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A Future Horizon for Restitution in a Film on the Argentinian *Puna*: Rubén Guzmán's *The Noise of Time*

Arnd Schneider

This article offers a detailed discussion of the film *The Noise of Time* by Rubén Guzmán (Argentina, 2021). The essay film is a poetic reflection on the morally questionable excavations and anthropological research by the early 20th-century Swedish-Argentine archaeologist-anthropologist Eric Boman (1867–1924), in the northwestern Argentinian high Andes (*Puna*). In this film Boman has to return as a ghost to the *Puna* to bury Carpanchay, his former indigenous guide, also now a ghost, in order to redeem for his bad deeds as an archaeologist-anthropologist in real life. This article explores the historical background and, extending on the film's metaphysical message, makes an explicit case for potential restitution (of artifacts from Boman's excavations that are now held in various museums in Argentina and Europe) in the context of the recent restitution debate.

A SENTIMENT FOR RESTITUTION

Restitution, here understood as being the return of cultural property, usually from Western museums and other collections to non-Western peoples, whilst having been on the agenda for several decades, has in recent years entered both academic and public debates with renewed force and in a major fashion. Spurred in part by the report of Selwine Sarr and Savoy (2018) to the French president Emanuel Macron, a number of art historians, anthropologists and media scholars have prominently, and with different emphases, contributed to

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the debates—among them Azoulay (2019), Hicks (2020), Savoy (2022), and Laarmann et al. (2023).[1] Moreover, restitution can be said to be part of broader efforts, stretching beyond academia, to redress injustices that resulted from European colonial expansion and its postcolonial aftermath, including (among many other issues) questions of land rights and sovereignty, language autonomy and educational rights, and contestations over memorial sites and monuments.

As regards film, the complicated and controversial status of non-Western art and artifacts in Western collections had been a subject early on, famously in *Statues also Die* (*Les Statues meurent aussi*, 1953, a film by Alain Resnais and Chris Marker), and while this film did not yet ask for restitution it made clear the hegemonic colonial context in which such collecting had occurred. Since then the topic of restitution has been variously addressed in both feature and documentary films (of a wide variety of genres), including the actual material return of analogue film or video material itself, as a repository and record of cultural property (e.g. Cohen 2018, Myers and Stefanoff 2020; on archival film and photography, cf. also Gustavsson 2021)—a critical review of the continued relevance of *Statues also Die,* and of these and other more recent films in experimental formats, I have already offered in Schneider (2021).

In this essay I want to discuss a particular case, which is the issue of restitution as a yet unfulfilled promise and possibility spelled out in the recent film *The Noise of Time* (Rubén Guzmán, dir. 2021, 64 mins.). It is precisely the inherent promise and potentiality on a metaphysical plane which interests me, and where the film offers a space to think of restitution as a future scenario to be negotiated and yet to be realized. The Argentinian film, in some sense unintentionally, lays out and creates room for such a scenario without demanding it outright. Thererefore while it is not explicitly developed in *The Noise of Time*, restitution as a continuous subtext is rather implicit in some of its plot, acting and dialogues.

The Noise of Time takes us on a journey to the *Puna,* the Andean highlands in northwestern Argentina, bordering on Bolivia and Chile. This experimental essay film, veering toward the fantastic and mystical, has as its subject the incursions into indigenous territory by the late 19th and early 20th-century Swedish-Argentinian archaeologist and anthropologist Eric Boman (1867–1924). Boman participated in the Swedish Chaco-Cordillera expedition of 1901–02, led by the noted Erland Nordenskjöld, and again in the French Créqui-Montfort and Sénechal de la Grange expedition of 1903.[2] Boman was in many ways a self-taught archaeologist, working at a time when the boundaries between the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology were not yet established, and the roles of *huaquero* (grave or tomb robber), collector, amateur aficionado, naturalist and scientist could be rather fluid—and Boman certainly assumed several of these roles during his lifetime (Gustavsson 2018, 50–51). Boman came from a poor background in rural Sweden, never finished his secondary education, yet showed an early interest in botany and a talent for learning languages, both French and Spanish, knowledge of which he probably exploited in a variety of teaching and administrative posts in high schools and teachers' colleges in Argentina. where he had managed to emigrate via Antwerp in 1888 (Gustavsson 2018, 52). One of these teaching jobs was in the Andean province

of Catamarca, another in Tucumán (Greslebin 1964–1965, 10). By the turn of the century he had become somewhat of a cultural broker for foreign anthropologists and archaeologists wanting to do fieldwork in northeastern Argentina (Gustavsson 2018, 51). Then in 1901 Boman was contracted by the Swedish Chaco-Cordillera expedition (of 1901–02), led by Erland Nordenskjöld, and later, in 1903, by the French Créqui-Montfort and Sénechal de la Grange expedition, as mentioned above.

In *The Noise of Time* the story is told and enacted through selections from Boman's writings, some of them explicit expressions of superiority and a racist research agenda, others marked by self-doubts as well as by poetic interspersion from writers and philosophers. The principal plot line of the film is that Boman (played by Itamar Hatarvi) has to return as a ghost to the realm of his investigations in the *Puna*, somehow haunted by his former existence and deeds as a researcher. Boman's ghost (speaking in his native Swedish) meets up eventually with another ghost, Pedro Carpanchay (played by Walter Ábalos, and speaking in Quechua) who as a historical figure in "real" life had been his indigenous guide, and in his ghostly manifestation now also is a wandering and restless soul who challenges Boman's research and biased understanding of indigenous people and who, importantly, demands that Boman has to bury him properly to release him from his itinerant fate and otherworldly predicament.

