

REPRODUCTIONS:
POLITICAL AND AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN
CONTEMPORARY CHILE AND ARGENTINA, 1980-2015

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Reproductions examines the politics of cultural reproduction in Chile and Argentina by analyzing literary and educational institutions in the era of neoliberal governance. I advance two arguments: (1) parallel to neoliberalism's consolidation, the university and an emerging theory canon become necessary prostheses for the literary institution's reproduction and, (2) study, when understood as a form of unwaged, reproductive labor, transforms educational institutions into potential sites for anti-work politics. *Reproductions* explores the implications of the increasing dependence of literary production on educational institutions and their social reproductive functions.

Part One joins the growing consensus that struggles against capital have moved from the terrain of waged, productive work to that of unwaged, reproductive labor. I assemble an archive that exposes a representational crisis in the ranks of Chile's 2011 student movement. Beneath the opposition of peaceful, student protestors to violent, masked rioters, I suggest a point of solidarity in their shared marginalization from wage-labor. This helps me reconceive study as reproductive labor against the neoliberal model of study as human capital investment. Turning from university politics to its theorization, I contend that philosopher Willy Thayer's genealogy of Chile's neoliberal university defends academic labor at the cost of reifying the myth of university autonomy and obscuring the work of study. My argument culminates in what I call study-without-end,

at once an alternative pedagogy and anti-work politics, developed in dialog with the research militancy of Colectivo Situaciones, a theory collective active in the wake of Argentina's 2001 economic crisis. As practiced by the collective and their interlocutors in Argentina's unemployed workers' movements, study-without-end heralds the possibility of instituting ephemeral moments of political-economic autonomy.

Part Two shifts from social reproduction through educational institutions to the cultural reproduction of the literary institution. I contend that the consecration of theoretical fictions penned by two generations of contemporary Chilean and Argentinean writers is symptomatic of a convergence among literary, critical, and educational institutions since the 1980s. In Ricardo Piglia's understudied late works, I see a critique that intervenes in the reproduction of the literary institution. Piglia blurs the boundaries between criticism and fiction in order to prefigure his works' reception and contribute to their canonization. Among the youngest generation of novelists, Pola Oloixarac adopts similar novelistic strategies. By addressing her work to a university-educated audience, she ingratiates herself with the literary institution's gatekeepers. I return to the earlier generation to show how Diamela Eltit's writing insists on the banal objecthood of literature. Unlike her contemporary Piglia, Eltit threatens the literary institution's reproduction by voicing a non-reproductive desire.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Bret Leraul earned his B.A. *magna cum laude* in Comparative Literature at New York University in 2009, including coursework at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (2007). After studying German and Comparative European Literatures at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (2010-11), he studied Comparative Literature at Cornell University, earning an M.A. in 2014 and Ph.D. in 2018. While at Cornell, Bret conducted interviews and archival research in Chile (2012) and Argentina (2017) with grants from the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies and the Graduate School; his writing was awarded the Comparative Literature Essay Prize (2018) and honorable mention for the Peter Uwe Hohendahl Graduate Student Essay Prize in Critical Theory (2012); he delivered presentations and lectures with support from the Graduate School, the Latin American Studies Association, Ashoka University, and the Universidad Nacional de La Plata. Since 2017, he is a member of the editorial collective of *LÁPIZ*, the journal of the Latin American Philosophy of Education Society. In August 2018, Bret joined Bucknell University as a Visiting Faculty Associate.

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Philosophers like to ask, “What is thinking?” But they never ask what are the necessary social conditions for that particular way of performing the activity of thinking. . . . Resembling the artist in this respect he sets himself up as an uncreated creator . . . who owes nothing to the institution.

—Pierre Bourdieu. “The Philosophical Institution.”

Digamos que, en un sentido, son conversaciones ficticias; éste es un libro donde los interlocutores han inventado deliberadamente la escena de un diálogo para poder decir algo sobre la literatura.

[We could say, in a sense, these are fictitious conversations; this is a book where the interlocutors have deliberately invented the scene of a dialogue in order to be able to say something about literature.]

—Ricardo Piglia. *Crítica y ficción*.

INTRODUCTION

The Primacy of Reproduction

In 2011, people in the North Atlantic awoke to the untenability of life under neoliberalism. It seemed that young people across the region could no longer abide the precarity of their tutelage having learned the bitter lessons of the financial crisis of 2008. In the United States, the Occupy Wall Street movement for the first time indicted finance capitalism for forty years of growing wage stagnation and wealth inequality. They brought their bodies to reside in the entryways to Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan echoing the homeless encampments springing up in the shadows of glittering Silicon Valley, whose intellectual property-driven primitive accumulation was already crowning it the new center of finance capital. In Spain and Greece, people similarly gathered in city centers to place their bodies in alliance against the austerity measures of structural adjustment to the new regimes of sovereign debt financialization. And in Quebec and California, university students manifested their opposition to the withering away of public higher education and, in California, the mortgaging of their futures to finance growing student debt. Although not in response to 2008, even the Arab Spring began as a struggle over social reproduction, sparked by the confiscation by Tunisian police of a fruit seller's informal means of subsistence. This figure marginalized from the wage reflected to many unemployed and underemployed youths that they too might not outlive precarity.

The Quebecois and California students joined in solidarity with their peers in Chile whose protests had begun earlier in the year. Like the Arab Spring, the Chilean student movement was not a response to the crisis of 2008 or some other sudden decline in the fortunes of everyday people. Like other Latin American economies, Chile weathered the crisis relatively unscathed; its economy is still dominated by commodity exports whose principal Chinese market was largely unaffected by the atrophy of financial systems in the United States and Europe. Instead, the cycle of protests that began in 2011 mark the belated response to the years of Chile's pacted¹ transition to democracy and the permanent austerity and thoroughgoing privatization of the neoliberal society installed under Augusto Pinochet. The Chilean movement differed from many of its contemporaries—notably Occupy and the Quebecois and California student strikes—in another key regard, its longevity. Year after year, massive demonstrations—some mobilizing as much as ten percent of the country's population—maintained pressure on the government for an overhaul to higher education while at the same time indicting the country's elitist democracy, yawning wealth inequality, and all manner of social injustices and everyday hardships attributable to neoliberal democracy.

Surveying these various struggles in the years following 2011, I was struck by the ephemerality of some and the durability of others. Why do some movements burn out like flares that only signal toward possible futures while others endure through the night? The answer seems to lie with the degree of institutionalization, where by “institution” I

¹ In political science, a pacted transition to democracy is one in which ruling elites negotiate or pact the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule. While often seen as positive for the viability of the resulting democracy, pacted transitions tend to foster elitist democracies that mimic or otherwise continue aspects of their authoritarian predecessors.

understand a discursive structure composed of repertoires of behavior and social relations repeated over time.

The Chilean 2011 cycle was able to reproduce itself thanks to the student federations. Born of the continent-wide *Autonomía* movement of 1918—the first major reform to higher education that coincided with the first wave of economic modernization in Latin American polities—Chile’s student federations have outlived authoritarian and democratic regimes. But their longevity is not autonomous—the Chilean federations derive their institutionality from their respective universities—just as the 2011 movement, in particular, cohered thanks in no small part in opposition to the government, that is, by practicing a politics of representation, recognition, and demand. While the opportunism of the federations is admirable—they redirect the resources of other institutions toward their own, more democratically determined ends—they run the risk of mimicking their hosts, a fact I saw reflected in the strident reformism that channeled the movement into electoral politics in 2013.

The question then becomes not simply, “Why do some social movements endure while others do not?” but specifically, “How can movements ensure their reproduction beyond the institutional priorities of capitalist and statist institutions?” Or, recalling the global stakes of 2011, “How can we autonomously institute the reproduction of the social?” In the last instance, this question motivates this dissertation.

We are living a crisis of social reproduction. We see it in the dismantling of welfare states and social provisioning regimes around the world; in the decline of birthrates in middle and high-income countries from Western Europe and Japan to the

former Eastern Bloc; in the outsourcing of care work from disintegrating kinship units to the low-wage service sector in advanced capitalist countries like the United States; in the continuing dispossession of subsistence farmers across Africa and Asia generating intranational migrations that swell urban centers, the industrial reserve army, and informal economies as well as the unabated international immigration from peripheries to metropolises; in the slow violence meted out by degraded ecosystems on the verge of collapse. All these are symptoms of social reproduction crises whose common denominator is global capitalism, and specifically the ongoing primitive accumulation, both extensive and intensive, at the territorial limits of capital² and those internally created.³

As the above examples make clear, this is a generalized crisis, although its instantiations are modulated by historical and regional specificities. It is a generalized crisis not only because, historically speaking, social reproduction is the limiting condition of capitalist accumulation, but also because, formally speaking, reproduction is the condition of possibility for long-lasting transformation. Bearing in mind that humanity and its activities are inescapably embedded in the totality of social relations—including the social relations by which we metabolize our environments—reproduction is not only the production of the same, what we could call normal reproduction, it is also the production of the new, or crisis reproduction.

As I deploy it, reproduction is the knot that binds repetition and difference in the history of the social. The emancipatory political orientation of my work aims at leveraging the passage from normal reproduction to crisis reproduction in order to show

² See Luxemburg.

³ See Polanyi.

how we might harness these constant crises of reproduction—for they are not new, but endemic to capitalist accumulation—to free social reproduction from its capitalist yoke. As the process that produces labor, the source of labor value on which capitalism ultimately depends, social reproduction is its limiting condition of possibility. As such, it can be wielded as a powerful tool of anti-capitalist politics, a growing numbers of scholars and activists are learning from socialist-feminism.

The rub is that refusing to work, the primary tool for struggles against capital in the realm of production, when applied to the realm of social reproduction, would also mean refusing to reproduce ourselves. What a reproduction strike teaches is that the refusal to labor for capital must be paired with the political will to work for ourselves, at once subtracting and redirecting reproductive labor toward the institution of collective autonomy. This was the strategy of some student protestors in Chile that I study in Chapter One, who occupied their schools, stopped studying for the reproduction of capital, and self-managed their education by collectively determining what and how they studied. It was also the strategy of the Movimientos de Trabajadores Desocupados (MTDs) studied in Chapter Three, who embraced forced unemployment as the chance to work for their communities—both in social production and social reproduction—keeping at bay the mandates and temptations of the wage labor system to produce and reproduce autonomously.

Reproductions addresses this historical crisis of reproduction under neoliberal capitalism by studying reproduction as the formal condition for long-lasting transformation. Specifically, it studies the politics of cultural reproduction in

contemporary Chile and Argentina through an analysis of the intersection of literary and educational institutions since the 1980s. I advance two main arguments: (1) parallel to neoliberalism's consolidation, the university and an emerging theory canon become necessary prostheses for the literary institution's reproduction and, (2) study, when understood as a form of unwaged, reproductive labor, can be leveraged to transform schools and universities into sites for anti-work politics. My goal is to show how literary reproduction under neoliberalism is increasingly entangled with educational institutions and their social reproductive functions.

My argument in "Pedagogies" departs from the growing consensus among scholars and activists that social reproduction, as both the limit of capitalist production and necessary supplement for its reproduction, marks the preeminent site for struggles against post-Fordist labor regimes and neoliberal modes of capital accumulation. By including study alongside domestic, affective, and other forms of reproductive labor, I reframe Chile's 2011 student protest movement to expose a dual representational crisis in its ranks. Beneath the movement's constitutive opposition of peaceful, student protestors to violent, masked rioters, I identify a point of solidarity in these figures' shared marginalization from wage labor. This common denominator radicalizes a movement seen as reformist by reconceiving study as reproductive labor against the financial model of study as human capital investment. Turning from university politics to its theorization, I argue that philosopher Willy Thayer's genealogy of Chile's neoliberal university defends academic labor at the cost of reifying the myth of autonomy and obscuring the work of study. My argument culminates in what I call study-without-end, at once an alternative pedagogy and anti-work politics that I develop in dialog with the research

militancy of Colectivo Situaciones, a theory collective active in the wake of Argentina's 2001 economic crisis. As practiced by the collective, Argentina's unemployed workers' movements, and Chile's student occupiers in the 2011 cycle, study-without-end heralds the possibility of instituting and reproducing otherwise ephemeral moments of political and economic autonomy.

In "Fictions" I turn from educational institutions and pedagogical practices to examine the reproduction of literary and critical institutions in their contemporary, regional manifestations. Broadly stated, I argue that as literature and its canons wane in social importance, the theory canon and its university host become increasingly necessary prostheses for the literary institution's reproduction. I explore this claim through three studies of authors whose novels play on the indistinction of literature, criticism, and the university. I identify in Ricardo Piglia's body of work a pedagogy of literary reproduction for the era of institutionalized theory. Piglia blurs the boundaries between criticism and fiction in order to prefigure his work's reception and, in effect, to contribute to his self-canonization. Among the youngest generation of novelists, Pola Oloixarac adopts similar novelistic strategies. By addressing her breakout novel *Las teorías salvajes* to a university-educated audience she ingratiates herself with the literary institution's gatekeepers, Piglia among them. And in Diamela Eltit's work, I draw attention to the constitution of her corpus through thematic and formal repetitions across her novels that perform an avant-garde desire not to reproduce the literary institution. By habituating her audience to her corpus, her work institutes itself even if it desires to institute otherwise than as literature.

In the broadest terms, *Reproductions* seeks to ground the reproducibility of institutions and the institutionality of reproduction in the pragmatics and politics of work. My thinking departs from Marx's claim that every process of social production is also an act of social reproduction (*Capital Vol 1*. 711). Where Marx's claim applies to the capitalist social totality, Anthony Giddens scales it down, clearly demarcating a space for actions and agents, even individual ones. At the same time, Giddens makes it a property of every social structure, what he calls the duality of structure (25). Refocusing on labor through the lens of Marxist feminists, social reproductive labor not only reproduces the working class⁴ but also produces the sociality of society (Fraser 23). If we conceive institutions as social subsystems, by combining these points we can say that institutions owe their institutionality to the work of reproduction, before whatever social function they perform or content they produce. This *primacy of reproduction* explains the existence of vestigial institutions that outlive their specific function for society at large. While writing this dissertation, I have been beset by the creeping sense that the university and literature may soon be counted among them.

To explicate the inseparability of production and reproduction in the institutional context, let us take the examples of education and literature. Although the function of modern educational systems may be the reproduction of capitalist social relations, the function of each school and university is first and foremost its own maintenance through time. By the same logic, each institutional actor—whether student, professor, or administrator—produces for the institution only insofar as she ensures, at the very least, her own reproduction. In the end, each action reproduces the conditions of its possibility.

⁴ See, Bhattacharya, Dalla Costa and James, Federici, Vogel.

We might call this the reproductive primacy of the smallest agency or, more prosaically, simply survival.

This study centers educational institutions and pedagogical practices, because education and pedagogy are increasingly important to the reproduction of the literary institution. Part One of this dissertation focuses explicitly on educational institutions as sites for social reproduction and on study as the generalized form of their reproductive labor. This shift in emphasis—from the educational process to the labor of study—problematizes the production of knowledge—about a social movement (Chapter One), about the university (Chapter Two), about pedagogy (Chapter Three)—by seeing both process and product as reflections of the primacy of reproduction for institutions.

We can speak in analogous terms of the literary institution—analogue but not the same, for the literary institution, as I understand it, is primarily discursive. By way of contrast, educational institutions combine the semantic function of instituting—for Luc Boltanski, the illocutionary force of “designating the whatness of what is” (75)—with the coercive and policing functions of administrations and the coordinating functions of organizations (Boltanski 79). Literature then only *names* the coordinated actions of other institutions—chiefly, the mass media and education—whose primary function may be only indirectly reproductive of literature.⁵ Since the material conditions of its reproduction lie elsewhere, the literary institution is left to designate what counts as literature. By virtue of the collaboration of sender and receiver in the constitution of symbolic goods, the reproductive labor that lends the literary institution its institutionality

⁵ I should note that the term *literature*, in my usage, is always institutional. I variously refer to literature, the literary institution, and the literary field. By extension, literary works are crystallized labor understood as a set of social relations.

lies in reception, hence the centrality of criticism and education—specialist reception and non-specialist reception, respectively—in the treatment of my literary objects.

Each of the three authors studied in Part Two write what can be called *works of reproduction* that perform reproductive labor that maintains the literary institution. In particular, each responds in different ways to the shifting relationship between literature and the university and the institutionalization of theory⁶ in the mid-eighties in Argentina and the early nineties in Chile. Piglia self-canonizes by anticipating his critical readership by theorizing the literary in his novels and short-stories; Oloixarac satirically interpellates that same readership through her first novel's mimicry of the theory canon; Eltit performs the act of instituting in the repetitious constitution of her corpus gesturing toward the demystification of literature.

Bearing in mind the semantic understanding of instituting, the fact that the literary institution is largely discursive allows us to think literary works as *works of reproduction*, that is, as directly engaged in reproducing the literary institution.⁷ Of course, one could focus on the reproductive labor performed by their authors—for example, as teachers, mentors, or students—but this is not my focus here. Seeing literary works as reproductive agents complicates those sociologies of culture that would reduce literature and art to expressions of social interaction. It also complicates political-economic readings that would reduce artistic objects to their status as commodities, as immaterial goods resulting

⁶ I have tried to avoid taking a position on what counts as theory. Not only is the term variously denoted and connoted in different linguistic, regional, national, and institutional contexts, I am less interested in what theory is than in what role it plays in the particular cases I study. In this work, theory and the theory canon are more tokens and operators than a category of text united by an identifiable set of shared characteristics.

⁷ Such a claim touches on the thorny issue of whether non-human things—like books, machines, animals—labor, a question whose importance has been recently highlighted by the advent of artificial intelligence, but one that is central to Marxist political economy. That debate falls outside the scope of this dissertation, and I believe that my focus on reproductive work as the work of instituting justifies its bracketing.

from a peculiar production process only formally subsumed by capital.⁸ Both approaches largely disregard the specific content and form of the literary and artistic objects produced. While these analytical lenses certainly inform my reproductive readings of Piglia, Oloixarac and Eltit, I have attempted to show how their works, in both form and content, directly engage with the reproduction of the literary institution. Having discussed the organizational principles of the dissertation's two parts, I turn now to a detailed summary of the argument of each chapter.

Chapter One, titled “The Pacted Political Education of the *Inviernos chilenos* – Chronicle, Human Capital, and Other Representational Regimes” reads the 2011 Chilean student protest movement through its textual representations beyond the news media in which it largely transpired and the sociological tomes that made it an object of university knowledge. Parallel to official narratives, I expose a dual representational crisis, at once mimetic and political, coursing through the movement and the Chilean conjuncture, one largely disavowed by representations and representatives of the student movement. To make this argument, I call on an anonymous pamphlet found at marches and later circulated on the internet that defends the masked and hooded protestors, or *encapuchados*, reviled by the government and student leaders alike for their recourse to vandalism and violence. I argue that as the anonymity of the *encapuchado* confounds the regime of identification on which liberalism's moral economy rests, so the anonymous authorship of its defense confounds the political logics of textual representation like those harnessed by student representatives Giorgio Jackson and Francisco Figueroa in their

⁸ For the difference between formal and real subsumption in Marx, see Chapter Two, p. 99.

books about the movement. I critique Jackson's *El país que soñamos* and Figueroa's *Llegamos para quedarnos* at the level of their generic institution as *crónicas* –in its contemporary, regional manifestation– for perpetrating what Kristin Ross, writing on the legacy of May '68 in France, calls a “biographical confiscation” of a mass movement. In order to account for the anti-identitarian and anti-mimetic *encapuchado* as a part of a movement that is not one, I decompose its foil through a materialist analysis of the transfiguration of the student beginning in the lead-up to the neoliberal reforms to higher education in 1981, first and in theory, as a student investor in her own human capital and, then as a practical consequence of the first, as a student debtor. My interest in reading the *encapuchado* and the student as *figures* produced and captured by representational regimes –mine among them– is to transcode them into a form conducive to a mode of criticism alternative to the journalistic and sociological approaches that have dominated the discursive construction, reception, and analysis of the movement.

In tracing the composition and recomposition of the student in terms of its future labor, I ask if reconceiving the student's activity, namely study, as a form of present, unremunerated, reproductive labor performed in the service of future, productive, waged labor might dislodge the representational regime of human capital and the moralizing control and command mechanism of debt. I develop this argument with a reading of a collection of interviews with students, who, in the winter of 2011, occupied and self-managed their secondary schools. Through this example, I suggest that a notion of work beyond productive *and* reproductive instrumentalization by capital, what I call *study-without-end*, subtends the divisive figuration of the movement into peaceful, student protester and violent, masked rioter.

Chapter Two, “Aporia, Apocalypse – Willy Thayer’s University of *la Transición*”, turns to Chilean philosopher Willy Thayer’s influential *La crisis no moderna de la universidad moderna* (1996) and subsequent works on the university. Through a close reading of those texts, I obliquely criticize the tradition of writings on the ‘Idea of the University’, in which Thayer’s text – with its readings of Kant, Descartes, and Nietzsche – is deeply rooted. At the level of method, if Chapter One asserts the value of a literary and discourse analytic reading of Chile’s 2011 movement against its dominant sociological and journalistic reception, Chapter Two counters Thayer’s philosophical, albeit deconstructive, reading of the university with one guided by historical materialism (and in line with the emerging field of Critical University Studies).

Thayer wants to rescue philosophy from the ruins of a university dissolved in the capitalist facticity of Chile’s pacted or intransigent Transition to democracy. He does so, I argue, by reflecting reflexive critique thereby rendering philosophical speculation aporetic and inoperative, as registered in the text’s querying refrain, “How to speak non-universitarily about the university?” from a position in the university. In response to Thayer’s aporetic critique and its accompanying apocalyptic-messianic worldview, I argue that utopian thinking understood as critique in the future tense offers a dialectical antidote, one that reaffirms the movement of history and, along with it, human agency within contemporary capitalism’s networks of capture and command. Finally, through an immanent critique of the author’s subsequent essays and little-known public interventions defending the free time needed for the work of philosophical speculation, I claim that Thayer’s theory of the university forgets the material conditions of its own production,

and, in so doing, reinscribes the divisions between material and immaterial labor, between the philosopher and his poor.

Chapter Three extends the argument of the preceding chapters by returning the ruins of the Idea of the University to the larger context, introduced in Chapter One, in which education is recast as a mode of socially reproductive labor. “Instituting Autonomy – Colectivo Situaciones and Pedagogy in the Impasse” examines the deeply rooted but largely overlooked pedagogical interests of the Argentinean, activist theory collective Situaciones, whose work takes shape through the collective’s participation in horizontal political organizations that worked against waged labor in the wake of Argentina’s 2001 economic crisis. In contrast to Thayer’s non-university, university knowledge, Colectivo Situaciones practices an alternative mode of knowledge production forged outside academic circuits in dialogue with social actors and inseparable from the shifting, political conjuncture. Parallel to the so-called return of the state under the Kirchner administrations that, for the collective, creates an historical *impasse* for Argentina’s autonomist movements, I identify a shift in the collective’s militant research away from how to think the emergence of new sociabilities to their maintenance, to holding them in a suspense that is not an *impasse*.

Specifically, I analyze how the collective’s collaborative re-writing of Jacques Rancière’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* with popular educators in the Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados de Solano (MTD-S) reimagines the imbrication of knowledge production and its pedagogical reproduction for the purposes of autonomous institutions seeking to maintain a space outside both the wage relation binding labor to capital and state-interpellated political subjectivities. The resulting notion of anti-utilitarian

knowledge that I call an *unending grammar of questions* is developed in a 2008 text co-written with the semi-autonomous school Creciendo Juntos. There, members of the school and the collective outline autonomous, post-state institutions that might reproduce and maintain autonomous, popular modes of knowledge production. I conclude with a reading of a roundtable discussion among Italian philosopher Paolo Virno and members of the collective and school. There, Virno affirms in theory the school's practices by advocating for the institution of popular autonomy and suggesting the infant as metaphor and model for such institutions. Gesturing toward Agamben, Virno understands infancy as a condition for history, embodied in a disposition of openness to possibility, the capacity to create regularities in precarity and to find patterns in contingency. I claim that this infantile condition of history subtracts autonomy from Argentina's conjunctural *impasse* by releasing a study-without-end or unending grammar of questions from the instrumentalization of knowledge production and reproduction that composes students and workers as figures of capitalist futures.

With Chapter Four, *Reproductions* pivots from educational to literary institutions, from reproductive work to works of reproduction. "A Pedagogy of Literary Reproduction – Ricardo Piglia and Emilio Renzi" argues that the critical fictions of Argentinean author Ricardo Piglia critique the literary institution by intervening in literary reproduction. Specifically, I suggest how Piglia shapes his readership's horizon of expectation by prefiguring a second-order mode of reading that short-circuits the distinction between literature and criticism, art and life. In reproducing his paranoid, conspiratorial mode of reading, I suggest that Piglia institutionalizes his institutional critique, contributing – behind the author's back – to his self-canonization.

I trace Piglia's pedagogy of literary reproduction and its canonizing effects in the pages of his understudied late works. For example, I closely read the pedagogical scene that concludes the essay "Ernesto Guevara, Rastros de lectura", discovering in a typographical error between the first (2005) and second printings (2014) the mark of an absent student whose orthography Piglia's Guevara corrects with his dying words. At the same time that this reading illuminates the asymmetries of power that attend any explicative and stultifying pedagogy (regardless of its ideological slant), I see in Piglia's Guevara a model for Piglia's own prefigurative literary pedagogy.

Continuing my investigation into the life-writing genres from Chapter One, I turn to the first volume of Piglia's long-awaited diaries, *Diarios de Emilio Renzi. Años de formación* (2015). I argue that the text's overdetermined authorship at once suspends the reader between the possible worlds of its undecidable referentiality and catches her in Piglia-Renzi's second-order observation, for like "Ernesto Guevara" the Diaries are structured by a series of scenes of reading and, in particular, of reading oneself. I contend that the architecture of the autobiographical subject that Piglia builds into Renzi's diaries is inseparable from the text's material, social, and institutional contexts, that is, the community of readers and writers crystallized in the minor literary institution of the autobiographical genre, whose material inscription not only reflects Piglia-Renzi's life to others, but whose reflection of himself transforms the writer into a reader of his own life-become-text.

I conclude with a reading of Piglia's last novel, *El camino de Ida*, which combines detective story and campus novel to narrate the violent eruption of anarcho-primitivism in the halls of a fictionalized Princeton University, where Piglia taught until

his retirement. *El camino de Ida* reframes the questions of intellectual commitment and political violence raised in the Che essay(s), calling into question the institutional form of (literary) study, and threatening its ossified rituals and canons with an anarchic autodidacticism. Through the main character –a thinly veiled Ted Kaczynski– the novel infiltrates the literary institution and its pedagogical reproduction by threshing its fictional kernel from its realist chaff; for in its pages, much as in those of *Madame Bovary* or the *Quijote*, fictions become the basis for a violent world forming and letters are transformed into letter bombs. *El camino de Ida* raises the possibility that Piglia’s pedagogical subject, rather than institutionalizing institutional critique, in fact may destitute the literary institution by subtracting and affirming its autodidactic capacity.

Where Chapter Four retrospectively imputes a pedagogy of literary reproduction to Piglia’s already canonized body of work, Chapter Five examines ongoing consecration processes in the youngest generation of writers. “The Theory Canon Performed” takes a cultural sociological approach to the work of Argentinean writer Pola Oloixarac, in particular, her break-out novel *Las teorías salvajes* (2008). If Piglia’s work may be read as a pedagogy of literary consumption for the era of cultural theory, Oloixarac’s novel—in its content as much as its position-taking in the field—demonstrates an apprenticeship well accomplished.

Oloixarac’s first novel can be classed as a theoretical fiction, in the tradition of Piglia, but more importantly I see it as what I call a university fiction, texts that may represent the university milieu, as in *Las teorías salvajes*, but that more importantly find their primary reception in the university. Instead of the more commonly accepted ‘*ficción crítica*,’ I employ ‘theoretical fictions’ to highlight these texts’ entanglement with the

historically specific formation John Guillory calls the ‘theory canon.’ I do not track down theoretical references or reconstruct its underlying philosophy as if they were *romans à clef*. Rather, I read *Las teorías salvajes* as indexing the theory canon and performing its constitution making the text exemplary of the entanglement of a university-bounded theory canon and recent novel writing in Chile and Argentina. Like Guillory, I differ from new historicist claims that the novel has an unmediated pedagogical relationship to the reading public. Instead, I believe that the pedagogical function of theoretical fictions relies on the brick-and-mortar educational institutions, specifically universities, that produce and reproduce the theory canon. In this sense and despite their tremendous differences, Piglia, Eltit, and Oloixarac take not just criticism in general but university criticism in particular as their privileged field of reception thereby ensuring the restricted circulation of their cultural wares.

Las teorías salvajes illuminates the function that theory and the university play in the reproduction of the literary institution. Oloixarac’s meteoric rise is a textbook example of institutionalized anomie that Bourdieu identified as the logic of artistic modernity: the boundary struggles among generations or schools of cultural producers for the right to designate what counts as art. In *Las teorías salvajes*, this appears as the satire of the university and pastiche of theoretical discourse, the critique of *setentismo*—at once the heroic mythologies of seventies leftist militancy and its associated culture of memory—and the demolition of the machismo that saturates both. Institutionalized anomie in Oloixarac’s novel combines political patricide with cultural inheritance. *Las teorías salvajes* creates a chiasmus between these two fields and their logics, and Oloixarac denigrates less the novelistic forms and conventions of her predecessors—as in

Bourdieu's thesis—than their political convictions. In so doing the political autonomy her novel claims for art—understood as both the *ars poetica* and *ars technica*, as the cultural production and digital technologies she fetishizes—is in fact cultural inheritance, the repetition of the same gesture of difference within the unchallenged paradigm of the literary institution.

I go on to analyze this concatenation of politics and art in the scandal aroused by Oloixarac's celebrity performance of her authorial persona, particularly on social media platforms. As *Las teorías salvajes* straddles high and low discourse, so Oloixarac's authorial persona has been constructed in consecrated and emergent discursive spaces. Similarly, the mixing of the logics of the restricted and general economies of the literary field have stoked the minor scandals that have contributed to her fame, most recently, her 2015 support for right-wing presidential candidate Mauricio Macri. *Las teorías salvajes* has been read largely in the key of intergenerational conflict, and it was this gendered polemic with a state-sponsored image of the past under the Kirchners that provoked controversy and contributed to Oloixarac's minor celebrity. At the same time, these scandals obscured the pressing question about the role of theory in the novel.

In conversation with recent discussions about the emergence of the theory novel, I show that *Las teorías salvajes* is neither a parody nor an elaboration of theory but a satire of the university and an ironic ethnography of theory's reception and dissemination among students of her generation. Namedropping in the novel functions similarly to Oloixarac's Instagram posts with famous authors and her blogging about encounters with others. As these paratexts associate Oloixarac with figures who collectively embody the literary canon, so do Oloixarac's indexical references to theory point us beyond specific

theoretical texts to a theory canon. The montage techniques practiced throughout as parody, pastiche, and satire, not only index the theory canon but also imitate its form, for consecration, too, is a kind of recontextualization from the general to the restricted literary economy, whereby texts are encapsulated by the author's signature, listed, and enumerated. In its bid for consecration, *Las teorías salvajes* reflexively performs the act of canon formation: the composition and administration of a social milieu—the restricted field, literary institution, or republic of letters, depending on one's choice of metaphor—in the form of a list of references. Insofar as canons are historically situated in educational institutions, they are instruments for discursive reproduction. To the extent that *Las teorías salvajes* at once mimics the canon form and reflexively performs the act of canon formation, it is a work of reproduction that presumes to work to reproduce the university that materially supports, increasingly alone, the restricted literary field.

As Chapter Four did with Piglia, Chapter Six reads Diamela Eltit's canonized body of work through the lens of her most recent text *Fuerzas especiales* (2013). "‘Formulae in the process of failure’ – Diamela Eltit's Non-Reproductive Desire" argues that the author's body of work performs a non-reproductive labor that threatens to short-circuit literary institutionality. I claim that the autoreferentiality of Eltit's body of work, like Piglia's, helps educate her audience by providing it with a canon of common places by which to navigate her fragmentary narratives. But whereas Piglia transforms auto-reference into second-order observation that allows his novels to prefigure the field of their reception, for Eltit, auto-reference signals a turning-inward of her body of work that is also a turning-away from the field. And whereas Piglia dedifferentiates theory and fiction in order to reproduce the literary institution in his image, Eltit's work recalls the

Romantic desire to differentiate art and life and specifically its avant-garde variation to do so by dismantling the institution that secures the frontier between them. Eltit's avant-garde gesture is the way in which her novels unwork themselves. Her texts would be, as the narrator of her 1991 novel *Vaca sagrada* says, "formulae in the process of failing," the inevitable if not purposeful failure of her texts as works of literature (105). My corporeal reading of her works contends that in turning away from the field her texts attempt to perform an autonomous act of *instituting otherwise* than literature.

In each of the author's fictional and testimonial narratives, Eltit's formal choices supersede the text's referential and communicative functions to render it performative. At the same time, this "baring the device" —like so many modernist and avant-garde texts before hers—functions as a critical, metatextual instance that draws the reader's attention to the scene of enunciation and the moment of reception. The formal vertebrae of *Fuerzas especiales* are the repetitions that bombard the reader at the level of the novel's syntax, structure, and themes. In *Fuerzas especiales*, repetition is a banal subjugation, a slow violence the text inflicts as much on the reader as on the characters' waged and policed bodies.

Repetition not only structures this particular novel, it structures Eltit's corpus. And this corpus is constantly referenced in *Fuerzas especiales*. From my analysis of *Fuerzas especiales* I cull three commonplaces that I analyze in her other works: the scene in *Lumpérica* (1983), the count in *Jamás el fuego nunca* (2007), and the sublime in *Mano de obra* (2002). I develop my analysis of the last to claim that Eltit's sublime an/aesthetics harbors her non-reproductive desire. Through this lens I am able to place

her work in a longer trajectory that coincides with the history of modern literature and specifically to place it in relation to the avant-gardes to which she is so clearly indebted.

Carefully parsing aesthetics understood, on the one hand, as the philosophy of perception and, on the other, as that same philosophy applied to works of art, I show how the sublime has become a limit case that indexes the constitutive anaesthetic aspect of aesthetic experience. At the same time, I suggest that the art institution recurs to the anaesthetic to distinguish art from an increasingly aestheticized capitalist life-world. Paradoxically, the anaesthetic is the *modus operandi* of the (neo)avant-garde's political project to indistinguish life and art. From this I claim that, while sublime anaesthetics may succeed in defamiliarizing, deautomatizing or otherwise shocking us out of our anaesthetized state of suspension in the everyday phantasmagoria, this experience never crystallizes in the critical cognition that could be directed against the capitalist social relations that are its root cause. Rather than reject the reifying and anesthetizing life-world, society instead rejects the art-object's sublime incomprehensibility. Much to the chagrin of the avant-gardes, this rejection in turn confirms art's autonomy, its distinction from everyday work, its complicity with capitalism as an expression and reflection of reified consciousness. At most, a text's sublime presentation of our incomprehension remits us to that institution which nominates these strange objects as art.

Eltit builds on this awareness of the institution to outline a different strategy to achieving the same non-reproductive goal. Repetition is the force of habit, and habit is the medium of an *everyday* anaesthetics of the sublime present as much in her texts as in her writing practice. The force of habit suggests a different relation between reproduction and repetition. Recalling my claim in Chapter Three that the labor of autonomous

instituting begins by identifying in a given situation regularities that do not become rules, I suggest that through its self-constituting production of repetitions and regularities, Eltit's corpus performs a similar act of institution. In this sense, the turning inward of her body of work that is also a turning away from the field can be seen as an act of self-institution otherwise than as literature.

The Epilogue meditates on the notion of autonomy, parsing its usage in the dissertation's three primary fields of reference: education, literature, and political economy. Autonomy, I suggest, is inseparable from reproduction by virtue of the term's often overlooked ontological pole—what I term *autonomy-in-itself*—that constitutes subjects and identities through the relational difference of *autonomy-from* and *autonomy-with*. The liberal understanding of autonomy-from is pivotal to literary and university autonomy. But conceived on the model of the formal, individual subject that preexists its autonomous exercise of will, these institution's autonomy-from expresses a negative freedom often misconstrued as apolitical and asocial. By contrast, the kind of autonomy-with practiced by new Latin American social movements—from the Zapatista's to the MTDs—exercises a positive freedom that reveals the constitution of subjects through autonomy-in-itself otherwise obscured by liberal autonomy-from.

I conclude that the creative, ontological dimension of autonomy-in-itself is the work of instituting, in the semantic sense of designating the whatness of what is, and that the work of instituting is a form of reproductive labor. Building on my findings from Chapter Three, I advocate for designating the whatness of what is from a position of collective ignorance that poses the world as a problem, as an excess of reality, in order to ensure that this inner logic never atrophies into rules or norms that reify collective

consciousness, but remains open to the historical processes of collective self-determination, of autonomous political subjectivation. This is the wager of situational thinking, of research without an object, of study-without-end: to supply the epistemological practices necessary for the continual process of becoming inherent in the political practice of collective autonomy-with that is also always autonomy-in-itself.

PART ONE

PEDAGOGIES

CHAPTER ONE

The Pacted Political Education of the *Inviernos chilenos*: Chronicle, Human Capital, and Other Representational Regimes

Our values and beliefs inhibit us from looking upon human beings as capital goods, except in slavery, and this we abhor No less a person than J. S. Mill at one time insisted that the people of a country should not be looked upon as wealth because wealth existed only for the sake of people. But surely Mill was wrong.

–Theodore W. Schultz. “Investment in Human Capital.”

“That point in the city where statistics don't reach”

In June 2011, as the protests of Chilean university students became a truly mass mobilization, the announcement by President Sebastián Piñera (2010-14) of the Gran Acuerdo Nacional de la Educación (GANE) (The Great National Education Agreement) and the government's repeated calls for dialogue fell on deaf ears. July saw the entrenchment of both sides. Calls by the student federations for more demonstrations were answered by tens and hundreds of thousands of protestors on the streets of cities across the country. Students already occupying more than six hundred universities and secondary schools fortified the barricades. On the other side, the police made use of increasingly repressive tactics while government ministers continued their media assault in order to sway the stubbornly favorable public opinion of the movement. By August 2011, the confrontation between protestors and police reached a fevered pitch, and the situation seemed poised to erupt in widespread violence. In the weeks before the fatal

shooting by police of sixteen-year-old Manuel Gutiérrez on the night of August 26th, an anonymous manifesto began to circulate on the internet and on pamphlets at marches and sparked debate on social media within the student ranks. Although its provenance has been hotly debated, “En defensa de la capucha” is symptomatic of a crisis of representation within a movement itself predicated on the crisis of representation that inaugurated Chile's post-Transition⁹ period.

If I cover my face with a rag it's not out of fear, it's out of shame. And not for my stone, but for your threat. That threat that shuns dialog, that ultimatum by which, without meaning to, you told us, “The time for marching is over.” By what authority can you stop the march of history? It's true, I'm not a student. I'm an infiltrator in your marches, I don't belong in your distinguished school buildings. I'm the waste of this “order,” I'm delinquent (*flaite*) and tough. Don't try to explain me. They instructed me by blows, and with blows I will teach you Don't think that I belong to any organized group I don't even know the word “ideology,” I'm interested in being the sociologists' object of analysis. I'm delinquent, that's it (*Soy flaite y punto*) For you, the occupation is an anecdote. For my family it was a way of claiming a plot of land. They disperse you with tear gas, us with bullets. Not in the center, of course, but in the periphery, that point in the city where statistics don't reach So don't try to control me, whether by reason or by force. I am the anti-slogan I am the hidden face, the hood.

In the national imagination, *el encapuchado*—which translates as the hoodlum, hood, or literally, the hooded one—came to figure the vandalism and pitched battles with police that followed in the wake of the more than thirty marches that swept across the country in the winter of 2011 and many more in subsequent years. As such, the *encapuchado* was equally repudiated by the government and the student federations, who

⁹ The Transition most commonly refers to the period after the 1990 return to democracy, many believe that *la Transición* came to an end with the election of Sebastián Piñera, the first president in twenty years elected from a party outside the coalition of the Concertación. The 2014 re-election of Michelle Bachelet at the head of new coalition, La Nueva Mayoría, largely composed of those parties that formed the Concertación, contradicts the linearity of this periodization. Jackson's last chapter suggests, however, that *la Transición* begins with Pinochet's 1980 constitution, and that it will only end when it is overhauled. In contrast to these political accounts (in the narrow sense of professional politics), in Chapter Two, below, I present Willy Thayer's political-economic periodization, which dates the beginning of *la Transición* to the neoliberal counterrevolution of the 1973 *coup d'état*.

were engaged in a fierce media battle over public opinion. For both the movement and the government, the *encapuchado* came to bear all the weight of illegitimate violence. While there were debates between certain sectors of the militant student base, particularly secondary school activists organized around the ACES, and the bureaucracies of the university student federations over the use of violent means for political ends, in the media, student leaders roundly rejected the *encapuchados* and their “tactics.” From the perspective of the leadership, the state’s violent repression of pacific marchers could be leveraged to delegitimize the government’s position. In this sense, the student movement—like all movements based on acts of civil disobedience— did in fact make use of violence to achieve political ends, just not their own. In doing so, it reinforced the state’s right to monopoly violence and, through its media representations, politicized it to the movements’ ends. From the perspective of the “Defensa,” occupation is not a political tool, but an everyday means of taking possession in order to survive. Likewise, violence is not some exception, but a fact of everyday life in the poor and policed peripheries of the city. Its eruption during marches marks only its displacement from the periphery to the center.

Although “En defensa de la capucha” gives voice to a crisis of political representation within the student movement—a crisis that was exacerbated by the decision of its most prominent leaders to seek election to Chile’s Chamber of Deputies in 2013—the *encapuchado* does not partake in organized politics. As the text declares, “Don’t think that I belong to any organized group I don’t even know the word ‘ideology’” (“Defensa”). The *encapuchado* is a liminal, collective figure that bursts into the instituted politics of student leaders and politicians played out in the Chilean media,

threatening the glass house of legitimated discourse with a barrage of stones. In this sense the *encapuchado* figures not only a crisis of political representation within the movement. It also affects a parallel crisis of mimetic representation. Indeed, its speech in the “Defensa” is already a breach of the contract between constituted and legitimated identities that condemns the constituent mass to the silence of the real and the supposed senselessness of the violent act.

In this chapter, I trace this double crisis of representation largely disavowed by the representations and representatives of Chile’s student movement. In addition to the figure of the *encapuchado*, I will conjure its foil, the figure of the student. Not only do I claim that the student movement constitutes itself through the exclusion of the *encapuchado* whose appearance affects a crisis of representation. The figure of the student is itself in crisis as it comes to buckle under the weight of successive representations and modes of capture; from the educational reforms of 1965 onward, we must add to the student as subjected subject of a disciplinary society, the student-as-human-capital-investor, and its interface with finance capital, the student-debtor. My interest in reading the *encapuchado* and the student as figures captured and produced by representational regimes—mine among them—is to transcode¹⁰ them into a form conducive to a literary mode of criticism, which offers an alternative to the journalistic

¹⁰ I draw here, of course, from Fredric Jameson’s definition of transcoding in *The Political Unconscious*: “If a more modern characterization of mediation is wanted, we will say that this operation is understood as a process of *transcoding*: as the invention of a set of terms, the strategic choice of a particular code or language, such that the same terminology can be used to analyze and articulate two quite distinct types of objects or ‘texts,’ or two very different structural levels of reality. Mediations are thus a device of the analyst, whereby the fragmentation and autonomization, the compartmentalization and specialization of the various regions of social life (the separation, in other words, of the ideological from the political, the religious from the economic, the gap between daily life and the practice of the academic disciplines) is at least locally overcome, on the occasion of a particular analysis” (25).

and sociological approaches that have dominated the discursive construction, reception, and analysis of the movement. My hope is that this act of mediation will allow me to “locally overcome” the fragmentation and alienation of social texts I analyze by weaving a critical narrative whose red thread runs diagonally through contemporary Chile’s economical, political, and social conjuncture (Jameson, *Political Unconscious* 25). This narrative transcoding is also the effect of a dislocation of the events of 2011 that interrogates the easy and unexamined coincidence of words and things, voices and bodies. Within this space of a possible interrogation, of a narrative insinuation, I will begin to show how a notion of work prior to any productive or reproductive function, a purposive but purposeless work, subtends the divisive figurations of these two social actors in the 2011 movement (Chapter One), of the philosopher and the worker (Chapter Two), the teacher and the student, researcher and her object (Chapter Three).

It is also hoped that this transcoding will allow the resultant figures to be read in terms analogous to those I employ to read two books published in 2013 by former student leaders: *El país que soñamos* by Giorgio Jackson, president of the Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad Católica (FEUC) from 2010 to 2011, and *Llegamos para quedarnos* by Francisco Figueroa, two-term vice president of the Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile (FECH) from 2009-2011¹¹. My interest in these two texts lies in their similarly fraught mimetic relationships to the events of 2011; both

¹¹ Willy Thayer, whose theory of the university occupies much of the following section, has claimed that since Chile’s 1973 *golpe de estado*, events and their mediation can no longer be separated, since “mediation occurs, it does not cease to occur, mediation does not stop co-occurring (*co-incidir*) in the event (*acontecimiento*) or the event in the mediation” (*Fragmento* 35). At the same time, Thayer states in the same essay that, “the circulation of what occurred as a memory and document collaborates with the conversion of the Coup, the event in whose activation we find ourselves, in a past case” (30). For Thayer, the event of ‘73 and, he implies, events since that time are not discrete but incessantly recur. For a more detailed discussion of Thayer’s perceived shift in temporality see my discussion below on the role of apocalypse in his work.

student leaders write what can be classified as *crónicas*¹² in the run up to their campaigns for election to Chile's lower house of Congress.¹³ I am aware that by reading texts written by former student leaders, I may be seen as contributing to the personalization of a mass movement, what Kristin Ross, writing on the memory of May '68 in France, calls the "biographical confiscation" (4). On the contrary, I do not want to read the movement *through* these texts or "En defensa de la capucha," to privilege either the texts or their authors as means of access to the 'real' occurrences of 2011. Rather, my intention is to read them as part of the discursive construction of that year, as stillborn attempts to represent a mass movement that resists representation. Such a reading parallels my secondary hypothesis, that the mimetic mode of these *crónicas*, endowed with the authenticity and authority of the witness-author, implies a politics of representation which occludes the constituent mass, which qua constituent *must* exceed dominant regimes of representation—mass media and sociology—and more minor ones like those mobilized by Jackson and Figueroa, as well as my own.

Not a student, not organized, not social, the *encapuchado* of the "Defensa" would seem to be a purely negative or reactive counter-identity, identifiable only by its violence. This would be a double oversight. First, the *encapuchado* is not merely a reactive identity but rather an anonymous potentiality or virtuality. Secondly, the text's anonymous author not only claims to act as an *encapuchado*—"act," for the figure is its action, not only

¹² Although chronicle is the direct English translation of *crónica*, I have chosen to use the Spanish term throughout this chapter as a way of insisting on the specific regional construction, insertion, and circulation of the form. This choice assumes that genres are socially and historically conditioned, minor literary institutions.

¹³ I have chosen not to examine the book published by Camila Vallejo, the president of the FECH from 2010 to 2011 and the movement's most prominent spokeswoman, *Podemos cambiar el mundo*, because it is a collection of speeches and interviews. As such, its scene of address differs from the works of Jackson and Figueroa, and only tangentially raises similar questions concerning mimesis.

violence but also hooding—but twice declares “I am *flaite*, that’s it.” For the sake of clarity, it will be important to give translate this culturally specific term, even as doing risks exercising the power-knowledge of identification that the text rejects. *Flaite* is a low class, largely masculine identity within a certain youth subculture prevalent in Santiago’s peripheral neighborhoods. Its cultural markers in behavior (drug use, petty crime, blowhard confidence), dress (faux, brand-name sneakers, bowl or mullet haircuts, tattoos), and speech (a distinctly lower class, youth sociolect) situate the term in a referential field delimited by socioeconomic class.¹⁴ In calling the *encapuchado flaite*, “Defensa de la capucha” highlights the latent even repressed class character of the figure of the student and its movement, a point to which we will return. By placing a classed identity behind the *encapuchado*’s mask, the “Defensa” does not therefore close the metonymic chain opened up by the *encapuchado*’s anonymity. Rather, I want to argue, the “Defensa” composes an amphibious figure, the *encapuchado-flaite*, that operates sometimes within and sometimes in excess of representational and identificatory regimes.

I have suggested that “En defensa de la capucha” mimetically *represents* a crisis of political representation that began to emerge between the student leaders, student federations, and the militant student bases and other social actors. To do so would privilege the logics of representation and expressive causality that the text wants to refute. Instead, or rather, in addition, we should read the text as *affecting* a representational crisis, beginning with its anonymous authorship. Like the *encapuchado*’s hooded and masked face, the author’s anonymity is essential to the text’s mode of

¹⁴ This is not to identify the speaker of Defensa with a particular class or caste.

resistance¹⁵. The refusal to be named, the refusal to name oneself frustrate the regime of identification on which the moral economy of traditional Western subject formation rests. The author or authors of the “Defensa” become anonymous through the simple non-disclosure or absence of the name, for in a text, identity and the name are coextensive. The *encapuchado*, on the other hand, is a living presence already disclosed to the world. As such, its anonymity cannot be the mere absence of the name. Rather, it achieves anonymity through masking, a kind of doubling or surfeit of identity that dissimulates an individual identity in exchange for a collective one.¹⁶

In this sense, the *encapuchado*'s masking carries to an extreme the same substitution of individual for collective identity at work in any popular movement or collective action. But whereas the individual in the mass is anonymous only insofar as it remains a part of that collective body, the masked individual remains anonymous even as an single actor. The mass composed of identifiable individuals participates in and seeks to appropriate the regimes of visibility, identification, presence, and representation—the mass march is largely a mediatized spectacle, after all. The anonymous mass composed of masked actors asserts a dispersed and articulated collective identity capable of infiltrating the visible, identifiable mass and acting in plain sight but below the radar of regimes of representational capture. In the protests of 2011, not only the *encapuchados*

¹⁵ Laying out the stakes of his investigation into the centrality of anonymity for Foucault's theory of the subject, Érik Bordeleau describes the increasing salience of anonymity as a tool of political resistance in 'popular' movements since the 1990s, from the EZLN and alter-globalization movements to the hacker collectives Anonymous and LulzSec, and the Invisible Committee.

¹⁶ Jennifer B. Spiegel makes a similar point in her recent article, “Masked Protest in the Age of Austerity,” on the use of anonymity and performative protest in the Quebec student strikes, a movement that was in solidarity with the contemporaneous Chilean student movement. Based on her reading of Norma Claire Moruzzi and Hannah Arendt, she reminds us that the Roman juridical concept of *persona* derives from the masks worn in ancient Greek theater. In this sense the mask constituted the “public face and role through which a voice could be heard” which for Arendt is a political voice because it obscures the vulnerability of the body (Spiegel 796). The mask obscures a private identity and an individual body behind a public persona. I would add that the same suspension of private, individual identity occurs in the mass, or populace, or people, such that the individual public persona is residually collective.

took recourse to collective anonymity: police officers, too, removed or obscured their last names from their uniforms, the better to act with impunity on behalf of the state. Both the *encapuchados* and the police understand that unnamed power recedes into potentiality, unnamed presence into virtuality,¹⁷ the unnamed and unidentified individual into the mass or the machinery of state.

More specifically, to write anonymously obscures the individual subjective point of contact between discursive production and concrete existence, namely authorship. As a result, the anonymous text compels an immanent reading, or as the activist hacker collective Anonymous puts it in their manifesto: “We take away the face and leave only the message. Behind the mask we could be anyone, which is why we are judged by what we say and do, not who we are or what we have” (“We are Anonymous”). As anonymity returns the text to its message, so it returns the figure of the *encapuchado* to its action, to the function that any individual could potentially perform.

Nonetheless, readers seem compelled to tether the subject of enunciation to a subject of experience, to make a body the cause of a voice, the voice the expression of concrete life, as if their coincidence were the adequation of some truth. Anticipating my reading of Sarlo’s critique of what she calls the “subjective turn,” we may also say that by dissimulating the *flaute* or subject who experiences poverty and violence, the “Defensa” cannot appeal to any moral hegemony to guarantee the referential truth of that

¹⁷ I understand virtuality as the inverse of representation. At its base, representation designates one presence standing in for another presence. Virtuality, on the other hand, need not represent a presence. The anonymous *encapuchado* does not say, “I stand in place of this one or any one”, but rather “Any one could stand in my place.” We may think of their relation as analogous to the one that obtains between copy and simulacrum in Giles Deleuze’s reading of the Platonic Theory of Forms. The “iconic copy” is a copy endowed with resemblance (essence) to the thing. The “phantasmatic semblance” or simulacrum is a copy without resemblance to the thing (Deleuze, “Plato and the Simulacrum”). More concretely, we can think of this as the difference between the masked EZLN member inviting the world to assume their struggle and someone like Rigoberta Menchú, whose figure and whose *testimonio* must, as John Beverley insists, represent an injured or oppressed group (*Against Literature* 74).

narration of that experience. Both raise doubts about the text's provenance—that is, its referential truth—doubts that see the impeccable grammar and orthography, elevated register, and mentions of “ideology,” “sociology,” and “statistics” as uncharacteristic of the subject-supposed-to-be-*flaite*. Since the *encapuchado* admits no such positive identification, the author must be *flaite*, as if identity alone granted license to speak. Such doubts only reflect the readers' prejudices, setting in motion a kind of hermeneutic circle, whose exit is the actualization of the same desire that originates and perpetuates it, namely, to unify a voice and a body, speech and experience. The anonymity of the *encapuchado* frustrates regimes of identification just as the anonymity of the pamphlet's author frustrates representational modes of reading that assert the referential truth of experience. It also complicates the text's mobilization of the *flaite* identity against the figure of the student and its movement. Despite this apparent goal, the pamphlet's fusion of the anonymous *encapuchado* with the nominated identity of the *flaite* constitutes an amphibious figure that operates within and in excess of representational regimes, within and beyond the text's own representational matrix.

The student movement not only constitutes itself by denouncing the violence figured by the *encapuchado*. It also functions by obscuring the class character of the *flaite*. Indeed, student movements gain in transversality by speaking on behalf of a figure that doubly cuts across class distinctions: first, by virtue of the state's mandate for universal education, which means that the vast majority of the Chilean populace will at some time be interpellated as students, and, second, because the school plays a key role in the liberal imagination as a meritocratic utopia that holds out the promise of class mobility. Unlike youth movements, a student movement will be interpellated by the

education system and its incumbent imaginary, even when its origins and goals fall beyond education. In a certain sense, the student movement's transversality, is the obverse of the anonymity of the *encapuchado*; whereas the former claims a right to represent anyone interpellated as a student, the latter ensures anyone's right to eschew the logics of appearance, visibility, and identity called upon in the act of hailing.

I do not want to suggest that Chile's student movement, mobilized as it was in large part by student federations packed with members from the Juventudes Comunistas (J.J.CC.), is unaware of the myriad intersections between class and the Chilean educational system. On the contrary, its rallying slogan, "Educación pública, gratuita y de calidad" (Free, public, and quality education), demands equal access to educational opportunities regardless of the social status or financial means of students and their families. My point is that the student movement gains force in proportion to its ability to forge alliances by minimizing class distinctions among its ranks. In doing so, it leaves largely unquestioned the role of education in the reproduction of class and the affinities between the struggle for free, quality and public education and the struggle against capital. The reproduction of labor increasingly requires specialized knowledges and skills that must be acquired, or at least credentialed, through the education system. On my reading, the figure of the *encapuchado-flaite* interrogates the (re)productivism that unites the student movement and the dominant classes. The *encapuchado-flaite* casts into relief the figure of the student and its successive figurations as disciplined, controlled and, now, indebted, a succession that over the last half of the twentieth century has translated its reproductive function for the nation-state into that for contemporary capitalism. The *encapuchado-flaite* may be made to ask the student protestor: Can we think education

beyond the reproduction of class society, beyond capitalist imperatives to produce and to consume? Can we think democracy beyond representation? Can we think the movement beyond the student federations and beyond the student?

