ISSUE #13: THE LATIN AMERICAN ISSUE

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities
affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668

EDITORIAL BOARD

Bridget Alsdorf
Jennifer Ashton
Todd Cronan
Rachael DeLue
Michael Fried
Oren Izenberg
Brian Kane
Ruth Leys
Walter Benn Michaels
Charles Palermo
Robert Pippin
Adolph Reed, Jr.
Victoria H.F. Scott
Kenneth Warren
James Welling

Lisa Chinn, editorial assistant

FOR AUTHORS

ARTICLES: SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Please direct all Letters to the Editors, Comments on Articles and Posts, Questions about Submissions to nonsite.org@emory.edu.

Potential contributors should send submissions electronically via nonsite.submishmash.com/Submit. Applicants for the B-Side Modernism/Danowski Library Fellowship should consult the full proposal guidelines before submitting their applications directly to the nonsite.org submission manager.

Please include a title page with the author's name, title and current affiliation, plus an up-to-date e-mail address to which edited text and correspondence will be sent. Please also provide an abstract of 100-150 words and up to five keywords or tags for searching online (preferably not words already used in the title). Please do not submit a manuscript that is under consideration elsewhere.

ARTICLES: MANUSCRIPT FORMAT

Accepted essays should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents (either .doc or .rtf), although .pdf documents are acceptable for initial submissions.. Double-space manuscripts throughout; include page numbers and one-inch margins. All notes should be formatted as endnotes.

Style and format should be consistent with *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. or above. Second and later references to a previously cited work should be made in the text, giving the author's last name and the title of the work. Do not use op. cit.

POETRY: SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

We accept unsolicited poetry via nonsite.submishmash.com/Submit. Please submit your work in .doc or .pdf formats. Your submission should be a single file consisting of no more than ten pages, and may include, if you wish, a cover letter listing a few of your recent publications. We consider only previously unpublished work, and while we encourage simultaneous submissions, we request that you notify us (poetry@nonsite.org) immediately if your work is accepted elsewhere.

MEDIA AND PERMISSIONS

Authors must obtain permissions for illustrations that require permissions. A 300 dpi file (JPEG, GIF, PIC, or TIFF) of each illustration will be needed, though a legible scan is acceptable for initial submission. Hyperlinks will need correct URL addresses; video clips should be in MPEG, MOV or Quicktime formats; sound files should be high-quality MP3s.

Nonsite is subject to the same copyright restrictions and intellectual property laws as all publications. It is the contributor's responsibility to obtain necessary permissions to reproduce images, video clips, and sound files in the article text. Permission is not required for the inclusion of hyperlinks; the use of links may offer a more efficient way of including video, music, and image files. Image captions should include appropriate credits and permissions.

ABOUT NONSITE

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

ISSUE #13: THE LATIN AMERICAN ISSUE FALL 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Issue #13: The Latin American Issue 8

ARTICLES

Making it Visible: Latin Americanist Criticism, Literature, and the Question of Exploitation Today 12
By Eugenio Di Stefano (University of Nebraska at Omaha) and Emilio Sauri (University of Massachusetts Boston)

The Question of Cynicism A Reading of Horacio Castellanos Moya's La diáspora (1989) 46
By Alberto Moreiras (Texas A&M)

demanding the impossible… **Literature and Political Imagination (*Amuleto*, 1968 in the Nineties)** 66
By Susana Draper (Princeton University)

From Posthegemony to Pierre Menard 86
By Charles Hatfield (The University of Texas at Dallas)

Towards an Art of Landscapes and Loans: Sergio Chejfec and the Politics of Literary Form 102
By Steve Buttes (Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne)

Reading for Affect, from Literature and Film to Facebook and #Occupy: Why an Epistemological Lens Matters in the Criticism of Capitalist Cultural Politics 120
By Dierdra Reber (Emory University)

FEATURES

Cinematic Irony: The Strange Case of Nicholas Ray's Johnny Guitar 146
By Robert Pippin (University of Chicago)

EDITORIALS

Response to Jay and Sustar & Bean 178
By Adolph Reed, Jr. (University of Pennsylvania)

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

ISSUE #13: THE LATIN AMERICAN ISSUE

In nonsite's thirteenth issue, we turn to the contemporary relationship between literature and politics in Latin America today. Edited by Eugenio Di Stefano and Emilio Sauri.

ARTICLES

MAKING IT VISIBLE:
LATIN AMERICANIST CRITICISM, LITERATURE, AND THE QUESTION OF EXPLOITATION TODAY

EUGENIO DI STEFANO AND EMILIO SAURI

Vision is meaning. Meaning is historical.
—*True Detective* (2014)

The Missing Frame

At the center of Pedro Mairal's novel *The Missing Year of Juan Salvatierra* (2008) is an enormous painting, "four kilometers long" (*MY*31/*S*38), which the eponymous, mute artist, Juan Salvatierra, painted over the course of sixty years.[1] Recalling various styles of art, including "art brut," post-impressionism, and Japanese "emakimono" (*MY*8/*S*9), the painting chronicles Salvatierra's life in Barrancales, a fictional village located on the Argentine side of the River Uruguay. The narrator, Salvatierra's son Miguel, returns with his brother Luis to Barrancales two years after their father has passed away to decide what to do with the painting, now stored as more than sixty individual rolls of canvas hanging from the roof beams of the shed where he painted every day. The brothers quickly realize "It would have been impossible to exhibit the entire canvas in one place" (*MY*21/*S*28) because the "canvas had no borders, even at the end of each roll: they all fit exactly with the start of the next one." "If he could have," Miguel continues, "Salvatierra would have kept them all together in one vast scroll, although it would have been impossible to take care of it or transport it" (*MY*24/*S*30). But if the size of what Salvatierra had intended to be grasped as "one vast scroll" complicates any decision about exhibiting the painting, the absence of any "borders" also raises larger questions about the nature of the work itself and its relationship to the beholder. Where could one stand to look at the painting in its entirety? How could one begin to understand this scroll if one could never see the work in its totality? Can these scrolls really be understood as a painting if they can never be observed together? When do paint and canvas become a painting?

These questions have everything to do with painting as a specific medium, though we will see that, in raising such questions, *The Missing Year of Juan Salvatierra* (from here on, *Salvatierra*) gestures to a concern that has been crucial to the development of Latin Americanist literary criticism and theory for some time now: the concern with the text's relationship to the world and to its reader. This concern becomes all the more apparent in Mairal's novel when Salvatierra's son tells us that, "Possibly because of this sense of the limitless flow of nature that the canvas had, I find it hard to call it a painting, because that suggests a frame, a border that surrounds certain things, and that's precisely what Salvatierra wanted to avoid" (*MY*54/*S*67-8). Importantly, the expansiveness of a canvas that appears "to flow on forever" (*MY*18/*S*21) gives rise to an impression of boundlessness that not only compels Mairal's narrator to wonder whether the four kilometers of canvas are, in fact, a painting, but also precipitates the sensation that "you might plunge headfirst into the canvas" (*MY*76/*S*99).[2] Mairal's novel thus presents the conception of an artwork for which representing reality is less appealing than consuming or even becoming it, thereby calling to mind something like Borges' cartographers who create a "Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it"; a map, in other words, for which the difference between the Empire and a representation of it ceases to matter altogether.[3]

This conception of art, however, is not just limited to fiction; and indeed, it also underlies a dominant strain of Latin Americanist thought that comprises the focus of this essay, and for which this unframing has been conceived as a point of departure for a host of theoretical positions not just on art, nor on literature alone, but on politics as well. These positions include the *testimonio* criticism, affect theory, postautonomy, and posthegemony. Despite apparent differences between these, we argue that what has unified Latin Americanist criticism and theory at least since the 1980s, is this question of the frame, or more precisely, the effort to imagine how the text dissolves it. We can begin to see what this looks like, for example, in Néstor García Canclini's claim that art "became 'unframed' because…the attempts to organize it in terms of aesthetic prescriptions or a theory about the autonomy of the fields (Bourdieu) or of worlds (Becker) hardly work."[4] The frame is posed here as a matter of categories or criteria that have long defined literature and literary criticism, but primarily with an eye to marking their obsolescence. As for politics, Latin American studies has tended to characterize the investment in such categories and criteria as radically conservative, working even, as Jean Franco suggested in 1979, in the "service of reactionary governments."[5]

But if Mairal's novel raises questions about the frame's dissolution, it also prompts us to reconsider what the political meaning of the assertion of the frame might be. And it does this by presenting another conception of Salvatierra's canvas that openly undermines the identification of the artwork with unframed experience, and the idea of the *work as reality*

paralleled in Borges' anecdote. This other conception emerges shortly after the brothers discover that the roll Salvatierra painted in 1961 is missing. Miguel becomes determined to find it, not only because "If one part was missing, [he] wouldn't be able to take it all in its entirety" (*MY*77/*S*100), but also because recovering the missing roll would mean that "this world of images would have a limit." "The infinite would reach an end," he thinks, "and I could discover something he hadn't painted. Something of my own" (*MY*77/*S*101). Thus, Salvatierra's son suggests that finding the missing roll of canvas would not simply complete the painting, but produce a "limit" capable of drawing a "border" (*MY*54/*S*67-8) between the canvas and the world Miguel inhabits as he looks at it, and so locating Salvatierra's missing year would mean introducing the "frame" (*MY*54/*S*67-8) that the canvas's "limitless flow" (*MY*54/*S*67-8) ostensibly dissolves.[6]

That Miguel associates this border earlier with his own definition of a "painting" further suggests that such a frame would not only render legible the distinction between the images on the canvas and the world these depict, but also that this frame is what makes the painting a painting—that is, what makes the work contiguous with but not identical to the reality it depicts. As we will see, however, the novel's attention to the frame will not only entail a refusal of the artwork's reducibility to the world, but also—and perhaps more importantly—mark an insistence on the irrelevance of the beholder's experience to both the question of what is or isn't part of the painting *and* to what it means. And if attending to the frame is a way of marking the distance between the world represented on the canvas and Miguel's experience of it, it will also turn out to be a way of stressing the irrelevance of the experience and subject position of the viewer to the artwork's meaning. Indeed, insofar as the completion of the image, what *Salvatierra* identifies as the frame, functions as a "border" that presupposes a distance between painting and beholder, the novel also suggests that its absence will ultimately transform the work into an occasion for the subject's experience of boundlessness and limitlessness, the sensation, in other words, that "you might plunge headfirst into the canvas" (*MY*76/*S*99).[7]

Thus, *Salvatierra* presents us with two conceptions of the same work: one that tries to incorporate, and in this sense, *is* the world, and another that aims to represent it. The distinction between these conceptions not only asks us to consider the relationship between, say, a tree in Salvatierra's painting and a tree outside of it, but also foregrounds the issue of the beholder's relationship to the painting as well. The choice between the framed painting and unframed experience is, in this sense, what Michael Fried has described as the distinction between art and objecthood, a distinction which requires us to consider "whether the paintings or objects in question are experienced as paintings or as objects."[8] And yet, this essay not only asks why a novel *like Salvatierra* might want to revisit the concept of the frame,

now virtually absent from contemporary discussions in criticism and theory, but also attempts to demonstrate what this absence has meant to the development of Latin Americanist discourses on culture and politics. Thus, tracing this development through key concepts that have come to define Latin Americanist criticism and theory, including postautonomy, the postaesthetic, and posthegemony, we argue that the assertion of the frame is central to both literature and politics today.

In contrast, contemporary Latin American studies points to a particular configuration of art's relationship to politics and the market, but one which is predicated on a repudiation of the distinction between literary and non-literary objects, predicated, in other words, on the elimination of the frame. For reasons that will become clear, moreover, this configuration finds its origins in a transformation in the global structure of exploitation, one which has animated a political concern with categories like exclusion, but which in so doing, has ultimately oriented political theory away from the critique of this same economic structure. Latin Americanist criticism and theory can, in this sense, be said to participate in what Walter Benn Michaels has identified as the invisibility of the frame within postmodern and poststructuralist accounts of the text and the work of art that is doubled by another: the invisibility of the structure that creates class inequality in neoliberalism.[9] Building on Michaels' extended engagement with the relation between these two kind of invisibility, our aim in this essay is to determine how an assertion of the frame not only offers a means toward rendering the literary visible, but also and more importantly might reorient Latin American studies toward the critique of social structure itself.

Postautonomy

We can observe something like the culmination of what we are here calling the objecthood of the text in what the critic Josefina Ludmer has recently described as postautonomous literatures (*literaturas posautónomas*). For Ludmer, such postautonomous literatures "appear to be literature but cannot be read with literary criteria or categories like author, work, style, writing, text and meaning."[10] "They cannot be read as literature," she adds, "because they subject 'literature' to a drastic operation of emptying-out."[11] Ludmer subsequently locates the origins of literature's postautonomy in two postulates:

> The first is that everything cultural (and literary) is economic and that everything economic is cultural (and literary). And the second postulate would be that reality (if considered from the perspective of the media, which continuously constitutes it) is fiction and that fiction is reality.[12]

Postautonomous literatures would therefore seem to recall the historical avant-garde's well-known attack on the category of "work," though the difference, according to Ludmer, is that this same gesture today acquires an entirely new significance following the end of literary autonomy, or as she puts it, the "end of Bourdieu's field, which presupposes the sphere's autonomy (or the thought of spheres)."[13] That is, postautonomous literatures are not so much an attack on literary autonomy as they are a symptom of the collapse of what Bourdieu identifies as the "field of restricted production," whose autonomy "can be measured by its power to define its own criteria for the production and evaluation of its products."[14] This is the sphere in which symbolic goods are manufactured for those producers who establish the criteria of aesthetic value, "internal demarcations [that] appear irreducible to any external factors of economic, political or social differentiation," including what Ludmer designates the "literariness" (*literaturidad*) of a work.[15] For Ludmer, however, any claim to such irreducibility today ultimately fails to recognize "new conditions of production and circulation of the book that modify ways of reading" in the "era of transnational book publishing corporations or the book's role in major newspaper, radio, and television networks, as well as in other media."[16] What this means, then, is that postautonomous literatures get what other forms of writing don't: that it no longer makes any sense to insist on the irreducibility of art to economic, political, or social phenomena, or more simply, on the distinction between art and nonart.

What Ludmer imagines here, in other words, is a form of writing that eliminates its own frame. This much is clear when she notes that these "writings not only cross the border of 'literature,' but also that of 'fiction' and remain outside-inside both borders."[17] Needless to say, the "border" evoked here has less to do with the physical dimensions of the canvas than with the boundary that categories like "literature" and "fiction" afford. And yet, like the notion of a limitless and unframed work in *Salvatierra*, such forms of writing not only suggest "they are and at the same time are not literature," but that "they are fiction and reality" as well, insofar as reality now is "produced and constructed by the media, technologies, and the sciences," and in this sense, "does not want to be represented because it already is pure representation."[18] Postautonomous literatures might be understood best, then, as a negation of the distinction between art and nonart that embodies a new situation marked by an alteration in the relationship between the economic and the cultural.

No doubt this is the scenario that has defined artistic production within the centers of the global economy like the United States for some time now: a de-autonomization associated with what Fredric Jameson identified nearly three decades ago as "postmodernism or, the cultural logic of late capitalism"; and indeed, one cannot help but hear in Ludmer's account echoes of Jameson's claim that "The theory of postmodernity affirms a gradual de-differentiation of these levels, the economic itself gradually becoming cultural, all the while

the cultural gradually becomes economic."[19] Importantly, this is this same de-differentiation between aesthetic and commodity production which, according to Jameson, was attended by the rise of a situation within the first world, in which "we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience."[20] From a certain perspective, then, the trajectory Ludmer traces points to the enlargement of a dynamic to which Jameson's term "postmodernism" refers: namely, capitalism's ceaseless march across the globe into previously unincorporated enclaves of cultural production, now integrated into the market. Ludmer's account thus raises the question of whether the standpoint of Latin American cultural production today is no different than that of the first world, and it is precisely this indistinctness her notion of postautonomous literatures would seem to register in approximating the vanishing point of postmodernism's own contemporaneity—a sense of the present which, according to Jameson, is no different than that of the commodity.

Postliterary

That said, "postmodernism" has long been part of the Latin Americanist lexicon, as some of the more significant developments in Latin American studies since the 1980s can be understood to participate in what John Beverley and José Oviedo in 1993 called the "postmodernism debate in Latin America."[21] The origins of this "debate," they contend, lie in the "crisis of the project of the Latin American Left in the wake of its defeat and/or demobilization in the period that extends from 1973 to the present." "[A]ll of these factors," they explain, "led to a pervasive climate of 'disenchantment,' in which the nationalist and leftist ideologies that had defined the protagonism of the Latin American intelligentsia in the previous period have been at best put on hold, at worst abandoned" (5). For Beverley and Oviedo, the "disenchantment" with Left politics—like that of the Cuban Revolution, for instance—as well as the emergence of new social movements throughout the region demanded the "postmodern" move away from a "politics (and epistemology) of representation to one of solidarity and participation" (8). The problem, as they saw it, was that intellectuals had failed to include, for example, grassroots indigenous populations who worked on writing radio soap opera scripts in Aymara (8). Which is to say that the question of inclusion becomes just as important to culture as it is to politics. Postmodernism in Latin America consequently "posits" a "new sense of cultural and aesthetic agency" to which the Left had not yet reconciled itself. This "new sense," then, not only marked a reconfiguration of art's relationship to politics, but would also prove essential to a redefinition of politics itself as the vindication of the excluded subjects of subalternism.

Yet, it is worth remembering that what Beverley and Oviedo conceive as a "new sense of cultural and aesthetic agency" also constituted a foundational moment for Latin American cultural studies, which, as Neil Larsen has shown, rejected that stigmatization of mass or

popular culture largely associated with Frankfurt school criticism.[22] Against, for example, Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the "culture industry," cultural studies never denies the commodity status of popular culture, but nonetheless urges the recognition of its potential for popular resistance to various forms of domination. But Larsen also makes the connection between this "cultural turn" and postautonomy all the clearer when he notes that the identification of this "oppositional, emancipatory character" derives from an understanding of mass culture that is now cast as "embodying its own scale of values to which notions of aesthetic autonomy are fundamentally irrelevant."[23] This disavowal of notions like autonomy in cultural studies is thus explicitly rooted in a democratizing impulse directed at the dismantling of what has been widely conceived as the Frankfurt school's shortsighted and elitist insistence on the distinction between "high" and "low" art and hierarchies of aesthetic value, and impulse we can already see underlying Franco's claim in 1979 that aesthetic autonomy works in the "service of reactionary governments."[24] In short, the turn away from autonomy and toward cultural studies signaled the desire for a more inclusive society.

Perhaps no development in this period captures the nature of this impulse more than *testimonio* criticism, whose theorization is underwritten by that conception of the unframed text, which is also central to Ludmer's postautonomous literatures. As is well known, the *testimonio* begins to gain critical attention in the late 1960s with the publication of Miguel Barnet's *Biography oj a Runaway Slave* (1966), and with its consecration following the decision by Cuba's Casa de las Américas to create a *testimonio* category for its annual prize. Its subsequent rise to prominence as the expression of new social movements throughout Latin America would eventually lead critics like George Yúdice to define the *testimonio* as an "authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.)," as is the case, most notably, of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1982).[25] On one hand, then, we might say that the *testimonio* and postautonomous literatures couldn't be more different; the commitment to the transmission of an "authentic narrative" is clearly at odds with that capacity to "*fabricate present*" (*fabrican presente*) that Ludmer attributes to the postautonomous text: one embodies "authentic" reality, while the other manufactures it (what Ludmer also calls "realityfiction" [*realidadficción*]).[26] On the other hand, it doesn't take much to see that the *testimonio*'s means of transmission are founded on a similar disavowal of "literary criteria or categories like author, work, style, writing, text and meaning."

This is precisely what Larsen underlines when he refers to the *testimonio* as "postliterary culture."[27] As Larsen demonstrates, readings of *testimonios* like Menchú's "seem to produce a virtual 'erasure' of the authorial function itself," an "erasure" which would, from our perspective, seem to prefigure literature's postautonomy.[28] And it is this same commitment to the putatively "postliterary" that Larsen sees in accounts like Yúdice's, in which the difference

between "the testimonial narrative and narrator…ceases to matter," so that Menchú does not so much "invent or invoke the village or tribal community" as "she herself, or the story, becomes, even constitutes, the community."[29] Which is to say, in the terms elaborated here, that, for Yúdice, it is as if Menchú steps into and out of the frame, or more precisely, it is as if her narrative eliminates it.

This and similar readings of the *testimonio* also demand a shift in the way we conceive of literary representation, and so it is perhaps not surprising that the thrust of various approaches to the *testimonio* has long been to downplay the question of representation itself in favor of its practice or performativity. Accordingly, Yúdice claims that "the speaker does not speak for or represent a community but rather performs an act of identity-formation that is simultaneously personal and collective."[30] Yet, this insistence on performativity, is not simply a shift away from representation, but a desire to re-describe literary meaning as a "truth effect" that the *testimonio* generates.[31] Following this logic, the political value of the *testimonio*, for the postliterary critic, has less to do with the meaning it communicates, since any progressive newspaper, novel, or essay can also speak to these same social injustices. Rather, it is the emphasis placed on the effect generated by this antiliterary text that brings it closer, for example, to a politics of "international human rights and solidarity movements" (37). In this way, critics imagine that the *testimonio* triggers a univocal political reaction, and so what is important is not simply what it says about a particular group, but rather the unframed text's ability to elicit what Beverley himself calls an "ethical and political response" (36) like solidarity from the reader; and indeed, for the testimonio to be ethical at all, it must eliminate the frame.

The consequences of this shift from the meaning of the text to the effect it produces are made explicit in in Beverley's 1989 essay, "The Margins at the Center," which introduces the idea that the *testimonio* "constitutes itself as a new form" (40) and "implies a radical break" with the literary and "literature" (42). More specifically, he argues that the *testimonio* is written with an eye to overcoming "bourgeois writing since the Renaissance" by undermining the idea of "authorial intention" that has long been "bound up" with various notions of literary interpretation and reading. In short, Beverley suggests that insofar as the *testimonio* calls for a refusal of those concepts central to definitions of literature and literary criticism, then it, like Ludmer's text, "cannot be read as literature."

Testimonio criticism, nonetheless, advances the postliterary as an embodiment of political potential—an embodiment, that is, of a "new sense of cultural and aesthetic agency." Beverley puts it this way:

> Because the authorial function has been erased or mitigated, the relationship between authorship and forms of individual and hierarchical power in bourgeois society has also changed. Testimonio represents an affirmation of the individual subject, even of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle. (41)

Ultimately, we can see that the testimonio as a postliterary phenomenon is also crucially a political project, one that attacks not simply literature and hierarchies of aesthetic value, but a political system that produces a hierarchization of Latin American society, including marginalized groups like the subaltern.

Beverley has more recently summed up the aims of this project in *Latinamericanism after 9/11* (2011) with the question, "What would be the elements of a Latinamericanism articulated 'from' the subaltern?"—"from" the position, in other words, of those individual and collective subjects that have long been excluded from the national-popular discourses of Latin America.[32] And while he has more recently abandoned subalternist critique in favor of what he takes to be a more pragmatic support of the Left governments of the *marea rosada* he identifies with "postsubalternism," the terms remain largely the same: an "alliance politics" including various "social groups" and the "different sorts of experiences, interests, values, worldviews, histories, cultural practices, sometimes even languages"(83) that define them. And in fact, one can observe a similar reasoning behind Beverley's earlier account of the *testimonio* narrative in "Margin at the Center," which he understands as "democratic and egalitarian" because it allows for the "entry into literature of persons who would normally […] be excluded" (35) as a result of their race, gender, or social class. More to the point, the testimonio is conceived here as giving voice to those who speak not "about" but "from" the position of exclusion.

At the same time, Beverley also believes that the *testimonio*'s democratic and egalitarian character allows for an identification with the excluded that promotes "solidarity," and in so doing, undercuts what *Latinamericanism after 9/11* will later describe as the "neo-Arielism" (19) promoted by Latin American intellectuals. These are intellectuals who, according to Beverley, not only regard North American Latin Americanists with skepticism, but also—and more importantly—ignore the "proletarian/popular on whose behalf they had pretended to speak" (20). In this sense, Beverley's Latinamericanism works toward a de-hierarchization of the political that mirrors the democratization of culture already implicit in cultural studies' disavowal of aesthetic criteria like autonomy. But this also means that both Latinamericanism and the *testimonio* reflect a deep investment in the position "from" which one speaks, as well as of the "authentic" (24) voices of those *indígenas*, afro-latinos, mulattos, mestizos,

women, sexual minorities, homosexuals, and even readers and critics, that both literature and traditional politics have excluded. We will return to this investment shortly, but for now it is important to note that the distinction between literary and postliterary culture is, for *testimonio* criticism, predicated on the idea that a politics of inclusion begins once literature as such ends.

Postaesthetic

But where, for Beverley, the politics of inclusion central to cultural studies presents a solution to the problems posed by the crisis of the Latin American Left, Alberto Moreiras has shown why a commitment to identities fails as a response to a "substantive change in the structure of capitalism at the world level." This is the post-Cold War moment of Latin American politics that Moreiras' own contribution to this issue of *nonsite* examines in Horacio Castellanos Moya's *La diáspora* (1989), in which he reads the novel's engagement with the defeat of the Central American Left as gesturing toward, in his words, "things and affects that might harbor the seed of historical potencies that remain unseen and unimaginable." In his seminal *The Exhaustion of Difference* (2001), Moreiras had already demonstrated what this same moment has meant not simply for Latin American literary and cultural debates, but for the function of "critical reason" more generally.[33] According to Moreiras, the insistence on the need to articulate a Latin Americanism "from" the position of the excluded is a kind of "locational thinking," a form of thought that underlies culturalist notions of a specifically Latin American alternative modernity belonging to what he calls the "aesthetic-historicist paradigm" (15).

Yet, such notions are, according to Moreiras, now exhausted in the wake of the very transformations in global capitalism that postmodernity and globalization name. Like Ludmer, then, Moreiras draws on Jameson to suggest that Latin Americanist discourse has yet to contend with this change, what he later describes as the "move of capital toward universal subsumption under globalization" (29). Moreiras' point, however, is not to urge an abandonment of cultural studies altogether; and indeed, he argues that cultural studies has made important contributions to the "destruction" of the aesthetic-historicist paradigm by revealing the singularity of not just literature and art but also of Latin American history as discrete objects of study to be "mere ideological prejudice" (15). Yet, cultural studies, he maintains, is still committed to a concept of critical reason tied to the "determination, evaluation, and defense of what is properly Latin American," and therefore "cannot go beyond the affirmation of an identitarian space-in-resistance, whether from a continental, national, or intranational perspective" (5), and of which Beverley's commitment to the subaltern is only one version. That is, despite uncovering this "ideological prejudice," Latin American studies remains largely invested in understanding its object exclusively in terms of identity and difference at a moment marked by the "commodification of location" (21). From

this position, refusing to confront this moment of real subsumption, the success of Beverley's commitment to locational thinking turns out to be a failure.

Accordingly, central to *The Exhaustion of Difference* is the question of how to study Latin America, while avoiding the "pitfalls of its recommodification" (22), or the trap of locational thinking. As can be expected, this project becomes all the more difficult in the age of real subsumption, "the moment in which intellectual labor, no longer a for-itself, has become a moment of capital" (100). Recalling Jameson and prefiguring Ludmer, Moreiras insists this moment is just as conclusive for art in general and literature in particular, neither of which has recourse today to the distinction between art and commodity, or art and nonart:

> And the same happens to aesthetic thinking, which is always necessarily based on the possibility of an existing if unreachable outside…which is aesthetically posited as the transaesthetic foundation of the real and therefore as foundation of the aesthetic itself. (20)

For Moreiras, in other words, the so-called autonomous space of aesthetics—what long acted as one foundation of critical reason—has disappeared. Which is to say that the distance between the artwork and beholder, what, as we've already noted, the concept of the frame presupposes, can no longer be preserved under the conditions of real subsumption. That Ludmer's claim regarding the "end" of the "thought of spheres" will resonate with this account is obvious enough, though the dissolution of the frame here—of what Moreiras calls at one point the "hermeneutic circle"—takes on a specifically political meaning in the conceptualization of the literary that is "postaesthetic and posthistoricist" (16). So, although cultural studies has been "fundamentally committed to the deconstruction of the inside-outside relationship" on which culturalist theories of modernity have rested, it has yet to "engage in the radicalization of its own postulates and look for…the outside of the hermeneutic circularity, what has been subalternized," and in this sense excluded "as the constitutive outside of the hegemonic relation" (16). Or, said differently, the postaesthetic offers a response to the "aesthetic-historicist paradigm" at the center of Latin Americanism because it takes into account the conditions of real subsumption, conditions which cultural studies continues to ignore.

The postaesthetic moment is the revelation and recognition of this "remainder" (16) and "constitutive outside" as "savage space" (15), which comes to define the concept of critical reason that may yet meet the challenges posed by the real subsumption of intellectual labor today, and which, we will discuss, underlies what Moreiras elsewhere identifies as the "nonsubject of the political" and "infrapolitics." For now we ought to note that the

identification of critical reason with deconstruction here results not only in a reconceptualization of the aims of cultural studies, but in the discovery of entirely new critical possibilities within literary studies as well. For Moreiras, this has everything to do with the "subaltern function" literary studies assumes following the ascendency of cultural studies within the university, a function that allows it to realize the "irruptive possibilities" of "postaesthetic and posthistoricist language" by means of the "literary labor of translation" (16). From the postaesthetic view of this literary labor, however, this point is not to produce a complete translation, but rather that, in taking up this task, criticism could possibly reveal the existence of what he identifies as an "untranslative excess" (23). That translation will always remain incomplete not only recalls the impossibility of completely knowing the object of study (Latin America), but also that some aspect of this object must overcome conceptualization/representation if we are to avoid expropriations and appropriative practices constitutive of capital's law of equivalence, or the "commodification of location" (21) that has exhausted all thinking of identity and difference. In short, the postaesthetic points to that which always remains the "unreachable outside" of aesthetic and historicist thinking.

At the same time, resistance to the "commodification of location" is associated here with a postaesthetic dimension that rests on the identification of an "excess" not simply as a "supplement to location" (23), but as supplement to the "thought of spheres" that Ludmer associates with literary categories and criteria; and, as Moreiras makes clear, the point of the postaesthetic is to demonstrate the degree to which such thought is predicated on the exclusion of a "constitutive outside" (excess) that, at the same time, destabilizes the "inside-outside relationship." It is in this sense, then, that the postaesthetic—like the postliterary and postautonomous—can be said to be directed at imagining a text that dissolves its own frame. Or to return to *Salvatierra*, we might say that, from the perspective of the postaesthetic, the missing scroll works in the novel to destabilize the inside-outside relationship through which the artwork becomes visible. That is, like the supplement in Moreiras' account, the missing year prevents the frame from completely closing. But where, for Miguel, the unavailability of the scroll means forever living in neither the real nor the aesthetic world, for the postaesthetic, it means the end of the aesthetic-historicist paradigm and the beginning of a new project. And so, like its postliterary and postautonomous counterparts, the postaesthetic imagines that politics begins once the frame dissolves and literature ends.

Posthegemony

As Mairal's novel indicates, this dissolution of the frame would not only render the world indistinguishable from its representation, but in so doing, transform the artwork into an occasion for an experience in much the same way any object we encounter in the world might become such an occasion.[34] Or, to put it in terms borrowed from Fried, the distinction

between the work of art and its objecthood ceases to matter altogether. And as we have begun to argue, in the context of Latin American criticism and theory, a similar distinction is identified as the problem both postliterary and postaesthetic conceptions of text seek to overcome with an eye to decisively political ends. This is nowhere more apparent than in *testimonio* criticism, which understands the performative dimension of the postliterary text as a means toward generating an experience that would result in the reader's identification with the subaltern. But where a critic like Beverley had seen the possibility of solidarity and participation in this dimension of the *testimonio* narrative, the same insistence on readerly responses vis-à-vis the text that underlies his argument against literature will persist in radicalized form—one that makes it even more fundamental—in Jon Beasley-Murray's important account of posthegemony. [35]

To begin, Beasley-Murray's *Posthegemony* (2010) argues that considerations of consent, opinions, and beliefs—what he calls "traditional politics"—"offers at best a temporary palliative, at worst a fatal distraction from the real workings of power and domination" (xii). As a result, he locates the possibility of a left politics today in the articulation of habit, affect, and the multitude (as articulated by Bourdieu, Deleuze, and Negri respectively). Beasley-Murray consequently maintains that "in stressing the role of habit," posthegemonic analysis points to "processes that involve neither consent nor coercion"; and "in stressing the role of affect," it turns to "the impersonal and embodied flow of intensities that undermines any concept of a rational subject who could provide or withdraw his or her consent" (x).

