and equality. Despite Bolivia's official structure as a liberal nation-state, a construct undergirded by ideals of citizenship and individual rights, the image of the burdened man highlights the differential status of belonging and the distribution of rights claims along racialized and classed lines.

Figure 3. A man burdened with a sack reading "200 Años de Libertad Para Quién?"

Creating Alternative Publics and Communities

Images stenciled, painted, pasted, and scribbled cover the city of Cochabamba in a quilt of color and lines that reaches into all of its public spaces. In Cochabamba, the graffiti and street art engage with often explicitly political issues, producing an alternative public sphere out of painted images and messages on city walls. In some cases, the graffiti has a straightforward alignment with specific political groups and movements—there is a multiplicity of statements and words expressing, for example, solidarity with indigenous and feminist movements. The reclamation of public space and the desire for inclusion and belonging in the public sphere are common to indigenous and feminist movements. Although there are important differences in racist, classist, and sexist forms of public exclusion, the use of spectacular images of bodies pasted on walls and the instantly recognizable symbolism hastily painted throughout the city similarly work to reappropriate the spaces where they hope to intervene. Cochabambino graffiti often uses familiar iconography to create connective political affiliations throughout the city, such as the hammer and sickle of communism, or the gender icon to express feminist solidarities (Figure 4). Frequently, stencils

and street art use words and images that are easily legible transnationally, such as an image repeated throughout the city criticizing capitalism as violent and implicitly expressing solidarity with global anticapitalist graffiti subcultures (Figure 5). Graffiti archives and scholars have demonstrated the use of highly stylized representational stencils (i.e., Figure 5) and a common concern with consumerism and the excesses of capitalism (McCormick et al., 2007; Schacter, 2010).

Figure 4. Writing that reads "Libres" ("free") and the gender symbol for female.

Figure 5. A stencil that reads "Capitalismo" and features a man pointing a gun
at another man's head.

Much like Nevaer's (2009) analysis of Oaxacan graffiti acting in concert with a social movement during an ongoing political struggle, the graffiti in Cochabamba engages directly with contemporaneous political events, issues, and even protests. Some of the graffiti deals with local and national political issues, such as controversial plans to build a highway through indigenous land in the Bolivian Andes. In September 2011, police and protestors against the construction of a highway through the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS) clashed in a violent confrontation (Achtenberg, 2013). In 2012, graffiti opposing the TIPNIS highway was painted in every corner of the city visited. These range from direct messages to vote or march against the highway (Figure 6) to more stylized illustrations of protest. A particularly resonating image that recurred throughout the city is a tree design with hearts for leaves underneath the word "TIPNIS," being cut down by the name "Evo" (in reference to President Evo Morales) and accompanied by a skull-and-crossbones (Figure 7). The symbolism in this image, which is repeated over and over again, is clearly read as the death and destruction (skull and crossbones) of indigenous life and territory (the heart tree) at the hands of the president (Evo as a saw). The betrayal by an Aymaran president against a majority indigenous population could be felt palpably, with words denouncing President Morales strewn throughout its public spaces (Figure 8).

Figure 6. Writing opposing the TIPNIS highway and encouraging public resistance.

Figure 7. A commonly found stencil indicting President Evo Morales for the TIPNIS highway.

Figure 8. Graffiti denouncing President Morales with incendiary language.

Much of the graffiti in Cochabamba addresses the status quo and societal institutions more broadly, including repeated condemnations of police repression (Figures 9 and 10). Culture-jamming style graffiti challenges globalization and commercialism, asserting its violent repercussions. In a satirical stencil of Snow White, she holds a military weapon that juxtaposes the Disney conglomerate with an image of violence (Figure 11). Another image replicates the stylized font of "Coca-Cola" but replaces these words with "Con Ciencia," a message to consume global commodities with consciousness (Figure 12).

Figure 9. Writing opposing police repression: "Policia Represora!"

Figure 10. Writing opposing police repression: Speaking out against
police violence in English and using a symbol for a bomb.

*Figure 11. A stencil of Snow White holding a machine gun, an indictment
of global consumerism.*

Figure 12. A stencil mimicking the Coca-Cola logo asks readers to consume consciously.

Some of the graffiti works against the patriarchal status quo, including a campaign against sexual violence with repetitive imagery found throughout the city. Images stickered onto walls alongside painted messages speak out against the silencing of victims of sexual assault, declaring a variety of messages such as "No es No" or "mi cuerpo es mío" (Figure 13). These are accompanied by a diversity of men and women photographed from their bare shoulders up, looking directly out from the walls while miming a shushing motion, an act that refuses to be silent about the violence of patriarchy.