Even as the extra-ideological, anti-social *encapuchado* of the “Defensa” refuses identification and the positive identity *flaite* is delimited by class, the latter limns class consciousness as an underclass or declassed collectivity. In this sense, the *encapuchado-flaite* joins a cast—or, rather, caste—of unclassifiable subjectivities: neo-Gramscianism’s subaltern, post-Fordist theorists’ ambiguous multitude, and Marx’s equally ambiguous but negatively connoted lumpenproletariat. Like the lumpenproletariat of the *18th Brumaire* or the negative face of the multitude in Paolo Virno’s work, the *encapuchado-flaite* of the “Defensa” turns out to coincide with many of the positions of Chile’s political and economic elite. Before stepping down in mid-July 2011, then Minister of Education, Joaquín Lavín gave an interview to reporters from *La Tercera*, Chile’s left-of-center daily, that exemplifies the government’s discursive tactics against the student movement. Lavín panders to parents and students concerned about “missing the semester” (by October, the government would be forced to speak of “missing the school year”); he undermines the legitimacy of student protestors and their leaders by claiming that they do not represent the majority of students, and that the supposedly ultra-leftist politics of their leaders is out of step with the general populace, or in Lavín’s words, “I think that the leaders have been politicized, but the citizenry has not” (Capochnik and Villalobos); and he incites fear that these leaders cannot control the aggressive behavior of the mob. Lavín’s message is clear: only the government and its police are capable of maintaining order; only the government can determine which goals

are legitimate and realistic, a claim condensed in the Transition's catch phrase "*en la medida de lo posible* (to the extent possible)"; and only through dialogue and demobilization can order, legitimacy and everyday normalcy finally be restored. "I have always been willing to talk about the themes that are really related to education. What cannot be done is the mixing of legitimate demands with political and ideological ones" (Capochnik and Villalobos).

In other words, for Lavín and Chile's political elite, governance functions best when it is unencumbered by politics and ideology. In spite of his position as a Cabinet Minister in the first right-wing government since the end of the dictatorship, the political playbook is the same as that of the *Concertación*, the center-left coalition of political parties that managed Chile's post-dictatorship transition to democracy for twenty years. It incites fear of a return to the upheavals of the seventies. According to the official story, the political and ideological polarization of Chilean society, on both the left and right, brought about the election of Salvador Allende and his *Unidad Popular* and the conservative reaction, first as *gremialismo* and, then, as dictatorship.¹⁸ The *encapuchado-flaite* of the "Defensa" who self-designates as apolitical and un-ideological, could be seen as the illegitimate ideal of contemporary Chilean citizenship. Until the student movement, many believed that Chilean youth in general were equally depoliticized. If politics and ideology distinguish the student protestors from Chile's hegemonic governmentality, purportedly apolitical violence distinguishes the *encapuchado-flaite* from both. But the picture is more complicated still. For just as there is legitimate, state violence and illegitimate, non-state violence, there are legitimate and

¹⁸ The same story, told in Argentina, is known as the "teoría de los dos diablos" (theory of the two devils). It stands at the beginning of prolonged debates about the ethical turn sparked by the 2004 publication of Oscar del Barco's "No matarás" in *Revista Intemperie*.

illegitimate politics. Despite the apolitical posturing of “En defensa de la capucha,” there is no human violence that does not also partake of the political even if it eschews politics. In this light, the threat of this figure may be posed differently. Just as the *encapuchado* infiltrates officially sanctioned student demonstrations, the political may come to infiltrate the politics practiced by the government and the movement's leaders.

Giorgio Jackson comments on “En defensa de la capucha” and the problem posed by the *encapuchado* in one of the more autobiographical passages of *El país que soñamos*. He does his best to distance the *encapuchados* from the movement and, at the same time, to tar the ultra-leftist factions within the CONFECH¹⁹ and the ACES²⁰ by association with their violence (87). (The subsection treating the *encapuchados* is followed by another on internal tensions within the CONFECH). Jackson, now playing the social analyst, sees the *encapuchado* as the unfortunate but inevitable response to state repression. By this casuistry, the greater the public support the student movement garnered, the more the government repressed the marches, which in turn increased the violence of the *encapuchados* and, Jackson admits, some factions of the student movement, particularly secondary students, among whom donning the hood and pitching street battles became “a kind of trend” (83). Jackson dispenses with “En defensa de la capucha” by stating, “One can’t deny the real marginality and hopelessness behind such radical texts. But even so, the acts were not justifiable, because there was destruction and

¹⁹ The CONFECH, or Confederación de Federaciones Estudiantiles de Chile [The Confederation of Chilean student Federations] was the organizational center of the movement.

²⁰ The ACES, or Asociación Chilena de Estudiantes Secundarios [Chilean Association of Secondary School Students], largely organized the secondary student protests of 2006, the called the *Pingüinazo* after the penguin-like appearance of the public school uniform. The *Pingüinazo* is often cited as the immediate predecessor of the 2011 movements.

violence” (84). For Jackson, radicalism and violence are irrational reactions, not concerted choices. Casting the *encapuchado* as the suffering victim of Chile’s social inequality, and their violence as an inevitable and regrettable reaction whether to police repression or to poverty, Jackson wrests agency from the mass and intention from its actions. The *encapuchado* is human insofar as it is a victim, but animal-like in its actions. By this sleight of hand, Jackson ejects the *encapuchado* from the stage of the mythical conflict between students and the government.

The earliest mention of the *encapuchados* in Jackson’s text is exemplary of this move and theoretically resonant. Describing the festivities organized by the CONFECH at the terminus of an early march on May 12th, Jackson tells us, “The event went forward with absolute normality. At some point, *encapuchados* appeared, but only in the direction of Almagro Park, behind the stage, and they were not part of the people who were enjoying Manuel Garcia’s performance. Nonetheless, the police encircled us via the side streets around Bulnes and began throwing tear-gas bombs at the pacific multitude.” (67). Clearly, Jackson’s motivation for mentioning the *encapuchados* is to emphasize the pacific nature of the gathering and the unprovoked and therefore unjustified police repression. The scene makes clear that the *encapuchado* is outcaste from “the people,” similar to Paolo Virno’s characterization of the multitude as the remainder that subsists outside and after the constitution of the body politic. Continuing the allegorical reading of this scene, the people here are constituted by their ‘enjoyment’ of a musical act, which suggests that the *encapuchado* is barred from or incapable of the act of aesthetic appreciation.

Not content to exclude the *encapuchado* from the body of the people, Jackson goes on to reincorporate them by pretending to speak on their behalf. He describes the lives of the *encapuchado*-turned-victim in terms of a “movie” of which the government sees only the last violent scenes. Student leaders, “on the other hand. . . focused on the need to re-write the initial script of that movie, one in which those kids would have been given a real chance to live a dignified life (*vida digna*) and receive the education we all deserve” (84). Jackson’s cinematic metaphor is apt, given that the movement sought to achieve its goals on the plane of representations, both in the media and in the form of its political organization. And it emphasizes his structural determinism and liberal reformism: change the education system to promote equity, and the social structure will follow; the animal-like, anonymous mass will be individualized and humanized when they become students and future workers within the politically functional category of the people. The move is ironic, considering that Jackson sees the constitution of an engaged citizenry as the antidote to the consumer individualism that sickens Chilean society. But just as Marx’s productivism lead him to excise the lumpenproletariat from the collective subject of the revolution, violence allows Jackson to excise the figure of the *encapuchado* from the people of his dream to transform Chile’s elitist democracy into a participatory one.

Despite its ham-fisted style, uneven register, and lapses in narrative continuity, *El país que soñamos* is generically complex. Part chronicle, part political analysis, part political autobiography, it is addressed to a variety of contemporary Chilean audiences: current and former student activists, members of the media, and most importantly the

electorate. *El país que soñamos* was released in June 2013 just as Jackson was heading into the primary elections in his bid to represent Santiago Centro in Chile's Chamber of Deputies.²¹ Jackson would go on to win the seat as an independent, the only candidate from the non-pacted *Revolución Democrática*, the political organization he founded in 2012 along with former FUEC leaders Miguel Crispi and Nicolás Valenzuela. The book should be read in light of Jackson's political aspirations, which, I would argue, instrumentalize its other generic frames; as both *crónica* and political analysis, the book invests Jackson with authority—a point we will analyze in depth through the similar combination of *crónica* and essay in Figueroa's *Llegamos para quedarnos*. As a chronicler, he claims the authority of the eyewitness and the right to represent the most important civil society movement since the end of the dictatorship. As a political analyst, he dons the familiar mantels of the *opinólogo* (talking head) of talk-news radio and television and the expert, a common and trusted figure in the political culture of the Transition.

The introduction and first chapter are dedicated to criticizing the Chilean model and its incumbent classism, individualism, and inequality. By and large Jackson blames these on Chile's conservative *Revolución Nacional*—the party of Pinochet and Piñera—overlooking the role of the *Concertación* in perpetuating Chile's “liberal revolution” of

²¹ Jackson was not the only former student leader to run for election in 2013. Camila Vallejo, former President of the FECH 2010-11 and principal spokeswoman of the student movement, campaigned as a member of the Communist Party of Chile (PCCh), which would go on to form part of Bachelet's coalition government, and won her bid to represent the Santiago community of La Florida. Figueroa ran under the aegis of the non-pacted *Izquierda Autónoma* [Autonomous Left], but lost his bid to represent Santiago's Ñuñoa district. Gabriel Boric, successor to Vallejo as president of the FECH (2011-12) and colleague of Figueroa in the ranks of the *Izquierda Autónoma* and a member of the board of directors of its associated foundation *Nodo XXI*, ultimately won election to represent Magallanes and the Chilean Antarctic. And Karol Cariola, former president of the *Federación de Estudiantes de La Universidad de Concepción* (FEC) (2009-2010) and Secretary General of the *Juventudes Comunistas* [Communist Youth] (JJ.CC.) since 2011, was elected as a member of the PCCh to represent the Santiago communities of Recoleta and Independencia.

the 1980s,” an odd periodization that postdates the consensus among commentators (25). After a chapter that defensively recounts his role in the student movement as if to set the record straight, Jackson offers the positive counterpoint to these criticisms. Starting from the assumption that “transformations would have to begin by placing urgency on the institutional” (Jackson 138), the book’s last chapter, “Después de la transición [After the Transition]” outlines the progressive platform of his candidacy. Beginning with education, Jackson critiques the myth of meritocracy, citing the system’s continuing role in the reproduction of class. Likewise, the movement’s rallying cry that education is a right and not a *bien de consumo* (consumer good) only seeks to exchange one notion of liberal *economic* personhood for a liberal *political* personhood. Although the right to equal educational opportunity would shift the model away from one focalized through economic means, the universal education system based on individual rights of access retains liberal individualism. Such a view of education stands at odds with Jackson’s earlier critique of Chilean individualism (Jackson 117-18). Jackson’s personal hobby horse and also his proposal with the greatest resonance has been the call to convene a constitutional assembly to rewrite the 1980 charter with the goal of scrapping the country’s so-called binomial electoral system, which weights minority positions in congress, further ensuring Chilean democracy its elitist character. And, in accord with his institutional approach and pragmatic image, Jackson cites the need for reform of the tax and royalty system in order to fund the welfare state he envisions.

In keeping with the genre of political autobiography, Jackson’s program is sketched in gestures barely sufficient to constitute “norms that allow us not to renounce a just, utopian horizon” (119). Even within this vague outline, it is clear that Jackson’s

proposed political platform would only perpetuate the political culture of the Transition, itself an extension of nineteenth-century imaginary of *la república ordenada*. Jackson's dream, where workers are well paid, students have equal access to quality education, and families are ensured housing and healthcare, will produce a "synergy" and "greater horizontality" so that "we can move from the noise that exists today to a more pleasant harmony" (121). Jackson is quick to preempt allegations of anarchist and communist leanings that "are often used to make anyone who criticizes the free-market system look ridiculous," saying, "I firmly believe in commerce, commerce in itself is a good thing . . . so long as it has ethical rules" (121, 123). Whatever criticisms he does make are hollow. Jackson believes in "incentivizing" change, for example, by promoting the inclusion of sexual minorities and indigenous peoples, which, he says, will make Chile a tourist destination and a more stable country for foreign investment (125). It is easy to see why Figueroa will claim that the impulse of Jackson's politics differs little from that of the mainstream, center-right *Demócratas Cristianos* (DC).²² And despite its name, Jackson's *Revolución Democrática* continues the ethos of the Transition, its human rights discourse, free-market development model, and technocratic reformism, now infused with the momentum of a young, technologically savvy, upper middle class activist base newly politicized by the student movement.

For all its faults, Jackson's text partakes of the same utopian impulse that has animated the student movement since 2011, and not merely to manipulate that impulse for his own gain. Like the other student leaders now elected to the Chamber of Deputies, Jackson naïvely believes that he has the right to represent the movement and to carry its

²² Indeed, Jackson won election to the FEUC executive committee as a member of the *Nueva Acción Universitaria*, a progressive youth faction of the DC formed in 2008.

demands into official politics. In doing so, he and the other former student leaders want to suture the breach between Chilean society and its government, to restore the harmony between those who represent and those who are represented. Student protestors I talked with on the streets of Santiago in the winter of 2013 called this a betrayal. It is this act of representational suturing that *El país que soñamos* essays in its representation of the movement. Neither this mimetic nor that political mode of representation seems likely to capture that peripheral point in the city referred to in “En defensa de la capucha.”

Crónica: Capturing the Mass

Several months before the appearance of Jackson’s *El país que soñamos*, Francisco Figueroa, former vice-president of the FECH (2009-2011), also published a book about the student movement, *Llegamos para quedarnos. Crónica de la revuelta estudiantil*. Despite the fact that Figueroa also was running for election when the book appeared in print, I do not think it should be read in the same key as *El país que soñamos*, that is, merely in the service of the author’s candidacy. True to its author’s convictions, *Llegamos para quedarnos* is invested in the movement’s autonomy from traditional politics (171), even if such a position may stand at odds with Figueroa’s political ambitions. Moreover, Figueroa’s interests lie less in future solutions—unlike Jackson, he makes no policy proposals—than in representing and analyzing the events of Chile’s recent past. The genre he chooses to do so is the *crónica* announced in his book’s title and by its publication in the series “Colección Nuevo Periodismo (New Journalism Collection)” by LOM Ediciones. Indeed, Figueroa trained as a journalist at the

Universidad de Chile, and he maintains links to its Centro de Investigación Periodística (CIPER), which provides an institutional space for investigative and new journalism by sponsoring the publication of book-length works of non-fiction. The book's opening line, "This text is the piece of a story just as I lived it," reads like a calling card of the *crónica*, and not only of that genre but of all forms of testimonial writing (Figueroa 13). For this reason, we must look beyond the ready-to-hand genre of the *crónica* to inquire more generally about those various writing practices that fuse author and witness. From this more general perspective, Figueroa's and Jackson's books each exemplify what Beatriz Sarlo has criticized as the "subjective turn" in literature, history, and criticism, the "ideological and conceptual reordering of the society of the past and its personages, which concentrates on the rights and the truth of subjectivity" (22). In what follows, I will question the generic self-institution of *Llegamos para quedarnos* in order to draw out the latent ideological commitments of its particular way of representing the mass mobilization of 2011.²³

Figueroa's introduction exemplifies the text's conscious generic institution: "At times *crónica*, at times essay, this book recounts the gestation, development, and outcome of the course [of 2011], its highs and lows, not always considered or outright distorted (*desvirtuados*) in the account constructed by the media" (13). Figueroa motivates his writing by placing his representation of the movement in opposition to Chile's mainstream media. The move is characteristic of new journalism, the tradition in which Figueroa and his publishers situate his book, and one that shares a genealogy with contemporary Latin American *crónica*. As John Hollowell informs us in his early study

²³ The criticism I make of *Llegamos para quedarnos* is not intended to reflect on Figueroa's work as an activist, only on the political consequences of his book's form and their resonance with certain aspects of the student movement.

of the practice, “The new journalist's stance is often openly critical of the powerful interests that control the dissemination of the news. By revealing his personal biases, the new journalist strives for a higher kind of ‘objectivity’. He attempts to explode the myth that any report can be objective by freely admitting his own prejudices” (22). Figueroa continues,

I recount (*cuento*) events I took part in, directly witnessed, or that I know about from trusted sources, but I also present more subjective considerations. At other times, I propose readings in order to understand the relationship that exists between the social, political, and educational factors that gave shape to the revolt, articulating my own approximations with the analysis of more knowledgeable third parties. (13-14)

Like all *crónicas*, the text is clearly focalized through Figueroa, but like traditional journalism he cleaves to the facts and rarely fictionalizes events even as he narrativizes them.²⁴ This subjective focalization and objective factuality combine to form a sort of feedback loop, by which the subject’s lived experience lends truth-value to the narration of events, which in turn lends authority to the subject. As a result, the constructed and mediated nature of both subject and object is obscured; verisimilitude becomes veracity, realism reality. And despite Figueroa’s intentions, the “higher objectivity” to which his

²⁴ Although my interest lies less in approximating some definition of the *crónica* and more in the effect of Figueroa’s invocation of it, it is worthwhile to sketch the formal and thematic elements that demarcate the genre. Among the formal characteristics and techniques of the contemporary Latin American *crónica* are: the narrativization and, often, fictionalization of events deemed ‘real’; subjective focalization through witnesses other than the author, the author as witness, or the author’s “will to style” (Jaramillo 34); the citation of sources and high degree of dialogization, which often lend the text a prismatic, multiperspectival, or polyvocal character (Sefcovich 143-45); and, consequently, the indeterminacy not only of the representation itself, but of the relationship between the representation and events represented (Bielsa 39). In addition to these techniques and formal markers, commentators and practitioners point to subject matter as a means of identifying and distinguishing the *crónica*. Motivated by his belief that *crónica* is first and foremost a form of entertainment that abhors boredom, Peruvian *cronista* Darío Jaramillo notes the predilection among *cronistas* for spectacle, violence, and extravagance (45-46). Others practitioners like Juan Villoro and Martín Caparrós emphasize how *crónicas* make the everyday fascinating. Most agree that the form has an affinity for the marginal, even as they disagree as to how the marginal is taken up. (Indeed, both the spectacular and the everyday can be seen as ‘marginal’ from the standpoint of one or other). Marginality may also apply to the genre’s position in the field of cultural production. As Esperança Bielsa, echoing Hollowell, suggests, “the marginality of the *crónica* is that of literary practices in the media and, more widely, in society” (175).

text aspires tacitly participates in the Transition's political culture of "*en la medida de lo posible* (to the extent possible)," which has been mobilized across the Chile's political spectrum to curtail the progressive imagination and the utopian impulse of the movement whose events Figueroa wants to faithfully represent. For it is precisely the extent, measure, or representation of what is possible that sectors of Chile's civil society have questioned since 2011. It is this same impulse that *El país que soñamos* naïvely represents just as skillfully as its author harnessed it on his path to election.

The assumption that undergirds Figueroa's self-designated *crónica* is the coincidence of "lived history" and "given facts." At the same time as Figueroa tells "a story (*historia*) just as I lived it," he also attempts "to tell the facts just as they are given" (19). Even as the text assumes the coincidence of fact and individual experience, Figueroa attempts to quarantine the subjective dimension, a move out of step with his text's self-institution as *crónica*. "At times *crónica*, at times essay" the book is internally divided between "the narrated and the interpreted," and the chapters of his book alternate between the narrative *crónicas* and interpretive essays (Figueroa 13). For Figueroa, the interpretive essays contain "personal considerations" and "my own approximations" (14) making the narrative *crónica* appear objective by comparison.²⁵ If we recall that Figueroa

²⁵ As an example of Figueroa's subjective essayistic mode we may look at the second chapter, "Raíces del descontento" (Roots of the Discontent). There, Figueroa attacks a claim made by many among Chile's elite and, in particular, by Eugenio Tironi in an opinion piece published in June 2011 in Chile's famously conservative daily *El Mercurio*. There, Tironi claims that the student movement is a symptom of "the Dutch disease," which, Figueroa explains, is a commonplace for the particular discontents of wealthy nations. (Tironi calls the same phenomenon "the 15 M illness," a double reference to the contemporaneous Spanish assembly movement and *quince mil* or fifteen thousand, the GDP per capita in US dollars that serves as a loose benchmark of high-income countries). Tironi's point is, of course, that the discontent manifested by the student movement is a result of the success of Chile's economic model. Figueroa counters by citing Tomás Moulián's *Chile actual* in order to claim that "what manifests itself is the rupture between the official story and social experience" (42). He cites statistics on GDP, income, and wealth distribution to demonstrate the nauseating inequality produced by the last forty years of the elite's strategy of accumulation by dispossession. And he cites Victor Orellana and Carlos Ruiz Encina, who like Figueroa sit on the board of directors of Nodo XXI—an autonomist, leftist think-tank—on the tercerization and

is a journalist by training, we may think of this distinction between objective, narrated *crónica* and subjective, critical essay as traditional journalism's distinction between objective, neutral news articles and subjective opinion pieces. Since both the essay and the *crónica* are forms intimately bound to authorial subjectivity, their difference is less to be found in their degree of subjectivity or objectivity. I would argue instead that they interpellate two different personae of the authorial subject.

Figueroa's distinction between *crónica* and essay in *Llegamos para quedarnos* would also distinguish the witness from the critic, the author's experiential and critical personae. But offering a critical perspective on that which is represented is an important characteristic of *crónica*. The *cronista* does not simply testify and report as if to some truth and reconciliation commission or in a court of law, whereby the act of judgment, the critical instance, is forfeited to a third party. The *cronista* informs, reports, and narrates in the same breath as he judges, criticizes, and indicts. This is what John Kraniauskas, writing on Carlos Monsiváis, calls the *crónica's* "critical closeness." The *cronista* in Figueroa is ultimately no different, despite the sharp distinction he wants to draw between the two genres. What, then, does his text gain by separating *crónica* and essay, narration and interpretation? I would argue that the principal effect is to bolster the truth-value and self-legitimation of subjective experience by pitting it against subjective opinions and arguments. But, since both the witness and the critic, the experiential persona and the critical persona converge in Figueroa's individual identity, the factual experience of the *cronista* also legitimates the subjective opinions, interpretations, and

precaritization of labor that lurks behind the government's rhetoric of "Chile, a country of 'entrepreneurs'" (Figueroa 46). Figueroa compensates for what he views as the subjective nature of his arguments by citing authorities, that tried-and-true scholastic practice that nowadays gives narrative argumentation the appearance of scientific reproducibility.

readings of that same individual turned essayist. In short, Figueroa seems to insinuate, “Since my experiences are true and valid, so too are my arguments.”

The argument I have been making about the generic self-institution of *Llegamos para quedarnos* in many ways resembles one made by Argentine critic Beatriz Sarlo, to which I earlier alluded. In *Tiempo pasado* (2005), Sarlo questions the truth-effect that results from the pact between readers and an author-witness who recalls and represents its past experiences in the shifting textual present. According to Sarlo,

the testimony asks for a consideration that mixes the arguments of its truth, its legitimate pretensions to credibility, and its unity (*unicidad*) sustained by the unity (*unicidad*) of the subject that announces it with its own voice, placing itself as the present guarantor of what it says, even when it is not about a subject who has experienced extreme situations (*situaciones límite*). (48)

In the case of *Llegamos para quedarnos*, the truth-effect of the narration of subjective experience arises from what I have called the assumed coincidence of Figueroa’s “lived history” and the “given facts” of the student movement. For Sarlo, the pact between the witness-author and the reader that gives rise to the “referential truth” of testimonial texts is legitimated by “moral arguments based on a respect for the subject that has borne the events about which it speaks” (47). Not only is a text’s moral hegemony no guarantee for its veracity (57), the claim to moral truth made by testimonial writing banishes doubt, and, she suggests, along with it the possibility of critique.

Against this unimpeachable moral truth of subjective experience, Sarlo claims the prerogatives of the imagination. Following Hannah Arendt, Sarlo understands the imagination as the subject’s capacity to think beyond the facticity of its own phenomenal experience (53-57). As such, it functions as the “dialogical condition” for any

understanding or narration of past occurrences not content to accept the moral truth of narrated experience (Sarlo 29). In fact, it is only from the distance achieved through the exercise of imagination that the facts of experience can be narrated at all (Sarlo 92). The intrinsic belatedness of representation makes every individual representation anachronistic, the temporally suspended mediation of a “real” past and a present reception. These different temporalities coincide in what we call reference by virtue of the imaginative capacity of both writing and reading subjects. Following Sarlo, imagination dispossesses a subject of its experience in order for it to entertain the experiences of others. Recalling my discussion of “En defensa de la capucha” and the figure of the *encapuchado*, anonymity similarly frustrates the referentiality of first-person narration, the presumed causality that obtains between voices and bodies, by infiltrating identificatory regimes with the specter of identity’s fictitiousness. The moral truth of subjective experience obscures our understanding that both “lived history” and the “given facts,” like the identification of author and experience, voices and bodies, are constructions of a fictive synthesis or an imaginary dialogue, what Althusser might call, a hailing.

I have argued that *Llegamos para quedarnos* consciously combines essay and *crónica*, what Figueroa considers the “subjective” opinions and arguments of the author as critic and the “objective” narration of the experiences of the author as witness. The effect of this combination is to bolster the credibility of the critic’s arguments through the referential truth of the witness’s experiences. Since it employs both critical and experiential modes of writing, Figueroa’s text troubles Sarlo’s implied distinctions between experience and imagination, memory and history, moral truth and critical

skepsis. Sarlo's argument is most coherent where it treats testimonial writing and discourses of memory as resulting from a relationship of modes of representation and aspects of subjectivity. From this perspective, the imagination and experience co-produce referential representations. Problems arise from the generic institutionalization of this schema, which aligns testimonial writing with a presentist, subjective experience (often the passive suffering of a victim) and history and literature with the dialogical (potentially critical) imagination.

Not only does Figueroa's combined use of the essay and the *crónica* short-circuit the activity of the imagination and the prerogatives of experience. Sarlo herself takes advantage of the porous boundary, if any, that separates the critical and experiential personae of the authorial subject. She does so, ironically, to support the prerogatives of "literature,"²⁶ or more precisely, imaginative fiction. "If I had to speak for myself, I would say that I found in literature (hostile as it is to the limits of truth one might seek to establish over it) the most precise images of the horror of the recent past and of its texture of ideas and experiences" (163). Sarlo justifies her essayistic subjective turn toward imaginative literature in terms of her argument against the narrative subjective turn toward memory by claiming that "in literature a narrator always thinks *from outside* experience, as if humankind were able to take control of the nightmare and not only

²⁶ In his *Latin Americanism after 9/11*, John Beverley critiques Sarlo's *Tiempo pasado* largely within a disciplinary and intellectual historical framework. Beverley aims less at Sarlo's phenomenology of writing (although, cf. n. 25) than at the institutional position she assigns to imaginative writing by invoking literature. It is indeed odd that Sarlo seems to naturalize the literary institution, a move that Beverley calls modernist, given her early years as a practitioner of the sociology of literature (see, *Literatura / sociedad* [1983]; *Conceptos de sociología literaria* [1980]; *Ensayos Argentinos. De Sarmiento a la vanguardia* [1983]). While his criticism is warranted, I think that Beverley understands *testimonio* in the narrower sense than what is implied by Sarlo's subjective turn. They agree, however, that testimonial writing challenges literature although for Beverley this is positive and for Sarlo it is negative. On this point I disagree. Any mode of writing, whether testimonial or imaginative, becomes literature when it is received as literature or otherwise inserted into the field of practices that make up the literary institution.

suffer it” (166). Although her justification for the prerogatives of literature is less moral and more political than the claims made by testimonial writing, and although its mode is the hypothetical “as if we were” and not the past indicative “I was,” it is nonetheless mediated by her authorial subjectivity. Claiming that the moral hegemony of the victim’s narration of his experience illegitimately applies to other first personal, testimonial writing, Sarlo asks: “Where is the threshold between the experience of suffering and other experiences of that same subject?” (162). We may pose a similar question to her: Where is the threshold between a subject’s experience and its capacity for imagination and critique? And if, as Ricardo Piglia—Sarlo’s erstwhile co-editor of the journal *Los libros* and a central figure in Part Two of this dissertation—claims, criticism is a form of autobiography, what criterion would allow us to distinguish between the testimonial writing of lived experience and the critical writing of the life of the mind (*Crítica* 11)?

Given that Figueroa, like Sarlo, wants to posit a difference between testimonial and critical modes of writing, a difference both authors contravene in their own writing, we may now return to *Llegamos para quedarnos* to trace this threshold. In order to do so, we will need to move from the more general category of testimonial writing to the specific genre of *crónica*. The *crónica* complicates the neat distinction of experiential persona who narrates his lived experience and the critical or imaginative persona who narrates the reconstruction of the given facts. Contemporary Latin American *crónica*, like new journalism, insists on precisely the unreliability, uncertainty, and indeterminacy of subjective experience and its representation, and not on their truth value or truth effect, as evidenced by its blurring of fictional and factual discursive modes. Moreover, despite

critics' consistent characterization of the genre as a hybrid form that emerges from the intersection of literature and journalism²⁷, the contemporary Latin America *crónica* is instituted as literature,²⁸ even when the texts themselves eschew the fictional—as Figueroa's does.

The risk is that, as it is inducted into the literary institution, *crónica* gains aesthetic autonomy at the expense of political engagement. Where Argentinean *cronista* Martín Caparrós once championed the use of the first person and the techniques of narrative fiction as political acts (“Por la *crónica*” 611),²⁹ only several years later he criticized contemporary *cronistas* for their depoliticized understanding of their work

²⁷ Among critics ranging from Susana Rotker's and Julio Ramos's studies of the *crónica modernista*, Aníbal González's abiding investigation of the overlap between journalism and literature, to contemporary *cronista* Juan Villoro's characterization of the form as the “*ornitorrinco de la prosa* (the duck-billed platypus of prose)” (578), the Latin American *crónica* has been cast as a hybrid form. This hybridity emerges from what Esperança Bielsa in her recent study of contemporary urban *crónica* calls the “contact zone” between literature and journalism and high and low culture, or what Susana Rotker in the case of the *crónicas modernistas* calls “condensation spaces” (203).

²⁸ I would argue that, over the last fifteen years, the emergence of journals (*Anfibia* in Argentina, *Etiqueta Negra* in Peru, *El Malpensante*, *El Gatopardo* and *SoHo* in Colombia) newspaper supplements, editorial series and anthologies (Anagrama, Aguilar, and Tusquets publish series dedicated to *crónica* while Almadía, Planeta, and Fondo de Cultura Económica along with other smaller editorials publish series dedicated to *periodismo nuevo*), professional associations (many cite the 1995 founding of the Fundación Gabriel García Márquez para el nuevo periodismo iberoamericano and its sister organization Nuevos Cronistas de Indias as catalysts of *crónica*'s ascent), conferences, and master classes dedicated to the form indicates a degree of institutionalization that renders the genre effectively autonomous. Mercedes Alonso adds that this institutionalization of the form and concomitant consolidation of its definition—at least in practice, if not in theory—has superannuated its hybrid characterization. Rather than a mixed genre composed of “borrowings” (Villoro), we should now speak of a liminal form with its own canon of texts and techniques, dedicated producers and consumers, all of which ensure its reproducibility, the first principle of autonomy. I would add that the contemporary *crónica* has undergone a particularly literary institutionalization. This shift toward the literary is evident in Alfaguara's 2012 *Antología de crónica latinoamericana actual* (Anthology of Contemporary Latin American *Crónica*), whose editor, the Peruvian *cronista* Darío Jaramillo Agudelo, states that the sole criterion for the selection of the volume's texts was their “literary quality” (47).

²⁹ “We convinced ourselves that the first person is a way to minimize (*aminorar*) what is written, to revoke its authority. It is the opposite: faced with the tricks of informational prose . . . the first person takes responsibility, saying: This is what I saw, what I found out, what I thought . . . I would say, if there is a theoretical (even moral) justification for using all of the resources narrative offers it would be this: that with those resources it becomes evident that there is no machine, that there is always a subject who watches and recounts. That makes literature. That literaturizes (*literaturiza*)” (Caparrós, “Por la *crónica*” 611).

("Contra los cronistas" 614).³⁰ We should be wary of conflating autonomy, whether aesthetic, artistic, or institutional, with critical distance, just as we must carefully distinguish critique from subversive or oppositional politics. If we bear in mind that aesthetic autonomy is an historically conditioned symptom and ideological tenet of Western bourgeois modernity, we may be permitted to ask: What kind of critique and what kind of politics are possible in contemporary *crónica's* literary paradigm? And if, as Sarlo claims, imaginative writing holds open the possibility of critique in the face of the referential truth of the narration of subjective experience, where is the threshold between that imaginative writing that interrogates the real and the literary institution that insulates that writing from political engagement?³¹

In the case of *Llegamos para quedarnos*, the invocation of the *crónica* is less a protest against politics as such—although this is clearly central to the book's content—and more the politics of the field of cultural production. Contemporary Latin American *crónica* marshals the resources of imaginative writing over and against the conventions of the news media. As Esperança Bielsa points out about the *crónica*: "Its critical dimension is thus also associated with notions of literary autonomy and the difficult repositioning of literature after the decline and fall of the lettered city" (Bielsa 175). *Crónica's* critique takes the form of what Julio Ramos calls "overwriting (*sobreescritura*)" by which a literary authorial subjectivity "reflects" on the informational content of the news, thereby questioning journalism's claim to faithfully and objectively reproduce the given facts

³⁰ At a conference sponsored by Nuevos Cronistas de Indias, Caparrós recounts that "over the course of three days of debate about 'the *crónica*,' at no point did we talk about politics. And I used to think that what made the *crónica* interesting was its political position" (Caparrós, "Contra los cronistas" 614).

³¹ Beverley poses a similar question to Sarlo in the aforementioned *Latin Americanism after 9/11*. See, p. 87.

(110-11). Here, Ramos is writing about the *crónica modernista* and the situation of the *literato*, specifically Martí, who must adapt his writing to the conventions of the news media. Nonetheless, these early negotiations between high culture and the emergent culture industry resonate with Sarlo's critique of testimonial writing. Literature, high culture, the imagination trouble the referential transparency and immediacy of communicative, informational discourse. On the basis of their shared immediacy and communicative transparency, Sarlo can compare the testimonial writing about the most horrific atrocities to the autobiographies and memoirs of celebrities.

At the same time, for Figueroa to invoke the *crónica* is to assume the authority of its literary institution. It is in this sense of literature as an institution in the economy of cultural capital and social distinction and less as the abode of fiction that *Llegamos para quedarnos* can be read as a literary *crónica*. In our contemporary field of cultural production inundated with digital life writing, the truth-value of narrated experience is devalued. Today, almost anyone with internet access can narrate their lived experience on Myspace, Facebook, Twitter, Orcut or any other blogging platform. Moreover, these digital platforms were essential to the discursive construction and political organization of Chile's student movement.³² Literary *crónica*'s access to the durability of the paper medium distinguishes Figueroa's text from everyday life writing online. In a country where the tax code effectively imposes a 19% value-added tax on books³³ and the heart of universities is less the library than the *tienda fotocopiadora* (copy shop) next door,

³² Chile boasts the highest internet penetration rate in Latin America. In 2011 it stood at 52.2 internet users (per 100 persons). In 2014, the rate had increased to 72.4. By comparison, Argentina in 2011 there were 51 internet users per 100 persons and in Mexico 37.4. (World Bank).

³³ Despite the popular myth that Pinochet's regime imposed an *IVA al libro*, the high taxes are not the result of one tax on this specific cultural commodity but of a 'cascade effect' of value-added taxes on goods and services at every step of the production process (Bustos Barbé). Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that the resulting high taxes on books was some ploy by the dictatorship to prevent dissent by thwarting the printed dissemination of ideas to the masses.

books' symbolic and cultural capital cannot obscure the financial means it takes to acquire them. At the same time, the literary *crónica*'s institutional character and recourse to the techniques of imaginative fiction distinguishes it from equally institutionalized, paper-medium, informational news media. In this way, the self-institution as *crónica* of *Llegamos para quedarnos* doubly distinguishes Figueroa's account of the movement.

In the chapter "La política aturdida" (Politics Bewildered), we can observe the complex mobilization of Figueroa's particular short-circuiting of argument and experience in the form of the *crónica*, which, as literature (and on paper), serves to distinguish his voice from the digital masses and mass media alike. The chapter is structurally important in that it contravenes the text's quarantine of essayistic and experiential modes of writing into alternating chapters. Figueroa begins by recounting his debate on CNN Chile with Sergio Bitar, ex-Minister of Education and Public Works under the administration of Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006) and founder, along with Lagos, of the center-left Partido por la Democracia (PPD), and José Ramos, former dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Chile. The interview went viral thanks to Bitar's outburst in the face of Figueroa's calm yet staunch defense of the movement's demands. In response to Figueroa's suggestion that Bitar's political connections make him complicit with Chilean capitalists, Bitar fumes "I have not dedicated my life to politics since I was a minister under Allende, nor was I imprisoned, nor was I exiled for a little snot... a boy like you to characterize me in such a way!" (123). Figueroa retorts that, fortunately, the older generation's monopoly on political power and its complicity with capitalism are nearing their end, "because this generation and this movement has come to politics to stay (*llegaron a la política para quedarse*)" (123).

The complex scene of address, with its multiple mediations and modes, condenses many of the claims I have made about *Llegamos para quedarnos* even as it sheds new light on them. To begin, it is important that Figueroa focuses on Bitar's outburst, in which he asserts authority on the basis of his heroic victimhood. Beyond exemplifying the assertion of moral hegemony for the sake of argument, the intrusion of emotion in the newsroom is construed as the revelation of Bitar's true opinions about the movement. And instead of infantilizing him, Bitar's slur casts Figueroa as the voice of reason and the representative of a transversal, generational movement. Figueroa transcribes selected parts of a televised interview. In doing so, he at once translates and frames his own speech and that of Bitar, Ramos, and the moderator, Ramón Ulloa, in the written narration of his experience, lending its truth-value to the arguments he makes in the transcription and in its framing. By "overwriting" his own first, televisual and, then, online video representation, Figueroa treats his own image as another character in his narrative, and a heroic one at that. Moreover, Figueroa writes the rest of the chapter as an essay taking his own televised image and speech as his first source of evidence. In order to transition from the particular scene in the CNN newsroom to general criticism of political realism under the Transition and of its elitist and technocratic democracy as an extension of authoritarianism, Figueroa makes Bitar and Ramos representative of the status quo, which implies that he represents the new generation of snot-nosed young Turks. Of course televised debates exploit the logic of representation in order to personify and dramatize otherwise inchoate events. In this regard, Figueroa's *crónica* is not so different from the news media he criticizes. By sourcing his own televised arguments in the crafting of his essayistic ones, he also casts himself as an authority. Although his

authority, unlike Jackson's, is not that of the expert, a figure he goes on to criticize as "an objective being . . . uncontaminated by interests and ideologies . . . beyond good and evil," his claim that "objectivity is the subjectivity of the powerful and this became clear in 2011" could be leveraged against his text's self-institution as *crónica* (128). *Llegamos para quedarnos* pursues a "higher objectivity" through the subjective focalization and narration of Figueroa's lived experience. At the same time, it claims the position of a "higher subjectivity" through the literary institution of the *crónica* and of his book.

In light of its self-designation as *crónica*, Figueroa's book is surprisingly univocal. The *crónica* form is keyed to the dialogical, whether we understand this as an author's literary "overwriting" of informational news media or as the journalistic technique of sourcing the testimonies and opinions of others. The *crónica*'s dialogical mode of testimonial narration is one of its political potentials. At the same time that it contests notions of objectivity through the *mise-en-scène* of the author, it often reduces his authority by making it one voice among the many reported voices of others. If in Figueroa's text we should be wary of the shifting threshold between the narrations of experience and of the critical imagination, we should also interrogate the boundary between the narration of experience and imagination of the individual and those of others. In the specific case of representing mass movements, we should ask: How does a *crónica*'s particular mode of representation reflect the rights claimed by an individual author to represent the mass?

Perhaps out of humility, circumspection, or fidelity to the facts of experience, Figueroa's *crónica* chapters are limited to the narration of his personal story. The reported speech of others, whether invented, recalled, or directly culled from interviews, so central

to the genre, plays only a minimal role here. Despite this, Figueroa avoids reporting the speech of individual's whose voices are already audible, far above the din of the mass, save his own. He thereby avoids contributing to the heroic personalization of the movement, in his figure or in those of the other student leaders, whom he rarely mentions. When he does report the speech of the student bases, it is often in a generic mode. For example, at a meeting of the CONFECH to address the 'irregularities' and delays in the distribution of grants, which had left 20,000 students unable to pay their tuition six weeks into the 2011 academic year, Figueroa fictionalizes the generic positions of the organization's caucuses.

“Let's have a press conference and put out a release!” some audaciously bellowed. “Let's demand a meeting with the authorities and present our points there!” others cried out. “And where is the unity of workers and students!” the Trotskyists took it upon themselves to ask, pressing play on their cassette of slogans, which, as predictable as they are, get confused with the background noise. (54)

Here, the reported collective speech of students does not shift the text's focalization through the author. This passage is interesting, rather, because by fictionalizing collective speech, it reveals the unity of that collectivity to be a fictional abstraction. In this sense, its effect is similar to that of the anonymity of the *encapuchado*. As the *encapuchado*'s masking frustrates regimes of individual identification by subsuming identifiable individuals into the anonymous mass, so Figueroa exchanges the real, reported speech of individuals for the fictive, generic speech of groups and stereotypes (in the case of the Trotskyists). Like the virtuality of the *encapuchado* that blocks the correspondence between public persona and private individual, the fictive speech of the students has only a pseudomimetic relationship to any actual particularity. The difference lies in the thoroughgoing determination of *Llegamos para quedarnos* by an authorial subjectivity

that insists on its coincidence with Figueroa's person. In the context of a chapter that recounts his lived experience, this fictionalized collective speech becomes a mere prosthesis of the author's memory.

Figueroa's text approaches polyvocality where it incorporates the slogans he hears at marches and sees on banners and placards around the country. Like the fictionalization of collective speech, the slogans' and chants' overdetermined and anonymous authorship troubles the unity and univocality of the "self" of these self-representations. The slogans are quoted in the contexts in which Figueroa encounters them, seemingly erupting in the text. But they are not therefore reducible to his lived experience. For example,

They spread out across the university to swath it in slogans like "WE ARE NOT AGAINST THE PARTIES, THE PARTIES ARE AGAINST US," or "CONCERTACIÓN, PIÑERA: THE SAME WALLET" ("CONCERTA, PIÑERA: LA MISMA BILLETERA"). (Figueroa 69-70)

and,

On the Alameda one could read:

I wanted to give my child an education...I only gave him debt.

The presidents and politicians study for free. Why not you and me?

Justice!

I'm a teacher: If I pay for the bus and my student loan, I don't eat.

(Figueroa 99)

The slogans speak through his narrated experience, or, rather, they infiltrate it. We might even say that they "underwrite" his text in the same way that his *crónica* "overwrites" the

movement's representation in the news media. This is not to fetishize the "reality" of these words as the "authentic" voice of the "people." On the contrary, my goal has been to dismantle the acts of reference, representation, and identification that posit and manufacture realities and identities and in this way to hold open the utopian impulse and the constituent process of 2011.

These intertextual slogans "underwrite" *Llegamos para quedarnos* in two senses. First, they underwrite Figueroa's text in the sense of legitimating his writing. Although the text insists that it narrates only his experiences and opinions, this narrative is only interesting insofar as it represents the collective, only valuable by virtue of the movement whose presence it posits and constructs. The unwitting biographical confiscation of its generic self-institution as *crónica* obscures this basic fact against Figueroa's better intentions. Second, the movement's overdetermined, impersonal self-representations are Figueroa's source material, the collective wellspring from which his voice emerges and is individuated. Before Figueroa was a *cronista*, he was a member of the mass, one among a multitude of anonymous, if potentially identifiable, co-authors of these slogans. Before he is an identifiable individual, a proper name narrating the truth of his experience, he is a persona, a mask, acting in public and speaking with and through language, that which we hold and which holds us in common.

Just as *Llegamos para quedarnos* begins by highlighting its subjective focalization—"This text is a piece of history just as I lived it"—it concludes by curtailing the reach of that voice: "What ends here is my account and not the student

revolt” (165).³⁴ The first personal narration of lived experience and its assumed coincidence with the given facts that insists on its referential truth-value also recognizes its incompleteness. Figueroa uses that same subjective limitation that makes the text largely univocal to distinguish between his constituted, determined, and finite representation and the open, ongoing, and constituent process represented. If indeterminacy distinguishes the *crónica* from other forms of testimonial writing, in *Llegamos para quedarnos* this indeterminacy is not to be found in intersubjective constructivism, as, for example, in the polyphony of individual voices in Elena Paniotowska’s *La noche de Tlatelolco*. Rather, the insertion of the authorial subject demarcates and determines his representation and his referential truth. It also leaves indeterminate the movement that underwrites his representation, beyond the total representational capture of the authorial subject. Figueroa’s largely univocal focalization allows him to maintain a clear political position without reducing the movement to that same position.³⁵ It also recognizes that the movement continues. Or rather that it *should* continue. In 2012, presumably when Figueroa wrote much of *Llegamos para quedarnos*, it was unclear if the student movement would survive the frustrated desires of 2011, and outlive the flashbulb moments of its mediatized existence. Against the effects of its self-institution as *crónica*, the book’s conclusion may be read as a wish just as its title may be read as an injunction, the hope and call for fidelity to the constituent process and utopian impulse that became visible in 2011.

³⁴ In a final wink to his text’s generic self-institution, Figueroa concludes the last chapter by indirectly quoting Rigoberta Menchú in Andrés Fielbaum’s inaugural speech as president of the FECH in 2013-14 (166).

³⁵ Even in those chapters that are written in the mode of *crónica*, Figueroa attacks the positions and actions of certain sectors of the movement during 2011, among them the FEUC under Jackson’s leadership (107), the most radical anarchist leftists in the CONFEC and ACES (157), and the “coopted leadership” of organized labor (147). In contrast to Jackson, Figueroa does not directly treat the problem of the *encapuchado*, and his passing comments on their actions neither condemn nor victimize their authors.

Human Capital: Student-Investors, Student-Debtors

I began this chapter by claiming that the figure of the *encapuchado-flaite* affects a crisis of representation within a movement itself predicated on a crisis of Chile's so-called representative democracy. "En defensa de la capucha" does so by making the declassed identity of the *flaite* speak from behind the mask of the *encapuchado*. The paradoxical combination of a self-identified speaking subject with a figure that refuses identification and individualization calls into question the assumed reference that obtains between voices, bodies, and identities. It insists on the virtuality and potentiality of the mass against the movement's representative political organization and its largely symbolic action in the representations of the news media. The specter of the mass, of direct action, and of violence haunts the movement just as the specter of class threatens to disintegrate the transversal figure of the student. Now, I would like to return to the related claim that this ambiguous figure indexes the latent or repressed class character of the movement. To do so I will decompose the figure of the student and trace the ways in which it is represented and captured as a subject of capitalism in the late twentieth century, first, as the student-investor and, then, as the student-debtor. In order to dissociate the figure from these representations, I will remit the student to its activity, to study. For ultimately it is the labor of study that must be measured in order to make the student reproduce capitalist society.

What is the class character of the Chilean university student? And what is the latency cast into relief by its foil and excrescence the *encapuchado-flaite*? In his book *Derrumbe del modelo* (2012), social scientist Alberto Mayol agrees that the 2011 student

movement marks the reawakening of class struggle in Chile. One of the movement's slogans, "*¡No al lucro!* No to profit!," read narrowly, rejects Chile's growing number of for-profit institutions of higher education. Read broadly, it indicts central tenet of capitalist accumulation, the extraction of surplus value from labor. However, for Mayol, the student movement represents a "sophistication" of the older model of class struggle. "The historical class conflict is located in the dimension of work, but the crisis of 2011 is located in the dimension of consumption, or rather, in obtaining through consumption a future job" (80). This notion of consuming in the present in order to produce in the future makes the class character of the student doubly latent. The first, ideological latency arises from liberal democracy's meritocratic myth, which casts higher education as a clearing ground of the class system, as a means for individuals to transgress the station of their birth. The second, material latency arises from the often-erroneous view that students are not yet productive workers³⁶ and therefore not yet properly classed.³⁷ This double latency

³⁶ The definition of the productive worker is one that dogged classical economics to such an extent that J.S. Mill addresses the question in an early aside to his *Principles of Political Economy*—a book that served as the teaching text for several generations of neoclassical economists (70-74). With marginalism, bourgeois economics abandoned the labor theory of value, sidestepping the question altogether and preparing the way for labor's reentry through its transformation into human capital. While Marx clearly and narrowly defined what counts as productive work (I believe the clearest account to be the unpublished Sixth Chapter of *Capital*, Vol. 1) under the guise of "the woman question," Marxists nonetheless revisited the issue time and again. Not until the late-twentieth century were Marxist feminists in a position to claim that reproductive labor not only produces use-values, but also exchange values as it is a mode of production at least formally (see, Vogel) if not really subsumed to capitalist production (see, Fortunati, Federici) even as it is doubly exploited in the political framework of the "social factory" articulated by *operaismo* (see, Dalla Costa and James, Federici). This theoretical shift is overdetermined by its conjuncture, but we can nonetheless identify among its causes: the demise of the Fordist compromise with Keynesianism and the notion of the male-earner family wage along with it; women's increasing insertion into the productive labor force beginning with the war effort; the recognition brought about by decolonization that informal work dwarves the formal sector.

³⁷ Many theorists of student debt, both its critics and proponents, overlook the fact that large shares of university students are simultaneously workers, and precarious ones at that. In his recent work on student debt, Maurizio Lazzarato seems to assume that the student is not also already a worker. In *El ladrillo* (see below), the architects of Chile's neoliberal counterrevolution assume the same when trying to account for the real costs that should be covered by student loans: "In effect, one cost of higher education not normally considered is the income that the student could receive if he worked and which we must forgo if he studies." (147). As of 2013, one third of all students enrolled in Chilean institutions of higher

clouds a materialist analysis of the university student, and by extension, student movements. Part of the difficulty arises from the novel means by which the student has been inserted into post-War capitalism, which reconfigure it, first, as a human capital investor or, recalling Foucault, an entrepreneur of the self in cognitive capitalism's post-industrial risk society and, second, as an indentured servant in the global debt economy. I will argue that these figures of the Chilean university student mark a shift in representational regimes that is latent in the 2011 student movement.

The transformation of the figure of the student into that of an investor in his or her own human capital is one that has proved central to the legacy of the Chicago School of Economics, whose combination of monetarism and neoclassical economics informs much of Chile's neoliberal governmentality. In the 1950s, Jacob Mincer, Milton Friedman, Theodore Schultz, and Gary Becker theorized education as a service industry whose primary product, instruction, is consumed in order to increase the stock of human capital. The notion of education as human capital development was taken up in Chile almost as soon as it was invented. In a speech which set in motion the Educational Reform of 1965, president Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-1970) claimed that low rates of education not only frustrated the practice of authentic democracy, but also lowered productivity, since “[e]ducation constitutes one of the forms of capitalization of a country's wealth, expressed in the talents of man” (Frei Montalva 16 in: Ruiz Schneider 89). Jorge Gomez Millas, Frei's Minister of Education, would add that where once education was considered a luxury, it should now be seen as a ‘consumption-investment’ (Ruiz Schneider 89).

education also worked (26 percent of university students, 31 percent of students at technical education centers (*centros de formación técnica*), and 47 percent of those at professional institutes) (Instituto Juventud 8).

Both statements could just as easily have come from the mouth of Theodore Schultz during the course of a speech he delivered in March 1962 in Santiago. Schultz's paper "Education as a Source of Economic Growth" documents the discursive shift at work in the transformation of education into human capital investment. Where today we speak of human, symbolic, cultural, and emotional capital without batting an eyelash,³⁸ at the dawn of this moment of economics' discursive expansion, which performatively inaugurated the next phase of primitive accumulation, Schultz still feels compelled to graphically mark the metaphorical transference of his vocabulary by underlining new key terms, placing them in quotation marks, or employing "as" in place of "is". For example, Schultz states his purpose thus: "My principal task is to examine education. How much does education contribute to economic growth? What is the return of education? In answering these questions, I propose to treat schools (organized education) as an industry that produces instruction and that this instruction represents an investment in people" (7). And before launching into his economic proof, Schultz feels obliged to forestall counterarguments founded on the "strong belief that the cultural attributes of education are beyond economics" (8). His justification for treating education as an investment in human capital rests on the logics of equivalency and commensurability which are axiomatic to his discipline: since education clearly has costs, which have long been calculated by the governments that provide it, it follows that education has returns that can be measured (Schultz 10). Schultz elides the "moral and value issue" that still inheres in the passage from the possibility of measure to its realization, the same issue

³⁸ Indeed, my own approach draws heavily on this vocabulary associated with post-Marxist thinking, particularly the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

that, in his opinion, for too long caused economists to “shy away from” the quantitative, economic analysis of education (8).

The oversight, according to Schultz, is great, and its correction nothing short of (counter)revolutionary. The consensus among economists was once that economic growth derived from three sources: land, labor, and capital. Since land and labor were considered more or less constant, economic planning had focused on fixed capital. However, as the unexplained difference between macroeconomic input and output came into focus through quantitative analysis, economists—many cite Jacob Mincer as the first—began searching for other sources of growth to explain the discrepancy. Schultz mentions several contenders: the mobility of labor, more efficient resource allocation among regions and branches of the national economy, reduction of the “lag” between the discovery of economically useful knowledge and its application, economies of scale, advances in knowledge as expressed in fixed capital (which was already the topic of Marx’s now over-quoted “Fragment on Machines”), and finally the “rise in education of members of the labor force” which Schultz unabashedly calls later in the paper “stock of education per worker” (5-7, 28). For Schultz, the last three sources—economies of scale and the stock of knowledge in fixed capital and variable capital—most likely account for the lion’s share of observed but unmeasured economic growth. Identifying and quantifying these sources marked a tremendous expansion of the purchase and power of Thomas Carlyle’s dismal science.

Despite the umbilical chord that for seventeen years (1956-1973) connected the Chicago School of Economics to the Universidad Católica and Frei Montalva’s 1965 Education Reform and his receptivity to the notion of human capital, before the 1980s,

one could have identified the Chilean university student as a member of the upper classes and the university system as a means of reproducing the ruling class and its ideology along the lines of Bourdieu and Passeron's *The Inheritors and Reproduction* and Althusser's *On Reproduction*. Until the 1980s, the Chilean university student remained a subjected subject of a disciplinary society. Pinochet's 1980-81 decrees laid the scene for the massification,³⁹ privatization,⁴⁰ and precaritization⁴¹ of Chilean higher education, all of which drastically transformed the social insertion and imagination of the university student.

Pinochet's higher education reforms are rooted in the so-called first-phase of the dictatorship (1975- 1981), when brutal repression and state terrorism cleared the ground for the implantation of Chicago School economic policies. In 1992, the Centro de Estudios Públicos, a right-wing think tank, published *El ladrillo. Bases de la economía política del gobierno militar en Chile*, which made public for the first time a 1973 working paper drafted by Sergio de Castro, Pablo Barahona, Sergio Undurraga Saavedra, Emilio Sanfuentes, and other economists affiliated with the economics department at the

³⁹ In 1981 tertiary educational attainment in Chile stood at 5.9 percent of the population age group 13 and older (Brunner, *Cinco Estudios* 55). By 2011, tertiary attainment in both theoretical and professional training was 29.8 percent for the age group 25-65 years old (OECD 37).

⁴⁰ Decreto con Fuerza de Ley (DFL) No. 1 (after passage of the 1980 constitution), declares the right to form private, non-profit universities. DFL no. 5 (1981) allows for the creation of professional institutes and DFL no. 24 (1981) allows for the creation of private technical training centers in order "to incentivize and stimulate the creation of private centers of this type and engage them in the delivery a good educational service." While the laws appear to regulate, in fact these new norms shift the paradigm of higher education from education as an affair of state provided to citizens, to education as a service provided to student-consumers by private enterprise.

⁴¹ At the institutional level, over the course of the eighties, public investment in higher education declined by 40 percent and universities were asked to make up for the shortfall through increasing tuition (Bernasconi 65). What subsidies the state did provide were distributed by competition among various institutions. At the same time labor policy in higher education was left up to individual institutions leading to growing [number of temporary, contracted professors so legion as to earn the popular moniker of "profesor taxi", a reference to the fact that many cobble together a living by teaching courses at many universities simultaneously.