As Charles Hatfield suggests in his contribution to this special issue, the consequences of this shift away from questions of consent, opinion, and belief that the term "posthegemony" refers to become all the clearer in Beasley-Murray's claim that "What matters is how things present themselves to us, not what they may *re*present" (205, emphasis in original). For Hatfield, this amounts to a reiteration of the same commitment to the primacy of the subject's position that has been central to Latin American intellectual history, and that Moreiras criticizes. But *Posthegemony*'s emphasis on the "how things present themselves to us" demands an attention to the subject's affective responses that will, as Beasley-Murray suggests, also have far-reaching consequences for the relationship between politics and aesthetics. Following Terry Eagleton's notion of aesthetics as a "privileged means by which affect is purified, submitted to the apparent disinterestedness of liberal ideology," Beasley-Murray discovers a posthegemonic politics in what Eagleton cites as the "habits, pieties, sentiments, and affections" that not only become "the ultimate binding force of the bourgeois social order," but for this reason also offer a "resource for revolution" (149).

Dierdra Reber's essay in this issue provides a comprehensive sense of what Eagleton's claim looks like within the Hispanist literary canon by tracing an affective narrative logic from the colonial period and nineteenth-century independence moments, through the Latin American "boom" literatures, and to present-day mobilization of social media by protest movements in Mexico (#yoysoy132) and Spain (15-M). But *Posthegemony* takes this claim a step further in imagining that aesthetics is politics to the extent that it provides "something in the body" with an opportunity to "revolt against the power which inscribes it" (149). This is in no small part because "Resistance is no longer a matter of contradiction, but rather of the dissonance between would-be hegemonic projects and the immanent processes that they always fail fully to represent" (136). That this view of aesthetics stems from a "politics of affect" (130) that foregrounds what *Posthegemony* describes as the "(non)relation or incompatibility between processes of capture and affective escape" (138) will therefore also suggest that Beverley's "antiliterary" text falls short precisely because the forms of solidarity with new social movements—just as the solidarity with the *marea rosada* his "postsubalternism" will seek later—rest on the production of a readerly experience that are subject to the processes of capture executed by the state, the party, or populism. In contrast, Beasley-Murray insists that "however much affect is confined, something always escapes" (132), and it is in this "something" that a radical potential for resistance lies. In this way, the "resources for revolution" he sees in aesthetics are deeply bound up with the work's ability to generate an affective response that, at the same time, underscores the irrelevance of representation and, by extension, of cognitive processes of interpretation. And it is only in so doing that aesthetics can sidestep questions of belief or consent.[36]

Yet, as Abraham Acosta usefully puts it in an incisive reading of Beasley-Murray's *Posthegemony* and Beverley's *Latinamericanism after 9/11*, "what we see between the two is the fashioning of competing models and the formation of a new economy of reading."[37] We would only add that this is particularly true insofar as "reading" is understood here not as the interpretation of meaning, but as an attention to the effects a work provokes in the reader. To be sure, this attention is oriented toward different—if not altogether antithetical—political ends in each. For Beverley, the aim is "the formation of a new historical bloc at national, continental, and intercontinental levels in Latin America based on alliance politics between social groups (including but not limited to economic classes) with different sorts of experiences, interests, values, worldviews, histories, cultural practices, sometimes even languages."[38] In contrast, Beasley-Murray suggests that the conjunction of an embodied affect and habit "leads us to the multitude: a social subject that gains power as it constructs new habits, new modes of being in the world whose durability is secured precisely by the fact that they are embodied well beneath consciousness" (178). And yet, if Beverley's postliterary or "antiliterary" text can be said to perform a kind of consciousness-raising that provides the reader with those beliefs

that Beasley-Murray's politics of affect treats as "temporary palliative" and "fatal distraction," both are equally committed to imagining a form of immediacy between reader and text that demands a dissolution of the frame. For what is primary in both is not what a work represents, but rather with how it affects us. In brief, what is significant and political about the work of art is, for both, the effect it has on the reader, not what it means or represents.

But this also means that insofar as *Posthegemony*'s emphasis falls on the "embodied flow of intensities" or effects provoked, then what it understands as the *function* of the literary text or artwork more generally is no different from that of non-aesthetic objects like populist rhetoric, mass media, or popular culture. Of course, from the standpoint of affective criticism—and from that of cultural studies' critique of aesthetics—this is precisely the point. In this way, Beasley-Murray provides what is perhaps the clearest picture of what the literary text *is* and *does* under the conditions of real subsumption that Ludmer's postautonomy names. For Ludmer, such forms of writing register a self-reflexive refusal of the literary in its most conventional or formal sense to suggest that they are not fiction because rather than represent reality they "*fabricate present*." And if, according to Beasley-Murray, "what matters is how things present themselves to us, not what they may *re*present," this is, from Ludmer's perspective, because in the wake of literature's real subsumption ("everything cultural [and literary] is economic and that everything economic is cultural [and literary]), there is nothing to represent ("reality…is fiction and fiction is reality").

As Ludmer also suggests, this emptying-out of both the literary and its claims to representing the present as historical referent will have wide-ranging consequences, not only with respect to the way in which texts are circulated and read, but particularly in regard to what Adorno and Horkheimer had seen as the "distinction between the logic of the work and that of the social system," a division that literature's assertion of autonomy had formerly provided. This "social system" is one in which labor processes of all kinds, including cultural ones, are directed toward the creation of value and its valorization. Said differently, without recourse to the logic of the work that such autonomy presumes, we must consider the literary object primarily in relation to what Marx understood as the "unity of the labor process and the process of valorization," in "the capitalist process of production, or the capitalist form of the production of commodities."[39] And if literature is a commodity like any other, then it can be said to play a significant role in the process of valorization represented by Marx's exchange-formula M-C-M^1. From the standpoint of this same process of valorization, however, this also means that a literary text is no more significant—indeed, no different—than, say, a Hollywood blockbuster, a saw, a toothbrush, or any other object. Of course, no commodity can fulfill this role unless it meets the demands imposed by the market, which is to say that to presume that literature is *only a commodity like any other* requires us to believe that *what it*

is and does is determined exclusively by the effort to fulfill consumer desires and realize its exchange-value. Consequently, if Ludmer believes that postautonomous literatures "cannot be read as literature," this is because what she cites as "literary criteria or categories like author, work, style, writing, text, and meaning" all evince the same market-driven calculation that does not just efface the distinction between artworks and commodities, but also renders the distinction—much like Salvatierra's absent frame—between literature and any other kind of object irrelevant.

Furthermore, we can understand why the reader's or viewer's affective dispositions and experience become all the more important at the moment of literature's postautonomy, why, in other words, the term "postautonomous literatures" is simply another name for the literatures of posthegemony. For what the work says about itself is, from the point of view of the commodity, less important than what it might say *to* and *about* us as readers/consumers, since it is only in light of her or his response that the object has any value for the critic. Thus, what follows from the repudiation of categories like artwork or meaning is a deep investment in considerations of whatever effect the artwork—like any object—happens to produce, and so what we experience and who we are as subjects of that experience become primary concerns. Indeed, for reasons we have already touched on, this insistence on the commodity character of all literature, and art more generally, offers a means toward imagining a dissolution of the frame that renders the work's objecthood all the more conspicuous. This is no less the case for the posthegemonic commitment to "how things present themselves to us," for insofar as interpretation is understood here as a cognitive function associated with consent, opinion, belief, and representation, then the question of what a text or painting means is just as much a "distraction" from what is both significant and political about the work itself. And if what matters instead are questions of what happens to us (at a pre-cognitive, corporeal level), as well as who we are (as embodied subjects), then Beasley-Murray's account is not just consistent with Ludmer's, but marks a similar insistence on the primacy of textual effects that is consistent with the notion of the frameless text we have traced from the rise of testimonio in 1980s to the postautonomous literatures of the present. We might even say that Beasley-Murray's affective criticism goes a step further insofar as this commitment to the primacy of what happens at the pre-cognitive and corporeal level makes it impossible to even register something like the frame.

Inequality, Exploitation, and Inclusion

The disintegration of the modicum of distance from the market that literature's assertion of autonomy had formerly provided here meets the disintegration of that distance between the artwork and subject, or between the text and reader, that the frame presupposes. And as we have just seen, what follows from this is an increasing attentiveness to the question of what

happens to the reader. But while this project came to define a good deal of literary and cultural debate in Latin America throughout the last three decades, it has also been consistently given an immediate political content, one which has been underwritten by a concern with the different positions individual and collective subjects assume within society.

The prominence given to this concern marks a tendency that extends well beyond the disciplinary boundaries of these debates and to other disciplines; and in fact, the consequences of this orientation are perhaps nowhere more apparent than in John Womack's "Doing Labor History: Feelings, Work, Material Power" (2005). Here Womack examines the importance labor studies increasingly places on the worker's experience, and questions of race, gender, or identity more generally. This concern, he observes, has been attended by a tendency to treat a worker's relationship to labor—and labor's relationship to capital—as less important, if not altogether irrelevant. The result, according to Womack, has been a shift from analyses of "coordinated labor power in production" to an investment in accounting for "individual, personal experience, not work, but the *feeling* of a self at work."[40] Similarly, labor history's concern with who the worker is—with his or her "'voices,' 'subjectivity,' 'experience,' 'meanings,' 'identity,' and 'language'" (274)—not only refuses to see "workers…as labor power" (283), but in so doing, also prevents historians from understanding the very economic structure that transforms individuals into workers in the first place (that is, capitalist production). And this is particularly true, according to Womack, in the case of "U.S. historians of Latin America" (279), for whom the disappointment with the Marxian or revolutionary Left throughout the region would prove decisive by 1990.

But the tendency Womack considers here can also be said to participate in what Daniel Zamora has identified as a "semantic and ideological evolution" that has sought to redefine the fundamental problem of exploitation as a question about exclusion.[41] As Zamora suggests, this evolution is rooted in a broader tendency—inside and outside of the university—to conceive of politics exclusively as an accounting for the disproportionate effects of inequality that individuals and marginalized groups experience under capitalism. Tracing this shift through debates on the economy in Europe and the US since the 1980s, and back to the stress on domination and discrimination underlying the critique of classical Marxism of the late-1960s, Zamora notes that the growing centrality of the term "excluded" for both the Right and the Left has worked primarily to displace a concern with those forms of exploitation that underlie labor's relationship to capital. What this has meant, according to Zamora, is that

> [T]he categories of "the unemployed," "the poor," or the "precarious," are swiftly disconnected from being understood in terms of the exploitation at the heart of capitalist economic relations, and find themselves and their situation apprehended in terms of relative (monetary, social, or psychological) deprivation, filed under the general rubrics of "exclusion," "discrimination," or forms of "domination."

Whether mobilized on behalf of conservative critiques of the "privileged and protected welfare underclass," or by leftists with an eye to underscoring the radical potential of the "precariat," the "*sans-culottes*," or the "part of the partless," this focused attention on the category of the "excluded" pits two factions of the same exploited class—the employed and unemployed, "active" workers and "surplus populations"—against each other. Importantly, this shift has also succeeded in redefining the antagonism between labor and capital at the heart of capitalism as the conflict between the "included" and the "excluded," and in so doing, has reoriented the aims of social and political theory away from the transformation of the mode of *production* and capitalist economic relations. And if, as Zamora notes, "what takes center stage is what/where one *is* (one's identity) in the relations of domination within one's own class (unemployed, underemployed, immigrant, etc.)," then we can begin to see why this semantic and ideological evolution can be said to recall the same commitment to the prominence of identity and experience Womack sees in labor history's concern with "the *feeling* of a self at work."

No doubt the historical trajectory Zamora outlines belongs to the context of the end of the American and European postwar boom that introduced not only a quantitative change in unemployment, but also a qualitative transformation in the form that unemployment takes. And yet, it is also true that a similar change in the global distribution of unemployment—as well as in the global division of labor—has produced comparable consequences in intellectual and political debates within the context of Latin American studies since the 1980s. As Robert Kurz has shown, this postwar boom corresponds to a period marked by an explosive increase in capital intensity (what Marx calls the "organic composition of capital") propelled by an unprecedented leap in the scientific and technical capacity of capitalist production during the postwar period, but whose origins lie in the very logic of commodity production that demands the development of productive forces from businesses with an eye to competitiveness.[42] The result is an intensification of productivity that renders capital increasingly incapable of absorbing labor power. Or, as Kurz puts it, capitalism becomes "'unable to exploit,' that is, for the first time in the history of capitalism, the total global mass of productively exploited abstract labor is declining absolutely, as a result of the permanently increasing levels of

productive forces."[43] This new and unprecedented standard of productivity leads to a decline in profitability that throws the entire global system of commodity production into crisis.

The consequences of this historically specific immanent contradiction are well known in Latin America, whose economies could not keep up with these new levels of productivity, and onto which the burden of this crisis is eventually shifted by way, for example, of the structural adjustment policies designed by the IMF and World Bank. What follows, according to Kurz, is the "collapse of modernization," a situation in which the conditions of possibility for social and economic modernization had been radically altered, if not altogether eliminated, by the third world's inability to meet new levels of productivity. Consolidated under the debt crisis of the 1980s, this collapse of modernization would render the developmentalist hope for success within that system—to say nothing of an alternative to it—an impossibility. But this also means that the proletarianized masses that various modernization projects promised to integrate into the national-popular state become redundant to capital's economic needs, transformed now into what Kurz calls "monetary subjects without money." For Kurz, "Most of the world's population today, therefore, already consists of monetary subjects without money, people who do not fit into any form of social organization, neither pre-capitalist nor capitalist, much less post-capitalist, being forced to live a social leprosy that already comprises most of the planet."[44] These are surplus populations, but Kurz's terminology is important here precisely because it marks the degree to which they remain products of and subject to the logic of exploitation, even as unabsorbed labor power.

But if this transformation in the political configuration of the world economic system can be said to precipitate the explosion in the surplus populations of Latin America's favelas, *villas miserias*, and *ciudades perdidas*, it might also be understood as the origins of that tendency within political theory and debates to emphasize the "excluded." It is perhaps for this reason that the displacement of a concern with exploitation by questions of domination and discrimination Zamora traces was no less decisive for Latin American studies. Citing Žižek, Zamora notes that the critique of classical Marxism in Europe and the US "compelled many thinkers and movements to redefine their sense of the 'social agents who could play the role of the revolutionary subject, as understudies who might replace an indisposed working class: Third World peasants, students, intellectuals, the excluded.'" This is also the case in Latin America following the socioeconomic collapse of modernization, which precipitated a dismantling of political utopias and rise in surplus populations that appear to have posed new challenges to the Marxian commitment to exploitation as the privileged category of social critique.[45] Accordingly, a similar search for such "social agents" increasingly—though not totally—divested of any association with class like the subaltern that has been as central to Latin Americanism for some time now.

For example, we have already observed how this collapse and ensuing disappointment underlies Beverley and Oviedo's call for a shift from a "politics (and epistemology) of representation to one of solidarity and participation." Beverley's work throughout the same period maintained that resistance in the form of such solidarity and participation with various social movements would oppose the hierarchies and subordinations imposed by the national-popular state. What Beverley and Oviedo call "alliance politics," to be sure, is simply another name for "identity politics," though, more importantly, it also highlights the degree to which Beverley's notion of resistance redefines the goal of all politics as a critique of domination articulated in terms of inclusion.

Moreiras proposes an alternative to such politics of inclusion/exclusion when he insists that such solidarity and participation always presumes some prior exclusion that ultimately undermines the egalitarian project promoted by critics like Beverley. Moreiras has more recently expanded on this point in a response to Beverley, explaining that the "notion that the subaltern is the constitutive outside of any hegemonic articulation—hence, the subaltern cannot claim belonging, and must therefore not claim any positive identity whatsoever: the subaltern is the nonsubject of the political."[46] This is a concept he fully develops in *Línea de sombra* (2006) as an alternative to all forms of "subjectivism in politics"—that is, to the insistence on the political primacy of the subject. Such subjectivism, Moreiras argues, "is always exclusionary, always particularist, even when the subject is conceived as communitarian subject," as in communism, "and even when the subject conceived of itself as representative of the universal," as in liberalism."[47] In contrast, the nonsubject is "not an ideal to be reached, a goal to be achieved"; rather, it is "only an instance to take into account, only a necessary condition of all political thought" that suggests that "neither justice nor equality nor liberty would be able to exist if justice, equality, and liberty are *exclusionary*" in any sense.[48] The possibility of a politics beyond the subject is consequently made available by a form of political thought—what Moreiras refers to here and elsewhere as "infrapolitics"—grounded in a recognition of a "constitutive outside" the nonsubject names, but which, at the same time, can never be incorporated into the articulation of political concepts like justice, equality, or liberty.[49] Thus, *pace* Beverley, the point is not to produce some more inclusive version of these or similar concepts by way of something like an "alliance politics," since, according to Moreiras, such a politics is invariably derived from an image of the subject that generates its own radical exclusions, remaining always outside all political and aesthetic articulations. Similarly, Susana Draper's essay in this special issue of *nonsite* demonstrates how literature, and particularly Roberto Bolaño's *Amuleto* (1999), marks the possibility of opening up a space for thinking through and beyond the notion of an impossible democracy to come, all while refusing to reduce that notion to a singular political subject.

Needless to say, Moreiras' thought of the political finds a counterpart in the concept of the postaesthetic, which, as we noted above, is not directed at any inclusion as such, but rather at the identification of an "excess" on which the binary of inside/outside (inclusion/exclusion) is not just predicated, but also by which it is deconstructed. But if Moreiras' commitment to subalternism as such can be said to alter the political meaning of exclusion, even radicalizing it as the necessary condition for all politics, we may nonetheless ask whether it can be made to speak not simply to relations of power (which always leave a "remainder," "excess," or "outside"), but to a mode of production in which exclusion itself—as in the case of the economic category of monetary subjects without money—is not just coincident with the logic of exploitation, but the inexorable result of that logic. That is, while infrapolitics offers a compelling means for a critique of domination that foregrounds the failure of every hegemonic articulation (justice, equality, liberty) by taking into account the excluded nonsubject, how might it lead to a transformation of a mode of production defined, above all, by exploitation? Or, to put the question another way: how might we map the movement from the infrapolitical to politics itself?

For Beasley-Murray, the upshot of this "vigilant and unceasing critique of power on the basis of hegemony's inevitable failures" is an unsatisfactory conception of "posthegemony as permanent critique or labor of the negative." The problem, he argues, is that critics like Moreiras "question the rules of the game by pointing to the aporetic excess for which [hegemony] can never account. But they do not doubt the game itself" (xiv). In response to what he sees as the failure of subaltern studies, Beasley-Murray develops a notion of posthegemony with a view to locating new modes of resistance, which are found in that affect, habit, and multitude to which domination itself—now at the noncognitive, corporeal level—gives rise. From this perspective too, the kinds of inclusion Beverley calls for, whether on behalf of the state, the party, or the people, ought to be regarded with skepticism, insofar as these are functions of an apparatus of "capture" into which the radical potential of such modes of resistance dissolves. In contrast, "Affect precedes and resists the process of subjection that gives us stable emotions and bounded identities," and so "Something always escapes." "But affect is ambivalent," Beasley-Murray argues, and just as easily mobilized by the repressive structures associated with the state and market: "As habit, affect continually encodes structures of domination, even immanently" and "perpetuates an arbitrary social order 'on the hither side of words and concepts'" (227).

At the same time, it turns out that habit too is "ambivalent," and therefore "threatens to outstrip the structures that it constitutes." In this sense, affect and habit are both "components of a constituent power that escapes and exceeds constituted power," which is to say, that they are tools of domination that nonetheless become a means to resist and

subvert it. One is tempted here to see something of Moreiras' emphasis on the nonsubject as the "constitutive outside," or "excess," that refuses all forms of inclusion, though a pointed difference asserts itself in Beasley-Murray's claim that "Affect and habit are the first two concepts of a theory of posthegemony, but they lead on to a third: the multitude." For the multitude, as theorized by Negri and as *Posthegemony* insists, is a subject, and even "reclaims subjectivity from its disrepute in much twentieth-century political theory" (228). Although, "Like the multitude, the subaltern is beyond representation," it is nonetheless a "limit concept," and so whereas "Subalternity is defined negatively," as the negation of hegemonic articulations of all kinds, the "multitude, by contrast, is defined positively" as the self-constituting subject of history that leaves "hegemony behind altogether" (234).

Herein, then, lies both the potential for resistance that embodied forms of affect and habit can be said to possess, as well as the futurity of posthegemony: for "habit leads us to the multitude: a social subject that gains power as it constructs new habits, new modes of being in the world whose durability is secured precisely by the fact that they are embodied well beneath consciousness" (178). Now, while this conceptualization of posthegemony would seem to recall the same investment in experience Zamora and Womack identify with the shift in political theory and labor studies away from the question of exploitation, Beasley-Murray refuses the equation of affect with experience alone, as that which "happens to a body." At the same time, the disavowal of affect's reduction to experience gives way to a transformation of history itself into the "recomposition or movement of bodies, a series of modulations in and through affect" (132). For Beasley-Murray, then, the point is not so much to foreground an experience produced by the subject's position within a particular social structure determined by one's race, gender, or class. The point is rather to conceive of this very structure as both acting on and a product of such bodily movements, which will, at the same time, give rise to new affects and habits that resist systematicity and structure as that which "always escapes."

For all that, such resistance should, again, not be confused with that form of radical exclusion on which Moreiras' thought of the political insists; on the contrary, insofar as affect, habit, and the body itself are now grasped simultaneously as the object of domination and locus of resistance "on the hither side of words and concepts," the thrust here is decidedly toward a radicalized vision of inclusion—extended now to bodies, flesh, skin, and nerves—that encompasses life itself, what Beasley-Murray, following Foucault, refers to as biopolitics. That is, political resistance is located in that which "always escapes" the apparatuses of capture associated with the state, party politics, populism, or the market, but remains situated in those processes immanent to the social field.

For this reason, however, *Posthegemony*'s biopolitics, like Moreiras' infrapolitics, must also defer the question of class politics, and Beasley-Murray suggests as much when he notes that the "multitude is a subject of a particular kind." For while it is not the "rational individual beloved of the social sciences or one of the delimited identities of cultural studies' multicultural alliance" reminiscent of Beverley's Latinamericanism, it also isn't the "traditional working class, whose identity derives from its place in the process of production and hence its relation to capital" (228). The multitude, in this sense, is the solution in which all class differences dissolve.[50] But, as Zamora explains, "More than (or rather than) an identity, the idea of proletarian," or the working class, "constituted a category" in classical Marxism. This category was "derived from the general processes of exploitation and inequality" and is a "function of the economic organization of capital."[51] What this means is that although posthegemonic politics advances a powerful critique of how the state, along with social and economic elites, exercise power, the stress laid on "how things present themselves to us," on those effects generated at the level of the body, involves deemphasizing the general processes that give rise to such effects in the first place. From this perspective, infrapolitics and the politics of affect appear as two sides of the same coin, not simply because both challenge the identitarianism implicit in various kinds of political theory and "traditional politics," but also because the conditions of the political are primarily conceived in radicalized terms of inclusion or exclusion that renders the structure of exploitation itself a secondary, if not altogether irrelevant concern. As Zamora's essay makes clear, however, the refusal to recognize exploitation as a primary concern is something which both the neoliberal Right and progressive Left are happy to accept, extending an overall trend since the late 1970s to redescribe the "class difference that generates the very structures of capitalism and exploitation" as difference in how the "effects of inequality get distributed throughout society." And the problem with this shift, according to Zamora, is that it obstructs the possibility "to think abstractly about the forces that produce inequality…and leaves us stranded at the level of their immediate forms," making it all the more difficult to imagine the transformation of the very structure that gives rise to this inequality on both a local and world-systemic scale.

Making Form Visible

Indeed, the point for Womack and Zamora is that the effort to imagine any transformation as such is not simply a question of exploitation, but of making the structure that produces it visible. Womack makes this point clear, for example, when addressing the refusal on the part of labor studies to account for that which defines it as a discipline: labor. This refusal, he argues, is important not simply as a matter of accounting for exploitation, but as a question of conceptualizing the discipline's object of inquiry itself: "They can 'explore the articulation [sic,

for inflection] of gender and class' all they please, but they will not explain industrial workers' gender or class (or discourse or subjectivity), so long as they look for it only in 'experience"' (93). In other words, insofar as what counts is the "*feeling* of the self," then it matters very little whether that feeling is produced by work, discrimination, inequality, exclusion or even other bodies. That is, the emphasis on experience functions to make the cause of that experience—capitalist economic relations—tangential at best, irrelevant at worst.

Undoubtedly, the brand of political theory developed by several of the critics considered here concerns the way in which *power* functions and effectuates domination under capitalism, and how the effects it generates become sites of potential resistance and revolt. Thus, Beasley-Murray reads in Marx the claim that "Part and parcel of our exploitation is that our habits are not our own" (204) to suggest that capital demands and imposes mechanisms of social domination that secure the perpetuation of exploitation itself. The problem with the emphasis on domination in Latin American studies, however, is that in leaving questions about the same system's mode of production aside, it has tended to render the structure of capitalist *economic* relations barely visible. Said differently, while an attention to embodied habits, experience, or hegemonic articulations may very well gesture toward an account of how exploitation continues to persist, it alone cannot make the relations of production that generate the structures of class inequality and exploitation legible in the first place. To think otherwise would be to render the difference between this system and the manner in which it reproduces itself indistinguishable. From this point of view, then, we can begin to understand the force of what Zamora means when he notes that the "invisibility" of these structures "is a kind of image of neoliberalism."

No doubt Womack's and Zamora's astute insights into labor and the structure of the economy also find a parallel in Latin Americanist literary and cultural debates, which have borne witness to a turn away from that which had long defined these and similar fields: an attention to the work itself. The predominant literary project that emerges from these debates is one committed to the text's dissolution of the very structure that distinguishes it from non-literary objects, and art from nonart more generally, rendering the differences between these invisible. Beatriz Sarlo makes a similar observation about cultural studies when she notes that:

> [T]he aesthetic question cannot be ignored without significant loss. Because if we ignore the question of aesthetics we would be losing sight of the object that cultural studies is trying to construct (in opposition to an anthropological definition of culture)....The difficulty that we face is that we are no longer sure in what sense (whether formal or fundamental) art is a specialized dimension of culture, a dimension which can be defined separately from other cultural practices.

> Thus, once again, the point which concerns us is whether we can capture the specific dimension of art, that feature which tends to be overlooked from the culturalist perspective which motivates cultural studies, which so far has been ultra-relativist with respect to formal and semantic density. The paradox we face could also be considered one in which cultural studies is perfectly equipped to examine almost everything in the symbolic dimension of the social world, except art. [52]

Sarlo's claim here has been widely criticized as evidence of her elitism—or even, as Beverley suggests, of her "neoconservative" thinking—and as evoking a desire to return to more traditional notions of literary studies associated with the national-popular state. [53] Given Sarlo's stress on values and her defense elsewhere of expertise, such criticisms are warranted. [54] At the same time, Sarlo's interest in the "aesthetic question" also raises crucial questions about the invisibility the "specific dimension of art" assumes within cultural studies. This is essentially a question of mediation, and so we might change the valences of terms like "value" and "ultra-relativist" to suggest that what is at stake here is the possibility of accounting for form at a moment when literature and culture are conceived primarily as isomorphic. From this perspective, Sarlo's critique can be said to mark a commitment to the primacy of form, one which need not culminate in a defense of notions like "aesthetic value," as it does in her essay, but which is nonetheless a necessary condition of any effort to conceptualize not just a distinction between art and nonart, but a distance between the artwork and reader's or viewer's experience.

We get a version of what this might look like in Mairal's *Salvatierra*, and particularly in Miguel's idea that finding the missing scroll would complete his father's "work." What is crucial here for Salvatierra's son—and crucial for a certain conception of literature and art—is that without the roll, the difference between art and life becomes blurred, producing what the novel describes as the sensation of a "limitless flow" or the "infinite." But this, as we recall, also raises the question of what, if anything, could make the four kilometers of canvas something other than an object the beholder experiences in the same way she or he might experience any other massive object.

This is a question the novel seeks to address, for instance, when Miguel recalls that the Guinness Book of Records people had proposed to lay out the work on a highway and film it from a helicopter. The brothers refuse because "Salvatierra wouldn't have liked this. He hadn't painted his work for it to be seen from a helicopter like some kind of monstrous prodigy" (*MY*31/*S*38). [55] Viewing the painting in this way would suggest experiencing the

enormity of an amazing or unusual thing, and, as Mairal's narrator would have it, Salvatierra had sought to create something else. Indeed, the novel alerts us to this fact earlier when Miguel notes that their father had distanced himself from the "installations and happenings" of the sixties, "aesthetic concerns that were alien to him" (*MY*23/*S*28), and which were—at least historically— conceived as attacks on the institution of art and the category of "work" itself. This is why Miguel's search for the missing year is central to Salvatierra's story, for finding the scroll would imply that "The infinite would reach an end." But if finding the scroll would complete the work of art, and in this sense, provide a "frame, a border," this does not mean that the sensation of limitlessness it provokes is totally irrelevant to its status as a painting; what the frame introduces rather is the possibility of distinguishing between whatever Miguel might feel before the canvas and what the artist wants everyone to feel. Indeed, no one denies that artworks can provoke an infinite range of responses from viewers/readers that have everything to do with who they are. The problem isn't that the work of art gives rise to various kinds of effects, or even that we might think of it as the source of our affective dispositions. Rather, the problem is that, in the absence of the frame, the difference between painting and objects ceases to matter altogether, and so the experience of a tree in Salvatierra's painting becomes no different than the experience of a tree outside of it. Thus, the insistence on the frame turns out to be not only an insistence on a distinction between art and nonart, but an assertion of the irreducibility of the artwork's *intended* effects to the *actual* effects it occasions.

What it means to make artistic form visible, then, is to mark a distance between artworks and objects, between a representation of the world and the world itself, and in this sense, to make the difference between *intended* and *unintended* effects visible. Borrowing from Michael Fried, we might say that in defeating or suspending its own objecthood, Salvatierra's painting would not simply insist on the irrelevance of the beholder's experience to its meaning, but more precisely, on the irrelevance of those unintended effects that any beholder might experience. The difference between these views is provided here by the frame, which, in foregrounding the canvas' status as painting, allows us to ascribe the sensation of limitlessness Miguel feels not to an object but to a work of art, and to understand that sensation itself as an intended effect, that is, as a question of meaning and interpretation.

In this way, *Salvatierra*'s assertion of the frame can be said to approximate Fried's idea of absorption in painting, which is both constitutive of a "mode of pictorial unity," as well as a means by which to refuse the reduction of the artwork's meaning to the beholder's actual experience.[56] What is important in Fried's account, as in Sarlo's, is the possibility of envisioning a work whose form and meaning remain irreducible to those unintended effects the beholder/reader may experience. And we can see something of the inverse in Beasley-

Murray's claim that "What matters is how things present themselves to us, not what they may *re*present." For if what the work may represent or mean—an interpretive question associated with "consent, opinion, and belief"—does not matter, then the difference between intended and unintended effects cannot matter either. Conversely, in Mairal's novel, the insistence on this "specific dimension of art" presupposes a distance that not only allows Miguel to live outside of his father's painting and past, but also makes representation possible; to insist on what Miguel calls the frame, in other words, is to insist on the irreducibility of art to objecthood, making visible a formal distinction between meaning and readerly experience that a significant swath of Latin Americanist theory has treated as unimportant for the last thirty years.

The point, however, is not simply that the text needs to defeat or suspend its own objecthood. It is also a matter of making form—literary and social—visible. Steve Buttes' contribution to this issue of *nonsite* provides a sense of why this is the case by turning to the matter of literature and debt, though as Womack and Zamora indicate, this is not a question for literary studies alone. That is, it isn't difficult to see that the success of neoliberalism as a political project has depended largely on the effort to imagine, or insist on, a world in which economic structures like class inequality are invisible, one in which "there is no such thing as society," and in which the free market operationalizes the self-interest of unconstrained individuals. As both Womack and Zamora point out, part of the problem with this invisibility is that it makes it impossible to understand the effects generated by capitalist economic relations like the exclusion of surplus populations. In the case of Latin American studies, it has been primarily culturalists, like Beverley, who have stressed the primacy of experience. And while critics like Moreiras and Beasley-Murray offer incisive critiques of subjectivism and identity politics that underlie this project, they are equally committed to doing away with form; indeed, all see form (and the mediation it assumes) as central to both the aesthetic and political problem.

This is a situation in which something like the assertion of the frame in *Salvatierra*, what amounts to a refusal of the artwork's objecthood, acquires an entirely new political significance, because in making the "specific dimension of art" legible, it also marks a limit to the reduction of the artwork's form to the experience of seeing it or reading it. Or, to put it another way, the assertion of the frame is what makes seeing or reading not simply a question of what the work says *to* and *about* us as viewers or readers, but a question of what it means, and in this sense, of interpretation. And insofar as the question of meaning is predicated on an attention to form, on what we have been calling the frame, then we can begin to see how this attention orients our thinking away from the prominence given to experience, and effects more generally, that plays into a disavowal of structure (economic, political, social) that neoliberalism demands. Which is just to say that if an assertion of literary form is, in fact, a

politics, this is because it insists on a certain irrelevance of the claim "that everything cultural (and literary) is economic and that everything economic is cultural (and literary)," a claim which underlies that conception of the unframed text that we have traced through the work of Ludmer, Beverley, Moreiras and Beasley-Murray. Indeed, what follows from this claim is not simply an injunction to conceive of literature as *nothing but* a commodity like any other, but a refusal to conceive of the text as *anything more* than an object. And yet, the insistence on form—on that which makes Salvatierra's painting, for example, a representation of the world rather than an object in it—suggests that regardless of whether art is a commodity, its meaning isn't. To think otherwise, as we have shown, is to reduce meaning to experience, and to understand interpretation as nothing but an attention to whatever effects the text provokes. A politics of form consequently emerges not simply from the visibility of the frame, but in a certain irreducibility of meaning to experience that this visibility maintains. In this sense, the insistence on form becomes the theoretical point of departure for a critique not simply of the Latin Americanist commitment to the unframed text, but also of the market, where the distinction between meaning and effect, art and objecthood, and interpretation and experience similarly dissolves. And it is in maintaining this distinction that the assertion of the frame preserves the possibility of seeing the very structure of exploitation that neoliberalism demands to be hidden.