THE NOISE OF TIME: HAUNTED PRESENCES IN THE *PUNA*

The film is not a simple condemnation and denunciation of early 20th-century anthropology, but a multi-layered, poetic investigation of the complicated and controversial intrusions of a European mind and body into, absorption by, and appropriation of another, indigenous reality. This trope of a complicated anthropologist-interlocutor relationship is not unfamiliar in late 19th-century and early 20th-century anthropology, if we think for instance of the work of Franz Boas, and his relationship to George Hunt, who was not only one of his main interlocutors but really the coauthor of some of Boas's works among the Kwakwa_ka_'wakw First Nation, or Kwakiutl (as anthropologists called them then). This story has been extensively researched by the visual anthropologist Aaron Glass in a number of exhibition and film projects (for example, "In Search of the Hamat'sa: A Tale of Headhunting" 2004) and in a recent book (Glass 2021).

In *The Noise of Time* the controversial figure of the archaeologist–anthropologist, as if in a play of shadows ("My voice had become a shadow," says Boman at 16′31") is also evinced by the encounter, or rather disencounter of Boman's ghost in the town of Susques with a group of dancers and a child, to whom he remains invisible. It is as if a play of alterity is involved, where Boman cannot understand the natives and they cannot understand him; the deeper reason for this alterity being of course not only cultural distance but his unredeemed deeds which, at this point (as they had in real life), prevented him from a deeper understanding. Boman's own frustration with these failed attempts at cross-cultural communication are expressed in the following words:

"I always longed to be one of them, to share their days, their sorrows, their rites. But they didn't care! Because of me they abandoned villages, only to disappoint me, to convince me how useless my effort to want to know them was" (46'00"–46'30'').

This clearly reflects, as Göbel (2003, 145–46) rightly points out, a profound cultural incomprehension of the other by Boman and fundamental cultural disencounter with the local population furthered by the power differences, and his depreciative behavior toward them (on which more below).

In *The Noise of Time*, the haunted presence of the disturbed indigenous world takes form as Carpanchay's ghost, which eventually asks for reburial and, in a more fundamental sense, restitution. However, rather than being experienced by an empirical subject (who might become a topic of an anthropology or ethnography of haunting, for which cf. Good, Chiovenda, and Rahimi 2022), here the haunting is played out by actors on a metaphysical meta plane where the historical figures of Boman and Carpanchay (and by extension their empirical-ethnographic setting, i.e. the *Puna* itself) have become ghosts and thus haunting agents. Restitution here is figurative, fictive and posthumous, occurring in an almost Piranesian architecture[3] of ghostly wanderings in a hypnotically beautiful memory landscape. These wanderings include, at the end of the film, a surreal mirage image of a Swedish church on the vast expanse of a salt flat typical of the Argentinian and Bolivian *Puna,* followed by its impressive mirror-like interior façade (61'20''–61'30''), as well as scenes from Boman's childhood in Sweden. Eventually in these landscapes the soul of the restless wanderer is only redeemed when meeting up with another restless wanderer and finally allowing him to rest (Figure 1).

Thus in *The Noise of Time* restitution—as an atonement and reparation for Boman's deeds—takes place in the fantastical realm of the spirit world. The implications for restitution in *this* world however become apparent in the

Figure 1 Still frame, Rubén Guzmán, dir. (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

following key exchange between Boman and his indigenous guide, Carpanchay (Figures 2 and 3).

Boman: "And what do you want me to do now?"

Carpanchay: "To go back together to the canyon where I died. There you will bury me."

Boman: "I usually do the opposite" (at 48 mins.)

The terms of this exchange are clear, as Boman's practice has been precisely the opposite of proper burial, that is, ripping from the earth artifacts and also human remains of indigenous peoples, items which would end up stored and classified in certain museums of Argentina and Europe; for instance, in the Swedish Museums of World Culture, which include the World Culture Museum, in Gothenburg, and the Ethnographic Museum, in Stockholm, and in the Musée du Quai Branly and its predecessor the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. In order to sketch possible future avenues for restitution, more research needs to be done in the collections and archives of these and other museums which hold artifacts from the Swedish and French expeditions, and other excavations that Boman was involved in.[4] It is from the ethically problematic ways of collecting (on which more below), in other words, the "illegitimacy" (if we remember the Sarr and Savoy report, 2018, 29) of such museum holdings that the moral and ethical obligation to restitution arises.

The haunting presence of Carpanchay and the haunted state of Boman's soul in *The Noise of Time* also contains then a foreboding of a resolution, in fact restitution which might materialize in times and places beyond the film's own.