Universidad Católica.⁴² On the topic of higher education, the authors propose sweeping market-based reforms starting from the axiom that “The higher levels of education, both technical and professional, represent a notable and direct benefit to those who obtain it, such that the gratuity of this kind of education is in no way justified” (*Ladrillo* 146). Rather than a collective or even individual right, higher education represents an individual economic gain whose “real value” should determine its price (*Ladrillo* 147). The argument against the state providing free higher education was the same in 1973 as it was in 2011: free higher education would not redistribute wealth since it equally subsidizes students from rich and poor backgrounds.⁴³ Instead of universal state subsidy, *El ladrillo* proposes a system of loans and grants to ensure *individuals’* equal access to the services of higher education, what is commonly referred to in Chile as *focalización* (focalization) (Figueroa 86). On this plan, seventy to eighty percent of the costs of education would be funded by loans, and the remainder by grants to those students with the least resources. The repayment of loans would be directly tied to a percentage of future earnings, a point we will examine below. But lacking a mechanism for calculating present creditworthiness based on future income, this ratio suggests contrary to the authors’ claims of equal opportunity that the university would remain an institution largely accessible only to students currently creditworthy and, therefore, from

⁴² In fact, the document dates to 1969, when these same Católica-Chicago trained economists convened to draft socioeconomic policy for the right-wing presidential candidate Jorge Alessandri. Alessandri’s defeat by Salvador Allende made it so that the group would have to wait until after the *golpe* to pitch their free market-utopia to the now authoritarian Chilean government. (*Ladrillo* 7-8).

⁴³ In his 1962 speech, Schultz made the same argument for more economically cogent reasons: “If education were free, people would consume it until they were satiated and they would invest in themselves until the return to education were zero The costs of education to the individual are less as a rule than they are to the community (economy). If all costs were borne by the community (government), the individual would find it to his advantage to ‘invest’ in additional education until it would no longer increase his future earnings (to the zero return point)” (17-18). Milton Friedman and Gary Becker also insist that higher education must not be free of charge. Were education free, there would be no market, and the benefits of this service would remain unquantified and social.

presumably well-off families (*Ladrillo* 148). Most nefarious of all, however, is the suggestion that, in order to change Chileans' mentality about higher education from being a right to being a service, demand for credit should be artificially manufactured by immediately and substantially raising tuition (*Ladrillo* 149). Unlike Schultz's half-hearted attempt to address this shift in mentality by justifying it on economic grounds, *El ladrillo* demands that education already is a consumer good rather than a social right. It demands that young people be guaranteed access to the higher education market through loans backed by their future earnings. Both demands (from above) become compulsions (from below) with the manufacture of consumer demand for credit. First, the value of higher education and, then, the risk of human capital investment are individualized as the student is transformed into an investor.

But *El ladrillo*'s individualization of the gains and risks of human capital investment point to problems in the scale of its measure. For Schultz and Mincer, human capital functioned first at the level of a population. Even the passage in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, where Mincer rediscovers the concept, conceives of human capital as "the acquired and useful abilities of *all* the inhabitants or members of a society" (265; my emphasis).⁴⁴ Of course, human capital is embodied, whether in the form of knowledge, skills, affects, values, or health; the future productivity of the individual worker, in the form of earnings, is its measurable output, as opposed to the intangible outputs Bourdieu calls symbolic and cultural capital, and that Schulz recognizes but must leave out of the framework of his quantitative analysis. As such, it is not transferrable in the manner of fixed capital on which it is modeled, unless the laborer and not just his

⁴⁴ University critic Morgan Adamson explains further: "Human capital calculations start with a conception of human productivity in its raw state, a pre-individual, or '*Gattungswesen*,' to which all value added could, potentially, be calculated as human capital" (273).

labor is treated as property. The “moral and value issue” elided in Schultz’s presentation in Santiago is not only the incalculability of the cultural, ethical, and political value of education, its symbolic and cultural capital. It is also the consequence of treating workers like machines or slaves.⁴⁵ Ultimately, the debt relation becomes the mechanism by which the free laboring substratum of human capital investment interiorizes the command and exercises the capture of capitalism.

But where does this capital for investment come from? In Chile in the 1990s, greater access and rising tuitions combined with the deepening penetration of consumer credit markets⁴⁶ to compose the figure of the student-in-debt. In order to transform Schultz’s macroeconomic, social understanding of human capital investment into *El ladrillo*’s individualized human capital investor, two issues must be overcome; the paucity of present income let alone capital among the young people who are most likely to become investors in human capital, and the tremendous observed risk involved in investing in (young) people. The first finds its solution in the finance system, as proposed by *El ladrillo*. The second however, presents a stumbling block to the first. Not only are young people poor in capital and earnings, they are poor in creditworthiness. Then, in one way or another, the risk of the student loan must be distributed, i.e. socialized, even as its gains are privatized.

In his 1962 *Capitalism and Freedom*, Milton Friedman proposed a novel way to distribute the risk of human capital investment. Based on the model used for other high-

⁴⁵ The comparison of labor invested with human capital to slavery and machinery is common in the economic literature on human capital. Adamson’s article “The Human Capital Strategy” cites several examples including one from Gary Becker.

⁴⁶ In 1990, domestic credit provided by the financial sector as percent of GDP was 70 percent. By 2011, it was 109 percent of GDP. This statistic measures the depth of the banking sector and, in general, the degree of development of the financial sector. By comparison, the same measure for the same years in Argentina stood at 32 percent and 25 percent of GDP, and in Mexico at 37 percent and 45 percent of GDP. (World Bank).

risk investments, namely “equity investment plus limited liability on the part of the shareholders”, what has later been dubbed the ‘human capital contract’ would allow lenders “to ‘buy’ a share in an individual’s earnings” (Friedman 87). Unlike loans, which are limited by time and rate of repayment or even indentured servitude, which is limited by time alone, this contract constitutes an investment by the creditor in perpetuity.⁴⁷ In this schema, then, there are two investors: the creditor-turned-shareholder who fronts the capital, and the student-debtor and future bearer of that human capital stock who fronts the present unwaged labor (study) and a portion of his future waged labor (earnings). The human capital contract is not, as Friedman says, just a way for the lender to “get back more than his initial investment from relatively successful individuals” in order to “compensate for the failure to recoup his original investment from the unsuccessful” as if investment were a zero sum game (88). The goal of investment is future profit, such that “compensation” to the creditor-investor means dividing the student-debtor-investor’s return on investment. With shocking indifference, Friedman openly admits that such contracts “are economically equivalent to . . . partial slavery” (88), which does not faze him, since they are not illegal. Capitalism and Freedom would seem to lead down the Road to Serfdom.

⁴⁷ There is some ambiguity in Friedman’s text about whether the contract is limited or not. For example, he proposes that both “private financial institutions and non-profit institutions such as foundations and universities” should be the primary investors in human capital contracts (Friedman 89). One can imagine that the incentives of for-profit and non-profit creditor-investors would be quite different and, therefore, that the negotiated percentage of future income and expected return on investment would differ. An equity investment means that the investor owns a part of the company until either he sells his share to a third party or else the company’s assets are liquidated and proceeds distributed to shareholders. The implications of this for an embodied investment like human capital are unclear. But beyond the term equity investment, Friedman does point to the enduring nature of the human capital contract when he says, “The individual would agree to pay . . . *in each future year* a specified percentage of his earning in excess of a specified sum” (89; my emphasis).

Despite a recent revival of the idea of the human capital contract,⁴⁸ in Chile, as in many countries, the primary mechanisms for financing human capital investment remain family incomes and bank loans. In Chile, the latter takes the form of the government's student loan scheme called *Crédito con Aval del Estado* (CAE) (state-guaranteed credit), enacted in 2006, by which the Chilean government underwrites 90 percent of a student loan (principal plus interest) in case of default or desertion of study. So, in order for the Chilean student to become an individual investor in his own human capital, the state and ultimately taxpayers assume the risk of the student-debtor's investment while the financial sector reaps profit in the form of interest.⁴⁹ What is the outcome of this system? Since the reforms of 1980-81, the number of Chileans holding a tertiary degree increased nearly five fold reaching nearly thirty percent of the adult population in 2007. At the same time, Chilean institutions of higher education have been guaranteed the right to freely determine the cost of tuition (Brunner and Uribe 193). In the decade 1995-2005, tuition and fees across all tertiary institutions increased an average of 57 percent. And even as government funds during the period 1995-2007 increased 321 percent for scholarships and 448 percent for guaranteed loans, in 2007 Chilean families and students still bore 84 percent of the cost of higher education. As of 2011, Chilean households spent on average 22.7 percent of their income at purchasing power parity on higher education, the highest relative cost in the world. Not only the value but the quality of education was "regulated" solely by the market until 2006, when the government enacted

⁴⁸ In 2001, Vanderbilt University economist Miguel Palacios Lleras founded Lumni, Inc., a company that has using human capital contracts to mediate between institutional investors and students in the US, Peru, Mexico, Chile, the US and Llera's native Colombia. For more on Palacios Lleras and the Human Capital Contract see, Adamson, "The Financialization of Student Life," 102-105.

⁴⁹ In his interpretation of the Chilean office of the Budget's "Informe de Pasivos Contingentes", Mayol notes that in 2009, the amount paid to creditors on behalf of student-debtors who deserted or defaulted on their loans was sufficient to having granted full scholarships to the same number of students (119).

a “national system for quality assurance in higher education.” Rather than assure the quality of education, this system assures quality of the instructional product in order to maintain consumer confidence in the higher education market. At the same time, it gives incentive to that market's further financialization by adding yet another measure to better calculate return on human capital investment.

Human capital and debt are technologies of control that produce the subjectivities of the student-investor and bearer of human capital stock and the student-debtor. As such, they exemplify the shift from “neoliberalism from above” to “neoliberalism from below” identified by Argentinean social theorist and erstwhile member of *Colective Situaciones* Verónica Gago (*Razón* 12). Human capital encysts the property relation in the mind and body of the free laborer; its power derives from ownership mediated by measurement. The power of debt is control over the conduct and way of life of that free laborer; this control, as Maurizio Lazzarato has argued, following Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari, functions not only through economic necessity and jurisprudence but also morality. When human capital stock is purchased on credit, the creditor comes to own a part of the debtor's living labor and to control aspects of his behavior for a period of time. As we have seen, the student-debtor is, in many cases, the material prerequisite for the figure of the student-as-human-capital-investor, even though the notion of human capital is the discursive condition for this particular debt relation. Alongside the subjectivities produced by these technologies of command subsists that of the student as present and future worker. These subject formations do not supersede one another as if by some linear, segmented historical progression. Rather they accumulate as sediment. As Gago states, “Consumption as mediation and the financial as the figure of command put all the

world to work without replacing the homogenous figure of labor. This diffusion of the imperative to self-entrepreneurship is exploited, promoting the invention of new forms of value production, beyond the confines of waged labor and the parameters of its legality” (*Razón* 24). Reproductive labor has long been recognized as a source of unwaged and largely unregulated value production. Before it is an investment, the present labor of the student is a form of unwaged reproductive labor, a point corroborated by Silvia Federici (Gonzalez and Manning). This fact is often forgotten in the productivist drive of economic and materialist analyses of education. Since human capital investment is measured by future, remunerated labor, and it is this measure that, in the case of students, gives rise to the debt relation, can we then say that the student’s present, unremunerated, reproductive labor in the form of study escapes this measure? Or is it possible that there is an equally unwaged but also non-reproductive study that is neither bound to reproduce the capitalist system nor to produce within it?

I would like to explore this notion of study, what I will call *study-without-end*, with and through a concrete example that extracts the labor of the student in the present tense from the representational capture that composes the student as a figure of capitalist futures. At the height of 2011, as tens and hundreds of thousands of students and fellow travellers took their demands for education reform to the streets, others had occupied approximately 600 schools and universities. Barricaded behind desks and chairs piled like caltrops in front of doors and gates, the occupied schools were direct actions that, like the *encapuchados*, operated below the movement’s representational logics. Although the student occupiers stopped normal school operations, many did not also abandon study. I

will claim that these temporary, autonomous schools can be seen as sites for the release of a *study-without-end* from its instrumentalization, the enactment of a study that is useless for the purposes of capitalist production and reproduction.

Trazas de utopia is a text that collects the experiences of the different actors involved in four self-managed high schools during 2011. The text is the result of a collaboration between Colectivo Diatriba, Observatorio Chileno de Políticas Educativas (OPECH) (Chilean Observatory of Education Policy), the publishers Editorial Quimantú, and participants from the self-managed schools Liceo Eduardo de la Barra (Valparaíso), Liceo Luis Galecio Corvera A-90 (Santiago), Colegio República de Brasil D-159 (Concepción), and Liceo Manuel Barros Borgoño (Santiago). The text transcribes interviews with students, student organizers, teachers, parents, and other school workers who participated in the occupation. As such, it may be classified as a work of testimonial writing, but one in the style of the anthropological or sociological studies that informed the *testimonios* transcribed by Miguel Barnet or Elizabeth Burgos before the mode was taken up within and against the literary institution. And unlike Figueroa's *Llegamos para quedarnos* or Jackson's *El País que soñamos*, *Trazas de utopia* lacks the unity provided by subjective focalization or literary overwriting; not only is the text collectively authored, it includes the questions asked of each individual or group interviewed like a protocol that circumscribes the collective's role by making it transparent to the reader. That said, the collective did pen a brief introduction and conclusion; although these texts do not overwrite the mosaic of other voices, they do write beside it. Describing the rationale behind the text's publication, the collective writes in December 2011:

The experiences are still in process and, like everything that is born, they are confronted by infinite enemies and detractors. Due to this . . . we came

together to rescue the voices of the protagonists . . . the multiplicity that constitutes the making of history, in making it (*hacer la historia, haciéndola*). (*Trazas* 6)

Contrast this statement with Figueroa's claim that "The student movement, like all social movements, has no historicity beyond its organized elements." (102), where "organized elements" refers to the student federations, and we see how the collective's understanding of the role of writing in the first person resonates more with the anonymous author of "En defensa de la capucha" than with the so-called *crónicas* penned by the movement's so-called leaders.

The reasons students give for organizing the autonomous schools make up a collage that cannot be reduced to some gray theory; they range from emancipatory desires, liberal ideologies, strategy in support of the movement, and the pragmatics of occupation. For Jean, a student at Liceo Auto-Gestionado Eduardo de la Barra "the experience of self-management begins with the need for knowledge, the need to cultivate oneself as a person . . . to know because we want to, not because we need to" (*Trazas* 10). Cristóbal Espinoza, a student at the Liceo Auto-Gestionado Luis Galecio Corvera A-90, the first of the self-managed high schools, saw the practice as a way to shore up waning student support for the occupation and cites as their inspiration the Argentinean self-managed factory Zanon that students from the high school learned about at a student movement assembly (*Trazas* 42). For Miguel Legue, student at the Liceo Auto-Gestionado Manuel Barros Borgoño, self-management was a tactic "to silence those mouths that say we're only doing this to skip class and because we're lazy" (96). As one student simply states, "With self-management we demonstrated that we come here to learn" (*Trazas* 96). Whatever their motivations, students at the autonomous schools study

by choice. And not only at the there but at all times, a fact revealed when the state's mandate that students attend school no longer obscures their will to study.

The study at the autonomous schools was not all that different from the study during their normal operations as apparatuses of state, as one student recognizes (*Trazas* 122). They did not radically alter the curriculum, except for the addition of a few workshops taught by fellow students, even though students did determine the focus of each course. At the Liceo Auto-Gestionado Manuel Barros Borgoño, fourth year students even took the precaution of working with the curriculum that prepares them for the Prueba de Selección Universitaria (PSU), the test that largely determines university admissions, should they have had to take it that year (*Trazas* 119). With few exceptions, the autonomous schools preserved the student-teacher relationship, with university students filling in for teachers who did not support the occupations. From this perspective we could see self-management as the opposite pole of self-entrepreneurship, the internalization of the control mechanisms of neoliberal governmentality as a response to precarity that Gago calls neoliberalism from below. Certainly the situation is ambiguous, and what appears as self-management or study-without-end in one moment may appear as self-entrepreneurship and study-as-means in the next. This ambiguity is an index of the opportunism necessary for constructing institutions in adverse situations. It is also an index of these schools' potentiality, much like that of the *encapuchado-flaute*. Indeed, study-without-end is both a regulative ideal and a name for the student's basic activity. It is immanent to an education system that instrumentalizes it as the unwaged reproductive labor of capitalism. Immanent, ambiguous, indeterminate, study-without-end brackets the necessity of the present to hold open possible futures, and the

autonomous, occupied schools generated social spaces where it could appear, open and opportunistic institutions where it might come to dwell.

CHAPTER 2

Aporia, Apocalypse: Willy Thayer's University of *la Transición*

Das Denken soll verarmt werden, es soll nur soweit zugelassen werden als es gesellschaftlich realisierbar ist.

(Thought should become impoverished; it should only be permitted in so far as it is socially realizable.)

—Walter Benjamin. “Bert Brecht.”

. . . *utopia is what links* philosophy to its own epoch . . . In each case it is with utopia that philosophy becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point.

—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *What is philosophy?*

Theoretical engagement with the university in Chile has a history as long as the national university itself. Andrés Bello's 1842 inaugural address as rector of the newly chartered University of Chile stands at the beginning of this tradition. Bello's speech could wax eloquent about the lofty aims and ambitions of the new university, precisely because its idea had not yet been actualized. More than 150 years later, the idea of the university and really existing institutions of higher learning have not overcome the breach. In many ways, the crisis that gives rise to Willy Thayer's *La crisis no moderna de la universidad moderna* itself grows from the recognition of the disjuncture, even incommensurability, of Chilean universities and their idea. Thayer addresses this same disjuncture as that between the modern university's Enlightenment ideology and its contemporary function in the capitalist market system.

La crisis no moderna is not only a history of the idea of the university but a diagnosis of postdictatorship Chile. While Thayer's readings of the Cartesian, Kantian, and Nietzschean universities inform his own analysis of the current state of that same idea in Chile, it is difficult to say what Thayer's position is with respect to his predecessors. For example, he mobilizes Nietzschean genealogy to deconstruct the instrumental teleology of the modern French university (1806) and the speculative teleology of the German university (1810) (13). Its Nietzschean iteration also marks the historical moment when the university is equally determined by the universal medium of Enlightenment reason and the universal medium of capital, the money form. But despite the affinities of Thayer's deconstructive method with Nietzsche's genealogy, he does not believe that the Nietzschean University is the university of today (226-27). For when capital ushers in the era of technological reproducibility, the production and reproduction of knowledge, once the ken of universities, is generalized on a planetary scale as the capitalist production and reproduction of information, that is, commodified knowledge. This generalization is more precisely a sublation that at once dissolves the specificity of the university as the subject and organon of (legitimate) knowledge and makes the university indistinguishable from contemporary capitalist (post)modernity. So far Thayer's history resembles that of contemporary theorists of the university.⁵⁰ The basic plot is the same: capital comes to replace some older ideological formation as determinant of the production and reproduction of knowledge symbolized by the idea of the university. Where Thayer differs from other theorists of "cognitive" capitalism or "post-industrial" societies is in his seemingly conservative revalorization of the Kantian

⁵⁰ For two classic critiques see, Lyotard, *The Condition of Postmodernity* and Readings. For a more positive assessment of this process in the Chilean context, see Castells.

Faculty of Philosophy and the act of critical reflection now collapsed into an aporetic bulwark against professionalization, informationalization, and the real subsumption of knowledge work.

Thayer's apocalyptic worldview is an inversion of Enlightenment modernity's utopian thought that, we are told from both the Left and the Right, came to an end in 1989. As such, it cannot correspond to reality, however rooted in its contexts it may be. We must ask ourselves then: What is the political and theoretical value of Thayer's apocalyptic vision for his argument and for the idea of the university in post-dictatorship Chile? In what follows I will draw out and analyze Thayer's aporetic mode of critique and self-described apocalyptic syntax in order to flesh out the political ramifications less of what *La crisis no moderna* says than of what it does.

The Intransigent Transition and Aporitic Critique

Published in 1996, incidentally the same year of the posthumous publication of Bill Reading's now canonical *The University in Ruins*, Thayer's *La crisis no moderna de la universidad moderna*, along with Marxist sociologist Tomás Moulian's *Chile Actual, Anatomía de un mito* (1997), is a seminal work of the early post-dictatorship. In order to understand *La crisis no moderna*, we must first see how his text intervenes into its historical conjuncture. Much of the text's opacity and ambiguity derives from two largely indistinguishable sources - its aporetic critique and its apocalyptic vision. Two central aporias animate Thayer's critique: the paradox of historical periodization announced in the book's title, and its corollary, the aporia of reflective critique. For Thayer, the idea of

the modern university is not only generalized by so-called cognitive capitalism, it is exploded by the generalized crisis of modernity. Thayer renders the university, modernity, and ideology synonymous in order to claim that Kant's categories have become inoperative under post-state, post-ideological capitalist supremacy. This is so, Thayer goes on to claim, because the very notion of category—the structure and conditions of possibility of knowing and thinking in general—has come undone.

Thayer calls this crisis of modernity *la Transición*. In Chile, *la Transición* is usually understood as the 1990 transition from military dictatorship to democracy. For Thayer, however, *la Transición* begins with the 1973 *coup d'etat*, which inaugurated the twinned processes of the dismantling of the state and of economic and technological modernization. In Chile, then, 'modernization' forecloses full access to modernity.

Modern are the science, the politics, the education that think themselves in the sense of emancipatory progress. And that think, at the same time, the condition of the emancipatory and of progress (Kant). Modernization would name, then, the transition from an ideological and *reflexive* modernity, to a modernity with neither ideologies nor critical hyperbole. In this sense modernization would be a process of taking distance from and not approximating the modern. (*Crisis no moderna* 194)

Under modernity, Thayer tells us, the term 'transition' means progress from sameness to difference, from self to other (*Crisis no moderna* 168). But *la Transición* does not transit, does not progress, and is rather the eternal return of the same, a mere travesty of historical change, and the subordination of every occurrence to the "heteroclitite identity of multinational capitalism" (*Crisis no moderna* 167-170). Moreover, *la Transición* does not admit of any experience, and is rather the suspension of modernity's historical temporality in an actuality that is "not a present, not even a time . . . but rather a space in which presents, modes of production converge metonymically" (*Fragmento* 22). In this

sense, so Thayer, “the Golpe did not happen ‘in’ Chilean history . . . it happened ‘to’ Chilean history” (*Fragmento* 20) and not only to Chilean history, but also the modern episteme, its institutions, epistemologies, and temporalities. In Thayer’s vision of what could be described as a market singularity (and I believe he would welcome the oxymoron of qualifying that which, cosmologically speaking, has no qualities), he tells us that “demands for political justice, economic justice, and social restitution are . . . but demands immanent to . . . the market” (*Crisis no moderna* 172).⁵¹

Modernization, in Thayer’s usage, reduces the functional differentiation and uneven texture of modernity to the depthless facticity of a totally administered world purified of conflict and contingency, a world legitimated by performativity (Lyotard) and measured by the self-referential notion of excellence (Readings). In Thayer’s apocalyptic vision of what can best be described as a market singularity, the crisis of the university is “the crisis of modern categories, and of the category of crisis” (*Crisis no moderna* 171; “Filosofías de la Universidad” 51). This metonymy of Kant’s categories, modernity, and the university produces an aporia. In order to rescue critique from this metonymic impasse, along with the identity and privilege of the work performed by the university philosopher, Thayer’s text rescues what I call aporetic critique.

As Chilean philosopher Pablo Oyarzún points out in his review of *La crisis no moderna*, Thayer’s diagnosis of *la Transición* is not only about the conditions of

⁵¹ Anticipating Chapter Three, I should note that for Colectivo Situaciones, the events of 2001 in Argentina are also a “fall into immanence” and “an explosion of time” (*19 y 20* 54, 59). Whereas for Thayer immanentization in omnipotent capitalism renders us impotent, the collective sees immanence as the terrain of political action (*19 y 20* 26). And whereas non-modern history for Thayer remains negatively defined and possibly ahistorical, the explosion of time is for Colectivo Situaciones the unleashing of a multiplicity of temporalities still unified by conjunctures that give history its consistency (*19 y 20*, 26).

possibility of thinking, but critique in particular. Indeed, Thayer appears oddly nostalgic for the critical reflection that the modern and specifically Kantian university once performed. On his reading of Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties*, the lower faculty's autonomy, its distance from society and state, makes possible the critical reflection Thayer wants to salvage from the crisis of modernity. Thayer reminds us that, for Kant, critique is about the limits of knowledge, its conditions of possibility. As such, the Faculty of Philosophy speaks from the university and in its language about the limits of language, of the university, of the state and its power. For Thayer this means that "the intention of the Faculty of Philosophy is only viable at the expense of the impossible: to think power without power; to speak about language outside of language" (*Crisis no moderna* 65).

I take issue with Thayer's dualistic topology that caricatures Kant's critical philosophy as a matter of critical distance. The autonomy of the lower faculty is not the condition of critique, only a defense against the authority of the state. So far as I understand the spirit of the Kantian project, critique as the philosophical inquiry into the conditions of possibility of an object of knowledge is always bounded by the knowledge of that object, so long as the thing-in-itself cannot be known, but only thought. This limiting of knowledge does not necessitate critical distance. If we read him generously, these absences are not oversights but symptoms of how Thayer's text *works*, if his argument is to be found less in the text's denotative than in its performative register.

On this reading, the question "How to speak, then, non-universitarilly about the university? [Como hablar, entonces, no universitariamente de la universidad?]" is one of several posed by Kant's modern university that Thayer transposes into the present day.

The effect of this anachronism is to produce a paradox in the simplest sense: two doxa side by side, in this case, each deriving from one modern and one non-modern historical paradigm. Given Thayer's long Transition and the metonymy of university and modernity, the Chilean university of *la Transición* is doubly compromised: first, by the state during the dictatorship—what we might call the modern crisis of the modern university, the antagonism of authority and reason described by Kant—and second, by capital with the outright commodification of language and knowledge—the non-modern crisis of the modern university. If the autonomy of the university was Kant's solution to safeguard reason from authority, knowledge from power, and if reason's critical reflection was the endogamous source of that autonomy, what act of reason will now defend the university from its dissolution into cognitive capitalism?

“The demand for a university metaknowledge just like the demand for a metaknowledge of the market, needs a non-university knowledge of the university. And it requires a non-university language in which such a supposed metaknowledge would speak. Because to know or speak about the university in the way it ‘knows itself’ or ‘speaks itself’ would be to *reiterate* it and not to *reflect* it” (“Tiempo especulativo” 49; my emphasis). Although it may appear that Thayer advocates the resurrection of the modern act of critical reflection,⁵² I want to suggest that he performs a different kind of critique. We see this in the above quotation where Thayer differentiates “reiteration” from “reflection.” To reiterate is etymologically to repeat an action, to re-act; reflection is

⁵² Thayer's apparent nostalgia for critical reflection is not only apparent in *La crisis no moderna* but throughout his thinking on the university. Over a decade after its publication, Thayer affirms that “if there is still a specificity to philosophy it would immerse itself in or retreat behind the reflexive principle. On this point contemporary philosophy flourishes as a post-reflexive philosophy in which reflexivity has achieved a degree of self-irony that disposes it as pure interruption, as dialectical suspension, as undecidability of judgment” (“Filosofía de la reforma” 134). Although Thayer's position with regards to this post-reflexive turn in contemporary philosophy is ambiguous, its “dialectical suspension” and “undecidability of judgment” is closely affiliated with his aporetic critique.

a bending backward or an inward folding. We may think of reiteration as the repetition of the same difference, a process of one becoming two, and reflection as the difference of the same where one is shown to be already two, in the sense of the Möbius strip or Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit. To reflect in the same way as the modern university would be to reiterate its modern critique and the same difference –and distance, according to Thayer—already captured by contemporary capitalism. Instead, I want to suggest that Thayer reflects modern reflective critique, bends it back onto itself to produce aporias that were always its latent potential. Critical reflection on the university must be already within and against university-modernity in order to avoid capture and commodification.⁵³

Thayer's non-modern modern critique of the non-modern crisis of the modern university does not find aporias in modern philosophical texts, but reproduces or rather reflects those texts as aporetic in a manner similar to how his apocalyptic *Transición* relates to modern utopia, a point I will address below. Aporia here is not merely the impasse of thinking, but the active suspension of judgment, a spacing within the edifice of instrumental reason which re-creates modern critique's very conditions of possibility,⁵⁴ including, as we will see, the division of labor and social stratification that are its

⁵³ Martín Hopenhayn in his essay "What is positive in negative thought?" summarizes this same bind in the case of critical theory, with whose immanent critique Thayer's deconstruction shares outward similarities. According to Hopenhayn, an impasse results from Adorno and Horkheimer's repudiation of hope for its complicity with the false totality of industrial societies and their claim that "only the renunciation of hope can, paradoxically, permit hope itself to survive amid all that continuously denies it." (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* cited in: *No Apocalypse* 59). For Hopenhayn, "by means for this operation, a range of features are attributed to that world filled with negativity. Among these features are the perverse capacity to absorb hopes and utopias, to neutralize their transformational potential, and to convert them into ideologies of preservation To evade its reification, criticism must infinitely duplicate itself as criticism of criticism" (*No Apocalypse* 59). In the face of totalitarianism and bereft of hope, negative thought, i.e., critique, is left to reflect upon itself, as I argue Thayer does here.

⁵⁴ The method I have identified in *Las crisis no moderna* resembles "procedural" deconstruction. As the late Derrida puts it, "Each time that I say 'deconstruction and X (regardless of the concept or the theme),' this is the prelude to a very singular division that turns this X into, or rather makes appear in this X, an impossibility that becomes its proper and sole possibility, with the result that between the X as possible and the 'same' X as impossible, there is nothing but a relation of homonymy, a relation for which we have to provide an account" (*Deconstructions: A User's Guide*, 300).

conditions of possibility. Despite this criticism, aporetic critique as a philosophical method—like any technology—is not in itself politically bankrupt. However, the union of aporia as constitutive of critique with an apocalyptic, post-historical passivity, in other words the transposition of critical suspension onto history is the cause of political paralysis and not its effect.

Apocalyptic Syntax

The second difficulty presented by Thayer's *Crisis no moderna* is what he calls its "apocalyptic syntax." Apocalyptic syntax performs one of Thayer's responses to the question "How not to speak, then, universally about the university?" All of us speak like the university insofar as we speak and think in the language and categories of modernity. But in the same manner as Thayer's reflection of modern reflective critique, even if it is impossible to speak universally, i.e. categorically, about the crisis of university-modernity, its categories, and of the category of crisis, it may be possible to speak otherwise or in another register. In his review of *La crisis no moderna*, Pablo Oyarzún suggests one way in which Thayer writes otherwise, pointing out his use of the present conditional. On Oyarzún's reading,

the grammar of the present conditional . . . our present conditioned by the eclipse of the condition [of thinking], . . . disrupts—would disrupt—the ways in which we are accustomed to reflexively taking charge of the present, and, above all, the modern form of criticism. (276)

Another mode would be Thayer's recourse to the metaphorical registers of language. As we have seen, Thayer is careful not to determine the relationship between the university and its context, for example, by making the crisis of the university expressive or symptomatic of the crisis of modernity and its social and epistemological categories.

Instead the crisis of the university *is* the crisis of modernity, and, moreover, the university *is* modernity insofar as the copula here is understood not existentially but relationally, as an “is like/as” that Paul Ricoeur calls the copula’s “metaphorical mode of being” (248).⁵⁵ Metaphor’s paratactic field of shifting surface relations and endless exchanges of meaning is suited to describing the catastrophe of modernity, its categories and apparatuses, and the facticity of the global networks of capital that have replaced them. Thayer calls this parataxis an in subordinate “apocalyptic syntax” (201).

This poetic impulse, or what Nelly Richard calls its “will to style,” places Thayer’s text in line with those of his contemporaries (“Language of Criticism” 255). Beginning in the late 1970s with Patricio Marchant⁵⁶—a Chilean philosopher, translator and erstwhile student of Derrida—a cohort of Chilean intellectuals, including Oyarzún and Richard, crafted poetical theoretical texts in the style of Nietzsche and twentieth-century French Nietzscheoids.⁵⁷ These Chilean intellectuals’ recourse to tropic language *emerged* in response to the censure and silences of the years of dictatorship. It *subsisted*

⁵⁵ In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur, recalling Ernst Cassirer, points out that language “does not go so far as to distinguish between two senses of the verb to be, the relational and the existential” (Rule 248). ‘To be’ is at once to posit a being and to insert that supposed being into a network of relations that mark it as a discrete unity. ‘To be’ is both ‘to exist’ and ‘to be other’, ‘to be like/as’. This “tension in the relational function of the copula” is the tension “between identity and difference in the interplay of resemblance” (Rule 247). We should note that Ricoeur understands ‘being’ as a semantic function; more than being-as-such it is the verb ‘to be’ that Ricoeur characterizes as metaphorical. Otherwise, Ricoeur would not only contradict his own understanding of the metaphor as a fleeting and purely semantic event. He would also transgress the order of the Aristotelian system (the point of departure and ground of *The Rule of Metaphor*), which confines metaphor to the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. I have bracketed these doubts and assumed the first interpretation, for the clarity of Ricoeur’s explanation is worthy of restatement despite the possible slippage between being-as-copula and being-as-such.

⁵⁶ In 2000, Oyarzún and Thayer edited and co-wrote the introduction to a collection of Marchant’s essays, cf. “Perdidas palabras, prestados nombres”. *Escritura y Temblor*. Marchant is not only important as a pioneer of Chilean poststructuralist theory, but as a forerunner of Thayer’s approach to the university. Marchant’s deconstructive readings of the university can be found in passages of *Sobre arboles y madres* (1984), his widely publicized debate with Jorge Guzmán about his reception of the book, as well as the essays “Sobre la necesidad de fundar un departamento de Filosofía (en la Universidad de Chile)” (1988) and “Situación de la filosofía y situación de la filosofía en Chile” (1972).

⁵⁷ The term is borrowed from Geoff Waite who critiques this tradition in the US academy in the introduction to *Nietzsche’s Corps/e*.

after 1990 in resistance to the myth of transparent communication⁵⁸ that occluded—in the double sense of enclosed and excluded—what the dictatorship had once merely excluded, now in the name of national truth and reconciliation and Chile’s post-dictatorship, consensus democracy. For Thayer and his cohort, tropic language in the post-dictatorship resisted academic discourse in general and sociological discourse in particular, both of which they saw as colluding with neoliberal hegemony.

Few critics are more exemplary of this style of theorization and its shifting targets than Nelly Richard. For all her varied subjects, Richard’s work doggedly insists on the intransigent resistance of poetic discourse and the explosive potential of a politics of signification. In her essay “Academic Citation and its Others,” Richard champions the “micro-critical-intellectual scene of the eighties” (*Residues* 93) for unleashing tropic language and mobilizing metaphor in order to theorize “the ruin of meaning” and “catastrophe of naming” affected by the dictatorship (*Residues* 90). In her view, the style of the so-called *escena de avanzada* was an act of resistance with the same goal as Benjamin’s citational procedure, namely “to forge ‘concepts useless to the ends of fascism’” (Benjamin “Reproducibility” in: *Insubordinación* 16). In her early appraisals of the *avanzada*, the scene escaped and challenged the State by naming the fractured experiences unrepresentable by denotative communication (*Insubordinación* 17). After the return to democracy, the same tools and strategies now resist the rehabilitated university and, via its market orientation, neoliberalism generally.

⁵⁸ As Richard has it, “To rehabilitate that word as a field of plural and divergent forces serve to open it to a multiplicity of points of view whose contradictions must not be silenced by today’s will to dissolve all opacity, to eliminate every foreign body that threatens to cloud the vision of a cultural history reconciled to itself.” (*Insubordinación* 18)

While the censorship and the intervention of universities by the state are historical realities of the Pinochet years, Richard's critique of the university also hinges on a transference—as if by metaphor—of state authoritarianism to the authority invested in university discourse. In both cases, Richard maintains that merely to oppose “the dominant point of view” is “to invert the symmetry of the represented without coming to question the topology of representation” (*Insubordinación* 16). For Richard and many of her contemporaries, the metaphor represented an irreducible surplus of meaning, an excess of the signifier with relation to the signified, that could not be captured or commanded by a communicative economy that assumes not only the unity of the sign but also the equilibrium of signifier and signified in the process of signification. The metaphor became the common currency of anti-university discourse.⁵⁹ In this version of linguistic idealism, dissident knowledges required a dissident language, a view Thayer seems to share.

Richard's essay is a version of one she published in the first volume of the sixth series of the *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* (1995). The first volume of the re-edition of the *Anales* set out to reflect on the changing place and function of the university in *la Transición*, which in the words of its editors is “when there is no longer a center to almost anything, when the state tends to volatilize, when information freely slips along electronic networks, and when the factic [*lo fáctico*] dissolves any social project or design” (35-36). While the editors invited intellectuals, like Richard, working on the margins of the academy, they recognized that this opening to the outside invited polemic given the “inscription of any institutional activity” in the cultural context of *La*

⁵⁹ Richard cites Patricio Marchant and his controversial book on the poetry of the Gabriela Mistral *Sobre Arboles y madres* as an example of ‘anti-university discourse’ (Residues 89).

Transición (“Anales” 36). Indeed, Richard derogates the editors for inviting debate about the function of the university but not its discursive forms as represented by the “Editorial Standards Guide” that accompanied the journal’s call for papers (*Residues* 86-87).

Richard outlines the stakes of this line of questioning by saying that

to debate the enunciative *mise-en-scène* of knowledge (techniques of discourse, expository rules, methods of presentation) has vital importance when one wants to mobilize new theoretical practices capable of shaking up with their rebellious *écriture* the institutional routine of standardized disciplines. It is thanks to these debates of style and form that we dare to ask the university to give us ‘all the expressions and all the idioms that we need in order to think against the realities that do not convince us’. (*Residues* 87)

Richard’s criticism gets at the properly semantic function of institutions, that is, in the words of Luc Boltanski, the designation of “the whatness of what is” (72).

However it mistakes the policing function of the style guide for that phatic function of the university institution. In doing so, Richard seems to suggest that style or enunciation is fundamental to meaning-making. More troubling than her mistaking of the policing of the content of the university institution with its interpellation of that content qua content, is that Richard advocates for the inclusion within the university of those other styles pioneered by the *escena de avanzada*. When in the above quotation Richard asks the university to open a space for critique, or when, later in the same essay, she claims that the *escena de avanzada* “should be worthy of study by the new university discourse,” one which is constituted by the difference of legitimate and illegitimate knowledges (*Residues* 93), Richard misrecognizes the institution from which she demands recognition. If we grant that the university is in the business of designating, organizing, and policing meanings, to modify the university’s mode of designation and nomination, whether directly or by amplifying its notion of legitimacy, does not change its basic

functions. A university with a different discourse, a different style, a different mode of enunciation is still an apparatus whether of discipline or control. Then Richard's claim is less a revolution of university discourse than its de-centering or redistribution. In this, she is not far from the Kantian architectonics which Thayer resignifies; on Thayer's reading of the conflict of the faculties, Kant makes critique the eccentric center—eccentric with relation to the dogmatism and censorship of eighteenth-century German universities—of the renovated university institution.

Thayer was also invited to participate in the 1995 issue of the *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*. Although ultimately he did not contribute to the volume, he gives a reading of the call for papers in the final chapter of *La crisis no moderna*. Unlike Richard, who sees the Editorial Standards Guide as an authority to be challenged, Thayer sees it as the stillborn attempt of the university to speak universally, i.e., ideologically and critically, about a university that it is not; he sees it as the pathetic, parodic gesture of an eclipsed modernity (*Crisis no moderna* 189). In Richard and Thayer's analyses we have examples of the two positions constantly reiterated with regard to the university and its periodic crises. On the one hand, prelapsarian arguments, which assume the continued validity of the institution and range from the conservative slogan, "The university must be defended!" to progressive positions, like Richard's, that advocate university reform. On the other hand, we have postlapsarian arguments that accept its expiration and range from Readings' admonition to 'dwell in the ruins of the university' to Thayer's inescapable apocalypse. Richard's and Thayer's positions are made clear in her review of his book and his rebuttal, texts to which we now turn.

Given her progressive position vis-à-vis the university and its discourse, it is not surprising that Richard should recruit Thayer's *Crisis no moderna* in support of her poetical, post-structuralist anti-university discourse. In a review first published in *La Revista de crítica cultural*—the journal Richard founded in 1990 and edited until its closure in 2010—and later translated into English for the first edition of Walter Mignolo's short-lived journal *Nepantla*, Richard identifies three aspects of Thayer's style that speak non-universitarily: recourse to the extra-university aesthetic of the video clip; the "subjective disorder" borne in his use of the first-personal and mentions of the body; and the book's interdisciplinarity ("Language of Criticism" 255). With regard to Thayer's "aesthetic of the video clip" which gives the book "an alarming rhythm of arguments without explicative links", we have already noted the parataxis of Thayer's argument, which is one of his responses to the catastrophe of modern categories that the text takes as axiomatic (Language of Criticism 255-56). In the appendix, which transcribes a roundtable discussion about the book, Thayer admits Richard's reading, saying that he began writing in the style of the video clip to counter the hegemony of academic discourse. But Thayer goes on to clarify that its style is not only intended to counter university discourse. Rather it "parodies" university discourse "exaggerating its gesture" and turns the multiplicity of voices so often invoked in the image of the conflict of the faculties into babel (*Crisis no moderna* 212).

This move is similar to how Thayer reflects modern reflective critique in order to produce within it aporia that preserve critical distance. Indeed, Thayer suggests that parody or "paramimesis" may be the only opening for criticism in neo-capitalism's absolute and intransigent second nature (*Crisis no moderna* 212). In her review, Richard

goes on to criticize Thayer's apocalyptic tone for its universalism, claiming that it precludes a subversive micropolitics articulated in "thinking about concrete localities" and through "tactics situated in local responses" ("Language of Criticism" 261). In his published rebuttal of Richard's review, Thayer chides Richard for what he sees as her "neocontestatory activism" and her one-sided reading of his book that "tilts [it] toward a self-complacent and inactive melancholy . . . before the contemporary impasse of thought" ("Possibility of Criticism" 265, 264). In trying to restore its careful balance of the contemporary aporia of thinking, Thayer also clarifies that the apocalyptic tone that Richard makes central to her critique of his purported universalism, is precisely a local tactic, but one that does not offer a response, local or otherwise. "The apocalyptic tone . . . is inevitably a fatal strategy if what one is trying to do is change the tone of university discussion from the inheritance of the military dictatorship . . . And if I say fatally, it is because in order to change the (no) tone of the post dictatorship, it must be raised to the apocalyptic shout" ("Possibility of Criticism 264").⁶⁰ But for Thayer, the universal facticity of *la Transición* and accompanying catastrophes of ideology and meaning do not preclude the possibility of a politics. Rather, by dissolving and subsuming being, thinking, and language, those generic human categories become immanently and immediately effective within capitalism and potentially against it. "There, in the facticity (*facticidad*), positions gain the immanent force of the event" (*Crisis no moderna* 229). Globally integrated capitalism can absorb revolutionary politics and dissident speech, just

⁶⁰ Hopenhayn again illuminates Thayer's position through his critique of Adorno and Horkheimer's pessimistic critical theory (See, Note 49). He tells us, Lacking the hope in a utopian horizon "[n]othing is left to [philosophy], but to act . . . in a world that philosophy itself has previously qualified as impermeable to all disturbance. In this way, critical thought is more gesture than action, more symbolic than effective. Its pessimism can be understood—and thus defended—as a form of provocation" (Hopenhayn 59).

as liberalism absorbed and incited “freedom” by making it the logic of the market. So, for Thayer, a parodic politics and paratactic speaking otherwise within and against capitalism and its university hold out the possibility for change.

Richard’s reading is not wrong, only one-sided. We have already seen that Thayer betrays a fascination for the claims to universality of the university, modernity, and the Kantian categories of knowledge. But failing a positive political program beyond the expectation of some “event,” Thayer’s aporetic critique and apocalyptic syntax are open to charges of ambiguity.⁶¹ Thayer recognizes as much citing the “poetic difficulty of critical language,” specifically, speaking non-universitarily about the university, “that risks reinstating in what it ‘says’ that which it wants to disavow” (*Crisis no moderna* 65). One could argue that his aporetic critique only reinscribes the intransigence of *la Transición*, or that his apocalyptic syntax, while it may resist modern university discourse, mimics the hyperbolic discourse of neo-capitalist modernization. Indeed it would seem that the constitutive ambiguity of his style and mode of critique is the price for their intended inoperativity within the hyper-functionality of *la Transición* and its university. But even if we were to read each as the rhetorician’s parody and the philosopher’s irony, as we will see in the next section, Thayer’s reflection of reflective critique leads him, to reinscribe the oppressive social structures that are modern critical philosophy’s material conditions of possibility.

⁶¹ The charge of ambiguity is one that is constantly leveled at poststructuralism, cultural studies, and the various iterations of post-revolutionary post-Marxism. In Latin America, criticisms like these are often made against cultural studies, accused of being global capital’s fellow traveller, and by proponents of the late-modernity camp of the postmodernism debates (See, Neil Larsen, Nelly Richard in Beverley and Oviedo). In the North Atlantic, one of the most scathing criticisms of theory’s political ambiguity is Timothy Brennan’s *War of Positions*, which importantly follows the development of poststructuralism in contemporary Italian philosophy (particularly Agamben, but also Hardt and Negri) accusing the latter of the same ambiguity and ambivalence with regard to the political that attended poststructuralism.

The Time of Speculative Labor

In a text responding to the Ministry of Education's (MINEDUC) invitation to teachers and philosophers to comment on its 1997 plan to remove philosophy from secondary school curricula, Thayer argues that thinking, reflection, and, by extension, the university have a specific "speculative temporality" that differs from the "instrumental temporality" of the market. In this assertion, Thayer—along with Derrida, whose 1986 seminar he echoes—reasserts the autonomy Kant claimed for the Faculty of Philosophy. In a manner similar to Richard's and his criticisms of the Editorial Standards Guide for submissions to the *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, Thayer's critique leverages MINEDUC's procedure, in this case the short time span (fifteen days) of the comment period before the enactment of the reform. The "urgency" of solicited response is for him a symptom of the "most definitive contraction of speculative time into instrumental temporality" affected by the dictatorship and its neoliberal reforms ("Tiempo especulativo" 2). Not only in form, but in content too, the ministry's proposal subsumes speculative to instrumental time. Its proposal of "curriculum for life" captures free time as reproductive labor or human capital investment. For Thayer, as for Derrida, speculative time is free time, time not captured or instrumentalized by capital. The ambiguous inoperativity of aporetic critique and apocalyptic syntax now appear as the return of bourgeois modernity's aristocratic repressed.

Anyone familiar with the work of Jacques Rancière will recall his repeated reference to the Platonic myth of the division of labor.⁶² *The Republic* is at pains to

⁶² This is what Rancière calls archi-politics, a political philosophy he associates with Plato that seeks to materialize *logos* in the *polis* through a clear taxonomy of assigned social roles. See, *The*

ensure that the artisan should do nothing but his trade, and Plato enlists time to police the division of labor and the boundaries between castes (*Distribution* 12). Thayer's argument that there is no longer any time for the inoperative task of critical reflection reinscribes this labor and caste division. To rally around the category of free time only reinforces the distinction between free time (*ocio*) and unfree time (*negocio*) on which the division of labor is founded. More striking still, Thayer sees the contraction of speculative and instrumental time as the end of the division of intellectual and manual labor. This brings us to the third and final aspect of Thayer's theory of the university of *la Transición*, namely intellectual labor.

In a passage near the end of the *La crisis no moderna*, Thayer elaborates on the division of labor he characterizes as that between "professional 'physical labor' (*phusis*) and critical 'intellectual labor' (*metaphases*)," to which he had alluded over the course of the book (21). It is an odd passage in that it enlists Marx in support of Thayer's post-historical, apocalyptic vision.

If the "conflict" or "class struggle" between "physico-technical labor" (*phusis*) and "intellectual-critical labor" (*metaphases*) constitutes the antagonistic pivot of modern history, modern politics, and the modern university, the end of that history-politics-university will be reached when such a difference/ disagreement would be abolished. It is in *la transición*—affected by the dictatorship— . . . that that difference is dissolved, without therefore abolishing capital. *La transición* as the passage from the "era of formal subsumption by capital" to the "era of real subsumption by capital" would abolish the social division of labor, the class struggle, the conflict of the faculties, the difference of physical-executive labor and intellectual-critical labor, putting in check the modern theory of revolution and installing itself as a definitive immobility. (176)⁶³

Philosopher and his Poor, pp. 3-57; *Dissensus*, 61-93. Also, see Bosteels "Politics, Infrapolitics, and the Impolitical," p. 208.

⁶³ Mauricio Lazzarato and other post-autonomist Italian thinkers have theorized the shift since the 1970s in the division of intellectual and manual labor. In his essay "Immaterial Labor" included in the 1996 anthology *Radical Thought in Italy* edited by Michael Hardt and Paulo Virno, Lazzarato warns that the distinction between material and immaterial labor is no longer apt for conceptualizing the contemporary

Thayer's reading of the unpublished Sixth Chapter of *Capital* Vol. 1 is tendentious at best. The transition from formal to real subsumption in Chile did not occur with *la Transición*, as if the neoliberal coup marked the beginning of specifically capitalist production processes there.⁶⁴ Nor does Marx state that the passage from formal to real subsumption "abolishes the social division of labor" or "the difference of physical-executive labor and intellectual-critical labor." An argument can be made that the neoliberal university strains to really subsume academic labor. But this argument does not rest on the intellectual as opposed to manual quality of that labor, but rather on its characterization as craft labor (formally subsumed to capitalism) opposed to the technologically revolutionized mode of capitalist production modeled on industrial production (Marx, *Capital* 1: 1021, 1024, 1034-38). Even so, a tendentious reading is valuable insofar as it betrays the author's goals.

Earlier Thayer had used the division of intellectual and manual labor to characterize Kant's division of the university into the higher and lower faculties. Here, he analogizes the conflict of the faculties to class struggle, again making the university a metonym, this time, of the Marxist conception of history and its revolutionary promise.⁶⁵ But the end of history and of class struggle in the passage from formal to real subsumption does not also bring about the end of capitalism and usher in communism.

Rather *la Transición* is what Italian post-autonomist philosopher Paolo Virno calls "the

labor process. For Lazzarato and many of his contemporaries, intellectual labor now transcends class boundaries giving rise to a "mass intellectuality" (133).

⁶⁴ As is often the case, politician understandings of neoliberalism, like Thayer's *Transición*, tend to emphasize its novelty. This excises it from longer histories of capitalism and anti-capitalist struggle, such that critiques of neoliberalism often harbor the desire for a return to a gentler liberalism.

⁶⁵ Incidentally, Derrida makes the same analogy between Kant's conflict of the faculties and class struggle even coining the phrase "faculty class struggle" (104). And like Thayer, Derrida does go on to trace the consequences of such an analogy but remains content to insert historical-materialist metaphor within the juridical framework of his reading.

communism of capitalism” when the whole body and the social totality become productive, but without the realization of social equality (Grammar 110). In *La crisis no moderna*, it is unclear whether we should celebrate or grieve the recognition that the work of the philosopher is no different from that of the laborer. But given the false bottom of real subsumption, it appears that Thayer believes that the division of labor should be reinstated and the work and time of the philosopher safeguarded and separated from those of the manual laborer.⁶⁶

Thayer develops this thesis in a 1995 article “Fin del trabajo intelectual en la era de la subsunción real” (The End of Intellectual Labor in the Era of Real Subsumption) republished in his 2006 collection of essays, *El Fragmento repetido (The Repeated Fragment)*. It not only clarifies Thayer’s position on intellectual or academic labor. His reading of Marx’s critique of idealism prefigures the aporetic critique he attempts to rescue from the non-modern crisis of the modern university. Based largely on his readings of *The German Ideology* and the unedited sixth chapter of *Capital*, Thayer tells us that Marx’s critique of capitalism was also necessarily a critique of idealist philosophy, which for Marx is any philosophy that forgets or obscures the scene of its own production (*Fragmento* 145). Idealism is the palliative of capitalist life, for it constructs the idea of totality in place of the real totality, the division of which provided the conditions for capital’s genesis and the means of its subsistence. “Philosophy as ideological restitution would be the *pharmakon*, the ‘balm’ or the ‘opium’ that alleviates and preserves the pain of history” (*Fragmento* 149). For Marx, the outside of idealist

⁶⁶ As Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis warn, placing too great an emphasis on intellectual labor—even in the expanded sense given it in the analyses of post-autonomist thinkers—reproduces the hierarchies and divisions among the working class maintained by the ideological overvaluation of that work (127).

philosophy is the material production of life. (Coincidentally, Thayer draws a similar argument from his reading of Heidegger: “Science is only possible thanks to forgetting first: the forgetting of Being” (“Reforma de la Filosofía” 125). Marx’s antidote to idealism is materialism, which, on Thayer’s reading, insists on the irreducibility, the unrepresentability, and the ideological untranslatability of its object in the last instance. But for all that, Marx’s materialist critique of idealism is itself philosophical, just as the concepts of the people or the concrete are, as concepts at least, latent, philosophical constructs (*Fragmento* 150-52). But unlike idealism, materialism knows itself and its objects to be the historically conditioned products of human labor. In Thayer’s words, materialism “is first and foremost about not forgetting that philosophy, its economy of principles and truths, is to be found outside philosophy in a non-philosophical ‘presupposition’ . . . a presupposition in which occurs the social division of labor . . . that generates . . . the catastrophe of the totality, that is, history” (*Fragmento* 147). Materialism is the return of idealism’s repressed, an uncanny idealism. Materialism would be philosophy’s autoimmunity, within and against philosophy or the philosophy of the non-philosophical, similar to Thayer’s other aporetic constructions (*Fragmento* 153-54). If indeed *la Transición* has affected the end of the division of labor, the fusion of *phusis* and *metaphusis*, what role is there for materialism? According to Thayer, materialism “cannot but act as permanent ‘guerilla’ (Jameson) against idealism-capitalism. Against the capitalistic indifferenciation of action-meaning; as the re-origination of ‘intellectual labor’ and of critical distance” (*Fragmento* 160).

Insofar as Thayer predicates his aporetic critique on the separation of the philosopher and his poor on the faculty of philosophy’s distance and autonomy from the

social, *La crisis no moderna* would appear to suffer from the same problem as idealism: it forgets its constitutive outside, the material and social conditions that make possible its production. What would it look like if the philosopher were to affirm his critical reflection not as the product of free time but of labor time? Could he discover, through critical reflection, that his intellectual labor was always simply labor, even before capitalism “erased” its specificity? How might this philosopher-turned-laborer speak non-universitarily about the university? If we allow that in *la Transición* being, thinking, and speaking have been put to work, then, even on Thayer’s terms, she should work, not as a philosopher awaiting the event, but as a laborer to change the material conditions of the university’s scene of enunciation. Along with this chapter’s epigraph, perhaps thinking should be impoverished so that it might be socially realized.

Apocalypse and Utopia, or Critique in the Future Perfect Tense

Since at least 1989, Latin American intellectuals of the critical humanist Left have nurtured the narrative that the affirmative, often revolutionary, projects of the 20th century have fallen into ruin. Trauma, melancholy, mourning, failure, and defeat pervade Latin Americanist discourse.⁶⁷ Thayer’s *La crisis no moderna* is no exception, even if he does not share the psychoanalytic jargon of many of his contemporaries. Thayer’s

⁶⁷ Since the 1980s, Latin Americanism has been pervaded by memory studies, where memory is understood as the oral counterpart to written history and quite often as the speech of the subaltern. In Latin American literary studies, *testimonio* is exemplary (see, Chapter 1). For a literary perspective on these topics beyond *testimonio*, see Amar Sánchez and Basile’s introduction to their 2014 special edition of *Revista Iberoamericana*. “Derrota, melancolía y desarme en la literatura latinoamericana de las últimas décadas.” More broadly, memory studies can be seen as the academic response to the techniques of transitional justice established in the wake of the Holocaust (raised to the level of cultural policy in West Germany’s *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) but fully institutionalized and enshrined in the practices of human rights organizations with the truth and reconciliation commissions that became particularly important in Latin America’s transitions following the success of the *Nunca más* report (1983) in Argentina.

apocalyptic syntax is not merely a rhetorical strategy. The drastic immanentization affected by *la Transición*, the closure of ideology, critique, and history, the real subsumption of living labor and concomitant indistinguishing of intellectual and physical labor and speculative and instrumental time together constitute a profoundly pessimistic worldview voiced or, rather, “shouted,” in the midst of the widespread optimism that followed the end of Chile’s dictatorship. Thayer’s apocalyptic syntax is inseparable from an apocalyptic worldview, a point that, while I have long suggested it, only becomes fully evident in retrospect.