NOTES

Special thanks to Ericka Beckman, Nicholas Brown, Steve Buttes, Todd Cronan, Charles Hatfield, Walter Benn Michaels, and Mathias Nilges for their useful and incisive comments. Many thanks to Leila Bilick as well for her help in preparing this special issue for publication.

1. Pedro Mairal, *The Missing Year of Juan Salvatierra*, trans. Nick Caistor (New York: New Vessel Press, 2013) is cited in the text as *MY*. Pedro Mairal, Salvatierra (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2008) is cited in the text as *S*.

2. And it is this same sensation that Miguel will evoke again when he recalls wanting to escape "from Barrancales, from home, and most of all from the painting, from the vortex of the painting that I felt was going to swallow me up forever" (*MY*80/*S*105).

3. Jorge Luis Borges, "On Rigor in Science," in *Collected Fiction* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 325.

4. Néstor García Canclini, *Art beyond Itself: Anthropology for a Society without a Story Line* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 11.

5. Jean Franco, "From Modernization to Resistance," in *Critical Passions: Selected Essays* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 301.

6. This is not to say that Salvatierra's painting couldn't be a work of art because some part of it is missing; to think otherwise would amount to thinking that a work like the Venus de Milo isn't art because of its missing arms. Rather, the point is that from Miguel's viewpoint, the question of the frame becomes relevant to the novel only after the scroll is lost. Or said differently, what the missing scroll highlights is the artist's intent to create a single work that is now incomplete, much like the Venus de Milo's body. But one doesn't have to stand in Miguel's shoes to see that the missing scroll—like the absence of the sculpture's limbs—implies the idea of a whole or total work. Nor does one have to experience the painting like Miguel to understand that without the frame the difference between art and nonart, representation and life, vanishes.

7. In this way, Mairal's novel also recalls what Michael Fried's *Absorption and Theatricality* describes as one of several paradoxes underlying the eighteenth-century conception of art that Diderot formulated, and that would later become the foundations of modern art: "the recognition that paintings are meant to be beheld and therefore presuppose the existence of a beholder led to the demand for the actualization of his presence: a painting, it was insisted, had to attract the beholder, to stop him in front of itself, and to hold him there in a perfect trance of involvement. At the same time … it was only by negating the beholder's presence that this could be achieved: only by establishing the fiction of his absence or nonexistence could his actual placement before and enthrallment by the painting be secured." Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 103-4.

8. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148-172.

9. Walter Benn Michaels articulates this relationship between the political economy of neoliberalism and the question of the frame in several essays, including "The Politics of a Good Picture: Race, Class, and Form in Jeff Wall's *Mimic*." *PMLA* 125.1(2010): 177-184; "Neoliberal Aesthetics: Fried, Rancière and the Form of the Photograph": http://nonsite.org/issues/issue-1/neoliberal-aesthetics-fried-ranciere-and-the-form-of-the-photograph; and more recently in "The Force of a Frame: Owen Kydd's Durational Photographs": http://nonsite.org/feature/the-force-of-a-frame; and "Meaning and Affect: Phil Chang's *Cache, Active*": http://nonsite.org/feature/meaning-and-affect-phil-changs-cache-active.

10. Josefina Ludmer, "Literaturas postautónomas 2.0" *Z Cultural* ano IV, no. 1 (2011): http://revistazcultural.pacc.ufrj.br/literaturas-postautonomas-2-0-de-josefina-ludmer/. All translations are our own, unless otherwise noted. [Aparecen como literatura pero no se las puede leer con criterios o categorías literarias como autor, obra, estilo, escritura, texto, y sentido]

11. Ibid. [No se las puede leer como literatura porque aplican a 'la literatura' una drástica operación de vaciamiento].

12. Ibid. [El primero es que todo lo cultural (y literario) es económico y todo lo económico es cultural (y literario). Y el segundo postulado de esas escrituras sería que la realidad (si se la piensa desde los medios, que la constituiría constantemente) es ficción y que la ficción es la realidad.]

13. Ibid. [fin del 'campo' de Bourdieu, que supone la autonomía de la esfera (o el pensamiento de las esferas)].

14. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Market of Symbolic Goods," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984), 115.

15. Bourdieu., 115; Ludmer, "Literaturas posautónomas"

[16] Ibid. [implica nuevas condiciones de producción y circulación del libro que modifican los modos de leer], [la época de las empresas transnacionales del libro o de las oficinas del libro en las grandes cadenas de diarios, radios, TV y otros medios]

[17] Ibid. [estas escrituras diaspóricas no solo atraviesan la frontera de 'la literatura' sino también la de 'la ficción' y quedan afuera-adentro en las dos fronteras]

[18] Ibid. [son y no son literatura al mismo tiempo], [son ficción y realidad].

[19] Fredric Jameson, "Globalization as a Philosophical Issue," in *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso Books, 2010), 449.

[20] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1991), 21.

[21] John Beverley and José Oviedo, "Introduction," in "The Postmodern Debate in Latin America," special issue of *boundary 2* vol. 20, no. 3 (fall 1993), 16. Subsequent references cited in parentheses in the text.
For Beverley and Oviedo, the usefulness of the term postmodernism for the study of Latin America stems from the fact that "it is bound up with the dynamics of interaction between local cultures and an instantaneous and omnipresent global culture, in which the center-periphery model of the world system dominant since the sixteenth century has begun to beak down" (3). Importantly, they also hold that "this concern has involved a shift away from the equation of democratization with economic modernization, which prevailed across the political spectrum in different ideological forms" (6), and that "What began to displace both modernization and dependency models, therefore, was an interrogation of the interrelation between the respective 'spheres' (culture, ethics, politics, etc.) of modernity, an interrogation that required of social scientists a new concern with subjectivity and identity, and new understandings of, and tolerance for, the cultural, religious, and ethnic heterogeneity of Latin America" (7). But while it is certainly true that the dictatorships in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay demonstrated that a more egalitarian or democratic society did not follow from a commitment to modernization, it is just as true that the temporally and spatially complex processes of capital accumulation today continues to give rise to centers, peripheries, and semiperipheries that are tied together in a relationship of deepening inequality.

[22] Neil Larsen, "The Cultural Studies Movement in Latin America: An Overview," in *Reading North by South* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1995), 189-196.

[23] Ibid., 192.

[24] Importantly, Larsen also maintains that the "change" announced by cultural studies "is less radical than it appears" (192), and notes that the ascendancy of cultural studies "presents a danger of a move further to the right," not because of its abandonment of aesthetic categories like autonomy, but precisely because it risks reproducing the Frankfurt school's own pessimism regarding possible alternatives to class society.

[25] George Yúdice, "Testimonio and Postmodernism," *The Real Thing : Testimonial Discourse in Latin America*, ed. Georg M. Gugelberger.(Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1996), 44.

[26] Ibid.; emphasis in original.

[27] Larsen, *Reading North by South*, 11.

[28] Ibid., 9.

[29] Ibid., 14.

[30] Yúdice, "Testimonio and Postmodernism," 42.

[31] John Beverley, "Margin at the Center: On Testimonio," in *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 33. Subsequent references cited in parentheses in the text.

[32] John Beverley, *Latinamericanism after 9/11* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2011), 23.

[33] Alberto Moreiras, *The Exhaustion of Difference* (Durham: Duke U P, 2001), 3. Subsequent references cited in parentheses in the text.

[34] No doubt this encounter will give rise to various kinds of experiences, but as Mairal's novel makes clear, that experience will be determined in large part by who the beholder is. Miguel's own relationship to the work is further complicated by the fact that the people, places, and events it depicts are as much a part of his life as his father's, drawing our attention to the familial drama the novel plays out. For Miguel, then, viewing Salvatierra's painting becomes an occasion for remembering events like his younger sister's death or gaining insight into his father's character and affections; the work will even lead to the revelation of Salvatierra's extramarital affairs and the brothers' discovery of the "mulatto" (MY73/S95) half-brother, Ibáñez. From Miguel's perspective, in other words, viewing Salvatierra's painting is something akin to looking at a familial photo album, an intensely personal experience tied to his own familial history that causes him to think, "There was a super-human quality to Salvatierra's work; it was too much" (MY36/S44). There are even moments when the painting will seem to address Miguel directly, as if it were painted for him alone, as when he comes across the image of his ex-wife and son,

and thinks, "here was Salvatierra showing me what I had lost" (MY82/S107). Meanwhile, this is no less the case for Luis, for whom "the shadow of that life rolled up in the shed seemed to weigh heavily on him" (MY87/S113). But if for this reason *The Missing Year of Salvatierra* can be said to revisit the plot of the familial romance that has long been central to the history of Latin American fiction—the return to origins whereby the son comes to terms with the past to discover who he really is—the novel also suggests that who Miguel is and what he sees as Salvatierra's son are irrelevant to the question of what the vast scroll ought to be regarded as. See Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkley: Univ. of California Press, 1993), and Margarita Saona, *Novelas familiares. Figuraciones de la nación en la novela contemporánea* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2004).

[35.] Hegemony, as Beasley-Murray explains, is the notion, "derived from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, that the state maintains its dominance (and that of social and economic elites) thanks to the consent of those it dominates. Where it does not win consent, this theory suggests, the state resorts to coercion." Jon Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), x. Subsequent references cited in parentheses in the text. For Beasley-Murray's critique of Beverley's most recent book, see "Prospero's Book," *Política común* 4 (2013): http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/pc.12322227.0004.006.

[36.] In "The Turn to Affect: A Critique (*Critical Inquiry* 37.3 [Spring 2011]: 434-472), Ruth Leys maintains that, "The whole point of the turn to affect by [Brian] Massumi and like-minded cultural critics is thus to shift attention away from considerations of meaning or 'ideology' or indeed representation to the subject's subpersonal material-affective responses, where, it is claimed, political and other influences do their real work" (450-51). The result, Leys contends, is a "relative indifference to the role of ideas and beliefs in politics, culture, and art in favor of an 'ontological' concern with different people's corporeal-affective reactions" (451)—an indifference which, moreover, ultimately rests on a "radical separation between affect and reason" that makes "disagreement about meaning, or ideological dispute, irrelevant to cultural analysis" (472). It is precisely the absence of such forms of disagreement that Beasley-Murray understands as the mark of contemporary politics in Latin America when he says that politics is "no longer a matter of consent and negotiation," so that "In place of ideology, affect" (139). Further, as his analysis of the Salvadoran FMLN suggests, abandoning disagreement requires us to abandon any possibility of agreement (how, in other words, could anyone be convinced in the absence of consent and negotiation), so that "Joining the FLMN involved not the adoption of any specific set of beliefs, but a change in affective state; indeed it involved a shift from an individualized subjectivity associated with opinion as well as emotion, to the depersonalized commonality characteristic of affect" (139).
But in giving up on meaning and ideology or belief (locating politics on the plane of immanence instead), *Posthegemony* requires us to wait for something to happen, especially given the warning against any form of political action (after all, how is intervention even conceivable in the absence of meaning, ideology, or representation). At the same time, this may be the reason why Beasley-Murray will eventually insist on the distinction between "good and bad multitudes"—an insistence that nonetheless returns us to questions of belief.

[37.] Abraham Acosta, *Thresholds of Illiteracy* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2014), 20.

[38.] Beverley, *Latinamericanism*, 83.

[39.] Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 304. Nicholas Brown draws out the logic of this identification of the artwork and commodity in "The Work of Art in the Age of its Real Subsumption under Capital": http://nonsite.org/editorial/the-work-of-art-in-the-age-of-its-real-subsumption-under-capital. In what follows, it should be obvious that our own account of this identification is indebted to Brown's.

[40.] John Womack, Jr., "Doing Labor History: Feelings, Work, Material Power," *The Journal of The Historical Society* 3 (Fall 2005), 267; emphasis added. Subsequent references cited in parentheses in the text.

[41.] Daniel Zamora, "When Exclusion Replaces Exploitation: The Condition of the Surplus-Population under Neoliberalism": http://nonsite.org/feature/when-exclusion-replaces-exploitation.

[42.] Robert Kurz, *O colapso da modernização: da derrocada do socialismo de caserna à crise da economia mundial*, trans. Karen Elsabe Barbosa, 6th ed. (São Paulo: Paz e terra, 2007), translation of *Der Kollaps der Modernisierung: vom Zusammenbruch des Kasernensozialismus zur Krise der Welto?konomie* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1991). In *Capital Volume I*, the "organic composition of capital" refers to the ratio of "constant capital" (capital invested in technology, equipment, and materials) to "variable capital" (capital invested in those labor-costs required to hire employees).

[43.] Ibid., 212. ["incapaz de explorar", isto é, pela primeira vez na história capitalista está diminuindo … em termos absolutos … a massa global do trabalho abstrato produtivamente explorado, e isso em virtude da intensificação permanente da força produtiva]. At what point, if at all, the "labor theory of value" as it is commonly understood is entailed by this line of thinking is beyond the scope of this essay, though interested English-language readers can find translated essays by Kurz

and others working in the school of Marxian critical theory known as *Wertkritik* (value-critique) in *Marxism and the Critique of Value*: http://www.mediationsjournal.org/toc/27_1.

44. Ibid., 182. [A maioria da população mundial já consiste hoje, portanto, em sujeitos-dinheiros sem dinheiros, em pessoas que não se encaixam em nenhuma forma de organização social, nem na pré-capitalista nem na capitalista, e muito menos na pós-capitalista, sendo forçadas a viver num leprosário social que já compreende a maior parte do planeta.]

45. Or, as Larsen puts it in his reading of Kurz's *Kollaps*, this is a situation in which "the mediating role of class then becomes much more difficult to theorize, since the process through which class as structurally determined by labor and production becomes the class that possesses political, even revolutionary agency can no longer simply presuppose a given state power or national polity as the *agendum*, the object to be acted upon." *Determinations: Essays on Theory, Narrative, and Nation in the Americas* (London: Verso, 2001), 72.

46. Alberto Moreiras, "The Fatality of (My) Subalternism: A Response to John Beverley," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 12.2 (2012), 237. Moreiras' response is directed at Beverley's *Latinamericanism after 9/11*, where he notes, "I have become aware that this identification of subalternism, leftism, and deconstruction has become problematic for me," and that "deconstruction is yielding diminishing and politically ambiguous returns" (9).

47. Alberto Moreiras, *Línea de sombra. El no sujeto de lo político* (Santiago, Chile: Palinodia, 2006), 14; [El subjetivismo en política es siempre excluyente, siempre particularista, incluso allí donde el sujeto se postula como sujeto comunitario, e incluso allí donde el sujeto se autopostula como representante de lo universal]

48. Ibid., 13; emphasis ours. [Pero el no sujeto no es un ideal a alcanzar, una meta a conseguir: sólo una instancia a tomar en cuenta, sólo una condición necesaria de todo pensamiento político que, jugado en un más que la vida, jugado en una voluntad de política que permita regular la relación humana a favor de un abandono del sacrificio, a favor de la idea de que no podrán existir ni la justicia ni la igualdad ni la libertad si la justicia, la igualdad y la libertad son excluyentes, quiera sin embargo abandonar la santurronería sacerdotal—o, alternativamente, aunque no son incompatibles, la visión técnica del mundo—implícitas en todo subjetivismo]

49. Alberto Moreiras revisits the relationship between this nonsubject of the political and infrapolitics in a recent blog post of the Infrapolitical Deconstruction Collective: http://infrapolitica.wordpress.com/2014/09/10/79/.

50. Hence, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's claim in *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005) that "No group is 'disposable' because global society functions together as a complex, integrated whole. Imperial sovereignty thus cannot avoid or displace its necessary relationship with this unlimited global multitude. Those over Empire rules can be exploited—in fact, their productivity must be exploited—and for this very reason they cannot be excluded" (336). Which is to say that under the current dispensation of Empire we are all exploited.

51. Zamora, "When Exclusion Replaces Exploitation."

52. Beatriz Sarlo, "Cultural Studies and Literary Criticism at the Crossroads of Values," in *Journal of Latin American Studies: Travesia* 8.1 (1999), 122.

53. Beverley, *Latinamericanism after 9/11*, 88.

54. See, for example, Sarlo's *Tiempo Pasado: cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo: una discusión*. (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2005), where many of her examples of understanding the recent past stress the work of experts like social scientist rather than that of everyday citizens.

55. Miguel also recounts, "We had thought of several ways we could exhibit the canvas. One of them was to join all the pieces together and have them pass by behind a glass screen, then wind them on to a second big reel. But it would need an enormous space to do this, and with this system, once the roll had reached the end, the canvas would unwind in the opposite direction, as if time were flowing backwards. Another idea was to exhibit, if not the totality of the canvas, at least some lengthy fragments in an enclosed space, or a circular gallery like the Palais de Glace in Buenos Aires. A further possibility was to publish a bulky coffee table book with foldout illustrations" (*MY*30 -8/*S*38).

56. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 103.

Eugenio Di Stefano is Assistant Professor of Latin American Literature and Culture at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He has published articles on the discourse of human rights, the work of Roberto Bolaño, and Latin American painting in the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, and MLN, respectively. He is currently working on a book manuscript titled *The Vanishing Frame: Latin American Culture and Theory in the Postdictatorial Era.*

Emilio Sauri is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Boston. His research focuses on the relationship between Latin American literature and US fiction, and the relationship of each to a deepening crisis in the world economic system. He is co-editor of *Literary Materialisms* (Palgrave, 2013), and his work has appeared in *MLN*, *Studies*

in American Fiction, and *Twentieth-Century Literature*. He is currently at work on a book project titled *Combined and Uneven Americas: Literature, Capital, and the Ends of Modernization.*

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

THE QUESTION OF CYNICISM

A READING OF HORACIO CASTELLANOS MOYA'S LA DIÁSPORA (1989)

ALBERTO MOREIRAS

And this anarchist picture of people shedding their enforced tasks and dispersing into the freedom of the unexplored and the uncharted even today seems to offer relief from the oppressiveness of an omnipresent capitalism. [1]

didonai gar auta diken kai tisin allelois tes adikias kata then tou khronou taxin. [2]

I.

In one of the few reference works we have on contemporary Central American literature Beatriz Cortez makes the argument that a culture of what she calls "failed cynicism," fueled by what Baruch Spinoza would have addressed as "sad passions," pervades the Central American literary space after the civil wars that devastated lands and societies in El Salvador and Guatemala and Nicaragua between the 1970s and the early 1990s. [3] The argument is poignant and worth rehearsing, particularly as, one would think, there would be no need to confine it to Central America. In her reading, failed cynicism is a sort of *dispositif* that may have come to occupy the site previously occupied by true political commitment, by faith and hope in radical political change of an emancipatory kind.

One of the authors Cortez refers to often is the Honduran-born Horacio Castellanos Moya, more generally considered a Salvadoran writer. Cortez' *Estética del cinismo. Pasión y desencanto en la literatura centroamericana de posguerra* was published in 2010, but it is the result of work done in the mid-2000s, with the consequence that her corpus for Castellanos Moya only considers the following works: the novels *Baile con serpientes* (1996), *El asco: Thomas Bernhard en San Salvador* (1997), and *El arma en el hombre* (2001); one collection of short stories, namely, *Indolencia* (2004); and the collection of essays entitled *Recuento de incertidumbres* (1993). She therefore leaves out of consideration not only Castellanos Moya´s fascinating tetralogy composed of *Donde no estén*

ustedes (2003), *Desmoronamiento* (2006), *Tirana memoria* (2008), and *La sirvienta y el luchador* (2011), but also books such as Castellanos Moya´s most critically successful novel, *Insensatez* (2004), [4] of course the most recent *El sueño del retorno* (2013), and also, among other short stories and essay collections, the older novels *La diabla en el espejo* (2000), and *La diáspora* (1989), which was Castellanos Moya´s first novel, never reprinted, and the one I would like to concentrate my reading on. [5]

It would not be fair to Cortez to confront her argument by referring to books she does not study because they were published after she more or less had concluded her own book, but one needs to wonder why *La diáspora* in particular was left out of consideration, as it seems particularly germane to her critical theme. There could be, however, any number of perfectly legitimate reasons for it. [6] I just want to mark the fact that I will be contesting Cortez´ notion of failed cynicism from my analysis of a work that she could have explored but chose not to. My contention, however, does not engage with the totality of her argument. I like her book, and I have learned much from it, which is the reason I take it to heart, and I suppose there is enough recent literature in Central America, as elsewhere, written on the back of sad passions to fill a bookshelf or several. My claim is not only that *La diáspora* has nothing to do with failed cynicism or even with cynicism as such but that it gives us, even if in an imperfect, inconclusive way, as it happens frequently with first novels, the beginnings of a literary endeavor that I would consider the very opposite of a cynical enterprise for contemporary times. And, beyond that, it also gives us a new figure of the Central American writer—one that, by running frontally against all kinds of prejudices held by so-called first-world intellectuals and their clients, may have something important to teach us regarding the function of literary narrative today. Or at least the function of Castellanos Moya´s literary narrative.

Now with Cortez. In her opening pages she refers to a "disenchanted sensibility" that conforms an "aesthetics of cynicism" (23), which is a direct rebuke to the "utopian aesthetics of hope" linked to Central American revolutionary processes (24). The latter were powerfully influential throughout the region long before the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua, caused by an endemic political discontent and strong anti-imperialism dating, in their modern configuration, from the 1920s and 1930s and exacerbated by the CIA-staged coup against Jacobo Arbenz´ government in Guatemala in the 1950s. The rise of guerrilla movements in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and elsewhere, supported by the Cuban post-revolutionary state, formed entire generations of artists and intellectuals whose horizon was premised on the values of political militancy associated with communist liberation in one way or another (there never was any particular ideological agreement, and of course there were many political and intellectual tendencies). Cortez´ position is therefore that the new sensibility of ideological

disenchantment, which was a consequence of the different political fiascos in Central America that nevertheless managed to bring the ostensible wars to an end, is a relative historical novelty for the region, and, from the perspective of an evaluation of cultural production, marks a true change at the level of tonality and what we could call social spirit. But Cortez is not happy. It is not necessarily that she misses the old sentiment of revolutionary conformity and liberationist communion. It is rather that she finds the new spirit catastrophically lacking and eminently destructive: "this aesthetics of cynicism brought about the formation of a precarious subjectivity . . . , a subjectivity constituted as *a priori* subaltern, a subjectivity that depends on the recognition of others, a subjectivity that is only enabled by the slavery of that subaltern *a priori* subject, and by its destruction, its dismemberment, its suicide, literally speaking" (25).

So this is why cynicism fails: because, according to Cortez, it leads to the destruction of the cynical subject through some paroxysm of self-contempt or self-hatred. Leaving aside the perpetual possibility that the definition of cynicism can never be totally fixed and is therefore susceptible of producing interpretive disagreement, Cortez' position seems at first sight counterintuitive. Isn't cynicism, to start with, already a defense mechanism that is adamant about its own epistemic privilege and sets itself up in advance against any desire for reciprocal recognition? If so, its defensive strategies seem to fail in Central America. Why would the Central American cynical subject expose herself to recognition as a subaltern subject? Isn't the cynical subject always already a superior subject, a subject that knows better, a subject whose privileged understanding of the real is constitutively meant to ward off any possible subalternization? But Cortez says that cynicism fails because, in the particular case of Central American cynicism, it becomes a trap that destroys subjectivity at the same time it constitutes it.

The argument becomes a bit more complex when we add a second strain to it. Within the Central American historical context, artistic production in general, and fiction writing in particular, were traditionally stigmatized as "treason" by culturally hegemonic "insurgency circles" (26). If everything had to be geared towards aiding the "struggle of the people," or later towards the construction of the new revolutionary State, then fiction was more often than not perceived as mere escapism, evasion, and alienation from what really mattered. The rise of testimonio, in its different strands, and of "political" poetry, was a direct consequence of the secondarization of a cultural production whose reinvention after the wars would have been anything but politically innocent. Fiction writing after the wars was already an abandonment of old pieties and implicitly a rejection of everything that had once been considered not just valid, but the very definition of the valid. One wonders whether Cortez' allegation of cynicism does not start right here, in the structural or formal denunciation of

old pieties, in the rejection of an epochal Central American partisan culture that, as everybody knows, did not accomplish much, in spite of the efforts, of the suffering, and of the deaths. After so much terrible turmoil, Central American societies today are still rife with and torn by social injustice, but now also crushed by the weight that the thoroughly irresolutive dialectical turn of the screw of the revolutionary movements, the wars, and the peace accords has brought with it. Perhaps admitting it is already cynical.

So, if I move in such a way that my moves reveal my deep displeasure, my abandonment of the values and forms of behavior of my friends, relatives, teachers, and neighbors, then I become a cynic. Do I become a cynic, or do I set myself up to be called a cynic, because I think their understanding of life has proved to be nothing but a disaster, or almost nothing but a disaster, and, whatever I want, I do not want a return of their world? It is possible—such is the way things happen, particularly given the vicious dogmatism of unleashed political passion. Treason, however, is a strong word, an important word, and we should not allow it to be defined exclusively by the gatekeepers of a failed historical project (Cortez is clearly not one of them), or indeed by its clients. I will return to Cortez, but first I must add different pieces to my own argument.

II.

Horacio Castellanos Moya is a man of the left. His literature cannot be confused with any attempt to guarantee or strengthen a *statu quo* favoring the corruption, incompetence, gangsterism, violence, and deep social injustice in his country, which indeed his literature has never stopped exposing. It is not my interest or intention here to proceed to a biographical analysis of his itinerary, but he has said enough in his published writings for us to understand sufficiently that he was himself committed to revolutionary goals as a young man, at the time of the insurgency and the guerrilla war. Something happened to him in the 1980s, and that is only for him to know, as he chooses not to make himself perfectly clear.[7] Whatever the case, he decided not to go under, as so many members of his generation did, and to embark on a different path that has produced one of the most interesting and remarkable oeuvres in contemporary Latin American writing, still in full development. *La diáspora* is the story, or the beginning of the story, of just such a refusal to go under, but it is of course fictionalized and we would have no particular right to think it is meant autobiographically.

It is not a finished book, in a sense: too many strands in the story are simply left ungathered. Like in most of his other novels, Castellanos Moya initiates with *La diáspora* a narrative sequence that he may or may not choose to bring to completion at some later time. To my knowledge, he has never returned to the characters he started to sketch in *La diáspora*, and his novel has never been reprinted. But it is an important novel precisely because it indicates a

process of breaking away that you may want to call disenchantment or even liberation, albeit not in the traditional postcolonial sense. In this particular text, the liberation needs to be understood as a particular liberation from the obsessions of a form of life that, by 1984, or perhaps by 1989, had come to seen unlivable, but not because of the risks and dangers of clandestine, insurgent life. Something else was at stake.

In early 1984 the character Juan Carlos, a young fellow who has been a militant in the strongest of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (*FMLN*)'s five organizations for several years (he had been working in the Finance Division of the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí [FPL] from Managua), breaks with "the Party," and initiates his exile in Mexico. His further goal is to make it to Canada or Australia, finish up his studies, make a little money, perhaps become a writer. In Mexico he visits old comrades like Carmen, herself also an ex-member of the Party; Antonio, Carmen´s husband, a Mexican sympathizer through the Solidarity Committee; Gabriel, also a former comrade, a professor at the Jesuit university in San Salvador now working away on a dissertation on the Salvadoran writer Roque Dalton, ("te van a colgar de los huevos" [*they will hang you from your balls*], warns Juan Carlos); [8] and Gabriel's wife Teresa. He also attempts to come into contact with el Turco, another former comrade, a musician, and el Negro, a former jesuit who is still an *apparatchik* and runs the Mexican Office of Information for the Salvadoran guerrillas.

Through Gabriel he is received by an Argentinian refugee, the beautiful Rita, a *montonera* whose husband had disappeared in Argentina, and who now runs ACNUR, the refugee agency whose cooperation Juan Carlos needs to make it to Canada (or Australia), and to survive in Mexico until the visa comes through. Juan Carlos spends the time chatting with his friends, waiting, desiring Rita, dreaming of writing, reading a bit (he starts to read a Milan Kundera novel, "prejudiced at first, as he feared encountering some cheap anti-Communist tirade" [41]), and dealing with his own demons. A few other characters cross the fringes of the page, like Chele Carlos, whom Juan Carlos sees from afar several times, and he is told that he was "a military cadre . . . , a commando in charge of kidnappings, bank robberies, executions, intelligence and counterintelligence activities; one of those implacable war machines that would not think twice before stabbing Commander Ana María eighty-two times with an icepick" (57). He has been helping Negro prepare for a party and is returning home to Carmen and Antonio's when he is kidnapped by Mexican intelligence, beat up, interrogated, and threatened. The First Part finishes here.

Nothing much has happened. A number of characters have been introduced who form part of what the novel's title calls "the diaspora"—people in various degrees of political disillusionment and personal crisis. On what grounds? Revolution has been raging in El Salvador for many years, and the revolutionary organizations are well entrenched. But in

1983, the previous year, a fatal event happened that seems to center the allegorical import of the novel: the assassination of Commander Ana María (eighty-two stabs with an icepick), a 56-year old former teacher, and, at the time of her death, second in command of the FPL guerrilla force whose chief was Commander Marcial, that is, Salvador Cayetano Carpio. Carpio, known as the Latin American Ho-Chi-Min, was a 64-year-old former syndicalist leader and secretary general of the Communist Party of El Salvador in the 1960s who became the uncontested leader of the Frente Popular de Liberación since its beginnings in 1970. As it transpired, the Sandinista police, through their own investigations, had determined the culpability in Ana María´s assassination of people under the apparently direct orders of Commander Marcial, who then chose to commit suicide. These are all historical events with one problem: all we know is the official story, more often than not a straightforward lie. The novel of course hints at the fact that the official story may not be truthful—in a variety of ways.

It is the murder of Ana María and the suicide of Marcial that changes things, or perhaps those events are only a confirmation that things have already changed, or that things were not what they were supposed to be. The death of the two leaders, in a situation structurally charged by the cult of personality, was a serious psychological blow, as well as a blow to morale, for the rank-and-file militancy. As the novel tells it, "both of them were a myth, the revolutionary masters, the link with a whole tradition of struggle and conspiracy, the ancient wise ones, the symbol of the popular and proletarian essence of the Salvadoran revolution. Together they had forged . . . an organization that until April 1983 was considered the genuine expression of revolutionary morality, heir to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, destined to liberate the Salvadoran people, the true manifestation of the worker-peasant alliance, the only one with a worker and a teacher (no petit-bourgeois students) as maximum leaders" (124). For Juan Carlos, as he tells it, the shock of the events was bad enough, but he chose to continue in the Party, unlike other members who preferred to break away. Things deteriorated, however, as the developing atmosphere of perpetual suspicion, surveillance, and relentless imposition of the party line became unbreathable: "Things were no longer the same: something had broken inside Juan Carlos. And it was not just a question—as he would later claim—that a situation of intolerable mistrust had developed in the Party" (125). All Juan Carlos knows now is that "there is no return" (14) from the step he has taken, that is, abandoning the Party, abandoning the fight, and that eight years of his life have just vanished into thin air.

But Carmen is another former militant for whom the events of April 1983 had been nefarious. Antonio, her husband, comments that the refusal of the Party to discuss things in the open, to close ranks into an intensified militarization of life for everyone is "alarming . . . since a political response is demanded by the current internal crisis" (17). The ghost of Roque

Dalton, the most illustrious Salvadoran writer who was murdered by his own party comrades in 1975 under obscure-as-usual circumstances, constantly returns.[9] For Gabriel Dalton is an obsession. But the Party requires only unconditional submission. Juan Carlos feels himself prey to "inexplicable anxiety," paranoia, and fear (25). In the meantime, el Turco has become the most radical of the bunch in his vocal denunciation of the betrayal of the revolution and the sinister character of the revolutionary leadership. He cheers Juan Carlos: "*Salú*, since you finally left that shit. I knew you would have the balls" (37). And, as Juan Carlos makes his way into the Kundera novel he is reading, he thinks "of the possibility that his personal story could serve to write a novel of that reach. It seemed to him, however, that his was too insipid, uneventful, without tragedy. What was really worthwhile was the form in which the two maximum revolutionary commanders had annihilated each other; but that would require a pen of genius" (41).

