

pied. This other world emerges in saturated tones of the filmic landscape as rich blue and green hues, where light plays on water, and where sound vibrates through the rush of the waterfalls. By using a decolonial femme method, we can perceive the *machi*'s immersion in the water, her repetition of gestures, the dancing of light on the river, and the undulating waves as guiding us toward a world before and beyond the extractive zone.

Through the *machi*'s view, Huichaqueo shows us submerged and emergent perspectives as parallel perception. This space otherwise flows like the river, a dream that escapes colonial duality, and that moves toward a state of undifferentiation. If we take this perception seriously, Huichaqueo and Kallfüman seem to intimate, then we can learn how to reoccupy through a full return of the senses.

#### CHAPTER 4

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### A Fish-Eye Episteme

#### *Seeing Below the River's Colonization*

It takes many aesthetic strategies, modes of critique, engaged activisms, acts of land and water defense, and forms of perception to decolonize the dominant viewpoint that misrecognizes territorial relations for the extractive zone. One strategy that mestiza Colombian multimedia artist Carolina Caycedo employs is to repurpose the images taken by satellite technologies so as to visibly document how hydroelectric corporations block the flow of South American rivers.

In the installation *Dammed Landscapes* (2012), Caycedo works with digital imaging to document five stages of the El Quimbo Hydroelectric Project construction, a highly controversial plan that has led to widespread dispossession in the region.<sup>1</sup> In Caycedo's hands, satellite photographs become the source for enormous wall panels that illustrate how the Southwestern Colombian landscape has, since 2011, been thoroughly damaged by the onset of hydroelectric development. What time-sequenced images show over a four-year period is the trail of barren territory left in the wake of hydro-power's advancement. The riverbed scar visibly reminds the viewer of the pathway where the powerful Magdalena River once flowed.

The sectional erasure of the river body, and the dispossession of communities that depend upon the Magdalena, is at the core of Caycedo's impressive body of work. *Dammed Landscapes* pursues how technocratic designs distort a multi-tiered perception of life through stark images that track a twenty-mile stretch of the disappearance of the Magdalena River. Caycedo inverts the extractive view to show how the Magdalena's confluence with the Páez River literally damns the river to extinction.



Carolina Caycedo, from *Dammed Landscapes*, Magdalena River (Yuma) after Endesa river diversion, satellite image, 2012.  
Image courtesy of Carolina Caycedo.

In *Yuma: Land of Friends* (2014), Caycedo offers important video work that testifies to the process of literally submerging the rural mestizx and Indigenous communities that for generations lived intermixed with the flow of the Magdalena River. In this chapter, I take a close look at *Yuma: Land of Friends*, a video that blends the experiences of those most affected by damming with long shots of the river's movement, its sound, and its voice. That dams "silence rivers" has been an important way to perceive modernization's separation from the agency and life forms of the natural world.<sup>2</sup> Caycedo's visual and sonic techniques are based in anti-dam counterlogics and do not "silence the river," but instead allow for its rushing sound and the gurgling voice of Yuma to emerge. Through edits that literally submerge the camera into the mucky brown water below the surface, Caycedo lifts submerged perspectives within the extractive zone.

Perceiving anew matters on a continent where small, medium-sized and

large-scale dams are planned for much of its rivers, and where the pervasiveness of megaprojects in mining, petroleum, and hydroelectricity is hegemonic.<sup>3</sup> Almost one hundred new dams are currently under construction throughout South America, obscuring the promotion of energy alternatives that do not depend on life's extinction. Despite growing social movements that aim to protect territories and an accompanying vast political ecology literature that challenge the costs of hydroelectric power on human and nonhuman life,<sup>4</sup> mega dams are often constituted by state and corporate actors as the necessary means to continuing to pursue a retrogressive view of national and regional integration toward globalized modernity.

We might pause to consider how hydropower functions on a scale of extractive capitalism that demands exponential, if finite, social and ecological resources.<sup>5</sup> Large dams require expansive infrastructure and intensive capital investments, usurping thousands of acres of land. Whether it is the Itaipu Dam along the Paraná River, the Three Gorges Dam that spans the Yangtze River, or the projected "Master Plan" that imagines building seventeen dams along the Magdalena River, since their design in the nineteenth century, large dams have continually dispossessed millions of Indigenous and rural peoples.<sup>6</sup> What conceptual tools allow us to puncture the assumption of dispossession that is embedded in the logic of hydropower? How do local communities counter these colossal schemes and their cycloptic viewpoint? Because of its sheer size and potential for destruction, mega dam development often casts doubt about the potential for local responses, yet in this chapter I enumerate how visual and embodied resistance finds ways to fissure the dam walls, working to perforate the matrix of capitalist expansion.