Figure 13. A paste-up speaks against sexual violence, insisting that "No is no."

Cochabambino graffiti operates not only to form local connections, but also to form linkages to experiences of oppression elsewhere in the world and with communities of resistance across borders. The graffiti art in Cochabamba references, alters, and builds upon global cultures of subversive graffiti. Several instances of stencils noticeably borrowed stylistically from the infamous work done by Blek le Rat and Banksy, such as juxtapositions of popular culture with violent imagery—as in the already discussed stencil of Snow White with a rifle (Figure 10)—or the use of rats as metaphors for environmental and/or political corruption (Figure 14). Also noteworthy is the repetition of images that have been seen in other parts of the world, such as an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in a gas mask that was documented by Nevaer (2009) in 2006 Oaxacan protest graffiti (Figure 15) as well as in other places throughout Latin America. A Mexican-origin deity, the Virgin of Guadalupe is associated with the struggles of Mexican indigenous people and is a protector of the poor, a connotation that translates into various racialized and classed struggles in the Americas. Additionally, it is significant that the graffiti frequently speaks both in Spanish and English (Figures 9 and 10), attesting to a desire to speak not only in a local context, but also to reach out to regional and global audiences. The choice of English evidences a desire to bring the outside into the center of the city, to acknowledge Cochabamba as a globally traversed node, and to speak to various travelers (and perhaps visiting graffitists). It speaks to an awareness of the circulation of graffiti via social media and online archives that document these uncommissioned artworks worldwide. The desire to communicate with global audiences can also be read in the citational style of graffiti writing that calls out to its origins in New York City (Snyder, 2009), and the recognizable aesthetics and techniques of much of the street art discussed in this study.

Figure 14. Rats dressed in fancy attire traverse the city and its walls.

Figure 15. Artwork of the Virgin of Guadalupe in a gasmask has a presence globally.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) theorize art in terms of smoothness and striation, which, like their notions of urban space, corresponds to processes of linearity, order, and hierarchy. In contrast to striated space, smooth space "has neither top nor bottom nor center; it does not assign fixed and mobile elements but rather distributes a continuous variation" (p. 476) and a "continuous development of form" (p. 478)—it is always in a state of constant becoming. Smooth space is haptic, characterized by nomadic movement

in which flight and journey, rather than defined dimensions or points, express the space. Nomadic art produces continuous linkages, and is activated through "local spaces of pure connection" (p. 493), so that its experience requires physical closeness and intimacy. It is in these characteristics of unpredictability, associativity, connectivity, and material immediacy that graffiti can be read as nomadic. The connections formed between memories of popular protest, ongoing social struggles, and messages and images covering the walls of the city produce a rhizomatic politics embedded in Cochabamba's graffiti culture.

An understanding of graffiti's processes in striated urban spaces may additionally be informed by Brian Massumi's notion of the politics of affect. By *affect*, Massumi (2002) means the body's capacity to both affect and to be affected, which implies a powerful potential for connections between people and situations globally. According to Massumi, even the most striated and deterministic spaces have openings, within which there is a "margin of maneuverability" important for political action (p. 212). Affective expressions (in particular he mentions anger and laughter) are powerful because they disrupt a situation and its conventional meaning processes. Graffiti frequently operates affectively, disrupting normalized urban space while forming an affective relationship with its audience (both imagined and pedestrian). Written and painted on the surfaces of striated spaces, the illicitness of graffiti discovers unsanctioned potential in the materiality of the buildings, corners, walls, and streets of the city, and expands and imagines new spaces, publics, and forms of belonging.

Nomadic Graffiti and Smoothing Striated Urban Space

Much of the graffiti and street art in Cochabamba was nonrepresentational and abstract, drawing from global graffiti trends and vernacularizing them according to the particularities of local streets (Figure 16). Yet even without a clear political intent or immediately transparent reference, graffiti and street art change the space itself, moving nomadically to smooth out the striated cityscape. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe striated art as requiring orientation in relation to a central referential point, which allows for dimensional arrangement and unity of composition. It is representational, tied to graphic visual aesthetics that reference and stand-in for a finite exterior object or concept. This could be said to describe landscapes, portraits, still lifes, and other art forms that intend to portray a scene with fidelity to the experience of optical sight. It is measured, perspectival, proportional, and ordered. Nomadic art, on the other hand, is abstract to the point that it escapes signification systems and becomes antirepresentational; it describes a "streaming, spiraling, zigzagging, snaking, feverish line of variation" (p. 499). Nomadic art takes the form of a rhizome, with interminable connections, no center, and no hierarchical organization.