I do not get the feeling that the shock of the Commanders' deaths tells the whole story—they are a metonymy, that much seems clear from the subdued and unaggressive narrative whose authorial and narrative voices are both pained and perplexed, crossed by doubts and misgivings, by questions without resolution. Instead, a projection of a dissatisfying state of affairs hangs over the characters like a cloud of flies. But the stories of naked power, conspiracies at the top, use and abuse of the lives and energies of the combatants, inefficiency and incompetence covered up by police tactics and the intimidation and silencing of all dissent: those are all familiar enough. The author-narrator is not so much identified with Juan Carlos as dispersed among all former comrades. If the guerrilla offensive in El Paraíso that has just taken place could have been successfully conducted through the final takeover of power, it is now the time to evaluate whether the world these forces could offer is a world that warrants the immense sacrifice of the people. It is not an easy question: Juan Carlos has eight years of his young life invested in it. And it is particularly not easy because the mere alternative, the *statu quo ante*, is at least equally unpalatable. One is not an anticommunist, would not want to be, Castellanos Moya seems to be telling us, but one wonders whether one wants to be a communist looking at the panorama, that is all, and it seems simple enough. In the meantime, does one become a cynic?

There is perhaps one rather cynical character in the novel, who shows up in Part Two, which is mostly devoted to the story of Quique, a militant of peasant extraction, not an intellectual but a soldier whose interest is in the fight as such. The other man, the perhaps cynical one, is at first referred to as "the Argentinian:" the press office, run by el Negro, commissions from Quique "a copy of the December 9 Party's communiqué where Commander Marcial is accused of having ordered the assassination of Commander Ana María, as well as copies of all wire messages on it. They are for the Argentinian" (86). But it is not until Part Three that

the Argentinian is identified as Jorge Kraus, a well-known journalist based in Mexico. This is a fellow who was a militant in one of the leftist organizations in his motherland in the early 1970s and had to flee the country, soon to become the star reporter of a prestigious venue. Kraus is described as a man "always willing to collaborate with whatever the revolutionary process demanded" (119), in a sense, therefore, a revolutionary hack, a mercenary of the revolution whose essential opportunism is in perpetual search of the opportunity.

He finds it first in Angola, "after the success of the movement for national liberation" (119). He writes a first book on the Angolan revolution that transforms him into a "first-level journalist in the Third-World power circles" (120). And his second triumph was a book on the Ethiopian process, which gets him "new requests for articles, travel money, copyrights and even university lectures" (120). Nicaragua comes later, through another great book on the Sandinista entry into Managua. And then of course the Salvadoran revolutionary forces become famous in the international scene, and our friend Kraus does not hesitate to set his target on the "small country" (121).

But things turn out to be a bit more difficult than expected. First, Kraus is booted from his job in the Mexican newspaper, where he has managed to make some enemies, and loses status and cover. Second, the Salvadoran revolution is not triumphant yet, which means he cannot quite work under the safe conditions he has come to consider a given. So he tries his hand at something else for a while, but everything fails. He lucks out by becoming the boyfriend of a dashing French photographer with credentials and resources, and the news strikes: Commander Ana María has been assassinated, and Marcial seems to be somehow involved. "As a good journalist, he immediately knew there was something fishy there, and if the *compas* had opted to keep silent it would be better to forget about it" (128). In the meantime—this is October 1983—Juan Carlos hears from his liaison that the FPL's sixty supreme leaders have met secretly for a month and have concluded on the need to blame Commander Marcial for the April assassination: "Juan Carlos listened without questions, without looking for alibis with which to defend something of what was being destroyed for him, as if all that version were true, truth as such, and he harbored no doubts" (132). The December communiqué comes as no surprise to either Juan Carlos or Kraus, but it gives Kraus an idea. Yes, he knows the story is not as told, but it is the retelling that offers the chance for him, of course provided he can secure the green light and the support of the FPL and the Sandinistas. So he proposes a book meant to assuage the militancy: "the facts were too cruel and complex for *compas* to be content with a general explanation, so that a fictionalized account would be a formidable way to disseminate and make the official version comprehensible" (137). In true hack fashion, "he had no intention of looking for new revelations: he would depart from what could be

considered 'the truth' and his work would precisely consist of demonstrating that this truth was absolute down to the smallest details" (139). And Kraus decides to work on his story.

La diáspora is a political novel, and we are trying to evaluate its cynicism. That Kraus is a cynic leaves little doubt—he is the outsider, a sort of representative for the committed first-world intellectual, even though he is from Argentina, whose mission in life is the promotion of revolutionary causes everywhere. The novel does not overly condemn him. The lines quoted are as far as the denunciation of the character goes. But, in political novels, sometimes politics takes over, and literary quality must take a step back (which, one may add, does not speak for any particular cynicism). That is precisely what happens at this particular point in Castellanos Moya's novel. Section seven of Part Three includes a thoroughly editorial addition that has no function in the showing, but only in the telling of what happened. It is not, it is no longer about Kraus—Kraus is left aside at this point, becoming simply the one who confirms, not out of stupidity but out of cynicism, the general falsity of history as told by the masters of words. Instead, it is about the revolutionary process. The editorial section tells the story of Roque Dalton, arguably the most significant Salvadoran writer of the century, who was executed by the leadership of his group, the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (*ERP*), in May of 1975 after having been initally accused of being a traitor at the service of the CIA, and, secondarily, a traitor and "a clown" infiltrated into the ERP by the Cubans. The Dalton execution was never prosecuted, and those responsible remain publicly unknown, at the same time that Dalton's burial site remains a secret. The text does not say it, but it is clear that the FPL could not afford another Dalton scandal—a culprit needed to be established: Marcial. If Marcial had actually killed Ana María, then Marcial would be in a position parallel to that of the Dalton murderers. It would then come as a surprise that Dalton's widow would show up at Marcial's burial, as she did, and as was documented in a picture published by the Sandinista newspaper *Barricada* on April 21, 1983. The novel makes a strong statement that Marcial did not kill, and was not responsible for the assassination of Ana María: he was driven to suicide by a false accusation.

Could we not object to Beatriz Cortez' general argument on the failed cynicism of so much Central American writing that there is a critical difference between depicting cynicism in one novel and assuming it as the novel's perspective? At one level, *La diáspora* may appear cynical, to the extent that it expresses a strong distaste for the tactics of the FPL (and, before them, of the ERP), although it is my contention that the particular events displayed by the novel are themselves metonymic of a wider range of affairs. So the question needs to be asked in a straightforward way: are the critique and the denunciation of guerrilla organizations in a revolutionary or postrevolutionary situation always necessarily cynical? If the answer is yes, to the extent where we would not want to conclude that all critiques and all denunciations

are cynical, we would have to accept that the very accusation of cynicism is no more than a guerrilla-inspired accusation of being a traitor to the guerrilla´s goals. But of course the so-called cynic can then retort that the guerrilla's ostensible goals are the ones betrayed by the guerrilla's actions, or the actions of its leadership. Treason, in other words, is not to be defined by the likes of Kraus, or even by the 60 characters that get together in the mountains of Chalatenango to plot how best to extricate themselves from the consequences of the assassination of Ana María by blaming Marcial. Perhaps the question of cynicism, in the particular Central American configuration, presupposes and even disavows, all too cynically, the question of the historical betrayal of the people by the self-appointed masters of revolutionary truth.

It is clear, I suppose, that there is a primary or more fundamental level in *La diáspora* that should not be silenced, and that has nothing to do with any cynical resignation to the way things are. Even less is the novel committed to any presentation of "a precarious subjectivity . . . , a subjectivity constituted as *a priori* subaltern, a subjectivity that depends on the recognition of others, a subjectivity that is only enabled by the slavery of that subaltern *a priori* subject, and by its destruction, its dismemberment, its suicide, literally speaking" (25). Yes, there is precarious subjectivity in the novel, but it is the precarious subjectivity assigned to the collection of characters who are struggling with the ongoing betrayal of the goals of justice and truth, of freedom and respect, that has left their lives void of meaning and orientation. The novel itself, however, can only be understood as an attempt to enable such a precariousness to emerge out of itself, to escape destruction, dismemberment, and suicide: free to pursue Spinozist joyful passions.

III.

But why is this so important? What is at stake here, beyond the concern for a number of broken life stories that cannot nearly match in quantity or suffered violence the many thousands of innocent lives taken by the civil war, the repression, the Salvadoran State and its death squadrons? Surely whining about how tough things are in a situation of civil war is not enough to make a political case. *La diáspora* was published in 1989, and it depicts events from 1983-84. Right between those two dates Fredric Jameson, a man who was then attentive to the political process in Latin America, published his controversial, but at the time rightly hailed, essay on "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism."[10] Today, almost thirty years later, it is easy to claim that Jameson´s essay is outdated, obsolete, but it is not so easy to understand, or say, why. I will give it a shot.

The most irritating and, at the time and through the early 1990s, stubbornly resilient claim in that essay was of course that "all third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel" (69). The claim is sweeping in its generality and forceful truth-claim: *all* of the texts are *necessarily* national allegories. It is slightly unpacked in the following words: "Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (69). Jameson´s essay sent a sizeable number of area-studies literary scholars into a desperate frenzy to look for exceptions to the claim, to no avail. The claim could, after all, meet no exceptions because a universal reach is in the nature of the allegorical machine. Jameson himself conceded as much when he said that "allegorical structures are not so much absent from first-world cultural texts as they are *unconscious*, and therefore they must be deciphered by interpretative mechanisms that necessarily entail a whole social and historical critique of our current first-world situation" (79).

Well then, if the difference between first- and third-world production has to do with the fact that third-world production makes manifest what remains latent in the first, what is so radically different? It is only by a certain forcing of the argument that the difference between the latent and the manifest may be presented, to literary critics whose job it is, after all, to turn the latent into the manifest, as "alien to us at first approach, and consequently, resistant to our conventional western habits of reading" (69). "In distinction to the unconscious allegories of our own cultural texts, third-world national allegories are conscious and overt: they imply a radically different and objective relationship of politics to libidinal dynamics" (79-80): Jameson establishes a direct correlation between objectivity and manifestation (equaling politics) and subjectivity and the unconscious (equaling libidinal life) that leaves of course much to be desired, and is probably unsustainable (but it would take too long to show it). And yet that is the basis of his claim for a radical difference, and the basis of his claim for the development of world-literature studies.

It was not so routinely understood that Jameson´s main claim was in fact dependent on a deeper claim that was relegated to the final pages of his essay. The time has come to examine and reject the deeper claim explicitly as so much condescension—a feature that is clearly visible almost in every page of the essay, and whose patent visibility should probably not surprise us retrospectively. There is an assumed superiority of the first-world intellectual that is in fact denied by the ostensible argumentation of the deeper claim, which tries to argue for

the epistemological privilege of the third-world intellectual. Jameson prefaces it by saying: "I want to conclude with a few thoughts on why all this should be so and on the origins and status of what I have identified as the primacy of national allegory in third-world culture" (84). The thoughts turn out to be a rehearsal of the old Kojévian and Lukácsian obsession: Hegel´s dialectic of the Master and the Slave.

Within the terms of the dialectic, as conventionally understood, "only the slave knows what reality and the resistance of matter really are; only the slave can attain some true materialistic consciousness of his situation, since it is precisely to that that he is condemned. The Master, however, is condemned to idealism—to the luxury of a placeless freedom in which any consciousness of his own concrete situation flees like a dream, like a word unremembered on the tip of the tongue, a nagging doubt which the puzzled mind is unable to formulate" (85). It is a moving account, it has always been, but it forgets itself: there is and has never been an epistemic privilege of the slave, because a situational consciousness of oppression does not, and can never, amount to epistemic privilege. It is in fact the Master who, by projecting a notion of privilege on the slave, entertains his own misery and seeks to ensure the possibility that recognition by the slave, now endowed with a certain borrowed aura, might finally amount to something, to the possibility of a new libidinal cathexis. In the previous situation, as Jameson admits, "'recognition' by this henceforth sub-human form of life which is the slave evaporates at the moment of its attainment and offers no genuine satisfaction" (85).

So the third-world slave is forced to confront not just his slavery, but that of her own people, whereas, and this is the dissymetry not recognized as such in Jameson's argument, the first-world intellectual, particularly the one concerned with "world literature" or cosmopolitanism, need only confront the slavery of the other. The active collectivity, as it were, for the first-world intellectual, is the collectivity of the third-world slave. It is of course a measure of Jameson's intelligence that, at the very end of his essay, he makes the conditions of the master's libidinal investment in the fate of the slaves dependent upon a horizon that remains beyond dialectics, and thus remote enough. As they are, those slaves are not interesting: "there was nothing at all attractive about it in fact." But a supplement can be added that will set things right, that is, if a master could believe that the true projection of the slave is not really to become masterful, but rather to return to the originary pre-dialectical moment. Jameson posits it through his reading of Ousmane Sembene´s *Xala*, in a quotation that all of a sudden appears as a mantra, endowed with a magic aura: "Its life [should be] based on the principles of community interdependence" (86). But why would a master seek or promote community interdependence? Or is it that it is only wanted for the other, and demanding it is simply another act of mastery? It is an old tradition of a certain segment of western intellectuality,

after all. What if the active notion for western intellectuals trying to pontificate on events elsewhere were to move away from masters and slaves into a denunciation of all their mimetic appearances at any level of the social, the political, or the intellectual?

The very young Castellanos Moya decided then that he would want nothing to do with the idea of assuming slavery for himself or, indeed, his people, not even on comparative terms; that he would prefer a path where the very structuration of the world in terms of slavery and mastery would be preempted. Please note that the definition of failed cynicism in Cortez implies a basic acceptance of the master/slave division through the very notion that the failed cynic has succumbed to recognition troubles. In fact, Cortez appeals to a "subaltern subjectivity" that craves recognition and that the master can then easily destroy by withholding the latter. Also Jameson makes subalternity depend on underlying psychological slavery: "'cultural revolution' . . . turns on the phenomenon of what Gramsci called 'subalternity,' namely the feelings of mental inferiority and habits of subservience and obedience which necessarily and structurally develop in situations of domination—most dramatically in the experience of colonized peoples" (76). In Castellanos Moya's literature—I feel comfortable enough with the generalization, although I have only discussed his early novel—there is neither an assumption of structural subaltern inferiority nor an acceptance of recognition as a means for the accomplishment of any "cultural revolution." What is allegorized in his novels is not therefore the national situation in terms of any presumed difference between a present state of affairs and some end of history based on communal interdependence. The fact is, without a utopian horizon premised on the abolition of the difference between slaves and masters and the restitution of communal interdependence, no third-world literature, and no first-world literature, could ever be described as exhaustively comprehensible in national-allegorical terms.

Which makes *La diáspora* neither a cynical nor a rightist or liberal novel. Its Fourth Part is devoted to the narration of the party at el Negro's—where all the characters of the novel get together—seen through el Turco´s eyes. But el Turco was the more radical abjurer of his prior pieties. Is he, then, the one who has become a cynic, because he has opted for a subalternized subjectivity on a black mirror of non-recognition? I do not think so. His story is familiar enough, as something similar will have happened to all of us at some point in our lives. It is not a story of catastrophic subjectivity given a failure of recognition, but rather a story of being pissed off by a biographical drama one is trying to leave behind: exactly the kind of thing Spinoza offered his theory of the passions to help out with.[11]

El Turco quits his job playing the piano at the bar because his boss has decided he would no longer get credit for drinks. He is desperate enough—his financial prospects were never good and just became so much worse. He remembers that el Negro had invited him to his

party, and he shows up. All the characters we have in the novel are present at the gathering. El Turco reviews them with a cold look. At this point he is only interested in finding a sexual mate for the night. In the meantime he terrifies everyone else with the crudity of his sincere opinions, conventionally cynical ("they get scared about the divisions and the crimes in the revolutionary ranks, but all revolutions have been infested with shit" [164]), conventionally self-destructive ("With those comments, Turquito, you are going to lose this lady" [162]). But he asks for and obtains no recognition from the rest. He couldn't care less. He is drinking too much to care. And, finally, he gets Carmen.

Narrated in a free indirect style monologue, the novel's end depicts el Turco waking up in the middle of the night to a deserted house with a bad hangover, sick, cold, and alone. With nothing but his broken life to look at, he is forced to reminisce on his life: his participation in the political struggle, his fear and trauma, his small adventures as an itinerant musician at the service of the revolution once he was sent abroad by the party leadership, his final separation on censorship disagreements and dissidence. It is all anticlimactic. No revelations come to enlighten the reader, who must only witness the guilt and failure and loneliness of a life. Is this the final cynical message of *La diáspora*? Is cynicism merely regret on grounds of existential failure? Is this the message the novel, and with it, if Cortez is right, all, or almost all, of Central American post-war writing finally wish to convey?

IV.

Cortez says: "the cynical project fills the individual with passions that do not take him to experience joy but give him pain . . . The aesthetic of cynicism shows the symptoms of an absence . . . : the experience of joy, the struggle to defend the right of the body to act, the predominance of life over death, the immanence of power" (38). One could rightfully say that el Turco's bad hangover is nothing but the consequence of his very attempt to ward off pain and death—his will to joy. But, in any case, is Cortez not confusing the plane of writing with the plane of the written? They are not the same thing, and they are not immanent to each other: showing is not the shown, and saying is not the said. Writing about slavery is no proof of being a slave, in the same way that the impersonation of mastery makes one no master.

What about cynicism? In a recent book, *Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One*, Jameson notes, glossing Marx, that, in previous historical epochs and modes of production, the ideological dominant remained distinct from the productive determinant. Religion was the ideological dominant in feudalism, for instance, but religion remained unidentifiable with the mode of production as such: "Only capitalism constitutes a social formation—that is, an organized multiplicity of people—united by the absence of community, by separation and by individuality. . . . the identity of dominant and determinant in capitalism in principle

constitutes it as the first transparent society, that is to say, the first social formation in which 'the secret of production' is revealed."[12] In a recent article in *Fronterad* Jorge Alvarez Yagüez addresses the implication of this Marxian insight in terms of the overwhelming presence of cynicism as an ideological dominant in our society. It is an ideological dominant with a peculiar particularity: it is hard to define it as ideology, as it is in fact the naked recognition that ideology will not do, that there is a state of affairs no ideology can contain. Cynicism is, in Alvarez Yagüez´ determination, precisely the result of the recognition of the fact that we must assume, under full-blown capitalist conditions, a "brutal simplification, . . . a reduction of the density of motivations that could rule over the psyche and behavior toward the only one that can rule, 'cold interest,' 'mere exchange value.'"[13] Alvarez Yagüez assumes that only cynicism can grasp the real of the situation in a context with no alternatives. It is indeed a form of radical realism. He says: "the cynic is the 'great realist,' the one who is always in favor of the real."[14] If so, what makes the cynical position false? Alvarez Yagüez only hints at the answer by suggesting that the cynic lives in false conciousness through a willed oblivion that remains "unattentive to the potencies that negate existing reality."[15]

The inattention of the cynic, if cynicism truly is the ideology of the end of ideologies, is not inadvertent inattention, and cannot be compensated by the old recipe: ideology critique. The cynic could not care less that his ideology could be subjected to critique, to the very extent that he has assumed in advance all forms of critique, and has dismissed them. The cynic, an absolute historicist who always already knows very well what he is doing, always in every case chooses to continue to do it: he knows that personal advantage is the only position tolerated by the absolute dominance of the law of value in a capitalist society, and finds no limits and no determinations that might constrain his push for personal advantage. The cynic is no master—his life is indeed nothing but a constant pull for mastery, which means he lacks it—but he is no slave either: there can be no slaves, because there are no masters. There are only bearers of a subjective position. They live within a system characterized by a thoroughly seamless objectivity, and they can mimic slavery or mastery without for that reason ever reaching the systemic structure, which in every case determines them from the outside. The cynical position mimics mastery without ever acquiring it. Is the cynic not therefore the perfect contemporary representative of the bearer of Spinozist joyful passion? Or could we suggest the difficult thought that cynicism as such always necessarily fails through its very inattention to what is only mimicry in the mimicry? I think the latter is what Alvarez Yagüez, or Marx himself, meant through the idea that the cynic, for all his attunement to present reality, and through it, forfeits the possibility of an alternative temporality, a futurity that eludes him, if only because it eludes everyone else as well.

If Castellanos Moya could be understood to offer what I earlier called a novel figure of the writer in Central America—I have only undertaken the analysis of *La diáspora* in this essay, but I would propose my thesis for all of his oeuvre—, it is because his writing leaves behind the parameters presented by Beatriz Cortez in her book, which actually offer an axis for the age-old discussion regarding the function of intellectuality in Latin America. Castellanos Moya is neither a writer of insurgency, committed to postcolonial liberation in the name of a slavish identity that seeks redemption, nor a conservative writer that favors the political dominance of a particular social group through the artistic projection of class ideology.

Whatever is insurgent in his writing, and perhaps even whatever is conservative in it, go deeper. Castellanos Moya is a writer, clearly a political writer, whose focus is on the inconspicuous inattention to things and affects that might harbor the seed of historical potencies that remain unseen and unimaginable. To that extent he follows a path of thought, a path of writing, that must reject in advance all kinds of historical pieties. This was not so for, for instance, his admired Roque Dalton, who knew, as a militant intellectual, exactly what it was he was after. But today the question of a possible future remains clouded. As Moishe Postone has recently put it, "the older understanding of socialism (and of capitalism) has been called into question in various ways, including by the character and failure of 'actually existing socialism'. . . Yet, . . . a more adequate vision of socialism as the negation of capitalism has not emerged."[16] Castellanos Moya's literature, like that of his friends Roberto Bolaño or Rodrigo Rey Rosa, to provide two examples, dwells in the crisis of a past that no longer offers a future, and that is constantly interrogated as to its very silence and opacity.

La diáspora projects the presence of a writer, Juan Carlos, whose writing will be produced in the ruins of a youth and from the ashes of a country devastated by an inconclusive civil war. Juan Carlos is indeed at least part of Castellanos Moya´s literary *persona*. Like him, Castellanos Moya left El Salvador for a hesitant life elsewhere, to finish his studies, to make a little money, to become a writer, not to write "cheap anticommunist tirades," but rather to project a novelistic work that could feed on the remains of the past for the sake of an improbable future. That Castellanos Moya´s literature registers a monumental crisis in the political, which *La diáspora* only in a sense prefaces, is obvious for any reader. But what kind of an understanding of the political is finally rendered, or could be offered from the hypothetical standpoint of an overall consideration of a work in progress that is, at this point, very much unfinished? I will come back to it some day. For now, in conclusion, let me try to explain my Anaximander epigraph.

The epigraph is conventionally translated as "for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to their assessment of time."[17] Martin Heidegger offers a famously revisionist translation of the fragment in his essay "The Fragment of Anaximander,"

which says: "along the lines of usage; for they let order and thereby also reck belong to one another (in the surmounting) of disorder."[18] Heidegger's essay is at the core of a dispute between Jameson and Derrida in the mid-1990s on the issue of a reinterpretation of Marxism. Jameson claims that for Derrida "the past and history, along with historiography and narrative itself (grand or not), have for whatever reason been eclipsed."[19] Such a situation "calls for a revision of the past . . . but does so by way of a thoroughgoing reinvention of our sense of the past altogether, in a situation in which only mourning, and its peculiar failures and dissatisfactions . . . [open] a vulnerable space and entry-point through which ghosts might make their appearance."[20] This is the way in which one of the great representatives of Marxism attempts to conjure away the Derridean welcome of Marxian spirits in *The Specters of Marx*, but, leaving aside its critical edge, it could equally well serve to characterize the ostensible relation with the Salvadoran past that Castellanos Moya's literature offers: his ghosts must be handled through mourning, but then mourning always looks for its own end. It is not the failures and dissatisfactions of the haunting that prevail, but the reinvention of the real through dealing with them.

If "The Fragment of Anaximander" is significant for Derrida, however, it is because it proceeds through a peculiarly political language, since it talks about justice and restitution, about order and disorder, about usage, about the dislocation of time dispensed and time withheld, and about surmounting. If "standing in disjunction would be the essence of all that is present"[21], then the action of politics might introduce a corrective, in the form of "reck," which is the ancient English word used to translate the Greek *tisin*, and comes to figure as the essential word of what Derrida would call a democracy-to-come, as letting-belong and letting-be. Heidegger says: "The experience of beings in their Being which here comes to language is neither pessimistic nor nihilistic; nor is it optimistic. It is tragic."[22] Perhaps Castellanos Moya's writing is also a writing of reck. I would venture the statement that the experience of the political that Castellanos Moya's literature offers us is also a tragic one, which makes it unique in the Central American context, and comparable only to the rendering of some of the most august Latin American writers: José María Arguedas, for instance, or Roberto Bolaño. Cynicism does not quite measure up to it.

NOTES

1. Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One* (London: Verso, 2011), 91.

2. Anaximander cited in G.S Kirk and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, second ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 107.

3. Beatriz Cortez, *Estética del cinismo. Pasión y desencanto en la literatura centroamericana de posguerra* (Guatemala: F&G editores, 2010). "My interest is to explore the aesthetics of cynicism as a failed project" (26). All translations that follow in the text are mine. Further references are cited parenthetically in the text.

4. Horacio Castellanos Moya, *Insensatez* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2004). Cf. the essays by Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado "La ficción y el momento de peligro: *Insensatez* de Horacio Castellanos Moya," *Cuaderno Internacional de Estudios Humanísticos y Literatura (CIEHL)* 14 (2010): 79-86, and Sam Steinberg's "Cowardice—An Alibi: On Prudence and *Senselessness,*" *New Centennial Review* 14.1 (Spring 2014): 175-194, on this novel. Sánchez Prado presents the core of the novel as indicating or referring to the collapse of the modern intellectual subject, whose epitome, in Central America, was the committed intellectual. This novel seeks no rescue of the committed intellectual and looks for no reconfiguration of it: it aims at no reconstruction of a subject of the political. Steinberg interestingly links Castellanos Moya's production with the notion of infrapolitics. I depart from Steinberg at the point of his understanding of a militant infrapolitics at the metacritical level, as I think the infrapolitical dimension in Castellanos precludes any and every possibility of militancy. I would rather use the term "belligerence." Castellanos is a belligerant writer of restricted action against every writing of infinite militancy.

5. But I could have chosen *Baile con serpientes,* second ed. (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2012), if it were merely a matter of discounting Castellanos Moya´s cynicism. The snakes that wreak havoc and produce general confusion in the population in that book—they are nice snakes, albeit murderous, poisonous snakes with an undetermined capacity for attack—are a good symptom of the aggressivity that underlies Castellanos Moya's narrative, so much of the time subdued, but here, like in *El asco: Thomas Bernhard en San Salvador* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2007), given free rein. This is neither a narrative of redemption nor is it a cynic narrative. Cynic aggression has an altogether different tonality. But in this novel we find the aggressiveness of a desperate man, a writer whose internal tensions waver between dark nihilism and rage against a world that allows stupidity, pettiness, and corruption to gain the upper hand every time. Castellanos Moya sees truthlessness and mendacity everywhere, and understands the symbolic as so much smoke and mirrors used to cover up petty power struggles and manipulative fantasies of various kinds. There is no need to control him by claiming he is merely giving expression to the social mood of post-civil war Central American societies, and even less need to condescend to him by claiming his somber depictions of some imaginary facticity hide a real commitment to social change. If the writer feels at times closer to his own characters—Eduardo Sosa in *El asco*, Robocop in *La diabla en el espejo* (Madrid: Linteo, 2000) or *El arma en el hombre* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2001), or the hapless waiter in "Con la congoja de la pasada tormenta," in *Con la congoja de la pasada tormenta. (Casi todos los cuentos)* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2009), 139-74, it is probably because that is the way it is. But the snakes are not just aggressive. They are also loving creatures, as we see in the last section of the novel, which contains one of the most savage erotic scenes in Latin American literature.

6. From the fact that Cortez did not like the novel to the possibility that she did not have access to it. I am not suggesting that anything was done wrong here. Simply, the analysis did not happen.

7. See the essays collected under the heading "Breves palabras impúdicas" in *La metamorfosis del sabueso*: *Ensayos personales y otros textos* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2011), 11-54.

8. Horacio Castellanos Moya, *La diaspora* (San Salvador: UCA editores, 1989), 23. Further references are cited parenthetically in the text.

9. Roque Dalton, mentioned already in *El asco* (86), is something like a recurring obsession for Castellanos Moya. See for instance his astounding short story "Variaciones sobre el asesinato de Francisco Olmedo," in *Con la congoja de la pasada tormenta*, 73-111 and his equally astounding essay "La tragedia del hereje," in *La metamorfosis del sabueso. Ensayos personales y otros textos* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2011), 100-15.

10. Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (Autumn 1986): 65-88. Further references are cited parenthetically in the text.

11. This is a topic that I can only mark. Spinoza's theory of the affects, which includes his disquisitions on sad and joyful passions, occupies a good deal of his work, in particular sections three to five of the *Ethics* in *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 213-382, with important sections on the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* in *Spinoza: Complete Works,* 1-30, and *the Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* in Spinoza: *Complete Works*, 31-107. It was crucial for Spinoza to theorize freedom against every possibility of bondage for deep

personal and biographical reasons. Let me just say that the attempt to disengage Castellanos Moya's writing from the notion of sad passion in Spinoza is what motivated the writing of this essay.

12. Jameson, *Representing Capital,* 91.

13. Jorge Alvarez Yagüez, "Cinismo, nihilismo, capitalism," *Fronterad*, December 5, 2013, www.fronterad.com/?q=cinismo-nihilismo-capitalismo .

14. "Cinismo," 4.

15. "Cinismo," 4.

16. Moishe Postone, "Thinking the Global Crisis," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111.2 (Spring 2012), 233.

17. *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 108.

18. Martin Heidegger, "The Anaximander Fragment," *Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy*, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 57.

19. Fredric Jameson, "Marx's Purloined Letter," *Ghostly Demarcations. A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx,* intro. Michael Sprinker (New York: Verso, 1995), 43.

20. "Marx's Purloined Letter," 43.

21. "The Anaximander Fragment," 42.

22. "The Anaximander Fragment," 44.

ALBERTO MOREIRAS is Professor of Hispanic Studies at Texas A&M University. He is the author of *Línea de sombra. El no sujeto de lo politico* (Palinodia, 2006), *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies* (Duke University Press, 2001), and *Tercer espacio: Duelo y literatura en América Latina* (ARCIS/LOM, 1999), among other books. His *Piel de lobo: Posthegemonía e infrapolítica* is forthcoming in Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid. He is a coeditor of the *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, *Política común*, and *Res publica. Revista de filosofía política.*

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

DEMANDING THE IMPOSSIBLE...

LITERATURE AND POLITICAL IMAGINATION (*AMULETO*, 1968 IN THE NINETIES)

SUSANA DRAPER

I

The call for submissions for this special issue poses an intriguing and difficult question: "What role, if any, do discussions of the literary, and of the work of art more generally, … play within Latin American studies today?" At a time when literature seems to vacillate between an almost mindless market-driven mechanism (the best-seller) or a moribund state (the apparent absence of any social role), the question challenges us to move into complex territories involving not only the possibility of saying something new or different about art, but also examining the way in which certain works become questions about themselves, about what they can do or achieve.

In this sense, I am interested in dealing with what Derrida calls "literary acts" (or "acts of literature") because they allow us to explore the performative aspect of literature—*its practical expressions*. In the opening interview of *Acts of Literature*, Derrida argues that literature's power lies in the fact that it configures speech from a place that differs from other discourses [in]

> [being] the institution which allows one to *say everything*, in *every way*. The space of literature is not only that of an instituted *fiction* but also a *fictive institution* which in principle allows one to say everything. […] The institution of literature in the West, in its relatively modern form, is linked to an authorization to say everything, and doubtless too to the coming about of a modern idea of democracy. *Not that it depends on a democracy in place, but it seems inseparable to me from what calls forth a democracy, in the most open (and doubtless itself to come) sense of democracy*. [1]

It is perhaps in this link between the open structure of a fictional institution and a potential democracy that literature connects to a form of promise—in other words, to the fact of being able to create a space in what is instituted as a given (as "non-fiction") so as to translate it into

other modes of being. In this act of opening, which suspends the limitation or reduction of language to its referential form, another possibility emerges: "to invent something new in the form of acts of writing which no longer consist in a theoretical knowledge, in new constative statements, to give oneself to a poetic-literary performativity at least analogous to that of promises, orders, or acts of constitution or legislation which do not only change language, or which, in changing language, change more than language. It is always more interesting than to repeat."[2] This is connected to the idea that emerges in Martin Heidegger's texts on art as a poetic dwelling that is connected to a "measure" that corresponds to the incommensurable (that which affects, inhabits, or questions thought).[3] Its power resides in the effort power to interpellate us from the non-measurable, and thus from what becomes incommensurable to our present, and to question, test, and critique it.

It is curious to note that on the current literary map it is the best-selling and most heavily marketed Latin American author, Roberto Bolaño, whose work is apparently obsessed with dramatizing the different relations between aesthetics and politics that are linked to Latin American literary endeavors. Various texts by the Chilean author raise the question of another *place* to think about literary intervention and how it connects to the political horizon, proposing a an interstice that extends the usual figures historically articulated by aesthetics and politics. By this I mean either the ideal of autonomy or art for art's sake, with the figure of the activist artist who transmits a message, or the notion of a vanguard as the group of forerunners who lead or guide the masses. Likewise, the fact that he articulates the question about aesthetics and politics differently challenges us to rethink each of those spheres in a way that questions the relationships between the specific spheres of production characteristic of art and politics: for example, the notion of the writer linked to the university or to state institutions and therefore entangled in a given politics, already stereotyped by the limitations of the state. *Nocturno de Chile* (2000), like *Amuleto* (1998) or *Los detectives salvajes* (1998), dramatizes the crisis of a certain type of intellectual and writer, proposing a retreat from the institutional organization of the art of writing. However, in proposing this withdrawal, we have to consider or wonder about the type of fabulation the text can create or assume once it is disconnected from that which traditionally linked it to certain power organizations.