By centering on hydropower, I analyze how plans to absorb and drown the proliferation of life are contested by local communities, specifically in the Cauca Valley of Colombia by the Asociación de Afectados por el Proyecto Hidroeléctrico El Quimbo (Association of Affected Peoples of the Quimbo Hydroelectric Power, ASOQUIMBO). In tandem with this movement, the artwork and decolonial praxis of Carolina Caycedo inverts, refuses, and subtends the visual formats of the dam's view to instead support the experiences of local social and ecological movements that live and die within the extractive zone.

### Seeing Like They Do

Over the past decade, the Spanish hydroelectric company Endesa has threatened territories in the Department of Huila with the construction of the Quimbo Hydroelectric Project. In 2008, President Álvaro Uribe Vélez's neoliberal government (2002–10) sold ten thousand hectares to Endesa, legally handing over rights to land alongside the Magdalena River, territories that had been inhabited by Indigenous groups, mestizxs, and local fishing and agricultural communities for generations. Eschewing their responsibility for resettlement and ecological mandates, the state office of the National Authority of Environmental Licenses has become notorious for systematically ignoring the land rights of local communities. As the ASOQUIMBO activist Jose Avilá described it, "We lost everything, this land is what has supported my family for generations and all we demanded was to be relocated or compensated fairly as stated in the environmental license."<sup>7</sup>

Carolina Caycedo has worked both independently and alongside Descolonizando La Jagua (Decolonizing La Jagua, ASOQUIMBO), and Rios Vivos (Rivers Alive Colombia), anti-extractivist campaigns based on local membership that has spearheaded organizing against Endesa. The strategies of these local movements proliferate to include protests, marches, forums, press conferences, and legal pressure aimed at stopping both Endesa and the Chinese state-owned company Hydrochina from dredging and blocking the river. Overall, the objective has been to decolonize the river communities that have been flooded with state agents, corporate workers, the military, dam builders, bulldozers, cement, and so forth, that have made artisanal and low-resource ways of life nearly impossible.

Since 2011, ASOQUIMBO's work has focused upon Endesa's disregard for local communities, and taking back lands along the Magdalena River that were illegally granted to the extractive corporation. More recent efforts have placed emphasis not only on the river's destruction and dispossession but also on the resilient and vibrant aspects of river life, such as the intertwined living that takes place between riverbank communities and their interdependent relation to the Magdalena River. In this announcement, for instance, there is a palpable expression of a future-oriented desire to recuperate land and place: "On March 14, 2015 we will initiate a great mobilization for the defense of the Magdalena River and the territories of

life. We take a journey through the country from Macizo Colombiano to Bocas de Ceniza to reject the Master Plan that takes advantage of the River Magdalena. We do this to recuperate memory, identity, and culture by an entire nation that has constructed its life, territory, and history alongside the river."<sup>8</sup> Taking long walks alongside the Magdalena River as a mnemonic experience of community identity allows for the acknowledgment of the imbricated relation with and deep respect for the Magdalena River.

Such acts as organizing collective walks not only signal the importance of local land memory as constitutive of regional and national identity; they also point to how the river itself is enlivened by human activity that does not merely extract from its ecological life. Taking this insight one step further, we might imagine how the river possesses its own form of memory, as a witness to the dialectic between life and death of damming, as weighing in on the contradictions between converting value and devaluing, and as a source of flow that energizes against its own erasure. Seeing, watching, knowing the histories of riverbank communities and being enlivened by their presence is a submerged perspective that one might imagine could emanate from the river. These submerged perspectives refuse to be limited by regional or national boundaries, as they are able to flow beyond the corporation's efforts at containment.