In order to salvage it from the dustbin of intellectual history, we need not rescue Thayer's apocalypse from the facts that history, ideology, class, the state, and much of the structure of modernity with its functional differentiation of spheres remain, not only residually but often dominantly. The apocalypse “described” or “diagnosed” in his apocalyptic prose does not need to be “real” or “true” to have effects. Chief among these is that Thayer's apocalypse points to the potential or latent power of utopian thinking when the perpetual peace of the perpetual present has foreclosed futurity. The figuring of contemporary capitalism’s atemporality as a perpetual present also forecloses conjecture just as it imposes collective amnesia. In this context, work upon the past—in the form of memory, history, and, often, the affirmation of loss—is a necessary act of resistance.⁶⁸ Since memory makes the past present, this resistance takes the form of critique in the continuous past tense. However necessary this may be, it is not also sufficient. Anticipatory and conjectural representations on the order of utopia, manifestos, constitutions (Jameson, “Utopia” 41) are equally needed in order to bolster a concept of

⁶⁸ We could think of Thayer’s restitution of modern philosophical critique as non-modern aporetic critique as one such act of memorious resistance.

history in which work upon the past is channeled into the construction of possible futures. These conjectural representations, like their traumatic and traumatized counterparts, exceed capitalism's atemporal regime of representation. Where the latter lodges a critique of capitalism's perpetual present in the continuous past tense, utopian critique is cast in the future perfect tense—if not always from the perspective of a perfect future. This is utopia's latent power to hold open and work in the gap between the present and future, a gap that may shed the light of that impossible future onto that which is currently repressed (Hopenhayn, *No Apocalypse* 142-45; Jameson, *Archaeologies* 38). In this schema, apocalypse only indicates utopia's critical potential, since its congenital structure of belief,⁶⁹ much like the perpetual present, displaces all conjecture about possible futures into a metaphysical realm beyond history. By contrast, utopia is a "politically energizing perspective" (Jameson, *Archaeologies* xii), the affirmative, practical face of critique's negative thinking.

Apocalypse, which carries in its Greek etymology the act of unveiling, would seem to conform to the shape of utopian critique. But apocalypse is not the negative face of utopia, it is not dystopia, for it partakes of a different temporality and ontology. Where utopia-dystopia are possibilities engendered and sustained by imagination and belief, apocalypse is an inevitability, an article of faith. Apocalypse, then, may be thought of as

⁶⁹ This is not to say that Thayer's apocalyptic worldview does not partake of what Frederic Jameson calls the "utopian impulse." For example, we could see the nostalgia that seems to motivate Thayer to rescue modern critique as non-modern aporetic critique and the incumbent reinscription of the caste division of labor that provides both their material conditions of possibility as the attempt to create a utopian "enclave". For Jameson, the utopian enclave characterizes all modern utopia beginning with Thomas More. He also points out that "the intellectual is quintessentially the dweller in just such enclaves" (*Archaeologies* 17). In this light, Thayer attempts to restore the intellectual to his marginal enclave, which since the university can no longer be defended, must be refashioned within thinking itself. In accord with Thayer's apocalyptic worldview but in contrast to his desire to rescue critique by transforming it, Jameson goes on to suggest, that, with the advent of postmodernity and the third stage of capitalism, the differentiation of the utopian enclave within the space of the social imaginary may no longer be possible (*Archaeologies* 20).

sacralized utopia weighed down by faith. When it is at hand, it results in pessimism, as in Thayer's case;⁷⁰ when it is still to come, it manifests as messianism. Apocalypticism, like messianism, denies human collectivities the ability to work on the real by imagining alternatives. We see this in Thayer's philosopher, who, resigned to the *vita contemplativa* of intellectual labor performed in a speculative time apart, expectantly awaits the eruption of some indeterminate Event. Thayer's apocalypse is less beholden to universalism, as Richard suggests, as it is to the facticity of *la Transición*. It does not critically conjecture but only critically analyzes. Thayer's apocalyptic worldview wrests futurity from the desire latent in his critique and, therefore, forecloses the possibility of fulfillment by replacing it with faith in the end of times. Intransigent resistance is the practice that corresponds to a critique encumbered by an apocalyptic paradigm, what in Thayer's case I have identified as the inoperativity of aporetic critique.

In 1994, two years before the publication of *La crisis no moderna*, critical sociologist Martín Hopenhayn published *Ni apocalípticos, ni integrados (No Apocalypse, No Integration* [2001]), a collection of essays on the fate of utopian thinking amid the crises of Latin American peripheral modernity. Hopenhayn's text presents us with a valuable counterpoint to Thayer's.⁷¹ Writing in and about the same context, Hopenhayn coincides with much of Thayer's diagnosis of *la Transición*. Like Thayer, Hopenhayn indicts Chile's elitist, technocratic democracy animated by a pragmatic politics that mimics if it does not directly serve market logics accompanied by a temporal shift from

⁷⁰ As Hopenhayn suggests, the same is true of Adorno and Horkheimer. See, Note 49.

⁷¹ Hopenhayn is an excellent foil to Thayer not only because he advocates for utopia against apocalypse, but because he has published widely on the topics of education and youth. See, Hopenhayn and Ottone. *El gran eslabón. Educación y desarrollo en el umbral del siglo XXI* (2000); Hopenhayn. *América Latina desigual y descentrada* (2005), pp. 305-45.

diachrony to greater synchrony. Even so he warns against the “closed version of negative thought, rejection-without-a-project” practiced by “critical humanists . . . bereft of large-scale narratives, adrift in a sea of post-ideological disenchantment” (*No Apocalypse* 65, 69). Thayer would appear to fall in with this despairing lot. Against this trend, Hopenhayn’s essays revivify supposedly moribund utopianism as the model for a positive, dialectical critique of the present. Thayer’s and Hopenhayn’s books are like positive and negative prints of the same image representing dialectical versus aporetic modes of thinking, utopianism versus apocalypticism, history versus atemporality.

Following the political defeats of the 1970s and subsequent ideological delegitimizations of the eighties, Hopenhayn tells us that the image of revolution, the desire to create alternative worlds, is “less prefigured as the center of the future” and “more projected onto the periphery” (*No Apocalypse* 43). “The alternative . . . announced in slender places, slim gaps, tepid disorder” has “no pretension of passing on to hegemony, but rather to living under the very sign of resistance” (*No Apocalypse* 44, 43). When it is not oriented toward the impossible horizon of alternative worlds, unending resistance, resigned to auto-marginalization and purely negative critique, cedes to the “ruling realism” and anti-constructivism of neoliberalism (*No Apocalypse* 51, 150). Hopenhayn does not reduce realism and utopianism to antinomies. Rather their dialectical relationship presupposes the continued existence not only of history but also meaning when he asks, “what remains to our precarious and tense realities if we cannot make them stand out, in a horizon of meaning capable of transcending that same precariousness and tension?” (*No Apocalypse* 153).

For Hopenhayn, utopia is an “instrument of intelligibility” and “a horizon of normativity,” “a factual impossibility, absolutely desirable, that serves as an orienting horizon to frame the intelligibility of the real and to make patent the potentially repressed.” (*No Apocalypse* 151). His advocacy for utopia does not seek the restitution of the projects of Western modernity. Hopenhayn is well aware of the ambiguities that have contributed to their decline: utopia are “factually impossible” but “cultural necessary” figures for the “self-creation of society” (*No Apocalypse* 153); their constitutive unrealizability is compounded by their equally constitutive incorruptibility (*No Apocalypse* 148); their reductive (transcendent) reading of the world which is the source of their potency is also exclusionary; and the necessarily normative character of their content often takes the form of coercion (*No Apocalypse* 150). These troubles have occasioned solutions that would empty utopia of all determined content, for example, what we might call the procedural utopias of transparent communication or perfect political representation (*No Apocalypse* 151). But these are false solutions for they sacrifice utopia’s normativity. Instead, Hopenhayn suggests that utopia must be determined, normative, even as they are open, “capable of continually reformulating themselves” (*No Apocalypse* 143).⁷²

By way of conclusion, I would like to return to our point of departure and ask: How might the meaning of the Chilean university of *la Transición* change when seen against the horizon of determined yet open utopia? How would the prism of a utopian mode of representation differently refract the Chilean student protest movements I read in Chapter One? In contrast to the *crónica* and its journalistic ethos, which banks on the

⁷² A very similar understanding of openness will reappear in Chapter 2 with Paolo Virno’s notion of autonomous, open institutions.

authenticity of the individual subject's view of events and an undialectical realism, the utopian form is eminently collective, even antihumanist, as its tendency to depersonalization evinces (Jameson, "Utopia" 40). Even so the chants, slogans, marches, *cacerolazos*, and occupations of the mass-made-manifest are guided by a positive image of an alternative society, an image that critiques the post-Transitional present in the future anterior tense even as it unleashes Chile's past so brutally repressed by *la Transición* of 1973. If nothing else, 2011 marks the tentative return of the utopian impulse; its properly utopian form,⁷³ however, is not to be found in the representations of Jackson, Figueroa, other student leaders or the movement's boosters and commentators. Nor is it to be found in the collectively authored movement itself. The movement figures the excess of the utopian impulse in relation to every representational regime; indeed, a certain aspect of its politics refutes the logic of mimetic (and political) representation. And to the always belated, purely negative critical analysis and the intransigent resistance of aporetic critique inseparable from Thayer's apocalyptic worldview, utopian thinking offers a dialectical antidote that reaffirms the movement of history by resurrecting utopianism from history's dustbin. Most importantly, it injects agency back into structure—as elastic, fluid, and amorphous as contemporary capitalism's structure may be—and transforms salvation by some messiah into the mundane work of every day.

⁷³ In his *Archaeologies of the Future*, Jameson distinguishes between utopian impulse and utopian form largely based on his reading of Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*. "[W]e need to distinguish between the Utopian form and the Utopian wish: between the written text or genre and something like a Utopian impulse detectable in daily life and its practices by a specialized hermeneutic or interpretive method" (1).

CHAPTER THREE

Instituting Autonomy: Colectivo Situaciones and Pedagogy in the Impasse

*For production [poiesis] has an end other than itself,
but action [praxis] does not: good action is itself an
end.*

– Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics.

A Grammar of Questions

In the last weeks of December 2001, the Argentinean government's default on its sovereign debt and devaluation of its currency sparked massive protests across the country that ultimately forced the resignation of then president Fernando de la Rúa, who fled the Casa Rosada by helicopter, so inundated with protestors was the Plaza de Mayo on which the executive branch sits. The protestor's chant "¡Que se vayan todos! ¡Que no quede ninguno!" (They all must go! None must remain!), signified not only Argentinean's discontent with the current government, but with governance altogether. 2001 has since come to represent a new protest repertoire whose defining practices—horizontality, autonomy and self-management, social protagonism, and territorial recuperation—reemerged ten years later in the movements that erupted in North Atlantic societies in 2011. And despite the very different conjuncture and course of 2011 in Chile, I want to suggest that the same repertoire inspired the more radical and repressed constituent processes of the so-called student movement, among them, the *encapuchados* and the self-managed, occupied high schools I analyzed in Chapter 1.

Although the spectacular events of December 2001 marked a decisive break in Argentinean history, they were not spontaneous. Even before the crisis, during the economic depression that began in 1997, marginalized sectors of Argentinean society began forming the popular organizations that would become the protagonists of December. These social movements developed in response to the weakening of the institutions of the Argentinean state and civil society affected by the neoliberal governmentality of the Menem presidency (1989-1999). For example, in the face of the government's unwillingness to prosecute crimes committed during the dictatorship (1976-1983), the group HIJOS publicly indicted perpetrators by organizing protests combining street art and theatrical performances in front of the houses and apartment buildings where they lived. And as whole populations were made economically superfluous by the reforms of the nineties, unemployed workers organized into self-managed, mutual-aid societies, the Unemployed Workers' Movements (Movimientos de Trabajadores Desocupados or MTDs) or so-called *piqueteros*. Rather than advocate for employment, many MTD members affirmed their identity as unemployed workers and refused to reinsert themselves into the wage-labor system, instead setting up barter economies, cooperative workshops, community gardens, and, in the wake of the financial crisis, occupying and running factories abandoned by their proprietors. And beginning in 1997, an association of students from the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires called el Mate, became involved in popular education initiatives in peripheral neighborhoods in greater Buenos Aires. With the rupture of 2001, Colectivo Situaciones (Situations Collective), composed of many former members of el

Mate, set about theorizing Argentina's shifting social conjuncture in coordination with that conjuncture's popular protagonists.⁷⁴

The collective practices militant research (*investigación militante*), which they understand as both an activist politics and an anti-academic means of intervening in knowledge production. The task of militant research is “to carry out theoretical and practical work oriented towards co-producing the knowledges and modes of an alternative sociability, beginning with the power (*potencia*) of those subaltern knowledges” (“Researcher-Militant” 187). Each of the collective's publications is written in collaboration with members of a variety of social organizations. The model of their collective writing and thinking is the dialogue, whether group discussions, interviews, or workshops, and often a combination of all three.

The collective's militant research follows in line from the worker's inquiry inaugurated by Marx in 1880 and its American (Johnson-Forest Tendency), French (Chaulieu-Montal Tendency, later *Socialisme ou Barbarie*) and Italian iterations (Operaist, Autonomist, and, to a lesser extent, post-Autonomist *conricerca* [co-research]) (Haider and Mohandesi). In the Latin American context, we should note its resemblance to Colombian anthropologist Orlando Fals Borda's participatory research-action

⁷⁴ Among the universe of organizations that emerge in nineties, the MTDs or *movimientos piqueteros* and their predecessors (Movimiento Teresa Rodríguez) and umbrella organizations (MTD later Coordinadora Aníbal Verón, Bloque Piquetero Nacional) stand out for their autonomy. Other groups of unemployed workers maintain affiliations with left-wing political parties, among them: CCC (Corriente Clasista y Combativa) linked to the Partido Comunista Revolucionaria; CUBa (Coordinadora de Unidad Barrial) linked to the Partido Revolucionario de la Liberación; Barrios de Pie linked to Patria Libre; and Polo Obrero linked to the Partido Obrero. For the history of these organizations, see Svampa and Peyreya, Oviedo, and Massetti. In addition to the MTD de Solano, Colectivo Situaciones has worked with MOCASE (Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero), MLN Tupamaros (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Tupamaros), HIJOS (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio), La Universidad Trashumante, and the autonomous school Creciendo Juntos.

(*investigación-acción participativa*) and Paolo Freire's radical pedagogy. Uniting worker's inquiry with participatory research is the separation of material and immaterial labor that strengthens class divisions among workers. Taking my cue from its method, my intention will be less to trace the collective's intellectual history⁷⁵ than to analyze its work in its constituent contexts. The collective insists that its writings must not be divorced from the context of their writing, for "separated from practice, the language of militant research is reduced to jargon, mere fashion, or a new pseudo-academic ideology deprived of *situational* anchoring" ("Por una política" 39).

Even so, the collective recognizes its entanglement with academic discourse. While research-militancy occurs outside academia, it does not simply disregard university knowledges. Rather, "what characterizes research militancy is the quest for sites where those same [university] knowledges can be composed with popular ones" ("Researcher-Militant" 188). Furthermore, Colectivo Situaciones not only sees its task as mediating between academic and popular knowledges, but also mediating between the situations within which those knowledges arise and other situations, or, as they put it, "to capture and disseminate the advances and production of other social practices" ("Researcher-Militant" 188). In what follows, then, even as I cannot avoid reducing research-militancy to jargon from my speaking position within the academy, the print medium by which the collective "captures and disseminates" already begins to cleave their research from its constituent social practices.

⁷⁵ The collective's extremely syncretic practice draws from a wide range of thinkers, many of whom they have collaborated with in their own research or through publishing ventures. They include Adorno, Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar, Althusser, Badiou, Miguel Benasayag, Franco Berardi 'Bifo', Deleuze, Silvia Federici, Foucault, Horacio Gonzalez, Félix Guattari, Michael Hardt, John Holloway, Mauricio Lazzarato, Pierre Macherey, Marx, Christian Marazzi, Sandro Mezzadra, Negri, Nietzsche, Peter Pál Pelbert, Polanyi, Rancière, Suely Rolnik, León Rozitchner, Spinoza, and Paolo Virno. This partial list does not include the many collectives, schools, and members of social movements that are the collective's privileged interlocutors.

Militant research not only dissolves the division between hand and head, as Rancière, one of the Collective's interlocutors, often says, it also complicates received notions of knowledge production, as knowledge *about* an object. For if the researcher-militant is to co-produce with alternative sociabilities knowledge *of* those sociabilities (keeping in mind the ambiguity of the periphrastic possessive *of*), she must work immanently in the "space of an as yet undeciphered meaning" as a "productive dimension of the open process" (19 y 20 75). As the collective succinctly states, this means that "research-militancy does not have an object" ("Researcher-Militant" 189).

We are attempting to develop a style of thought (*pensamiento*) not constituted by the preexistence of its object, but rather by the interiority with regard to the phenomenon—in it—that it thinks. In this way, thought abandons every position of power over the experience in which it participates. The classic separation of subject and object is left behind in order to make thought into another dimension of experience. (19 y 20 9-10)

Along with the collective's claim to leave behind subject and object, the radical immanence of research without an object would appear to beg the question, in the sense of the logical fallacy called *hysteron proteron*. The collective would welcome the characterization, for research without an object short-circuits the law of non-contradiction. Moreover, it aims at the destitution of the division and containment of subject and object, thinking and practice, the work of philosophers and the work of manual laborers.

We find the shape of the *hysteron proteron* reflected in the quandary of how to think the emergence of the new, or rather, how to think in and through experience, both pressing questions in the Argentinean conjuncture following 2001. To describe this

epistemological problem, Colectivo Situaciones glosses Pablo Picasso: “one does not seek unless one has already found something [I]f what one seeks is completely unknown, we will never recognize it upon ‘encountering it’” (*Hipótesis* 31). On several occasions, they also refer to the formulation in Marx’s *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, in which he claims that we only set ourselves problems that we can solve, since the material conditions that give rise to the problem also contain the conditions for its solution. And, unsurprisingly, they point to Althusser’s contribution to *Reading Capital* in order to “account for the effects of a rupture” (19 y 20 26).

In that text, Althusser credits Marx with the discovery of structural causality, which at once illuminates and resolves the problem posed by an epistemological break. The guiding question of structural causality is: “*by means of what concept is it possible to think the new type of determination which has just been identified as the determination of the phenomena of a given region by the structure of that region?*” (“The Object of *Capital*” 206). In opposition to empiricism’s linear causality, which only accounts for causal relationships between present parts, and idealism’s expressive causality, which accounts for the same by subordinating a present part to an absent whole, Marx’s *Darstellung* which Althusser recasts as structural causality, by virtue of the notion of the present-absent cause, is able to account for a determination of the part by the whole that does not foreclose the possibility of the inverse determination of the whole by the part—what the collective will term the “concrete universal” that is the “ethical operation.” For Colectivo Situaciones, it is less a question of a new kind of determination with and by a structure, than it is a question of “producing the terms of the situation ourselves”—if we allow a provisional homology between the Althusserian “structure” and the collective’s

“situation”—which, proceeds by means of “a grammar of questions” (“Research-Militancy” 194). Similarly, for Althusser, Marx’s discovery of capital and its particular mode of causality is all the more extraordinary for its method, the “theoretical question contained ‘in the practical state’ in Marx’s scientific discovery, the question Marx ‘practiced’ in his work” (206). Here the analogy ends, for Althusser sees in Marx, not only the practice of the question of structural causality, but also its answer in the establishment of historical materialism as a science. The impossible object of research is both the condition and the conditioned of the labor of research-militancy, both its impossible starting point and its impossible end. Research-militancy as a dimension of work inhabits and composes the situation and experience of social practice.

In 2003 and 2004, members from Colectivo Situaciones and the Movimiento de Trabajadores de Solano (MTD-S) came together in the Buenos Aires suburb of San Francisco Solano to read Jacques Rancière’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. In the hands of the reading group, Rancière’s text became something else altogether: a pretext for reflecting, refracting, and reimagining their experiences of popular education, of collective autonomy, and of the construction of popular counterpower in the MTD-S.

While Rancière’s text is well known, it will be worth summarizing it here in order to recall its key terms for these form the starting point for the reading group’s exchange. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* resurrects the figure of Joseph Jacotot, an early nineteenth century French educator, who, in 1818 while living in exile and teaching at the University of Louvain, embarked upon an experiment that attacked the basic inequality of the pedagogical situation. According to Rancière’s Jacotot, traditional pedagogy “divides the

world in two . . . divides intelligence in two” by positing a superior knowledge incarnate in the master or teacher and an inferior one embodied by the student (*Schoolmaster 7*).

The goal of pedagogy—following the Greek etymology of the term—is to “lead the child” from ignorance to knowledge by means of what Rancière calls “explication” which is simultaneously “enforced stultification” (*Schoolmaster 7*). Jacotot’s anti-method departs from the axiom of equal intelligence. It presupposes that there is only one intelligence of which everyone is capable, if only one has the will to exercise it. As Jacotot puts it, “He will learn what he wants, nothing maybe” (*Schoolmaster 18*).

Emancipation is first the awareness of the unity and equality of intelligence. The emancipatory master is he who declares “*I must teach you that I have nothing to teach you*” (*Schoolmaster 15*). For the emancipatory master to incite intellectual emancipation in others—“incite” for there is no longer transmission of any *thing* called knowledge—“he *interrogates*, demands speech . . . the manifestation of an intelligence that wasn’t aware of itself And he *verifies* that the work of the intelligence is done with attention” (*Schoolmaster 29*). In other words, intellectual emancipation is not only the result of chance, as it was for Jacotot and his students in Louvain. That chance occurrence can be reproduced; intellectual emancipation can be effected when one’s intelligence obeys only itself while the will obeys that of another (*Schoolmaster 13*). The manifestation of intelligence is the will to exercise one’s equal capacity for intelligence by paying attention to a thing. It is the index of one’s activity and work and not of one’s possession of a share of knowledge or, even less, a quality of one’s being. Insofar as Jacotot’s method evacuates education of its presumed content, it resembles the collective’s virtuous praxis of research without an object. And just as the lack of an

object gives research its potentiality, so ignorance destitutes the stultifying circle of powerlessness by making public an always latent “circle of power” simply by announcing the unity and equality of intelligence (*Schoolmaster* 15).

It is important that the short text, *El taller del maestro ignorante* (The Ignorant Schoolmaster’s Workshop) published in 2005, is not merely a commentary on Rancière’s book. Rather, it resignifies the *Ignorant Schoolmaster* in terms of the reading group’s experiences at the same time that the book becomes the thing-in-common—as was *Télémaque* for Jacotot and the Flemish students—through which members translate their individual experiences into collective ones. As Laura, one workshop participant, puts it, knowledge transmission becomes stultification when communication is not equally co-produced (*Taller* 12). Both sender and receiver must assume ignorance of one another and of the meaning of an enunciation, in turn, assuming responsibility for its translation and resignification. This operation begins by linking one’s will to one’s intellectual capacity, by paying attention to the situation and maintaining the ability to “to return to oneself (*volver a sí*) . . . to ask oneself, ‘What am I doing?’ in order to investigate from where the criteria emerge to evaluate what we are doing” (*Taller* 24-25). Far beyond the pedagogical situation, the reading group makes the mutual assumption and recognition of ignorance the condition of possibility for communion. By emphasizing that emancipation is singularly collective, they diverge from Rancière and Jacotot (*Taller* 12, 24). For Neka, it is less important that one depart from the ignorance of the other or of oneself and more important that we assume ignorance about our relation, always in process, thereby disqualifying any prior knowledge or constitution of the participating subjects which are recreated in each encounter.

[W]hat makes us (*nos vuelve*) ignorant . . . [is] the event of making appear a *not-knowing* (*no-saber*) about the relation that exists (and can exist) between us; a relation that, precisely, ignores what should be Then, it would be about tearing down what is assumed, what is expected of each relation . . . to allow the encounter (*el encuentro*) to appear. To ignore is to disqualify others and ourselves. It implies an opening (*apertura*) to what could happen. (*Taller 18*)

Ignorance or not-knowing is the immanentization of thinking, what Colectivo Situaciones calls a situational thinking or “a thinking *in* the effects and not *about* the effects. To think without objectifying (*objectualizar*)” (*19 y 20 10*). Only thinking alienated from experience can presume to determine or norm a situation, to presuppose “what should be.” Alienated thinking is also knowledge that can be possessed and transmitted. Knowledge stultifies the whole world by dividing the common, our equal intellectual capacity that is the condition for our thinking together. Situational thinking, on the other hand, acts as a prophylactic against the ossification of relationships into hierarchies, of communication and agreement into laws. It is the thinking of a will, singular and general, that has not been “delegated” or otherwise forfeited (*Taller 19*). For the MTD-S, thinking must not determine collective experience, but must emerge from within it in the form of not-knowing, for “There is a Movement when it is in movement” (*Taller 22*).

Just as Rancière and Jacotot seek to reproduce the chance emergence of the equality of intelligence without the mechanism of transmission, the MTD-S grapples with how to reproduce the movement’s movement, how to activate the capacity of a will “to be moved, to act by its *own* movement” (*Schoolmaster 54*). In the analysis of the collective, the MTDs affirmative refusal to be employed seeks to recapture the inherently anti-utilitarian potential of work.⁷⁶ In the case of the MTDs, the ethical and subjective act

⁷⁶ These MTDs affirm Mario Tronti’s thesis that the refusal to work “implies the refusal of the command of capital as the organizer of production” (30-31). Colectivo Situaciones draws the subtler

of rejection and self-affirmation begins by transvaluating their status as an excessive population—from the perspective of the global economy—and coming to recognize in unemployment the potential for autonomous work.⁷⁷ As one reading group member suggests, this “the subjective alteration we are talking about is anti-utilitarian, and what we often call autonomous refers to this anti-utilitarianism” (*Taller 17*). The refusal of employment is analogous to the study-without-end that appears in Chile’s self-managed, occupied high schools in 2011; as MTD members de-instrumentalize productive work by refusing employment, so the student occupiers begin to de-instrumentalize their reproductive work by subtracting their will to study from the state’s mandate that they do so.

In the experience of reading group participants, how to incite in others this shift in subjective identification has long presented a challenge. Lorena points out that the MTD has attracted not only those who are committed to the autonomous construction of the collective and the common, but also opportunists who seek employment in MTD workshops while they look for traditional employment elsewhere (*Taller 17*). More generally, individuals mired in impotency come to the MTD seeking solutions to problems they already presume to know (*Taller 21*). For reading group members, the MTD does not offer solutions. It is not a knowing collective but an ignorant one. Not

distinction between employment and work. “If in some way the [productivist] ideology, which has reduced human life to pure labor power, has worked, it has been through the subtle and imperceptible equivalency of work and employment. In this way work, as a creative activity through which humans—and not only humans—recreate the world, is reduced to obtaining employment and a salary. One is employed in exchange for a needed wage, but work is something else; it is an anti-utilitarian activity *par excellence* (“Concimiento Antiutilitario”). See also, *Hipótesis 891*, p. 127.

⁷⁷ In order to affirm their resignation to unemployment, members of the MTDs must begin by eschewing the desire inspired by a situation of lack. For this reason, Colectivo Situaciones and the MTD de Solano reiterate that the emergence of a new social protagonism begins with the transvaluation of the values and senses [*sentidos*] of the hegemonic situation. For example, “the marginalization of which we speak is not that of him who has been catalogued as excluded, but that of those who reject the central norm in order to come to self-affirm their own modes of adequation” (*19 y 20 198*).

knowing as a situational thinking cannot offer solutions without also considering “what kind of thing a problem is” (*Taller* 21) without working to recreate the paradigm in which a problem emerges, without making the paradigm itself a problem.

Similarly, an ignorant collective cannot determine what kind of relations should be constructed or how to construct them (*Taller* 11); it cannot enforce any “law of the good activist (*militante*),” not even those criteria like autonomy and horizontality that have come to act as laws for social organization as they have been divorced from the lived experiences from which they emerge (*Taller* 21). An ignorant collective can only work to create and recreate new social relations, potentialities, and paradigms that form “compositional criteria” (*Taller* 22). The singular must be the construction material of the common and the collective, for ignorance, in the reading group’s recreation, is openness to inchoate reality, to the situation that is neither determined nor determining. In the composition of an ignorant collective, that collective must say of its members and potential members, “He will learn what he wants, nothing maybe.”

Based on this notion of ignorant collectives, the reading group hazards a necessarily temporary definition of popular education in the MTD, “as the practice oriented toward discovering, producing and accompanying the emergence of those compositional criteria that are not laws” (*Taller* 22). But even criteria that are not laws suggest an act of institutional administration,⁷⁸ the first steps in the norming of behavior. Popular education as the practice of intellectual emancipation through the situational thinking of ignorant collectives can be made to emerge in any situation, even in the ruins of the disciplinary apparatuses of Argentina’s state education. As Melina points out,

⁷⁸ For the distinction between institution, administration, and organization, see the introduction to this dissertation.

“Ignorance is never the property of an identity,” whether individual, collective, or institutional (*Taller* 25). For the same reason it can be made to emerge anywhere, it cannot therefore be “encapsulated” or otherwise alienated so as to form a principle or norm of an administrative institution. We will return to the institutional question in the following section, but for now it is sufficient to point out that even a radically extra-institutional and anti-instrumental vision of education, whether popular education in the MTD-S or Jacotot’s experiment, is engaged in the work of its own reproduction. The challenge is, of course, how to rework reproduction as the new production of the same into the new production of the new.

The aphoristic commentaries by reading group members never come to rest in any sort of conclusion. This short text performs the constant movement, boundless uncertainty, and endless questioning of situational thinking that indexes our intellectual equality and conditions the possibility of our communion. In the reading group, this boundless uncertainty condenses around the thought of Jacotot’s ignorance. Elsewhere, Colectivo Situaciones and its members approximate this political epistemology through other experiences of thinking together.

In an series of notes published online in 2001 that form the basis of the book-length *Un elefante en la escuela* (2008) to which we will return, the collective speaks of “useless knowledge (conocimiento inútil)” through an interview with the autonomous school Creciendo Juntos, through several collective members’ experiences in the late-nineties organizing the popular education workshops called Cátedras del Che with other students of Sociology at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, and through the collective’s readings of Paulo Freire, Plato, and Descartes. Among the collective’s hypotheses that

are not definitions, *conocimiento inútil* is not only the openness to the situation but also the production of possibilities. “Knowledge (*el conocimiento*) is always a challenge. The challenge of the production of ‘that which-is-to-come’ (*‘lo por-venir’*) as possible]” (“*Conocimiento inútil*”). If positive knowledge assumes the preexistence of an object that can be determined, captured, and represented by a thinking subject, not-knowing is not merely the recognition of lacunae in that knowledge. Rather not-knowing subverts the givenness of the world and recreates it as a problem. As collective member Diego Sztulwark elsewhere comments, “a problem is the production of an excess of reality (*excedencia de realidad*) that is there” (*Imágenes* 16). *Conocimiento inútil* is then the production of an excess, a disadequation that transmutes a supposedly extant reality into an infinite field of potentialities. Its principle, or rather its criteria of composition, is a grammar of questions without answers and without end.

Infancy and Intransigence, or Strategy in the Impasse

Since Colectivo Situaciones and Argentina’s new social organizations first began co-producing militant theorizations of the country’s social conjuncture in 2001, that conjuncture has significantly shifted. Whereas statist institutions declined under the neoliberal reforms of Menem, the populist administrations of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2003-2015) have elicited debate around the so-called return of the state that some have called, rather hastily in my opinion, ‘post-neoliberalism’. In the collective’s diagnosis, the state has not so much returned, as it has been made anew. This new statehood professes what the collective calls “popular

neoliberalism” and “neo-developmentalism” couched in the discourse⁷⁹ of national sovereignty. It promotes popular consumer culture through its generous social relief policies, a gesture reminiscent of older forms of Peronist clientelism, for despite its unique qualities, Kichnerism is, in the last instance, a variety of Peronism. Kichnerism’s true novelty is the legitimation of the informal economy and precarious work through the creation of what the Collective calls “open institutions” “built on a principle of permanent improvisation in terms of [their] performance and efficiency parameters . . . an institutionality based on ‘projects’” (“Crisis” 401). The open institution is the vehicle of a governmentality beyond the traditional parameters of state governance; a governmentality capable of co-opting the self-managed and improvisational modes of work and organization that developed during the nineties and became widespread after 2001; that is, a governmentality that normalizes and institutes precarity, less by imposing it from above than by institutionalizing those practices from below.⁸⁰

In a 2009 essay, “Inquietudes en el *impasse*” (Restlessness in the *Impasse*), Colectivo Situaciones analyzes the atrophied political conjuncture that developed following Argentina’s years of creative crisis. On a regional scale, the collective identifies the exhaustion of the popular social movements of the nineties and early aughts, the so-called *marea rosada* or “pink tide,” as the effect of an *impasse*. The *impasse* is a “time in suspense . . . an ambiguous temporality” instrumentalized by

⁷⁹ In 2014, this nationalist neoliberalism was clearly on display in the media spectacle surrounding the resolution of litigation between the Argentinean government and one hedge fund creditor that, for over a decade, has refused to accept the terms of Argentina’s 2002 debt restructuring.

⁸⁰ “The rise of a ‘popular’ capitalist world is tightly connected to the capacity to recover experiences and practices of self-management capable of dealing with non-state social relationships, transactions, and policies in an increasingly heterogeneous society. This capacity is regenerated again and again from below, in a close relationship with the market.” (Colectivo Situaciones, “Crisis” 402)

resurgent states to institutionalize popular counterpower⁸¹ (“Inquietudes” 9). Although it results not from some apparent rupture but from a slow decline and cooptation of popular creativity, in its effects, the *impasse* closely resembles what I see as Willy Thayer’s intransigent Transition. For the collective, the twentieth century’s transitions to socialism and to democracy maintained a faith in the progress of historical time even as past and future temporarily coexisted. The *impasse* of the years of Kirchnerism represents both “the exhaustion of the sense (*sentido*) of history” and “a resplendent rebirth of the *already-lived* (*lo ya-vivido*)” (“Inquietudes” 10). Thayer’s intransigent Transition in Chile evinces the end of historical time. His aporetic critique can be seen as an attempt to project the modern project of critical philosophy into the non-modern temporality of Chile’s own long *impasse*. But, insofar as aporetic critique reinscribes the division of immaterial and material labor by reasserting the autonomy of the university and of the speculative time of the philosopher, aporetic critique represents the return of the same (modern, critical philosophy) if not the return of late modernity’s aristocratic repressed. This nostalgic appeal to old political configurations—in Thayer’s case, the politics of knowledge production—“that opposes a ready-made image to a new and intricate problem” constitutes what the collective calls cynicism (“Inquietudes” 37). Thayer’s nostalgia, his reflecting of reflexive critique, reifies the dynamic of duplication and superimposition that characterizes the *impasse*. It creates a “stereotype” of critique, “a separated image [...] specters sustained by truncated and purely *specular* premises” (“Inquietudes” 38). Against Thayer’s cynical duplication and stereotyping of the critical gesture as a response to the suspended and ambiguous temporality of the *impasse* of the

⁸¹ In their contribution to the anthology *Contrapoder. Una introducción* (Counterpower: An Introduction) (2001), the collective understands counterpower as the immanent potential of a social movement to practice a non-instrumental politics beyond traditional politics.

Transition, the collective reaffirms the wager of militant research for the current one: “On the contrary, critique is politicized when it participates in collective processes of meaning creation . . . in concrete situations” (“Inquietudes” 37).

Of course, the collective’s research militancy is not the same in 2009 as it was in 2001, precisely because it is a practical orientation within a conjuncture and not an encapsulated and transposable method. During the crisis, the collective could articulate its method as research without an object, as an autonomous, anti-utilitarian praxis. This, I would suggest, is because the apparently revolutionary moment of 2001 seemed to follow the linear temporality of the dialectical unfolding of history. This implies that autonomy becomes recognizable in the unfolding of time. Now, in the ambiguous suspense of frustrated desire, the figure of autonomy becomes, as if by a *Gestalt* switch, that of the *impasse*, an unfolded paradox.⁸² By emphasizing the latency of the *impasse* in the figures of anti-utilitarianism and autonomy, my reading counters the collective’s apparent understanding of the *impasse* as another political use of time by the state. And, I would argue, although the collective continued to practice militant research by thinking and writing together with social actors, its focus shifted from how to think the emergence of new, alternative sociabilities, to their maintenance, to holding them in a suspense that is not an *impasse*. Given that in the *impasse*, “counterpower and capitalist hegemony coexist” superimposed on each other, militant research must now also “disentangle that mixture of discontent and restlessness (*inquietud*) with which, today, we live political passion” (“Inquietudes” 9). Research militancy in the *impasse* must subtract autonomy from its aporetic figuration in order to recuperate the potentiality of collective

⁸² This notion draws on the work of Niklas Luhmann and especially his reading of the mathematician and logician George Spencer-Brown. The notion of the autonomy of a social sphere arises from what Luhmann calls the functional differentiation of social systems.

imagination that derives from a position of ignorance that makes emerge our not-knowing of the excess of reality and popular invention. Against the acceptance of *inquietud* as anxious “restlessness,” it must mobilize the acceptance of *inquietud* as “curiosity” and “inquisitiveness.” Or as the collective puts it:

We must submerge ourselves in this ambivalent medium, full of very real potentialities that do not come to manifest themselves, but that impede the total closure of “reality.” Perhaps politics is, even more, this inflection by which we give consistency to the situations in which we are involved, discovering the capacity to make a story for ourselves (*la capacidad para fabular por nuestra cuenta*). (“Inquietudes” 46)

Research militancy must seek to co-institute and make public⁸³ the grammar of questions that reproduces and produces the excess of experience against representational capture, alienation, and instrumentalization. For this reason, I would argue, many of the members of Colectivo Situaciones have redoubled their focus on institutions. For example, members of the collective continue to run the press Tinta Limón from the Buenos Aires cultural center Cazona de Flores that they share with other activist groups; some have gone on to found cultural periodicals, namely, the online *El Lobo Suelto!* and others have refounded the print magazine *Crisis* that was an important leftist periodical during the sixties and seventies; still others have returned to the work of el Mate and increased their engagement with education. What we might call the collective’s strategy in the *impasse* returns us to the questions raised by *El taller del maestro ignorante*: What kind of institution will be able to promote and maintain destituent popular practices of counterpower? How can these institutions appropriate the suspended temporality of the *impasse* in the service of the mass by instituting and reproducing its autonomy?

⁸³ Make public because the so-called crisis of the movements resulted from their inability to maintain a public presence. “The excess produced by the most innovative social experiences of the last decade has not found lasting means of autonomous, public expression” (“Inquietudes” 20).

Colectivo Situaciones and its popular interlocutors offer little in the way of solutions to the problem of instituting autonomy, which on my reading is the problem of instituting collective ignorance as a grammar of questions. I would like to suggest that we can begin to submerge ourselves in the ambivalence of the *impasse* through Paolo Virno's closely related theorization of the ambivalent multitude. Although this comparison will distance us momentarily from the all-important constituent context of the collective's militant research, we are still within its orbit.⁸⁴ We should note that, through Tinta Limón, the collective has been involved in Spanish-language translations of Virno's *When the Verb Becomes Flesh* and *Multitude: Between Innovation and Negation* as well as works by other Italian post-autonomists including Franco Berardi 'Bifo,' Silvia Federici, Maurizio Lazzarato, Sandro Mezzadra, and Toni Negri. Moreover, in 2006, Virno participated in a workshop with Colectivo Situaciones and members of the autonomous elementary school Creciendo Juntos in which they theorized precisely the question of how to institute autonomy.

According to Virno, the contemporary, post-Fordist multitude is a mode of social being that counts the many as one without recourse to the traditional categories of people, body politic, or the public-private dyad. It is a "purely negative borderline concept" constituted only by that which humans have in common, namely, language and thinking in general (*Grammar* 23). Under contemporary, post-Fordist capitalism, the multitude enters into the public sphere because production has become generic; it is "the era in which language itself has been put to work, in which language itself has become wage

⁸⁴ According to *El taller del maestro ignorante*, "To be in orbit, then, is the position that allows us to listen-speak (translate-retranslate) without this dialogue being part of an act of stultification, that is, without us trying to 'add others to our orbit' or 'impose a truth on others'" (26).

labor” (Virno, “Notes” 270). “Mass intellectuality” is the term Virno uses to describe the sum total of post-Fordist living labor, which includes our “generic attitudes of the mind . . . the faculty of language, the disposition to learn, memory, the power of abstraction and relation, and the tendency towards self-reflexivity” (“General Intellect”147). Mass intellectuality is then the multitude’s force of production.

More specifically, mass intellectuality is the manifestation in living labor of the knowledge concretized in dead labor (fixed capital) that Marx calls “general intellect” in the *Grundrisse*’s “Fragment on Machines.” In “Notes on the ‘General Intellect’,” Virno tells us that, for Marx, general intellect signifies the tendency for abstract knowledge (science) to surpass labor time as the primary productive force (265). Due to some presumably inherent distinction between material and immaterial labor, Marx sees this process as one of increasing contradiction between the mode of production (knowledge) and the measure of value (labor-time) that eventually brings about the crisis that will lead to communism. Virno suggests that Marx’s prognosis for general intellect has been realized, not as communism but as post-Fordism’s “communism of capital” (“Notes” 267).

This has several consequences that will be helpful for understanding the ambivalence of Virno’s multitude. First, the general intellect, as the organizing principle of the life world, is a real abstraction with material modalities (Notes 269). Unlike modernity’s real abstractions that manifest the principle of equivalence—chief among them, the money form—general intellect, as the primary mode of production, is immediately effective and, as a real abstraction, it may act as general equivalent without recurring to commensurability (“Notes” 268). Not only does abstract knowledge become

the coin of the realm and medium of social relations, in so doing, general intellect seems to make communication an end in itself, which “prevents any unified representation of the productive social process” and thereby “capsizes the very foundations of political representation” (“Notes” 269). The end of “dialogical communication” spells the end of politics and the rise of postmodern cynicism. It would appear that Virno counterpoises mass intellectuality to general intellect in order to deliver the living human being back to that which makes us human, the knowledge and language from which we have alienated ourselves in the era of the realized general intellect.

The general intellect reappears in the first seminar of Virno’s *Grammar of the Multitude*, this time couched in the distinction between *topoi koinoi* (common places) and *topoi idioi* (special places) in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. *Topoi koinoi* are the basic logical principles of thought. They supply the invisible armature of *topoi idioi*, through which the ethical community articulates itself. In modernity, the “ethico-rhetorical topography” of human association mediated by *topoi idioi* gives way as *topoi koinoi* come to characterize our increasingly standardized societies (*Grammar* 37). If *topoi koinoi* may be thought of as the “intellect in general,” “general intellect” names their entrance into the public sphere. This passage of private “intellect in general” to public “general intellect” may take one of two forms. If its labor remains bound to wage labor, the multitude will yield what Virno calls “a publicness without a public sphere,” in which thought and language appear to be immediately effective, a public sphere of schizocapitalists (*Grammar* 41). If, however, the multitude can separate the general intellect from the wage system, it may yield an autonomous “non-public public sphere,” a non-governmental third space between the public sphere—traditionally understood as

civil society—and the state, a space in which thought may still become action without the statist mediations of body politic, general will, or sovereignty. The multitude need not form itself into a body politic or general will, for under post-Fordism the multitude may enter the public sphere simply by virtue of that which is common to its human constituents, thought and language, in other words, by virtue of the general intellect (*Grammar* 42).

The latter is certainly the result that Colectivo Situaciones saw emerging along with Argentina's new social protagonists before and after the events of 2001: a horizontal mode of spontaneous association that recognized itself as a concrete universal capable of affecting the public sphere without seizing the power of the state. If experiences like those of the Argentinean social movements in the years of crisis can be thought of as constituting an autonomous non-public public sphere, the new statehood that took shape through Kirchnerism seems to have colonized that third space. For this reason, the Collective (along with Virno) advocates for the creation and maintenance of autonomous institutions to counter the immanentization of power in the form of the 'open institutions' of Argentina's new governmentality beyond governance.

Whichever form the post-Fordist multitude may take, its mode of action is always virtuosic, a thesis Virno develops in the second seminar of *The Grammar of the Multitude*. Virtuosity is political action, because it requires "the presence of others" (Arendt). Before the advent of post-Fordism, Virno identifies two forms of virtuosity, one Aristotelian, the other Marxian. Aristotelian virtuosity is *praxis*, which is defined in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as "good action [which] is itself an end" (VI 1140 b; *Grammar* 52). *Praxis* differs from *poiesis* on two accounts. First, *praxis* describes labor between

humans, whereas *poiesis* mediates between humans and nature. Second, *praxis* is non-alienated and therefore objectless labor, whereas *poiesis* works to produce something over and against the producer. Virtuosity as *praxis* is then a non-alienated activity that unfolds in the presence of others. Virno discovers another type of virtuosity in Marx's *Theories of Surplus-Value*. There, Marx speaks about a form of wage labor that is not productive labor, that is, labor that does not objectify itself in the commodity form (*Grammar* 53). Under post-Fordism, the distinction dissolves between *poiesis* and *praxis*, alienated and non-alienated labor. This occurs when productive, alienated labor becomes virtuosic, when it instrumentalizes the faculty of language, which has no end, and begins to produce linguistic commodities. "Virtuosity becomes labor for the masses with the onset of a culture industry" (*Grammar* 56). If we recall that the general intellect frustrates dialogical communication by making language *appear* as an end in itself, we must understand that it appears not as *praxis*, but rather as the opaque linguistic commodity. Virno implies, that post-Fordist virtuosity is ambivalent, like post-Fordism in general. When practiced by the laborer, virtuosity resembles *poiesis* in that it produces cultural commodities and surplus value. When practiced by the contemporary multitude, it resembles *praxis* or "the virtuosity of the speaker . . . virtuosity with pure and simple *dynamis*, with pure and simple potential" (*Grammar* 66). This virtuosity of the multitude as *praxis*-like potential closely resembles the anti-utilitarian knowledge and autonomy that Colectivo Situaciones, the MTD-S, and Creciendo Juntos cultivate. It also resembles the study-without-end practiced by Chilean students in those self-managed schools occupied during the course of 2011.

The autonomous school Creciendo Juntos has experimented with the question of how to institute autonomy by inciting intellectual emancipation. Since it opened as a kindergarten in 1982 and even as it grew to include elementary and secondary education by the late nineties, Creciendo Juntos has sought to recognize the power that traverses the school as well as its latent potentialities. Beginning in 2000, Colectivo Situaciones found in Creciendo Juntos a fellow traveller in its attempt to think research-militancy as anti-utilitarian knowledge, to “explore gratuity as the potential of all thinking experience” (*Elefante* 15).⁸⁵ And between 2002 and 2005, the collective and many of the school’s teachers, parents, and students, met on Saturdays to discuss how the school understands its project within the larger social conjuncture and to develop a vocabulary for approximating their own experiences and experiments in autonomous education. In 2008, the Taller de los sábados (Saturday Workshop), as the group called themselves, published with Tinta Limón *Un elefante en la escuela: pibes y maestros en el conurbano* (An Elephant in the School: Kids and Teachers in the Metropolitan Area) summarizing the proceedings of the workshop, many of whose discussions resulted from engagement with other collectives (Mujeres Creando, Grupo de arte Callejero, the Madrid-based collective Precarias a la deriva, and the MTDs de Guernica and de Solano), schools (Escuela 105 Gonzalo Catán), and education and political theorists (Silvia Duschatzky,⁸⁶ Carlos Skliar, Suely Rolnik,⁸⁷ Miguel Benasayag,⁸⁸ and Paolo Virno).

⁸⁵ The school also offered a place to explore these notions that the university did not. The move is a radical one, in that it goes to the root (*radix*) of social reproduction in the education system. Much like the collective, this study has drawn me from the university to the school as a more propitious, more radical site for exploring the work of reproduction.

⁸⁶ As researchers in FLACSO’s education division, Silvia Duschatzky and collective member Diego Sztulwark co-authored *Imágenes de lo no-escolar* (2011) that utilizes the same methods of collective authorship and participatory if not quite militant research as *Un elefante en la escuela* but in the traditional public schools 105 (elementary) and 39 (secondary) in the Buenos Aires suburb of Gonzalo Catán.

Creciendo Juntos practices a critical pedagogy informed by Paolo Freire and Rancière since the publication of the Spanish translation of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* in the early aughts. In its early years, the school focused on recruiting what it calls militant teachers (*maestros-militantes*) who, by integrating the public, the private, and the social and by recognizing the school as a political site, would work to de-institute the school as a disciplinary apparatus of state and de-school its pupils (“Conocimiento inútil”). With the exception of teacher salaries, Creciendo Juntos is financed by the community it serves. It understands itself as a public school, where the term “public” surpasses the narrow, common acceptance as publicly financed, which implies property of the state. In Virno’s vocabulary, we could think of it as a non-public public school. But the *maestro-militante* figures only the school’s “teaching project.” The school also deploys “learning projects” traditionally linked to the teaching project through the mechanism of evaluation and, ultimately, accreditation (*Elefante* 36).

One of the criteria of the school’s learning project, clearly drawing on Freire, “is that kids be morally autonomous” (*Elefante* 20). This criterion necessitates a different institutional configuration built on a new understanding of responsibility. In other words, it is what the MTD-S would call a compositional criterion. El taller de los sábados calls this new responsibility “implication” (*implicancia*) and opposes it to “participation” (*participación*). Whereas participation entails mere presence in the school’s predetermined institutional and physical structure, implication entails “occupying a

⁸⁷ Suely Rolnik, a French-born psychoanalyst and philosopher based in São Paulo, was interviewed by the collective as a part of their 2009 anthology *Conversaciones en el impasse*.

⁸⁸ Member of the Paris-based collective *Malgré Tout*, Miguel Benasayag and collective member Diego Sztulwark co-authored *Política y situación* (2000), a treatise on political theory that stands as a precursor to many of the notions arrived at by *Colectivo Situaciones* through the practice of militant-research.

school that always demands its construction” (*Elefante* 38). Students, teachers, and parents alike are asked to implicate themselves, for like the MTD-S, Creciendo Juntos is inextricable from the dynamic social fabric of the *barrio*. Implication goes hand in hand with horizontality, which is “capable of putting in play a new type of responsibility, according to which thinking and resolving go together with an effort to sustain what is decided” (*Elefante* 40). This responsibility to sustain a collective decision is the same incitement to exercise the autonomy of the will and to link it to intelligence. For neither knowledge nor the school precede the circle of power made up of individual wills that orbit one another.

Just as the MTD-S struggled to translate and transform the expectations of its members for employment (waged labor), Creciendo Juntos often finds itself entangled in the differing codes employed by the state and members of its community—for example, students who demand explication, parents who demand discipline. For unlike the MTD-S and its theories of popular education, “Creciendo Juntos is not based on an ‘alternative logic,’ but rather its is made up of elements that remain close to the educational system by means of a ‘combinatory logic’ (*lógica recombinante*)” (*Elefante* 53). Beginning in 2003 with the beginning of Néstor Kirchner’s first administration, members of the workshop discerned a palpable return to normalcy that required schools to adjust to the new political and economic structure, the same normalcy that in the collective’s view produces an *impasse*. We might say that for the workshop, the *impasse* is simply “the exception turned order itself,” in other words, precarity institutionalized by Argentina’s new statehood (*Elefante* 46). Their response to both can be seen in the rhetorical question raised by their reading of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*: “Can a school assume its condition

as producer of an unproductive workforce" (*Elefante* 46). In other words, can a public school, an institution near the state, be the means for study-without-end?

Un elefante en la escuela concludes with a 2006 interview of Virno conducted at the school by members of El taller de los sábados. In the discussion, Virno proposes the infant as the model for constructing post-statist institutions for a non-governmental public sphere. Infancy is not only a stage of life but also the *neotenic* condition that subsists in each individual as the problem of our newness and our openness to the new. The infant exercises an opportunistic *saber hacer* that is capable of acting in a world of unknowns, uncertainties, and contingencies. The infant's *saber hacer* recognizes the necessity of rules and knows *how* to apply them and *if* to apply them in a given situation. The infant oscillates between the rules and norms of institutions and the life world; it is a border-crosser whose movement creates regularities that do not become rules. Like the members of post-Fordist society, the infant's position is precarious. But as post-Fordist societies of the spectacle come to harness precariousness as a mode of production, they create a caricature of infancy that Virno calls "puerility." State institutions understand only rules and exclude the infant's *saber hacer*, the capacity of each one to create regularities and to relate rules to experience. True infancy poses a critique of puerility. I would add that the infant, in the etymological sense of "the unspeaking," is also a metaphor of the refusal to work within contemporary capitalism, if we recall that under post-Fordism language and thinking in general have become productive.

When asked by a member of Creciendo Juntos about how to employ the metaphor of the infant in an institutional setting like the school, Virno offers another metaphor. A post-state institution may construct rules that have the regularity of a child's game

without the rigidity of laws. Translated into the language of *El taller del maestro ignorante*, they may employ criteria of composition that do not ossify into laws. Virno advocates for the creation of autonomous, post-state institutions, warning that without them there is no way to maintain a non-governmental public sphere.⁸⁹ The collective's diagnosis of Kirchnerism seems to bear this out. Such institutions need not assert their marginality or fear recognition by state institutions, but must instead parasitically "suck the resources currently enclosed in state administration" (*Elefante* 127) and oscillate between the rules of the state and their own *saber hacer*. In this way, post-state institutions can make public what the collective calls the "phase lag" (*desfasaje*) internal to all rule-bound institutions, by which they adequate the product of their actions to their own rules of operation after the fact (*Elefante* 119). The multitude must institute itself as a non-state public sphere if its capacity for novelty and its infancy are not to become part of the new governmentality. When confronted by members of Creciendo Juntos with the real challenges that they face in their own oscillation between their status as a state and autonomous institution, Virno refreshingly responds: "It seems to me that theory and political philosophy can't do anything, they must shut up because there are problems that have to be confronted by practical experience alone" (*Elefante* 114).

Beyond serving as a model for post-state institutions, how does the figure of the infant subtract autonomy from its aporetic figuration in the *impasse*? While the child so often figures reproductive futurity,⁹⁰ Virno, referencing Giorgio Agamben's argument in *Infancy and History*, rescues infancy as history's point of departure.

⁸⁹ Institutionality is not defined by margin or center and activists should not fear the relation to the state. Rather they should learn from its knowledges and techniques, opportunistically taking whatever resources and tools they can in order to construct something new.

⁹⁰ For a Lacanian elaboration of the figure of the Child, see Edelman's influential *No Future*.

If the human being were not marked by the uncertainty and the child's *saber hacer*, there would be absolutely no history To simplify, it is possible by virtue of infantile *neotenia*: these modes of being marked by possibility. A possibility means openness, and openness means possibility, openness to the world. (*Elefante* 126)

Infancy subtracts autonomy from the *impasse* in the same manner that Hopenhayn's utopian thinking restarts historical time. By raising the specter of utopia, we saw how Hopenhayn subtracts agency from the double bind of Thayer's apocalyptic vision and his attempt to think through the intransigent Transition by means of an aporetic critique. The child as the figure of futurity is not infantile but puerile. Any image of the future that we do not recognize as unknowable, as an impossible utopia, is a caricature and negative print of history. El taller de los sábados makes a similar point with regard to a survey of parents in a nearby neighborhood that asked them why they send their children to school. According to the taller, the parents' response—"so that in the future my child can be someone"—"mortgages the kids' present to an imaginary future . . . it makes it so that in school the actual being (*el ser actual*) is suspended in name of a promise of a future" (*Elefante* 62). The pedagogical fiction is sustained by this mortgaging of the present to pay for the future, by which we exchange our equal intelligence for our stultification and its hollow, abstract knowledges that only stultify us further. The infant's future never arrives, for as soon as the infant becomes the material of the future, any future will be puerile, instrumentalized by the society it will be made to reproduce.