Amuleto plays at transferring the question of the literary to another type of archive, one that is capable of making us reconfigure the past based on its promises, instead of factual archives. It signals the possibility of opening up a space for imagining not the configuration of fact through the factual, but through what did not happen (could not be). Interestingly, the text becomes the place where a way of articulating the promise of the literary emerges from a concrete objective that refers to *thinking, introducing, and expressing another type of memory of 68*. The fact that this is the date that crystallizes the text is not coincidental, since it is

thanks to the market's appropriation of the imagination of 68 and its cognitive work that the novel acquires another meaning by insisting on opening up histories *after* 68 *about what did not happen*.[4] Thus, the drama bequeathed by the post-boom is augmented by the possibility of what Brett Levinson in *The Ends of Literature* calls "an effort to occupy an imaginary hybrid site between aestheticism and empiricism," perhaps a way of being able to move in the space of co-implication of both.[5] Bolaño provides a condensed response to the anxiety about the end of the literary and at the same time, he is *doing* something that causes us to roll the dice again, to bring in what might be called the specter of the literary, its promise—its "place." I wish to discuss *Amuleto* because I believe it shows one of the possible potentials still remaining in literature, the ability to imagine what did not happen, which allows me to respond to the question in the call for submissions with a reply that also coincides with an act of literary interpretation.

Amuleto, 1968 Otherwise

Playing with 68's great crisis of functionality and its critique of knowledge-producing institutions, the novel signals a withdrawal from the authority of academic knowledge—in *Amuleto* literature passes through another *site, constructs another place* (we go from the classroom to the bathroom).[6] Bolaño appropriates a rumor and constructs a story: when the Spanish poet, León Felipe, died, a recording of him reading his poems was played in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. According to Martín Dorsal, the sound of Felipe's voice was followed by the tramp of boots as the riot police seized the building.[7] Poetry and activism are linked in the first major moment of violation of the Mexican university autonomy, which crystallized in a curious image of military boots filling the physical and auditory space of the building, leading to the fact that poetry ended up being crushed by military force. This comes into *Amuleto* with an evocation of the event in an anecdote that apparently circulated around the university, in bars, and in intellectual and artistic circles: Auxilio Lacouture, who is shut up in a bathroom stall during the occupation, reads poetry and resists until she faints. A poet with no published work, she emerges as a 68 character who inhabits only the memory of those who remember her; she did not leave a great work and yet she emerges in almost all the texts that in one way or another attempt to recapture the scene at the time.[8] The question that arises is why the memory of one of the most extraordinary moments in the politics and culture of Mexican history should focus on this character, who seems not to belong anywhere: an undocumented Uruguayan in Mexico who is neither an activist nor a student becomes the stage for a moment in time. To my mind, the choice of this particular memory site tells us something about the relationships between the aesthetic, the historical and the political, something that recurs throughout almost all of the author's works, but is seen at its most intense in this short novel.

It is interesting that Bolaño's longest texts are the ones that have drawn the greatest attention from readers on an international level. Perhaps it is not too far from the mark to claim that the Bolaño boom that has been going on ever since the English translation of *Los detectives salvajes* reflects an anxiety about the death of a notion of literature that Bolaño explores intensely and incessantly. According to Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, Bolaño situates us in a universe in which literature and horror appear in a story of police complicity, forcing us to think about the bankruptcy of the scholarly and literary endeavors typical of the Enlightenment.[9] In a similar vein, Patrick Dove stresses that Bolaño confronts us with the paradox of an aesthetic which, rather than opening up possibilities for critically enriching the senses, ends up creating an anesthesia, a critical and sensory "blindness."[10] Dove is referring to the scene close to the end of *Nocturno de Chile*, in which we are told that in one of the literary salons held in the home of María Canales, the wife of a CIA-DINA agent, someone gets lost in the basement corridors and comes across the body of a detainee who has been tortured and is waiting for his "transfer" or death. In this scene that the text reconstructs again and again, a powerful critique is mounted against a certain type of "vanguard" literary criticism which, rather than opening up ways to "see" differently, blinds the senses. Here the notion of Enlightenment as "illumination" overlaps with a gradual darkening, since each description of the event emphasizes that as before the person who saw horror returns to the living room where the literary-artistic group is meeting, he carefully switches off all the lights he turned on as he went down to the basement. The question is, therefore, how to link the critique of Enlightenment scholarly endeavors within which literature has operated in the history of Latin American letters and the place from which this critical gesture is constructed (Bolaño's *literary* work). *In other words, how should we approach the literary act that constitutes the work when the text is intended to problematize literary history and all that relates to it (Enlightenment endeavors and the limitations of their idea of a public sphere for the circulation of knowledge and their different educational endeavors?*) In this sense, I am interested in examining what is put in place of a certain literature (or perhaps certain ~~literature~~) and of a promise of another type of "articulation" between literature and Enlightenment that Bolaño interpellates critically and irreverently *from within literature* about literature. Thus, a question arises as to whether it is possible to re-think or re-imagine literature when, along with the criticism of a certain history of this practice, one is intervening in what *remains* unthought in that past. Along these lines, my text follows a Benjaminian vein in attempting to pose a constellation of fragments that recreate the "song" that Auxilio Lacoutoure hears as "echoes," an act of listening that the text proposes to narrate using an unusual, foreign female figure, who represents a curious repetition of 68 as a political and life event beyond and closer to us than the massacre. That is to say, I believe that the way this text is structured encourages us to think about how "68" is being reproduced as a "gesture" and *how the promise of a 68 that never happened can be inherited*, a 68 that *could not* happen

or that *might not have happened*—a wake left by 68 beyond its own time period, a wake that connects it to a broader history of events and exclusions.

Literature and the Othering of Political Imagination

As Raúl Rodríguez Freire argues, the last few decades have confronted us with a process of transition in which political interest in the figure of revolution has been gradually displaced (substituted) by a growing obsession with memory and its politics. However, says Rodríguez Freire, even assuming that the interest of "the left" is being reduced to the practice of remembrance, the left needs to create its own memory politics, and even more, "to realize that it is standing on the same historicist and metaphysical ground as the right"[11] (2) Thus, the problem that arises is not merely the act of naturalizing the substitution of interest in social transformation for interest in practices of remembrance, but also the fact that memory itself needs a critical approach able to re-articulate a question about the historicity in which the configuration of the past is being carried out. Within this context, one of Bolaño's literary interests seems to be suggesting a different version of the relationship between memory and politics, one that could create a possible view of the past as a critical, creative act. In this sense, *Amuleto* is one of the works that goes the furthest in terms of dramatizing a reflection on the construction of political memory, seen in the protagonist's obsession with imagining "encounters that never occurred" (63).[12] Thus, the act of remembering comes from opening up an impossibility in the past: imagining the memory of *what did not happen*, the unfulfilled promise and also the potential. This act of remembering is what allows the protagonist to stay in the bathroom on the fourth floor of the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras as the riot police are invading the university, and thence to defend-resist university autonomy. This incommensurable "rescue" of university autonomy, the starting point for the student movement and 68 in Mexico, starts with an unusual gesture in which the form of remembrance is explicitly directed towards creating images of a past "that did not happen." Thus, we may ask ourselves what exactly 68 represents when Bolaño recreates it as an image three decades later; that is, how this fictionalization addresses a political and artistic past in the text, as well as the "urgency" of its present. In Benjaminian terms, if the present becomes "critique" thanks to the threat not just that the status quo will be preserved but also that the memory of the past will be erased, what type of "rescue" and alert configures this peculiar way of posing the problem? It would seem that one of the keys to *Amuleto* lies in the text's destabilization of all notions of linear progress in time, making us think of the peculiarity of the ways of making history perceptible. It draws attention to the leap involved in the passage from experience to narrative retelling. From the moment the text encourages us to enter the universe of what did not happen, the timescale of politics opens up to a different mode, with various spatio-temporal layers or plateaus, each dissymmetrical to the others. Perhaps it

is in this way of approaching and entering the past that Bolaño offers a subtle commentary on ways of opening up the political and creating a space in/for it in the sense of avoiding fixing or transcendentalizing certain meanings that the military dictatorships had sealed shut. It would seem as if *Amuleto* moves in a terrain that cannot be reduced to the two most dominant dialectical poles in terms of framing the political past in a critical narrative: the paradigm of defeat or the paradigm of growing up, maturing. Both involve a moral of learning that presumes a temporality that is too tinged with progress, that is, a time that moves in stages without questioning how defeat is narrated and temporalized or what type of subject is presumed to have matured with respect to the politics of the past, which are seen as a "childhood illness" the dictatorships came to "cure."

In his book *Marx For Our Times*, Miguel Bensaïd argues that "to de-moralize history … is to politicize it and open it up to strategic conceptualization," which can "disentangle tendencies and temporalities that counteract without abolishing each other."[13] This raises the possibility of thinking about politics as "the point where discordant times intersect."[14] Furthermore, I would argue that the whole exercise of unsettling time that seems to be the starting point for *Amuleto* is a literary dramatization of a suggestion Bolaño made in an essay "A Modest Proposal" about re-thinking the political in a way that is not only critical of its supposed past but also of the way its narrative is constantly co-implicating itself with what supposedly cancels it out. It is a simple question that urges us to overturn or question the naturalized order of historical events: What would have happened if…?

> Sometimes I have the feeling that the animal is trying to tame me. … Sometimes I get the feeling that September 11 wants to break us. Sometimes I get the feeling that September 11 has already irrevocably broken us. What would have happened if September 11 had never existed? It's a silly question, but sometimes it's necessary to ask silly questions, or it's inevitable, or it suits our natural laziness. What would have happened?[15]

This passage situates us in a crucial framework inside Bolaño's cynical horizon and his particular view of politics and art, encouraging us to ask about something that both the left and the right continue to exclude from the map: what would have happened if September 11 had not happened? Or if October 2, 1968, had not happened? As Bolaño´s essay tries to make clear in the text, these questions do not mean idealizing the left, but simply glancing away from the dialectical moral of defeat and/or a lesson learned, starting with a question that overturns the *timeframe of dominant policy—the very horizon of the question about the past and the wake it leaves in other modes of imagining it in the present*. Thus, he encourages us to take the paths of other

truncated histories that point to the potential (what did not happen), opening up a unique space in which the critical gaze urges us to re-create the political imagination without reducing it to the primacy of the "now" (what actually happened). That is, it points us towards a way in which the "now" of history (the fiction of facts) is co-implicated in annulling the potential of what did not happen that the "now" attempts to silence, displace, and even exclude altogether.

We could say, therefore, that *Amuleto* moves from a way of imagining 68 that has been fixed in the imagination as a "bath of horror" ever since the massacre of Tlatelolco and instead focuses our attention on another bath/room (the one on the fourth floor of the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at UNAM), which shows us a "modest proposition" with the imaginary voyage of Auxilio, who, just like Bolaño with Chile, is obsessed with "rescuing" what was not possible in the past, the "impossible encounters." Thus, the question underlying the "modest proposition" is dramatized as the structural force of the novel, the idea of imagining what did not happen. The question of how the truncated past connects past and future plays with the possibility of imagining the political in a way that does not emerge as a prediction of a future in the past, but as an open promise, the unfulfilled that insists and subsists as a question ("What would have happened if….?"). Thus, the text is organized as a way of repeating 68 as a gesture that displaces the primacy of the narrative focused on the positivism of "the facts" or political "realism" as a lesson from the dictatorship. It therefore urges us to open our eyes to a politics that, cynically but no less pretentiously, does not presume or assume an exclusive disjunction (success-failure) but forces us to think of how to dig around in the past from the point of view of what is not constituted as "given." In this way, the structure insists, a priori, on a challenge to the way of envisaging the relationship between historical imagination and politics, dismissing the idea of faithful testimony to what is given (the "facts") and setting up a faithfulness to the event (Mexico's "68," Chile's "70," etc.) from the open structure of a promise (from the impossible past *as* promise).

"Y ese canto es nuestro amulet/And that song is our amulet"

"And then I kept quiet while they went on badmouthing the poets of Mexico, the ones they were going to blow out of the water, and I thought about the dead poets, like Darío and Huidobro, and about all the encounters that never occurred. *The truth is that our history is full of encounters that never occurred…*" says Auxilio, situating us in the dynamic that governs the possibility of another way of writing and conceptualizing history.[16] In his introduction to the Spanish translation of "Convolute N" of Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, Pablo Oyarzún proposes that the truncated past is that which could not occur in its present, and he contrasts it both to the "weak" force, to the structure of a promise (unfulfilled), and to the dominant force represented by the fantasy of administering time and managing politics (the obsession with remembrance/memorializing) that has permeated the dominant discourses of the left and the

right ever since the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the dictatorships as the imagination of the "end" of (a certain) history. [17] In a way, I believe this is the vein in which *Amuleto* seems to evoke (or write itself) as a unique "remembrance" of the event of "68," without proposing that its homage is a way of evoking the referentiality of a "fact." Instead, it traces the modality of a time frame that differs from the political, since time is muddled and multiform in the text, a constellation of dreams of nightmares. By organizing Auxilio's interior monologue based on the image of impossible encounters and the weight of reflexivity that this imposes regarding a temporal imagination, Bolaño seems to point to a need to think about the figurability of politics in other ways, ones that diverge from the narratives of the left and the right, which are trapped in historicism and what the writer calls the invisible and introjected gaze of the jailers.

Amuleto generates an unusual "fold" which shows, perhaps, another way of thinking about political and artistic vanguard(s), or rather of thinking about the connection between the critique of certain stereotypes of the vanguard (emphasizing the "break" or cut necessary in order to reach the future—from that future) and their insistence on imagining an *unknown* university. This emerges not so much in relation to the notion of an artistic vanguard or neo-vanguard able to emphasize the "cut-off" or "shock," nor in relation to a political vanguard as the organization of a leading leadership. It would be interesting to think about this gesture in connection with what Willy Thayer proposes in "The Coup as Consummation of the Vanguard," given that it would seem that in Bolaño two lines emerge: one associates the vanguard with a cut-off point, a *golpe* or coup (meaning "blow"). [18] Thus, the artistic vanguard of both the left and the right (a shared desire) emerges in certain works as part of the fascist imagination in the sense that Thayer emphasizes, with the idea of the Coup as a cutting off. However, Bolaño also articulates a need to rethink the vanguard from the horizon of projects which emphasized a possibility for social, political or institutional transformation. *Amuleto* thematizes this possibility from the structure of an emphasis on thinking of a non-existent vanguard that would seem to go hand in hand with an "unknown university"—both as an open promise in the dreams and nightmares of 1968, 1973, etc. In this sense, the "What would have happened if…?" could be approached as an attempt to think of the constructive moment of the work of social transformation—in Chile's case, the complicated web of the leftist coalition Unidad Popular, and in the case of Mexico, the multiplicity of 68 as an instance of a unique blending of voices of students, academics, peasants, and railway workers. From this critical perspective, it could be said that a problem emerges here that is no less important in terms of the vanguard in Bolaño, which is always split or torn between the political and the artistic. However, it would seem that in different texts, but more noticeably perhaps in *Amuleto*, there is an instance of decentralization of each of the poles from the notion of the unknown vanguard, the one that could not take place, the one that perhaps remains to be thought.

Perhaps it is here that the novel's focus on the figure of Auxilio starts to make more sense, because it makes us see and read a series of historical layers with a gaze that is oblique and dissymmetrical, which, within the novel´s political and artistic horizon, gives us the figure of the "sister" or the "mother" who suspends the horizon of a fraternity that thinks of politics from and for "brothers" (something that the protagonist reiterates cynically as the world of "Latin American *machitos*"). Undocumented, with no residence papers, and homeless, Auxilio becomes the place of a singular gaze that, instead of trying to remember a past that has supposedly "been," is obsessed with reconstructing what could not be. The first time this obsession arises suggests a way of thinking about a vanguard that did not occur (she calls it the "non-existent vanguard"), where instead of being something that goes "before," the vanguard is posited as something that is muddled up in terms of time. That is, from the framework that the text creates with its muddling of time, the distinction between what goes ahead and what lags behind, the "avant-garde" or "arrière-garde" loses meaning (how do we mark a vanguard or a rearguard when the timescales intersect, mingle, open and close upon one another?). At the same time, in this muddling we can glimpse that possible impossible vanguard (non-existent in terms of happening "now") that implies an intriguing aporetic gesture in which the vanguard itself lies in the impossible voyage through what has not happened. It is as if going between-times involved a performance or demonstration of that vanguard that is waiting to be thought, seized, and/or re-configured. Thus, Auxilio demands that we imagine another kind of vanguard where the muddling of time overturns the order of events (those happening now and those potentially happening from their irreducibility and co-implication) and tests an essential theme for thinking about the political: the question of how to think about the perceptibility of history itself. Perhaps this is linked to what in "Literature + illness = illness" Bolaño posited as the possibility of recognizing the new as something "which has been there all along" based on the idea of following "paths that lead nowhere except to the loss of the self, and yet they must be followed and the self must be lost, in order to find it again, or to find something, whatever it may be—a book, an expression, a misplaced object—in order to find anything at all, a method, perhaps, and, with a bit of luck, the *new*, which has been there all along."[19] This type of gaze posits a novelty that does not appear to be governed by the possibility of uniting the present and the future (the anxiety of futurity, the cut-off point and novelty of the vanguard) but rather the idea of being able to look back and thus perform a revolutionary gesture.

The first impossible encounter that Auxilio proposes to think about begins with a kind of reflection on friendship and love. The poet says: "That's the way love is, my friends; I speak as the mother of all poets. That's the way love is, and slang, and the streets, and sonnets. And the sky at five in morning. But friendship is something different. If you have friends you're never alone" (59). She goes on to speak about her situation as a kind of hinge between groups that

could not communicate with each other, generations that spoke different literary "languages": "I was friends with León Felipe and Don Pedro Garfías, but also with the youngest poets, the kids who lived in a lonely world of love and slang" (59). In these passages, Bolaño seems to be insisting on a kind of double structure based on a counterpoint between what is "like that" (love, slang, the streets, the time of day) and what derails all that (the declaration of what is affirmed as immutable and is nothing less than friendship as an instance in which one is not alone). At this moment, Auxilio meditates on young poets' inability to understand other generations, and the lack of communication between artistic and political languages that the massacre of Tlatelolco bequeathed as a wound that split history in two. It would seem that the notion of friendship as that which is not governed by the logic of what is "like that" (the regime of now), that is, what could be or could have been different from what it is, is linked to the idea of thinking about hypothetical past encounters and exploring those possibilities. In this possibility, we see for the first time in the text the problem of imagining another vanguard, one that the protagonist can think of as "the non-existent avant-garde" and that is immediately exemplified by a kind of university-other. This is suggested through a specific case in which Auxilio meditates on something she remembers the Mexican poet, José Emilio Pacheco, saying about how much Latin American poetry had lost because of the meeting and possible friendship that never took place between Rubén Darío and Vicente Huidobro. And she adds that this event that the young poets cannot imagine would have caused something unique that muddles the timeframes of art and the way of thinking about education, both of which are linked to a curious form of non-existent vanguard that would have implied a divergent route from the usual way of narrating the steps between modernism and vanguard.

> Because Darío, I dare say, would have taught Huidobro a great deal, but Huidobro would also have taught Darío a thing or two. That's how the relationship between master and disciple works: it is not only the disciple who learns. And since we're speculating, I believe, and so did Pacheco … that, of the two, Darío would have learned more; he would have been able to bring Hispanic modernism to a close and begin something new, not the avant-garde as such, but an island, say, between modernism and the avant-garde, what we might now call the non-existent island, an island of words that never were, and could only have come into being (granted that this were even possible) after the imaginary encounter between Darío and Huidobro; and Huidobro himself, after his fruitful encounter with Darío, would have been able to found an even more vigorous avant-garde, what we might name the non-existent avant-garde, which, had it existed, would have transformed us and changed our lives. (62)

This passage places us in the mixing-up not just of literary history (as a linear route in which vanguard follows modernism) but also of a form of learning in which the relations between pupil and disciple mingle, co-implicating themselves in an other-process.

Clearly, in this route, her own figure seems to place her as part of that island (isolation) inhabited by the impossible memory of the echoes that the young poets cannot now “hear” or translate, and that lead them to see Auxilio as the figure of a woman who is drunk or crazy. This emerges with a play on voices in which the young poets “recite” their poetry like a song with no relation to a past or a future that provoked rejection in the protagonist. Thus, it would seem that this island (limbo) between modernism and vanguard is also the site from which a dissymmetrical gaze on history emerges. From the aporia organized by the text (the impossibility of imagining what did not happen), Auxilio is positioned as a kind of link that tries unsuccessfully to connect the world before the massacre and the later world of young poets who, born out of the wound of Tlatelolco, emerge in her gaze as beings uninterested in thinking of another university, another perceptibility of history. Thus, if the protagonist on whom the text focuses is also a name and a place of remembrance, we may argue that this muddling involved in the idea of imagining what did not happen is opening up an insistence on a genealogy of history’s silenced voices. The game that imposes this inability to inherit the promises of what did not happen would seem to speak of a literature that is perhaps unknown, since with this fictionalization of a type of memory (that is neither memoir nor testimonial), what appears in the text as delirium is the fact that the memory is being fabricated. Thus, *Amuleto* would seem to open up that peculiar mode of articulating pasts and futures, a way of thinking about the writing of history that, in Benjaminian terms, *demands a different prose*—an act of imagination that seems to remind us that any memory of the past is actually an act of fictionalizing that past, an almost impossible translation of erased voices—a ghostly form of listening that in the text perhaps responds to the question of what type of construction of 68 can be performed in 1998, how to inherit its promise and repeat the gesture without trying to copy it.

It is thus not accidental that on returning from the journey in this section through an unknown vanguard, Auxilio then turns to an encounter in which she herself is the protagonist and which involves an impossible conversation with Remedios Varo, a Catalan artist exiled in Mexico. Thus we pass from the impossible encounter between two poets whose names represent modernism and vanguard, the *telos* of literary historicization (Darío – Huidobro), to the impossible encounter that is made up in the bathroom on the fourth floor of the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, a dream that brings in elements that are key to the rest of the text, in the future of its narrative possibility: the idea of her obsession with the (unknown) university linked to the notion of an impossible “fraternity, liberty, and equality.”

II

> …someone opens the door and it is Remedios Varo . . . she says she has given up smoking, that her lungs are delicate now, and although she doesn't look like she has bad lungs, or has even seen anything bad in her life, I know that she has seen many bad things, the ascension of the devil, the unstoppable procession of termites climbing the Tree of Life, the conflict between the Enlightenment and the Shadow or the Empire or the Kingdom of Order, which are all proper names of the irrational stain that is bent on turning us into beasts or robots, and which has been fighting against the Enlightenment since the beginning of time . . . I know that she has seen things that very few women *know* they have seen . . . It is time for me to go. I don't know whether to shake her hand or kiss her on both cheeks. Latin American women, as far as I know, give just the one kiss. On one cheek. Spanish women give two. And French women three. When I was a girl I used to think that the three kisses stood for Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Now I know they don't, but I still like to think they do. So I give her three kisses and she looks at me as if she too, at some point, had shared my theory. (…) And Remedios Varo looks at me and her eyes say, Don't worry, Auxilio, you're not going to die, you're not going to go crazy, you're upholding academic independence, you're defending the honor of our American universities. (107-9; 113-4).

In this long passage we see virtual syntheses of the problems the novel explores from the dissymmetrical gaze that involves a relationship between the Enlightenment endeavor and its raison d'être, the emancipatory legacy of the French Revolution and its motto, and the defense of academic freedom. We also contemplate the horror of those promises and the insistence on decentering, which starts with that impossible encounter during which the text's characteristically enormous incommensurability turns insistently, like a spotlight, on that farewell and the three kisses. These are translated in Auxilio's mind into a sort of "gesture" that is indebted to the emancipatory promise of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" which is now exposed by an impossible fraternity (among sisters *who know they saw*) and that is linked to the earlier difference between enlightened reason and the "stain" of an irrational order, a distinction that is posited in a delirious way as an artistic vision. In this encounter we see a groove or fissure in the imagination of fraternity in which Auxilio imagines a different path of non-masculine fraternity, that is, an impossible divergence from the meaning of the word. Thus, with this "seeing" that encourages us to imagine what we cannot "see," there is a gesture towards another form of fraternity, one that exposes the traditional framing that has operated, as Derrida shows, in the framework of masculine brotherhood and the type

of political fiction that it sets up within a political imagination based on isomorphism of the self as a way of inscribing equality. However, this leaves out of the sphere the dissymmetrical element that would implicate its impossibility and that would seem to correspond to an impossible insistence on what did not happen and to the possibility of expanding the frame of this politics. By insisting on linking the "university" to the idea of liberty, fraternity, and equality, it would seem that the text is confronting us with a question about the act of naming in history, insisting on a name when it is being emptied and questioned, as Derrida posits in the *Politics of Friendship* about the word-name "democracy," which is insisted upon even when its history, its premises, and its predicates are being deconstructed.[20] That is, when he asks (just as Bolaño is perhaps urging us to ask) what it is that insists when we maintain those names as sites in which a history is being deconstructed and where we are urged to reiterate a gesture of meaning, an act of reading in which the name operates as the very site of a promise. In *Amuleto* liberty-equality-fraternity and vanguard would seem to follow this impossible logic, urging us to think about what remains to be thought in the worn-out words history, testimonies, surfeits.

Beginning with this encounter, Auxilio imagines a past whose echoes she hears in the form of a valley split by a bottomless abyss and she expresses the double-sidedness [*doblez*] of that abyss as what separates "her" obsession with the university and the post-massacre literary life of the young poets born from the wound (the abyss) left by Tlatelolco. This is clear when she says, "The truth is, young poets usually end up as old, failed journalists. And the university, my beloved university, is lurking in the sewers underneath the Avenida Bucareli, waiting for its day to come" (122). Here it is worth asking what this insistence on the university means, and, even more, what type of "university" is imagined by this character who functions as a site able to transform the echoes of a past into figure and amulet. And, further, how is that university linked to the tapestry that Auxilio can "paint" finally in her imagination as if it were a portrait of Remedios Varo and that refers, in this context, to the impossible fictionalization of another vanguard and another imagination of the Enlightenment? By this I mean, with an imagination that, like the "university" that lies hidden in a non-visible zone, in the "sewers" of history, and that is included in its impossibility like those three imaginary kisses that would open up a world of liberty-equality-and-fraternity, now thought from what was historically and philosophically *dissymmetrical* to it—the impossible outside that sustains a certain Enlightenment imagination.

On the other hand, we can also see that this "tapestry" or final portrait invented in the text resembles the first testimonial given by Elena Poniatowska in *La noche de Tlatelolco* (1971), where she describes a group or mass of individuals who are walking to their deaths. It is as if this tapestry that is painted at the end of *Amuleto* repeats (cites) in a distorted way

that first narrative circuit about the massacre (the monument-work of 68) with the image of young people walking towards the writer, young people whom we see becoming corpses, ghosts, and finally, as in *Amuleto*, "kids" who are walking unknowingly towards the abyss. Clearly, this is perhaps the work of Bolaño himself who is constructing this "university" in which horror and hope emerge as co-implicated within the "gesture" of imagining what is left out of "History" and attempting to imagine how it can be made "perceptible." Thus, the tapestry seems to introduce that instant of "insanity" that raises a question about how to think, represent, and imagine history from the dissymmetry that it was not, that was erased, that was truncated. To a certain extent, the call to think about "Tlatelolco" three decades later from this incommensurable act of imagining what is imagined by this woman who defends university autonomy and resists the massacre from inside a bathroom and the work of her imagination (acts that refer, once again, to *La noche de Tlatelolco* which mentions a woman who passed out in a bathroom), seems to play with the possibility of writing a past from the impossible. This situates us in a zone that matches the idea of insanity that is judged in the "saying" that emphasizes the contradictory, impossible, or unsayable as an act of remembering what did not happen (the unrememberable), the insistence on "the community of those who have no community," etc.—all ways of thinking about the force that opens up an aporetic structure without which the political, as Derrida says, would be determined as an automatic program.[21] In the attempt to think the unthinkable and from there trace another way of making historicity perceptible, there is a gesture towards the possibility of an "other" Enlightenment that remains to be thought from this *asymmetrical* point of the unknown university, what does not qualify as a recognizable brother in this story (the story of that horror and hope that comes not from the classroom but from the bathroom, from the excrement of history, from the sewers, but that insists on teaching). Thus Auxilio's narrative voice becomes more interesting as it opens up an attempt to think about history against the grain, from the point at which all that was excluded demands to be "represented" in other terms.

III

The epigraph of *Amuleto* is based on a quotation from Petronius that reads: "In our misery we wanted to scream for help, but there was no one there to come to our aid." In what follows, the word "help" (*auxilio*) re-emerges not as a noun but as a proper name: "My name is Auxilio Lacouture and I am Uruguayan…" (2). When defining this generation of frustrated children, it is clear that what emerges after the massacre is a de-politicization or at least a separation of what would have been an attempt to articulate a political amalgam (questioning the typical notion of political vanguard) and a poetic vanguard. In this sense, we could say that through this character who emerges three decades later in response to a call for "help" we see an

incommensurable (immense) act in which literature and university autonomy emerge as an act of reading and imagination. The defense of this university that has been forgotten by the bohemian poets, the failed critics of the future, seems to be posited as a "reminder" of a possibility not just to differentiate political crime from the political that Tlatelolco seals as a place (the name of history), but also to put forward a question about the status of the public and the notion of academic freedom as a different type of knowledge that the text posits as a retrospective imagination, appealing to the ambiguity between the terrain of the literary and the political, where "university" and "vanguard" intermingle to be rethought.[22]

In a sense, this would imply the possibility of redirecting the character's insanity towards the possibility of that insanity speaking of a dissymmetry, of an equality in dissymmetry excluded by the logic of fraternity as its impossible-to-foresee other (insanity in the sense of unpredictability, of unsubsumable speech). Bolaño seems here to be structuring the passage on the juxtaposition between the noun "help" in the epigraph, a request for aid or assistance, and the proper name "Auxilio" (help, aid, assistance), as a response that emerges and that perhaps can only emerge from the textual space from which that help arrives, three decades later, imagined in this singular form of a foreign consciousness in which "memory" is connected to universes that are obviously improper: a woman with no home, no property, and no documentation who is nevertheless the mother and younger sister of those who walked and are walking towards the abyss.

Various poems published in *The Unknown University* dating from a period prior to the writing of *Amuleto* foreground the most important tropes in the latter, placing us on a problematic horizon that permeates all of Bolaño´s literary work: the abyss, the horror, the perspective granted by light (gaze, vision, image), and the search for political activism:

> The vases conceal
> The door to Hell
>
> With a particular light
> And at a certain time
>
> You suddenly realize:
> That object is terror.[23]

In *Amuleto*, the vase constitutes the problematic nexus of the novel´s first part in which Auxilio narrates her relationship with the two exiled Spanish poets, Pedro Garfías and León Felipe. At the same time, this relevance of light and the time of day create a singular figure combining "vase" and hell, which emerges later on in the novel as the key to the protagonist's

relationship with the temporal and with horror. The protagonist says: "Now I believe, if you'll excuse a brief digression, that life is full of enigmas, minimal events that, at the slightest thought or glance, set off chains of consequences, which, viewed through the prism of time, invariably inspire astonishment or fear" (23). In this double articulation of affect (amazement and terror, horror and hope), we see perhaps an attempt to write the unknown as a gesture made from a non-existent vanguard. It is in this vacuum of the non-existent that *Amuleto* perhaps opens up as a kind of abyss, a hallucinatory and persistent obsession that is clearly rooted in the movement's essence: trying to imagine the impossible, not as a Kantian regulative ideal (the impossible, untouchable ideal) but rather as a way of leading the imagination to a question about the type of assumptions that this very imagination failed to question. The question would be how and to what extent this insistence on introducing that impossible voice would modify the essential position of the text as a meditation on an impossible ideal of democracy, one that skirts the need to redefine the public, from a ("public") bathroom no less. At this point, the treatment of politics in *Amuleto* becomes a shade delirious (the "craziness" of Auxilio's gaze is emphasized by critics), but that insanity nevertheless constitutes an important political critique *of politics*. That is, an insistence on thinking about what a future democracy would be like in the Derridian sense of a "promise" and not a "presentness" of political projects in the past and present. In this sense, the assumed "insanity" that the narrative site recreates seems to be linked to an (im)possible notion of fraternity that does not assume the "brotherly" to be "given" (the familiar notion of a symmetrical masculine fraternity) or at least it crosses it out when writing it. This is where Derrida's analysis of the figure of impossible fraternity seems helpful in thinking about the figure of the protagonist without limiting ourselves to reading "Auxilio" as the stereotypically delirious "crazy" woman, which, as Rodríguez Freire points out, has been the unilateral critical response.