In the demand for legal accountability from Endesa, over the past decade transregional communities have compared and shared knowledge across national borders to support them in their legal battles. As I mentioned in chapter 3, the Mapuche struggle against Endesa in the Bío Bío region of Chile began in 1996 and continues until today, marking an earlier era of hydropower expansion in South America. When ASOQUIMBO in the Cauca Valley learned about the successes and failures of anti-Ralco Dam struggles, it used knowledge of what worked there to combat Endesa on its own territories. Furthermore, as in the struggle against Ralco, ASOQUIMBO also coordinated its actions with International Rivers and other international NGOs, in effect strengthening its vertical and lateral alliances. Like the Magdalena River that transits through multiple regional borders, the flow of knowledge between affected Indigenous and rural communities moves freely in ways that facilitate the positive deployment of resistance strategies.

To combat the violent disarticulations and dispossessions required by the presence of the hydropower corporation, over the past decade ASO-

QUIMBO has taken an increasingly militant stance. Violent escalation in the extractive zone occurs through a familiar sequence of events: militarized dispossession leads to confrontations between local organizations and the state, conflict that is then followed by the state's criminalization of land and river defenders. The ASOQUIMBO case is legendary in this respect, in that there are currently dozens of river defenders who have been imprisoned without trial or promise of release, in many ways replicating the violent scenes and media frenzies that have taken place in other sites around South America.

Through militarization of the extractive zone corporate control is able to advance its capitalist agenda, by dispossessing Indigenous and rural peoples of their territories. In Caycedo's visual and narrative work, she makes this link directly as she plays with the multiple meanings contained within the word "dam," using it alternatively as a verb, simile, noun, and metaphor. For instance, in Spanish the word *represa* is used for "to dam," and also for "to repress." A *represa* literally contains the river's natural flow as well as signifying the political repression against local land and river defenders. For Caycedo, then, extractivism cannot be separated from forms of violence and repression that are rendered invisible by current economic and political models. Attending to this colonial matrix, her work "explores the interrelations between social repression, and the planning and construction of water dams/reservoirs. Dams generally serve the primary purpose of retaining water by stopping the flow of a river. By analogy, we may think of repression as an instance of power that also interrupts the flow of social and community organization."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, Caycedo's visual work does a kind of relational mapping of power that uncovers the epistemological, material, and bodily violence that thwarts biological life. It also reveals how the river's diversion does not block submerged perspectives and movements that look to defend local autonomy.

### Damned Landscapes

Damned landscapes are extractive zones where military, corporate, and state technologies of resource surveillance convert Indigenous and rural territories into a digital colony. Caycedo's unique approach to the digital colony is to produce countervisualities that expose the extractive view-

point by presenting the containing logic of damming. Nicholas Mirzoeff's *The Right to Look: A Counter History of Visuality* historicizes visuality within a Western genealogy, and outlines the contours of a countervisual methodology that moves against the organizing principle of colonial seeing. Though Mirzoeff's effort to produce "a comparative decolonial framework" is only suggestive and might require more sustained attention to the scholarly and cultural production of the Global South, his book generates an important set of proposals about the potentialities and constraints of the visual. Drawing upon the classic work of W. J. T. Mitchell, Mirzoeff imagines a range of medium theory as a venue "for the transmission and dissemination of authority, and a means for the mediation of the subject of that authority."<sup>10</sup> If we consider that the extractive viewpoint succeeds precisely by becoming the normative way we see and universalize the planetary, then in the regions I study countervisuality reveals extractive zones as corporate and state collusion over the destruction of life, refocusing our attention upon a smaller scale of experience.

Rather than condemn technology to its hegemonic use as surveillance, Caycedo's eye inverts the instrumental usage of colonial digitality, presenting the devastation of local communities and the landscape from multiple scales. In other works, Caycedo weaponizes digital technology to facilitate the visibility and vitality of communities that persist despite hydropower's extinguishing footprint. Overriding the viewpoint of the digital colony, her artistic production eschews the developmentalist fallacy that assumes that hydroelectricity is good for everyone.

In a video of a midrange satellite image, we see Caycedo's hand drawing over the white space where the emptied river once flowed. This movement of her pen renders the memory of the river's flow and offers a mapping of the Earth's rapid changes at the hands of human development. Rather than reproduce the extractive view that sees like a satellite from above to enable the management and diversion of the river's resources toward capitalist accumulation, Caycedo's pen instead works in the opposite direction: Tracing the flow of water reverses the flow of capital and its amnesic evacuation of what was once there, placing the river back in the frame and outside of the digital colony.