No mention is made in the film of specific museum collections, the final resting-places of artifacts from Boman's excavations and anthropological fieldwork, whether in Sweden, France or Argentina. There is only some reference to his stay in France from 1904 to 1908, which was financed by Créqui-Montfort (Gustavsson 2018, 53) while Boman was working with the materials from the expedition—and eventually publishing the results in the two-volume *Antiquités de la région Andine de la République Argentine et du désert d'Atacama* (Boman 1908, 1991 for the Spanish translation). Museums as final resting-places of artifacts unburied and dissociated from their owners loom large throughout this film, even if not explicitly mentioned. Museums which are, after all, also "great morgue(s)"—as the contemporary artist Christian Boltanski once called them (1991, 13).[5] And a morgue, because of its transitory and liminal character, is perhaps even more a place of haunting than a cemetery. Museums, where artifacts are bereft of their object and subject agencies from original contexts and dissociated too from their owners, and thus consequently "die," so too the lesson learnt from the film *Statues also Die (Les Statues meurent aussi*; 1953)[6] is that statues assume a haunting presence through their absence from their original places. Just as Carpanchay's and Boman's ghosts in the film have to engage in spiritual but for large parts haunted exchanges (before Carpanchay is properly buried), so too the artifacts from Boman's fieldwork, scattered in different collections around the world, are haunting their temporary resting places—and this seems to be precisely the message of the film.

Figure 2 Still frame, Rubén Guzmán, dir. (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

Figure 3 Still frame, Rubén Guzmán, dir. (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

Yet what Carpanchay is asking Boman, at this point, is not the material return of the artifacts to the soil, but rather the return of their spirits or souls (in the sense of *anima*), and this is exactly what Carpanchay's ghost is standing in for (in other words, representing all the souls of both human remains and cultural artifacts). Perhaps this is somewhat of a truism now (and not only since the ontological turn in anthropology; e.g. Viveiros de Castro 1998, Holbraad and Pedersen 2017, Heywood [2017]2023) that for many non-Western societies, those of the *Puna* included, the environment is animate and imbued

with spiritual agency and religious beliefs, and more so the remains of personal objects from people of the past, especially human remains.[7] Thus, to excavate, in fact unbury, artifacts and remains, whether they were deliberately buried or, with time, "just" turned into ruins and rubble,[8] implies a grave interference with and disturbance of their spiritual resting places. Such a profanation of sacred sites, by unsettling the ground, and involving acts of unsoiling and desoiling, will have to be redeemed in the spiritual realm (so the main gist of the film). It is only when the ghost of Carpanchay is properly laid to rest, that Boman, too, finally will be at peace. Hence a "reburial" has to be obtained in the spiritual realm first, and then–as I read the further implications of this film–a possible physical return to the original resting places or other appropriate sites might occur. This kind of restitution could be realized in negotiation with and on the terms of the local populations, for example, to the museum in the region accessible to them and where they might become stakeholders, or indeed to proper burial sites designated by them.

In their review of "hauntology" in anthropology, Good, Chiovenda and Rahimi write that "many anthropologists work in places … where ghosts of past violence return literally to demand restitution from the living" (Good, Chiovenda, and Rahimi 2022, 444). In the case of *The Noise of Time*, a fictional film, after all, this restitution is demanded and achieved on a plane of metaphysics, and in a first step with the burial of Carpanchay; but ultimately it could leave the double plane of fiction, where one ghost (Carpanchay) demands deeds from another ghost (Boman), to become an agentive demand for the living in this world.

The film does not explicitly advocate restitution, or problematize such a scenario, but one could envisage a future redemption, and of course return and reburial for any human remains and cultural artifacts, if that is what the indigenous peoples of the area want, that is the descendants of those peoples

Figure 4 Still frame, Rubén Guzmán, dir. (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

on whose territories the excavation by Boman had been carried out in the first place. In a crucial scene toward its end, the film makes very clear that reburial has to function on a spiritual plane, and this is why Boman's ghost has to bury Carpanchay (Figure 4).

Carpanchay: "Now Keep Your Promise. Bury Me!"
Boman: "Wait! Perhaps you can help me to stop wandering, it's unbearable."
Carpanchay: "You deserve it! The Ancients got you. Because you desecrated and plundered our sacred sites. That's why you came back and walk in torment." (55′00"–55′30′′).

A HORIZON FOR RESTITUTION

In a broader sense, to advocate a spiritual and eventually material return also means to return the "primacy of interpretation," and this is what the decolonial project in its broadest sense is also about. It is in this context that films, such as *The Noise of Time*, can meaningfully contribute to the restitution debate (and provide an answer to my question, "Can film restitute?" which I posed in my recent book, *Expanded Visions: A New Anthropology of the Moving Image*).[9]

The question that remains about what to do with collections, such as those assembled by Boman, is what many museums and collections the world over will now have to consider, through working with the communities and their descendants from whose territories objects had been extracted in the first place. Practices now increasingly common, through working with a local population, include establishing provenance, and eventually returning artifacts—which is what more recent decolonial archaeology also proposes in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America.[10] Accordingly the task would then be to establish, in collaboration with local institutions and the local population (including the descendants of those from whose territories these have been taken) the importance and meaning of artifacts collected by Boman and other members of the expeditions he participated in, and eventually to return results and also artifacts to the "original" peoples (what in Argentina are called the *pueblos originarios*).

The Noise of Time offers a first proposal about the avenue for restitution, not in a condemnatory tone but through opening a dialogical proposition for Boman and Carpanchay, and by suggesting initially a spiritual path to redeem for the deeds of the expeditions that Boman participated in. Consequently this new space for dialogue and the ethics it implies could be filled eventually with future conversations and negotiations between those holding Boman's collections in Argentina and abroad (in Sweden, France and elsewhere), and institutions and peoples from the areas whence the human remains and artifacts had been taken.