To transform the *impasse* into the maintenance of autonomy, we must insist on the intransigence of infancy, the intransigence of our openness to the present that is the condition of history. The present not as the self-presence, truth, or knowledge of individual experience to which we may in future testify, but as the collective possibilities

and potentialities of which we are ignorant and that we must construct through an unending grammar of questions, research without an object, study-without-end.

PART TWO

FICTIONS

CHAPTER FOUR

A Pedagogy of Literary Reproduction: Ricardo Piglia and Emilio Renzi

. . . children and revolutionaries hate irony, which is the negation of all saving instincts, of all faith, of all devotion, of all action.

—Joseph Conrad. *Under Western Eyes*.

From Letters to Arms, or an Essay

At the end of an essay on Ernesto “Che” Guevara published under the title “Ernesto Guevara, rastros de lectura” (Ernesto Guevarra: Features of Reading) in his 2005 collection *El último lector* (The Last Reader), Ricardo Piglia recounts the story of the Argentinean revolutionary’s last words spoken before his imminent death in a Bolivian schoolhouse in 1967.

Guevara points out to the schoolteacher a sentence written on the board and he tells her that it is poorly written, that it has an error . . . he tells her: “It’s missing the accent.” He makes this small recommendation to the schoolteacher. Always pedagogy, up to the last moment. The sentence (written on the board in the schoolhouse in La Higuera) is “I know how to read (*Yo sé leer*).” That it should be this phrase, that at the end of his life the last thing he registers is a sentence about reading, is like an oracle, an almost perfect crystallization. . . . He died with dignity, like a character in a *Bildungsroman* (*una novela de educación*) lost in history. (137-38)

The scene is the last in a series of fictionalized reconstructions from the life of Guevara that allegorize the relationship between the act of reading and political action. In this key, it can be read as a referendum on the position of the intellectual in the years leading up to the Cuban revolution. But no sooner than Piglia marks the distinction between the reader and political actor as one between the obstinate indecision and endless

vacillating of interpretation and political decision making⁹¹, he slips from decision making to experience and from experience to reality itself, so that the difference is no longer only between letters and arms, but letters and life, not only a pragmatic but also a metaphysical question. “The scenes of reading would be the vestiges of a social practice. It’s about the trace (*la huella*) . . . of a meaning that remits us to the relations between books and life, between arms and letters, between reading and reality” (*Último* 106). Following this slippage we might then read the essay’s narrower concern for linking reading and politics in the example of Guevara within Piglia’s more general and equally abiding concern with the indistinction between art and life. As Graciela Speranza has done, we can think of this indistinction in the tradition of the avant-gardes.⁹² But where critical accounts have tended to approach the avant-gardes and Piglia’s work from a productivist paradigm that inevitably privileges an author’s poetics, I believe we should insist on an avant-garde reception aesthetics that constitutes Piglia’s innovation—or rather his neo avant-garde reproduction—of what he might call the avant-garde “sequence” or “series.” If for Piglia the practice of the avant-gardes “consists in constructing the artistic gaze at the same time as the artwork” in their wake the literary field becomes about “acting on the conditions that will generate the expectation of a work

⁹¹ We find the same opposition in one of the short stories intercalated in the body of the first volume of *Los años de formación*: “In order to think one must stop making decisions. . . . Indecision is already the sickness of thought. And that is the origin of philosophy” (65). As we learn from the editor’s footnote, “Una visita” is based on an interview Piglia conducted with Ezequiel Martínez Estrada conducted in 1959. It recounts a poet’s thinking in preparation for a speech to be delivered at a university colloquium in honor of his life and work. As much as the paragraph recalls Piglia’s Che essay(s), it also recalls the paralytic Senator Luciano Ossorio in *Repiración artificial* who in turn anticipates Piglia’s neuromotor degeneration due to ALS in the last years of his life. The paragraph in the *Diarios* continues “For that reason, thought is of the order of sickness and of paralysis. I understand illness as supreme indecision. After thirty years of practicing perfect thinking, my body was overcome by thought and acquired the form of *situated thinking* (*el pensar situado*). My whole body became thought” (65).

⁹² In her book *Fuera de campo*, Speranza studies the “Argentinean effect” of Marcel Duchamp on the “avant-garde vocation” of Piglia, Borges, Cortázar, Puig, and Aira as well as the visual artist Guillermo Kuitca (26, 27).

and define its value” (*Antología* 91, *Complot* 37). In analogous manner, Piglia’s work forms his readers’ gaze and delineates their horizon of expectation. We can also think this indistinction in less aesthetic and more practical terms—a shift already at work in the qualifying distinction between the acts of aesthetic production and aesthetic reception or reproduction. Beyond its late modern, institutional reification, we may think of art in the expanded sense of its etymological root (*ars*), so that the indistinction between art and life is made to pose the question of second nature, the human capacity to shape worlds and to shape ourselves, of which politics and pedagogy are the forms Piglia privileges in “Ernesto Guevara, rastros de lectura.”

At the same time, these scenes, or crystallized images—indeed several of them depart from the analysis of a photograph⁹³—dissolve that other crystallized image of the *guerrillero* by narrating his transformation from Ernesto Guevara de la Serna—the asthmatic, Argentinean doctor and introverted, aspiring writer—into el Che gazing steadfastly toward the communist horizon from underneath a red star pinned to his black beret. But Piglia’s essay does not merely critique the Che myth in order to rescue and preserve the historical man in the metatextual fiction of Piglia’s criticism. The pedagogical scene that ends Piglia’s essayistic *Bildungsroman* is the necessary

⁹³ Piglia uses this ekphrastic technique to begin many of his texts. In the same collection, Piglia begins the essay “¿Qué es un lector?” (What is a Reader?) with the phrase “There is a photo where Borges is seen . . .” (*Último* 19). For a brief discussion of the role of the photograph in this essay collection, see Fornet “El último lector.” *Respiración artificial* (*Artificial Respiration*) (1980) famously begins by asking “¿Hay una historia?” (“Is there a story?”) to which the narrator, Emilio Renzi, responds that, if there is one, it begins with a letter he received from his uncle, Marcelo Maggi, containing a photograph of Renzi’s family taken when he was a newborn (13). The technique is made explicit in *Años de formación* where the photograph is a metaphor for the memory image: “As always, I see the scene as in a photograph and, as always, I wonder what is there in the memory that I don’t see in the image” (307). The same technique of narrating a scene arrested in time—although not photographically—structures the second part of *La ciudad ausente* (*Absent City*) (1992), in which Junior’s viewing of the exhibits in the museum gives way to the stories behind those scenes intercalated into the body of the text. Finally, this technique recalls the still lives (*naturaleza muerta* in Spanish) of the crime scenes that form the point of departure for so much crime or detective fiction, the genre to which Piglia is deeply indebted.

consequence of the guevarist ideology el Che embodies. Piglia's narrative is built on and through this myth, and without its tragic, "dignified," and necessary ending neither could be sustained (*Último* 109).

Piglia's Guevara understands revolutionary politics as a form of nomadism combined with voluntarism. The constant movement of the guerrilla force is also the odyssey of subject formation of the New Man (*Último* 129). It is the narrative of becoming other through the displacement of the body not only in space but also in time, for the *guerrilla* is "an elite group that seems to live in the future" (*Último* 135). In other words, Guevara's vanguardist politics are also prefigurative. And insofar as prefiguration grounds an imagined future in present experience, its gesture is that of the avant-garde that aims to ground a new life practice on the basis of art and to topple those institutions that police the arbitrary boundaries between the two.⁹⁴ Like all voluntarist revolutionary politics, Guevara's wagers that humankind can radically transform itself through force of will. What is novel in *guevarismo*, according to Piglia, is the embodiment of that "future" transformation in the living present (*Último* 125). But this embodiment means that *guevarismo*, unlike other political ideologies or practices, cannot be simply transmitted (in theory) but must be repeatedly enacted, reproduced in each individual who produces herself anew. "There is nothing to transmit (*transmitir*) in Guevara, except his example, which is untransferable (*intransferible*)" (*Último* 109). Piglia recasts the same claim in terms of Walter Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller" so that "we could say that Guevara is

⁹⁴ In his seminal and hotly debated *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger claims that the historical avant-gardes—a term he applies to Dadaism, early Surrealism, and the post-1917 Russian Avant-Garde, and whose breadth raised the ire of art historians (see, Buchloh)—mark the moment when art becomes self-critical through the recognition and critique of the art institution and its autonomy. Bürger is explicit that the historical avant-gardes do not launch their critique against the art institution by claiming the end of art. Rather they "attempt to organize a new life praxis from the basis of art," which the autonomy of the bourgeois art institution prevents by ensuring the "apartness" of art from life (49).

experience itself and, at the same time, the untransferable (*intransferible*) solitude of experience” which recalls the solitude of reading that Piglia counterpoises to the constant movement of the guerrilla and the sociability of the (revolutionary) politician. He continues, “what he proposes as an example, what he transmits (*transmite*) as experience, is his own life” (*Último* 137). For this same reason, Guevara’s death sustains his myth as much as the transmission of the untransferable experience of becoming other exemplified by his life.

What does it mean for untransferable experience to be nonetheless transmissible? Understanding the pedagogical character of Che’s life, the manner by which his revolutionary politics prepares for its reproduction, seems to hinge on the difference between transmission and transference. As Piglia’s reference to “The Storyteller” would seem to indicate, transmission is inseparable from its medium. Our question would then become, by what medium is this untransferable experience transmitted? Whereas Benjamin dismisses reading and writing (the novel) in favor of speaking and listening (the story and the epic)—a model that would make Guevara’s person the medium of transmission—for Piglia, the operative distinction would seem to be between experience and meaning, regardless of medium. The reader is but one example of someone who “looks for the meaning (*sentido*) of lost experience” (*Último* 105). And specifically the reader of fiction “is someone who finds in the scene he reads (*en una escena leída*) an ethical model, a model of conduct, the pure form of experience” (*Último* 105).⁹⁵ Here, we

⁹⁵ The notion of meaning making as giving form to life is central to Georg Lukács’s neo-Kantian and at times vitalist early work, *Soul and Form*, especially that book’s introductory essay “On the Nature and Form of the Essay.” For Lukács, giving form to life describes the epistemological mode of art—as opposed to science—his claim remains tethered to the autonomous realm of artist’s production. For Piglia, discovering the form and meaning of life, while it may be an epistemological question, is also immediately a practical and moral one.

encounter the resonant frequency between the politics-reading series and the life-art series of Piglia's essay. The ethical model of Guevara's experience is not only his vanguard revolutionary politics but also his avant-garde reception aesthetics, what Piglia calls "quixotism (*el quijotismo*) as a way of binding reading and living" through which, "life is completed with a meaning that is taken from what he has read in fiction" (Último 104). Experience and meaning are not opposed but complementary, a claim Piglia has long maintained and whose most widely commented version is certainly the epigraph to *Respiración artificial* (1980) from T.S. Eliot's *The Dry Salvages*: "We had the experience but missed the meaning, an approach to the meaning restores the experience."⁹⁶

In this light, Guevara's untransferable experience is not only the formation of an individual revolutionary subject through the spatio-temporal displacement of his or her body, but also the solitary, untransferable experience of reading meaning into life. Piglia's Guevara teaches us that the phrase "*Yo sé leer*" is not merely the affirmation of mastery over a medium or a communicative capacity but also the possibility of giving meaning to life and of conducting oneself accordingly. In this expanded usage, to read is to dispose oneself toward the world as an agent. In the specific case of the essay, we can then unite the two halves of Piglia's Guevara and say that reading, specifically the reading of fiction, is a condition of possibility for prefigurative politics, for enacting in the present a desired future.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ In fact, Eliot's two stanzas run: "We had the experience but missed the meaning, / *And* approach to the meaning restores the experience" (my emphasis). The typographical error is innocuous enough to be unremarkable were it not for the fact that Renzi makes error in the foreign-language epigraph to Sarmiento's *Facundo* foundational of Argentinean literature (130-31).

⁹⁷ We find a similar relationship between fiction and the future in Piglia's contribution to "Tres propuestas para el próximo milenio (*y cinco dificultades*)": "Or to put in the manner of Macedonio Fernández, how would we describe the possibilities of a future literature, a potential literature. And if we allow ourselves to imagine the condition of the literature of the future, perhaps in this way we also will be able to imagine the society of the future. Because, it may be possible to first imagine a literature and then

While this reading harnesses the statement “*Yo sé leer* (I know how to read)” to the pedagogical fiction of Guevara’s exemplary life in politics and in letters, it overlooks the specific dynamics of the scene. Indeed, it seems strange that the revolutionary’s final act of reading in the schoolhouse in La Higuera also depicts a rather traditional pedagogical scene. Even if we assume that Che’s last words are pedagogical in the performative sense of modeling for the reader an aspect of his exemplary life, what he transmits to the schoolteacher is the recognition or knowledge of an orthographical error. Recalling Rancière’s lexicon from Chapter Three, Guevara explicates and thereby stultifies the schoolteacher. And not only the schoolteacher but also her student, for Piglia’s singular focus on the exemplary reader (el Che) obscures behind the generalized subject of pedagogy that absent reader and presumed writer of the sentence, “I know how to read.” Following Piglia’s own procedure, we may read this scene as an allegory of pedagogical authority, the authority Guevara exercises in correcting the teacher and her student as well as the authority Piglia exercises in deeming Guevara an example of revolutionary subject formation as well as a model for a politics of reading. In this regard we should note that Piglia corrects the orthography of both sentences in the text of his essay, as if he were carrying out Che’s request or prefiguring his corrected and correcting vision. In so doing, Piglia doubly obscures the young writer whose absence is marked by that orthographical error.

The attentive reader becomes acutely aware of this absent and absented reader-writer when, in the same essay republished under the title “Ernesto Guevara, último

infer a reality that corresponds to it, the reality that that literature postulates and imagines” (12-13). It is important to note that Piglia disrupts or disregards the typical value judgments that adhere to notions of fiction and reality, the imaginary and the concrete. In this chapter, I have tried to be faithful to this indistinction.

lector” in Piglia’s *Antología personal* (2014), the sentence whose orthography Guevara corrects no longer appears as “*Yo sé leer*” but as “*Ya sé leer*” (*Antología* 295). Ironically, the same reader-writer whose absence is marked by the orthographical error that Piglia corrects is made present—in one causal reading—by the publisher’s typographical error. This version, whether intentional or not⁹⁸, shifts our focus away from Piglia’s allegory, allowing us to read otherwise, to re- or de-allegorize the scene, by returning us to the letter of the anecdote, both figuratively and literally.

In the nine years that separate “Ernesto Guevara, rastros de lectura” and “Ernesto Guevara, último lector” the pronominal first personal subject *yo* has transformed into the temporal adverb *ya*. While the first sentence may be translated easily enough as “I know how to read”, the second could be rendered as either “I already know how to read” or “Now, I know how to read.”⁹⁹ The transformation of *yo* into *ya*, the subsumption of the pronoun within the conjugation of the verb shifts the sentence’s emphasis from the

⁹⁸ That this second sentence remains grammatically correct raises the question of whether or not the replacement of the *o* for an *a* is the publisher’s error or the author’s intention. Piglia has used non-standard orthography in his novels to better approximate the sound of speech—for example, to represent the photographer Grete Berlau’s German accent in *Blanco nocturno* (2010) (“En el campo nadie verr nada, no hay borrdé. . . así habalaba Grete, con un acento fuertísimo” (252)), or more ambiguously Tardewski’s Polish accent in *Respiración artificial*. Clearly, that is not the case here. If intentional, it seems more likely that the shift from “*yo*” to “*ya*” draws from the thematics of giving form to or making sense of chaos, along the lines of Tardewski’s chance discovery of a meeting between Kafka and Hitler through a mistaken catalog card in the series HI at the Library of the British Museum that leads him to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* instead of the text by Hippas that he was searching for. Or else, an intentional shift from “*yo*” to “*ya*” may be the reverse of Renzi’s fictional typographical errors produced by a borrowed “Remington que se saltaba la *a*” in *Blanco Nocturno* (115). Without getting mired in the intentional fallacy, we may say that, regardless of the cause, the effect is to create two versions of the essay’s climactic scene.

⁹⁹ According to structural linguist Emile Benveniste, both “*yo*” and “*ya*” whether as “now” or as “already,” are “shifters” or “indicators” that, unlike other nominal signs, do not refer to concrete historical objects, but to a locutionary act in the eternally present “instance of discourse.” The pronouns “I” and “you” are examples, as are demonstratives, adjectives, and adverbs (like “now” and “already”) insofar as their “deixis is contemporary with the instance of discourse that carries the indicator of person” (219). The shifting discursive present of the indicators “*yo*” and “*ya*” are the means by which Piglia’s Guevara appropriates to his person the absent reader-writer’s utterance, no doubt, part of the reason for the overshadowing of this figure in Piglia’s discourse. The intersubjective communicative discourse of Guevara’s last words are emphasized by their pedagogical content. However, the construction of Piglia’s text complicates that intersubjectivity, first, by allegorizing the scene and, more fundamentally, by speaking of Guevara in the third person, that is, as the concrete historical referent or non-person of a discourse organized around Piglia’s subject position, even though it never surfaces in the text in a pronominal form.

knowing subject made explicit in the first to the manner in which that subject performs the act of knowing. Specifically, the second version supplements the first by historicizing the accomplished act of knowing, whether “already” or “now.” It replaces the pronomial subject who possesses reading knowledge with the historical and social process of coming-to-know, the process of learning. This version reminds us that knowledge is social, historical, and traversed by power, a fact borne out by the doubled pedagogical gesture of the scene.

In what follows, I want to bear in mind the asymmetry of this pedagogical situation, for I will argue that the gesture of Piglia’s corpus is similarly pedagogical. This pedagogical gesture and the closely related indistinction of art and life are the twin pillars of what I will call a reproductive reading of his corpus. This reproductive reading would account for all those techniques of second-degree writing—to avail myself of the narratological terminology employed by many critics—the intertextual, metatextual, and autofictional strategies that make up Piglia’s writing machine. At the same time, this reproductive reading gets at the performative dimension of his work. In his overlapping and mutually constitutive roles as storyteller, essayist, and professor, Piglia educates an audience of readers by prefiguring—in his texts and by his example—a second-order or avant-garde mode of reading that indistinguishes art and life. This is both the mode of his pedagogy and its lesson: to transform reading from the “passive” pole of the communicative act into an agentive disposition toward oneself and the world. In so doing, Piglia intervenes into the literary institution at the site of its reproduction. He also reproduces and institutionalizes his institutional critique so that, behind the author’s back, he participates in the canonization of his own work. Rather than dispense with this

ambivalence, a reproductive reading embraces it, for it is endemic to the duality of the structure and actions that compose the literary-critical institution.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, this duality is at once the contradiction that Piglia's second-order writing exploits.

We may read Piglia's Che essay as *Bildungsroman*, as suggested in the essay's concluding paragraph with which we began; as an intellectual biography; or as a part of Piglia's autobiography. At the level of content, we can draw out parallels between Piglia's Guevara and the first volume of *Los Diarios de Emilio Renzi*, to which we now turn: They share a nomadic lifestyle—Renzi spends his youth moving from hotel to hotel between Buenos Aires and La Plata and Guevara begins his story with the mythical journey through South America and ends it moving from one revolutionary struggle to the next; their mothers play important roles in their formations as readers and writers; they share an obsession with recording their lives in journals. At the level of form, Piglia has claimed that criticism is the modern form of autobiography (*Crítica* 11). Indeed, his more recent collections of essays insist on the autobiographical nature of his criticism, always in epigraphs, prologues and epilogues, those paratexts that Piglia seizes as sites for metatextual reflection. Take for example, the epilogue to *El último lector*, which states, "My own life as reader is present here and for that reason this book is perhaps the most personal, the most intimate of all those I have written" (190).¹⁰¹ In the prologue to

¹⁰⁰ See, Introduction p. 2

¹⁰¹ *El último lector*, stands under the sign of finitude alluded to in the epigraph from Oliver Wendell Holmes's poem "The Last Reader." A meditation on the infinitude of imagination and writing as a prosthesis of finite lived experience, the poem's first stanza serves as Piglia's epigraph "I sometimes sit beneath a tree / and read my own sweet songs; / Though naught they may to others be, / Each humble line prolongs / A tone that might have passed away, / but for that scarce remembered lay." By the poem's end, the lyric "I" contemplates not only his own death but the finitude of his poetic afterlife, "When the last reader reads no more!" (Holmes 12). The potential infinitude of future readers and interpretations only becomes thinkable in relation to possibility that one day, the last reader might unveil the secret

the essays and stories collected in *Antología personal* he makes a similar claim in similar terms: “this books represents me more faithfully than any other I have published,” and entrusts a future reader with deciphering the “personal detour (*desvío personal*) of the law of social languages” that marks the author’s singular absence (14). Or the epilogue to *Formas breves* (1999) that quotes the interview from *Crítica y ficción* glossed above, now in the context of the author’s own autobiographical criticism.

The texts in this volume . . . may be read as lost pages from the diary of a writer and also as the first essays and attempts of a future autobiography. Criticism is the modern form of autobiography. One writes one’s life when one believes one writes one’s readings. Is this not the inverse of the Quijote? The critic is he who discovers his life inside the texts he reads. (137)

Criticism as autobiography, autobiography as novel, novel as essay. The seemingly endless metonymy of genres—what critics have referred to, rather imprecisely in my opinion, as Piglia’s genre mixing or hybridization—sets up a parallel chain of equivalence between Piglia the novelist, Piglia the diarist, and Piglia the essayist, whereby the secret of the author’s experience appears as the common denominator of his multifaceted body of work. While that may be so, Piglia’s system also endlessly defers any certain knowledge that any experience corresponds to the author-become-proper name. As we will see, this is the gesture of attributing to Emilio Renzi the author’s long-awaited diaries, whose publication has been just as long deferred. The author’s experiences—present and past, written and remembered—are taken up into the machine that produces, reproduces, repeats, translates, and transforms texts that are but traces of a

autobiographical strains that run through Piglia’s work or otherwise offer a definitive reading and close the universe of interpretation. But between this future end and potentially infinite future of his literary project, Piglia, like Wendell Holmes is content to read his own songs. As I argue, the figure of the author reading his own writing becomes central to *Los Años de formación*, its specular autobiographical form, and the representation of what I will call “second-order observation.”

multiform network of social relations between readers who are writers and writers who are readers.

Second-order Observation, or a Diary

The question concerning the relationship between meaning and experience, art and life is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in *Los Diarios de Emilio Renzi* (The Diaries of Emilio Renzi), the first volume of which was published in 2015 under the subtitle *Años de formación* (The Formative Years).¹⁰² In both form and content, Piglia's long-anticipated diaries are fertile ground for the elaboration of a reproductive reading that attends to the pedagogical gesture of Piglia's (neo)avant-garde reception aesthetics. At the same time, the diaries' generic institution complicates my sociocritical approach to literary form,¹⁰³ by raising a series of questions concerning the form of the subject and its corresponding process of subjectification. Similarly, the long shadow of the authorial subject complicates those readings that see in Piglia's intertextuality the abdication of the author in favor of the infinite play of citations and the textual *mise-en-abyme* of mimesis and poesis alike. In this section, I will attempt to show how the specular form of autobiography makes *Años de formación* a work of reproduction and the culmination of the reproductive work that has formed Piglia's readership over the last fifty years.

¹⁰² Volume 2, *Los Años Felices*, was published in 2016 and Volume 3, *Un día en la vida* in 2017. In this chapter I will only treat Volume 1.

¹⁰³ My approach also wants to circumvent the national allegorical approach that although it does not determine certainly inflects certain readings of Piglia's work coming from the North American academy (see, Williams, Dove, Levinson). While Piglia gives due to the regional and the national—largely in the conditioning of the literary field and individual authors of works—he seems more invested in literature as a transnational or cosmopolitan phenomenon (*Diálogo* 28).

Piglia's diaries have played an important role in the mythology that surrounds the author's process, project, and persona. Piglia has published from and alluded to his journals, in interviews, essay collections, and his autofictional short stories. In so doing, he has delineated a horizon of expectation that conditions and orients the reception of *Los años de formación*. If, as he has claimed, "everything that I wrote was in order to publish my diary later" (González Álvarez 145), its publication marks the successful education of his reading public, or as the title of one review article proclaims "El triunfo de un modo de leer" ("The triumph of a way of reading"; Pron).

Piglia's assertion that Borges took recourse to literary criticism to "explain how the reading of narrative could be otherwise . . . so that his texts could be read in the context in which they worked" strikes me as a model for Piglia's own literary pedagogy (*Crítica* 159-60). Like Borges, Piglia's educates his audience by occupying the positions of privileged readers, the literary critic and professor of literature, despite the fact that elsewhere he disavows the notion of a privileged reader. There is no doubt that Piglia's work troubles even exploits the differences between criticism, theory, and fiction. This presents a problem for the critic of his work. As Jorge Fernet rightly points out,

To study Piglia carries with it a risk that is difficult to avoid. He is so coherent and convincing in his opinions that it is not uncommon to find oneself trapped in his logic, explaining his texts—by an infinite tautology—on the basis of his own ideas. In a certain sense his poetics imposes, even demands that reading, above all when that reading tries to see how Piglia himself weaves the net through which his figure and his work move and should be understood. (21)

We might call this the problem of "critical mimesis," whereby the criticism of a text comes to imitate or simply reiterate the text's own theories, thereby negating or short-circuiting critical distance or difference. Where Fernet sees this as the effect of

coherence and persuasiveness, Diego Poggiese sees repetition and apodictic aphorism (159). For Poggiese, the tropological rhetoric of Piglia's criticism gives the appearance of certainty, since "the infallibility of oracles lies in the signification of multiple possible signifieds, even contradictory ones" (160). The appearance of certainty is magnified less by the coherence of Piglia's critical aphorisms than by their incessant repetition over the course of his career; indeed, the last reason Renzi gives for publishing his diaries is "because I want you to know that today, at seventy-three-years-old, I continue to think the same, to critique the same things that I critiqued when I was twenty-years-old. . . . I remain faithful to my ideas" (*Diarios* 1: 357). "Repetition institutes," according to Poggiese, and not only Piglia's repetitions, but those of critics trapped in critical mimesis, who "are consolidated into a system formed by the disciplined echoes generated by the author in the critics by the author" (161).

At the same time, the autofictional, metatextual, and self-referential qualities of Piglia's body of work make it difficult to propose a reading of any one text that does not open onto every other in his hyperlinked, textual universe. Or if we prefer a more analog metaphoric, we might say that as soon as a reader begins to pull on one thread, the entire fabric of Piglia's system-subject-work is deformed, so tightly interwoven are its texts, techniques, forms, and themes. It is not then about finding the key that will unlock the Piglian system or reaching that vantage point that will reconstellate Piglia's work around the perspective of a privileged reader. Not only are those keys and those vantage points freely given. Piglia's second-degree writing makes the reader the necessary operator of the machine, so that any chance reader, regardless of his position in the literary system,

has only to make a choice, hazard an interpretation to set it in motion.¹⁰⁴ The play of meaning and experience, art and life, second nature and nature is just as necessary as it is accidental, a claim that undergirds my reading of Piglia's last novel *El camino de Ida*. My concern is less to escape the "infinite tautology" that besets much of the criticism of Piglia's critical fictions and more to illuminate how they intervene in the literary institution by means of this mechanism.

My pedagogical thesis would seem at odds with Piglia's consistent privileging of the (non-professional) reader over the author. In an interview, Piglia claims that, "[i]t's important not to want to control the readings, each reader should do with texts what he sees fit." He continues, a writer "resists being canonical . . . because that limits and prefigures the reading," and that he is "against the 'important' text" (Carrión 428).¹⁰⁵ This desire aside, there can be no doubt that by prefiguring the publication of his novels and especially the diaries Piglia raises the reader's interest by manufacturing a sense of expectation.¹⁰⁶ Writing six years before the publication of *Años de formación*, the critic José Manuel González at once exemplifies and analyzes this expectation: "The diary would potentially stockpile all the modulations that govern his writing . . . which Ricardo Piglia uses to give interpretative keys . . . to frame a reading pertinent to his literary

¹⁰⁴ Bosteels makes a similar argument in his essay "In the Shadow of Mao." See, *Marx and Freud*, pp. 195-230.

¹⁰⁵ I hesitate to call this statement disingenuous for fear of misattributing intention to it, but the fact is that Piglia has often played the role of privileged reader—as editor, critic and professor—who designates "important" texts and prefigures readings. As we will see in Chapter Five, he has no qualms about declaring Pola Oloixarac's *Las teorías salvajes* "the great event of new Argentinean prose" just as he declared the prose of Rodolfo Walsh "one of the great moments of contemporary Argentinean literature" in the prologue Piglia penned to his former mentor's collected short stories ("Prólogo" 17).

¹⁰⁶ An excerpt from *Respiración artificial* was published in 1978 under the novel's original title "La prolijidad de lo real" in the pages of *Punto de vista*. Similarly, *Ciudad ausente* was announced in the pages of *Clarín*.

production and open a critical space so that his texts are channeled into the right path” (148).

But as Edgardo Berg has pointed out, “to keep a secret and exhibit it is to multiply the suspense in an eternal deferral” (68). Even now that the diaries are being published, Piglia holds the reader’s suspense and sense of expectation by continuing to defer: first, through the serialized publication of the diaries, which allows him to conclude *Los años de formación* with Renzi anticipating the second volume, *Los años felices* (The Happy Years): “The story will go on,’ he paused. . . . ‘If I don’t die first” (*Diarios* 1: 358). As Berg also points out, by locating this mythical origin of his writing machine in the future publication of his diaries, Piglia “provokes a logical displacement and chronotopic dyssynchrony” (68). The gesture recalls Enrique Ossorio’s election to write his utopic romance as an epistolary novel composed of letters addressed to a recipient in the distant future—as it turns out, Marcelo Maggi and, ultimately, Maggi’s nephew, Renzi. We even see this suspension through deferral materialize in the last chapter, in which Renzi delays relating the story of how his mother revealed the secret truth of Emilio’s grandfather Emilio’s life by marking each return from a digression with the time of his mother’s telling. Most importantly, however, the overdetermination of the diary’s authorship leaves the reader suspended between the possible worlds of its undecidable referentiality and caught in the vicious circle and virtuous dialectic of Piglia-Renzi’s “self”-observation.

Although readers of Piglia’s work have grown accustomed to his fictional alter ego Emilio Renzi, and although the author has often alluded to the wellspring of his

novels, stories and essays in those bound notebooks, nowhere is the coincidence between Piglia and Renzi greater than in the diaries. I say “coincidence,” because the reader formed by Piglia’s machine is inclined to read the diaries not as autobiography but as autofiction along the lines of texts like “En otro país” (In Another Country) or “Encuentro en Saint-Nazaire” (Meeting in Saint-Nazaire). Coincidence, because *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi* happen to perfectly align with Piglia’s life, as much in space—like Borges’s map of empire at a scale of one-to-one— as in time—like the story of a “living” replica of Buenos Aires that serves as both prologue to *Él último lector* and is included in *Los años de formación* under the title “La moneda griega” (The Greek Coin)¹⁰⁷.

By attributing the diaries to Renzi, Piglia frustrates the desires of readers—implanted by the author and cultivated over decades—for some great unveiling of the origins of the writing machine in the author’s experience. Piglia’s work has always questioned such literary property rights¹⁰⁸. Beginning with this authorial misattribution of authorship, *Los años de formación* displaces the equivalence of author, narrator, and protagonist that Philippe Lejeune and other “new model” theorists of autobiography see as constitutive of the genre, even as the diaries suggest similar conclusions about the fictitiousness of the autobiographical genre and its rhetoric of selfhood (Lejeune 5; Watson 59-60). *Años de formación* exchanges the referentiality of text to life and the authorial property rights on which certain narratological theories of autobiography insist for the uncertain identity of fictional and lived experience.¹⁰⁹ There, Emilio Renzi and

¹⁰⁷ The text in question was first published in 2001 under the title “Pequeño proyecto por una ciudad futura.”

¹⁰⁸ See, “Parodia y propiedad” in *Crítica y ficción*.

¹⁰⁹ This procedure would then resemble Piglia’s autofictional strategies. Jorge González Álvarez sees this strategy in accord with Paul De Man’s defense of the autofictional illusion of referentiality (117). While I agree that *Los años de formación* is similarly engaged in deconstructing referentiality, I believe the text goes one step further. The coincidence between the content of the diaries and Piglia’s public life, as

Ricardo Piglia come closest to reuniting in their full proper name, Ricardo Emilio Piglia Renzi. If we take seriously Piglia's abdication of his diaries to Renzi, the referentiality that binds together the autobiographical subject and makes it proprietor of the autobiographical text recedes into the process of textual subjectification.¹¹⁰ In a similar sense, this exchange is also an inversion, and an avant-garde one at that. Where autobiography insists on the authority, originality, and authenticity of lived experience vis-à-vis its representation, Renzi-Piglia's autobiography authors life on the basis of art. "Everything that I am is there, but there is nothing but words]" (*Diarios* 1: 11). Piglia's avant-garde pedagogy would then instigate the laboring subject's emancipation from "its" experience.

In the text "Conversaciones en Princeton" critic Michelle Clayton poses Piglia a question about the role of autobiography in an author's body of prose fiction. His response—about the myths of Kafka, Macedonio Fernández, and Hemingway—sheds light on the (neo) avant-garde re-distribution of art and life, meaning and experience throughout his work and, specifically, in the structure of *Los años de formación*. "There is always something of an enigma . . . a paradoxical relation between text and subject that founds the myth. . . . It seems to me that there is always an enigma and that the writer is often the transactional figure between language and life, as it were, that's why the avant-garde ends up working almost exclusively with the myth, with the writer without a work" (*Crítica* 215). Similarly, the diaries, letters, and (auto)biographies of writers have a "double effect of concentration . . . a life converted into a destiny, a life read, and at the

well as Piglia's autofictionalization as Renzi since the publication of "La invasión" in 1967, gives Renzi a life story almost as full as that which Piglia has previously made public.

¹¹⁰ Raquel Fernández Cobo makes a similar claim in her review of the diaries: "In this way, a metaphor of himself is constructed, where Piglia, upon being displaced toward enunciation, is converted into the work itself" (3).

same time the tension between language and experience, the split subject (*el sujeto escindido*), you know, the model of ‘Borges and Me’” (*Crítica* 215-16). Along the lines of “Borges y yo,” this split (*escisión*) is not only *in* the subject but is externalized *as* the difference between two subjects bearing proper names. And this resection (*escisión*)—the physical valence of the medical term is appropriate here—is not only registered in the heterodiegetic authorship of the diaries, but also *in* the diaries as the synchronous self-observation and asynchronous reading of one’s own life’s register. (We will return to self-observation below). As Renzi states at the end of *Los años de formación* “That singular quality of being inside and outside a story (*una historia*) and seeing it as it happens, marked all my literature and defined my manner of narrating” (*Diarios* 1: 342). One might speculate if this quality did not also define Piglia’s way of life. But encrypted and encoded in *Los Diarios de Emilio Renzi*, Piglia’s diaries, let alone his life, will remain an enigma, as incomplete and undecidable as fiction.

Although the diaries may be attributed to Renzi, Piglia remains the author of *Los Diarios de Emilio Renzi*¹¹¹. *Años de formación*. For *Años de formación* is composed not

¹¹¹ “In printed texts, responsibility for all enunciation is assumed by a person who is in the habit of placing his name on the cover of the book, and on the flyleaf, above or below the title of the volume. The entire existence of the person we call the author is summed up by this name: the only mark in the text of an unquestionable world-beyond-the-text, referring to a real person, which requires that we thus attribute to him, in the final analysis, the responsibility for the production of the whole written text” (Lejeune 11). Lejeune dismisses anonymity and pseudonymy by claiming that “exceptions and breaches of trust serve only to emphasize the general credence accorded this social contract” and that it is impossible to write an anonymous autobiography by his definition of the genre, since it is grounded on the proper name that links a material identity to a discursive person (11, 19). I wonder if “Ricardo Piglia” might not have been replaced by “Emilio Renzi” as the byline and on the flyleaf—as Jorge Volpi has done in his 2014 *Memorial del engaño*, a fictional memoir to be sure—were it not for the value in exchange of Piglia’s proper name. Volpi’s pseudonym, J. Volpi, is close enough that shoppers would not overlook the book even if the author’s biography on the flyleaf would send them scampering to the internet to verify that they had purchased the “right” Volpi’s book, in an attempt re-establish the social accord on which Lejeune’s common sense is based. For a defense of the political value of discursive anonymity, see the discussion of the 2011 manifesto “En defensa de la capucha” in Chapter One.

only of the diaries. It is a mosaic of diary, autobiography, narrative fiction, and non-fiction prose, each form seemingly quarantined in different chapters. Before returning to the text's autobiographical strategies, it will be worth reviewing its overall structure. For even as each form entails a different reading pact, diegesis, and temporality, the relations between them are not unmotivated, but provide the book its basic structure.

The autobiographical chapters "En el umbral" (On the Threshold), "En el estudio" (In the Study) and "Canto rodado" (River Pebble) are narrated primarily in the third person and past tense, even though they occur closest in time to the volume's publication date. Their placement at the beginning, middle, and end frame the rest of the book and its other forms. While the narrator in the first chapter remains disembodied although not omniscient, in the chapter that opens the second part, "En el estudio," the narratorial instance slips between omniscience and focalization through the figure of María, the Mexican secretary who transcribes the diary entries that Renzi reads aloud (122, 345).

That's why, *he continued (Por eso, continuó)* . . . that's why I work with my Mexican muse now. *I dictate to her and, of course, she writes something else.* . . . she collects my works and writes them how she feels them, so that when, after some time, I ask her to read *what we have written* . . . she reads to me a few pages in which what I have said is barely a turbulent shadow amidst the pure and precise words with which she has improved my reading of what is written by hand in my journals years ago. (345; my emphasis)

This staging of the diaries' intermedial genesis destabilizes the text's other forms of life writing—diary, autobiography, essay—that are supposedly defined by their verisimilitude, if not veracity. It also further overdetermines the text's authorship, by subdividing Renzi's claim over the diaristic diegesis. *Años de formación* insists on the materiality of its medium. Writing distinguishes the diaries from memory, and

constitutes the concrete archive that materializes the resection (*escisión*) of the autobiographical subject. As the narrator of the “Nota” tells us: “He has the strange sensation of having lived two lives. That which is written in his journals and that which is in his memories” (*Diarios* 1:11). Moreover, *Los años de formación* must insist on the medium, because its matter has become a problem for Renzi. The reason why Renzi must dictate to María—the referent of “*por eso*” that begins the quotation above—is what he refers to as “a small perturbation in my left hand . . . my good hand” in order to forestall uttering the word “illness” (343). In Andrés di Tella’s 2015 documentary *327 Cuadernos*, Piglia too suffers from a nervous disorder, one that worsens rapidly over the course of shooting. And much like the paralytic ex-senator Luciano Ossorio, who tells Renzi in *Respiración artificial* that his reduction to the “condition of thought . . . has allowed me to glimpse the order that legislates the great polyhedral machine of history” (54), Renzi too is able to distinguish order in the journals—his own “time machine”—by observing “that stranger who had taken over my body” (*Respiración* 357-8; *Diarios* 1: 343).

The diaristic chapters are narrated in the first person and present tense and are organized chronologically beginning in 1957 and ending in 1968. A fictional or essayistic chapter follows each of the diary chapters, most of them previously published,¹¹² save the story “Una visita” (A Visit) which an editorial note tells us is published here for the first time. (We will return to this story below). These vary in person, tense, and relationship to the diaristic and autobiographical chapters; some relate thematically, others spring from the diaries’ chronology, but all serve as specular metatexts that condense, crystallize, and

¹¹² The re-publication of texts previously published by Piglia in the diaries attributed to Renzi seeks to overdetermine the text’s authorship. The result is to indistinguish the fiction/reality binary as one meaningful for organizing the discourses of the literary institution.

otherwise reproduce and reflect on the diaristic and autobiographical material in a different form. For example, the first intercalated story, “Primer Amor” (First Love), previously published in *La ciudad ausente* (*Absent City*), resonates with Renzi’s chaste relationship with Elena described in the preceding “Primer diario (1957-58)” and anticipates his torrid relationship with Lidia in the subsequent “El segundo diario (1959-60).” In doing so, the story configures the series of relationships with women that run through the book, because as the first-person narrator tells us, “Clara was in each woman that I have loved” (*Diarios* 1:43). Previously published in *Formas breves* (Short Forms) and translated into Piglia’s and Andrés di Tella’s 1995 television film *Macedonio Fernandez*, “Hotel Almagro” departs from events recorded in the preceding diary. Specifically it recalls Renzi’s move from La Plata to Buenos Aires, draws out the sensation—also reported in the diaries—that “I was living two lives in two cities as if I were two different guys,” and intensifies that sensation through its fictive elaboration. The narrator discovers that the armoire in his pension facilitates the letter exchange of absent lovers, leading him to speculate “that I was immersed in a split world (*un mundo escindido*) and that there were two others who also . . . moved from one side to the other just like me” (215). Others serve as essayistic commentaries on the text’s form, both diary—in the case of “Los diarios de Pavese” a study announced in the 1963 diary that precedes it—and autobiography—in the case of “Quién dice yo” (Who says I), previously published as the prologue to an anthology of Argentinean autobiographical texts that Piglia edited in 1968 and intercalated in *Años de formación* after the diary of that year. In the “Nota del autor,” we are simply told that the diaries are accompanied by “stories and essays that he included because in their first version they were part of his personal

journals” (*Diarios* 1:12). But from the examples above it should be clear that the structure of *Años de formación* is in no way spontaneous, but the work of careful and deliberate construction, whose principle task was a monumental creative reproduction: re-reading, transcribing, editing, transforming the journals and previously published texts.

The “Nota del autor” cited above keys readers to the book’s themes: parallel lives, split subjects, the alienation of self-consciousness and the mind-body dualism, alter egos materialized as *Doppelgänger*, and the looming threat of falling into a state of hypersemiotic paranoia. The title creates the expectation that in the note, as in most of Piglia’s prologues and epilogues, the empirical author will address the reader directly. This was the case in “En otro país” from which the “Nota” is excerpted and translated from first into third person.¹¹³ But this apparent paratext is no less ambiguous or undecidable than the autobiographical chapters. The book’s opening clause accords with the reader’s expectation of the genre: “Había empezado a escribir un diario a fines de 1957” (“I had begun writing a diary in 1957”; *Diarios* 1:11). The second clause—“y todavía lo seguía escribiendo” (“and I continued writing it; *Diarios* 1:11)—replaces the expected discursive present with the narrative past, distancing the moment of address from the reader’s present. The unequivocal emergence of the third person in the second sentence—“se mantuvo fiel a esa manía” (“he remained faithful to that mania”)—determines the otherwise ambiguous person in the first sentence—the first and third person are lexically indistinguishable in the imperfect past tense verbs “*había*” and “*seguía*”—destabilizing the presumed reading pact. Even though the “Nota” does serve

¹¹³ Here, it is interesting to note that Piglia employs the first person in this autofictional literary genealogy while he frames the autobiographical diaries in the third person. This chiasmus between person and truth-value further supports his claim that imaginative and referential modes of writing are co-constitutive.

some of the functions associated with its title—it briefly sketches out the three volumes of the diary project and their relation to the 327 notebooks—by introducing a narrator and thereby dividing the text between third personal narration and reported speech, it also serves the function of deforming that minor genre. In this it resembles the autobiographical chapters that construct the (fictitious) diegesis through which the diaries are presented to the reader.

Just as the authorship of *Los años de formación* is overdetermined, so is its structure. For within the overt structure described above, we are presented with a second, subterranean structure formed composed of reading scenes, a structure anticipated by *El último lector*. Unlike that collection, *Años de formación* represents not only scenes of reading others—Renzi’s years at the Universidad de la Plata are peppered with notes on Plato, Hegel, Heidegger, and Sartre; Fitzgerald, Camus, and Martínez Estrada—but also scenes of reading oneself. We have already seen how the autobiographical chapters stage the reading, transcription, and translation of the diaries, and how each of the intercalated stories and essays in addition to its particular relationship to the diaries also in some way reflects on them. And the chronological order of the diary chapters is marked not only by the dated entries but also by Renzi’s habitual end-of-the-year entry about his experience reading the journal entries he has penned in the preceding year.

“To read oneself,” as the reflexive pronoun indicates, requires a division, doubling, or repetition of that self, which in turn only becomes visible, let alone meaningful, from some vantage point or second-degree observation. We have seen that *Años de formación* supplies us with this vantage point through the text’s heterodiegetic

authorship. But even within the diegesis of Renzi's diaries we encounter a reproduction and observation of a self capable of giving form to the inchoate events of lived experience. Recalling Piglia's affinity for Russian formalism¹¹⁴ and perhaps nodding to Deleuze, Renzi states in the opening pages: "Experience, he had realized, is a microscopic multiplication of small events (*acontecimientos*) that repeat and expand, without connection, dispersed, in flight (*en fuga*). . . . [I]f we observe from a vantage point the reproduction of the same, there is no need to extract a sequence, a common form, even a meaning (*una sucesión, una forma común, incluso un sentido*)"—no need, because the sequence, form, and meaning are readily apparent (*Diarios* 1: 16). Claiming, as Piglia has before him, that their autobiography could bear the title "*Los libros de mi vida*" (The Books of my Life) Renzi chooses to follow the series of books, and specifically the memory image of the act of reading, in which he says, "me veo a mi mismo leyendo" ("I see myself reading"; *Diarios* 1: 17, 18). These memory images and scenes of self-observation not only structure Renzi's "serialized autobiography (*autobiografía seriada*)" they are also scenes of subjectification, the *forma inicial* of "a serial life (*una vida serial*)" (*Diarios* 1: 17). In addition to the series "*me veo a mi mismo leyendo*"¹¹⁵ from our vantage point we can also make out the "parallel lives, alienation, exile and the foreigner" series,¹¹⁶ the series about "copying and repeating, editing and montage,"¹¹⁷ the series on "anachronism and (false) memory."¹¹⁸ I want to suggest that

¹¹⁴ See "Parodia y propiedad," *Conversaciones en Princeton*, in *Critica y ficción; Respiración artificial*, pp. 18, 156.

¹¹⁵ See, pp. 18, 19, 22, 64-5, 76, 95, 145, 155, 177, 184, 212, 233, 251, 261, 267, 269, 290, 318, 323, 342-45.

¹¹⁶ See, pp. 127, 135, 149, 189, 248-49), 252, 271, 305.

¹¹⁷ See, the intercalated stories and essays, save "Una visita" and pp. 21, 122, 129, 160, 165, 180, 189, 192, 208, 268, 341.

¹¹⁸ See, pp. 150, 189, 305, 307, 315, 329, 354-55.

all these series can be classed together under the activity of self-observation, the *practice* that animates autobiography regardless of the genre's referentiality or ontological status.

Perhaps the term "self-observation" should be recast as "second-order observation," for it is not simply the result of Renzi's shifting between writing to reading. Rather, he becomes as another to himself. *Los años de formación* begins with Renzi's sensation that "I am outside, at a distance, and I see myself as if I were another" (18). Towards the end, he refracts his body of work through the lens of second-order observation: "That singular quality of being inside and outside a story and watching it as it happens, marked all my literature and defined my way of narrating" (*Diarios* 1: 342). Second-order observation is not only the effect of a self-difference internal to the individual subject. Renzi eschews psychologism at the outset, claiming that his autobiography will have "nothing of interior life, only facts, actions, places, circumstances that when repeated create the illusion of a life. An action . . . that insists and reappears says more than everything that I could say about myself" (*Diarios* 1: 16). While Piglia's writing often seeks to flatten narrative to its visible diegesis, in this case the procedure challenges the autobiographical status quo. In *Los años de formación*, the split or resection (*escisión*) of the subject is externalized: first, in the text's dual authors and, then, onto the figures of the writer and reader, whose difference is mediated and maintained by the printed page, the material inscription of language. In this way, the architecture of the subject that Piglia insinuates into Renzi's diaries is inseparable from its social and institutional forms. That is, the community of readers and writers crystallized in the minor literary institution of the autobiographical genre that organizes

the text that both reflects Piglia-Renzi's life to others and transforms the writer into a reader of his own life-become-text.¹¹⁹

Second-degree observation not only gives form to *Los años de formación*, it is itself represented so that the form re-enters the content returning its readers to the social and institutional constitution of both the text and its subject. As Jorge Fornet suggests in a gloss of Piglia's "Tres propuestas para el nuevo milenio" (Three Proposals for the New Millennium), metatextuality of this sort requires "a reader who recognizes himself in the plot and from there questions the reality given him. Perhaps this is literature's political node (*nudo*)" ("Último" 153). We will encounter just such a reader in *El camino de Ida* who demonstrates not only this overtly political node of literature but also the autodidactic thrust in Piglia's pedagogy that it implies. In short, second-order observation in *Los Diarios de Emilo Renzi* socializes the alienation of each (individual) subject in the community of readers and writers and of reader-writers. Perhaps then, in teaching us how to read his corpus, Piglia enables us to reflect on ourselves, to see our self as others, in and as a collectivity.

From Letters to Letter Bombs, or a Novel

I would like to conclude with a reading of Piglia's final novel, *El camino de Ida*.

This autofictional text returns us to the questions about intellectual commitment,

¹¹⁹ Brett Levinson, in his reading of *Respiración artificial*, takes this same notion one step further: "In *Artificial Respiration*, in sum, the 'autoaccounts' of a life cannot account for themselves completely. Maggi, for example, cannot narrate his own disappearance and death. Life stories are never all, never total. They demand another's *recount*. The 'full story,' that is, requires not simply author/writer but an infinite series of authors, an open (future) community of readers and writers. This is why the *relato* is not simply a story but a utopian practice" (73).

vanguard and avant-garde pedagogies raised in Piglia's Che essays, reframing them in the institutional setting of the university where the novel takes place. In doing so, *El camino de Ida* calls into question the institutional form of (literary) study, threatening its ossified rituals and canons of knowledge with an anarchic autodidacticism. It infiltrates the literary institution and its pedagogical reproduction by threshing the fictional kernel from the rationalized chaff, for in its pages, as in those of *Madame Bovary* or the *Quijote*, fictions become the basis for world forming, in this case violent, as letters are transformed into letter bombs.

In *El camino de Ida*, Emilio Renzi reappears as a professor of literature invited by the brilliant, rebellious, Conrad specialist Ida Brown to teach at Taylor University in New Jersey. The novel's first section sets the scene through a series of vignettes that detail Renzi's life at the university and his love affair with Ida. However, upon her death in a car accident, Renzi sets out on a paranoid quest to find the cause and endow her death and its accidental nature with meaning. With this, the novel takes the form of Piglia's speculative brand of *novela negra*. In the mass media and in the conference rooms of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Ida's death is associated with another mystery stalking the halls of academe, namely, a string of letter bombs sent to academics at US universities, we discover, by the brilliant, Harvard-trained, Fields Medalist Laureate-turned-anarchist terrorist Thomas Munk. This leads Renzi to suspect that Ida was aiding him in distributing the letter bombs, and that her death may be somehow implicated. Renzi's attempt to conjure away accident leads him to visit Munk in a California jail, where he questions him about Ida's involvement in his plots. Although the mystery of the letter-bombs is

resolved, Munk's Bartleby-like response to Renzi, "No afirmo ni niego" ("I do not affirm, nor do I deny"; *Camino* 282), leaves Ida's death meaningless or at least unnarratable.

What little criticism *El camino de Ida* has occasioned has focused on the question of political violence and largely overlooked its university setting. Although the mysteries surrounding Ida's death and Munk's letter bombs form the two blocks of the novel's narrative engine, to overlook the vehicle risks missing the social trace of the text's generic institution. We should bear in mind Piglia's concluding remarks to the 1986 edition of *Crítica y ficción*, for they apply as much to the characters in *El camino de Ida*, its author and its readers, as they do to the participants in those collected interviews: "We could say that, in a sense, they are fictitious conversations; this is a book in which the interlocutors have deliberately staged the scene of a dialogue in order to be able to say something about literature" (245). Certainly, the university setting provides Piglia with a rather comfortable platform for the literary musings, critical disquisitions, and cultural aperçus typical of his novels and stories. Renzi's graduate student seminars occasion discussions of the figuration of nature in the works of Argentinean-American author W.H. Hudson that presage Munk's Spanish-English bilingualism, his Thoreauian asceticism, his manifesto's Frankfurt School criticism of instrumental reason and techno-industrial capitalism. His conversations with department chair Don D'Amato contribute to the same thematics, and the monomaniacal Melville specialist's digression through Bartleby in a speech at the department's holiday party foreshadows the undecidable conclusion Munk offers to Renzi's quest for meaning. Ida's annotated copy of Conrad's *The Secret Agent* that Renzi discovers in his office, and that he reads as a secret message that will decipher the mystery of her death stages the hermeneutics of suspicion that have long united the

investigative journalist, the critic, and the detective in what Piglia calls his “paranoid fiction.” And Renzi’s conversations with his Russian neighbor Nina Adropova, a retired Tolstoy specialist, furnishes the novel with its speculative heart, at once a kind of secular theodicy and an ethical treatise on political violence in the age of the War on Terror.

But Piglia has always deliberately invented scenes—and certainly less obvious ones—in which it is possible to say something about literature. Then the specificity of the university setting is to place *El camino de Ida* within the tradition of the North American campus novel, allowing Piglia to transvaluate another popular genre as he has hard-boiled and noir detective fiction, genres to which the novel also pertains. This dual, perhaps even ironic, structure is not only characteristic of his works, it is, for Piglia, constitutive of every story. In the often-quoted “Diez tesis sobre el cuento” (Ten Theses on the Story), he affirms that “A story always tells two stories (Un cuento siempre cuenta dos historias) . . . a visible story (*relato*) and a secret story (*relato*), narrated in an elliptical and fragmentary way” (*Formas* 92). Within the campus novel, beneath the detective story, may lie buried the elliptical and fragmentary corpus of Piglia’s literary and social theory, of *Los libros de mi vida*, of the history of the Unabomber, of his 327 journals, or just those that record his years at Princeton and, we are told, will not be published in *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi* (*Diarios* 1: 12). On my reading, this crime scene is staged and cordoned off by Piglia’s neo-avant-garde institutional intervention at the site of its reproduction. But like the problem of determining the value of an investment in a student’s human capital that we saw in Chapter One, it is hard to determine the shape of structural change that will result from the reproductive labor of groups of individual literary agents. Piglia’s pedagogy is built on paradigm shifts similar to those from student to human capital investor or from study-

as-means to study-without-end. Piglia's pedagogical subject would destitute the reproduction of the literary-critical institution—the university, cultural journalism—by subtracting and affirming its autodidactic capacity. By claiming “Now, already, I know how to read,” the autodidact affirms its agency to reproduce the world otherwise—beyond the realism that polices the boundary between fictive and real—by harnessing imagination to action.

Just as Taylor University is a fictionalized version of Princeton, where Piglia taught for many years, Munk's story so closely follows that of Ted Kaczynski that the chapter in which it is recounted appears as a fictionalized biography of the Unabomber. Kaczynski coincides with Munk in nearly everything: from details of his personal history and choice of targets, to the name Munk uses to sign his letters to the press—The Freedom Club—and the title of his manifesto—Kaczynski's “Industrial Society and its Future” becomes “Manifiesto sobre el capitalismo tecnológico” (Manifesto on Technological Capitalism). The story of Munk's (and Kaczynski's) formation represents an instance where the university spectacularly fails to reproduce itself. After entering Harvard at age sixteen, Munk defends a junior thesis with the suggestive, Piglian title “*Los hijos de Lady Macbeth o el teorema de las series indecisas*” (Lady Macbeth's children, or the theorem of undecided series), gaining early acceptance to graduate school where his perfectionism and “theoretical asceticism” present problems—“They explained to him that he would never be able to graduate or to dedicate himself to teaching unless he decided to write imperfect things” (*Camino* 186-7). Nonetheless, in 1967 he is offered a position in the prestigious department of mathematics at the University of California,

Berkeley, only to abruptly leave his post several years later, citing academia's stifling atmosphere.¹²⁰ An ascetic in the university's regimented, monastic pastoral (*el campus*), Munk flees to wander North America before retreating from the world to his hermitage in the Idaho wilderness (*el campo*).¹²¹ In a sense, he represents, at once, the American university's failure to reproduce itself, by conforming Munk to its norms, and its ideology taken to an extreme. Munk's negative freedom and self-reliance reproduce at the individual level the institutional autonomy of the idea of the university, what Alexander von Humboldt famously called, on the eve before the modern university's founding, its "isolation and freedom" (255).