Drawing the connection between damming, violence, and the evacuation of localized territories was at the center of her solo exhibitions *The Headlong Stream Is Termed Violent, but the Riverbed Hemming Is Termed*

*Violence by No One* (2009) and *Beyond Control* (2010) that took place in Berlin. In them, Caycedo used multiple artistic formats to invert the gaze and rearrange the way we relate to the mutations imposed by hydroelectricity. Her photographs and sculptures illustrate the degree to which hydroelectricity in the Quimbo region has blocked the flow of long-term residents, rerouting and reconstituting the memory of the region's ecological biodiversity.

In *Represa/Repression* (2012), Caycedo depicts a fragmented and carved-up landscape that has been violated by the Endesa dam construction. She describes this work as a "research-based project that explores concepts of flow and containment, while investigating correlations between the mechanisms of social control and the unethical aspects of projects including large water dams and reservoirs."<sup>11</sup> This quote implies that regions are extracted by sending police and military personnel that first repress, then quell, and later displace local residents. Caycedo's work shows that these submerged perspectives and counternarratives require deep investigation into how peripheral spaces and community are repressed. Caycedo's viewpoint utilizes the same technologies of research and digital output that corporations use but she diverts and repurposes them to deauthorize the extractive view.

### Other Views: Fish-Eye Episteme

If satellite technologies, which identify high-resolution social and ecological activity, so completely map and commoditize the landscape from above, does any view reside outside of the society of control? The answer to this seems to depend on how we enter the colonial condition. In *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues that what underlies grave social inequalities in the current global configuration is the persistence of cognitive injustice—what I refer to as forms of perception—that have reproduced asymmetries through colonial systems, modern states, and global capitalism's economic rationale.<sup>12</sup> Western modernity, as de Sousa Santos maintains, devalues heterogeneous knowledge formations and reduces diverse life forms into a modern scientific perspective, underscoring both the limits of disciplinary knowledge as well as the erasure of the multivalent ontologies that express themselves within the vernacular practices of peripherally constituted spaces.

I find De Sousa's naming of cognitive injustice a useful point of departure with respect to seeing otherwise. "Cognitive injustice" refers to the constraining paternalisms imposed on the Global South through colonizing discourses and practices that continue to perceive these regions as purveyors of natural materials, and undervalue the heterogeneity of life embedded within local epistemes. De Sousa's larger contention is that multifaceted knowledge formations already exist, and it is the task of scholar-activists, and, I would add, artists and performers, to lift up those submerged epistemes and juxtapose them within a Western canon that cannot apprehend its own limitations.<sup>13</sup>

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, whose perspectivist insights have come out of a thirty-year ethnographic engagement, helps me to define such a point of view. His work both parallels and departs from subaltern genealogies and other Global South epistemes.<sup>14</sup> Moving beyond the object-subject divide, Viveiros de Castro's work increasingly poses a decolonizing challenge to Western anthropology, and to the reproduction of the human as a singular entity standing within a world of subordinate beings. Through ethnographic critique, Viveiros de Castro offers Indigenous thought as a philosophical challenge to the classic European distinction between Nature and Culture. Inverting the signifiers of "multiculturalism," which has been the center of colonial/modern thought, to "multinaturalism," Viveiros de Castro references how Indigenous peoples acknowledge the coexistence of multiple perspectives in the human and nonhuman world. The fundamental conceptual shift of perspectivist theory, then, is to reorder the nature-culture divides of primordial immanence: reversing the order of universalism to follow that of nature, and particularity to that of culture.

Indigenous thought, as Viveiros de Castro shows us, has long been engaged with apprehending "reality from distinct points of view,"<sup>15</sup> and ontologically has organized its societies and spiritual practices accordingly. A constantly shifting imagination of the Other is not constrained or delimited through the privileging of *Homo sapiens*.<sup>16</sup> For my purposes, Viveiros de Castro's work not only moves us into the realm of decolonial possibility, it also pursues and elaborates a rescripting of European thought. More importantly, it proposes that agency exists within a multiplicity of vantage points that are irreducible. As Viveiros de Castro puts it about Indigenous perspectivism, "We must remember, above all, that if there is a virtually

universal Amerindian notion, it is that of an original state of undifferentiation or ‘undifference’ (don’t mistake this for ‘indifference’ or ‘sameness’ between humans and animals).<sup>17</sup> This state of undifferentiation does not propose a unifying viewpoint but instead shows how the act of viewing can itself contain an agency that is not uniquely human. Furthermore, by conceptually naming multinaturalism, perspectivisms locate agency within the realm of the animate as well as the inanimate. Thus, in opposition to the gaze that is merely about ocular extensions of centralized power, perspectivist thought escapes the view of dominant visuality to encompass the modes of seeing that emerge outside of the range of the human eye and its capture.