Then as now, archaeological excavations on indigenous, First Nation territories (*pueblos orginarios* in Argentina) are highly problematic ethically. In the present, to be carried out in ethically conscientious and responsible ways—apart from getting government clearance—they will have to include permission

from indigenous peoples (usually, through indigenous councils or other representatives designated by the communities involved) to arrive at ethically responsible collaborations; and ideally on research agendas which indigenous peoples determine themselves (for instance, to research contentious issues in their colonial or more recent past). Thus decolonial archaeology is not just a catch-word but a practical and ethical demand, without which archaeology on indigenous grounds is no longer possible. Collaboration not only means respect for indigenous customs and religion, regarding the spiritual status of objects and artifacts and especially human remains, but also inclusion of indigenous research agendas and methodologies.

In Boman's time, of course, there was mainly involuntary "co-operation" forced on local people by the European expedition members and local or regional representatives of the Argentinian state (often military personnel). It was co-operation based on the recent and violent incorporation of indigenous territory by the dominant nation-state, including the repression of an indigenous rebellion in Jujuy in 1875, and subsequent taking of prisoners—a practice continued also in later instances of insubmission. Thus the forced co-opting of indigenous labor in archaeological excavations reflected extremely asymmetrical and unequal relationships in regard to economic and political power (Karasik 2003; 2008–2009). Pedro Carpanchay, one of the protagonists of *The Noise of Time*, was one of those prisoners, and was obliged by the authorities to work for Boman as a guide—Boman in fact called him "my prisoner" (Boman 1991, 421 quoted by Karasik 2003, 184). Expedition members complicit in such practices in turn showed no specific respect for local customs and beliefs concerning burial grounds (both for human and other remains, and artifacts too). Unsurprisingly then, there was clearly reluctance and resistance by locals, people who were disgusted and repelled by the interference with and profanation of their sacred sites by these European expeditions.

It is clear from the reports by contemporary anthropologists and archaeologists, such as Juan B. Ambrosetti, Salvador Debenedetti and indeed Eric Boman, which have been extensively researched by Karasik (2003, 2008–2009), that the local population was very reluctant to collaborate, and so the researchers in fact had difficulties in recruiting manual labor. One reason for this was that fieldwork was typically carried out during the university vacations, in the summer months of January and February, which were also the months of intensive labor in the agricultural and pastoral economies with harvesting activities and caring for livestock (llama, alpaca, sheep and goats); and especially carrying out rituals marking the animals with colorful textile ribbons (*señaladas*), as well as carnival celebrations (Karasik 2008–2009, 200–01).[11] More importantly there was widespread reluctance, indeed refusal, to work in the *antigales,* the archaeological sites, and specifically in the burial sites so as to excavate human remains (skeletons and mummified bodies)—all of which stood high on the excavation agenda, as early 20th-century anthropologists or archaeologists wanted to show spectacular pieces, and use them for research in physical anthropology, rather than assemble less striking potsherds (*ibid.*, 201). In *The Noise of Time*, Boman's ghost characterizes his activity thus: "I picked

bones like the gleaner in the field" (4′14"). Rather than being a perhaps unintended filmic nod to Agnès Varda's seminal film *The Gleaners and I* (2000), depicting agricultural and other gleaners, ancient and modern, as eco-friendly recyclers, in Boman's case gleaning has more sinister undertones of a scavenging activity. It is clear from all reports that this practice interfered with the spiritual belief system of the local population, framed as "prejudice" or "superstition" by most archaeologists or anthropologists, of what were genuine expressions of disgust, anxiety and preoccupation by the locals. The landlady of the house where Eric Boman stayed, which he had requisitioned, was clearly disturbed and repelled by his every day bringing back great quantities of skulls and mummified human remains (Karasik 2003, 184; Karasik 2008–2009, 200–01). The anxiety over disturbance of the spiritual order was not just personal, as people directly feared that such an unsettling of the spiritual and indeed the material order would provoke bigger calamities for the community, such as droughts and inundations. Some locals who did work in the excavations (but refused to participate in the disinterments), offered as a remedy *ofrendas*, that is spiritual offerings, presented over the remains, so as to assuage the spirits, and to ensure their own and that of their communities' future well-being (Karasik 2008–2009, 202–04). In addition there was widespread threatening and use of armed force by the archaeologists and anthropologists, also with the help of agents of the local military, as a way to get reluctant people to take up the work, but also to provide food, and not least to obtain anthropometric measurements. Indeed, such operations continued violent practices for the subjugation of indigenous populations in Argentina during the 19th and early 20th centuries (Karasik 2003, 186–87; Karasik 2008–2009, 205). Anthropometric research was common at the time and followed the racist paradigms of its era and false theories about phrenology, but again it was met by reluctant local co-operation and often outright resistance. Boman did measure 36 individuals, but was perhaps not the most enthusiastic in his anthropometric research: it followed the system then current, one developed by Alphonse Bertillon, but which he did not find "sufficient to scientific ends" (Boman 1908, 524, quoted by Karasik 2003, 182). His ghost character in *The Noise of Time* seems to have doubts, too, pondering "Have I been fair enough? For the first time I doubt my observations, some based on Bertillon's system for criminals. Should I trust a system that served colonialism?" (6′20′′–6′52′′). Boman "only" published anthropometric tables, and the four individuals who are depicted photographically are fully dressed, not nude—as was often the case for anthropometric research by others, as Mora Rivera also points out (Mora Rivera 2009, 73, 79; see also Zamorano 2011, 440, 447 for the Bolivian part of the Créqui-Montfort expedition). In addition, in the captions Boman provided the names of individuals photographed, again not common at the time (though a notable feature of Rivers' seminal monograph *The Todas* in Rivers, 1906). But still Karasik (2003, 182) finds the people photographed to appear rigid and uneasy in their postures, and while Boman did question Bertillon's system, "he did not question the social relations which permitted that the indigenous people were turned into objects of scientific examination" (*ibid.*, 183).