I think it a mistake to see Munk's years of solitude and self-reliance simply as some Robinsonade, despite the novel's references and allusions to Defoe's text. Clearly the *Bildungsroman* of a liberal *homo oeconomicus*, with its libertarian and anarcho-capitalist variants in contemporary North America, is removed from the solitary, anti-capitalist insurrectionary we find in Munk. Nor is he under his autodidactic aspect some Kantian genius who gives the rule to himself and others by translating nature for humankind. Nonetheless, Munk's individualism and exceptionalism pose problems that Piglia attempts to resolve in Renzi's interview with him that forms the novel's closing theoretical disquisition.

Munk's justification of his apparent individualism assumes a different model of the individual subject, one quite similar to the one at work in *Años de formación*:

¹²⁰ This sentiment is foreshadowed by the expression of Renzi's Santafecino poet friend, now teaching in France—no doubt a reference to Juan José Saer—that Renzi recalls as he debates taking a position at Berkeley in creative writing: "Faulkner and Fitzgerald drowned themselves in alcohol, I will drown myself in the university" (*Camino* 168); along the same lines, Ida welcomes Renzi to Taylor University by saying "Welcome to the cemetery where writers come to die" (18).

¹²¹ In an interview with Piglia, Fernando Bogado remarks on the homology between the *campo* ("countryside," "hinterland") in which *Blanco Nocturno* (2011) takes place and the *campus* setting of *El camino de Ida*.

“Anarchism negates the false distinction between the one and the multiple: *The individual . . . is multiple* (*Camino* 275). It is on the same basis of this theory of the subject as a variable “potential compound” (Kropotkin) and “group-in-fusion” (Sartre) that Munk can claim to speak not only *on behalf of* but *as* a dispersed network of isolated, invisible actors, each operating like isolated *guerrilleros*, deep behind enemy lines. This is also the risk of such a multitudinous subjectivity. By socializing its self-difference it may come to see itself as identical with the social. “In this way I had achieved absolute sovereignty, a prepolitical and ultramoral sovereignty, he said. There was no future proposal that would justify the present acts: he negated utopian hope, always proposed, always stubbornly postponed, that nonetheless presented the final horizon of action” (282).

As Renzi’s paranoia forestalls the meaninglessness of accident and the unrepresentability of death, so the novel’s dense internal structure—its doubled genres and mysteries, its multiplication of suspicious hermeneuts, of adumbrations and analogies—acts as a bulwark against Munk’s anarchic violence. Indeed the novel’s symmetric form reflects not only Renzi’s paranoid investigation but also the isolation of the American university campus. And the campus setting where the novel begins is mirrored by Renzi’s interview with Munk at the federal penitentiary where he is imprisoned, so that these two disciplinary apparatuses frame and symbolically contain the enigmatic eruptions of violence, accident, and death that catalyze the plot. We might say, then, that *El camino de Ida* is as much a campus novel and detective story as it is a prison novel. What Piglia’s fictional predecessor, Steven Ratliff says about the prison, “it attempts to artificially reconstruct the conditions of future life,” could just as easily be said about educational institutions (*Prisión* 27). In the same manner, his claim about the carceral novel is a

fitting description for *El camino de Ida*. “The modern novel is a prison novel. It narrates the end of experience. And when there are no experiences, the story advances toward paranoid perfection. The void is covered with a persecutory network of perfect connections, the closed structure” (Prisión Perpetua 27). At first glance, this seems to suggest a different relationship between the meaning and experience than the one that guides *Respiración artificial*: “We had the meaning but missed the experience. An approach to the meaning restores the experience.” Rather than restore some given experience through an approach to the meaning, the paranoid fiction narrates how meaning replaces experience, or how experience is indistinguishable from a necessary fiction.

Renzi’s paranoia reaches a fevered pitch with the aforementioned discovery of Ida’s copy of *The Secret Agent*. Having already assumed that Ida was murdered, Renzi reconstructs her reading from her annotations of the text. Her emphasis on the figure of the Professor who, in Conrad’s novel, abandons a brilliant academic career to lead a group of anarchists bent on destroying science, leads Renzi to conclude that Ida’s reading had identified the sender of the letter bombs, because she had known Munk. “It was not reality that made sense of the novel, but the novel that made sense of a reality that, for years, had remained incomprehensible” (*Camino* 231). But as we find out from Parker and the news media, Ida’s “discovery” is only possible because Munk, like Kaczynski, had in fact read *The Secret Agent* and each had told his family in the mid-eighties that only through Conrad could his life’s work be understood. The extending chain of representation and interpretation reduces the difference between reading and writing, between histories and stories relative to its length: Conrad’s fictionalization of the 1894

Greenwich Village bombings inspires Kaczynski's life's work, which is fictionalized by Piglia's novel, in which Renzi's reading of Ida's reading of Conrad discovers what Parker already knew from the mass media. The false discovery aside, the staging of Renzi's paranoid hermeneutics sets the scene for Piglia to say something about literature and its relationship to practice, or, rather, to repeat in a new context, to reproduce something he has already said in his essays on Che.

There is something solitary and perverse in the abstraction of the reading of books, and in this case it had transformed into a life plan. . . . As if Munk had found in literature a path (*camino*) and a character through which to shape his clandestine action. A reader of novels who searches for the meaning of literature and actualizes it (*la realiza*) in his own life. (*Camino* 231-2)

Munk's path is the method (from the Greek *methodos*: the pursuit of knowledge; from *meta-hodos*: the path) of avant-garde artists, revolutionaries, the state, and other conspirators: to construct alternative realities on the basis of fictions, speculations, images of the future (*Complot* 11-13). The systemic, world-constituting doubt shared by Munk's conspiratorial paranoia and Renzi's generalized hermeneutics of suspicion signals an openness to the world, to its contingencies, accidents, and possible futures and, at the same time, the will to give form to the inchoate and endow it with meaning. In this, it resembles the autodidactic method contained in Rancière and Jacotot's exhortation to "Look here!" for "everything is in everything." Munk's path is also the method of the literary autodidact, who, like Ted Kaczynski, Emma Bovary and Alonso Quijano, makes "la decisión de cambiar de vida" ("the decision to change lives/ change one's life)," to displace himself in time and space and become an other through reading.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Theory Canon Performed: Pola Oloixarac's *Las teorías salvajes*

Political Patricide and Cultural Inheritance: Institutionalized Anomie and the Autonomy of Ars

Since the 2008 publication of her first novel, *Las teorías salvajes*, Pola Oloixarac has become a literary star on a global stage. Since her 2014 endorsement of Mauricio Macri during his successful campaign for Argentina's presidency, she has become a political pariah among the country's intellectuals. There is no contradiction between these two facts.

Literary provocateuse and internet troll of *la burguesía bienpensante* ("well-intentioned bourgeoisie") and high priests of leftist orthodoxy, Oloixarac's meteoric rise is a textbook example of institutionalized anomie, that cultural competition for the right to nominate "what is art" and "who is an artist" that Bourdieu identified as the logic of artistic modernity ("Manet" 252). In *Las teorías salvajes* this anomie postures as an intergenerational conflict,¹²² which the novel allegorizes in its opening anthropological

¹²² Elsa Drucaroff's massive study of post-dictatorship Argentinean fiction, *Los prisioneros de la torre* (2011), makes extensive use of generational periodization, drawing on Mannheim and Ortega y Gasset. While her book is a welcome addition to the study of contemporary Argentinean letters, I find this approach problematic. Rather than see culture as a terrain of conflict and competition, the generational approach emplots the field in an almost deterministic structure. This Whig historiography allows Drucaroff to play the classically self-critical critic, the critic who disavows her own position to simply celebrate the new against her own "prejudices" which are but a straw man for the prejudices of other critics of her generation, specifically Beatriz Sarlo, to whom Drucaroff dedicates a caustic chapter.

description of a Papuan rite of passage, in which tribal elders torment their children, sometimes to death (13).¹²³

Institutionalized anomie¹²⁴ forms the hinge between the novel's two, otherwise disconnected plot lines. It appears as the satire of the university and pastiche of theoretical discourse; the critique of *setentismo*, at once the heroic mythologies of seventies leftist militancy and its associated culture of memory¹²⁵; and the demolition of the machismo that saturates both. Over the course of the novel, these are transposed into a vaguely inhuman key.¹²⁶ The novel's two female protagonists become militant, cyborg intellectuals; yesteryear's committed guerrillas are replaced by lulz-seeking hackers; and theories that once provided deep structures of meaning are flattened into so many proper names and subjected to ridicule. As in the novel's opening anecdote, intergenerational antagonism is also a rite of passage, and the novel's anomie is also the logic of the

¹²³ In-line citations refer to the Roy Kesey's 2017 English-language translation.

¹²⁴ If the paradigm of institutionalized anomie seems more descriptive than argumentative, a diluted rather than a strong tonic, the intention is to leave room for the novel to speak. Part of the goal in this section is to give an attentive reading to the novel in its entirety, something skirted by previous critics who often focus on one of the plotlines. One of the closest readings of the novel in its entirety is Damián Selci and Nicolás Vilela's excoriating essay that concludes by calling for the novel's retraction, as if it were a communiqué to the International, only stoking Oloixarac's fame.

¹²⁵ In several interviews Oloixarac makes clear that her resistance to *setentismo* is as much about the instrumentalization of art for political and moral ends in the sixties and seventies as it is about the cooptation of the memory of seventies militancy by Kirchnerist "officialism" (Rojas) for their "marketing *político*" in the mid-aughts ("O universo").

¹²⁶ Valeria de los Ríos points out, violence is often coupled with allusions to the animal (153). For her, *Las teorías salvajes* employs animality as part of an antihumanism that interrogates received notions of politics. Although De los Ríos does not cite it, one of the novel's epigraphs from Adorno's *Minima Moralia* lends credence to her thesis: "All of the playing along, all of the humanity of interaction and participation is the mere mask of the tacit acceptance of inhumanity." De los Ríos goes on to suggest that the novel's questioning of politics links it to Roberto Esposito's category of the impolitical—a term taken up by Del Barco in the debates sparked by his "NO MATARÁS" (See, Note 14). De los Ríos quotes Esposito's definition of the impolitical as "'the search for a 'third way,' not always conscious but in any case highly problematic and radical,' without ceding to 'modern depoliticization,' since by definition the impolitical does not imply a weakening or fall of politics, but rather, on the contrary, an intensification and radicalization of politics" (155). De los Ríos does not go on to specify how *Las teorías salvajes* fictionalizes the impolitical, but given Oloixarac's body of work and her authorial persona, I do not see that Oloixarac's task extends much beyond the negative moment of satirical critique.

literary field, its parodic¹²⁷ stance the motor of literary evolution. In short, institutionalized anomie in the cultural field produces novelty by reproducing the same gesture of difference.

It is unsurprising, then, that Oloixarac has courted the favor of actors whose position in the field affords them the power to consecrate. In his blurb for the Argentinean edition of the novel published by the independent press Entropía in 2008, Daniel Link—a technophile like Oloixarac and early participant in the literary blogosphere—characterizes the novel as a “comedia isabelina” and “roman philosophique” with strains of Nabokov’s Humbert-Humbert, Rousseau, Wittgenstein, and Baron von Uexküll. For the 2010 Spanish edition published by Alpha Decay, Ricardo Piglia is more succinct, saying simply or if possible even more grandiloquently, “Oloixarac’s prose is the great event of new Argentinean narrative.”¹²⁸ Perhaps no other act of consecration captures the tension of institutionalized anomie specific to Oloixarac’s novel than Beatriz Sarlo’s early review, “Las teorías en tiempos de Google” (“Theories in Times of Google”). Before we treat the novel’s reception and its bid for consecration, I will examine the plot’s satirical critiques of the university, *setentismo*, and the machismo that pervades both. I will focus on the particular form of institutionalized anomie that manifests as the exchange of political patricide for cultural inheritance.

Las teorías salvajes weaves together two plot lines: the coming of age of a Buenos Aires nerd and the murderous obsession of one university student with a theory of political ontology and its creator. The first I will consider, dispassionately narrates in the third-

¹²⁷ Strictly speaking, Oloixarac’s novel is not a parody but a satire. See, Section Three “University fictions, theoretical fictions, theory canon.”

¹²⁸ That Piglia refers to her “prose” is not insignificant for my argument. As opposed to “novel” or “author”—the other likely subjects of Piglia’s sentence—“prose” emphasizes technique. Really?

person the life of the adolescent Kamtchowsky, her blogger boyfriend Pablo—known as Pabst, after Georg Wilhelm Pabst, the director of the 1933 film adaptation of *Don Quixote* that the two teenagers view on their first date—and their friends Mara and Andy, another couple. The episodic narrative follows the teenagers as they author angst-ridden blog posts analyzing contemporary culture in the propositional style of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*¹²⁹, party on the cultural circuit of neoliberal “*laissez faire, laissez passer*” Buenos Aires (177), and engage in group sex with one another. Narrator and characters alike are steeped in political philosophy and social theory, and academic rhetoric inflects both narration and reported speech. The culminating episodes in the story of *la pequeña K.* drive home two of the novel’s thematics: the critique of *setentismo* and the reclamation and sublimation (in Kamtchowksy’s case) or weaponization (in Ostreech’s) of women’s sexuality.

In many ways, Oloixarac’s Kamtchowsky is a typical adolescent nerd—intelligent, ugly, and socially maladroit. Likewise her story is a typical Bildungsroman except that it unflinchingly relates her sexual adventures, from her prepubescent sex-ed classes and first menstruation to teaching Pabst “how to make her cum with a pack of Sweet Mints” (34) and engaging in *ménages à trois* with Andy and Mara under Pabst’s voyeuristic gaze. *La pequeña K.*’s sexuality is at once sweetly awkward—her relationship with Pabst exhibits care and respect—and coldly calculating—she discovers “that fucking consists of a set of procedures that could be *serialized*” (*Savage* 30) and imagines translating a partner’s facial expressions during orgasm into propositional language

¹²⁹ The numbering system used by Wittgenstein to indicate the rigorous hypotaxis of the *Tractatus*’s argument is also employed by Oloixarac to structure Ostreech’s first-person narrative composed largely of letters or diary entries addressed to Roxler. This again demonstrates the omnipresence of academic discourse across the permeable boundaries that separate the author, narrators and characters.

(*Savage* 234). Most importantly, it is visible, unashamed, and assertive, even in the most shocking of circumstances.

The culminating episode of this series tells how, at an art party called *Zarpe Diem*, Kamtchowsky is gang raped in a public restroom after losing motor coordination from snorting several lines of ketamine laid out by her assailants in the shape of a *Hackkreuz*. When it turns out that the rape was digitally recorded and that the resulting video, *somegirl.avi*, has gone viral on the internet, Kamtchowsky capitalizes on her newfound internet celebrity by staging another amateur porn scene at the Ronald McDonald House with Miguel, an unsuspecting McDonald's employee with Down syndrome. To further "grow her market share" (262) she produces an autobiographical "documentary" about father-daughter incest (266) that premieres at a multimedia arts festival sponsored by the city of Buenos Aires.

Kamtchowsky's story leaves *setentismo* no quarter, satirizing and ridiculing everything from the motivations of the militants to its cultural legacy of moral superiority in defeat. Oloixarac diminishes militants' motivations in the intercalated diary penned by Kamtchowky's disappeared aunt Vivi, who relates her petty jealousies and sexual misadventures in entries addressed to Mao alias Moo. We are told how Andy learned of the Dirty War through his mother's naïve consumer activism, refusing to buy from Massera Ice Cream, explaining to her five-year-old son, "Well, Massera was an evil man who threw a bunch of people out of an airplane, okay? Why don't we buy an alfajor instead? Look, there's a Havanna" referring, at once, to a ubiquitous chain of coffee shops in Buenos Aires and the Cuban Revolution (*Savage* 97). We learn how, in high school, Mara is encouraged to write a play about the disappeared—retitled by her

schoolmates “Hit me and call me Esma,” after the Escuela Militar de Argentina (ESMA) that housed a clandestine prison (*Savage* 99)—that is then wildly praised by her mother Cris, a stalwart Trotskyite who uses the occasion to recount how she was saved from certain torture by refusing to sleep with a Montonero, because “this is about ideology, not about who’s the best fuck” (*Savage* 100). And in one of his many soliloquies, Pabst rails against the “theatrical capitalism developed by the left to sell their products” that conflates victimhood with truth “for no reason other than that it flatters the reigning ‘democratic ideal’ and a whole string of other euphemisms which must likewise never be interrogated.” He compares the cultural hegemony of leftist defeatism to a bad movie we watch, because, as “downwardly self-obsessed” “bourgeois ethnologists,” victimhood “protects us from any and all moral or ethical judgments regarding our actions.” Perhaps worst of all, the exchange of moral victory for political defeat is built on “a philosophically flawed foundation,” presumably the conflation of victimhood and truth (*Savage* 206).

Despite these many barbs, Oloixarac’s critique of *setentismo* cuts deepest with the climax to Kamtchowsky’s story, when she and her companions team up with the hackers Q and Logical Backdoor. For their first project, they produce the massive multi-player game, *Dirty War 1975*. Pabst sees it as a “sociological apparatus” that, thanks to a bit of malware in the code, gathers data about the players’ in-game behavior—for example why they would prefer the character “El Tigre” Rosca, an Argentinean career soldier and Chief of Operations, over The Revolutionary Author “Pepe,” who “carries his typewriter everywhere [and] uses it as a weapon to crush his enemies’ skulls” (*Savage* 240, 237). Although the data illuminate little about its players, the game does serve to expose

Argentina's recent past to the harsh light of Oloixarac's mordant critique, caricaturing and belittling actors on the Left.

The crew's second project takes the critique of seventies militancy one step further by suggesting the superannuation of anticapitalist struggle, the end of a progressive notion of history, and the transformation of class struggle into the revolt of the "oppressed class known as nerds" against "the dominant factions composed of young men far more gifted . . . at producing fluids and exchanging them with members of the opposite sex" (*Savage* 256). The project consists of hacking Google Earth and replacing its images with historical ones using DNS cache poisoning—an exploit, we are told in the acknowledgments to the English edition (290), publicized in a 1996 security advisory bulletin co-authored by Emiliano Kargieman, a former hacker and cyber security analyst, current satellite technology entrepreneur, and the author's husband. The result, an explosive *imago mundi* dubbed by Kamtchowksy "Pornography of Space and Time," recalls Daneri's *aleph* in Borges's celebrated short-story. Although critics concur that this episode constitutes the novel's climax, few have paid much attention to the self-interpretation Oloixarac provides.

At the launch party for the program, the only point where the novel's two plotlines directly intersect, Ostreech analyzes the juxtaposition of the city's visible history to the "spatialized syntax" of the "technologically poisoned city map" (*Savage* 274, 275):

to a certain extent, the map sought to isolate the abstract form of the notion of consequence, separating it from the consolidation of time understood as a series of stages. Facts, details, architecture, catastrophe, chaos, it all returned to write itself once more. This history was neither an archive nor a memoir, but a set of graphic annals, witnesses to the phase of the chronicle that consists of the accumulation of tales void of linkage or hierarchy, and strictly speaking it isn't history at all; in one sense, the program seemed to reclaim liberty from out of an anarchy of recountings,

but at the same time it established the absence of history as a studiable phenomenon within which causes and effects could be identified in the name of change or improvement. This was the raw dough, the cyclical history of a country where events occurred and then revolved around one another, merely existing, unable to account for themselves. (*Savage* 275)

At first glance, it may appear that Ostreech understands the Google Maps hack as the experimental application of some end-of-history thesis. On closer inspection, however, it is less history that ends, than the meanings to be derived from its syntactical organization of time. The resulting image of a “cyclical history” of merely extant facts without meaning or progress is less important for what it posits than for the caricature of History it negates, the stagist, teleological History that, we are meant to believe, stoked the revolutionary fervor of a generation of leftist militants. Such passion appears as hopelessly naïve when the very notion of historical time that drives it is reduced to the meaninglessness of mere existence. More specifically, Ostreech’s cynical reason aims at progressivism, the historical figuration of hope for a better world, and the displacement of utopia into the future that organizes this desire. Instead of this futuristic utopia or telos, in Ostreech’s view, the Google Maps hack visualizes an anachronistic utopia that beats a retreat to an inhuman time within History, composed of events suspended in space-time and rendered meaningless as if they were atoms in Brownian motion.

I focus on this passage, because Ostreech’s commentary models (or prefigures; see, Chapter Four) how readers should receive the hack, that is, less as a political act than as an aesthetic experience. For example, Ostreech’s disinterestedness recalls eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, and subversive, political acts are rarely celebrated with launch parties reminiscent of a vernissage. The map not only contaminates the present with the past, but also the real with the imaginary. It visualizes past political events and

catastrophes as well as cultural anecdotes, fictional and biographical. For example, the trajectories of Marechal's and Arlt's characters are traced through the city, the plot of Beatriz Guido's *El incendio y las vísperas* is rendered as a .gif file, Gombrowicz cruises for young men in the city center, the actress Tita Merello is depicted in the Mercado Central along with Borges who appears, here, as rabbit inspector and, again, as a pick-up artist on the banks of the river, and Daneri's home glows from within by the light of the *aleph* (Savage 274).

In the popular imagination, hacking is seen as subversive and, therefore, legalistically if not morally and politically inflected. Oloixarac promotes this commonplace. Despite the novel's auto-fictional qualities—we are told that Ostreech is often mistaken at university for Pola, another launch-party attendee—and despite the concatenation of novel and author promoted by a literary marketplace hungry for biographical authenticity, a point we turn to next, we should not confuse Ostreech's commentary with that of the author. To do so would flatten the irony that underpins the novel's institutionalized anomie. However, in an interview about her second novel, *Las constelaciones oscuras* (2015), which extends the ethnography of hacker culture begun in *Las teorías salvajes*, Oloixarac redoubles the claim made at the novel's climax. "The revolution we are living . . . is technological," she states, "If you think that the revolution today is to fight against liberalism, to me you're stuck forty years ago" (Plotkin). As this claim confuses means (technological) with ends (against liberalism), so the teenager's spatialized syntax of history lacks self-conscious political content. In place of guerrillas who take up arms out of ideological conviction or strategic hope, Oloixarac gives us nerds who hack a map of the city for little reason besides the lulz. This is the final

contamination perpetrated by the hacked map: the suggestion that ludic or artistic purposelessness can be revolutionary in a political sense. This gesture recalls similar ones made by the romantics and the historical avant-gardes. And it is not far removed from that of Silicon Valley visionaries, who exhort us to “Think Different” like Einstein or Gandhi by purchasing an Apple computer instead of a PC. In sum, the novel’s culminating episode contrasts cynical cyber-hedonism with political action guided by hope for the future and grounded in historical meaning, couching its critique in the disinterested contemplation of art in the broad sense of *ars*, a term which captures the ambivalent status of the poisoned map as computer program (*ars technica*) and artwork (*ars poetica*), as an object produced in a black box of code or for the gallery’s white cube.

The novel’s second plot line is narrated in the first person by Rosa Ostreech, a self-consciously brilliant and beautiful philosophy student at the University of Buenos Aires. It relates her obsession with her professor, Augusto García Roxler; the intellectual history of his Theory of Egoic Transmissions; and her desire—from her point of view, the necessity—to actualize his theory by seducing and murdering Collazo, a writer and *ex-montonero aburguesado* who also teaches at *la Facultad*. If, as the author herself has suggested (Mouján), Kamtchowsky’s story can be read as a parody of the bourgeois *Bildungsroman*, Ostreech’s story can be read as a campus novel, a genre that lends itself to satire. And here again, Oloixarac’s institutionalized anomie manifests itself in critiques of the university, patriarchy, and *setentismo*. But unlike Kamtchowsky’s story, which emphasizes the break with institutions of Argentina’s past, Ostreech’s narrative

dramatizes the combination of political patricide and cultural inheritance particular to the position in the literary field of both novel and author.

We see cultural inheritance in Ostreech's largely imagined relationship with García Roxler—after narrating how she stalks him in the halls of the university, often addressing her narrative to him, the novel ends by announcing their long-awaited meeting—and in the intellectual history of his Theory of Egoic Transmissions—a name that nods toward this continuity. García Roxler's theory turns out to be a recapitulation of one developed by Johan Van Vliet, a Dutch anthropologist working in the early twentieth century. Although never fully explicated, a third-person narrator (likely Ostreech) cryptically describes the Theory as an “ontology of human acts” and a “model for the anthropology of voluptuousness and war” (*Savage* 171). Its founding assumption is that humans learn from animals the first principle of the social, according to Van Vliet, the violent relationship between predator and prey that makes the world “an invisible theater of war” (*Savage* 173). Foreshadowing the hacked Google Map, Van Vliet posits a spatial syntax that sutures human sociality and activity to monadic points of view in space-time where history is accumulated and transmitted, that is, egoic transmissions (*Savage* 173).

When Van Vliet goes missing, presumably killed by the West African tribe he is studying—the premonition of which he takes as further evidence for the validity of his theory—his disciples Marvin Fischer and Manfred Fodder are left to argue over how best to “complete” their master's theory (*Savage* 162). Fischer at first opts to couch it in the terms of prehistorical trauma à la Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, thereby providing it, in Ostreech's analysis, with “a consumer market” (*Savage* 166). Eventually, however, Fodder convinces Fischer that the theory must find its completion in practice, saying:

“When the subjective conditions are insufficient to prove to others the necessity of a given theory, a small nucleus (*foco*) must undertake actions that at first glance might seem unthinkable, so as to spread their ideas and bring down the regime (e.g. the other theory) in which they are embedded” (*Savage* 168). By applying the language of Guevarismo (*el foco*) to academic marketing, Oloixarac foreshadows Ostreech’s seduction of Collazo and satirizes one of the militant generation’s guiding political theories. It is unclear how García Roxler learns of Van Vliet’s work, or how Ostreech learns the history of Fodder and Fischer’s debate, but like Van Vliet’s disciples before her, the self-proclaimed *Puella bondinis* of the UBA sets out to complete García Roxler’s theory by seducing and murdering Collazo. In a journal entry addressed to Augusto—reminiscent of Vivi’s letters to Moo for its demented adoration—Ostreech proclaims her fealty: “My presence is a *necessary condition* for your theory. . . . The act is intrinsic to the doctrine. . . . In your mouth I am the plaything of a monster” (*Savage* 119-120).

Political patricide consummates this chain of cultural inheritance. That Collazo was a *montonero* is another occasion for Oloixarac to ridicule the radical left and its legacy. The hypocrisy of former militants turned bourgeois professors is dramatized when Ostreech’s first attempt to murder Collazo is comically interrupted by a band of ruffians who steal her books—“The French edition of Trotsky’s *History of the Russians*, *Naufragios* by Álgvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *De civitate Dei* by St. Augustine . . . *Storie italiane di violenza e terrorismo* . . . and a small anthology of Catholic poems by Péguy” (*Savage* 150)—and his American Express. When Ostreech protests the theft by pointing out that Collazo once fought to realize socialism on behalf of poor people like them, the thugs mistake him for a politician and thief and begin to beat him. When Ostreech clarifies that he is not a

politician but a leftist intellectual, they beat him more (*Savage* 152). In contrast to Collazo's erstwhile politically motivated violence and the economically motivated violence of the bandits, Ostreech closes the episode by affirming the "compassion and nobility" of her purely personal motives for choosing to murder Collazo (*Savage* 168). After all, one of the tenets of the Theory of Egoic Transmissions is a subjective constructivism verging on solipsism (*Savage* 129).

Ostreech eventually succeeds in murdering her prey after seducing him on his yacht in the Tigre Delta north of Buenos Aires's wealthy suburbs. This suggests a more oblique critique of seventies militancy. Rather than pointing out the hypocrisy of its legacy—whether the exchange of moral superiority for political defeat or the transformation of militant communists into members of the bourgeoisie—Oloixarac takes aim at its recourse to violence, a gesture common to *la teoría de los dos demonios* and critiques of radical leftism the world over. Although only implicit in *Las teorías salvajes*, Oloixarac voices this broader critique of violence in a short story published in *Granta's* 2012 special edition dedicated to the "Best Young Hispanic Writers." "Conditions for the Revolution" develops the relationship between Mara and her mother Cris in the context of the protests and *asambleas barriales* sparked by the 2001 financial crisis. To Cris's self-congratulatory awe at the return of her generation's *cris de guerre* her daughter Mara tersely replies, "The protest now is pacifist and yours wasn't. There's a world of difference. Besides, this demo is pure bourgeois self-defence" ("Conditions" 96). In addition to seventies militancy, Oloixarac's implicit critique of violence would also include Ostreech in her quest to prove a Roxler's theory by performing the violent Act its disciples see as immanent to it. Broadly speaking, Ostreech and radical leftists like

Collazo share a common procedure: the enactment of theory by any means necessary, including violence.¹³⁰ Both stand in marked contrast to the digital suspension and abnegation of embodied politics seen in the Google Maps hack and the author's insistence on the technological more than political-economic character of today's "revolution."

In conclusion, I would like to return to the apparent contradiction with which I began: Oloixarac's status as both celebrity author and political pariah. I suggested that the suspension of this contradiction can be found in her practice of institutionalized anomie. But this is not the only cause. Institutionalized anomie may be the logic of the art world, but it does not have the same purchase in politics. *Las teorías salvajes* creates a chiasmus between these two fields and their logics, and Oloixarac denigrates less the novelistic forms and conventions of her predecessors—as in Bourdieu's thesis—than their political convictions. In so doing she contradicts the political autonomy her novel claims for art, understood as both *ars poetica* and *ars technica*.

The problem is not that computer technologies or artistic practices cannot revolutionize the social relations from which they arise or that technology, art and politics do not mutually condition one another, even if, the greatest technological and artistic revolutions can be traced back to deformations to the network of relations between capital and labor. The problem is that this technological revolution and the institutionalized anomie of the literary field become the cover under which Oloixarac smuggles in the interests and ideology of Argentina's ruling elite. In the absence of a positive political vision, Oloixarac's persona offers us the return of the nineties's savage

¹³⁰ It should be noted, however, that Oloixarac's earlier mockery of the Aunt Vivi's and Cris's motivations suggests that theory had little to do with their activism.

neoliberalism in the guise of opposing the Kirchnerist post-Crisis restoration of the (clientelist) welfare state. The merely negative moment of her well-warranted critique of Kirchnerismo's appropriation of *setentismo* finds its positive political content in a reactionary.

In 2014 Oloixarac was among hundreds of public personalities who signed a letter in support of Mauricio Macri's presidential campaign. Six months after his electoral triumph, she published a piece with the BBC World Service linking the end of Kirchnerismo to "new cultural winds . . . blowing through Argentina." She recognizes Macrismo constructing a cultural imaginary of the past to influence the politics of the present, much like Kirchnerismo before it. But Oloixarac simply seems to favor the irreverent art of the sixties over the myths of seventies militancy, saying "I, for one, welcome the rise of irreverence over dogma—even if it means giving a dog a throne, on occasion" ("Reviving").

Pola Oloixarac / Paula Caracciolo: Authorial Persona in the Era of Web 2.0

While the reading of *Las teorías salvajes* in the preceding section may have briefly indulged the fiction of literary autonomy, now the time has come to fully emplot the novel to its larger social text through an examination of the personae—the author (Section Two) and her readers (Section Three)—that compose the field of the novel's production and reproduction. In making this focal shift, we must bear in mind that these figures are no less fictitious than the novel around which they are constellated and

through which they are produced. I will demonstrate this by focusing in this section on the co-production of Oloixiarac's authorial persona as it relates to canon formation today.

Authorial persona is intrinsic to the institution and history of a post-patronage literary field (English and Frow 40). Romantic notions of authorship entailed persona, and at least since the modernists and the proliferation of audio-visual media beginning in the 1920s, in many cases, authorial persona has become as important as the work (Glass 17). Indeed, Latin American literary works are increasingly bound to authorial personae evidenced by the growing importance and market share of the life-writing genres since the sixties. This is what Sarlo has analyzed under the name of the "subjective turn." Similarly, Alberto Giordano speaks of a "biographical turn" in Argentinean letters since the nineties. In Chapter Four, we saw how a figure as canonical as Piglia concluded his life by transforming it into literature, dissolving his authorial persona and gifting his biography to his literary alter-ego Emilio Renzi. In Chapter One, we touched on the latter-day debates surrounding *testimonio* in reference to the emergence of the *nueva crónica*, and I highlighted the growing tension between these consecrated forms of life-writing and everyday life-writing online since the advent of Web 2.0. Oloixiarac's literary production does not fall into these genres, but she has made prudent use of paratextual life writing—especially published interviews and online platforms including the blog, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter—to smelt authorial persona and promotional apparatus into the alloy of a minor literary celebrity.

As *Las teorías salvajes* straddles high and low discourse, so Oloixiarac's authorial persona has been constructed in consecrated and emergent discursive spaces. In the consecrated realm, she has participated in countless readings and roundtables at

bookstores and universities—many of them recorded and accessible online—in which she exudes charm and a wit.¹³¹ She has agreed to numerous interviews in print, radio, and audio-visual media. These well-trodden means construct authorial persona beyond the book and its traditional paratextual supports—byline, author biography and headshot, back cover reviews— by doubly remitting readers to the voice: first, through the orality of recorded or reported speech and, second, through the attribution of that speech, whether to a visualized body or to a proper name.¹³²

Argentinean philosopher Leonor Arfuch addresses both forms of giving voice, positioning the interview in what he calls, following Lejeune, the space of biography. The orality of the interview is not only important for referring the public to the presence of a speaking subject, it also dramatizes the scene of enunciation, thereby holding open the possibility of an unintended revelation, even the mere possibility of which affects the singularity of the present, speaking subject. This “openness to the unforeseeable” in the dramatic form of the interview suggests to Arfuch “every interaction’s biographability.” Attribution singularizes speech as voice, “the most pristine site of the subject’s expression, hypothetical source of all agency (*protagonismo*)” and “the confirmation of a ‘person,’ of the immediacy of experience.” Beyond the interview, Arfuch points to new

¹³¹ I first became aware of Oloixarac at one such event at Cornell University, “The Second Voices for the New Century,” organized in September 2013 by Bolivian author and Cornell professor Edmundo Paz-Soldán. A kind of echo of the recently released *Granta* special issue “Best of Young Spanish-Language Novelists” (2010), in addition to Oloixarac, the conference included readings by *Granta* nominees Carlos Yushimoto and Rodrigo Hasbún.

¹³² It is interesting to note that, upon the novel’s publication, Oloixarac stopped performing with her friend, Esteban Insinger, as the group Lady Cavendish. In an interview, she explains: “I felt very strange using my voice in that way. People would approach me with curiosity, and it occurred to me that they must be comparing one voice with the other—the written with the physical voice. Since we were unable to tune both to the same key, I stopped singing in public.” (Gallón Salazar). Alternatively, one could speculate that Oloixarac did not want her musical performances to compete with her authorial one, her singing voice with her authorial voice.

interactive technologies as vehicles for these same indices of presence or “life fictions that try to dissolve the very idea of fiction” (Arfuch 129).

A self-admitted technophile (Bertazza), Oloixarac was an active blogger several years before the publication of *Las teorías salvajes*. Early posts to her primary blog (she maintained another about her orchid collection) read like the novel’s fragmentary manuscript, exhibiting Oloixarac’s characteristic style—exuberant, jargon-laden, ironic—and typical thematic concerns—for example, the literary and scientific exploits of eighteenth-century aristocrats, the concatenation of militarism and high fashion in the pages of Italian Vogue, notes on early modern political philosophy. Although Oloixarac does not believe a blog to be a “serious place” for literary production (Maciel), I would still venture that *Melpomene Mag* pre-figures the novel’s eclectic form structured in a manner reminiscent of a markup language or a viral mode of propagation.¹³³ Since publication, her blog has also become a factory for the production of her authorial persona and, more specifically, a promotional tool where she posts images of friends and fans reading her books in different locations around the world; reposts reviews and interviews, many humorously illustrated with incongruous photographs; announces forthcoming translations and upcoming appearances; and links to Youtube videos of past appearances and her journalistic pieces for the BBC, New York Times Herald, and Revista Ñ, among other outlets.

According to literary critics James English and Jonathan Frow, literary celebrity is “the production of persona in secondary performances (on television or radio or in

¹³³ Sabino Méndez, in his review of *Las teorías salvajes* quotes Oloixarac as saying “my thought was that the novel would expand like a virus” (Méndez). In another interviews, Oloixarac describes her desire to craft “a total work, not completely closed in on itself, but one that projects outward and invades you like a virus” (“Interview with Juan González”).

newspaper columns) as though they were merely supplements or reflections of the “real” performance of [authorial] persona in the book. It depends upon the signature effect, the effect of authenticity, and on its careful fostering in the marketplace” (52). The irony of her self-consciously bombastic self-promotion—one banner image on her blog shows María Kodama reading aloud *Las teorías salvajes* to a blind Borges, another pictures Hugo Chávez presenting the book to Barack Obama—countenances this celebrity performance of Oloixarac’s authorial persona. The reflection online of the novel’s ironic and playful tone helps construct her authorial signature and the authenticity effect of her writing in both print and digital media.

While *Las teorías salvajes* represents an irreverent and at times polemical critique of leftist orthodoxy, the author’s online performance does not. Oloixarac seems to bask in the glow of previous generations of luminaries, some of them—like Sarlo, Piglia, and Horacio González—committed intellectuals during the years of militancy. Her Instagram account includes photographs with Salman Rushdie and Diamela Eltit at readings in New York City, with Colombian novelist Fernando Vallejo at the Festival Internacional del Libro en Guadalajara, with Edgardo Cozarinsky and Sarlo at cultural and social functions in Buenos Aires (“Photograph with Rushdie in New York,” “Photograph with Rushdie in Guadalajara,” “Photograph with Eltit,” “Selfie with Vallejo,” “Selfie with Cozarinsky,” “Photograph with Sarlo in Almagro,” “Selfie with Sarlo”). These images are often accompanied by captions that exhibit Oloixarac’s characteristic humor. To celebrate and promote the 2016 re-edition of *Las teorías salvajes* in Argentina with Literatura Random House, Oloixarac posted a mockup of the cover featuring a montage of Raquel Welch in *One Million Years B.C.* (1966) wearing a skimpy cavewoman costume overlaid with

Sarlo's face ("Primeros esbozos"). Her selfie with Fernando Vallejo in Guadalajara praises the Colombian author for his sharp tongue and capacious knowledge of Argentinean politics¹³⁴ before referring to herself as a "a vietcong just passing through #filguadalajara2015" ("Selfie with Vallejo"), a metaphor that perhaps highlights the contrast between Vallejo's anarcho-nihilism and her "right-wing Marxism" (Maciel) despite their common support for Macri, or perhaps references her appearance in the photograph. Although crafted for the small audience of her social media followers, these images nonetheless constitute performative acts of affiliation, less with the individual authors depicted than with the consecrated and consecrating generation they collectively represent.

In addition to self-promotion and the celebrity performance of her authorial persona, Oloixarac's blog, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts are also platforms for the promotion of other writer friends and even her husband's satellite technology company. Unlike her blog, which was always intended for a public audience, the "public" or rather "publicity" photographs on Oloixarac's social media accounts appear alongside others of a more personal nature. This raises the question: What role does the public/private distinction play in the construction of authorial persona and literary celebrity? And how has this shifted since the advent of Web 2.0?

The explosion social media platforms has democratized the logic of celebrity, generalized the expectation of being watched, and weakened the boundary between

¹³⁴ Specifically, Oloixarac appreciates that he shares her opinion of Cristina Krichner and Mauricio Macri. According to the author, Fernando "was happy about Macri's win 'he has saved you from a horror that could have become unending.' He criticized as empty a few of Macri's points, 'but sometimes reality says it all, you just have to exhale, keep quiet'" ("Selfie with Fernando Vallejo").

public and private that has characterized capitalist modernity. Wendy Brown eloquently critiques this state of affairs when she asks:

Do we presume we have nothing of value to protect from public circulation and scrutiny? Are we compelled to reiterate the experience of the historically subordinated: to be without a room of one's own, without a zone of privacy in which lives go unreported, without a domain of creativity free from surveillance. . . ? Are we so accustomed to being watched that we cannot feel real, cannot feel our experiences to be real, unless we are watching and reporting them? (95)

Although Brown writes in 1995 against the compulsion to speak, make visible, render intelligible that drives U.S. identity politics, her questions apply just as well to the global effects of Web 2.0. Sociologist and celebrity theorist Joshua Gamson is more direct, titling his essay on the elevation of the ordinary in U.S. celebrity culture, “The unwatched life is not worth living.” There, Gamson points out that celebrity often emerges from the entanglement of the extraordinary and the ordinary, the public life of success embodied and the private life of that everyday body. This fact becomes increasingly apparent with forms of internet celebrity occasioned by Web 2.0.

Oloixarac is no different from other denizens of social media who daily curate their daily lives for public consumption. Unlike them, Oloixarac leverages the tension between public and private as the distinction between the secondary performance of literary celebrity and the primary production of her authorial persona. The indistinction between “public” and “private” posts on Oloixarac’s Instagram and Twitter—for example, posting a photograph of lunch with Karl Ove Knausgård followed by one of her cat—uses intimacy to elicit the authenticity effect of her authorial persona while, at the same time, making her everyday life the ordinary foil for her extraordinary achievements (“Photograph with Knausgård”). In this way, Oloixarac’s online performance solders an

authentic authorial persona to her merit-based celebrity to cast in her image the figure of the genial author.

A related line of questioning highlights the primary difference between older, consecrated spaces and “interactive technologies” for the production of authorial persona and the performance of literary celebrity. In English and Frow’s definition, the “secondary” nature of an author’s celebrity performances suggests that they take place in the paratexts of reception. In contrast to her published, recorded, and in-person performances, Oloixarac’s online performances occur in spaces of reception crafted and curated by the author. Where the older spaces relied on other actors in the field for the publication and distribution of celebrity authorship, the newer online spaces allow the author to perform this intermediary role, occupying and shaping the realm of her reception. If every author is her own first reader, in the era of Web 2.0, every author is also potentially her own publicist. This configuration resembles what I have called Piglia’s “critical mimesis” or “pre-figuration of the horizon of reception,” which he achieves by exercising the role of the critic—in his texts and in the classroom—with the effect of bolstering the consecration of his works at the level of their content. He maybe predetermines but still leaves in the hands of others the mechanisms for their distribution and promotion. Oloixarac takes advantage of web-based platforms to play the publicist and expropriate those mechanisms in her bid if not for consecration, then at least for celebrity.

The tension between public and private is also at work in the minor scandals elicited by *Las teorías salvajes* and Oloixarac’s authorial persona. To be sure, Oloixarac’s satire is antagonistic and her extra-textual commentary often polemical. But the

antagonism in her novel is not particularly novel, and, in particular, the central critique of *setentismo* plays by the rules. Despite her claims to the contrary (Gonzalez, Moujan, Rojas), not only had leftist intellectuals already begun to reappraise the seventies—for example, the famous turn-of-the-century debates sparked by Oscar del Barco’s self-critical “No matarás”—fiction writers, too, had made similar critiques—for example, the assertion of literary autonomy against political commitment made in the nineties by the self-denominated Grupo Shanghai (Drucaroff 55-56, 88-91). Not only is the banality of Oloixarac’s critique wholly in keeping with the principle of institutionalized anomie, whereby it is less the content than the form that counts, less the particular position than the iterable position-taking. In ridiculing the lofty heights of the academy and bringing low the heroic myths of *setentismo* that organized Argentina’s political present, *Las teorías salvajes* also deploys banality as critique.

The difference between polemic and institutionalized anomie, on the one hand, and scandal, on the other, is one of register and value. Institutionalized anomie plays by the rules of the field of restricted literary production; scandal mixes the rules of the restricted and general fields. Literary celebrities straddle these two fields and their respective audiences (Moran 6) and literary scandal often erupts from conflicts between registers, so-called “scandals of the middlebrow” (Radway). Keeping in mind the narrow scope of Bourdieu’s analysis, institutionalized anomie is a logic of the restricted economy of artistic production, i.e. high culture, and not of the general economy, i.e. the culture industry. At the same time, the repetitiousness implied by the institutionalized character of this anomie points to a homology between these two economies of literary value. In the one, we find the repetition of sameness, in the other, the repetition of difference. By

virtue of the irony constitutive of its satiric form, *Las teorías salvajes* occupies this point of contact between the two and participates in both anomie and scandal. As the novel achieves its comedic effect through the grotesque combination of high and low, the mingling of academic discourse with a contemporary youth sociolect, Ostreech's fervent idealism and seductive sexuality with Kamtchowsky's awkward corporeal misadventures, so has the novel's reception been similarly mixed, growing from a small coterie of Buenos Aires literati into a global readership.¹³⁵

The nature of the scandal here has less to do with a particular position than with who is taking it. Much like Kamtchowsky and Ostreech, Oloixarac is acutely aware of her gendered speaking position and its marginalization as much in intellectual and political circles as in computer nerd culture (Plotkin). In interviews, she has suggested as much, saying that the real scandal may be less the novel's polemic against *setentismo* than the fact that a woman would dare to make it (Gallón Salazar, González, Maciel, Rodrigues, Rojas, Wiener). By displacing antagonism from *Las teorías salvajes* to her figure, Oloixarac moves from institutionalized anomie to literary scandal, from authorial persona to literary celebrity. As English and Frow suggest in the context of contemporary British literature, in contrast to modernism's aesthetic provocations, to which we are by now inured, in recent decades, "scandal has come adrift from the work of art . . . and attaches itself more firmly to the person" (50).

¹³⁵ If the novel tenuously holds onto its position in Argentina's restricted field of production by virtue of its interpellation of and reception by the consecrated figures in the national literary scene, its worldwide circulation in translation, so close to its publication date, underscores its more popular appeal. In the United States, the promotion of *The Savage Theories* (2017) on Oprah.com—although not the king-making Book Club 2.0—speaks to the novel's affinities with the Anglophone genre Mark McGurl has called "lower-middle-class modernism" (see, Section Three).

Journalist and *cronista* Gabriela Wiener correctly points out that seemingly every early review or interview mentions Oloixarac's physical appearance. But she errs in her claim that "*In spite of her pin-up look (Pese a su aspecto de pin up)*, her doctor-of-philosophy lexicon has won her many enemies" (Wiener; my emphasis). Oloixarac's persona—and, by extension, her novel—scandalize not "in spite of" this apparent incongruity, but precisely because of it. In fact, it is central to her authorial persona, which Oloixarac genders and sexualizes at every turn. On her blog ("!!!"), she documents how she insisted to the editors at Entropía that the novel's cover match the color of her favorite bikini, an anecdote gleefully cued up by subsequent interviewers (González, Wiener); the much-commented photograph on the novel's flap depicts the author reclining on a couch, ankles crossed mid-air, limp-wristedly examining what appears to be a print depicting Napoleon; more seductive still, another photograph shows a smiling Oloixarac, head tossed back, hugging Mexican-Peruvian author Mario Bellatín, the hook of his prosthetic arm caressing her legs crossed under a skirt lifted just enough to reveal the edge of a white undergarment ("En Pringles"). "But she is a sexual object conscious of itself" (Rojas). Oloixarac's clarification of her protagonists' sexuality applies equally to her authorial persona. It would be easy to confuse the sensuous description of Rosa Ostreech with Oloixarac's persona; indeed, at the launch party for "Pornografía del Tiempo y Espacio" ("Pornography of Time and Space") Ostreech bumps into Pola, mentioning in an aside that they are often confused with each another at university:

My skeletal structure is flawless and persuasive, often inescapably so according to some monstrous statistic. . . . I am most elegantly distributed, my flesh unfolds in a soft, glowing imprecise skin tone between olive-gold and the lyrical ivory of Byzantium . . . my black hair begins to plunge into the void, then restrains itself with unction an instant before reaching my hips; my eyes are black and deep, slightly crossed; my mouth is orthodox,

red. Seen from the front the eminent twin towers rise spiritedly below a fine Doric neckline, and the jawline of a lady carnivore. From behind, of course, paired anatomical glories, an intersection of feminine aesthetic and military deployment known, *per secula seculorum*, in the Biblical sense. . . . The priceless resources at my disposal only acquired strength as they came to know the enemy by taking Communion with him, in an act of atrocious intimacy. . . . By this point the reader will have realized that the experiment herein described required making of my body a laboratory, and also a watchtower from which to direct a land war. (*Savage* 111-113; translation emended).

Térèse Courreau points out, Ostreech is no mere *femme fatale* and “therefore object of discourse, the medium of creation over which man must triumph to become an artist, subjecting femininity to the sexuated order of literary discourse” (138). One of the novel’s principle narrators, Ostreech is more dominatrix than *femme fatale* as is Oloixarac to commentators who declare that the literary world “has surrendered at her feet” (Néspolo) or the blogger whose profile picture shows the author smoking a cigarette through a latex mask. Given these resemblances, we cannot be sure if Ostreech reflects Oloixarac or if Oloixarac’s persona performs Ostreech.¹³⁶ Whatever the case, this cyborg “makes of her body a laboratory” for a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, whether the embodiment of a theory or the incarnation of a fiction. It is precisely the ambiguity of these multiple and multimedia constructions of authorial persona and performances of literary celebrity that makes *Las teorías salvajes* a sophisticated “ground war” on the terrain of the literary field today.

¹³⁶ Nor should we conflate the two figures. To do so would flatten the novel’s constitutive irony and the performative construction of its author’s persona. At the same time, this confusion of narrators and author is one cause of the scandals that have stoked her minor celebrity (Drucaroff 119; Valente).

In the preceding section we witnessed the construction of Oloixarac's authorial persona and literary celebrity. Of course, readers are implicated as much in this process as they are in the construction of any text, but for the sake of presentation, I have focused on the author's role. In this section, I will again shift the analytic focus, this time from the author to her readers, and in particular to the "overeducated reader" that Oloixarac has called the ideal reader of *Las teorías salvajes* (González). Just as in the first section our narrower textual focus occasioned an exploration of the novel's take on contemporary, Argentinean cultural politics, and just as our focus on the author in the previous section occasioned a look at the effects of social media on the literary field, so our focus on reception, here, occasions a meditation on the relationship between narrative and criticism today, specifically, through an examination of the place of theory in *Las teorías salvajes*.

Perhaps no text is more emblematic of the novel's reception in the restricted field than Beatriz Sarlo's "La teoría en tiempos de Google." Thanks to her position as *crítica patovítica* ("gatekeeper critic") of Argentinean letters (Drucaroff), Sarlo's review was crucial to the novel's reception among the Buenos Aires literati. Cited by many, it stands as a kind of first critical reading that conditions the novel's subsequent reception, a process Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano describe in their early work in the sociology of literature (*Literatura y Sociedad* 115). It was cited less for its veiled criticism of the place of theory, erudition, and the intellectual—among Sarlo's perennial concerns—in the internet era, than for its overt criticism of Oloixarac's satire of seventies militancy in the

diary of Kamtchowsky's aunt Vivi. As we have seen, *Las teorías salvajes* has been read largely in this key, and it was this gendered polemic with a state-sponsored image of the past that provoked controversy and contributed to Oloixarac's celebrity. At the same time, these minor scandals obscured the pressing question, raised by Sarlo, about the role of theory in the novel.

Sarlo's review is not only important because of her position in the field. In addition to her role as a literary critic, she is a literary and cultural theorist; a member of the militant generation; a woman in milieux crowded with men; and, in her later work, a critic of Kirchnerismo and a proponent of artistic autonomy. We might say that Sarlo embodies Oloixarac's ideal reader, one not very different from the author herself. We see evidence of this in a 2009 blog post addressed to "Beatriz, tú que reinas despiadada sobre la literatura argentina" ("Beatriz, you who reign mercilessly over Argentinean literature"). In the same breathless tone as Ostreech's letters to her idol, Oloixarac analogizes her relationship to Sarlo with the protagonist's relationship to García Roxler. The premise of the post is a television interview, in which Sarlo had mentioned that she keeps a private blog that only a hacker could find and read. Oloixarac takes this as a challenge, "a glove thrown from a popular and demodée technology, T.V., to this side of the keyboard." She fantasizes about hacking Sarlo's hard drive and posting to a false Facebook page unpublished criticism and photographs of a younger, bikini-clad version of the critic on vacation, a scenario that makes "Betty Sarlo" resemble Oloixarac and Ostreech in addition to García Roxler. Oloixarac concludes by asking, "should I intervene into culture, i.e., into Beatriz's computer?" Sarlo's computer becomes a metonym for the

cultural field, and Oloixarac becomes a hacker, coding her way into it. (“Cosas de Reinas”).

As this anecdote suggests, Oloixarac is as self-aware about the construction of her authorial persona as she is about the interpellation of her readership. Her readers and critics are not only the novel’s necessary compliment. As she sees it, they are part of a novel-turned-collective-creation “that keeps adding characters and voices because it is open” (González), like one instance of an unending Barthesian textuality or as-if *Las teorías salvajes* were but one chapter of the collectively authored novel Oloixarac calls Google (Ruffinelli). While the author recognizes the impossibility of controlling her work’s reception, the novel nonetheless, indicates how it wants to be read, sketching the shape of an ideal reader (*Literatura / Sociedad* 107).

The title, university milieu, academic discourse, dense intertextuality and constant references to political theory interpellate a university-educated readership, un *lector sobreeducado*, of which Sarlo is perhaps the paragon. Or as one caustic reviewer puts it, Oloixarac “writes for her teachers” (Valente). At the same time, *Las teorías salvajes* aims to entertain both this restricted readership and a general one (González). To her restricted readership, she offers the pleasure of speaking a private language and deciphering the novel’s intertexts, whether other texts—as in her pastiche of theory—or elements of its context—her satire of *setentismo*, *la burguesía bienpensante* and *la Facultad*. At the same time, the grotesque incongruity of discourses and themes would make any reader chuckle. In the well-trodden tradition of Borges and Piglia, Oloixarac writes heteroglossic texts that refunctionalize traditionally popular modes and genres—comedy and the campus novel in *Las teorías salvajes*, science fiction in *Las constelaciones oscuras*—as

literature, understood as a kind of genre-less genre, fiction that is not genre fiction. As already noted, this double interpellation of general and restricted economies of literary production gives rise to the scandals of the middle-brow that have stoked the author's minor celebrity. At the same time, the novel's successful interpellation of a restricted readership has been central to her speedy consecration.

But the university has supplied Oloixarac with more than her primary or ideal readership. *Las teorías salvajes* is not just part (anti)*Bildungsroman* and part campus novel. It is what I will call a "university fiction." Where campus or varsity novels rely on the university for their content, a university fiction also relies on the academy for its reception and production. Mark McGurl has argued that the university has become the primary patron of the postwar US literature. The university has always patronized the critical apparatus that reproduced the restricted field of literary production—indeed the study of literature was, until the mid-twentieth century, central to the nation-building and class-consciousness-inculcating missions of the modern university. Since the explosion of writing programs beginning in the nineties, so McGurl, universities house and patronize not only literary reception, but increasingly literary production, too. Not only do a growing number of authors and would-be authors from Latin America find their way to US programs, whether MFAs in Spanish, university sponsored residencies—Oloixarac participated in the Iowa Writer's Workshop in 2010— or funded PhD programs that buy authors time to write while training them for teaching positions that can support their practice in the future—Oloixarac is currently a PhD student at Stanford, where Jorge Ruffinelli, one of her novel's early reviewers, teaches. Increasingly, Latin American and

Spanish universities also offer MFAs in creative writing in a bid to commercialize the informal, author-organized workshops of the past.