My insights here touch upon, and also depart from, the recent turn in the humanities to new materialisms. The work on posthumanisms and new materialisms has been important as shifting epistemes that function within European logocentricity and the human-centered approaches that much of European continental philosophy has labored upon. Through a philosophy of vibrant objects, in which materiality enlivens through its active shaping of human and nonhuman events, Jane Bennett gestures to a nonhuman something else.<sup>18</sup> The expanded vocabulary of new materialist analyses are provocative. How can we read such work through the realities of marginality and expulsion faced in the growing extractive zones around the globe and through the regions that already experience biomatter as not separate from the human? How can we understand the human as already inscribed within the logics of coloniality?

There may indeed be an emergent consciousness about how to think about the natural world through other knowledge formations. As Diana Coole and Samantha Frost explain about the new materialist turn, “We are finding our environment materially and conceptually reconstituted in ways that pose profound and unprecedented normative questions. In addressing them, we unavoidably find ourselves having to think in new ways about the nature of matter and the matter of nature; about the elements of life, the resilience of the planet, and the distinctiveness of the human.”<sup>19</sup> Yet, Global South epistemologies and philosophies of race and racism, ranging from postcolonial and decolonial theories, to Indigenous critique, to Afro-based thought, to Black Studies to perspectivisms and relational models, have long anticipated the ways to differently imagine knowledge and perception as the foundation of planetary inhabitance. These other knowledge forma-

tions when grounded in the material relations of social ecologies form a sustained way to see and sense life otherwise. As Caycedo shows us, in the *Land of Friends* there is much to perceive anew.

### Other Views 2: *Land of Friends*

Yo no tengo ningún idea romantica de como era el pasado. Las cosas no estaban perfectas. La tierra quizás no se uso de la major manera.

Pero en sí eso de ninguna manera es raison ni logica de supultar todo el territorio.

I don't have a romantic idea about the past. Things were not perfect.

The land was perhaps not used in the best way, but that is not a reason or logic to drown a territory.

Activist in *Land of Friends*

As a Latina, mestiza, and once resident of the Magdalena River communities, Carolina Caycedo’s point of view draws from Indigenous relational understandings of land that imagine these geographies as enlivened and enchanted by its social ecologies. An artist skilled in multiple techniques and media, Caycedo is obsessed with the microlevel of gesture, social texture, and embodiment that contrasts the transparent logic of an extractive view that leaves no place “undiscovered.” In *Yuma: Land of Friends* (2014), a thirty-eight-minute video that experiments with the genre’s conventions, Caycedo focuses on seemingly small images and micromoments of everyday life to highlight the tensions and struggles between local fishing communities and Endesa’s conversion of the Magdalena River into hydroelectric power.

Importantly, the river was called Yuma by the Musica confederation whose inhabitants intermixed with the Incan extended empire several centuries before the river’s discovery by Spanish colonizers. In 1501, it was renamed after Mary Magdalene. As a symbol of these palimpsest histories, vernacular objects from the Musica confederation have recently been unearthed by the dozens during the drowning of territories by Endesa.

Panning across a dense view of highland Andean landscape, Caycedo expresses great affection for the Yuma River. Indeed, the fertile landscape at the center of *Yuma: Land of Friends* is an important way to feel the perceptual shift we are making against the extractive viewpoint and into a hybrid river nexus. Yuma territories are where Afro-Caribbean cultures meet



Carolina Caycedo, *Yuma: Land of Friends*, mosquito on hands, video still, 2014. Image courtesy of Carolina Caycedo.

the Andean region, and then one thousand miles further downstream find confluence with the Amazonian basin. By tracking these trans-regional spaces through long pans, Caycedo makes the river the flowing center of Huila residents' living.