As regards outright physical violence, or the threat of it, Eric von Rosen, another member of the 1901–02 Swedish expedition, and later to become a prominent member of the Swedish Nazi movement, did fire warning shots over the head of an indigenous man after he failed to produce a waist belt that he had been paid for (*ibid.*, 186–87).[12] In *The Noise of Time*, a scene where the army sergeant orders a soldier to fire shots above the head of Carpanchay, who had absented himself from the group, uncannily echoes this practice (45′30″).

THE ROAD TO RESTITUTION: EXPERIMENTS WITH AND EXPERIENCES OF A HAUNTED NARRATIVE LANDSCAPE

The Noise of Time succeeds in advancing its argument (of a restitution so far unfulfilled) through use of an experimental cinematic form appropriate to the subject. In this film the spirit world in human and non-human domains, and across European and indigenous spheres, becomes a powerful players in a plea for restitution; restitution that is embedded in the majestic landscape of the *Puna*—perhaps the ultimate spiritual plane, as metaphorically evoked by the iridescent salt flats and colorful mountains.

The surreality and hauntingness of these images are also transported by the *narrative landscape*, a term that I borrow here from the filmmaker Cyrill Lachauer (Lachauer and Schneider 2015, 22) and eloquently expressed in the following quote from a conversation with the curator Anna Schneider:

> [T]he starting point was the notion and issue of a narrative landscape. My concept of landscape includes everything that is located in a particular space: physical landscape, material culture, people, animals, atmosphere, inscriptions and blank spaces. Landscape is therefore a space in which all the parts, animated and inanimate, tell of one thing—of a particular culture, a particular history, or indeed a particular spirituality. […] I cared less about explicit historical narrative, especially as it is still written from a white-man perspective in the United States. […] I was more interested in the silent dimension of history that shows itself in small traces, that is inscribed in things, that has shaped people, without them being able to articulate it, and to which you gain access through experience. (Lachauer and Schneider 2015, 22)

Similarly, in *The Noise of Time* the landscape in its colorful and hypnotic surreal appearance as manifest in the Quebrada de Humahuaca canyon (near Tilcara, Jujuy province) where much of the film's shooting was done, becomes a foregrounded, haunted and haunting narrative agent in the film, not an illustrative background. The landscape in this sense is animated, a more-than-human actor, just as the mighty condor, seen surveying it from above (29′); and this sense of animation is clearly expressed in dramatic scenes of sunrays briefly illuminating majestic and dark mountains through low clouds, the rocky, arid landscape, and the surreal beauty of the colored mountains typical of that area (10′51″; 28′ and 36′). For Boman, then, the *Puna* is "not a region, it's an experience" (14′33″). Guzmán has a strong track record as both an

experimental and documentary filmmaker (13′), and the landscape as a narrative driving force has figured strongly in Guzmán's *œuvre* before, for instance, in *Amelina* (2019), a documentary about a single old lady living on a remote farm in the Patagonian province of Chubut (Argentina). In her younger days Amelina helped archaeologists to explore the area for rupestrian art and other material remains of indigenous cultures, and thereby acquired circumstantially an amateur knowledge of archaeology. In this film however Amelina appears as a very private and withdrawn person, while the imposing landscape, mountains, rocks and creeks take over and tell the story.

By contrast *The Noise of Time* is obviously a work of fiction, and its close reading in visual terms of the past and present actual landscape inscribed in it becomes apparent when one compares, or even merely beholds side by side, a number of photos taken during the Swedish Chaco-Cordillero expedition and particular scenes from the film. Here I mean in particular panoramic and panning shots over the *Puna*, but also establishing shots and close-ups of rocks, boulders and rocky fringes at the foot of mountain slopes which seem to correlate intriguingly. For instance, several "landscape" photos taking by the expedition appear almost to anticipate scenes in the film, where the small trek of Carpanchay, Boman, a soldier and a sergeant walk across the expanse of the *Puna,* take a rest; and later Carpanchay's and Boman's ghosts also sit down and talk, in landscapes with plants and boulders in the foreground (Figures 5–12).