We need to ask how the stigmatization of the character as "delirious" relates to the impossibility of subsuming the text in a sub-genre, given that as a "homage" to 68, *Amuleto* would seem to appeal to a reconstruction of the past that simultaneously deconstructs the types of polarization characteristic of recollections of political activism: the subjective memory or the hyper-collective memory, the "memoir" and the documentary testimony, the kingdom of emotion or the kingdom of political activism rationalized as a system of a reading apparatus. Without resorting to these figures, but playing with their forms, the novel seems to generate an appeal for a different way of reconfiguring memory with its insistence on an impossible but insistent "liberty, equality, and fraternity." Thus, we could conclude that the novel seems to emphasize that place in which names are mixed up and re-created out of an inability perhaps to differentiate clearly between what was and what did not happen in terms of the themes that dominate the text -that is, political and artistic vanguards, the

language of civic responsibility (after the massacre) and the "language" (babble perhaps) of affect, the memory of a turbulent past and the representation of its promise (the translation of that past into a present and vice versa). In this movement of co-implicated elements that the text mingles and extrapolates in the imagination, we can see how this novel articulates an obsession with thinking about the political and friendship in a complex and multi-layered way. "Auxilio" does not belong either to the Student Movement as a thinker (how few women theorists there were), nor to what she calls the "Latin American "*machitos*." While she flirts with all possibilities, she does not "belong" to any of them and yet she inscribes herself within them in such a way that her "not fitting" into any category seems to introduce an image that stresses another type of figuration of the relationship between imagination and politics. The proper name becomes a place for thinking about and imagining everything that "Auxilio" briefly summarizes when she confesses her overriding obsession: that of imagining impossible encounters, muddling time periods, jumbling them to create constellations that alarm her—constellations that were perhaps erased in the 90s (when Tlatelolco is re-written from Auxilio's point of view).

Returning to the point at which my text started, and thus to the issue of how to read Bolaño's demand that we think about the past against the grain, about what did not happen in what did, we also need to ask ourselves what type of memory emerges in *Amuleto*'s final image. The encounter with Remedios Varo leads to the final figure of the text: the valley split by the abyss (of time and of horror), where ghosts walk (without flying), singing a song whose echoes Auxilio can hear and translate as an "amulet" (the title-name of the text). In that painting, the crowd of ghosts walking towards what would become the massacre is characterized by being irreducible to the idea of a homogeneous activist subject that is ideal, or stigmatized, which the protagonist also mocks as the typical "value" of the "Latin American *machito*"—that which characterizes Belano on his return after the Chilean coup. Instead, the final painting is composed of an image of the past that becomes polyvocal, in which the voices are not limited to just one or to one single program but rather seem to trace a portrait of heterogeneous, irreducible, polyphonic voices.

> I also realized that although they were walking together they did not constitute what is commonly known as a mass: their destinies were not oriented by a common idea. They were united only by their generosity and courage. … They were walking toward the abyss. I think I realized that as soon as I saw them. … And I heard them sing. I hear them singing still, faintly, even now that I am no longer in the valley, a barely audible murmur, the prettiest children of Latin America, the ill-fed and the well-fed children, those who had everything and those

> who had nothing … The only thing I could do was to stand up, trembling, and listen to their song, go on listening to their song right up to the last breath, because, although they were swallowed by the abyss, the song remained in the air of the valley, in the mist of the valley rising toward the mountainsides . . . (181-4)

In this gesture, we reach a point at which the tapestry confronts us with both horror and pleasure. It is as if hearing these echoes required positing another way of con-figuring the past, both the catastrophe and the multiple, open process of composition, the figure of a "mass" composed of a heterogeneous, irreducible multiplicity. Thus, the final vision of 68 seen in this valley composed of the elements Auxilio imagines in the impossible encounter with Remedios Varo seems to introduce a way of 'spacing' an event that nowadays is hyper-stigmatized (68, the Student Movement) from a position that cannot be reduced to the homogeneity of a coherent political subject. It is from this impossibility of homogenizing the past that the text (*Amuleto*) perhaps posits itself as an "amulet," a way of urging us to think about, insist on, and figure the past from that impossible gaze of the sister who defends her obsession with a "University" unknown until now, a "democracy" that is unknown and mutilated (truncated). Along with *Nocturno de Chile, Amuleto* is perhaps the novel in which Bolaño most develops the problematic of an other-politics linked to making history perceptible, the possibility of an alternative universe in which memory, affect, and imagination are directed towards a critical universe of change and denunciation of injustice, with an emphasis on language as the strategic space of possible and impossible encounters. What I find most curious is perhaps that in readings of Bolaño, or in the commercial success of his work, there is always a lack of attention to the manifestation of desire linked to what did not happen (the vacuum of those poets without publications), the dream of the unknown, a dream of finding some other way to think about what, for lack of a better "sister"-word, I must call the political universe.

NOTES

1. Jacques Derrida, "This Strange Institution Called Literature: An interview with Jacques Derrida," in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1991), 36-7; emphasis mine. Further references are cited parenthetically in the text.

2. Ibid., 55.

3. While this idea is developed throughout his essays in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001), I refer particularly to "Building dwelling thinking" and "Poetically man dwells."

4. For an analysis of the market's appropriations of 68, I refer to Emmanuel Rodríguez' recent work, *Hipótesis democracia: quince tesis para la revolución anunciada* (Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, 2013).

5. Brett Levinson, *The Ends of Literature: The Latin American Boom in the Neoliberal Marketplace* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 190.

6. Regarding 68 as the irruption of a wholesale crisis in terms of social functioning, see Kristin Ross, *May 68 and Its Afterlives,* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002). For an analysis of the 60s as a time of questioning of knowledge institutions, see Frederic Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s" in *Social Text* 9/10 (Spring-Summer 1984), 178-209.

7. Personal conversation with Martín Dorsal.

8. Auxilio emerges in parts of Elena Poniatowska's *La noche de Tlatelolco,* 2nd Ed. (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1998), and also in a diary entry by José Revueltas, who promised to write something about this figure whom he perceived as the incarnation of a unique form of love.

9. Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, "A Kind of Hell: Roberto Bolaño and the Return of World Literature," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 18:2 (2009), 93-205.

10. Patrick Dove, "The Night of the Senses: Literary (dis)orders in *Nocturno de Chile*," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 18:2 (2009), 141-154.

11. Raúl Rodríguez Freire, "Literatura y política: Sobre la "izquierda" en Amuleto, de Roberto Bolaño," *Guaraguao* 38 (2011), 33-45.

12. Ibid.

13. Miguel Bensaïd, *Marx for Our Times: Adventures and Misadventures of a Critique*, (London, New York: Verso, 2002), 10, 13. Further references are cited parenthetically in the text.

14. Ibid., 22.

15. Roberto Bolaño, "Una proposición modesta," *Entre paréntesis: Ensayos, artículos y discursos (1998-2003),* ed. Ignacio Echevarría (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2008), 87.

16. Roberto Bolaño, *Amuleto*, (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1999), 63, emphasis added.

17. Pablo Oyarzún, "Introducción," *La dialéctica en suspenso: Fragmentos sobre historia*, (Santiago, Chile: ARCIS-LOM, 1996), 31-32.

18. Willy Thayer, "El golpe como consumación de la vanguardia," *Revista Extremo Occidente* 1.2 (2003): 54-8.

19. Roberto Bolaño "Illness and Kafka," *The Insufferable Gaucho*, (New York: New Directions, 2010), 144.

20. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, (London, New York: Verso, 1997), 103-4.

21. Derrida, *Politics*, 42.

22. Clearly here there is a whole zone involving one layer of the fragments compiled by Poniatowska defining the Student Movement as a moment when the public function of knowledge was re-examined and an embryonic language for a different kind of politics began to be articulated. The texts of Luis González de Alba in his prison novel *Los días y los años*, (México City: Ediciones Era, 1971) perhaps speak most clearly of the fissure suggested by the Movement with, on the one hand, the idea of being a "professional" (individual), with a "college degree" ahead and a teleology of a middle-class student, or, on the other, the impossibility of inhabiting that fantasy and the need to forge another type of "knowledge" and "future" from that unknown "university," impossible but potential—massacred by the State that invaded it.

23. Roberto Bolaño, "Untitled poem," *The Unknown University*, New York: New Directions), 83.

Susana Draper is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Princeton University. She is the author of *Ciudad posletrada y tiempos lúmpenes: crítica cultural y nihilismo en la cultura de fin de siglo* (Amuleto 2009) and *Afterlives of Confinement: Spatial Transitions in Latin America* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012). She is currently working on another book project on cognitive democracy in the 1960s (Experiments in Freedom and Cognitive Democracy in Mexico: 1968 Other-Wise).

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

FROM POSTHEGEMONY TO PIERRE MENARD

CHARLES HATFIELD

In his recent book entitled *Latinamericanism after 9/11* (2011), John Beverley writes that "globalization and neoliberal political economy have done, more effectively than ourselves, the work of cultural democratization and dehierarchization."[1] Surprisingly, however, Beverley insists that "the possibility of fashioning a new Latinamericanism" involves doubling down, so to speak, on "cultural dehierarchization," or the very project that by his admission has coincided harmoniously with neoliberalism and the market (22-23). Beverley, of course, is hardly the first to notice the compatibility of neoliberal economics and the politics of identitarian recognition: Charles R. Hale, for example, notes that "the shift to multiculturalism has occurred in the general context of neoliberal political and economic reforms, which are known to leave class-based societal inequities in place, if not exacerbated."[2] For many indigenous Latin Americans, Hale suggests, the result has been the "paradox of simultaneous cultural affirmation and economic marginalization" (493). But the simultaneity of these two processes ceases to be a paradox once we realize that they involve two incompatible approaches to difference. In the simplest terms, whereas the remedy for economic inequality involves abolishing difference, the project of cultural dehierarchization involves celebrating it.[3] While many political theorists have attempted to reconcile the competing demands for identitarian recognition and economic redistribution, it is clear that, as Nancy Fraser notes, "recognition claims tend to predominate," and they have even functioned to "decenter, if not to extinguish, claims for egalitarian redistribution" (8).

Beverley's project of cultural dehierarchization thus begins to look less like something that was—as he puts it—"ceded to the market and to neoliberalism" by the Left and more like something that is part and parcel of neoliberalism itself (23). If neoliberalism has come hand in hand with a cultural project that absorbs economic inequalities into cultural differences, my argument is that it has also brought with it a series of theoretical investments for Latin American literary criticism that turn interpretative disagreements into the identitarian

differences between readers. Indeed, it could be said that one of the most pervasive orthodoxies in the field of Latin American literary and cultural studies is the explicit or implicit repudiation of the idea that what matters about a text is the meaning its author intended.[4] This produces a conversion of disagreements into difference because, as I will argue, without intention, or the idea that a text's meaning exists independently from our individual experience of it, we cannot have interpretive disagreements. In order to disagree with someone about a text's meaning, in other words, we must not only think that *our* interpretation is in fact *the* interpretation but also that our different experiences as readers is irrelevant. How else would it make sense to think that others, who have their own irrefutably distinctive experiences of reading a text, are mistaken about what it means?

In the introduction to her important edited volume entitled *The Ethics of Latin American Literary Criticism: Reading Otherwise* (2007), Erin Graff Zivin poses a provocative question: "Can the act of reading be understood as an event?"[5] If the answer is "yes," then one consequence is that the reader's identity must now be seen as essential to the enterprise, since s/he is actually a participant in the event. Moreover, no two readings—or events of reading—will be alike because, among other things, no two readers will be alike. If reading is thought to be an event, then, a full accounting of the subject position of each reader will be fundamentally important, since each reading will vary depending on who is doing it, where, and when. In fact, the entire range of these variations will have to become the focus of our investigations—and we will be left to make sense of them by describing not the text but rather the endless difference of each reading subject, the place in which s/he is reading, etc.

Graff Zivin alternatively considers what might be gained by exploring other "interrelated avenues of inquiry," such as the role of affect or the extent to which "we can locate within literary discourse an 'other side' of representation, some element within the confines of the text (or within our encounter with the text) that resists representation" (2). However, affect and that which "resists representation" are two sides of the same coin since both force us to abandon interpretation in favor of a description of the subject position of the reader. On the one hand, if we are interested in a reader's affective response to a text, instead of interpreting the text we will have to focus on the particularity of the reader having the affective response. On the other hand, if we are interested in that which resists representation, all that we can logically do is deal with the myriad affective responses it produces, since there is no representation that we can interpret. Both of these questions, however, force us to contend with not only the reader but also everything that is part of the reader's experience.

The extent to which this is true is illustrated in Julio Cortázar's classic short story "Continuity of Parks" (1956), in which the reader of a novel realizes that he is a character in the novel he is reading. "Continuity of Parks" is most often read as a text that affirms the participation of

the reader in the text.[6] However, it could also be said that "Continuity of Parks" points to a range of consequences involved in thinking of a reader as a participant, since at the end of Cortázar's story the reader discovers not only that he is in the text, but also that everything that surrounds him (and is thus part of his experience) is in the text as well: his green velvet armchair, his house, his study, the "great windows," the "oak trees in the park."[7] In fact, it is precisely the repetition of these elements from the reader's surroundings at the end of the story that signal his own presence in the novel he is reading. Hence the "continuity" of "Continuity of Parks," which is simultaneously Cortázar's shortest story and, at least logically, his most unending, since if the reader is part of the text, then so is virtually everything else.

The interest in questions such as the event of reading or the affective response of the reader makes identitarian difference the main focus of studying a text, but it also destroys the notion of the text as a discrete object that can be studied in the first place. If reading is an event, or if what is relevant about a text is the affective experience of its readers, studying literature inescapably involves describing the infinite and irreducible difference of reading subjects over space and time. Just as every reading event will be bound up with an account of the subjective particularity of each reader, so, too will the affective responses a text produces. However, the fact is that anyone who has ever understood themselves to have read the same text as someone else, or who has ever disagreed with someone else about what a text means, has *already* rejected the idea that reading is an event, or that the effects a text produces on the reader have any relevance whatsoever to a text's meaning. That is because in order for two people to disagree, they must first agree that there is a singular truth about what is and is not part of the text.[8] In other words, they must agree that the truth about what the text is exists independent of their individual experiences of it, since if what the text is were to be bound up with their individual experience of it, they would have to think that they are not disagreeing but instead talking about two different texts, each one made different by their own experience. Then, having recognized that their individual experience is autonomous from what the text is, they will then have to face the fact that it makes no sense to justify their beliefs both about what the text is and what it means by referring to themselves or their experience. Instead, each of them will realize that they have the beliefs they have about the text because they think those are the true beliefs about it.

Jon Beasley-Murray's *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (2010), however, presents a very different account of meaning. "What matters," Beasley-Murray writes, is "how things present themselves to us, not what they may *re*present."[9] Beasley-Murray thus replaces representation—which involves what something means—with affect—which involves how something is experienced. From the start, the vision of the world that *Posthegemony* gives us is essentially and inescapably identitarian. That is because the question of what something

means will always be answered with a claim about *what is*, independent of us, whereas the question of how we experience it will always be answered with a description of *who we are*. That *Posthegemony* is one of the most brilliant and important examples of Latin Americanist scholarship from the last decade or more is readily apparent. Less apparent, however, are the ways in which *Posthegemony* radicalizes, rather than repudiates, the identitarian logic that has been at the heart of Latin Americanist thought. It might be said, in other words, that the effort to convert meaning into experience—to think of "how things present themselves to us, not what they may *re*present"—is the essence of Latin Americanism itself.

To say that *Posthegemony* is fundamentally identitarian is not to say that it relies on any of the old, familiar identitarian categories or conceptions. *Posthegemony* operates radically outside the traditional categories or collectivities of identitarianism. For Beasley-Murray, identity is not fixed, but in a state of "constant flux" (127), not essentialized but infinitely heterogeneous, not bound up with the history of popular, regional, national, linguistic, cultural, or racial identities, but "radically *open*" (234). In other words, Beasley-Murray's book seems on the surface to understand the world not in terms of "identities" but rather in terms of the "interactions of bodies" that actually "overflow any set identities," and to imagine a future in which "singularities and partial objects, bodies of all shapes and sizes" would be transformed into "new experimental couplings and collectivities" (132). Given that *Posthegemony* insists that history is "no more or less than the recomposition or movement of bodies, a series of modulations in and through affect," in which "bodies either coalesce or disintegrate" in the process of the "continuous variation that characterizes the infinite encounters between bodies," it might even seem that Beasley-Murray offers up a vision of politics after identity (128). Indeed, it is Beasley-Murray's hope that we might even be able to one day "liberate ourselves—from our *selves*" (132).

However, *Posthegemony*'s identitarianism is found neither in the way it substantializes identity—as popular, regional, national, linguistic, cultural, or racial—nor in the way it conceptualizes it—as embodied, performative, essential, contingent, or discursive.[10] There can be little doubt that *Posthegemony* empties out such categories and goes beyond such theorizations. In their place, however, *Posthegemony* installs the fundamental logic of identity itself, stripped of its problematic substances or conceptualizations. *Posthegemony*'s identitarianism, in other words, is found in its replacement of ideology and meaning with affect.[11]

At the very heart of the political and theoretical project of *Posthegemony* is the repudiation of ideology (what people believe) and the affirmation of affect, which Beasley-Murray (relying on the work of Brian Massumi) defines as "the constant interactions between bodies and the resultant impacts of such interactions" (127). The "constant interactions" and "impacts" (127)

of disintegrating and transmutating bodies, which Beasley-Murray argues are behind all "real workings of power and domination" (xii), are to be understood as fundamentally experiential, rather than ideological, since they take place "far beneath consciousness or ideology" (3). Social order, he argues, was "never in fact secured through ideology," since "no amount of belief in the dignity of labor or the selfishness of elected representatives could ever have been enough to hold things together" (ix). But rather than claim that affect governs or influences ideology, Beasley-Murray "dispense[s] with the concept of ideology altogether" (177) in favor of "an affect that can do without either ideology or discourse" (30).

Beasley-Murray thus doesn't need to explicitly make the claim, as he does, that "what matters is how things present themselves to us" rather than "what they may *re*present," because without ideology, all that's left is actually the question of "how things present themselves to us." That question—about "how things present themselves to us"—can in turn only be answered with a description of who we are, especially given Beasley-Murray's insistence on the idea that "no two bodies affect others in precisely the same ways" (128).[12] The problem we face, however, when we abandon the question of what things represent and replace it with the question of "how things present themselves to us" is that disagreement becomes logically impossible.

We cannot disagree when we believe that there are merely different, equally valid ways of seeing and knowing the world and no singular truth or privileged way of knowing it. This is precisely the point Alberto Moreiras makes in *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies* (2001) when he remarks that "the positing of location as final redemption" on the part of "Latin American Latin Americanists" leads to a "dubious legitimation."[13] The "legitimation" involved in "the positing of location," of course, is not inherently "dubious." Instead, it becomes dubious when it comes hand in hand with critique or disagreement—as Moreiras notes, for "Latin American Latin Americanists" it was "location" that "always already delegitimized their outsiding others" (6). As Moreiras points out, "location" cannot "function simultaneously as a source of legitimation and its opposite" (6).[14] If we are committed to the idea that where we are—or who we are—actually counts as a piece of evidence we can use to justify our beliefs as true, then it is not only dubious but also impossible to disagree with the beliefs of others. If our beliefs are true given who we are, then the same must be the case for everyone else's. Moreiras thus implies that critique involves a radical choice: if "location" or identity is relevant to the truth of our claims, then there can be no critique—but if there is to be critique, it depends on thinking that the truth of our beliefs has nothing whatsoever to do with who we are. This, of course, is not to say that our identity doesn't condition our beliefs or explain how we got them. I know, for example, that Ted Cruz and I have different identities and occupy different subject positions, but when

I disagree with his claim that raising the minimum wage is a bad thing, I don't care about his subject position—or mine. People can only disagree, in other words, when they believe that there is a truth about what something means, or about what something is, that is autonomous from their subjective experience of it.

Consider, for example, Beasley-Murray's account of the FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional), a coalition of left-wing groups in El Salvador in the 1980s. Beasley-Murray argues that joining the FMLN involved "not the adoption of any specific set of beliefs, but a change in affective state"—indeed, he argues, "it involved a shift from the individualized subjectivity associated with opinion" to the "depersonalized commonality characteristic of affect" (139). Perhaps. To say that the "subjectivity" created was "depersonalized," however, does not make this way of understanding the conflict between the FMLN and the Salvadoran government any less fundamentally identitarian. If joining the FMLN did not involve, as Beasley-Murray argues, "the adoption of any specific set of beliefs," then the difference between members of the FMLN and the Salvadoran government is no longer different ideologies about agrarian reform, but rather different affective states that are reducible to different subject positions. Of course, we might have always known that different subjectivities were involved in conflicts, but *Posthegemony*, by repudiating ideology, makes all conflicts identitarian. That is because without ideology, there is no disagreement, only difference.

Beasley-Murray's general replacement of ideology with affect would seem to have obvious implications for textual interpretation, and these are made explicit when he writes that the *Requerimiento*—the 1513 document that declared Spain's dominion over the Americas—was not a "document that demanded interpretation" but was instead one of several "touchpapers for the violent explosion of imperial expansion" (5). Beasley-Murray argues that while Bartolomé de las Casas saw the conquistadors as "savages more dangerous than the indigenous peoples themselves," he "failed to see that the *Requerimiento* channeled that affect" and "placed the lust for gold under the sign of a narrative of progress" (5). In other words, he argues, the "act of reading helped bind the affect mobilized in their hunt for gold, counteracting that affect's centrifugal tendencies" (5). But that binding and counteracting of affect, Beasley-Murray suggests, was not a function of textual *meaning*. It instead worked through affect: the "invaders repeatedly intone these words that they themselves barely understand" and "become habituated to a ritual through which the Spanish state, even at a great distance, seeks to regulate their activities" (6). Indeed, the text became "a shibboleth whose signification was purely incidental" (5). Beasley-Murray must repudiate the question of meaning itself—make the text a shibboleth—in order to think of it in terms of the

affective response it produces. But ultimately, and logically as he himself notes, this "displaces preoccupation with meaning" (207).

To be sure, the desire to think of texts as objects is closely related to the desire to think of them in terms of their affective powers. In *Writing in the Air: Heterogeneity and the Persistence of Oral Tradition in Andean Literatures* (1994), for example, the idea of the materiality of the text is key for Antonio Cornejo Polar's "broad concept of literature that assumes a complete circuit of literary production, including the reception of the message."[15] Cornejo Polar begins by affirming a difference in Latin American literature itself, which proves the insufficiency of "classical philological instruments" to study it (13). But Cornejo Polar goes further: he produces a logic through which the experience of the reader is actually the only thing that counts by replacing "the book's signifying function" with its status as an "object" (21). In similar fashion, Walter Mignolo writes in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (1995) that "representation is a notion I have tried to avoid as much as possible in my argument."[16] The trouble with representation, Mignolo suggests, is that it "rests on a denotative philosophy of language according to which names represent things and maps represent territories" and, as such, presupposes the possibility of people knowing "a world outside themselves" (333).[17] Mignolo associates that possibility—of knowing "a world outside themselves"—with hierarchies of culture and knowledge. For example, Mignolo argues, "a twentieth-century observer can surmise, when comparing an illuminated medieval codex or a wonderful Renaissance book to a painted Mexica codex, that while the latter is a piece to be admired, it cannot be put at the same level as the medieval codex" (334). However, if we look at the books not as representations or "visible signs," but instead as "cultural objects" which result from "human needs," then the hierarchical relation disappears (334). The objects cease to have meaning and are only read in terms of their participation in "activities" between individuals or groups (334). In other words, Mignolo makes it clear that cultural (or epistemic) dehierarchization, the abandonment of meaning, and the interest in textual materiality are all related forms of the same theoretical and political effort.[18]

This, however, should not give the impression that Latin American literature and criticism does not offer a valuable alternative model for textual meaning. In fact, Jorge Luis Borges's "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" (1939) offers one of the best and most lucid theorizations to be found anywhere of the nature of literary interpretation. Borges's famous story, of course, has most often been viewed as a text that points to the role of the reader in the making of meaning. Lisa Block de Behar, for example, claims that "Pierre Menard" is "one of the best statements in defense of the reader."[19] However, just the opposite is true. Borges's story actually affirms that meaning has nothing whatsoever to do with either the reader or the context in which a text is read.

Borges's story is about a French Symbolist poet named Pierre Menard who set out to write *Don Quixote*. Menard, Borges's narrator tells us, "did not want to compose another *Quixote*—which is easy—but *the Quixote itself*."[20] In other words, Menard did not want to merely copy Cervantes's novel; instead, he wanted to be its author. As Menard himself explains, "I have taken on the mysterious duty of reconstructing literally [Cervantes's] spontaneous work" (41). In the end, Menard succeeds in producing verbatim versions of "the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of the first part of *Don Quixote* and a fragment of chapter twenty-two" (39).

In Borges's story, the theoretical questions asked and answered arise from the difference between Menard's *Quixote* and Cervantes's—whether there is one at all, and if so, how it is to be established. The story's narrator compares Cervantes's *Don Quixote* to Menard's identical version and encounters "a revelation" (43). Despite the fact that the two texts are "verbally identical" (42), the narrator discovers that they are crucially different. He notes, for example, that in Menard's version the language "suffers from a certain affectation," while in Cervantes's the author "handles with ease the current Spanish of his time" (43). The narrator then compares two identical passages: "truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor" (43).

Borges's narrator dismisses the passage in Cervantes's version as "a mere rhetorical praise of history," but in Menard's, he thinks "the idea is astounding" (43). Given that Menard was "a contemporary of William James," the "final phrases," he declares, "are brazenly pragmatic" (43). The reference to Menard's lines as "pragmatic" is important because it underscores the account of beliefs the story puts forward. The difference between the two texts and their respective meanings in "Pierre Menard" is not grounded in anything objective, but only in a reader's subjective belief about the truth of what each author intended. But rather than conclude that there can then be no true meanings, just the opposite happens. The narrator writes, "historical truth, for him, is not what happened; it is what we judge to have happened" (43), the point being not that there's no such thing as historical truth, but instead that whatever we believe happened in the past is what we must also believe is *the truth* of what happened in the past. Borges's story extends this maxim into the realm of interpretation, so that what a text means is what we judge its author to have intended it to mean.

In this way, Borges offers a version of Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels's "Against Theory" (1982) *avant la lettre.*[21] In their famous essay, Knapp and Michaels advance the claim that "what a text means is what its author intends."[22] (725). Indeed, Knapp and Michaels argue that the question of whether something is language or not is the question of whether or not it has an author. To even recognize something as language (and hence meaningful)

in the first place, they argue, requires first "positing an author" (728). The question of what exactly language means, then, "will not involve adding a speaker but deciding among a range of possible speakers" (726). In fact, Borges's story hinges on the narrator's attribution of a text to different authors or "speakers"—after all, the story's title, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*," is itself the emphatic identification of an author. Thus the title of Borges's story, as technically the very first part of it, begins by naming a text and identifying its author, as if to highlight the primacy of authorial intention to the question of meaning.

Borges's narrator notes that it is "astounding" to compare the two texts: when Cervantes writes about "the curious discourse of Don Quixote on arms and letters," the narrator sees sincerity (42). "Cervantes was a former soldier," he notes, so his stance "against letters and in favor of arms" is "understandable" (41). But the same lines in Pierre Menard's *Don Quixote* are ironic: Menard, claims the narrator, had the "habit of propagating ideas which were the strict reverse of those he preferred" (42). (It is worth noting here that to believe that what a text means is what its author intends does not depend on establishing that intention in terms of any author's conscious or even explicit intentions, nor does it depend on what the author believes his or her intention is, either.) The two texts in question in Borges' story are identical, and yet the narrator sees two different texts that mean two different things. It's only because the narrator posits two different authors that this is possible: since the texts are identical, only something outside both the words on the page and the reader's experience could justify thinking that there is a difference between the two. This is in part what Borges means when he qualifies a list of Pierre Menard's work that does not include *Don Quixote* as merely his "visible work" (37). In the case of Menard's *Don Quixote*, the work is *invisible*: it cannot be seen when the two texts are put side to side, and it is only because the narrator sees the text and then appeals to something that cannot be seen (i.e., Menard's authorship) that Menard's work can then be recognized and evaluated. If meaning were located in the words themselves, then there would be no way to distinguish between Cervantes's "mere rhetorical praise of history" and Menard's "brazenly pragmatic" lines (43).

Likewise, if meaning is made by the reader, then the difference between the two texts could never be the kind that Borges's narrator identifies—"archaic" vs. "current," for example (43)—which essentially derive from the difference between two authors and their intentions and not the difference between two contexts of reading, or two experiences of reading. Specifically, like in Cortázar text above, the differences would have to include *everything* that is part of the reader's experience of them, including, for example, the typographical differences between Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Menard's. A footnote at the end of the story remarks upon Menard's "peculiar typographical symbols and his insect-like handwriting" (44). Borges's narrator, moreover, emphasizes that "Cervantes's text and Menard's" are only

"verbally identical," not visually identical (42). If Borges's point in the story were that the reader's experience mattered to the question of meaning, then his narrator would have certainly had to take into account the visual differences that were undoubtedly part of his experience of the differences between the two texts. We can perhaps assume that Cervantes's *Quixote* was printed, while Menard's was written by hand. But the narrator emphasizes that Menard's real work on his *Quixote* is *invisible*, which means that he has already decided that the visible or material differences between the two texts were irrelevant. The significance of this is easy to overlook, because we don't normally attribute meaning to the particular appearance of an author's handwriting in a manuscript, or even to the way the lines are broken in a piece of prose fiction. Likewise, we don't normally assume that two *verbally identical* but visually different editions of the same text (with different fonts, or different line breaks) are in fact two different texts with two different meanings. The reason we do not usually count the line breaks in a novel, the font in a poem, or the page numbers at the bottom of a poem as meaningful is because we do not believe that the author intended them to be meaningful. To be sure, they are part of our experience of the text, but they are not part of the text itself, and this distinction is possible only because what the text actually is exists independent of our own experience of it.[23]

The idea of "context" as something that is relevant to meaning has regularly been affirmed in readings of "Pierre Menard."[24] Beatriz Sarlo, for example, declares that "Pierre Menard" highlights the ways in which "all new meanings arise from readings."[25] For Sarlo, "the process and the historical contexts of enunciation modify the meaning of signs, which emerges in the activity of reading-writing and is not tied to words themselves but instead to the context of the words" with the result that "the ideological and aesthetic production of the act of reading makes impossible repetition."[26] If it were true, however, that "repetition" is impossible in the "act of reading," then no one could ever disagree about a text's meaning, because no one would ever be reading the same text. The words might be the same, but the "context of the words," to use Sarlo's phrase, would be infinitely variable.

How can it make sense to suggest that the difference between the two *Quixotes* in Borges's story is determined by context? Only after we have first posited an author can we go on to establish the historical context; without the appeal to an author, nothing in the text of Menard's *Quixote* can give us the context that would change its meaning. In Borges's story, meaning changes not when texts are moved to different contexts, but instead when they are attributed to different authors. That's the point of what the narrator calls Menard's "new technique" of "erroneous attribution" (44), which prompts the narrator himself to think about attributing "the *Imitatio Christi* to Louis Ferdinand" (44). It is only when "context" refers to the

context of authorship and intention does this claim work, but then context becomes another way of talking about authorship and intention.

Borges not only emphasizes that the author's intention is what matters, but also reveals that the reader—and the reader's experience—doesn't matter. If Borges wanted to affirm the role of the reader over the intention of the author, then the differences between Menard's *Quixote* and Cervantes's would be profoundly visible, not "invisible" as the narrator suggests. The differences would have to include any and all of the physical differences, intentional or not, between the two *Quixotes*. Without an appeal to the intention of the author of each text, the narrator would be left without a ground from which to decide what was meaningful and what was not in each text. Moreover, Menard's "new technique" of reading by means of "erroneous attribution" would make no sense, since the very question of attribution would be rendered irrelevant.

If intention is what makes the visible differences between the two texts irrelevant for Borges's narrator, it is also what makes *him* irrelevant. In the absence of the relevance of the reader, the reader's experience, or "contexts," meaning is fixed—indistinguishable from the author's intention, and outside of us. To put it differently, when we believe that a text means something, we also believe that it would have meant that had we never existed; alternatively, when we change our beliefs about what a text means, we conclude that our previous belief was wrong, not that it was correct given who we were and the evidence that was available to us at the time. This points to the fact that meaning is independent of us and our experience—or the "context" in which we encounter the text. If that is true, then a belief about what a text means is also a belief about what it should mean for everyone. One of the frequently misunderstood aspects of the argument in "Against Theory" deals with the role beliefs play in interpretation. The fantasy of "theory," argue Knapp and Michaels, is that there can be a model for interpretation that does not involve the interpreter's beliefs (737). The idea that beliefs are essential to interpretation might lead some to conclude that true interpretations are impossible. Knapp and Michaels, however, argue that just because beliefs are subjectively produced "does not in any way weaken their claims to be true" (738). Quoting Stanley Fish, they rightly insist that if "one believes what one believes," then "one believes that what one believes is *true*" (738).

The meaning of a text is thus never truly ours; what a text means is a belief about what is true outside of our experience. Alternatively, when we disagree about what a text means, the fact that we can disagree about it in the first place leads us to recognize the extent to which we think that "our" interpretation is in fact "the" interpretation. The point of "Pierre Menard" is not that we do not experience texts, or that texts do not produce affective responses in us.

Instead, it is that experience, affective responses, and the identity of the reader are one thing and the meaning of a text is another.