Using her own photographs as intertextual stills, Caycedo opens the film with a satellite photograph of ongoing dam construction that has already blocked and diverted long stretches of the Magdalena. In the next scene, a large mosquito sits on a pair of folded hands. "I have no nostalgia about the past," an activist from Entre Aguas says. As he continues to talk, the soundtrack gets quieter to the point that his words are inaudible. In this way, human voices are decentered and minimized so that visual ontologies that frame the river become the subject of emphasis within the film. About the Magdalena River, Caycedo narrates in a whisper, "It's also the golden thread, a sacred place where the ancestors and spirits dwell. Yuma's strait is especially magic. We all have our own quotidian rituals, our own goddesses and gods. They are among us."<sup>20</sup>

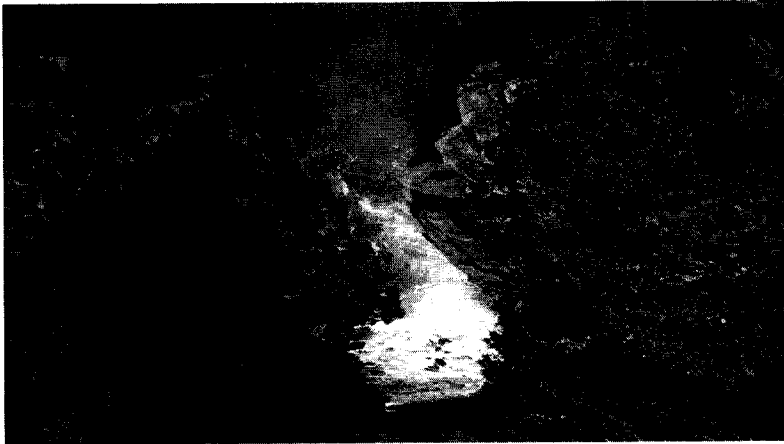
In the scene that follows, the director returns us to the satellite view of El Quimbo; her hand traces over the shadow terrain, the absent river, filling in the place where the river used to run before Endesa's construction in the Cauca Valley. The camera cuts to midlevel views of the river before holding for a full minute on a thick and squat waterfall that settles into a brown

shadowy pool of rock and ferns below. Then we are taken under the falls, into the beige then blue-gray space of moving water. We wait, holding our breath, acclimating, and we begin to see both clear spaces and those that are more opaque. We move with the ribbons of currents and the circling movements of oxygen below the water. We accept the fact that our sight is obstructed by the cloudy water, with pieces of leaves blocking the view, fleeting away, as small and then larger bubbles force us to try to find something familiar in the visual muck. In long takes that submerge the camera completely in the muddy water, the field of vision hovers in that transitional zone between the translucent and opaque, between oxygen bubbles and swirling currents.

The effect is remarkable: I felt as if I were seeing what a fish sees, perhaps itself an anthropocentric viewpoint. By dipping into the muck, Caycedo produced a fish-eye epistemology that changes how we might relate to Yuma as a sentient being, rather than as an extractible commodity. Coincidentally, the term "fish-eye" also refers to an extreme wide-angle lens shot in which the edges of the frame are distorted to a near circle, with the center of the image forming a pregnant bubble. Both meanings work for the kind of material and philosophical shift in perspective or "fish-eye episteme": an underwater perspective that sees into the muck of what has usually been rendered in linear and transparent visualities.

In *Yuma: Land of Friends*, Caycedo's camera often dwells on the movement of the brownish-green water, the moss-covered stones surrounding it. The river in Caycedo's perspective, inhabits a generative if turbulent landscape where the human, animal, and plant life that surrounds it lives off of its provisions. However, there is no illusion that the Magdalena River is an unspoiled utopia; its cold waters make swimming for long periods difficult; its small fish do not fetch a very good price in local markets; and overall the terrain is rough and untamed, and its currents dangerous to untrained swimmers and nonhuman animals alike. Yet, without lament, local knowledge accustoms to and becomes flexible with what the river offers. Submerged, from below, seeing out from underwater, how do we think about the complexity of ecology, humanity, and the conditions of other beings from the fish-eye point of view? And, as I elaborate upon throughout the book, how do nonnormative viewpoints from within social ecologies decenter the logocentric perspective of the human?