Empty of humans as they may seem, these archival photos seem to extend an invitation, with a kind of eerie foreboding, to the encounters between Carpanchay and Boman. And in turn, in the film, despite their *mise en scène* character, the shots of certain scenes give the impression of referencing the photos. There are of course no one-to-one equivalences between the photos taken by the expedition and the shots taken for scenes in the film. Rather the visual imagery of the film appeals to a sense of recognition in the viewer

Figure 5 Still frame, Rubén Guzmán, dir. (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

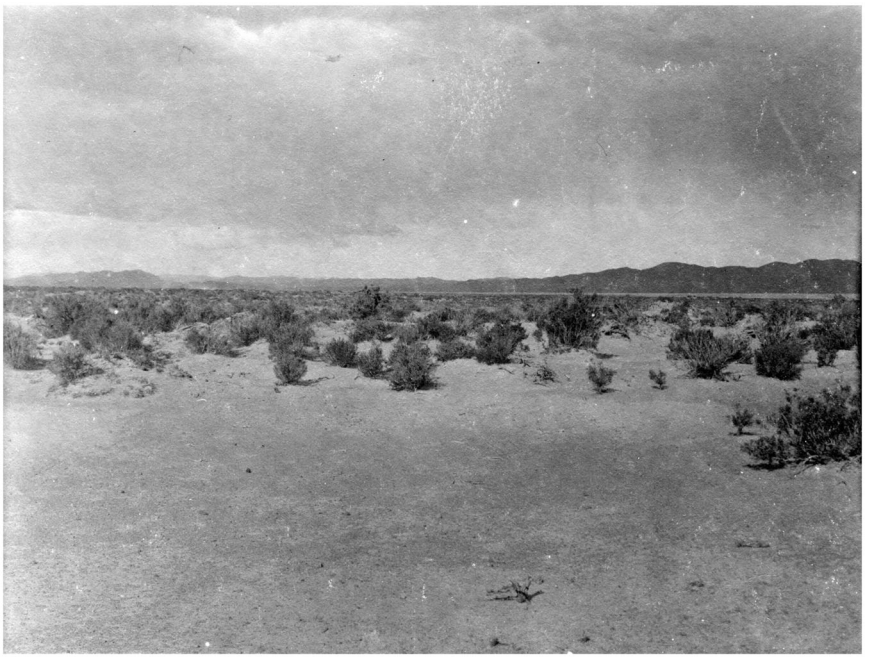

Figure 6 Landscape, Puna de Jujuy. (Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, 003650f; Swedish Cordillera–Chaco Expedition; photographer: Eric von Rosen, 1901-1902). (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

Figure 7 Still frame, Rubén Guzmán, dir. (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

familiar with some historical photography of the *Puna*, and particularly the Swedish Chaco-Cordillera Expedition's. Other photos from this expedition are noteworthy too, as they explicitly show the excavation of human remains or

Figure 8 Landscape, Puna de Jujuy. (Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, 003650d; Swedish Cordillera–Chaco Expedition; photographer: Eric von Rosen, 1901-1902). (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

Figure 9 Still frame, Rubén Guzmán, dir. (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

the notorious Eric von Rosen sporting a white tropical outfit, pith helmet, and standing with gun at his foot, amongst some local indigenous people.[14]

While some of the expedition photos lack any people, the photographer taking the shot and other expedition members walked through the landscape

Figure 10 Landscape, Puna de Jujuy. (Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, 003650b; Swedish Cordillera–Chaco Expedition; photographer: Eric von Rosen, 1901-1902). (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

Figure 11 Still frame, Rubén Guzmán, dir. (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

(often on narrow mule trails shown in the photos). But also in a material and perhaps curious way the photos have been walking through *it*, having been transported as initially unexposed and then exposed photographic plates on mule back (just like other expedition equipment was transported).

Figure 12 Still frame, Rubén Guzmán, dir. (2021. The Noise of Time, Argentina, MaravillaCine. By kind permission of Rubén Guzmán.)

Moreover, the hyperreality of the landscape was also something perceived by Boman, even if this meant ascribing a certain unreality to it, as Haber points out, based on a passage by Boman which is worth quoting at some length:

> The impression the PUNA produces in the traveler is so strange that he does not believe it to be real. One feels far away from the earth. With the slow pace of the exhausted mule, one seems to walk through a lunar landscape. The nakedness of nature is horrifying. Everything is transformed into gloom and silence; one does not smile anymore, and the chest tightens in this barely breathable air. Wherever one looks, the same somber tones, grey and undefined: the immense steppe with a sad yellow color, dirty with green-blackish spots, where the grey mountains with brutal contours, when one looks closely, appear to be a chaos of split rocks, and if one looks from afar, the clouds seem to be portents of thunderstorms. Harmony is completely absent. Everything seems to twinkle and flicker in this rarefied air: the objects do not have fixed contours, they are surrounded by a halo in the colors of the solar spectrum, as if one perceives them through very strong glasses. The sky is of a pale blue, almost never clouded. The rays of the sun do not encounter any resistance in penetrating this air of minimal density. The light is crude, it hits the eye like magnesium. There is no semidarkness, only sharply defined black shadows, and the ruthless white, incandescent light. The photos demonstrate it: the shadows are black as ink, and in the sunny parts the earth is so white that it seems to be covered by snow. When one looks at the photographs, one thinks there was a mistake in the exposure time or toning and fixing. […] (Boman 1991, 414–15, trans.; quoted also by Haber 2003, 170; capital letters in the original)

This passage is striking in several ways. It clearly shows the sense of estrangement and anguish that the majestic and yet monotonous vistas of the *Puna* produce in Boman. It is also remarkable for his explicit and implicit comments on photography, which seem to deliver the proof for the landscape of