McGurl argues that university patronage in the United States corresponds to the rise of new genres in the post-War period, namely, technomodernism, high cultural pluralism, and lower-middle-class modernism. Without first studying the institutional practices and spaces of production, as McGurl does in the United States, these genres can in no way extend to Spanish-language university fictions, generally speaking. But the particular case of *Las teorías salvajes* shares many generic similarities to Program Era writing. First, its overtly reflexive character gives it “an aura of intellectual sophistication . . . inviting critics to take [it] seriously as participating in the modernist/postmodernist high literary tradition,” and by “holding up a flattering mirror to the critic’s own sophistication” (McGurl 48). And second “the campus novel and the portrait of the artist are, then, two of the signature genres of the Program Era, each of them allegorizing, in complementary ways, the autopoeitic agendas they also enact” (McGurl 49). Oloixarac’s university readership seems to have accepted her invitation even if the pleasure of their self-recognition is a perverted one, distorted in the fun-house mirror of the novel’s satirical critique.

The distinguishing feature of *Las teorías salvajes* seems to be its pastiche of theory. In this sense her novel not only would express institutionalized anomie vis-à-vis *setentismo* and the generation of militancy. It would also distinguish itself from the poststructuralist aestheticism of the first generation of post-dictatorship writers associated with *Revista Babel* (1988-91) and the self-denominated Grupo Shanghai (Sergio Bizzio,

Martín Caparós, Sergio Chejfec, Daniel Guebel, and Alan Pauls). At first glance, *Las teorías salvajes* would be at home among their prose, which Elsa Drucaroff characterizes by its “exasperating exhibition of symbolic capital, its irony toward mass culture, the profusion of authoritative citations, latinicisms, exhausting appeals to distinction” (73). But Oloixarac’s is not a novelistic elaboration of theory, as Pauls once characterized his early work (Drucaroff 55), but an ironic ethnography of theory’s reception and dissemination among students of her generation. As such, it represents the context of its production in a way that the Grupo Shanghai expressly refused even as it advocates for a similarly depoliticized art, less engaged in the public sphere than in private codes.¹³⁷

But can we say that Oloixarac *parodies* theory, when there are no clear intertexts?¹³⁸ Theory appears in *Las teorías salvajes* in three guises—as a fiction, as an object of criticism, and as a set of references—each with a particular function. The fictional Theory of Egoic Transmissions appears to drive one of the plot lines; the criticism of theory is another instance of institutionalized anomie that serves to distinguish the novel from its forebears, much as its critique of *setentismo* purportedly does; and similar to Oloixarac’s authorial performance, the myriad references to theoretical texts situate the novel in a social milieu indexed to the theory canon. In each

¹³⁷ A strong critique of Oloixarac’s technological revolution might resemble Drucaroff’s critique of Babel and the Grupo Shanghai “If these books [by the Grupo Shanghai] and the aesthetic that Babel adversarially promotes have any merit, it is that of having reflected like an ephemeral, uncritical copy the ideology that was just then emerging and that would dominate the nineties almost completely. . . . They are *menemista* frivolity in its *chic* version (*la frivolidad menemista en su versión coolta*), the fetishism of the (symbolic) commodity taken to the extreme . . . the new, cynical spirit of the defeated” (133).

¹³⁸ Sarlo asks the same question but for different reasons: “I am not sure that ‘intertextual’ would be the adequate word. One would have to search for another. Intertextuality pertains to the era of real libraries and encyclopedias. The citations, allusions and theoretical fictions in this novel are of the age of Google, which has rendered almost useless the work of hiding (*hundir*) encoded quotations because nothing stays encoded for more than five minutes.” (“Teoría en tiempos de Google”). This spurious media historical periodization of intertextuality misunderstands the function of intertexts (theoretical or otherwise). In addition to the pleasure of discovery that the intertext offers to the knowing reader, especially in heteroglossic texts like *Las teorías salvajes*, it first situates the text by interpellating a restricted readership while at the same time bedecking the novel in cultural distinction.

of these cases, theory designates more a style of discourse and its users than a series of attempts to give meaning to a world, whether in the novel or outside it. If she parodies anything, then, it is intellectual history, the personal anecdotes and salacious rumors that give color to grey theory—as opposed to the history of ideas or concepts. For this reason, *Las teorías salvajes* is closer to satire than parody, more an ironic recontextualization of a social milieu than of a set of texts. For this reason, too, I maintain that *Las teorías salvajes* is more a university fiction than “theoretical fiction” or “theory novel,” terms I will review below. It worries less the presumed boundary between fictional and theoretical writing than that which wants to distinguish the textual from the social.

Critics have repeatedly characterized *Las teorías salvajes* as parodic and not only of theory. There are moments that would suggest as much. For example, Martín Kohan’s *El museo de la revolución* seems a likely intertext for Aunt Vivi’s diaries, given their common emphasis on the framing of a Dirty War *testimonio* with the story of its publication. But theoretical works are not among the novel’s intertexts. Instead we find satires of the university, of the art world, of political culture, pastiches of academic discourse, and a plethora of references that index the novel to the theory canon and perform its formation. The closest we come to such a theoretical intertext is the fictional Theory of Egoic Transmissions. Oloixarac seems to take her cue from Borges, who famously declared in the prologue to *Ficciones* (1944): “It is a laborious madness and an impoverishing one, the madness of composing vast books. . . . The better way to go about it is to pretend that those books already exist, and offer a summary, a commentary on them. . . . I have chosen to write notes on *imaginary* books” (*Collected Works* 80-81). Oloixarac’s commentary on this imaginary theoretical intertext would take the form of

her fictional intellectual history of the Van Vliet, Fodder and Fischer, García Roxler and Ostreech, the campus novel of its intergenerational reproduction and evolution. Beyond that, the theory is barely sketched enough to serve as a vehicle for the novel's pastiche of academic discourse and its satire of theorists and their acolytes.¹³⁹ Oloixarac frustrates expectations that the inclusion of theory should provide the novel a moment of performative self-reflexivity, as in many postmodernist metafiction. If it has a performative function, it might be to frustrate the reader with an inscrutable theoretical discourse that is, in fact, meaningless.

Each of the voices in both Kamtchowsky and Ostreech's stories offers a pastiche of theoretical discourse—alluded to in Section One—that satirizes its users. In an example from early in the novel, we hear the staccato cadence and baroque syntax of reassuringly complex theoretical discourse in the narrator's description of Kamtchowsky's sexual coming of age: "In order for initiational observations to be transformed into personal belief systems, implies the active participation of the little 'subjected subjects' ('*sujetos sujetos*') to dive into their respective pasts" (*Savage* 32; translation emended). In the following paragraph this theoretical style inflects Kamtchowsky's reported speech: "One day, however, Kamtchowsky grew up and said: —Given the absence of any binding objective morality, we have no option but to entrust ourselves to the privacy of an *ethics of mental processes*" (*Savage* 32). And in a summary analysis worthy of Kant's famous take on intercourse¹⁴⁰, Kamtchowsky claims, "Sex is a stable system of egotistical forms

¹³⁹ Oloixarac's imitation of academic or theoretical discourse is not simply a parody, which necessitates a definite intertext, but a pastiche, which imitates style (Hutcheon 38). This pastiche of theory, in turn, facilitates her satire of its practitioners, satire being the intertextuality of historical events (a text – world relationship) as opposed to the parody's intertextuality of texts (a text-text relationship) (Hutcheon 106).

¹⁴⁰ In Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* we encounter this aseptic definition: "sexual intercourse is the reciprocal use that one human being makes of the sexual organs and capacities of another" (6: 277)

revolving around the sun of vanity” (*Savage* 90). As already evidenced, Ostreech’s first personal narration and Pabst’s reported speech are likewise pastiches of academic discourse. The irony characteristic of Oloixarac’s novel and authorial persona subjects all these passionate nerds to a degree of ridicule.

Despite Ostreech’s adulation of García Roxler and the flattery one might assume from the characters’ imitation of theoretical style, the novel savages theory and its practitioners as much as it does *setentismo*. Before her pledge of fealty, Ostreech tells us how García Roxler’s star set long ago and “the fact that he was still around was less an honor for us than proof of a doddering ecosystem (*ecosistema gagá*) wherein doddering academics were allowed to coexist peacefully amidst the institutional deterioration” (*Savage* 50). While seducing Collazo, Ostreech decries the hypocrisy of anticapitalist critical philosophies, pointing out, behind fluttering eyelashes and false modesty designed to shelter his fragile masculinity, that “product differentiation is as important for (and within) the academy as it is for the capitalist corporations that academics love to hate” (*Savage* 135). Kamtchowsky’s story also begins at the university where her parents met in the sixties. The narrator tells us how the massification of higher education that brought them together coincided with the insertion of psychoanalysis into “the moist cavities of the middle class” (*Savage* 8) including Kamtchowsky’s mother, whose enthusiasm for her chosen field of study the novel mocks. Finally, Pabst’s academicist discourse convinces many of his blog readers, and they take for sophisticated critique what is in fact mere cruelty (*Savage* 42), an innocuous example of theory’s savagery when compared to Ostreech’s designs on Collazo’s life.

Perhaps the most obvious use of theory are the countless references to authors and

texts. The function, however, of these references is somewhat more inscrutable. At base, reference and citation are social relations that compose a discursive field. Namedropping in the novel functions similarly to Oloixarac's Instagram posts with famous authors and her blogging about encounters with others. As these paratexts associate Oloixarac with authors who collectively embody the literary canon, so do the novel's references emplot the novel in the theory canon. In both cases the individual reference is less important than the sum of references that compose their respective canons. And in both cases the procedure is indexical and the result iconographical.

Las teorías salvajes does not theorize. Instead, Theory is flattened into a series of names pasted onto the silent surface of an album, as if on Oloixarac's Facebook. At the novel's end, as Ostreech prepares for her long-awaited meeting with García Roxler, she confesses: "I am tempted to print out everything in My Documents" (*Savage* 277). But she resists, opting instead to "summarize . . . put things in order, to connect to compose to renumber" (*Savage* 277). This metafictional gesture toward the (re)writing of the novel gives readers the sense of an ending by remitting us to its fictional authorial origin. It also casts writing as montage. We can think montage together with parody and satire, the novel's primary modes, insofar as recontextualization is fundamental to each.¹⁴¹ But unlike the former, montage renders the text opaque, more object-like and iconographic than signifying and communicative in any linguistic sense. The indexical quality of Oloixarac's references to theory points us beyond specific texts to a class of texts. These montage techniques, alluded to at novel's end but practiced throughout as parody,

¹⁴¹ Gérard Genette refers to this basic act of recontextualization as "minimal parody." "The most rigorous form of parody, or minimal parody, consists, then, in taking up a familiar text literally and giving it a new meaning," and that it was Borges who "succeeded in demonstrating with the imaginary example of Pierre Menard that the mere displacement of context turns even the most literal rewriting into a creation" (17).

pastiche, and satire, not only index the theory canon but also imitate its form: consecration, too, is a kind of recontextualization from the totality of discursive production to the restricted literary economy, where texts are then encapsulated by the author's signature, listed, and enumerated in the formation of a canon. In its bid for consecration, *Las teorías salvajes* reflexively performs the act of canon formation: the composition and administration of a social milieu—the restricted field, literary institution or republic of letters, depending on one's choice of metaphor—in the form of a list of references. Given that canons are central tools not only for the constitution but also the reproduction of discursive fields, it can be said that Oloixarac does indeed write for her teachers.

Theory has entered the novel often enough for critics to have christened these texts “theory novels.” As ever, the constitution of this subgenre is not without its squabbles over terminology and periodization. For example, Mark Currie's narratology of the postmodern novel excavates “theoretical fictions” from beneath the more capacious category of metafiction. To his mind, the term metafiction implies a distinction between a fictional substrate and metalanguage even when that metalanguage is part of the fiction. In his definition, theoretical fictions perform a critical function without recourse to metalanguage (Currie 52). Although an author may perform the roles of both novelist and theorist, for Currie, a theoretical fiction must “dramatize that boundary or use it as an energy source” (52). Nor can they result from interpretation alone; they must be “objectively or intentionally” theoretical (Currie 56). Given the circumscribed role Currie assigns to authors and readers, what text could be called “objectively or intentionally”

theoretical without falling either into the intentional fallacy or a foundationalist epistemology, both of which run counter to the post-structuralist theories Currie takes a paradigmatic of Theory in general?

Judith Ryan speaks of “the novel after theory,” that is, “the novel that knows about theory” with or without the author’s intention. In addition to reflexivity, Ryan emphasizes intertextuality, allowing her to emplot these texts in a longer historical trajectory that includes not only postmodern metafiction but also the modernist novel of ideas (206). In contrast to the latter, there are no essayistic dialogues or detailed expositions of philosophical intertexts in the novel after theory. “Its method is one of allusion” and a “two-track strategy that allows those familiar with theory to recognize its presence yet largely refrains from spoiling the pleasure of reading” (Ryan 206). Indeed, we have already noted that *Las teorías salvajes* employs a two-track strategy. The implicit distinction at work in Ryan’s “two-track strategy” opposes theoretical abstraction to the concrete detail of literature, ascribing readerly difficulty to one and readerly pleasure to the other. Even granting this opposition, it nonetheless forgets the pleasurable concrete detail of theoretical prose itself. In other words, Ryan’s charge that theory spoils readerly pleasure misses one of theory’s distinguishing features, and a reflexive one at that, namely, its perennial questioning of the aesthetics and forms of philosophical presentation. Think of Adorno’s maxims on the essay, Benjamin’s aphoristic dialectical images, the pleasure of Barthes’s text, Derrida’s wordplay, or Foucault’s hypnotically repetitive negative clauses that render the *via negativa* prose. A text like *Las teorías salvajes* belies such a judgment. For frustrating some readers’ expectations that its novelistic discourse should reflexively perform its own theorization it exchanges the

pleasure of theoretical discourse. *Las teorías salvajes* is clearly a “novel after theory” if for reasons I think Ryan’s definition misses.

If the theory novel emerges from the body of postmodern metafiction, itself a performatively self-reflexive version of the modernist novel of ideas, now, in the wake high theory’s decline, critic Mitchum Huehls has identified what he calls the “post-theory theory novel.” This evolution of the subgenre names “those contemporary works of fiction . . . that use well-known theoretical concepts . . . without reflexively applying those concepts to the fictional text itself” (282). The post-theory theory novel dispenses with the theoretical—i.e., poststructuralist and specifically Barthesian—mandate that thought think itself, which characterizes the earlier subgenre. At first glance, Huehls’s characterization of the post-theory theory novel would seem apt for *Las teorías salvajes*, even if the periodization—based in the Anglophone North Atlantic—does not apply to the novel’s context. But on closer inspection, *Las teorías salvajes* uses neither “theoretical concepts” nor theory’s “well-known tropes” (283) either as “building blocks” or as “literary devices” (283, 299). As we have seen, it does not engage with theory as an intertext, but rather with theory’s context, that is, the university that is its historical condition of possibility. In addition to a university fiction, *Las teorías salvajes* may be a post-theory novel or a novel after theory, but not a post-theory *theory* novel, in the evolutionary or dialectical sense Huehls gives the genre.

Although this phenomenon emerges in the late eighties in the North Atlantic, I would suggest that the theory novel is part of a global literary history, for in some sense theory has become world literature. The theory novel emerges from a dense web of shifting relations at the end of the twentieth century in the literary-critical field and

specifically at universities. It is closely associated with the consolidation of a theory canon, itself bound to the declining fortunes of the literary canon traditionally conceived. In her study, Ryan points out that, beginning in the mid-eighties, “‘Theory’ became a kind of lingua franca capable of bringing scholars together in a period when the canon was expanding so rapidly that knowledge of a particular text could not be taken for granted” (9). Ryan refers to crossing disciplinary boundaries in the United States academy, where François Cusset tells us (French) theory first consolidates in distinction to philosophy, literary criticism or sociology. But it also crosses national and linguistic frontiers. For Ryan, the emergence of the “novel that knows about theory” indicates the spread of theory beyond an academic context or university-educated readership. But one could easily counter—as I have in the case of *Las teorías salvajes*— that such novels appeal precisely to that context as general readership of high literature dwindles and is increasingly confined to literature departments. Whether or not we see literary canons as expanding or imploding in this period, there is little doubt that a theory canon has become their necessary supplement.

I draw the notion of the theory canon from John Guillory’s *Cultural Capital* (1993). Although Guillory studies the Canon Debates that rocked US literature departments in the eighties and nineties, his focus on canonical *form* has explanatory value in the contemporaneous Argentinean and Chilean contexts. Guillory’s historical premise is that the Canon Debates are symptomatic of a crisis in the literary field, whose first cause is the emergence of a professional managerial class (PMC) that, unlike its bourgeois forebear, no longer needs literature—understood as one instance of cultural capital—for its social legitimation. At the same time, the PMC’s restructuring of the

university transforms the work of the professional literary critic. A theory canon emerges if not in response to this social context, then certainly as its consequence. Literature is no longer adequate to the new university, so theory—cloaked, first, in the scientific pretensions of new criticism and structuralism or, later and more tenuously, couched in the technical language of post-structuralist, post-Marxist, post-colonial and gender theory—becomes its necessary supplement and technicist legitimation. Guillory's premise is that the canonical work—whether literary or theoretical—bears cultural value; the election of texts to the canon is the selection for the values they contain, which can be either internal or external to the art work (19-30)¹⁴². This is an insightful description of the canon form, but one divorced from its social conditions of possibility. The cultural values selected and reproduced by the canon, like the values of other commodities, are but reified social relations. And as Guillory affirms, these social relations exceed those that obtain between authors, works, and audiences (560). As Marx chose the factory as the emblematic site for the examination of the specifically capitalist mode of valorization, we must ask ourselves: Where can we best examine the production and reproduction of the cultural value discursively coded in the canon form?

Guillory is the first to admit that the canon form does not merely index the selection of cultural values in a given cultural field; the canon is also “a discursive instrument of ‘transmission’ situated historically within a specific institution of reproduction: the school“ (56). To speak then of a theory canon is to remit theory to its

¹⁴² We should note the distinction between cultural values (plural) and cultural value (singular). Guillory wants to transform the common belief that canons select for cultural values, in an ethical sense, by pointing out that these values also possess a more cultural value-in-general. In this, Guillory applies the topology of base-superstructure to the cultural field of the superstructure. Of course, both index social relations, but where cultural values express or represent one kind of social relations, cultural value obscures another.

imbrication in the reproduction of social relations and of the ideologies that ensure, submission to the organization of those relations (Althusser 89). The school is the primary institution for the expression and reproduction of processes of legitimation and consecration that accrete as cultural capital to the works that make up a canon. I would add, the canon is also the index of the reproducibility of a work's value, for the functioning of the educational institution has its own rules which affect the selection of position-takings based on the coincidence (or homology) of their form or content with those institutional rules that guarantee its reproduction. "No institution is . . . reducible to its social function" since "[i]nstitutions of reproduction succeed by taking as their first object not the reproduction of social relations, but the reproduction of the institution itself" (Guillory 57). (To clarify, Guillory distinguishes between those social relations of society at large which educational institutions are tasked with reproducing and the social relations internal to the institution itself). In this duality of the social structure is governed by the reproductive primacy of the smallest agent (See, Introduction). This means that "the institution which is the historical site of these evaluative acts —the school— subordinates values expressed in works to the social functions and institutional aims of the school itself" (269).

To the extent that *Las teorías salvajes* at once mimics the canon form and reflexively performs the act of canon formation, it acts like Guillory's school in its use of theory. Making the appropriate substitution we could say, then, that *Las teorías salvajes* "subordinates the values expressed in [theory] to the social functions and institutional aims of the [university fiction]." The analogy illuminates the novel's first principle: its reception, consecration, and perhaps one day canonization, in short, its own reproduction.

At the same time, by the logic of institutionalized anomie, its critique of the university and of theory reproduce the literary field. As a university fiction, *Las teorías salvajes* is a work of reproduction. In the last instance, *Las teorías salvajes* is interested in the reproduction of a literary field that includes Oloixarac and that not only reproduces her works but reproduces the author, whether as a literary persona or simply as a person. In order to do so, it works—albeit perversely—to reproduce the university that materially supports, increasingly alone, the restricted literary field.

CHAPTER SIX

“Formulae in the process of failing”: Diamela Eltit’s Non-Reproductive Desire

“Things are as they are”

As I did in Chapter Four with Piglia’s corpus, this chapter reads Chilean author Diamela Eltit’s canonized body of work through the lens of her most recent text, *Fuerzas especiales* (Special Forces) (2013). Like Eltit’s earliest writings, this text—with its fragmentary plot, multiplicity of narrative voices, repetitious syntax, and droning incantation of the make and model of firearms—frustrates the critic’s desire to render legible his objects. I claim that the autoreferentiality of Eltit’s body of work, like Piglia’s, helps educate her audience by providing it with a canon of common places by which to navigate her fragmentary narratives. This corpus is constantly referenced in *Fuerzas especiales* such that the tropes and concerns of her early work become commonplaces much as the novel’s narrator fuses with the *bloque* as she dissolves into the common type. At the same time, these self-references make *Fuerzas especiales* a kind of meta-novel through which Eltit anticipates her readership.

I have argued that for Piglia, auto-reference is, in part, a metafictional technique that represents his critical self-reading and allows him to prefigure the field of his works’ reception. His works, fictive and critical alike, at once subsume and subvert the procedures of the institution. By contrast, Eltit’s auto-reference signals the turning inward of her body of work that is also a turning away from the field. Recalling the terminology of my criticism of Thayer’s aporetic mode of critique, autoreferentiality for Piglia

operates through artistic reflection, Eltit's autoreferentiality operates through machine-like repetition. L. Iluminada's ritualistic performance is repeated in filmed shot after shot in *Lúmpérica* (1983). And like these technologically reproduced rituals, in *Mano de obra* (2002), the main character's job at a supermarket consists of repetitive gestures captured by the all-seeing eye of the store's closed-circuit surveillance cameras. In *Jamás el fuego nunca* (2007), repetition not only characterizes the protagonist's work schedule and the constant accounting of her and her partner's limited resources, but also the trauma of a past abortion. And even the testimonio *El padre mío* (1989) and the chronicle *Puño y letra* (2005) begin from the repetition of the protagonist's recorded voices.

Whereas Piglia dedifferentiates theory and fiction in order to reproduce the literary institution in his image, Eltit's work recalls the Romantic desire to dedifferentiate art and life and specifically its avant-garde variation to do so by dismantling the institutions that secure the frontier between them. Eltit's avant-garde gesture is the way in which her novels unwork themselves. This autoimmunity of the literary work implies the short-circuiting of the art institution, its non-reproduction.¹⁴³ We might call this Eltit's queering of the field of cultural production or the non-reproductive labor of her writing. Her texts would be, as the narrator of her 1991 novel *Vaca sagrada* says, "formulae in the process of failing," the inevitable if not purposeful failure of her texts as works of literature (105).

By insisting on the repetition endemic to literary reproduction, Eltit raises the specter of the contingency and meaninglessness of a depthless, paratactic writing that only *appears* as the luxuriant uselessness of autonomous literature. By confounding the

¹⁴³ Non-reproduction here is future oriented and does not discount the influence of certain authors on her work. In just one published conversation Eltit mentions Manuel Rojas, José Donoso, Carlos Droguett, María Luisa Bombal, Marta Brunett, Faulkner, and Joyce as literary forebears (Lazzarra 65 -74).

literary and critical institutions and staging his own insertion into the literary canon, Piglia *appears* to reproduce them only to wrest from them their agency and to render ineffective their norms.¹⁴⁴ Both seem to suggest that to suppose the continuation of the field of literary production in Latin America is to search for the means of its reproduction beyond its traditional boundaries. For this reason, Piglia and Eltit can be considered as much theorists of the literary as its practitioners.

Diamela Eltit's 2013 novel, *Fuerzas especiales*, describes life in the housing blocks of a marginalized and heavily policed urban neighborhood.¹⁴⁵ The young, woman narrator makes a meager living as a sex worker performing webcam shows at the local cybercafé and turning tricks among the police force besieging her neighborhood. A series of episodes punctuate her daily routine "from the housing block to the cybercafé" (*Fuerzas* 87): the imprisonment of her sister's two sons; the police beatings of her father, sister, friend and fellow sex-worker, Omar, and the owner of the cybercafé, Lucho; the coordinated police raid of the housing blocks, more terrifying for the silence of the cellphones caused by the jamming of the cell towers and the narrator's technological withdrawal symptoms than for the all-too-familiar battering rams. But these plot points are less important than the scenography against which they almost imperceptibly stand

¹⁴⁴ In a speech delivered on the occasion of the awarding the Premio José Donoso to Ricardo Piglia, Eltit makes a similar claim: "Ricardo Piglia is an author who plays intensely with the specificity of the literary field: he sets its rules, intensifies and bends them. He crosses genres, epochs, traditions and trends to produce a discursive assemblage, a narrative surface that exceeds itself in its web of connections and reflections" (*Signos* 207).

¹⁴⁵ In an interview, Eltit discloses that she was inspired by the Santiago *comuna*, La Legua de Emergencia, a *población* hastily constructed in the 1960s to alleviate the overpopulation in neighboring *comunas* caused by massive immigration to the capital city. Since the early 2000s, La Legua de Emergencia has become synonymous with delinquency and the target of a massive policing effort designed to root out the drug trade. La Legua has a history of ungovernability dating back to the dictatorship, when residents, overwhelmingly supporters of the Unidad Popular, refused to recognize Pinochet's legitimacy and defended their autonomy against the regime.

out: the marauding street dogs and police, with their paddy wagons and water tanks, their whips and nightsticks (*lumas*); the dildo (*lulo*) she uses in her work; Omar's lockjaw from performing too much fellatio; the 1000 pesos the narrator earns for each half-hour webcam show and the 300 pesos she pays to rent the cubicles where she performs; the fashion websites she visits; the same stairs and differing fences of block after block of overpopulated, dilapidated social housing.

As in each of the author's fictional and testimonial texts, Eltit's formal choices often supersede the text's referential and communicative functions to render it performative. At the same time, this "baring the device" functions as a critical, metatextual instance that draws the reader's attention to the scene of enunciation and the moment of reception. The formal vertebrae of *Fuerzas especiales* are the repetitions that bombard the reader at the level of the novel's syntax, structure, and themes.

The most salient repetition is the enumeration of armaments specified by make and model: "There were two thousand Webley-Green .455. There were three hundred Baretta Target 90" (*Fuerzas* 11); "There were 16 Karp titanium submarine" (*Fuerzas* 85). Although on nearly every page, they seem to lack any pattern to which one might ascribe meaning. Instead, they simply accumulate as in an armory or like any other warehoused consumer good. Although apparently meaningless for the plot, these proper names nonetheless affect it. For one, the enumerated armaments contribute to the atmosphere of a slow-burning fear (of state violence, of precarious labor) that bears down on the characters. More importantly, their repetition over the course of the novel desensitizes readers to the threat they index. If at first these eruptions on the surface of the text perturb the reader, repetition causes them to recede into the background until they are barely

perceptible elements of the novel's scenography or the novel-as-scenography.

Counterintuitively, the vehicle of defamiliarization is a repetition that re-automatizes the novel's reading. In this sense, *Fuerzas especiales* sketches the fate of similar modernist and avant-garde gestures: difference repeated is but sameness, and novelty repeated is rendered banal. Returning to a formalist-phenomenological reading, we might say that the repetition of the enumerated armaments and concomitant banalization of their threat affects either a kind of readerly shell shock that reflects the characters' state of generalized anxiety or an information overload akin to the protagonist's online behavior. In all instances, the result is anaesthetic.

At other points in the novel, Eltit employs anaphora to structure the sentences of whole chapters. Anaphora often marks reported speech¹⁴⁶—"He says...He says (*Fuerzas* 91-97, 120-121) or "She tells us...She tells us" (*Fuerzas* 74-75)—but it also indicates location—the narrator seated "on the edge of her seat. . . . on the edge. . . . on the seat" as she receives the news that her nephews have been arrested (*Fuerzas* 18-20). If the repeated enumeration of armaments functions like an acousmetre,¹⁴⁷ anaphora is its diegetic complement. It shows us the form-giving function of the novel's repetitions.

¹⁴⁶ For Francine Masiello, writing about *Los trabajadores de la muerte*, the anaphora of reported speech distances readers from the narrative, at once drawing attention to the orality of the prose and "reducing all compassion from the text" (211). I agree with Masiello that indirect discourse extinguishes any pathos the reader may harbor toward the marginalized subjects Eltit's novels represent. Although orality is an important aspect of her poetics—especially in *Por la patria*, *El padre mío*, and the second half of *Mano de obra*—the interior monologue that is the primary mode of discourse is always rendered in an esoteric language far removed from everyday speech.

¹⁴⁷ The one time that the enumeration of armaments enters the diegesis is also the one time the title occurs in the body of the text: "mi miedo es otro . . . es otro, otro, es como si la policía hubiera atravesado todas las fachadas y sus escudos transparentes se me hubieran metido adentro de la boca. Como si las fuerzas especiales de la policía corrieran directo hacia mí y me lanzaran de manera sincrónica mil bombas de gas lacrimógeno que me cegaran. Como si uno de los cuadros de choque, un policía inmenso, me disparara un balón de goma en el ojo. Pero ahora, en este preciso minuto, en el cubículo que me corresponde, me bajo los calzones como si fuera una hormiga infatigable. Me los bajo con miedo. Un miedo bastante imbécil. No sé a qué. Había cuarenta y cinco helicópteros polivalentes August Westland AW139" (*Fuerzas* 89-90). It is interesting to note that the armaments mentioned are used for crowd control, for dispersing (*disgregar*) the collections of people that form a unity/collectivity.

Unlike those repetitive eruptions from without, anaphora obsessively demarcates the scene of enunciation, locating it in time and space. In this, it resembles the frames that so often compose the narrator's field of vision: the frame of her computer screen filled with fashion advertisements and images of her body at work; the frame of her cellphone camera (*Fuerzas* 32); and, when her cellphone no longer works, the frame of her mind's eye (*Fuerzas* 145). As a formal device, anaphora gives the prose—blocks of text uninterrupted by indentations or punctuation save commas and periods—graphic and sonic rhythm.¹⁴⁸ Like the ticking second hands on a clock, anaphora marks the text's time by dividing it into discrete units whose relation is the sameness of their repeated form. Like the enumeration of collections of mechanically produced armament-commodities, or the binary encoded reproductions of the digital images that frame the narrator's vision, the text's anaphoric passages give a machinic quality to the reported speech of others, as if they were commodity fetishes speaking to one another in the latest performance of Marx's classic, capitalist stage play.

I would like to note that syntactical repetition in *Fuerzas especiales* is not the “vertiginous, circular, linguistic presence” of the homeless, schizophrenic¹⁴⁹ Eltit recorded and transcribed in the mid-eighties, who, one could argue, is the key to her poetics (*Padre* 13). Repetition does not “explode” language but domesticates it like the motions of the narrator's hips when she works or Omar's lips when he services a john, of

¹⁴⁸ Gwen Kirkpatrick sees the repetitious and fragmentary nature of Eltit's prose as imparting an oral even “visceral” (65) quality that “reflects lived time, not linear time” (69). While I agree with Kirkpatrick's assessment, the material and physical quality of Eltit's prosody—particularly in the later works—is that of a body disciplined and ordered by the repetitive regimes of work, the purportedly infinite, amnesiac temporality of capitalism more than some resistant phenomenological temporality, a “romantic anticapitalism” as Lukács would say (*Novel* 20).

¹⁴⁹ One might argue, however, that the narrator's experience of information overload indexed by Eltit's formal repetition is a kind of filter failure not unlike the breakdown of the ego in a Freudian account of schizophrenia.

their fingers clicking through screen after screen, of the nightsticks falling on the skulls and ribs of the housing blocks' residents. Domestication in a double sense, for repetition in *Fuerzas especiales* is a banal subjugation, a slow violence the text inflicts as much on the reader as on the characters' waged and policed bodies.

These formal repetitions at the level of syntax find their diegetic complement in the narrator's acts of calculation, whether counting or measurement. Whereas the numbers of guns, gas masks, and grenades express a *collection* of identical objects mechanically produced, the narrator's counting of objects and measuring of spaces and times establish relationships that transcend the discreteness of people and objects to form *collectivities* or *unidades*, a term that signifies at once units and unities. Their principle of composition is more similarity and pertinence than repetition and sameness. For example, measurement assures the narrator that she pertains to her family—"I know that we are a family because . . . I measure (*mido*) their breathing pacing my heartbeats" (*Fuerzas* 35)—and to her gender—"my father . . . is of a different type (*tipo*) from us" (*Fuerzas* 115), "my mother, my sister and I are of a such a common human type (*tipo*)" (*Fuerzas* 78). Similarly, she attributes her companionship if not friendship with Omar and Lucho to the numerical coincidence of their shared birthday: "Omar, Lucho and I are the same age: the same month, same day, same year," but, "What differentiates us is the block (*bloque*), and that distance gives us different perspectives. Three streets separate us. Together we make up three blocks." (*Fuerzas* 61). Each of these instances of calculation creates immaterial unities out of material phenomena. Each is an act of counting-as-one, but none is more important than the spatial One.

“The blocks are all the same (*iguales*). Four floors. Cement stairs. Apartments of the same size. Thirty meters. An invariable size (*La misma medida*). Only the anarchic diversity of the fences marks a difference. Or it humanizes us, as one of the neighbors pointed out” (*Fuerzas* 112). The housing block is not just another of Eltit’s oppressive, surveilled spaces, like the plaza in *Lumpérica*, the house in *Los vigilantes* (1994), the supermarket in *Mano de obra*, the bedroom in *Jamás el fuego nunca*, or the hospital in *Impuesto a la carne* (2010). The block is also the possible constitution of a collectivity, a space of a possible solidarity. Many of Eltit’s earlier novels conclude with the protagonists breaking out of these spatial confines to wander the streets, nomadic, “*errante, errática* (errant, erratic),” as one of Eltit’s most celebrated essays has it. In *Fuerzas especiales*, the block is not escaped but mobilized, transcended, volatilized.

Eltit’s figural use of the term mobilizes it. After all, the metaphor—master term among rhetorical figures—is but a temporary, conceptual displacement, a brief transgression of definition and common usage. The *bloque* is not only a collection of apartments but the human collectivity that dwells there. As an example of prosopopeia, the *bloques* breathe, cry, dance, and, of course, calculate (*Fuerzas* 42). As it becomes apparent that the computers of the cybercafé are falling into disrepair, Lucho is forced to lower his rates, because, “The blocks tirelessly measure (*miden*) the minutes and they weigh the exact price for which time is transacted (*ponen en una balanza el precio exacto en que se transa el tiempo*). The blocks know well the dimensions of the cubicles, the thickness (*espesor*) inside them” (*Fuerzas* 63). *Bloque* is also the novel’s central and perhaps only metaphor, properly speaking. The narrator refers to the unit “Omar, Lucho and I” as an “block union (*unión bloque*)” and she describes how “my sister, my mother,

and I . . . we became proportionally fatter” to the point that “we became indistinguishable . . . a block-being (*un ser bloque*),” which is, according to the narrator, an anonymous, feminine collectivity that protects them from the worst of police abuses (*Fuerzas* 56). As the novel progresses, *bloque* comes to qualify everything in the narrator’s experience: not only “block-fusion (*la fusión bloque*)” (*Fuerzas* 49), “block-body (*el cuerpo bloque*)” (163), or “block-mob (*turba bloque*)” (94), but also “block-inhabitants (*habitantes bloques*)” (95), “block mutts (*quiltros bloques*)” (94), “block hours (*horas bloque*)” (66), “block days (*días bloques*)” (139), “block-years (*años bloque*)” (160), and “block-fear (*miedo bloque*) . . . that could one day get up, swell up, inflate and explode like a gas pipe, because the pressure from the fear would reach unmanageable levels and explosion would be the only form of consummation” (89).

In the novel’s climactic scene, the narrator’s subject is dissolved and transcended in an ecstatic reverie that culminates in the constitution of the I-block. “I am multitudinous, I am everywhere, I project outward like a God and I amplify myself. . . . But I am not I, we are the I-block (*yo bloque*) that dwells genetically in each of us” (*Fuerzas* 78). Again, the sublation of self into or as the collectivity *yo bloque* is, in the last instance, the effect of repetition. Her ecstasy seems to be triggered by the realization that not only are she, her sister, and her mother of a common type, indistinguishable and anonymous, but that “my common type (*tipo común*) is, in fact, exceptional” (*Fuerzas* 78). This paradoxical formulation inverts the connotation of the phrase “common type”—made more banal in Spanish thanks to the homonymy of “type (*tipo*)” and “guy (*tipo*)” so that *tipo común* also means “average joe” or “common man”—by pointing toward the epistemological if not ontological significance of the designations “type” and “common.”

Of course, a type is a collectivity that results from the inductive synthesis of a collection of analyzed traits. In other words, a type names the sameness of a repeated similarity. In this context, it also names a point of possible solidarity. Eltit makes this clear when she tasks the narrator's multitudinous subjectivity with "the mission to represent humanity's most common part (*la parte más común*), the block's most repeated zone" (*Fuerzas* 79). Perhaps for this reason the narrator remains anonymous, like many in Eltit's novels: Without a proper name she can function as a token, a variable, a concrete universal.¹⁵⁰

The religious references and allusions in the narrator's fleeting moment of ecstasy are reinforced by the dialectical relationship between transcendence and annihilation common to the mystical and ascetic traditions on which the passage clearly draws. "I feel more inclined to accept the ruin of the world. . . . I will surrender unto nothingness" (*Fuerzas* 79) and later on, "I am totally block and I will end up fused to the cement or converted into a cheap brick" (*Fuerzas* 149). This metaphysical transcendence finds its physical counterpart in the material disaggregation symbolized by digital technologies.¹⁵¹ Not only does the narrator surrender unto nothingness by fusing her subjectivity with the *bloque*, but, in order to work, "I have to forget myself in order to surrender body and soul unto the transparency that irradiates from the screen" (*Fuerzas* 39). In the final chapter,

¹⁵⁰ The notion of the concrete universal is central to Colectivo Situaciones's account of the emergence of new political protagonists in a given situation. By concrete universals they mean "consistent space-times" that traverse the whole and part, a totality that Leibniz would call a monad or Agamben might call a 'whatever singularity' (*Hipótesis* 30). "The situation consists in the practical affirmation that the whole does not exist separate from the part, but rather *in* the part" which they call a concrete universal (*19 y 20* 26, 30). Although the concrete universal or singular situation is latent within any abstract universality or fragmented particularity, it only recognizes itself and its ability to act ethically "through a subjective operation of interiorization by which it is possible for us to encounter the world as one concrete element of the situation... thinking the world as exterior to the situation condemns us to an abstract perception and impotent practice." (*19 y 20* 187, 26, 30). In other words, there is no reconfiguring the situation, no ethical operation without a 'new' subject.

¹⁵¹ The digital and the metaphysical transcendence of the individual subject conjoin in the contemporary repurposing by online collectives like Anonymous of the response the possessed man of Gerasenes gives when Jesus asks his name: "My name is Legion . . . for we are many" (Mark 5:9).

she states simply, “now we digitalize ourselves,” referring to her appearance, alongside Omar and Lucho, in the first Chilean video game, which they designed, called “Pakos Kuliaos (Fucked Kops).”

If the novel’s repetitions create a kind of mathematical sublime, it is only to show how advanced capitalist modernity has rendered it banal and deadening. What we might term the capitalist sublime is an anaesthetic category that the novel not only represents in its thematization of repetition but also performs in its formal ones. We see the anaesthetic effects in the novel’s conclusion when the narrator is unable to find among the fashion websites she frequents one that would seduce her to “surrender to contemplation,” an aesthetic contemplation, for fashion is the only artistic practice the novel represents (*Fuerzas* 163). She continues: “I don’t know how to define what I see” (163). Vision no longer corresponds to categories of knowledge, including aesthetic ones. Fashion, she tells us, does not advance but eternally returns. In contrast to this aesthetic practice, “the computers’ deeper sites give signs of a future,” most likely a reference to the power of the internet’s utility for political mobilization that made its debut just before the publication of *Fuerzas especiales* by facilitating the Arab Spring, the Movement of the Squares, and, of course, the Chilean student protest movement. But the narrator does not dare “indicate them with my intransigent index finger. Silence is worth more to me. A part of me has already been objectified (*cosificado*)” (*Fuerzas* 163). The index finger, whose movement was in *Vaca sagrada* the instigator of the sex worker Francisca’s sexual pleasure (96), is now the inert operator of the machine that makes possible her self-alienation in the form of the reproductive, communicative labor she performs through her sexual self-objectification.

There is no digital, no metaphysical transcendence that is not imaginary. There are only points of solidarity encoded in impermanent metaphorical translations and tropic transgressions that allow for the constitution of collectivities, if they are repeated often enough to semantically institute the whatness of what is,¹⁵² to tender a new name (*nomos*). “Nothing is impossible. . . . the world is not as they describe it” (*Fuerzas* 88) and “things are as they are” (*Fuerzas* 47; *Jamás* 120). Metaphor unites these seemingly contradictory statements, one discursive—describing *as*— the other ontological—being *as*—just as repetition becomes sameness, and similarity becomes equivalence by virtue of a third point of reference.

Repetition not only structures this particular novel, it structures Eltit’s corpus. And this corpus is constantly referenced in *Fuerzas especiales* such that the tropes and concerns of her early work become common places similar to how the narrator fuses with the *bloque* as she dissolves into the common type. These self-references make *Fuerzas especiales* a kind of metanovel through which Eltit anticipates her critical readership. But unlike Piglia’s prefiguration of the horizon of his works’ reception, the self-referentiality of Eltit’s corpus insists on the banality of writing, as if to say “things are as they are” and “the world is not how they describe it,” in this way destituting hierarchies and making it possible to claim that “nothing is impossible.”

¹⁵² For French sociologist Luc Boltanski, an institution is a “bodiless being” whose role is above all to establish the silent, semantic commons of communication, beyond the contract of sender and receiver (75). The properly semantic function of institutions rests on the illocutionary force of “denominating the whatness of what is” (75), which is not to be confused with the material, coercive force of the policing functions of ‘administrations’ and the coordinating functions of ‘organizations’ (79).

Critics of Eltit's work consistently emphasize the purported illegibility of her texts, often casting this quality as a form of resistance to their social contexts—first neoliberal dictatorship and then neoliberal democracy. Such readings, especially of Eltit's early works—*Lumpérica* (1983), *Por la patria* (1984), *El padre mío* (1986), *Vaca sagrada* (1991), *Los vigilantes* (1994) and *El cuarto mundo* (1996)—often mobilize allegory in order to do so. The allegorical reading places the critic in the rather comfortable position of mediating a referential relationship between these difficult, fragmentary texts and their context, restoring them legibility by making Eltit's texts “speak otherwise” (*allos-agoreuein*). It also allows readers of this criticism to read *through* the texts to their context, as if this were the only way to ensure their communicability.¹⁵³ I contend that Eltit's corpus need not be made to speak otherwise, for her work insists on the unrepresentability of things: “The world is not as they describe it” and “things are as they are.” In contrast to the reflexive autoreferentiality that creates the illusion of literary autonomy and critical distance in Piglia's work, the repetitious autoreferentiality of Eltit's body of work creates the illusion of banal objecthood.

¹⁵³ As Kate Jenckes points out, the success of Eltit's highly experimental texts among North American Latin Americanists in the eighties and nineties is surprising. At that time *testimonio* heralded the end of the literature (Beverley) thought of as the ideological errand boy of state and market according to some practitioners of Latin American cultural and subaltern studies. Within this field of reception, Jenckes suggests that the success of Eltit's works “may have less to do with the nature of the texts themselves than with the condition under which they were produced—a woman writing under the Pinochet regime” (73). By contrast, Julio Ortega claims that Eltit's texts “synchronized” with the critical trends in North American universities in the eighties and nineties (52). Both Ortega and Jenckes agree, however, on the importance of US universities in Eltit's reception.

Eltit's novels, even at their most fragmentary and polysemic, are not strictly speaking illegible or non-communicative. For all their opacity, these texts render themselves meaningful through the structuration of their internal repetitions, the tropes that in turning and returning constitute a differential sign system that is meaningful even if undeciphered or, as Eltit often puts it, hieroglyphic. In short, there is a text, whatever or however it means.

The later works—*Los trabajadores de la muerte* (The Workers of Death) (1998), *Mano de obra* (Workforce or Manual Labor) (2002), *Jamás el fuego nunca* (The Fire Never Again) (2007), *Impuesto a la carne* (Imposed on the Flesh or Flesh Tax) (2010), *Fuerzas especiales* (2015)—have not occasioned the same overtly allegorical readings among critics. (With the exception of *Mano de obra* they have occasioned few readings at all, likely a function of critical exhaustion with an author whose work has been fully canonized.) I believe there are several reasons for this shift in the criticism, reasons that stem more from the evolution of Eltit's corpus than the history of literary criticism.¹⁵⁴ First, such heavy, critical machinery has been obviated as her writing has become less fragmentary and more narrative, more conventional, more “legible.” Second, beginning in 2001, Eltit has taken an active role in shaping her readership through the publication of several anthologies of essays—*Emergencias* (Emergences or Emergencies) (2001), *Signos vitales* (Vital Signs) (2008) and *Réplicas* (Replicas or Replies) (2016)—that have made her criticism readily available. The presence of the author as critic fills the lacunae on which allegory rests at the same time that it encroaches on the mediating role that gave

¹⁵⁴ Alesandro Fornazzari identifies a similar shift beginning with *Mano de obra* (2002) away from a Benjaminian “refractory poetics” “that invests in the fragment the quality of resistance to any incorporating machine . . . to a more literary engagement” (56). This is also a movement away from the melancholic fidelity to the singularity of loss that dominated the cultural life of post-dictatorship Chile.(55).

critics the license to wield allegory in the first place. Third, there is little need to read *through* her texts because they can be read *against* one another. Just as illegibility makes the non-allegorical reader attentive to the internal repetitions that structure each text's hieroglyphic sign-system, Eltit's corpus of texts generates a system meaningful on its own terms. And finally, readers of this corpus simply become habituated to it, a familiarity often annexed to the figure of the author in what we call his or her style. Readers are no longer are no longer shocked into conscious of their collaboration with the novels.

These last two reasons are effects of a series of repetitions, or rather repeated series that give structure to a structure, systematicity to a system. At the same time that the repetitions at once anaesthetize us to the alienation and self-consciousness aroused by the difficulties of her prose, the repetition of Eltit's corpus teaches its readers how to read it. Where an early novel like *Lumpérica* could be said to enjoin readers to participate in the difficult negotiation of signification by inviting them to "Imagine with me," later novels like *Fuerzas especiales* seem to command in the disciplinary tone of a schoolteacher, "Repeat after me."

In *Fuerzas especiales*, as in each of her novels, Eltit rehearses the techniques and themes of her earlier texts.¹⁵⁵ The online sex shows that the protagonist repeatedly performs in front of the webcam recall L. Iluminada's filmed performance in *Lumpérica* (1983). The at times distrustful friendship among the sex workers at the cyber café recalls

¹⁵⁵ Masiello makes a similar claim about the repetitive construction of Eltit's corpus, calling it a "hall of mirrors that . . . creates a heightened awareness of the conditions of production and materials available to those who pursue the art of narration. Instead of inserting itself in the interstitial openings between dominant discourses, the novel [*Los trabajadores de la muerte*] works from the totality of Eltit's previous body of literature and from the body of the author herself. The 'in-between' and the 'simulacrum'—as staples of the postmodern project—here surrender to a totalizing vision that sustains the integrity of female agency in the production of culture" (217).

the ersatz family of supermarket employees in *Mano de obra* (2002). And the cubicles where they work, like the housing blocks where they live, recall the oppressive, enclosed, and surveilled spaces of the apartments in *Jamás el fuego nunca* (2007), *Los vigilantes* (*Custody of the Eyes*) (1994) and *El cuarto mundo* (*The Fourth World*) (1996), the plaza in *Lumpérica*, the supermarket in *Mano de obra*, the Putaendo insane asylum in *El infarto del alma* (1994), and the hospital in *Impuesto a la carne* (2010). Below I will analyze three of these commonplaces in her other novels under headings that derive from my reading of *Fuerzas especiales*: the scene (*Lumpérica*), the count (*Jamás el fuego nunca*), and the sublime (*Mano de obra*). Ultimately I will show that repetition is central to the dialectics of the aesthetic and the anaesthetic that shapes the relationship of modern art and capitalist society.

Commonplaces (1): The Scene

In my analysis of *Fuerzas especiales* I spoke about how the narrative recedes into the scenography or the novel-as-scenography. The scenographic is one of the most persistent tropes in Eltit's body of work. Not only do her narrators constantly refer to narrative episodes as "scenes," the scenographic encompasses a host of represented practices from artistic, especially filmic performances (*Lumpérica*), tribunals (*Puño y letra*), rituals both mythical (*Vaca sagrada*, *El cuarto mundo*) and everyday (*Mano de obra*, *Impuesto a la carne*), and infantile games (*Los vigilantes*, *El cuarto mundo*). No doubt as a consequence of her work with Fernando Balcells, Lotty Rosenfeld, and Raúl Zurita as a member of Colectivo Acciones de Arte (CADA), Eltit's novels are deeply invested in the performative. Indeed, early novels like *Lumpérica* and *Por la patria* make

language a terrain of action, pushing it to the limits of referentiality and communicability. Over the years, the performative register wanes even as representations of performances continue to abound. The scenographic also encompasses Eltit's obsessive focus on particular spaces in each of her novels, as I have already noted: the *bloque* in *Fuerzas especiales*, the hospital in *Impuesto a la carne* and *Infarto al alma*, the bedroom and the polysemic cell in *Jamás el fuego nunca*, the supermarket in *Mano de obra*, the familial house and city in *Los vigilantes*, *El cuarto mundo*, and *Vaca sagrada*, the *eriazó* in *El Padre mío*, and the plaza in *Lumpérica*. This last, Eltit's first novel, provides both the clearest and most developed example of the scene series or commonplace that structures Eltit's body of work, for it combines its scenographic and performative aspects. All of this emphasis on scenography and performance, in short, on the theatrical, give credence to the characterization of Eltit's work as neobaroque. In this tradition, closely allied with postmodern culture generally, Eltit's novels embrace artifice in order to break with the naturalization of social constructs and to account for the increasingly porous boundaries between the concrete and the image in contemporary, everyday experience.

In a 1998 interview with Leonidas Morales, Eltit confesses that she could not write *Lumpérica* until she was suddenly able to "make the entire plaza circulate . . . really make a metaphor of the plaza" (145). *Lumpérica's* plaza *is as* proscenium, the plaza *is as* excess, it *is as* a page, and it *is as* writing.¹⁵⁶ By metaphorizing it, Eltit dematerializes her primary spatial referent making it the conduit for the passage from the mimetic to the performative register of her language, much like how the metaphorization of the *bloque* in *Fuerzas especiales* midwives the transformation of the representation of a collection of objects and events into the constitution of a principle of collectivity.

¹⁵⁶ For my usage of this formulation, see note 52.

In the novel's first section, the plaza is primarily the "backdrop (*telón de fondo*)" to the description of three filmed scenes or rather rehearsals since each is followed by critical remarks, notes, and a list of errors. The first scene describes a kind of edenic act of nomination or a sacrament of baptism in which a neon advertisement perched on a building above the plaza interpellates "the pale-faced ones" by inscribing on their flesh proper "literary names...which will...transform them into ornamental merchandise" (*Lumpérica* 33). The plaza is not only the site where they become artistic commodities, but also "that very center...[where] they [the paled-faced] begin their particular representation. . . . With guttural sounds they fill the space in a virgin alphabetization that alters the norms of experience. And in this way, from the conquered into conquerors they are transformed" (*Lumpérica* 21). The plaza is at once a stage and surveilled space of subjectification

In the second scene, "*La producción del grito*" ("The Production of the Cry"), L. Iluminada's theater of cruelty begins in earnest: she hits her head on a tree, exposing the wound to the neon light so that her audience may see, and cries out, not in pain, the text tells us, but as a justification or pretext for her self-injury. L. Iluminada's scream "deconstructs the phrase ["I am thirsty]. . . . Twisting its phonetics. Alternating its modulation to become a foreign language. She disorganizes language" (*Lumpérica* 45-46). And it is the inadequacy of the medium of graphic language to its referent that makes it visible as a terrain of action, the scenography to Eltit's novelistic performance. In other words, this antimimetic language described in L. Iluminada's filmed performance becomes performative. By the sixth section, "Ensayo general" ("Dress Rehearsal" or

“General Essay”), L. Iluminada’s disorganized language and the pale-faced ones’ virgin alphabetization are no longer merely described. They take hold of the text itself.

E.G.1

Mug/r/apa y su mano se nutre final-mente el verde des-
ata y maya se errige y vac/a-nal su forma.

E.G.2

Anal’iza la trama=dura de la piel:la mano prende y la fobia *d* es/garra.

E.G.3

Muge/r’onda corp-oral Brahma su ma la mano que la denuncia & brama.
(*Lumpérica* 170-73).

But again, as the shock effect of the extradiegetic repetitions in *Furezas especiales* becomes the vehicle for the reader’s anaesthetization and the reautomatization of her reading, this breaching of the commonplaces of communicative language in *Lumpérica* becomes a commonplace in Eltit’s work such that unintelligibility is rendered significant by the differential structure of her corpus.

In the first section’s third scene, the protagonist burns herself on a bonfire built from trash collected from corners of the plaza in order to produce “a new circuit in literature” (*Lumpérica* 44). L. Iluminada’s and Eltit’s new circuit is also the short-circuiting of referential, communicative language by means of an embodied, performative mode of signification. The guttural babble and cry of the abject subaltern would open literature by making “every word . . . identical to the corporeal flash” (*Lumpérica* 49), the gesture, the pose, and the form of the body. *Lumpérica*’s new circuit would transform literature and language by asking both to somehow account for the unrepresentable, whether marginalized subjectivities, the materiality of their bodies, or their illicit, incomprehensible, and ecstatic speech. In order to do so, *Lumpérica* seems to suggest, literature would have to abandon any mimetic pretense. Whether political or discursive, representation functions through the enforced play of difference and coincidence (see,

Chapter One). By inhabiting the gap between signifier and signified, discourse and the real, means and ends, *Lumpérica* indistinguishes these categories.

In the second section, the plaza is no longer the setting, stage, or backdrop of the action, but the topic of a dialogue between two men identified only by their roles, that of interrogator and interrogated. The interrogator, who has seen the film of the performance asks, “What is the utility of the public plaza?” to which the interrogated replies that it is a site of recreation populated by children, lovers, the elderly, beggars, and the insane (*Lumpérica* 55).¹⁵⁷ In other words, the public plaza is the place where society’s unproductive elements gather like the “residue” scattered on its surface that is collected to feed the bonfire in the first section. It is also a space of transit. The interrogated attributes his inability to recall much about the plaza to the fact that “his stopping (*permanencia*) in the plaza had always been a break (*intermedio*) between one thing and another and as such, that place never drew his attention” (*Lumpérica* 57). This point is corroborated in *Lumpérica*’s final section when dawn breaks and the nocturnal cast of pale-faced lumpen is abruptly replaced by workers and students on their way to unknown destinations. What is more, the beggars and the insane not only inhabit this non-place, but they call it into being. As the interrogated tells us, “wherever they are an emptiness is produced” (*Lumpérica* 56). The plaza as non-place reflects its status as a metaphor: a perennially unstable discursive object whose constant movement is in excess of the mimetic economy of communicative language. When metaphorized, the represented non-place as space of circulation or of excess becomes as errant as those who pass through it.

¹⁵⁷ More so than the children, lovers, and elderly, the beggars and the insane are prosopopeia of excess. In 1986 Eltit published a transcription of recorded interviews with a homeless schizophrenic living on the outskirts (*eriazos*) of Santiago, and in 1994 she collaborated with the photographer Paz Errázuriz on a project documenting the amorous relationships among inhabitants of an insane asylum.