In a significant moment in the film, Caycedo's camera lingers on the



Carolina Caycedo, *Yuma: Land of Friends*, inverted view, video still, 2014. Image courtesy of Carolina Caycedo.

verdant green space. We are in the river's brown flow, surrounded by loud insects and birds and immersed within a roaring river's soundscape. The camera holds this still shot for three minutes; we breathe with the river's flow. Suddenly, and with the disorientation that comes from unexpected inversion, the camera is turned upside down, our view flips 180 degrees. From the top of the screen the river continues to flow, and this is the moment that fabrication breaks down, the instant we know that Caycedo has constructed the river world as the protagonist. The flow of gravity shifts, and the safety of our distant viewing is finally pierced. Caycedo's viewpoint is not only off-kilter but completely inverted, fundamentally reordering the river before us. What is this mirrored being that flows continuously from the top of the screen, the triangulated ferns that signal some kind of other worldly divinity? The gasping river, the inverted gaze we cannot move forward as we did before, now that we know of this place teeming, flowing, diverting our visions. The extractive view dissolves.

Earlier in the film, Colombian senator and opposition leader Jorge Robledo conjectures about the colonial and hydroelectric presence in the region. Offscreen, he states,

The key question is why did they come here? There are two theories. The theory for idiots is that they came to save us from underdevelopment,

un-civilization, and poverty. They came for one thing. The profit margins are higher here. Not that they can't use their capital and gain profits over there. The fact is that they gain more here, and under globalization policies they can move that money easily without the risk of it getting stuck so there is more motivation to come here, because in the current time there is not even the risk of a strike or a revolution.<sup>21</sup>

As he speaks, the camera remains focused on a still shot of the flow of the river. And then, when the interviewee begins to raise his voice and talk about something else, we no longer see him on camera, and instead the view returns to the river to become completely submerged within the brown water, as more foam streams to the surface. Robledo continues,

Y en la medida que han ido logrando, con la globalización que esa plata pueda entrar y salir libremente, sin los riesgos de quedar atrancada, con mayor razón intentan a venir más.<sup>22</sup>

And, to the degree that they have been able to, with globalization that money can enter and exit freely, without risks to forestall profit, giving more reasons for them to come and try the same thing again.

In the background track, the water echoes and finally drowns out the voice of technocracy, the flattening speech of a man-splainer; and, despite his solid analysis of the prevailing situation, what seems more important now, and again, is the river's voice. That is, Caycedo authorizes cognitive justice for the river itself, drowning out the global economy and its rationalized logic, and instead offers us the fish-eye point of view that sees below the surface.

In the scene that immediately follows, Caycedo introduces us to Zoila, an artisanal fisherwoman, who stands knee-deep within the Magdalena River. By moving from a fish-eye episteme to a local fisher, Caycedo emphasizes the web of local economies and perspectives. Behind the woman, the water flows at a surprising rate compared to her stillness. Zoila repeatedly throws out her net, casting it farther each time and gathering a few fish with each catch, the protein for the soup that she will later make for her children, grandchildren, and adoptive kids: "If there is nothing else to feed the kids, then you take these little catfish home, you make a cut here and take out the entrails, you cook them with onion and salt. Many times this makes for a nutritious broth; boil them for ten minutes and they are ready



to eat.”<sup>23</sup> The camera focuses on the small fish that Zoila catches, whereby the repetitive close-up of hands becomes the local perspective that resides within the extractive zone. This is not a stranger’s land but a territory of friends.

### Embodied Geographies

So far, I have addressed visualities and countervisualities within Caycedo’s oeuvre as doing important work to decolonize the extractive view. However, at a certain point, visibility can only take us so far into the realm of the senses and daily life experiences from within the extractive zone. In 2014, Caycedo, in conjunction with the local collective Descolonizando La Jagua (Decolonizing La Jagua) began a project that took into consideration the question of embodiment through a set of performances called “geo-choreographies.” These Earth-based performances are collectively authored to expose the dispossession of damming, as well as to show how kinesthetic movement by affected communities works to redirect the deadening logic of developmentalism. This work began through a series of choreographic workshops organized in partnership with Descolonizando La Jagua that engaged local communities in the towns of La Jagua, El Agrado, Oporapa, and Gigante. In recent years, Caycedo’s work has extended this project throughout the Américas, using a hemispheric framework that considers embodiment in relation to rivers throughout the continent. More specifically, Caycedo has performed and made work in collaboration with the ecological organization Friends of the LA River and with Indigenous networks and river defense projects throughout the United States, Canada, and Latin America.