The nonrepresentational graffiti found throughout Cochabamba maneuver the potentials of the space, pushing against the limits of walls and corners and finding paths of flight toward new and more inclusive spaces. Graffiti can create new flows of movement in a space, following people as they walk down the street beside the art (Figure 16). Large pieces in Cochabamba, such as those in Figures 16–18, are indicative of the ways in which New York-descended tagging culture has evolved into a vibrant style that continues to be adapted and expanded in local contexts worldwide. Experiencing these sophisticated pieces while moving through the city demonstrates how this graffiti art works to appropriate city space. The impetus behind tagging and creating pieces may be self-promotional, but it is also radical in its take-

over of perpendicular and gray concrete walls with blasts of color and line. The graffiti in these images moves with the passer-by in fluid, swerving motions, challenging the intended straight and disciplined movement encouraged by streets, corners and concrete buildings. These walls are meant to separate, to order and to segregate: people from other people, inside from outside, sidewalk from street from building, public from private. The mercurial flow of this graffiti resists the stratification of the walls and streets, creating connections with the people moving alongside it, absorbing pedestrians, concrete and paint into smooth space. The graffiti here becomes nomadic; it transforms the fixity of the city into something that is fluid, pliable, and never permanent. Unlike the graffiti described in the previous section, this artwork makes less explicit connections with ongoing political issues (such as TIPNIS) and social movements and groups (the indigenous stencils, feminist posters). And yet it still works politically, taking over the streets for a purpose other than what was officially imagined and built.

Figure 16. Larger than life artwork seems to move with a pedestrian as she passes by.

Figure 17. A graffiti piece on a barbed-wire wall.

Figure 18. Graffiti adds color and movement to a half-built, gridded structure.

Graffiti can ignore striated lines, the hierarchical buildings and streets that guide and limit movement, through irreverent character tags painted in varied sites in the city. Character tags were everywhere, such as a ubiquitous tag citing the famous "Mr. A" (originally the trademark of a French graffitist) whose crude face winks at you with a sardonic smile as it curses you in its thoughts (a thought bubble follows it with disparaging remarks about the viewer) (Figure 19). Tags exist in the center of the city, in the outskirts, in the suburbs, and in satellite villages in a state of repetitive difference, creating connections and unpredictable vectors moving through the city. This movement cuts through the gridded

logic of the city, flowing through structures and barriers and ignoring sanctioned roads in favor of creative and volatile routes. These graffiti tags create a rhizomatic alternative city within the actual striated urban space, with no center or clear authorial source, but one that is everywhere, ephemeral and mobile.

Figure 19. Citing the famous "Mr. A," a grimacing face taunts
the viewer across the city.

Nomadic movement is not limited to character tags, however, and can be seen in a variety of graffiti and street art forms. The repetition of rat stencils throughout the city found ways for rat characters to move in unpredictable and unintended paths. Rats parachute down from the sky, floating into the city (Figure 20), or they race along a painted line (Figure 21); rats can even move through solid concrete walls with the aid of small painted doorways (Figure 14).

Figure 20. Multicolored rats parachute into the city along a wall.

Figure 21. Rat stencils race along a painted line on a wall.

Graffiti contains the possibility of exceeding the corners and straight lines of the city, painting it over and smoothing it out into a borderless plane. Abstract and alien-like characters can wrap around buildings (Figure 22), ignoring corners that are meant to be turns, ends, or angles. Instead, this artwork traces a smooth, organic shape out of the walls, forming connections between these perpendicular planes. In another piece, a devilish face stretches across a rectangular rise in a building (Figure 23). Here, the structural angle becomes a resource to give the face contours, using it to push the demon's nose from the second dimension into the third. The straight and sharply defined wall is transformed into an organic bulging continuity, a living face. Street art can even reimagine the ontology and purpose of a space, such as reinventing box office windows as menacing robots or as prison bars (Figures 24 and 25).

Figure 22. Abstract figures stretch across a sharp corner, creating a rounding effect.

Figure 23. Spray-can art uses a rise in the wall to add dimension to a face.

Figure 24. The windows of a soccer stadium box office are reimagined as a robotic face.

Figure 25. The windows of a soccer stadium box office are reimagined as a prison window.