As anyone who has passed through an airport or train station can attest, the non-places of our fragmented public domain are also spaces of consumption just like the plaza whose inhabitants are continually surveilled and interpellated by the neon advertisement's seeming injunction, "I buy therefore I am (*Compro, luego existo*)" (*Emergencias* 27). But in spite of the advertisement, the plaza signifies a particular type of unproductive consumption, a doubly sumptuary consumption of capital's excess by its human excess. As we already saw, the assigning of literary names makes the pale-faced ones into ornamental merchandise. Similarly, the plaza is repeatedly characterized as "the city's decoration" (*Lumpérica* 97). And L. Ilumanada's performance resembles art actions undertaken by Eltit in the seventies and eighties as a member of CADA. All this suggests that the consumption that takes place in the plaza is the consumption of aesthetic experience, that consumption for which political economy cannot fully account. Perhaps for this reason, the reader never discovers *what* the neon light advertises so that even this sign is denied the purpose of its signification for the circulation of commodities. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx already recognized the affinity between the nomadic beggar and mendicant scholar (Marx uses the term "literati") as equally abject members of that "whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither . . . that the French call *la bohème*" (64). Whether beggar, tinker, artist, or scholar, their common uselessness defines them as that pseudo-class, the Lumpenproletariat. Against the characterization of *Lumpérica* as the narration of "prosopopeic communion" (Avelar 177) or "ritual of citizenship" (Garcia-Moreno 123)—both of which imply a politics of representation—and more than their designation as Lumpenproletariat by the city and capital—a definition by exclusion—I would suggest that it may be their choice to

temporarily dwell in the non-place of the metaphorical plaza that allows L. Iluminada and the pale-faced ones to co-belong.

By the fifth section, *Lumpérica* has renounced its filmic structural principle for that of “a transitory narrative that takes as its model a beggar woman (*una desharrapada*)” (*Lumpérica* 122). L. Iluminada writes in chalk on the plaza’s cement surface the question “¿*Quo Vadis?* (Where are you going?).” In addition to being the merely decorative and therefore useless non-place of unproductive consumption, the plaza becomes the page on which narrative becomes lumpen. Lumpen literature, like L. Iluminada’s question is a sort of failed counter- or anti-interpellation to that of the neon sign, a question without response, because the inhabitants of the non-place cannot answer for they are going nowhere.¹⁵⁸ Lumpen literature, like that unanswerable question whose chalky letters are erased by the hither and thither of the disintegrated mass, is a work that unworks itself. But this ability to unwork itself confirms its status as literature; only by virtue of the relative autonomy guaranteed it as a work of art can lumpen literature indict the social system that gives rise to artistic autonomy.¹⁵⁹

It would appear then that *Lumpérica* anticipates what Josefina Ludmer has recently identified as postautonomous literature. Postautonomous literatures are situated, embodied, and historically contingent practices of the everyday; they recognize the fusion of the cultural and the economic, while at the same time they disregard any distinction between the fictive and the real (151). Although postautonomous works “appear as

¹⁵⁸ Kate Jenckes makes a similar claim: “the question, written in chalk on the plaza’s floor, does not serve as the same kind of writing into existence as the signboard. It does not constitute a prosopoeic communion, with L. Iluminada functioning as an interrogator who asks the plaza’s passing community where it is going and thereby calls it into being as community, naming the individuals (tú) as a single body (tú)” (73).

¹⁵⁹ That art’s relative autonomy in relation to society should guarantee its critical potential is central to Adorno’s negative aesthetics, discussed below. See in particular, the essays “On Lyric Poetry and Society” and “Commitment.”

literature . . . they cannot be read with literary criteria or categories . . . because they apply to literature a drastic operation of emptying: in terms of meaning (or author, or writing) it remains without density, without paradox, without undecidability, and is completely occupied with ambivalence” (Ludmer 150). Could it be that *Lumpérica*’s lumpen literature becomes postautonomous by recurring to classical aesthetics’ purposiveness without purpose (“ambivalence” in Ludmer’s terms) that carved out literary autonomy in the first place? If so, *Lumpérica*’s postautonomous, lumpen literature would be “formulae in the process of failing” (*Vaca* 105) a literature of pure means like a study-without-end.

Commonplaces (2): The Count

In *Fuerzas especiales* I exhibited the importance of the act of calculation as both counting and measuring, and I highlighted the difference between the repeated, extradiegetic enumeration of firearms and the narrator’s modes of calculation, measuring, and framing as ones that establish relationships that transcend the discreteness of things and transform collections into collectivities or *unidades*. As in *Fuerzas especiales*, the specific form of repetition expressed in counting and calculation plays an important role in Eltit’s understudied late novel, *Jamás el fuego nunca*.

This surreal text relates the daily life and traumatic history of a pair of lovers who are also the last members of an underground cell of a militant, leftist organization. The female narrator, like so many in Eltit’s novels, is primarily employed in reproductive labor, in this case, care work performed both inside the home, as the primary caretaker of

her bed-ridden partner and comrade, and outside the home, as an elder care provider. The extreme isolation of their clandestine existence and marginalization from the economy at large requires that the narrator closely manage their limited home economy. In order to maintain the fragile equilibrium of their harmonious, clandestine existence, the narrator orders “with parsimony and lucidity the numbers that sustain us. A column of numbers that compile the strict diet we are subject to, a routine (*rutinaria*) and effective nutrition that goes directly to meeting the demands of each of the organs that rule us” (*Jamás* 17). The narrative present is repeatedly marked by what she calls “the numbers habit (*la costumbre de los numeros*)” (*Jamás* 78) for which her partner and comrade shows little interest and even outright disdain (*Jamás* 81, 110). For he is submerged in his own calculations, not of the consumption of their home economy but of the variables of the processes of industrial production (*Jamás* 81).

Eltit opposes his “industrial knowledge (*conocimiento fabril*)” (*Jamás* 81) the “rigidity of the columns, the order of the numbers” (*Jamás* 115) that occupy her evenings. Eltit deepens this gendered division of labor between the lovers in the cell by at once suggesting not only that the Marxist obsession with the processes of capitalist production and productive labor conceals the spheres of consumption and reproductive labor but also by indicting the machista tendencies of revolutionary politics. We see both in the supercilious quizzes about Marxist doctrine to which he subjects her; his interrogation of the ideological motivations behind her desire to purchase a red dress she spots in a shop window on her bus ride to work; in the hierarchy of roles in their investigations of the present conjuncture and study of Marxist doctrine in which she is primarily “a studious copyist,” as persecuted by the fear of “one miswritten syllable or

one spelling error” that risks “revisionism (*desviacionismo*)” (*Jamás* 57) as she is by the rigid tally of their paltry expenses (85). Ironically, their strict adherence to doctrine and conspiratorial political practices put them at odds with the thrust of historical materialism they so fetishize. As Engels said, historical materialism, as the means of revolutionizing the capitalist mode of production, does not proceed from principles but from stubborn facts (306).

The isolation of each iteration of their cell makes it “imperative to control time and space . . . to keep a detailed account of every movement” of their bodies in the confines of the apartment or the bed, of their home economy, of the city that she traverses by counting the bus stops as a kind of coping mechanism (*Jamás* 79, 150). At the same time, this isolation “exposed us to a space too empty, where references ended up disappearing” (*Jamás* 82) such that the street—metonym for the world beyond their windowless room—“is for us a hieroglyphic” (*Jamás* 62) and their abstract analyses lose sight of the shifting historical conjuncture to which they supposedly refer.

Eltit literalizes the oversight of abstraction—oversight in the double sense of misperception and surveillance—in a poignant scene that treats the couple’s obsession with eyesight. The same logic by which Eltit embodies the rigors of militancy and the asphyxia of life underground in the impenetrable rigidity of their bones and slowly atrophying muscles enables the narrator to analyze the difference between the biological process of eyesight and the intellection of vision. “The eye sees nothing, I tell you, no, nothing, its the brain, I tell you, its about an order” (*Jamás* 55). As if to find material proof for this vision, she palpates her partner’s eye.

But it’s useless. I do not manage to understand, the nature of your eye or of mine and I just presume the gaze . . . a cerebral gaze, your or ours, a

gaze nervous at its source although wholly dominated by a brain that we are accustomed to administrating. A gaze, so we decided, expedient, external. A gaze attentive to and founded in history. (*Jamás* 56)

For all its scientific pretensions over and against idealist philosophy, historical materialism is not scientific in the empirical sense. It is not grounded on the sensation of eyesight but on the vision of intellection (in the ancient Greek sense of *theoría*: to contemplate, behold) capable of imposing order from the outside (“a gaze . . . external”), capable of the metaphysical consubstantiation that renders history from time, facts from events, collectivities from collections. If *Jamás el fuego nunca* can be said to have a narrative, it consists primarily in the progressive widening of this immeasurable gap between the real and the known, the increasing incommensurability that neither *blind* faith can overleap nor calculating reason *oversee*.

We see this gap in the marked contrast between the novel’s varied acts of calculation and its multiple, superimposed temporalities. The narrator repeatedly expresses temporal confusion: “More than a century ago, I tell you, a thousand years at least” (*Jamás* 22); “In some sense more that five decades have already gone by (no, no, no, a thousand years)” (*Jamás* 63); “Incredibly, almost inexpressibly, I suffered this annulment of time. One day in another century, in other centuries, a time in which I walked and walked but could not advance. . . . A inexpressible confusion of time ends up invading me” (*Jamás* 33). As the novel progresses, even the daily accounting that had marked the narrative present disappears. This commingling of temporalities culminates in the final scene in which the narrator’s lover and another comrade apparently murder her during childbirth. Death not only casts her and her narrative into a spectral or rather ethereal state—it is suggested that she dies of an ether overdose or of a cranial fracture—

at once dead and alive, past and present. It also disavows the historical determinism that guides the militants with the novel's concluding ahistorical phantasmagoria.

The bed and the ether. The blood and the ether, my legs and the ether. I do not know. I cannot be sure of anything. The boy was stillborn or he died at two years. Or he was not born. Or he was not born. Who could tell: now we have all the time in the world . . . we had it just after time ran out for us. It is confusing and dreadful. It is inexplicable. It is not material much less dialectical; it is a damned hieroglyph. (*Jamás* 162-63)

From the perspective of this undead utopia, the symbolic hinge between the real and the known comes undone. The veil of historical time pulls back to reveal a time-in-itself, but one only apparent from the utopic vantage point of an anaesthetic subject, whether transcendent or merely dead.

Commonplaces (3): The Sublime

In the only book-length study of her corpus, Sergio Rojas argues that each of Eltit's novels is engaged in a process of becoming toward (*hacerse a*) the event of the Real that exceeds every process of subjectification (239). For Eltit to write as if it were possible to witness the catastrophe of the subject affected by the real, she constructs a significant body—the *mise-en-scène* of a bodily, not-yet subject—that “makes possible the aesthetic experience of the impossibility of comprehending the world” (Rojas 241), what I have called in the words of *Vaca sagrada* “formulae in the process of failing” (105). This aesthetic experience of the failure of comprehension is what philosophical aesthetics calls the sublime. Although Rojas does not dwell on this historical antecedent to his argument, even his definition of the Real comes less from Lacan than from Žižek's concatenation of Hegel, Kant, Lacan, and Marx in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. In the Kantian aesthetics Žižek cites, and to which Rojas is in turn indebted, the sublime is

precisely that category of aesthetic experience of the failure of representation (*Vorstellung*) to present (*darstellen*) the Thing-in-itself (*Ding-an-sich*), a failure that nonetheless pleases us with the pre-sentiment of the immeasurable greatness of a suprasensorial idea (Žižek 229, Kant 136) insofar as its materiality remains at a “safe” distance that reaffirms the superiority of man over nature (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 197). While I find Rojas’s systematic argument convincing, I will prefer to speak of Eltit’s aesthetics of the sublime for two reasons of historical coincidence: first, it places her work in a longer trajectory that coincides with the history of modern literature understood as writing annexed to the literary-critical institution, my primary interest throughout Part Two; and, second, Eltit’s career coincides with a revival of aesthetics, in general, and the category of the sublime, in particular, in the works of thinkers like Adorno, Lyotard, Nancy, Welsch, and others.

The climactic scene of *Fuerzas especiales* analyzed above is but one iteration of Eltit’s pervasive aesthetics of the sublime, whose clearest antecedent is her 2002 novel *Mano de obra*. In its two parts, *Mano de obra* straddles the supermarket where the narrator, Isabel, works and the house she shares with her coworkers. We have seen how in Eltit’s corpus both commercial and domestic spaces are characterized by calculation: in *Fuerzas especiales*, the daily “ritual of the coins” (80) with the *fricas* street vendor or the narrator’s decision that everything in the cybercafé “is worth one thousand pesos, my pain, the dildo was worth a thousand, Lucho a thousand, Omar a thousand, and I was worth a thousand” (*Fuerzas* 103), and in *Jamás el fuego nunca* the detailed accounting of the cell’s household expenses. In *Mano de obra*, however, repetition exceeds calculation taking on an aesthetic and ultimately metaphysical quality, much like the conclusion to

Jamás el fuego nunca. And like the repetition of the *bloques* in *Fuerzas especiales*, the supermarket where the first half of *Mano de obra* takes place is characterized by “a precariously sublime order” (27). The repetition—“succession” and “uniformity”—of row upon row of perfectly ordered foodstuffs creates the illusion of an artificial infinity that Edmund Burke saw as filling the mind beyond its capacity for measured comprehension, a state that gives rise to the feeling of the sublime (Burke 72-73). For Isabel, the novel’s narrator, this sensation is neither “delightful horror” (Burke 73) nor “negative pleasure” (Kant 129) but an illness:

I am infected, . . . exhausted and defeated before the impenetrable linearity of the shelves. I stare . . . at the merchandise and, even so, I do not manage to retain them or make them return (recuperate them) in order to annex them to the professional memory that I must exercise with the products.
(*Mano* 47)

She clarifies that these somatic symptoms have a psychic cause: “I find myself immersed in a voyage out of myself” (*Mano* 55). Isabel suffers from a reified consciousness, an extreme form of which, Lukács tells us, results from the extension of psychologically rationalized mechanization (Taylorism) into the worker’s “soul” such that “even his psychological attributes are separated from his total personality and placed in opposition to it so as to facilitate their integration into specialised rational systems and their reduction to statistically viable concepts” (88). Lukács shows how the alienation of labor in the value form comes to shape the worker’s individual consciousness; Eltit goes one step further. In *Fuerzas especiales* we saw how the narrator feels compelled to dissolve her self in her work, “to surrender, body and soul, unto the transparency that irradiates from the screen” (*Fuerzas* 39). In *Mano de obra*, Eltit depicts Isabel’s subjective

identification with a capitalist godhead that logically exceeds and historically precedes—in other words, it dialectically sublates—Fordist and Taylorist rationalization.

Despite *Mano de obra*'s winks to commodity fetishism—"the products speak on their own" (27) and "the letters dance before their eyes. And the smallest wares on the shelves dance for them, too" (43)—we are dealing here with a mystification of the subject of labor, less a mystification of the objects of alienated labor-power.¹⁶⁰ Many theorists see this subjective identification with capital and its logics as characteristic of the post-Fordist labor regime that coincides with the terciarization of national economies, the feminization of the global labor force, and the direct valorization of language, affect, and other psychic capacities,¹⁶¹ realms hitherto deemed either indirectly productive or market externalities. In this sense, Isabel and *Mano de obra* are emblematic not just of labor under neoliberalism, as most critics point out, but specifically of labor under post-Fordism.

The sexual connotations of Isabel's rapture are revealing of the shifts in the psychic disposition of the post-Fordist worker. In his classic analysis of Fordism, Gramsci dwelled on the relationship between the rationalization of factory work and Henry Ford's famous moral regulation of his workers lives outside the factory,¹⁶² the same regulation expressed at the national level in prohibition and codified in the 18th Amendment to the US constitution. Gramsci saw Fordism and Taylorism as simply the latest iteration of the rationalization of work that began with the capitalist mode of

¹⁶⁰ See, Bosteels, *Marx and Freud* 288-290.

¹⁶¹ Fornazzari places a similar emphasis on the post-Fordist character of the labor depicted in *Mano de obra* (61). For an overview of the key aspects of post-Fordism by many of its most well known proponents, including Bifo, Hardt, Marazzi, Mezzadra, and Virno, see Fanini and Zanini.

¹⁶² For an instructive account of the spectacular failure of Ford's rationalization of labor brought about by the direct confrontation of Fordist managerialism and pre-capitalist societies in the process of real subsumption of rubber extraction in Amazonian Brazil, see Grandin.

production, itself the latest iteration of the coercion and repression of humans' animal instincts under previous modes of accumulation (302). The new rationalization of work meant that American workers exhibited greater morality than members of other classes, not on ideological grounds but simply because there was neither time nor energy for anything so extraneous to the production process as pleasure. Speaking about the reconstitution of the family along Fordist lines, Gramsci tells us: "The exaltation of passion cannot be reconciled with the timed movements of productive motions connected with the most perfected automatism" (305).

Isabel's ecstasy in *Mano de obra* represents just such a reconciliation; contrary to appearances, it also represents the next stage in the rationalization of work. Isabel's ecstatic union with the supermarket godhead represents an efficiency in the relationship between labor and capital, albeit in the realm of circulation and not production.¹⁶³ Along the lines of liberalism's operationalization of freedom as the logic of the market and, therefore, as a means of control,¹⁶⁴ the ecstasy of this post-Fordist worker operationalizes what Gramsci calls our "animality" within the narrower logic of short-term profitability; "short-term," because what is subsumed through Isabel's ecstasy by the regime of work is the sexual pleasure associated with reproduction. In the short term, the non-reproductive worker is most attuned to the logic of profitability. In the long term, of course, non-reproduction of the working class places a demographic check on capitalist accumulation, one exacerbated by the nation-state form of capitalist competition as per the secular

¹⁶³ The theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall is conceived by Marx as a law of capital in general, regardless of the branch or sector (*Capital* vol. 3 317-320). Therefore the increasing the intensification of exploitation of labor in pursuit of short-term profits occurs across the board (*Capital* vol. 3 339-342).

¹⁶⁴ For this interpretation of liberalism see, Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics* (especially Chapter Nine); Gago, *La razón neoliberal* (210).

stagnation thesis recently revived with the financial crisis of 2008. The sublimation and reification of erotic pleasure in consumption, that has long been capitalism's balm for the violence of its work regimes, becomes immanent to the work regime itself. This is an efficiency, because no longer must capital count among its outlay the maintenance of apparatuses for the repression and regimentation of the laboring animal; no longer must it pay wages sufficient for the level of consumption that coerces consent.¹⁶⁵ Work is pleasure enough for these new subjects of capital as capital.

During the frenetic holiday shopping season, Isabel's dissociative reification becomes a mystical union with the supermarket lights-become-godhead, a union described, much like the corresponding scene in *Fuerzas especiales*, in the rapturous language of Catholic mysticism¹⁶⁶ albeit explicitly sexual, even vulgar. "I am possessed by a God that invades me with a radiance that places me in the avid sights of everyone present. God constantly possesses me as if I were his whore" (*Mano* 62). Despite the many similarities between the climatic scenes of the two novels, they differ in that Isabel fuses with an omniscient and terrifying God represented by the light. This scene is the metaphysical adumbration of the novel's second half in which the promotion of a coworker to management sows discord among the coworker-housemates that ultimately leads them to abjure their shared home thereby breaching the spatial marker of their camaraderie and tenuous solidarity. In *Fuerzas especiales*, the narrator's mystical self-transcendence has the opposite result: her multitudinous subjectivity is territorialized in the *yo-bloque*, an almost telluric ground for solidarity.

¹⁶⁵ In Gramsci's analysis, high wages were a distinguishing feature of Fordism (310-13).

¹⁶⁶ That the language is that of specifically Catholic mysticism can be seen in Eltit's usage of the term *morada* ("mansion") to describe the relationship between Isabel and the godhead. Santa T eresa de  vila, one of the most celebrated Catholic mystics of the Counterreformation, structures her treatise *El Castillo interior* around the seven *moradas*.

As in *Lumpérica*, where the camera that films L. Iluminada's performances is indistinguishable from the neon advertisement that illuminates the plaza, so in *Mano de obra* the supermarket lights are the necessary condition for the power exerted on the workers by the supervisors and their surveillance cameras. But unlike the 1983 novel, where the neon advertisement interpellates L. Iluminada and the pale-faced ones as artistic commodities, in *Mano de obra*, the supermarket lights completely possess Isabel. In *Lumpérica* there is still the possibility of resistance in the form of L. Iluminada's question "¿Quo vadis?" scrawled in chalk on the surface of the plaza like a counterinterpellation of the pale-faced ones who inhabit the space at night and of the crowds that traverse it during the day. Twenty years later, Isabel fuses with the supermarket's God-lights such that she interpellates herself as subject of and to capital: "Who am I? I ask myself foolishly. And I respond to myself: 'a necessary and correct service component.' I don't respond to myself at all. I act silently" (*Mano* 73-74). Although she knows the response to her self-hailing, she responds performatively, as if to suggest that symbolization is no longer necessary for the laborer-become-capital. Or, to put it in the terms of my analysis of Thayer, symbolization is no longer necessary in the post-ideological, market singularity of the advancing communism of capitalism.

The union of the worker and capital obviates the distinction between the state-capitalist interpellator and the interpellated subjects of labor such that any "resistance can only be solipsistic, interior" (Franco 147), a negation of oneself as condition and medium of capital's realization. Marxist analysis has always recognized the master-bondsman dialectic that obtained between capital and labor. Theorists of post-Fordism and human capital alike ontologized it by claiming that the laborer *becomes* capital insofar as he

works (Tronti 30-31). At the end of *Mano de obra*, after the workers' head of household, Enrique, betrays them by accepting the post of supervisor only to drastically cut their wages, the supermarket employees realize that they have only themselves to blame. "We left the supermarket trembling, each of us with the products still impressed on our pupils, we left chilled by the iciness that came from a stony reserve installed inside each one of us. Conquered, yes, victimized by a weapon that we ourselves had constructed" (170). They abandon the house to roam the streets under the leadership of Gabriel who assumes Enrique's erstwhile position and appeals to their common citizenship for the new organizational principle and source of pride. Nowhere is it mentioned that they stop working at the supermarket, so when Gabriel commands in the novel's last lines "Let's turn the page (*Demos vuelta la página*)" (*Mano* 176), we can expect that the unwritten, next page of this novel, like the pages of the workers periodicals that name each of the novel's chapters, would not bring any change but the return of the same.

"The world is not as they describe it": Anaesthetics, Habit, Institution

We have seen how repetition makes the representation of a mystical transcendence and annihilation of the self a commonplace of Eltit's corpus. The questions remain: What is the specific point of contact between this particular commonplace and an aesthetics of the sublime that I have claimed for that corpus? And what relation binds the two poles of ecstasy, namely, becoming-multitude in *Fuerzas especiales* and becoming-capital in *Mano de obra*? I think the answer to both lies in the notion of the anaesthetic.

In my reading of *Fuerzas especiales*, I briefly suggested that anesthesia is the compensatory fugue state of a sensorium overstimulated by the repetitious, mathematical sublime of the capitalist life world. I also suggested that anaesthetic experience obstructs the narrator's aesthetic contemplation of her beloved fashion blogs, pointing her to the unexplored political potential of life online. These two claims highlight a cleavage in the field of aesthetics. In the first usage, (an)aesthetics is broadly understood as the study of perception, along the lines of Alexander Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* and more recently in the work of Wolfgang Iser and Jacques Rancière; in the second usage, (an)aesthetics is narrowly conceived, as the application of the philosophy of perception to the realm of art, a tradition that stems from Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 196).¹⁶⁷ In both cases, aesthetic and anaesthetic mutually constitute one another; acts of perception—which is to say, our conscious cognitions of sensations—are produced in an economy of attention: any particular aesthetic experience (*aisthisis*) necessitates the negation of other particular aesthetic experiences (*anaisthisis*), just as a figure becomes visible against a ground.

Since its resignification in the field of philosophical aesthetics beginning with Nicolas Boileau's translation of Pseudo-Longinus in 1674, the sublime has become a limit case that indexes the constitutive anaesthetic aspect of aesthetic experience, the imperceptible in perception. As such, anaesthetics bears the same relation to aesthetics as the apophatic discourse of negative theology bears to the cataphatic discourse of positive theology so that the experience of the sublime, whether in nature or in art, appears as a

¹⁶⁷ For a history of this concatenation of aesthetics and the philosophy of art, see Eagleton.

secular rejoinder to the mystic's rapturous union with the godhead.¹⁶⁸ With regard to our first question then, it seems a small step to redescribe the ecstasies represented in *Mano de obra* and *Fuerzas especiales* as examples of a more capacious aesthetics of the sublime. With regard to our second question, if the anaesthetic and the aesthetic are mutually constitutive, the *suprasensory* anaesthetic—or an aesthetics of the sublime—can hardly be distinguished from the *subsensory* anaesthetic—all those unremarked perceptions in the distribution of attention to sensory stimuli. We have already seen how Eltit employs repetition in the intensification of sensation leading to Isabel's ecstasy and the narrator's fusion with the *yo-bloque* (suprasensory anaesthetics). Now we turn to *Fuerzas especiales* to explore its counterpart, the deadening of sensation through repetition (subsensory anaesthetics).

As I have already remarked, Eltit's work is often made to stand out against the background of its immediate socio-historical context. Now, through the lens of her aesthetics of the sublime, we are in a position to resituate her corpus in the longer history of art and specifically in relation to the avant-gardes to which she is so clearly indebted.

One could narrate the history of the restrictive field of artistic production in late modernity as the progressive purification of aesthetic experience of its sensuous content. As Susan Buck-Morss argues, this anaesthetization of art is bound up with the idealist fantasy of the autopoietic subject, a kind of unmoved mover as sovereign and critical as it is solipsistic (7-10). But over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was not critical philosophy or romantic poetics but capitalist overproduction and its growing

¹⁶⁸ Welsch is explicit on this point of connection "Mystics perform the ascent to the anaesthetic not by removing the aesthetic, but by decidedly aesthetic means. . . . Mystics are methodical aesthetes within the limits of metaphysical anaesthetics" (26). For a historical survey of apophatic discourse in the Western tradition, see Franke.

capacity for technological reproducibility that made possible the aestheticization of the everyday life and compensatory anaesthetization of the modern subject (Welsch 13-23), perversely realizing in the atomized masses of (post)industrial societies¹⁶⁹ only the anaesthetic element of the Idealist dream of an autopoietic subject. We see this in the banal subjugation thematized in *Fuerzas especiales* and performed by its droning repetitions.

Counterintuitively, art distinguishes itself from this context by recurring to the anaesthetic drive ready to hand in philosophical aesthetics' category of the sublime.¹⁷⁰ This history rests on a chiasmus worth parsing; the anaesthetic (in the broad sense of perception) marks the aesthetic realm (in the narrow sense of art) in contradistinction to the aestheticization of daily life (narrow sense) that anaesthetizes the modern subject (broad sense). Perhaps most importantly, the suprasensory, anaesthetic of the sublime—the yearning for the end of art in the realization of its idea—distinguishes fine art from the aestheticizing drive, first, of arts and crafts and, later, of the culture industries; it distinguishes spiritualized, individualized, art work from the mundane, collective labor of everyday living (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 196).¹⁷¹

This process of artistic anaesthetization reaches an extreme in the avant-garde desire to create imperceptible works of art. On the one hand we have works imperceptible to the senses; think of Robert Rauschenberg's 1951 recapitulations of Malevich's "White on White" paintings (1918), John Cage's *4'33"* (1952), or Walter de Maria's *Vertical*

¹⁶⁹ We can think here of the Benjamin's famous critique of the neurasthenic effects of industrial society, its factory work regimes and metropolitan phantasmagoria, in *The Arcades Project* and his writings on Baudelaire (Buck-Morss 16-18).

¹⁷⁰ Adorno reflects on this history by claiming that "after the fall of formal beauty, the sublime was the only aesthetic idea left to modernism" (*Aesthetic Theory* 197)

¹⁷¹ The fine arts' aesthetics of the sublime also separates the avant-gardes from its contemporary and fellow-traveller modern design, which supersedes the division of art and life by embracing manual labor and aestheticizing the everyday (Groys, *Going public* 20-37).

Earth Kilometer (1977), to name but a few. On the other hand, we have works imperceptible as art; for example, those classed as conceptual that blur the boundaries between documentary, theoretical, curatorial, and artistic practices or those that bleed into the everyday, such as Duchamp's ready-mades, *arte povera*, and some forms of performance art like Allan Kaprow's and Oscar Massota's happenings or Lotty Rosenfeld's *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento* (1979) and similar urban interventions made by CADA. According to this history, everyday life in the twentieth century became so aestheticized that the artwork could only be distinguished by dehumanization (Ortega y Gasset) or dematerialization (Lippard), in other words, by the anaesthetic.

Writing in 1968, Brazilian neoconcrete poet Hélio Oiticica nicely summarizes the anaesthetic program of the (neo)avant-garde¹⁷² in his description of the appearance of the suprasensorial in Tropicalismo, Brazil's leading artistic movement at the time. According to Oiticica, the suprasensorial

is the attempt to create, by ever more open approaches, creative exercises, dispensing with the object itself. . . . They are directed toward the senses in order by means of them, of "total perception," to lead the individual to a "suprasensation (*suprasensação*)," to the expansion of his habitual (*habituais*) sensorial capacities in order to discover his creative core, his expressive spontaneity numbed, conditioned by the everyday.

Oiticica makes clear that the (neo)avant-garde's sublime anaesthetics (objectless "suprasensation") works on the human sensorium to awaken the sovereign, critical potential of an autopoietic subject ("his creative core, his expressive spontaneity") from the anaesthetized state of modern existence ("numbed, conditioned by the everyday").

¹⁷² As the list of examples in the preceding paragraph makes clear, the desire to create imperceptible artworks is shared by the historical and neo-avant-gardes alike, a periodization hotly contested in the Bürger-Buchloh debate noted in Chapter 4.

Lyotard makes the same connection between the sublime and the avant-gardes in terms that return us to the unrepresentability of the catastrophe of the real in Rojas's reading of Eltit. The avant-gardes exercise an aesthetics of the sublime less by working directly on the subject—as in Oiticica or Benjamin—than by presenting that *there is* an unrepresentable event. This disadequation of the mind and the thing then elicits the sensation of the sublime in the audience, that comes to expect this intensification of its “conceptual and emotional capacities” (Lyotard, “Sublime and Avant-Garde” 101). But this “intensity is associated with an ontological dislocation” such that “the social community no longer recognizes itself in art-objects, but ignores them, rejects them as incomprehensible, and only later allows the intellectual avant-garde to preserve them in museums as the traces of offenses that bear witness to the power, and the privation, of the spirit” (“Sublime and Avant-Garde” 101).

Lyotard hints at what I see as the misplaced hopes of the (neo)avant-garde's sublime anaesthetics: not that it fails in defamiliarizing, deautomatizing or otherwise shocking us out of our anaesthetized state of suspension in the everyday phantasmagoria of (post)modern, capitalist life, but that this suprasensorial awakening (Benjamin, Duchamp, Oiticica), ontological dislocation (Lyotard), or presentiment of the unrepresentable idea or truth (Adorno, Kant, Žižek) never crystallizes in the critical cognition that could be directed against the capitalist social relations at the root of our anaesthesia and reified consciousness. “The paradox of art after the sublime is that it turns toward a thing that does not turn toward the mind” (Lyotard, “After the Sublime” 141). Faced with this paradox, the artistic object itself becomes the nucleation site most ready to hand, not capitalist technoaesthetics or its particular distribution of the sensible

(Rancière). So rather than reject capitalism's reified and anesthetizing life world, society rejects the art-object for its sublime incomprehensibility.

Much to the chagrin of the avant-gardes, this rejection in turn confirms art's autonomy, its distinction from the work of everyday, its complicity with capitalism as an expression and reflection of reified consciousness. Whether an aesthetics of defamiliarization or of the sublime, both contribute to the purification of the gaze that drives the progressive self-consciousness and autonomy of the field of artistic production (Bourdieu, *Field* 264-66). This purification of the gaze is also the purging of the senses that constitute subjects in and of the world, of the synaesthetic system that is the basis of any being together and of every politics. The history of this pure gaze is the history of the art institution, art world, or field—its progressive functional differentiation from other spheres of human activity that culminates in utter incomprehensibility and political paralysis.

Less than a presentiment of the moral idea (Kant) or the truth content of art (Adorno, an artwork's sublime presentation of our incomprehension incites our contemplation of that which nominates these strange objects as art. The presentiment of the absence of the event (Lyotard) leads less to an ontological dislocation than to cognitive dissonance and a righteous indignation. The wager of modern art since the romantics prophesied "a future revolution of attitudes and ways of thinking" (Hölderlin 247) may result from the art-object working on its audience but only to inspire the audience to work against the art-object and the social institution that designates it as art. On this basis, I have claimed that Eltit's formal choices often supersede the text's referential and communicative functions to render them performative metatexts that draw

the reader's attention to the scene of enunciation and the moment of reception. In this theater of the institution we encounter the reified social relations that are the unrepresentable core of our incomprehension. This is what I think Eltit means when she expresses her desire to "Act from narrative. From literature." (PM 15).

The central, ethical question of Eltit's work is the one posed by the union of tattooed women workers in *Vaca Sagrada*. They ask, "How will we live if our bodies collide with the walls?" The women make their demands to the state and threaten a general strike "The country will have to accede, allowing our bodies to dwell with ease (*habiten con soltura*)" (132). In the end, the episode has little impact. The protagonist, Francisca, flees the city for the south to search for her detained lover and for the meaning of her experiences. Her memories of the novel's violent and impassioned episodes recede into "a neutral space in which they appeared fleeting, without any hierarchy to their flight," like the amorphous flocks of birds, the novel's central trope; her heart no longer palpitates, "it only beat out of habit (*costumbre*)" (*Vaca* 188); her menstruation, which had once commingled her and her lover's bodies signifying an extraordinary even transgressive passion, becomes "a physical chore (*deber*) that imposed a biological repetition on me . . . a monotone sign [that] had standardized me (*me había uniformizado*) with other bodies" (*Vaca* 178). Instead of collectively claiming spaces where bodies can dwell (*habitar*) with ease, habit anaesthetizes her to the point that she can begin to write "sheltered in one the rooms (*habitaciones*) of my house" (*Vaca* 188). Eltit describes a similar relationship to the act of writing: "during the time of writing my own life is annulled, my own death suspended." "The writing habit (*hábito*)," as she calls

it, leads to a self-dispossession or uninhabiting—habit derives from the Latin *habere*: to have, to be constituted, to be—an everyday ecstasy. In short, Francisca and Eltit subsume one sense to another: the sensation of experience to the sense of its meaning, eyesight to vision, unit (*unidad*) to unity (*unidad*). Staring at a box of documents, Francisca sets out to write the novel of her experience as if, like Emilio Renzi in Piglia's *Respiración artificial*, she were acting on Eliot's admonition: "We had the experience but missed the meaning, an approach to the meaning restores the experience."

Jon Beasley-Murray identifies in the tattooed women workers episode another function of habit: the production of belief. Francisca's commitment to the cause, she tells us, proceeds from her tattoo,"[s]o the bodily brand precedes and founds her belief" (222). In *Lumpérica* we saw a similar inversion in "*La producción del grito*," where L. Iluminada's cry serves as pretext for her self-injury thereby effecting a disorganization of language, of the causal logic of experience and expression. Beasley-Murray compares Francisca's embodied belief to Pascal's famous dictum "Kneel down, move your lips and prayer and you will believe" cited by Althusser to illustrate the multi-modal materiality of his theory of ideology in general: "the existence of the ideas of [a subject's] belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatuses from which they derive the ideas of that subject.*" (114). Althusser's theory of ideology in general is, for Beasley-Murray, akin to Bourdieu's habitus, a system of habits that structures and reproduces habits parallel to the social field in which they form. In a manner analogous to Althusser, Bourdieu claims, "The social order is merely the order of bodies: the habituation to custom and law that law and custom produce by

their very existence and persistence is largely sufficient, without any deliberate intervention, to impose a recognition of the law based on a misrecognition of the arbitrariness that underlies it” (*Pascalian* 168). The difference is that for Bourdieu the deliberate action of ideological state apparatuses is largely unnecessary, for it is not the recognition of subjects by power but subjects’ misrecognition that constitutes the power that they subject themselves to.¹⁷³ According to Beasley-Murray, this fact comes to the fore when we dispense with the notion of hegemony, understood in strictly Gramscian terms as the maintenance of state power through the consent (ideology) or coercion (repression) of its subjects. Hegemony is for Beasley-Murray the ideology of ideology, “the conviction that ideology matters, that our actions follow on from the ideas that we hold or even from the ideas that hold us and so from the ruses of some hegemonic project” (182). The waning of ideology, then, reveals the persistence of habit as the medium and guarantee of the State’s “double inscription” in representations and bodies (Beasley-Murray 187).

Whether Althusser’s material rituals or Bourdieu’s habituation to custom and law, repetition is the force of habit. We can think of these terms as analogous to Althusserian interpellation: repetition is the demand (from the Latin *petere*) that again and again secures the subject’s self-possession (*habere*), that is, the constitution of concrete individuals as subjects. Repetition ensures the obviousness, the banality of our subjecthood and the social order, obviousness being for Althusser “the elementary ideological effect” (116). At the same time, habit retrospectively obviates repetition,

¹⁷³ Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron see misrecognition as fundamental to the operations of a particular power: “Every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic forces to those power relations” (*Reproduction* 4).

despite the fact that nothing ever repeats in nature insofar as we conceive it terms of a unidirectional time. Indeed for Giambattista Vico, at the beginning of modern historiography, repetition makes it possible for humankind to produce history. As Edward Said puts it, repetition for Vico gives “facts their historical factuality and reality its existential sense” by accumulating meaning to experience and containing that experience in the meaningful representations we make of it to ourselves and others (113). That there is experience, a story, a history, meaning is but the daily weaving together of repetition and habit.

I have suggested that the self-constitution of Eltit’s corpus through auto-referential repetition expresses a non-reproductive desire, that it labors against the reproduction of the literary institution. The force of habit sheds new light on this claim by suggesting a relation between reproduction and repetition on the plane of immanence, the same relationship that consubstantiates the accumulation or collection of repeated things and events into a significant collectivity.

In the case of Colectivo Situaciones and Creciendo Juntos, we saw how the labor of instituting begins by identifying regularities, series of repetitions in a given situation. And we saw Virno suggest that post-state institutions—institutions that would rely neither on violence nor ideological processes of interpellation—might embrace infancy as model for their operation, where infancy is understood as the neotenic condition, the problem of newness and our openness to the new. By exercising an opportunistic *saber hacer*, the infant oscillates between existing institutions and the lifeworld, between a habitus and its field, thereby creating regularities that do not become rules, a new habitus that does not give rise to an institution or ideological apparatus of the state.

I see Eltit and many of her characters as participating in acts of institution along these lines. The rehearsals of L. Iluminada's staged performance, the ceremonious games played by the infant in *Los vigilantes*, Maria Chipia's ritualistic dances in *El cuarto mundo*, all these are incipient acts of institution through the production of repetitions and regularities. For this reason, I have insisted on a corporeal reading of Eltit's corpus. Taken alone, it is tempting to make her texts speak otherwise. But taken together we can see that this speaking otherwise is but an ideological overlay on what is in fact the performative act of instituting otherwise. In this sense, the turning inward of her body of work that is also a turning away from the field can be seen as an act of self-institution. However much her work may be interpreted and interpellated as literature, Eltit's corpus also rehearses the institution of the narrative world otherwise than literature. This is how I understand the avant-garde gesture of Eltit's corpus and in general: not the destruction of the literary institution, but the attempt to form new reading and writing habits from repetitions and regularities that will conjure autonomous institutions capable of conforming the world otherwise as a place better fit for us to dwell (*habitar*).

Despite the (fallacious) attribution to Eltit of this desire to institute otherwise, in the last instance it depends on her readers to determine the shape these ambivalent acts of institution may take. On the one hand, the repetition that weaves her works into a corpus can just as easily institute a fetishized relation between closed objects, at once projecting our reified consciousness and mimicking our reified life world. But if her works are constituted in their reception as sets of social relations, repetition might operate in its etymological sense like a grammar of questions (*re-petere*) that enjoins readers to

participate in a political communion capable of generating new habits of reading and of writing.

EPILOGUE

Autonomies

The six studies that compose this dissertation revolve around what I have called the *primacy of reproduction*, which holds that institutions owe their institutionality to the work of reproduction, before whatever social function they perform or content they produce. The primacy of reproduction at once derives from and licenses my *reproductive reading* of literary, theoretical, and social texts. This method makes visible the reproductive labor inherent in the institutions of education and literature, labor often performed and masked by the act of production, by the cultural products themselves. All institutions are works of reproduction, and the work of reproduction is often indistinguishable from the work of instituting.

For anyone interested in social change, the primacy of reproduction poses a political paradox: the reproduction of the new. The deepening exploitation of labor under contemporary capitalism has provoked a crisis of social reproduction. The insecurity that this elicits often raises calls for society to be defended against it. Karl Polanyi saw in this reactionary double bind the seeds of fascism. As I write, the rising tide of reactionary politicians—including Macri in Argentina, Temer in Brazil, Trump in the United States, Modi in India, and Putin in Russia along with a host of right-wing populists and would-be autocrats in Central and Western Europe—makes Polanyi's analysis seem prophetic. But

society must not be defended, it must be reinvented, and the only way forward is through late modernity's Scylla and Charybdis, capital and the state.

The primacy of reproduction is not only a formal axiom about the nature of institutions and of social life generally. It is also a political mandate that points the way for an emancipatory politics. To recognize the primacy of reproduction does not mean acquiescing to the status quo, resigning oneself to reproducing the same: the same state control of collective freedoms, the same capitalist coercion of collective needs. Rather, the primacy of reproduction and of reproductive labor, forces us to recognize the ways that our species-being has been coopted, subjugated, even capitalized, and to envision other ways—both latent and new—for subtracting it from its capitalist instrumentalization. The crisis of social reproduction threatens capital insofar as it destroys labor, and some on the Left welcome non-reproduction as part of an anticapitalist politics. But it is not enough to be against capital. We must also be for ourselves. As Colectivo Situaciones and the Movimientos de Trabajadores Desocupados demonstrate, collective autonomy—subtraction and affirmation—is both the method and the end.

I have focused on the reproductive work that constitutes and maintains institutions in order to make them susceptible to a heterodox Marxist analysis whose emancipatory politics is the lodestar of my work. The language of reproduction I have foregrounded is in dialogue with the older paradigm of autonomy, a key concept in the history of literature and the modern university and a central if somewhat subterranean concern of this dissertation. Like any key concept, autonomy is oversignified, as is my usage of the

term. By way of conclusion, I will parse the term as it appears in the dissertation in order to show how autonomy is the necessary complement to the work of reproduction understood as the work of institution.

Reproductions references three autonomies: university autonomy, literary autonomy, and political-economic autonomy. Within these fields of reference we can identify three closely related modalities—*autonomy-from*, *autonomy-with*, and *autonomy-in-itself*—which can be mapped on an axis between two poles, one relational the other ontological. Reproduction and autonomy sit astride this axis, two faces of the same coin. Below, I will follow this taxonomy—field of reference, modality, axis—working outward from the specific uses of autonomy in the dissertation toward general theoretical conclusions.

The autonomy of the university has been so often invoked that its significance has changed over time. Among the German philosophers who debated the role of the university for modern nation-states in the lead-up to the 1810 founding of the University of Berlin, autonomy meant freedom of the sciences,¹⁷⁴ academic study,¹⁷⁵ or the faculty of philosophy¹⁷⁶ from state intervention, oversight or control.¹⁷⁷ Regardless of the particular terms used, these thinkers mostly understood autonomy negatively, as freedom from restraint or *autonomy-from*. In the topographical metaphors that imbues the German university debates, autonomy-from demarcates a space of “solitude and freedom” “in which reason must be authorized to speak out publicly” (Humboldt 255;

¹⁷⁴ See Herder; Schleiermacher.

¹⁷⁵ See Fichte; Schelling,

¹⁷⁶ See Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*.

¹⁷⁷ For an excellent overview of the various positions in these debates and their philosophical stakes, see Ferry, Pesron and Renaut.

Kant *Conflict* 28). Subsequent invocations of university autonomy often forget that, for these Enlightenment thinkers—most clearly Kant—this negative freedom is filled with the positive freedom of a transcendental reason or reason as freedom. Reason is its own law, so for the university to be autonomous (*nomos* in Ancient Greek means law or custom) meant clearing a space within it for reason to express itself.

As we saw in Chapter Two, Willy Thayer's theory of the Chilean university of *la Transición* rightly reframes the autonomy of the university from the state in terms of its autonomy from the market. In this he recapitulates the German university's autonomy-from, but without grounding it in the positive freedom of a transcendental reason. Lacking this ground, Thayer's defense of the faculty of philosophy from a metastasizing market relies instead on the division of intellectual and manual labor and even on the notion of speculation as freedom from work (*negocio*), as leisure (*ocio*). Having cast aside the mystified, albeit coherently, worldview of his Enlightenment predecessors, Thayer's defense of the university's autonomy-from reveals what the university has always been, materially speaking: an instance of naked class supremacy.

When speaking of the autonomy of the university, there can be no doubt that this autonomy is collective. But too often autonomy is thought on the model of the individual, as the exercise of one's will free from the restraint or interference of every other will.¹⁷⁸ I would argue that this sort of methodological individualism misconstrues autonomy-from as freedom from politics. Of course, the notion that an institution can be apolitical is a fallacy insofar as politics imbues the social and institutions are nothing if not a normed

¹⁷⁸ Indeed, Kantian personal autonomy has been interpreted this way, although autonomy as the exercise of one's free will in adherence to the objective law of reason is more transcendental than political or social. In the same way, the faculty of philosophy clears the ground for the manifestation of free reason by securing it from the realm of politics and needs.

set of social behaviors. While this may seem obvious to readers in the humanities and qualitative social sciences, this ideology still counts many adherents among the quantitative sciences. Without recourse to a transcendental *deus ex machina*, there is no autonomy free from politics. Autonomy is always a relational difference, and that relation is always social and, therefore, political. This is axiomatic to my understanding of the term.

In Latin America, the autonomy of the university has a somewhat different trajectory. The first modern, secular universities—as opposed to traditional, Catholic ones—were cast in the French mold, and only later assumed certain aspects of the German model. Issuing from the Revolution, the French university is grounded less on a free, transcendental reason than on the reason of state, understood as the embodiment of the collective will of the people. Accordingly, universities in this tradition are thoroughly political as is the conception of any autonomy they might exercise.

The 1918 student movements that emanated from the university at Córdoba and swept through Latin America were struggles over this political understanding of university autonomy. Where German philosophers' theory of university autonomy as the precondition for the manifestation of a transcendental reason was historically actualized in the practice of professional self-governance, these Latin American reformists sought to include students in university co-governance. Where professional self-governance could found its autonomy on specialist knowledges and modes of production, students' right to co-governance makes no such claim. And if professional self-governance as autonomy from the state tends toward the depoliticization of the university—an outcome

countenanced by elitist democracies and authoritarian states alike—university students have often acted in the opposite direction: politicizing the university and integrating it with society. Among the demands of many of the 1918 reform movements were: free tuition; mass matriculation; university extension programs; and unity among students, peasants, and the working class. Since the early twentieth century, the Chilean student federations have been active participants in the political life of their universities, and their organizational capacity—demonstrated not only in 2011, but in 2006, 2001, the 1984 protests against Pinochet’s rule, the 1967 university reforms, and the toppling of the dictator Carlos Ibáñez in the thirties—relies on the university’s political autonomy from the state that they have defended ever since. This remains *autonomy-from* but not from politics or society but specifically from state intervention.

Political autonomy from the state has become central to grassroots, Latin American struggles since the 1990s, most evidently in indigenous and peasant movements, such as the Zapatistas in southern Mexico to the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra (MST) in Brazil, but also, as we saw in Chapter Three, in the struggles of the urban and suburban precariat. Indeed, with the exception of the Zapatistas, perhaps no social struggle has done more to popularize the strategy of political autonomy than those that emerged leading up to the 2001 Argentinean financial crisis. These contemporaneous movements recognize that Latin American states—whether democratic or authoritarian—are the handmaidens of global capitalist governance, such that popular autonomy means *autonomy-from* the state and capital alike. Unlike the liberal tradition, which was central to the philosophical articulation of university autonomy, Latin American social movements’ autonomy assumes the

collective and not the individual as its point of departure. Like liberal autonomy-from, popular, political autonomy is always a relational difference, but one that emphasizes relation over difference, an expansive, collective autonomy I call *autonomy-with*.

University and literary autonomy are instances of institutional autonomy in general. I would argue, however, that the depoliticizing tendencies of the liberal conception of autonomy-from has had greater impact in the realm of art, creating a rift between politics and the restricted field of cultural production significant enough to sustain two centuries of debate. By contrast, states' interest in universities—as tools for governance or for their own reproduction—has always limited their autonomy—most obviously in the French model but also as a motivating factor for the German model's claim to it.

As I see it, the university and literature, like all “autonomous” institutions, use autonomy-from to forge a space for *autonomy-in-itself*. If autonomy-from and autonomy-with can be thought as two modes of self-governance—one emphasizing difference the other relation, both subject to arbitrary and contingent boundary struggles—autonomy-in-itself emphasizes the self of self-governance, self-determination, self-definition. Likewise, if autonomy-from and autonomy-with designate the relational difference of two identities, autonomy-in-itself can be thought of as constituting those identities. By virtue of the mediating notion of autonomy-in-itself, we can organize all three autonomies along one relational-ontological axis.

My reproductive reading of Piglia's, Eltit's, and Oloixarac's bodies of work in Part Two takes stock of the ideology of literary autonomy. While my institutional

treatment of literature counters the depoliticization and desocialization of literature so often coded into the notion of literary autonomy-from, it nonetheless recognizes the ontological pole of autonomy-in-itself, just as it recognizes the value of autonomy-from and autonomy-with as two modes of relational difference.

Each of these writers is consciously engaged with the reproduction of the restricted field of literary production, in the work of instituting or instituting otherwise. As such, they are concerned with the constitution and maintenance of the literary field, its autonomy-in-itself. Piglia does so by confounding the distinction between author and critic, fiction and criticism to anticipate and guide the reception of his works. Whether thematized and performed in Piglia's writing, this second-order observation or feedback loop between privileged producers and privileged receivers determines the restricted field of literary production, securing the in-itself of literary autonomy. Oloixarac's *Las teorías salvajes* similarly implicates the gatekeepers of the literary institution through its satire of the University of Buenos Aires and its pastiche of theoretical style. In staking out a position critical of the leftist political ideologies ascendant during the years of Kichnerismo, she wields literary autonomy-from to intervene into the debate about what counts as literature or, rather, who is a literary author. In the now institutionalized tradition of the avant-gardes, Eltit's repetitious writing participates in the (an)aesthetic of an everyday sublime, contributing to the purification of the gaze that drives the progressive self-consciousness and autonomy-in-itself of the field of artistic production. In this sense her work recognizes the necessity of the literary institution, in the sense of defining it through its autonomy-in-itself, even if she seeks to institute literature otherwise.

These writers' self-consciousness about the field of literary production is not novel. Literature becomes institutional in the late eighteenth century when literary criticism—in the mass media and educational institutions—becomes the conduit for its reproduction, supplying it with a means of self-definition, a medium for the exercise of autonomy-in-itself. What is novel, I suggest, is the late-twentieth-century shift from criticism to theory and the incorporation of the latter into literary products seeking an audience increasingly confined to academic and educational circles. In other words, literature has always been concerned with the limits of its own identity. Today, however, this autonomy-in-itself that defines what counts as literature increasingly depends on the university, giving rise to the genre of university fiction that applies, albeit in different ways, to the work of Piglia, Oloixarac, and Eltit.

Before turning to the relations between reproduction and autonomy, it will be worth summarizing the different modalities apparent in the dissertation's three fields of reference outlined above. In common parlance, autonomy signifies difference—the state of being unrelated, independent—and identity—the state of being self-contained, self-determined, self-sufficient, or self-governing. As I have insisted, difference is always relational, always political which implies that so too is identity formation.

In my conceptual parsing of the term, autonomy-from is the relational difference between two distinct identities that emphasizes their difference. We can think of this as analogous to negative freedom or freedom from interference. Autonomy-with designates the relational difference between two identities that emphasizes their relation, and it can be thought as analogous to positive freedom. By this analogy, we can say that autonomy-

with, unlike autonomy-from, inquires into who or what exercises free will and self-determination. Autonomy-in-itself gets at how this relational difference constitutes subjects and identities, passing the clearly political questions about the free exercise of the will (individual or collective) and who or what wills to the ontological question of how those willing subjects are defined.

Autonomy-in-itself imbues both autonomy-from and autonomy-with. Thinking these three modalities together we can say that autonomy in general is a modal relation that constitutes and identifies the subject who practices it, whether that subject is an individual or a people. In common usage, autonomy is concerned with politics and specifically with jurisdiction, with boundary struggles and border thinking. And as the law is a speech-act that materializes juridical relations, so does autonomy designate the political relations that constitute subjects. It is the enacting of difference in self-determination and self-definition, the coaction of negative and positive freedom in the constitution of the willing subject, the relational difference of identity.

But the liberal understanding of autonomy as autonomy-from obscures the ontological dimension of autonomy's relational difference. As in the case of the autonomy of the university and of art, it *assumes* the prior existence of the subject that exercises autonomy through its relational difference, and, more often than not, it assumes that subject to be an individual or, at least, modeled one. Among the new social movements in Latin America—including the MTDs in Argentina and some sectors of the Chilean student movement—autonomy *constructs* a collective subject. In this sense, if autonomy-from assumes (individual) identity, autonomy-with visibilizes autonomy-in-itself in the process of constructing new, collective subjects, fluid and expansive

identities that overflow the narrow bounds of liberal individualism and its autonomy-from.

In my investigation into the institution of popular autonomy-with in the work of Colectivo Situaciones, we saw how the collective viewed Kirchnerismo as instrumental to capturing the new social movements' insurrectionary and autonomous and channeling it back into the capitalist state. This historical *impasse*, I claimed, was not simply another use of time by the state but latent to the formal structure of the political autonomy that the collective advocated. An *impasse*, I suggested, is the paradoxical kernel that unfolds through history into autonomy.

My response to the collective raises the question that bedevils the practice of collective autonomy-with: Can change be thought? What happens in the blind field between two historical epochs? How to simultaneously subtract and affirm peoples whose livelihoods and self-concepts derive from and sustain the systems that oppress them? A similar question troubles the use of reproductive labor as a tool for emancipation: How freely engender change within the ceaseless flow of necessity? Creative destruction, although beloved by capitalists and revolutionaries alike, seems a poor model when what is destroyed are peoples, their relationships and organizations, their livelihoods, modes of subsistence, and collective metabolism of nature. As I suggest, one way to resolve a paradox is to set it in motion and dissolve it in history. The process must start somewhere with some act. Or, as the Zapatistas and Paulo Freire say, "We make the path by walking it."

Through my reading of *Colectivo Situaciones*, I outlined how alternative pedagogies might institute and reproduce popular political-economic autonomy through educational practices that invert traditional pedagogical models. Alternative, popular education would decouple the production and reproduction of knowledge from power hierarchies scripted into the pedagogical scene by the state, its schools and universities, By analyzing the power-knowledge combine embodied and personalized in the notion of intelligence, *Colectivo Situaciones* and the members of the MTD-S politicized the production and reproduction of knowledge, making education a question not of intelligence but of will, not of inheritance but of action. For the collective and the MTD, the construction of autonomy-with begins by collectively assuming ignorance of others through the practice of an unending grammar of questions. The openness of the interrogative mode recognizes the excess of reality in a given situation, and poses the world as a problem we set ourselves and upon which we work.

On my analysis, autonomy in general designates the political, relational differences that constitute identities and subjects. Autonomy-with visibilizes autonomy-in-itself in the process of constructing new, collective subjects, whereas autonomy-from obscures it by assuming the prior existence of a formal, cosmopolitan subject already endowed with will. Autonomy-with signifies an openness to change for it posits the possibility of a collective becoming-other, becoming something new. If autonomy engenders identity through relational difference, reproduction maintains it through time. But the work of reproduction does not temporally follow or issue from autonomy. The creative, ontological dimension of autonomy-in-itself is the work of instituting—in the semantic sense of designating the whatness of what is. The work of instituting is a form

of reproductive labor. Designating the whatness of what is from a position of collective ignorance that poses the world as a problem, as an excess of reality, ensures that this essence or inner logic never atrophies into rules and norms that reify collective consciousness in relation to the world, but remains open to the historical processes of collective self-determination, of autonomous political subjectivation. This is the wager of situational thinking, of research without an object, of study-without-end: to supply the epistemological practices necessary for the continual process of becoming inherent in the political practice of collective autonomy-with that is also always autonomy-in-itself. The work of reproduction does not simply maintain collective autonomy by instituting it. Reproduction is also autonomy's condition of possibility.

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