Geo-choreographies theorize how water functions as connective tissue, wherein rivers express the microlevel of human embodiment. In this view, rivers form the arteries of liquid, as Caycedo puts it, “for the river is to water as the veins that carry our blood.” While I am not convinced by all of this project’s analogies, in that they sometimes reach into generalities about human bodies and rivers that leave little room for textured analysis, the aesthetic and performative work of these comparisons seem important. And though the colonizing move of Eurocentric thought and exploration first sutured Indigenous peoples and the female body to land and nature, Caycedo differently names these historical lineages, avoiding

the trap of essentialism through an artistic practice in which many angles and takes avoid a unidimensional view. While one might point to how this work could easily reassert the binaries of female/nature, indigenous/land, and human body/planet; ultimately, Caycedo’s geo-choreographies seek out forms of human kinesthetic movement that mimic or work alongside the motion of the river in an expression of collaboration with it.

Caycedo’s performance work in particular links to a genealogy of feminist performance praxis in the Américas that finds new ways to express the old questions of embodiment as it relates to land, ecology, and politics. For instance, the recent video piece by Guatemalan artist Regina Galindo, *Earth* (2011), expresses the dangers of extractivism as she stands in what’s left of a piece of land that has been cut through by a giant yellow bulldozer that digs out all around her. Though the reference to collective burials such as Ayotzinapa in which young Indigenous students have become fodder for the corrupt state is evident in Galindo’s piece, the video could just as easily reference more conventional forms of extractive capitalism that bulldoze the earth to reap capital from it. Whether in the violence and poetry of Ana Mendieta’s images and performances, or Laura Aguilar’s land-based photographs or the *Earth* performance by Regina Galindo, the dimensions within Caycedo’s work clearly link her to a feminist hemispheric genealogy of producing work about embodiment, disappearance, visibility, and against a normative and extractive view of landscape. In particular, the body of work shows us how to see from the perspective of the fish, or the inhuman, or even the local river communities to appreciate the transits between these bodies as fluid encounters of perception, engagement, and vernacular meaning. Through the performative mediations of community knowledge we learn how to move and be in relation to land and water otherwise.

Caycedo’s particular vision is multidimensional, integrating the formats of visibility, whether it be satellite images, still photographs, documentary video, installation, or the embodied collaborative performance work with communities that blurs the distinction between human and water bodies. Caycedo multiplies sources formats and materials to communicate the alienated conditions that extractive capitalism produces, foregrounding the issue of scale to directly respond to the question I initially posed: How does the micro matter anyway?

While much of “geo-choreographies” is a work in progress, these performative iterations are key to producing spaces of communal meaning

submerged perspectives that exceed where the corporate management and technological domination over La Jagua, Colombia. I showed how life along the Yuma River in Colombia, which stretches from the Caribbean basin through the length of the entire country, depends upon a vast and interconnected river system that hangs in balance as it is organized into an extractive zone. If the extractive view naturalizes hydropower as the inevitable solution to the voracious energy demands of global urbanization, then the art and performance work of Carolina Caycedo renders visible a range of submerged perspectives that see from below and beyond its viewpoint.

I have illustrated how regimes of visual power are both used toward extractive ends and find their inversion through the viewpoint of artists such as Caycedo. Fundamentally, Caycedo's visuality gives us tools for analyzing complex modes of power toward the decolonization of mestizx and Indigenous territories. She provides the texture and context for how to think differently about visual power as a digital colony of the extractive zone. The networked society from below counters extractive regimes that control, silence, and extinguish the rivers. Such decolonial viewpoints emerge from the struggles of local populations in relation to their own subsistence economies, and also in relation to what it means to be under surveillance within the extractive zone. In this vein, ASOQUIMBO and Rios Vivos activism and the moving artistic practice of Carolina Caycedo insist that the future is now or there will be no future. Despite the fact that new extractivisms and megaprojects leave little room for the subtlety of riverbed knowledge, but what the fish eye sees is precisely the muck of the neoliberal and colonial condition.

that avow the expression of territorial loss, and toward finding communal forms that abate the melancholia of ecocide or the sadness of experiencing the river's death. This anti-damming intersectional and coalitional work finds its resources in producing embodied art that intervenes in the normalized view of the extractive zone.

### Toward a Conclusion

I have been tracking social and knowledge formations that exist alongside the colonial developmental paradigm, showing how the extractive zone has not managed to fully colonize life, but reduces, eliminates, and destroys its heterogeneity. In this chapter, we returned to the river to analyze its

Carolina Caycedo, ASOQUIMBO, Rios Vivos, "We are not just the defenders of the river; we are the river," 2015. Photo courtesy of Carolina Caycedo.