It is hard to know whether embracing intention over affect would have any political consequences. My point has been, however, that one of these accounts of interpretation and meaning has been the correlative of a political project that is encountering its limits or exhaustion in neoliberalism. The fact that the most grievous differences in Latin America today are economic ones might seem to suggest that a politics committed to eliminating difference, rather than affirming it, is what we should seek. It is worth recalling, in conclusion, that at the end of his introduction to *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (1999), John Beverley refers to Borges's "overtly reactionary politics," and wonders whether "those politics" are "related to his function as a storyteller as well."[27] I would say that what Borges gives us is both a politics and, at least in "Pierre Menard," a much-needed logic by which we can disagree with those politics and reject them.

NOTES

[1.] John Beverley, *Latin Americanism after 9/11* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 21. Further references appear in the text.

[2.] Charles R. Hale, "Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34, no. 3 (2002): 493. Further references appear in the text.

[3.] Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation," in *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange,* eds. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (London: Verso, 2003), 15. Further references appear in the text.

[4.] In his classic essay on Latin American *testimonio* from the late 1980s, John Beverley laments the fact that "our very notions of literature and the literary are bound up with notions of the author, or, at least, of an authorial intention" and celebrates testimonio because it "involves a sort of erasure of the function, and thus also of the textual presence, of the 'author'" (*Testimonio: On The Politics of Truth* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004], 35). Francine Masiello celebrates the poetry of Néstor Perlongher for the ways in which it challenges "lines of signification that have sustained rigid hierarchies of meaning" and makes language "physical to the detriment of meaning" (*The Art of Transition: Latin American Culture and Neoliberal Crisis* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2001], 70). Patrick Dove declares that "reading does not happen at the level of the narrator's or writer's intention, i.e., as the communication of information and meaning from writer to reader; rather, it takes place at those points of a story or history that exceeds the comprehension of the one who narrates" (*The Catastrophe of Modernity: Tragedy and the Nation in Latin American Literature* [Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004], 230). Most recently, Erin Graff Zivin complains that readings of allegory tend to rely "on an outmoded understanding of, among other things, the idea of authorial intent, the transparency of language, and the link between signifier and signified" (*Figurative Inquisitions*: *Torture and Truth in the Luso-Hispanic Atlantic* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014], 61). Graff Zivin proposes that we view a text's allegorical meaning not as the function of the intention of the author but instead as the product of the desire of the reader: what makes a text allegorical, she argues, is that "the reader *desires* such a relationship" (62; italics in original).

[5.] Erin Graff Zivin, "Introduction: Reading Otherwise," in *The Ethics of Latin American Literary Criticism: Reading Otherwise*, ed. Erin Graff Zivin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 2.

[6.] See, for example, Diana Sorensen Goodrich, *The Reader and the Text: Interpretative Strategies for Latin American Literatures* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1985).

[7.] Julio Cortázar, *Blow-Up and Other Stories*, trans. Paul Blackburn (New York: Random House, 1967), 64-65.

[8.] See Donald Davidson, "Objectivity and Practical Reason," in *Reasoning Practically*, ed. Edna Ullman-Margalit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 17-26. Davidson argues that "if people throw rocks or shout or shoot at each other, there is not necessarily, or perhaps even often, any proposition whose truth is in dispute" (21). A disagreement, he argues, "requires that there be some proposition, a shared content, about which opinions differ" (21). This, of course, runs counter to the account of disagreement famously offered by Jacques Rancière, for whom disagreement "is not the conflict between one who says white and another who says black" but rather "between one who says white and another who also says white but does not understand the same thing by it or does not understand that the other is saying the same thing in the name of whiteness" (*Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999], x).

[9.] Jon Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 205. Further references appear in the text.

[10.] In *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), Ruth Leys makes the point—in reference to the shame theories of Eve Sedgwick and Silvan Tomkins—that the effort to define "the individual as lacking a consolidated core personality and constituted instead by relationships between a multiplicity of affect and other assemblies of various degrees of independence and dependence" ultimately "makes no difference" to the fundamental commitment to the "primacy of identity and difference" (185-86). In other words, once we have replaced "an emphasis on what we have done or believe we have done with an emphasis on who we are," we will be committed to the "primacy of identity and difference" regardless of whether we understand identity as "fixed and stable" or "plural, contingent, and open to change" (186).

[11.] See Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37 (2011): 434-72. Leys suggests that "the disconnect between 'ideology' and affect produces as one of its consequences a relative indifference to the role of ideas and beliefs in politics, culture, and art in favor of an 'ontological' concern with different people's corporeal-affective reactions" (451). Running parallel to this, notes Leys, is "a similar disconnect between meaning and affect," which requires us to think of words not in terms of their meanings but instead as "mechanisms for producing [..] effects below the threshold of meaning

and ideology" (451). For a compelling recent critique that focuses on the relationship between affective politics and the Left in Latin America, see Eugenio Di Stefano, "Reconsidering Aesthetic Autonomy and Interpretation as a Critique of the Latin American Left in Roberto Bolaño's *Estrella distante,*" *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 47, no. 3 (2013): 463-485. Di Stefano notes that the Left in Latin America has responded to the inequalities produced by neoliberal economic policies with "a stronger investment in one's identity and the experiential position that informs it, a position that is irrelevant at best (and complicit at worst) when confronting the growing gap between rich and poor" (477). In the end, Di Stefano argues, the commitment to experience that characterizes so much recent Latin American literary and cultural theory "should be understood not in opposition to capitalism, but rather as a sign of the Left's ultimate endorsement of the market" (477-78).

12. In *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After*, Leys's point is that "the shift from guilt to shame" involves "a logic according to which if you think that the emotions, including shame, are to be understood in nonintentionalist terms, then you are also committed to the idea that they are to be defined in material terms, indeed that they are a matter of personal differences such that what is important is not what you have done, or imagined you have done, but who you are" (13). For Leys, the problem with the "shift from guilt to shame" is that it "replaces intentionalist accounts of guilt, in which the meaning of one's real or fantasized actions is a central topic, with a nonintentionalist, materialist account of the emotions in which the issues of personal difference is the only question of importance" (186).

13. Alberto Moreiras, *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 6. Further references appear in the text.

14. See Emilio Sauri, "'A la pinche modernidad': Literary Form and the End of History in Roberto Bolaño's *Los detectives salvajes*," *MLN* 125, no. 2 (2010): 406-432. At the end of his article, Sauri discusses Moreiras's concept of "savage hybridity," and argues that it is not "a means toward overcoming the problem of the subject's position in relation to the object" but instead a means of "preserving its primacy" (428). Sauri wonders whether Moreiras's "perspectival or relational subalternism" puts "the problem of the subject (and his or her position) before the truth of politics (the belief in a particular ideology)" in a way that might ultimately reduce "questions about political beliefs (what one believes) to questions about perspective (where one stands)" (429).

15. Antonio Cornejo Polar, *Writing in the Air: Heterogeneity and the Persistence of Oral Tradition in Andean Literatures*, trans. Lynda J. Jentsch (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 14. Further references appear in the text.

16. Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 331. Further references appear in the text.

17. For a short critique of the idea that making a true claim about the world necessarily involves people being able to stand outside themselves, see Stanley Fish, "A Reply to J. Judd Owen," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (December 1999): 925-30. The fact that we cannot justify our epistemic system from outside of it, Fish argues, should not lead us to conclude that the beliefs that emerge from our epistemic system might somehow not be true. If "our convictions cannot be grounded in any independent source of authority," it does not mean "our convictions are ungrounded" (925-26). On the contrary, Fish argues that the "unavailability of independent grounds—of foundations that are general and universal rather than local and contextual—is fraught with no implications at all" (926). "It turns out," Fish writes, "that not only are the grounds that are ours by virtue of the resources a lifetime has given us sufficient […] but also they are superior to the independent grounds no one has ever been able to find" (926). See also Roger Trigg, *Reason and Commitment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

18. See Jennifer Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism: American Poetry and Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Ashton argues that "when words become marks […] we have no choice but to experience them because—if we want to continue to apprehend them as material objects—we can no longer continue to think of ourselves as reading them. That is, we can no longer think of ourselves as reading them because we can no longer think of them as language" (92).

19. Lisa Block de Behar, *A Rhetoric of Silence and Other Selected Writings* (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), 48. Block de Behar's position represents the dominant critical tendency with regard to "Pierre Menard." Carlos Alonso (in "Borges y la teoría," *MLN* 120, no. 2 [2005]: 437-56) is one of the few critics to recognize that the story hinges not on the change of contexts of reading, but instead on the replacement of one author for another (445-46). Thus if "Pierre Menard" is essentially about "what happens when we begin a process of reading with Menard in the place previously occupied by Cervantes," the closing of the story, with what is "essentially an scene of reading and interpretation," is the answer to that question (446). The answer, Alonso correctly argues, "is that nothing is the same" because the narrator produces an "impeccable reading of the fragment from the first part of *Don Quixote* that is no less convincing and "correct" than previous interpretations that presumed that Cervantes was the author of the novel" (445). For Alonso, "to read the *Quixote* we must first create the figure of an author in order to decode the text" (445). "We are used to using a figure that we know

by the name of 'Cervantes' in that procedure," Alonso notes, but "it becomes clear that another authorial figure" can occupy that place, which means everything changes (446).

20. Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, eds. Donald Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964), 39 (italics in original). Further references appear in the text.

21. See Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, "Not a Matter of Interpretation," *San Diego Law Review* 42, no. 2 (2005): 651-68. "Pierre Menard" is briefly invoked in the service of a critique of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's "textualist" theory of statutory interpretation. It goes without saying, of course, that "Pierre Menard" has over the years been invoked to support—*avant la lettre*—a wide range of claims and theoretical perspectives. See, for example, Emir Rodríguez Monegal, "Borges and Derrida: Apothecaries," in *Borges and His Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, ed. Edna Aizenberg (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 128-38; Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Rosemary Arrojo, "Translation, Transference, and the Attraction to Otherness—Borges, Menard, Whitman," *Diacritics* 34, no. 3/4, (2004): 31-53; N. Katherine Hayles, "Translating Media: Why We Should Rethink Textuality," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 16, no. 2 (2003), 263-90; Diana I. Pérez, "The Ontology of Art: What Can We Learn from Borges's 'Menard?'" *CR: The New Centennial Review* 11, no. 1 (2011): 75-89.

22. Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, "Against Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982): 725. Further references appear in the text. My arguments here in general are obviously indebted to those made by Michaels in *The Shape of the Signifier: 1967 to the End of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). In particular, see Michaels's discussion of the ways in which seeing "difference as disagreement makes the subject position of the observer irrelevant (since to disagree with someone is to produce a judgment that, if it is true is true also for the person with whom you disagree—that's why we think of ourselves as disagreeing)" while seeing "difference without disagreement makes the subject position essential (since to differ without disagreeing is nothing more than to occupy a different position)" (32).

23. For an argument to the contrary, see Jerome McGann's *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). See also the responses to the Knapp and Michaels argument in *Against Theory: Literary Studies and the New Pragmatism,* ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

24. Enrique Sacerío-Gari argues that "Pierre Menard" affirms not a distinction between "the *actions* of producers and the *reactions* of consumers," but the opposite ("Towards Pierre Menard," *MLN* 95, no. 2 [1980]: 467). See also Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997). For Genette, "Borges 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).

25. Beatriz Sarlo, *Borges, un escritor en las orillas* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 2007), 57; translation mine.

26. Ibid. See also Sergio Waisman, *Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery*. (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005). Waisman makes a similar argument when he suggests that "Pierre Menard" teaches us "that through changes in the context, even the same words in the same language can gain entirely new meanings—and that this can occur, paradoxically, without necessarily losing the old meanings" (15).

27. John Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 24.

Charles Hatfield is Associate Professor of Latin American Studies at The University of Texas at Dallas. His first book, on the ideological underpinnings and political consequences of *Latinoamericanismo*, is forthcoming from the University of Texas Press in 2015.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

TOWARDS AN ART OF LANDSCAPES AND LOANS:
SERGIO CHEJFEC AND THE POLITICS OF LITERARY FORM

STEVE BUTTES

> During our childhood words were enunciated to us; these words became fixed in our memories, as did their meaning in our understanding, by means of ideas or images, and these ideas or images were accompanied by aversion, hatred, pleasure, terror, desire, indignation, or contempt. Over a period of many years, whenever these words were pronounced, the idea or image came back to us with its accompanying feeling, but in the long run, we begin to use words like coins: we cease looking at their image, inscription, and border treatments to determine their value; in giving and receiving them we pay attention only to their shape and weight: and I'd say it's the same with words . . . . one scrutinizes a coin only when its value is suspect, only in unusual, rarely encountered instances . . . . thus the pleasure we derive from original works, the fatigue we experience reading books that make us think, the difficulty of holding someone's interest with either the written or the spoken word.
> –Diderot, *The Salon of 1767*[1]

What does debt look like? And, perhaps more crucially, why should we be interested in representing it today? Making visible the invisible operation of the economic system, of course, has long been a hallmark of narratives coming to terms with capital. But the expanding role of the credit system in recent years, which has developed into a powerful external force on the economy that guides the formation of physical spaces, determines the movements of objects and influences actions taken by individuals, has made this task more challenging as

it has been transformed by an ever-growing array of increasingly complex debt tools. This increasing opacity has obscured not only our understanding of the crises that have emerged around the world during the past two decades but it also, and more importantly for the arguments of this essay, has obscured the credit system's persistent influence at the level of everyday life. Without a representation of the operation of the credit system and the knowledge that comes from it, we are limited to sensing debt as simply part of our own experiences, as something natural and determined. In a period in which credit is absorbed into the flow of everyday life, where debt is both everywhere invisible and indeterminate, how can we see capital and map our relation to it?

This question is at the heart of Argentine author Sergio Chejfec's most recent novel *La experiencia dramática* [*The Dramatic Experience*] (2012). The novel narrates weekly conversations that take place between Félix, a relatively poor immigrant, and Rose, a middle-class actress, as they stroll through a large city and discuss ideas for the exercise Rose is preparing for her theater workshop: she must write and stage a scene that depicts with "accuracy the true life events" that made up the most dramatic experience of her life.[2] By structuring his novel around this task, Chejfec articulates an interest in establishing a distinction between experiencing life and representing it, a separation that proves crucial for making visible the invisible influences of the credit system on the operation of daily life. Indeed, this essay argues that we can begin to map out a form for understanding the global function of debt through a reading of the mundane conversations between the two characters in Chejfec's novel. More specifically, this essay will examine how Félix and his insistence on giving form to his everyday experiences with money function as counterpoint to Rose's Rose and her attempts to escape or ignore her own experiences with debt. In this way, Chejfec begins to develop a concept of literary form that makes visible the invisible influences of the credit system in their abstract operation by coming to terms with the internal experience of indeterminacy and the modes of social being produced by debt. This essay argues that in so doing *La experiencia dramática* establishes new critical possibilities for literature as a contemporary art form.

We already get a sense of this insistence on aesthetic form in Chejfec's essay "Fábula política y renovación estética" ["Political Fable and Aesthetic Renewal"]. Here Chejfec suggests that, if there is a "possibility that [literature] persists as an art form," it lies not in waiting for or identifying "crisis and causality" nor in nostalgia for "the idea of totality and the idea of the fragment" but rather in acknowledging the "contiguity" of literature with reality and developing "abstract procedures" that would "return signs to the centrality of the real by recognizing that they are signs" and in turn make it possible for literature to "[arrive] at a place where other forms of writing are not sufficient."[3] Or, as he would put it more succinctly in an interview with Mariano Siskind: "my literature is premised on the construction of a

differentiated object, independent of the world surrounding it, but not so independent that its relationship with that world disintegrates[:] [a] work that is sufficiently autonomous so that it is not a direct, transparent link to social reality."[4] As we will see in what follows, Chejfec aims to establish a specifically literary form of writing by separating the subject's "dramatic experience" from the object that is the "dramatic representation" by way of "abstract procedures" that have much in common with what Michael Fried calls the "dramatic conception" of painting. As Fried notes, this mode of painting, which often took up figures absorbed in "ordinary, everyday experience" such as "walking [and] conversing," emerged as a strategy for insisting on the separation between the depicted scene and the beholder's experience of it.[5] By adopting for literature what Fried calls the "antitheatrical" visual strategies associated with both the "dramatic conception" and (especially important for *La experiencia dramática*) the dramatic conception's "offshoot" or variant, the "pastoral conception" of painting, Chejfec can move away from the crises, causalities and temporalities of narrative forms such as allegory, and establish for contemporary Latin American literature a "critical potentiality" that may be unavailable to other forms of narrative.[6]

How Are You Going to Represent Today? Cash or Credit?

La experiencia dramática has at its center a reflection on and critique of contemporary finance capitalism, but despite being deeply marked by the 2001-2002 Argentine debt crisis and—given Chejfec's residence in New York City since 2005—the global financial crisis that swept across the United States in 2008, the novel never directly mentions these collective experiences of debt nor the spectacular crises now associated with them.[7] Rather than explicitly depicting the drama of fear, shame, anger, horror or some other affective experience associated with debt default and economic crisis, which the novel's title would seem to evoke, *La experiencia dramática* instead proceeds by the accumulation of mundane, trivial details and partially remembered anecdotes that Rose and Félix reveal during their long, detained walks through the city, which take place "each week with unshakable discipline."[8] Their conversations are generally superficial and, to be frank, oftentimes quite boring, with long sections of the novel centering on topics such as the weather, the flow of traffic at certain intersections, complaints that there is no place to sit in their favorite coffee shop, what dish each of them might make for an out-of-town guest, the amazingly low price Rose paid for a mediocre package of veggie burgers, whether the following Monday is the 14th or the 15th and so on. Yet the weekly, routine structure of these meetings allows them to perceive each other's reactions to these everyday trivialities as the product of idiosyncratic and seemingly inconsequential habits, character traits that, on the contrary, are central to the reader's understanding of the economic critique at center of the novel.

Félix, for example, thinks deeply about each action he takes and each word he says, and. as As he discusses how a day measured in 30 hours rather than 24 would change the date of the following Monday, Rose notes that Félix has a tendency to over-intellectualize nearly every social interaction while Félix realizes that Rose "does not like to consider details or think much about them" and typically resolves conversations by speaking in "slogans" and "sayings that explain little" beyond their surface meaning.[9] During their strolls through the city together, Félix notices that Rose cannot help but carry herself as an actress; that is, she possesses "an indistinguishable tic, or a certain tendency in her body to move or show herself in a particular fashion," which, without her realizing it, "makes her visible" and tends to "attract the views" of passersby, who "detain their gaze on Rose for an instant as if her face were telling them something."[10] In these moments, Félix, happily fades into the background, enjoying "the strange pleasure of seeming invisible."[11] Rose "directs their path [through the city each week], deciding to turn at a corner, continue straight or turn back," making her decisions at times by "pure whim" and at other times by following a "preset path" she had in mind before setting out together, b. But whatever decisions she makes during a given outing, she gives little thought to them once she and Félix part ways. But while Félix "pays little notice to the path" they take while they are together, preferring instead to enjoy "the small pleasure of abandoning himself to the route Rose chooses," he spends hours after their strolls obsessively tracking on Google Maps the path they took through the city and mapping for himself Rose's whims, plans and decisions, which manifest themselves in the landscapes, angles and lines comprising the map of the urban space they traversed together.[12]

This idiosyncratic obsession with the maps and digital landscapes made available to him by Google Maps, or what Félix himself calls his "addict[ion]" to a "cartographic consciousness," emerges as one of the most consequential character traits for understanding the novel's economic critique, but Félix himself, it is important to note, precisely does not understand "what it is that attracts his attention to [these digital maps]."[13] This lack of understanding, as we will see below, is what the novel sets out to resolve, a solution that will emerge through conversation with Rose about her theater workshop and one that will produce an account of the operation of the credit system. But what can be said here is that Félix's inability to understand what precisely it is that compels him to contemplate these digital landscapes for hours on end can be attributed to the maps' deep connection to and indistinguishability indistinguishability from the routines of his daily life: Félix "often thinks about digital maps" not because they have in some way "made his life better, or less indistinct or really any different" but rather because they make the things he does on a daily basis "verifiable" and "give his movements—he could say his entire life—a greater consistency" in that he "can recall each step he took" by pulling them up "in an instant via a digital map."[14] The digital

map, then, makes it possible to see and "recall" not only "the paths he takes [and] has taken" but also those "he is going to take.," that That is, he can literally see the spaces he will traverse before he occupies them by contemplating Google's digital landscapes before heading out, for example, to meet Rose at a coffee shop. While "the word recall," then, "defines only partially the mental processes Félix undertakes" during his daily contemplation of Google Maps, "because the process of remembering also functions as a thought directed toward [a] future" action, the future and the past represented by the map collapse into the indeterminate present of his daily or weekly routine in the city: "Félix is walking toward a neighborhood coffee shop . . . to meet up with Rose . . . . [and] feels that he is gliding through the map and at the same time traveling along the surface of city streets," which makes the "physical objects" he encounters in the city seem "as if they were little more than lifeless spatial replicas of what is displayed on the maps.." [15]

For Félix, then, the time spent contemplating online maps, at the beginning of the novel, is not understood as a representation of his daily life but rather, through the simulacrum, as simply a re-description of it. In this sense, his "cartographic consciousness" might be understood as just one more in a long series of curious but mundane habits revealed through the trivial and over-intellectualized conversations about daily life accompanying his weekly strolls with Rose. Yet, while it is tempting to compare Félix's attention to geography to Rose's attention to her vegetarian diet, or to write off Félix's interest in these maps as having little more importance than Rose's preference for herbal tea and his own preference for coffee, Félix's affinity for mapping their movements in Google Maps, and in particular the odd relationship to temporality in their evocation of past, present and future, bears striking resemblance to another trivial interaction that comes into view through their weekly get-togethers: in taking turns paying for drinks at the coffee shop, Félix usually pays in cash and Rose with a credit card.

This latter point is mentioned just once at the beginning of the novel, and the characters give it little more thought or, perhaps better said, give it more or less the same amount of thought as any of the other mundane topics mentioned above: "Félix thinks Rose pays with her card out of convenience; and Rose thinks the same about Félix [and his decision to pay with cash]." [16] These seemingly inconsequential decisions at the point of sale, however, launch the novel's lengthy reflection on the functioning of the economic system by contrasting Rose's credit card, which she views as a mechanism for maintaining "her budget in order," with what, in Félix's view, is "the principal cause for [his own] disorder in relation to money:" "the coins" that make up his pocket change. [17] As he sits on a bench outside the café waiting for Rose to return with his coffee and her tea, Félix lets his mind wander to his own routine when it is his turn to pay for the drinks:

[he] longs for an era, although one he has never lived, when all daily activities could be conducted with coins, just as it is depicted in old novels and stories: someone reaches his hands into his pockets, takes out a fistful without blinking, slams them on the counter and resolves the situation. By contrast, the mixed use of coins and bills in daily life produces in him a sense of exhaustion and, in his view, subjects him to an unnecessary disorder that leaves him feeling run down and tired.[18]

Facing the confusing, exhausting and disorganized process of keeping track of his budget in relation to bills and (especially) coins, which are easily lost, Félix, with his limited resources, envies Rose, who "[by paying] with a credit card" can maintain "her budget in order" and need never worry about something so inconsequential as a lost coin. Of course, Rose, for her part, simply "wants to make herself believe" that the credit card organizes her budget when, in reality, she is "more or less resigned to never understanding her monthly balance, one or many pages riddled with any number of minor purchases."[19] She in turn admires "Felix's calm practicality in paying for everything in cash and forgetting about any later record or future threat."[20]

At first glance, these thoughts simply establish the difference between cash and credit as, like the choice between coffee and tea, one of personal preference or comfort with little actual difference between them. Félix's nostalgia for transactions accelerated by the slamming of coins on the counter very clearly parallels his admiration for the acceleration made possible by Rose's "wise strategy" of sliding a credit card through a machine on the counter.[21] And it is equally easy to see that the coins that produce disorder in Félix's budget parallel the small transactions that make Rose's budget incomprehensible. Yet, while the coin is relegated to the past when exchanged for a cup of coffee at the point of sale, the decision to buy a cup of herbal tea with credit is the decision to agree to allow one's actions to be shaped and influenced by debt obligations set out for the future.

Of course, this is not exactly what goes through our mind when use our credit card to buy a cup of tea at the coffee shop or a pack of veggie burgers at Trader Joe's: we do not tend to think of ourselves as taking on debt in these situations. Yet this is precisely the point Marx makes in volume 3 of *Capital*, when he notes that as "the credit system is extended, generalised and worked out . . . [and] commodities are not sold for money, but for a written promise to pay for them at a certain [future] date," these "bills of exchange," as Marx termed these future obligations, begin to "act absolutely as money" despite never undergoing an "eventual transformation into actual money."[22] This is crucial to note because though the credit system, or the circulation of interest-bearing or money capital, is absolutely dependent upon "the actual process of circulation [in which] capital appears always as a commodity or as money, and its movement always is broken up into a series of purchases and sales," in the

absence of an economic crisis, those payments and purchases are "obliterated, invisible, not directly included" because "we see only the alienation and the return payment."[23] Put another way, unlike the embodied functioning of the actual economy, represented by the formula M–C–M', the credit system appears to function through the "disembodied" M–M': the return of interest-bearing capital does not "express itself as the consequence and result of some definite series of economic processes, but as the effect of a specific legal agreement between buyer and seller."[24] In this way, by giving the lender "absolute control within certain limits over the capital and property of others, and thereby the labor of others," the credit system not only blurs the line that separates actions taken in the actual economy from those with an orientation toward meeting the requirements of a legal contract, but it also makes the identity of all actions in some sense indeterminate.[25] Under finance capitalism, every action we take and every object we acquire is simultaneously our own and not our own, and the extent to which we can sort out what is ours and what is a response to the powerful external force of debt obligationsis precisely what makes the actual functioning (rather than the crisis) of the disembodied process of the credit system difficult to represent.

In locating the origin of his critique of the credit system in the mundane, habitual transaction at the café, simply one more among the many trivial experiences of daily life narrated in the novel, Chejfec can generalize Rose's orientation toward the credit system to her way of seeing and living her life more generally. Indeed, Rose's habit of paying by credit card, that is, her habit of agreeing to act upon and to allow herself to be acted upon by a series of lines on a page—"one or many pages riddled with any number of minor purchases"—allows her to continue to produce the fiction of order when her own financial field is actually in disorder: "[she is] more or less resigned to never understanding her monthly balance." This habit of producing a fiction guided by lines on a page is generalizable to her role as an actress: "as an actress, Rose is accustomed to . . . speaking for others, nonexistent or more or less blurry figures, or, as actors enjoy saying, [she is accustomed to] being spoken by others, that is, to lending her body and her voice in order to bring into the world actions and words that do not necessarily belong to her."[26] Being habituated, then, to a state in which the things she has and does are hers and not hers, or perhaps better said, in being accustomed to a regime of debt and loans that expresses itself through a "natural inclination" toward "performance," she converts these "weekly strolls and meetings for coffee" into a "workshop" for "dramatic events or theatrical derivations" into which "Félix is incorporated."[27] Félix's bills and coins, then, are absorbed into his weekly routine with Rose, which in turn is subsequently mapped out into the geographic space they traverse in the city. The credit system, then, can begin to come into view through a series of representational possibilities emerging from the spheres of economy, theater and geography: lines on the page follow a budget or don't, follow a script or don't, follow a preset path or don't. Yet, as

indicated above, the challenge of constructing narratives from Rose's "natural inclination" toward performance, Félix's "cartographic consciousness" or the invisible influence of debt obligations is that these actions or activities are indistinguishable from their daily routines. The challenge that Rose and Félix set out before the reader is how to convert the experience of everyday life into a representation of the operation of contemporary finance capitalism.

One strategy for producing this operation emerges on the first page of the novel, but its centrality to the novel's representational strategies does not become clear until much later. While on his way to meet Rose for coffee and enjoying the simulacrum mentioned above, Félix remembers an anecdote that he often "recalls at random and when he least expects it:" [28]

Not long ago, a parish priest sought to relate during Sunday mass his understanding of God. He explained that it has always been said that God is everywhere, that God accompanies everyone at every moment. What is difficult, he suggested, is to make that presence tangible, to offer practical examples that leave no room for doubt. He paused and then quickly added that God is like an online map (he literally said "Google Maps"). It can give a view from above and from the side, is able to capture and visualize an entire continent or focus on only one house and even zoom in on the patio of a house . . . nothing could escape this surveillance. [29]

Though Félix, as he himself admits, only occasionally "thinks about God" and very "rarely in the terms used by the priest," it does often lead him to think about these digital maps—or "los mapas de Dios" as he sometimes calls them—as not only a simulacrum but also an image that may be observed by another person. [30] That is, this metaphysical fiction becomes a strategy by which Félix, like Rose, can conceive of their strolls "as a theatrical act," which is to say, it makes it possible for him to imagine his movements through the city in relation to a beholder observing both Rose's and his own movements through the city. [31]

In a characteristic example of this strategy, Rose and Félix have come to a place at "the edge of the sidewalk, next to a fence" where they stop and "without speaking" gaze at a three-story building. [32] In moments such as these, both Rose and Félix invent observers who are watching them absorbed in their contemplation of these buildings: "Félix maintains his gaze fixed on the second floor and imagines himself with a cleared head, observing a figure that is in reality himself, observing himself from that other position, from behind the curtains." [33] Throughout the novel they invent fictional observers for themselves—such as Félix's fictional alter-ego on the second floor—in order to convert their real experiences into scenes produced for a beholder, scenes that not only begin to articulate the forms necessary to stage with "accuracy the real life events" that should comprise Rose's dramatic scene but also make visible "what [they] did before but could not see with [their] own eyes:" their daily routine as representations of the operation of the credit system. [34]

An Anti-theatrical Art of Landscapes and Loans

If these scenes are theatrical in the sense of being imagined to take place for a beholder, the strategy Rose and Félix employ to produce them—adopting the fiction that they are simultaneously a beholder and physically present in the scene—can be understood as what Michael Fried calls "an off-shoot" or "special case" of the absorptive techniques at the heart of antitheatrical painting.[35] In his seminal study *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (1980), Fried analyzes Diderot's endorsement of strategies employed by painters to de-theatricalize the relationship between beholder and object and thereby re-establish for painting its "status as a major art."[36] This primarily took shape in what Fried calls the primary or "dramatic conception" of anti-theatrical painting, or, as it is more often described, the technique of absorption. This strategy, Fried notes, establishes a fiction of separation:

the fiction of the beholder's nonexistence in and through the persuasive representation of figures wholly absorbed in their actions, passions, activities, feelings, states of mind . . . . in a unified compositional structure [that gives] the painting as a whole the character of a closed and sufficient system.[37]

As he goes on to note in the third chapter of his study, however, to discuss only absorption would give an "incomplete" account of de-theatricalizing fictions of separation. Analyzing Diderot's discussion of "pastoral scenes, landscapes with figures, depictions of ruins, still lifes" and other "lesser genres" that are successfully antitheatrical despite not "[providing] the painter with the means that were needed radically to exclude the beholder from the painting," Fried develops what he calls the secondary, or pastoral conception of antitheatricality.[38] These landscape paintings with figures must establish the "fiction of the beholder's physical presence within the painting, by virtue of an almost magical recreation of the effect of nature itself."[39] While Fried acknowledges that Diderot's endorsement of the fiction of the beholder's physical presence within the painting seemingly contradicts his preference for absorptive paintings that explicitly deny the presence of and exclude the beholder, Fried goes on to point out that the pastoral conception is "surprisingly consistent with what has gone before, in that according to that fiction the beholder *is removed from in front of the painting* just as surely as if his presence there were negated, neutralized, indeed just as surely as if he did not exist."[40] This mode of antitheatricality, this particular fiction of separation, which emerges from landscape paintings, as we have already begun to see with Félix's physical presence in the scene he imagines from the position of his non-existent alter-ego, is central to *La experiencia dramática*. Indeed, as we will see in a moment, the pastoral conception of antitheatricality is the

mechanism by which Chejfec can bring into view the operation of the credit system in order to establish contemporary literature's critical potentiality.

As Félix imagines himself as a beholder of the landscape he physically occupies as he and Rose stand at "the edge of the sidewalk, next to a fence" gazing at a three-story building, Rose is remembering, that an old friend had an apartment in that building and that Rose and her husband had rented the apartment for the occasion of their wedding ceremony. This encounter with her friend's apartment building, however, does not bring back memories of her vows or of a first dance but rather of the "absorptive" experience she had with a strange children's toy she found on the shelf in her friend's apartment during the wedding reception: a piggy bank that took the form of a mailbox.[41] This mailbox-piggy bank had attached to its front a faded sticker displaying a series of coins "from another, probably forgotten, era . . . . that could perhaps only have its origin in books" and next to the coins "one could see the value of each, and closer to the edge, a series of numbers that, at first glance seemed arbitrary and incomprehensible, but that after a detained observation revealed themselves to be the number of coins that would fit inside the bank if someone proposed filling it with only coins of that single value."[42] What produced that "detained observation," however, was not the numbers themselves but rather the various landscapes with figures depicted on each coin. Particularly compelling for Rose was the 50-cent coin, which featured a river and a young nude diving into the water from the riverbank. "Around the image there are some branches . . . [that] serve as a frame," and Rose found herself "absorbed in contemplation . . . [and] in a state of wakeful slumber." The narrator continues:

the image seemed close to nature . . . . She feels that she is present in that moment at the edge of the river, that she sees the leap, she smells the air and perceives in a nearly physical way each one of the diver's ribs as he sails toward the water, as if she were facing a venerated body and that it was unnecessary to touch it to know that it is real and that she adores it.[43]

Like the antitheatrical pastoral landscapes Fried describes in his study, which are predicated upon "an almost magical recreation of the effect of nature itself" that compels the beholder to imaginatively remove himself from in front of the canvas and fictionally enter the space of the depicted landscape, Rose, in finding in these landscapes something "close to nature," equally removes herself from in front of the canvas and from the space of her wedding, and adopts the fiction that she has physically entered the space of the image on the sticker. Like paintings depicting absorption, the landscape paintings with figures praised by Diderot, Fried notes, "stopped and held [the beholder], sometimes for hours at a stretch if contemporary testimony is to be believed, in front of the painting."[44] In the same way, Rose too, in her pastoral fiction, was stopped and held in absorbed contemplation of these numismatic landscapes.