        This illicit art can alter the city's appearance in ways that challenge ideals of a clean and pristine urban space, which becomes overrun and undermined by the splattering, sprawling, and loud spectacle of graffiti. The created space is one of disorder, cluttered with images and writing. Abstract writing and art can be vivacious and colorful, can take up space for the sake of itself, filling walls with intense vibrancy. Sometimes nomadic graffiti and street art may act as a non sequitur, odd for the sake of being odd (Figure 26). These make the walls nonsensical, illogical, and irrational, and operate on an aesthetically affective level of communication. Some might move toward exceeding their own space, spilling over rigid lines, and bringing the outside in (Figure 27). Here a graffiti act transgresses its physical space, demanding that it be set free from the logic of rigid lines and fixed structures and reaching out for new spaces that are limitless and inexhaustible.

Figure 26. A fantastical pink and yellow animal becomes a non sequitur on a street corner.

Figure 27. Street art in a designated graffiti space pushes against its own limits, expanding itself beyond sanctioned areas.

Nomadic graffiti works through transgression to imagine new spaces of inclusion, freedom of movement, and connectivity. Jeff Ferrell (2013) suggests that graffiti is not only spatially and physically transgressive, but is also transgressive of moral norms so that "transgression also means pushing past the limits of law and imagination that were in place when such boundaries were drawn; it means crossing over into some new world while negotiating the limits of the old" (para. 20). Cochabambino graffiti is transgressive in this sense—it must operate and exist in the limits of the actualized present but continuously works to move beyond itself into borderless potentials of alternatively imagined cityscapes.

Conclusion

The graffiti in Cochabamba is nomadic and rhizomatic. It exists in entangled layers, intertwined and mixed, endlessly connected temporally (with past graffiti in specific sites, with the history of the city, with the imagined future) and spatially (graffiti that is on top of graffiti that is bordered by more graffiti, in relationship to other local sites as well as a global subculture). Graffiti moves nomadically in Cochabamba, smoothing out the exclusionary striated urban space. Cochabambino graffiti enacts processes of deterritorialization, invading the city, bringing inside the outside—the rural margins, indigenous migrants and women, and worldwide graffiti subcultures.

In the context of a long history of modernist stratification of urban Andean cities, the graffiti in Cochabamba emerges from rising social tensions as increasing rural-to-urban migration unsettles the idealized exclusionary visions of city planners. The art works against the erasure of indigenous migrants

and women in Cochabamba's public space, inscribing their bodies into city walls and demanding visibility and inclusion through spectacular displays of presence. By engaging with contemporaneous political battles and social struggles, Cochabambino graffiti produces alternative collectives, counterpublics, and solidarities. Graffiti scholars often talk about the solidarities formed amongst a global graffiti subculture, united by their commitment to free and public art and their anticapitalist, anticonsumerist, antiauthoritarian ethos (McCormick et al., 2010; Schacter, 2010). In more localized contexts, scholars have described the ways that graffiti crews are able to appropriate space, claim territory, and create underground networks of fame, recognition, and success (Macdonald, 2001; Soldatenko, 2013). In Cochabamba, these graffiti culture patterns manifest in a fascinating overlap with local and national sociopolitical struggles and popular mobilizations. Amongst the tags and citational stencils, anonymous protestors write calls to actions, political demands, and express alliance with indigenous, feminist, and class-based struggles. Together, these graffiti forms take over the striated cityscape in a uniquely Cochabambino culture of popular protest.

In its abstract and nonrepresentational forms, graffiti pushes against the gridded structure of Cochabamba and continuously works to smooth the striated space into a nomadic space of becoming. The artwork exceeds Cochabamba's limits, contouring and swerving the angles of the city's architecture. It expands the affective potential of the urban, creating spaces for inclusion, connectivity, alternative imaginations, and multiple public spheres. Graffiti is embedded in the local intensities of the city, but forms infinitely multiple connections to other communities and graffiti subcultures globally. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) warn us, smooth spaces should not be envisioned as end goals in themselves or as final results, and cannot rescue or free subjects spontaneously. Smooth space may allow changes and displacements, but there will also always be new obstacles and oppositions, new ways of organizing rigid boundaries and exclusionary structures. Rather than envisioning smooth space as an achievable accomplishment, we should understand it as continuously in a state of becoming that must be constantly struggled over (much like the definitions and delineations of graffiti). Although graffiti in Cochabamba smooths out striated urban space, the writing and artwork will be faced with persistent threats of destruction, cooptation, commodification, and containment. However, as long as there are walls and corners in the urban space to be painted, Cochabambino graffiti has the potential to open up new possibilities and move in unpredictably nomadic lines to reroute and remap the city.

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