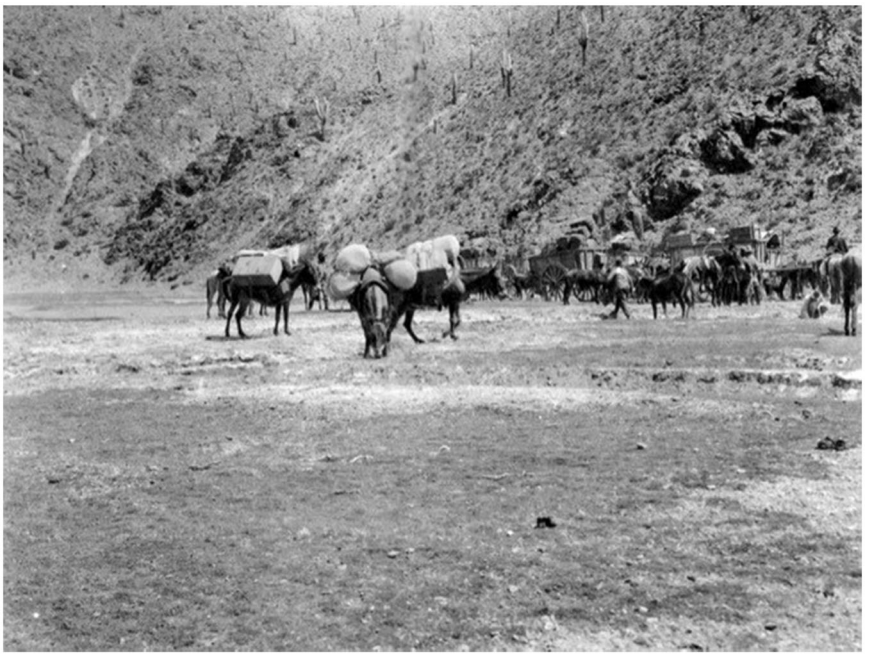

Figure 13 Pass at Quebrada del Toro. (Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, 003645; Swedish Cordillera–Chaco Expedition; photographer: Eric von Rosen, 1901-1902).

hard contrasts of incandescent light and hard shadows; even the sudden lighting up of the magnesium flash in use then seems to be implied, when he writes that the light hits (and presumably also hurts) the eye like magnesium. The crystalline brightness of high-altitude light of the *Puna*, however, is not just the innocent perception of the detached European observer. When Créqui Montfort and Sénéchal in the report from their expedition (one in which Boman participated) speak of the "marvellous purity" of light, where one does not need to use a reflector, they turn this into a welcome advantage for anthropometric photographs, coupled with the "capacity" of indigenous people posing still for lengthy periods for the camera (Mora Rivera 2009, 44, referencing de Créqui-Montfort and Sénéchal de la Grange 1904, 115). At the same time Boman's passage quoted above also shows the bias of the European traveler, when he writes that "Harmony is completely absent." Whilst harmony here is a relative, culturally contingent term (apparently having as its frame of comparison a European or other "civilized" landscape less naked than the *Puna*), another kind of harmony, that between or among spirits, humans and non-humans, was clearly perturbed by Boman and the other expedition members—as we have seen above in the accounts of their excavation of sacred sites and behavior toward the native population during the expedition.

The film *The Noise of Time* succeeds in a close re-reading of the landscape, while at the same time the landscape becomes an agentive force for the film, where Boman's bad deeds are inscribed in a now haunted environment and

which ask for redemption. Thus *The Noise of Time* seems to evoke a close reading of the travel photos from the Swedish expedition, but also photos and scenes in the film seem to reflect upon each other. Even if the film is not literally referencing the photographic record from that expedition, viewing still frames from the film and photos from the expedition together, and in close succession, prompts an uncanny feeling and impression of the blurring of the edges of the empirical index, of the record of "having been there" (in the photos), and the flowing into, ultimately as a confluence with another poetic reality in the film, which transports us into a metaphysical plane. In their turn the filmic still frames also affect a reading of the historical photos, which now seem to be animated by the spirits and ghostly characters from the film, curiously propelling forth both photos and film to a future horizon of possible restitution, following on redemption from bad deeds in the film.

In *The Noise of Time*, the ultimate heightening of reality to the point of surreality occurs in the final scenes, scenes where narrative landscape turns into a Piranesi-like narrative architecture, and Boman–now redeemed from his deeds by having buried Carpanchay–finds himself on the vast expanse of an Andean salt flat in the *Puna* (Figure 1), only to encounter on it, like a mirage, the Swedish Church of his childhood. And wandering through it, its walls have turned into a wondrous and miraculous Italian Renaissance interior (101′).

With *The Noise of Time* Guzmán has opened a new horizon for restitution. The film advances no ready-made solutions, but rather it can be read as a fable that the remains of other cultures in "our" Western museums, and the problematic, often violent histories of their acquisition will eventually haunt "us," and that restitution must be accompanied by acknowledgement of and atonement for deeds of the past, coupled with a spiritual redemption and eventual material return–only thus can a process of healing begin.[15] It is here where the film offers a space and horizon to think of restitution as a future scenario to be negotiated but yet to be realized.

NOTES

1. The recent debates on restitution still await a comprehensive review article; for the more specific field of the repatriation of human remains, specificially in the North American context, see for example, Nash and Colwell (2020), for the Argentinian context see note 10, below.
2. For some museum collections resulting from these expeditions, see note 4. Gustavsson (2018) (who has also been one of the researchers on *The Noise of Time*) provides an assessment of Boman within the disciplinary history of Argentine anthropology. For Boman's principal publication, see Boman (1908), published in Spanish translation as Boman (1991).
3. The allusion here is to Giovanni Battista Piranesi's imaginary and fantastic prison etchings, "Carceri d'invenzione" (1749–50; 1761).
4. See, for example, objects listed on the respective museum databases, https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-em/web/object/1860953 (accessed 3/05/23); https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-vkm/web (apply search term 'Boman'; accessed 3/05/23) http://archives.quaibranly.fr:8990/?id=recherche_grandpublic_detail&doc=accounts%

2Fmnesys_quaibranly%2Fdatas%2Fir%2FFonds%203%20-%20Mus%C3%A9e%20de%20l%27Homme%2FS%C3%A9rie%20I%20-%20D%C3%A9partements%20scientifiques%20et%20mouvements%20des%20collections%20%2FSous-s%C3%A9rie%20I2%20-%20D%C3%A9partement%20Am%C3%A9rique%20-%20Arctique%2FQUAIBR75_00000111%2Exml&page_ref=422805&unittitle=71.1908.23%20(Cr%C3%A9qui-Montfort)&unitid=D003180; (accessed 3 May 2023).

Boman mentions a second expedition in 1905 by Sénéchal de la Grange, the resulting collection yielding human remains and pottery (Boman 1908, 725–27). He did not participate in that expedition nor was he able to consult its collection during his stay in Paris, since Sénéchal de la Grange had donated it to the Museum of Anthropology in Monaco (*ibid.*, 727), today the Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology. According to the museum's director, Elena Rossoni-Notter, the museum is currently investigating the collection and is planning a publication from it (pers. comm., Rossoni-Notter 2023).

5. In the late 1960s when walking through the Musée de l'Homme, Boltanski was reminded of a great morgue (Boltanski 1991, 13).
6. The famous lines from *Statues also Die* (1953) are quoted by Sarr and Savoy (2018, 35):

   "When men perish, they enter into history.
   When statues perish, they enter into art. This
   botanical garden of death is what we call Culture."

   English language versions of the film also translate "die"
   (instead of "perish") and "botany" (instead of "botanical garden").
7. See, for example, Haber (2009) in relation to precisely the Puna de Atacama (in northwest Argentina, bordering Chile). See also Hockings' review of Too Many Stories, below.
8. But see Gordillo's account of the political and historical implications of "rubble" in his eloquent case study of the Argentinian Chaco (2014).
9. Arnd Schneider, "Can Film Restitute? Expanded Moving Image Visions for Museum Objects in the Times of Decolony," in Schneider (2021); see p. 148 for the return of the "primacy of interpretation".
10. See, for example, Londoño-Díaz (2020), Shepherd, Gnecco, and Haber (2016). Regarding the Argentinian context for discussions on restitution, and specifically of human remains (which several museums, including the Museo de La Plata, and Museo Etnográfico J.B. Ambrosetti have carried out over the past two decades), see for example Ametrano (2015), Bernabé (2020), and Gustavsson (2011). The legal background is legislation from 2001, i.e. Ley (Law) 22517 that specifies that human remains have to be returned from museum and private collections to indigenous and/or communities of origin (https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/ley-25517-70944; accessed 4 May 2023). For the specifics of obtaining consent and the right for indigenous communities to withdraw them, and enter into dialogical and collaborative research relationships, see the 2022 guidelines for scientific research in Argentina's National Parks, especially §36, 37, cf. https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/if-2022-58811426-apndtcapnac.pdf; (accessed 4 May 2023).
11. For current pastoralist practices in Argentine *Puna*, see Arzamendia et al. (2021), also Barbara Göbel (2002).
12. See Karasik (2003, 186–87) who is referring to the full account of the incident by von Rosen (1957, 215; trans. of von Rosen 1919). In the 1930s and '40s von Rosen

was active in the Swedish Nazi movement; his castle in Rockelstad was famous in Sweden for its swastikas and other Nazi imagery; Hermann Göring took refuge there after the failed coup against Hitler in 1923 in Munich. Von Rosen's sister-in-law, Carin, was Göring's first wife, and when in 1935 (early in the Third Reich) Göring remarries, Mary von Rosen, Eric von Rosen's wife, acts as the maid of honor and Adolf Hitler as best man, cf. Göbel (2003, 156–57, making reference to Fontander 2001); also https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_von_Rosen; (accessed 3/05/23).

13. For more information on Guzmán, see https://raymondbelugastudio.com/pages/pages/ruben-guzman.html.
14. For the photographic archive of the Swedish Cordillera-Chaco Expedition in the Swedish Museums of World Cultures, see https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-vkm/web/object/2246132/REFERENCES/2624 (accessed 3 May 2023); for von Rosen with pith helmet with indigenous people of the Bolivian Chaco, see https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eric_von_Rosen_bland_chorotes-indianer_i_bolivianska_Chaco._Chaco-Cordillera_expeditionen_1901-1902_-_SMVK_-_003594.tif; (accessed 3 May 2023).
15. von Zinnenburg-Carroll (2022, 27, 67, 170) elaborates on the notion of healing, discussing the possibilities of repatriation for the *penacho* or *Quetzalpanecáyotl*, the famous feathered Aztec crown in the Museum of World Cultures, Vienna.

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