Importantly, however, the absorbed contemplation resulting from this anti-theatrical appeal, had the effect of producing a "detained observation," which in turn made possible Rose's recognition that the numbers appearing alongside these landscapes were not "arbitrary" but rather were part of an intentional decision on the part of the creator of this object: "the number of coins that would fit inside the bank if someone proposed filling it with only coins of that single value [e.g. only 30 cent pieces]." This is crucial because it is the part of the experience that "accompanied her even after she left [the bank] in the place where she had found it."[45] What accompanied her was the thought that it would have been, perhaps, more instructive to have "the sticker provide expanded information, such as the amount the bank holds measured in money: the total amount of money represented if it was filled with five-cent coins or 30-cent coins, etc."[46] What this line of thinking produces is not only contrasting ways of calculating the collected coins but also differing historical relationships to money. On the one hand, there is Rose, formed by the contemporary financial system and its opaque bank statements filled with minor purchases, who can only contemplate complex calculations and the weight of incomprehensible future promises rather than the obliterated, invisible, intermediate actions of the everyday decision to save or purchase. On the other hand, there are the makers of this bank from "another, probably forgotten, era," in which "people . . . [were] distanced from complex calculations," who, in choosing to represent the number of coins rather than the amount of money represented by those coins, articulate each coin as a decision and the total number on the bank as an accumulation of consequential concrete actions.[47] What emerges from the absorbed contemplation of this antitheatrical landscape, and what accompanies Rose long after viewing it, is a model to replace the indeterminacy of the credit system, in which the focus on the end result (M–M') obliterates or renders invisible the intermediate actions that constitute history, with a detained, concentrated, absorbed focus on each decision, each step that was taken in the past, a recognition that proves consequential as Rose moves from her position as only an actress, living lives loaned to her by others, to her position as author and dramatist of her own dramatic scene.

Indeed, in the same way past decisions materialize as lines on the page of Rose's credit card bill and influence her future, so too must Rose's past dramatic experience materialize in the lines on the page of the script she writes for her theater workshop: "it is not sufficient to have simply experienced your dramatic situation," Rose notes, "the teacher has asked for a representation."[48] In other words, this representation, like the pastoral images on the coins that highlight the accumulation of minor decisions, must also come to terms with the series of decisions that created her dramatic experience. In Rose's case, she decides to stage the loss of a professional opportunity, in which she "simply decided to say no and it turned out that it was consequential [for her life]" in that she received fewer and fewer opportunities to play major roles.[49] The experience only became dramatic after the fact, that is, through a

series of "dramatic microscenes [that] lack . . . a staging pertinent" to "the concrete moment [of the decision] . . . [which] was not dramatic and did not leave a memory as such."[50] In this sense, the dilemma at the heart of her dramatic scene parallels Chejfec's evocation of the credit system through Rose's purchase of tea. The point of sale, as part of her weekly or daily routine, is not dramatic in the least. However, to the extent that an incomprehensible state of debt came into being not through a plan but rather through the whims and microscenes of consumption, daily decisions that never register as decisions to take on debt obligations, the weekly purchase of tea undoubtedly proves consequential for her life. In other words, Rose's dramatic representation, which must represent in all of its drama a scene which has no drama whatsoever, would also stage a representation of the operation of the credit system and its series of minor decisions made in the past, which laid out a future resulting from subsequent decisions characterized by a tension between the planned and the unplanned. As with Fried's description of successfully antitheatrical landscapes, then, Rose's dramatic representation can only come into view through a "temporal reading of the scene," which is characterized by a "fracturing of perspectival unity" but at the same time remains a "success as a unified" and autonomous work of art.[51] In much the same way, then, that there are very few successful antitheatrical landscapes or still lifes because these genres generally lacked the means to de-theatricalize their relationship to the beholder and produce their autonomy as a work of art, so too does Rose find difficulty in staging a dramatic scene that could produce a visualization of the temporality necessary to bring into being her conception of drama (and the drama of the credit system) as a coherent work of art: "[it is] impossible to represent it [as a scene] in a way that will follow closely the guidelines set out by the teacher."[52]

This dilemma parallels closely what Patrick Dove, in his study of Chejfec's earlier novel *Boca de lobo* (2000) [*The Dark* (2013)], describes as the author's "narrativa de contratiempo:" "we are not only the authors of our own history; we are also products of our past, often in ways that exceed our own capacity for understanding and awareness."[53] As Dove notes, in Chejfec's work, it is unclear if the present is being controlled and shaped by remembrances of the past or if the past simply provides the raw material from which the present can be constructed and differentiated from the past. But this narrative interrogation of the odd temporality of the present provides us with what Dove calls, "a powerful aesthetic alternative . . . [a] literature that interrupts the dominant logic and distribution of the social as it functions today."[54] The figure Dove evokes for visualizing Chejfec's "narrativa de contratiempo" is Walter Benjamin's famous re-description of Klee's "Angelus Novus" as the angel of history, an image scholars have now made classic for representing and understanding our relationship to history in modernity: gazing towards the ruins of the past, the winds of history push the angel ever forward into the future.

Yet, while Dove's concept of "contratiempo" is useful for understanding the temporality of the credit system as it is evoked in this novel, it is not Benjamin's "angel of history" and its allegory of economic crisis that brings this visualization to the fore in *La experiencia dramática* but rather Félix's "mapas de Dios" and their representation of the credit system through his tracking of their weekly strolls together. Rather than the contemplation of destruction and ruins, or we might simply say, crisis as the visualization of the "points in the not too distant past [when] things could have taken a completely different path," *La experiencia dramática* instead re-directs that reflective temporality to the "active digital map," the Google Map of the present that manifests Rose's whims and plans as representations of the decisions comprising the credit system, decisions that could easily have been different and led them down a path with vastly different results.[55] In this sense, Rose's scene might look like one in which Félix is manifesting his "cartographic consciousness," seated in front of a computer screen, obsessively tracking their movements through the city, over-intellectualizing each decision she made and thinking about how a different mundane choice might produce the world he envisions, in much the same way that re-imagining a day measured in 30 hours rather than 24 would literally change history, making the following Monday the 14th (as he imagines) rather than the 15th (as the calendar states).

It has been the argument of this essay, however, that Félix can only see these maps as representations, that he can only see with his own eyes the invisible series of loans and debts become geography and landscape by separating the representation of the credit system that is his imagined "mapa de Dios" from the experience of using Google Maps in everyday daily life. This project of separation is made possible through a process of narrativization that mobilizes the temporality evoked by antitheatrical aesthetic forms paralleling those described by Fried and elicited by the remembered anecdote about the parish priest. As stated at the outset, however, Chejfec claims these antitheatrical narratives specifically for the literary, a characteristic made clear as Félix remembers the parish priest's revision of his analogy:

God functioned like digital maps, but better, because God wasn't reduced to visual representation and its various forms (map, terrain, traffic, etc.): literally everything could be encompassed, from voices and sounds in the air to the deepest, most shameful feelings, in such a way that God could forego visual representation altogether without the slightest problem, something that was impossible for Google Maps.[56]

By constructing a novel that completely mobilizes the antitheatrical visual tradition through this metaphysical fiction but at the same time also "[foregoes] visual representation altogether," Chejfec's novel achieves "something that [may be] impossible" for other forms of narrative such as film, theater, dance, painting and so on, all of which are "reduced to visual representation."[57] In this way, Chejfec establishes for literature an important "critical

potentiality," one that asserts that it isn't enough to simply see and experience the everyday as we watch it take place on a computer screen. Whether on the screen or not, debt and its manifestations in its ordinary, mundane, temporal operation must be represented; it must be narrated; and however partially it may happen, it must be understood.

NOTES

1. Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art: The Salon of 1767*, vol. 2, tTranslated by. John Goodman, iIntroduction by. Thomas Crow (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 1995), 115-116. I first encountered an abbreviated version of this passage in Tatiana Smoliarova's discussion of the confluences of Diderot's thought with Viktor Shklovsky's concept of "defamiliarization" or "estrangement" in art. See her discussion of the roots of Russian Formalism in Diderot's thought in Tatiana Smoliarova, "Distortion and Theatricality: Estrangement in Diderot and Shklovsky," *Poetics Today* 27.1 (2006): 3-33.

2. Sergio Chejfec, *La experiencia dramática* (Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2012),: 156. "la regla de fidelidad de los hechos verdaderos.". Unless otherwise noted, translations from Spanish to English are my own. It should also be noted that Félix is a character who first appeared in Chejfec's 2004 novel *Los incompletos*.

3. Sergio Chejfec, "Fábula política y renovación estética," *El punto vacilante: Literatura, ideas y mundo privado* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2005): 115, 116. "Una de las opciones para la literatura—y cuando digo opciones me refiero a la posibilidad de que perdure como arte—es conseguir una regulación a través de la vía negativa: que la literatura llegue hasta donde las otras escrituras no alcanzan. Para ello habría que redefinir la potencialidad crítica que la caracteriza durante el paradigma moderno, y para ello también habría que abandonar tanto la idea de totalidad como la de fragmento; las narraciones deberían avanzar por contigüidad antes que por quiebre o causalidad, por expansión antes que por concentración, por elevación antes que por profundidad. Es cierto que sería difícil reflejar el compromiso moral con procedimientos abstractos. . ."; "quiero decir que los signos vuelvan a la centralidad de lo real descubriendo que son signos, que pueden ser leídos pero también leerse a sí mismos."

4. Mariano Siskind, "Entrevista a Sergio Chejfec," *Hispamérica*, 100, (2005),: 40. "mi literatura supone la construcción de un objeto diferenciado, independiente de la vida corriente, pero no tan independiente como para que se desintegre total relación. Una construcción suficientemente autónoma para que no sea referencia directa, transparente a lo social, sino más bien una connotación o una metáfora."

5. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1980:), 61, 135.

6. Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*Ibid., 105, 132.

7. Upon multiple readings of the novel, I find that the word "debt" ["deuda"] appears only one time (93), in reference to an emotional debt that Rose feels toward her husband's family. The words "prestar" [to loan], "préstamo" [a loan], "prestado" [loaned] and so on appear more often but in relation to items of clothing and, importantly, Rose's status as an actress, loaning her body to a role. As we will see, "credit" (in the form of Rose's credit card) is also mentioned only once, at the beginning of the novel, but it proves consequential for understanding the function of these other terms and the novel's economic critique more generally.

8. Chejfec, Chejfec, *Experiencia*, 126. "cada semana con inconmovible disciplina." Though it is never specified, the city where the novel is set is likely modeled on New York City, though, like many of the cities described in Chejfec's novels, it is anonymous enough to be characteristic of many large cities. In fact, the novel literally notes that "the city could be any city" ["la ciudad podría ser cualquier ciudad"] (12). But, the country where the city is located is described as "wide and extense" ["ancho y extendido"] (87) and Félix is described as "one more foreigner" ["un extranjero más"] (87) among many. The architecture described is a mix of mirrored skyscrapers, old warehouses, contrasting areas with short streets and wide avenues, and areas marked by a river and a canal. Rose is an actress who finds opportunities and laments not having bigger roles, which are presumably available. Like many native New Yorkers, Rose prides herself on never leaving her city: "She never left the city for more than a few days at a time . . . and within the city she always walked in areas that, according to her, she had always known. Her life took place in predictable and circumscribed spaces" ["Nunca dejó la ciudad por más de pocos días . . . y dentro de la ciudad siempre anduvo por lugares que, según ella, conoce desde un principio. Su vida se fue dando alrededor de espacios circunscriptos y previsibles"] (92).

9. Chejfec, *Experiencia*, Ibid., 130, 160, "No le gusta considerar detalles ni pensar en ellos;" "A Rose le gusta ir sembrando frases que explican poco y parecen conclusiones de compromiso, casi eslóganes."

10. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 30, 31, 29. "una actitud, una inclinación o presencia, algo así como un aire o hasta un mohín discreto, o un tic indistinguible, o cierta tendencia en su cuerpo a moverse o revelarse de determinada forma, etc., cosas que la tornan visible;" "atraer las miradas;" "detienen un instante la mirada en Rose como si su rostro les dijera algo."

11. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 29. "el extraño placer de parcer invisible."

12. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 35. "Ella dirige la marcha, decide doblar por una esquina, seguir derecho o regresar. A Félix le gusta que sea de esta manera, siente un pequeño placer en abandonarse a la ruta de Rose porque tiene la ilusión por unos

momentos de estar a resguardo en un mundo que, como muchos saben, raramente brinda protección. A la vez, Rose no siempre tiene un camino prefijado, en ocasaiones avanza, cruza, dobla o retrocede por puro capricho."

13. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 90, 88. "él mismo será uno de esos adictos o beneficiados de la así llamada conciencia cartográfica;"; "ignora qué es lo que más lo atrae de ellos."

14. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 10, 11. "piensa con frecuencia en los mapas digitales;" "[n]o piensa que desde la aparición de los mapas digitales su vida haya mejorado o sea menos indistinta, ni siquiera diferente . . . [sino] algo verificable. . ."; "puede evocar sus pasos y de este modo darle a sus recorridos—podría decir a su vida entera—una mayor consistencia . . . . . la caminata para encontrarse con Rose es más cierta en la medida en que puede evocarla diseñada en ese mismo momento en los mapas digitales."

15. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 11, 12. "la palabra evocar define parcialmente la operación mental de Félix, porque la evocación funciona también como un pensamiento proyectado hacia el futuro;"; "Félix camina hacia un café de barrio . . . para encontrarse con Rose . . . . [y] siente que se desliza por el mapa y al mismo tiempo navega por la superficie de la ciudad . . . . como si los objetos físicos no fueran más que una réplica espacial medio adormecida de aquello señalado por los mapas, y encontraran su justificación en esa existencia complementaria [en la pantalla]."

16. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 18, "Félix piensa que Rose paga con tarjeta por comodidad; y Rose piensa lo mismo que Félix."

17. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 18, "su economía organizada;"; "La causa principal de desorden vinculado con el dinero, aparte de su limitado presupuesto, siempre, para Félix son las monedas."

18. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 18,. "[a]ñora, aunque sea un tiempo que no haya vivido, la época en que todas las actividades del día podían hacerse con algunas monedas, tal como viejas novelas o cuentos recuerdan: alguien metía las manos en los bolsillos, sacaba a ciegas un puñado, las golpeaba con fuerza sobre la tabla y se resolvía la situación. En cambio, el uso mixto de monedas y billetes en las cosas de todos los días le produce una especie de cansancio, lo somete a un desorden según él innecesario y que le quita fuerzas."

19. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 18,. "[al pagar] con tarjeta . . . . [tiene] su economía organizada, según ella quiere hacerse creer . . . . [a pesar de estar] resignada a no entender jamás las liquidaciones mensuales de su tarjeta, una o varias páginas plagadas de gastos ínfimos."

20. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 18,. "la tranquila practicidad de Félix al pagar siempre en efectivo y olvidarse de cualquier registro o amenaza posterior."

21. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 18,. "sabia la estrategia."

22. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume III: The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole*, ed. Frederick Engels, (New York: International Publishers, 1968): chapter XXV, 400.

23. Marx, *Ibid.Capital, vol. III*, chapter XXI, 344, 348, 349.

24. Marx, *Ibid.Capital, vol. III*, 348. Michael Hudson, "From Marx to Goldman Sachs: The Fictions of Fictitious Capital," *Critique* 38.3 (2010): 419-44. accessed November 1, 2013, http://michael-hudson.com/2010/07/from-marx-to-goldman-sachs-the-fictions-of-fictitious-capital1/..

25. Marx, Marx, *Capital, vol. III*, chapter XXVII, 439.

26. Chejfec, Chejfec, *Experiencia*, 36,. "como actriz Rose está acostumbrada a . . . ponerse a hablar por otros, sujetos inexistentes o más o menos borrosos, o, como les gusta decir a los actores, ser hablada por los otros, o sea, prestar el cuerpo y la voz para propinar palabras o acciones que no necesariamente le pertenecen."

27. Chejfec, Chejfec, *Experiencia*, 32, 146,. "una inclinación natural . . . la actuación es en ella algo parecido a una forma de carácter;" "A lo mejor estos encuentros casi del todo conversados sean simplemente, para ella, una puesta en ejercicio junto con Félix de eventos dramáticos o derivaciones teatrales, como llama a las caminatas y cafés semanales."

28. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 10,. "la recuerda en cualquier circunstancia y cuando menos lo espera."

29. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 9,. "No hace mucho, un párroco quiso graficar en la misa dominical la idea que tenía de Dios. Explicó que siempre se ha dicho que Dios está en todas partes y que acompaña a todo el mundo en todo momento. Lo difícil, sugirió, es hacer tangible esa presencia, ofrecer ejemplos prácticos que no dejen lugar a dudas. Hizo silencio y en seguida agregó que Dios es como los mapas en línea (dijo textualmente 'Google Maps'). Puede observar desde arriba y desde los costados, es capaz de abarcar con la mirada un continente o enfocarse en una casa, hasta hacer zoom sobre el patio de una casa. Y así, como todos los presentes en ese momento podían imaginar, nada escapaba su vigilancia."

30. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 10, 161,. "En realidad son muy pocas las veces que piensa en Dios, y raramente en los términos usados por el párroco;"; "los mapas de Dio, como de un tiempo a esta parte los llama cuando recuerda la anécdota del párroco."

31. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 124,. "Caminar es algo que para Félix lleva tiempo, es un hecho teatral y de características que pueden llegar a ser épicas."

32. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 37-38,. "Los dos ocupan el costado de la vereda, junto a un cerco provisorio que limita el paso. Sin hablar, Rosa apunta con la mano hacia una casa de tres pisos que se levanta enfrente."

33. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 59,. "Félix mantiene la vista hacia el segundo piso y se imagina a sí mismo con la mente en blanco, vigilando a una persona que en realidad es él, observándose desde ese otro lugar, detrás de las cortinas."

34. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 10,. "lo que antes hacía pero no podía ver con sus propios ojos."

35. Fried, Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*, 132.

36. Fried, *Ibid.Absorption and Theatricality*, 105.

37. Fried, *Ibid.Absorption and Theatricality*, 131-32.

38. Fried, *Ibid.Absorption and Theatricality*, 130, 131.

39. Fried, *Ibid.Absorption and Theatricality*, 132.

40. Fried, *Ibid.Absorption and Theatricality*, 131.

41. This hybrid object is evocative of the "teas-maid," the combination alarm clock and tea kettle that W.G. Sebald mentions in his novel *The Emigrants* and that Chejfec discusses in his essay "Brief Notes on Stories with Images," trans. John Beasley-Murray, *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 11.3 (2002), which appears in the original Spanish in *El punto vacilante*, 135-44.

42. Chejfec, Chefjec, *Experiencia*, 44,. "mostraba monedas de otra época y probablemente olvidadas, ajenas a la memoria de casi todos los presentes en es momento, pensó ella . . . . el dinero que podía sólo aparecer en los libros;"; "se aclaraba el valor de cada una, y más al costado aparecían otros números, a primera vista arbitrarios y que no se entendían, pero que después de una observación detenida se mostraban como la cantidad de piezas que cabrían en la alcancía si alguien se propusiera llenarla sólo con monedas de ese mismo valor."

43. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 49-50, 50-51,. "En la moneda de 50 centavos Rose ve un río con su barranca empanada. Allí alguien acaba de lanzarse y se proyecta hacia el agua. Es de cuerpo delgado y no lleva ropas, con toda probabilidad muy joven . . . . Alrededor de la imagen hay algunas ramas . . . [que] vienen a ser el marco."; "la imagen le parece natural . . . . Todavía absorbida por la contemplación de la moneda, Rose cae en una especie de entresueño. Siente que pertenece a ese momento en el costado del río, que ve el salto, huele el aire y percibe de un modo casi físico cada una de las costillas del bañista en el vuelo hacia el agua, como si se tratara de un cuerpo venerado y no hiciera falta tocarlo para saber que es real y que lo adora."

44. Fried, Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*, 132.

45. Chejfec, *Ibid.Experiencia*, 51,. "la alcancía la acompañó aun después de dejarla en el lugar donde la había encontrado."

46. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 51,. "que la calcomanía diera información ampliada, como ser la capacidad medida en dinero: el total de dinero representado si estaba llena con monedas de 5 centavos, o con monedas de 30, etc." One might question whether the novel takes place in New York by noting the appearance of the 30-cent coin. It should be noted that the bank depicts coins "from another, probably forgotten, era which remained distant from all those present at the wedding . . . . [and] that could perhaps only have its origin in books." But perhaps the more important point is to note that the strangeness of the 30-cent coin parallels Félix's re-imagined day comprised of 30 hours rather than 24. It is unclear to me what Chejfec might specifically be noting with the choice of the number 30, but it does pair these two examples with an interest in finding moments when other choices or ways of being might have been possible, which I discuss in terms of geography below.

47. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 51-52,. "personas . . . alejad[as] de cálculos complejos."

48. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 99,. "no es suficiente con haber pasado por la experiencia dramática"; "[e]l profesor ha pedido una representación."

49. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid.,158,. "simplemente decidió decir que no y fue consecuente."

50. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 55,. "microescenas dramáticas, carentes . . . de pertenencia escénica;"; "en el momento concreto . . . no resultó dramático ni dejó ese recuerdo."

51. Fried, Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*, 134.

52. Chejfec, Chejfec, *Experiencia*, 159,. "imposible de representar si busca ser leal con las consignas del profesor."

53. Patrick Dove, "Territorios de la historia del presente y contratiempo literario en *Boca de lobo*," in *Sergio Chejfec: Trayectorias de una escritura*, ed. Dianna C. Niebylski (Pittsburgh, PA: IILI, 2012),: 186. "No somos simplemente los autores de nuestra propia historia, también somos productos de nuestro pasado, y a menudo de maneras que exceden nuestra capacidad de conocimiento y de conciencia." Sergio Chejfec, *The Dark*, trans. Heather Cleary (Rochester, NY: Open Letter Press, 2013). Sergio Chejfec, *Boca de lobo* (Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2000).

54. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., 184,. "una poderosa alternativa estética . . . [una] literatura como interrupción de la lógica predominante y de la distribución de lo social en vigencia . . ."

55. Chejfec, *Experiencia*Ibid., "Territorios," 186,. "en ciertos puntos de un pasado no demasiado lejano, las cosas podrían haber tomado otro rumbo por completo diferente." I should reiterate here, however, that Chejfec is not interested in discovering causality or reflecting on or lamenting the crisis of the dramatic situation. By re-orienting our attention to the decisions made everyday, Chejfec is asserting the contiguity of history with the present. The mundane daily details of life are the points at which history is being made and are the stuff Benjamininan ruins are made of. His goal, then, is to compel us to think about how the decisions we make everyday are or are not producing the history we want to make, are or are not a product of debt obligations and so on. In other words, the antitheatrical image and the possibilities for interpretation that it makes available are crucial to producing this contemplation of both the past and the present.

56. Chejfec, Chejfec, *Experiencia*, 9, ". . . Dios funcionaba como los mapas digitales, pero mejor, porque no estaba reducido a la representación visual y sus distintas modalidades (mapa, relieve, tránsito, etc.): estaba en condiciones de abarcar literalmente todo, desde las voces y sonidos en el aire hasta los sentimientos más inconfesables, de un modo tal que podía prescindir de la visualización sin mayor problema, cosa imposible para Google Maps."

57. The dialogue Chejfec's novels develop between literature and the visual arts (and photography in particular) has been gaining increasing attention. Chejfec himself has discussed the role of images in relation to literature in his essay "Brief Notes on Stories with Images." In analyzing Sebald and Uruguayan writer and visual artist Joaquín Torres-García, he implicitly questions to what extent the literary and the linguistic might be able to overcome their own limits and recover their relation to the real without directly including the visual text as "external validation." A number books and essays comment on these issues, and many of them, such as those by Craig Epplin, Luz Horne, Alejandra Laera and Mariana Catalin are printed alongside Dove's in an anthology about Chejfec's work edited by Dianna Niebylski: *Sergio Chejfec: Trayectorias de una escritura* (Pittsburgh: IILI, 2012). A version in English of Horne's essay is available as "A Portrait of the Present: Sergio Chejfec's Photographic Realism," *Hispanic Review* 78.2 (2010), and h. Her excellent book, *Literaturas reales: Transformaciones del realismo en la narrativa latinoamericana actual,* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo, 2011), deals extensively with these issues in Chejfec and other contemporary South American writers.

Steve Buttes is Assistant Professor of Spanish and Culture Studies in the Department of International Language and Culture Studies at Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne. He is currently at work on a manuscript examining urban poverty and national identity in both realist and avant-garde works from the mid-twentieth century in Argentina, Chile, and Mexico. His work has appeared in *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* and is forthcoming in the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

READING FOR AFFECT, FROM LITERATURE AND FILM TO FACEBOOK AND #OCCUPY:

WHY AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL LENS MATTERS IN THE CRITICISM OF CAPITALIST CULTURAL POLITICS

DIERDRA REBER

What is the relationship between affect and politics? I recently happened upon a scholarly debate in a Facebook forum devoted to literary criticism about whether Slavoj Žižek was founded in declaring that the "passionate attachment" of falling in love was analogous to that of political engagement.[1] One scholar claimed, on the basis of experience, that politics could not equal love in intensity; another scholar claimed, also on the basis of experience, that it could. Both perspectives seem defensible and potentially important. But what is even more interesting to me than the broad and absolute claims we feel authorized to make about the nature of emotion on the grounds of personal experience is thinking through the reasons why we feel authorized to make such claims in the first place.

I would like to approach the aforementioned debate from this latter distance—that is to say, not engaging it directly at all, but rather wondering about its epistemological foundation. I take as a point of departure the view of epistemology as an exercise in extended narrative in the creation of paradigms of human knowledge, its rules, frontiers, and possibilities always contingent, always subject to change, but shifting only on what Michel Foucault called the "deepest strata of Western culture."[2] In this essay, I will sketch out a working hypothesis of what those deepest strata might be for democratic capitalism in the modern West, which I argue brings into view a shift of cultural episteme from reason to affect in the Age of Revolution that becomes eminently visible during the current era of globalization. I will then consider the Hispanist literary canon during this same time period to gauge the epistemological framework at play and to consider how it squares with the periodization that I have proposed largely as a function of France and the United States in the Age of Revolution.

Turning to the cultural present, when I argue that affective epistemicity is becoming pervasive on a global scale, I will flesh out its contours through a close comparative analysis of two Latin American films. Finally, I will come full circle to my epistemological lens on the opening debate about the relationship between affect and politics, and its import for cultural criticism.

From Rational to Affective Epistemicity

What are the established terms of the epistemological narration of human knowledge? In the modern West, reason has been the physiological process overwhelmingly credited with the production of human knowledge. The iconic Cartesian cogito "I think, therefore I am" has served as a conceptual lightning rod for narrating—and thus defining—knowledge since the seventeenth century as the exclusive purview of self-conscious rational cognition. The rational cogito has long been conceptually synonymous with modernity and science.

Implicit in this famous formulation is the residual rendering—if not abjectification—of the "being" body over which the "thinking" mind presides. Cartesian mind-body dualism privileges the rational mind and relegates the passionate body to subordinate status. This story of the primacy of the superior rational mind and the relative insignificance of the inferior non-rational body has held culturally hegemonic sway for nearly four hundred years.

All of a sudden, over the past twenty years, affect has emerged as a challenger for the role of protagonist in the storytelling about human knowledge. By some bold counts, modernity is no longer best comprehended through the optic of rationality. Literary critic Patricia Clough calls our attention to what she dubs an "affective turn" in which no aspect of our contemporary social fabric may be fully understood without the consideration of affectivity, a term I employ as the obverse of rationality: sensory perception, emotion, feeling.[3] It is not only modernity that is being redefined but also, and perhaps even more significantly from the perspective of epistemological storytelling, scientific discourse. In a groundbreaking rejection of the investigative—epistemological—insignificance of emotion, neurologist Antonio Damasio posits that emotion is the very seat of reason and the foundation of the human condition itself. Damasio's influential trade publications in the early 1990s coincide with the onset of a steady and rising upswing in funding for affect-related scientific research.[4]

Four hundred years of epistemic reason have yielded our comprehension of reason as such: as what Foucault made salient, in the *Order of Things*, as an episteme. Indeed, in this magisterial study treating this same time period—the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries—Foucault lays bare an epistemological archaeology of the modalities of reason in modern European thought. Hierarchical taxonomies as a means of imposing order on the external world dominate the early modern era. Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* argues persuasively that this taxonomizing rationality underwrote the epistemological conquest of

the New World by the Old.[5] On the strength of Ángel Rama's reading of Spanish empire as a thinking monarchical head governing an overseas colonial body, the time period for the cogito as modern imperial praxis could be traced in its conceptual origins as far back as the Catholic Kings in the late fifteenth century.[6] Indeed, this rationalized conquest—its epistemological aspect underwriting its political, economic, and cultural aspects—would be what thinkers like psychiatrist and anti-colonialist revolutionary Frantz Fanon would centuries later decry as the most insidious mechanism of European imperialism.[7] Interestingly, and significantly, then, the rational Cartesian subject was exposed and rejected—overthrown—on the grounds of foundational collusion with modern empire.

The mid-twentieth-century throes of global decolonization and the intellectual decapitation of the Cartesian subject therein dovetail with the globalization of liberal democracy and the onset of the so-called "affective turn."[8] As a thought experiment that is also the central conceit of the present inquiry, let us entertain as a possible diachronic epistemological model a correlative relationship, on the one hand, between rationality and imperialism, and, on the other, between affectivity and democratic capitalism. Cartesian rationality is a dualistic relationship in which the self is split between superior transcendental interiority of mind and inferior residual exteriority of body—an epistemological model wholly resonant, if not coeval, with the imperialist logic of a rational governing head ruling over an unruly body politic, like the classic 1651 frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* in which the head and upper body of an absolute sovereign rise up to preside in enormity over a landscape in comparative miniature scale of settled land.[9]

Of course, companies and private capital played an enormous role in the establishment and proliferation of European empire. Perhaps the most notorious example of the intertwined nature of mercantilism and colonialism was the East India Company, which, founded in the very juncture of England's maritime-colonial ascent following the decisive 1588 defeat of Spain's "Invincible" Armada, would become so powerful as to colonize India in 1757, governing by proxy until formal colonization took place a century later. A bourgeois mercantile class possessed of such hefty economic, political, and military might was bound to be on a collision course with top-heavy monarchical rule. By 1751, the French term "laissez faire" had made its first known print appearance.[10] Semantically, the third-person plural/formal command "laissez faire" seeks freedom from a higher and greater power to "let do" in trade and commerce; the fact that this petition assumes the form of the imperative would seem to signal an urgency of discontent that a social class capable of economic self-determination, yet hemmed in and denied political autonomy by the constraints of kings, would have been feeling on the eve of the Age of Revolution.

"Laissez faire" answers the cogito in an epistemologically contestatory way: the imperative mode notwithstanding, it is a voice that speaks from below, asking for a freedom that it does not enjoy, and which is at the mercy of a higher authority to give or deny. It is, in short, a subaltern subject, whose contours are further elucidated within the original formulation, which is said to have been "laissez-*nous* faire" ("Lettre à l'Auteur" 111)—"let *us* do"—in a first-person plural speech act that casts the residual body politic as "we."[11] This "we" asks for a loosening of constraints, regulations, rules. It asks for the suspension of vertical power.

This "we" that anticipates the French Revolution finds its conceptual parallel in the contemporaneous "we, the people" that is the speaking subject of the United States Declaration of Independence; their respective "liberté, egalité, fraternité" under the organizing principle "ce qui est immoral est impolitique" and "all men are created equal" for the enjoyment of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are likewise resonant. A political life measured in feeling is declared in both instances as the model for a perfectly equal and free—democratic—social order harmonious in its brotherly horizontality. The implicit homology between morality and capital in these bourgeois revolutions is rendered explicit in the writings of Adam Smith, who theorizes the circulation of capital and morality throughout the body politic in the same terms, as being guided by an internal wisdom that Smith famously metaphorizes as an "invisible hand."[12]

The portrait of this collective social subject that emerges in the composite when all of these components are considered as a whole is one whose governance is internal—that is, self-governance—on terms that are fully comprehensible, reasonable, and functional to that self, but which require no guidance or direction from without. This collective "we" of the Revolutionary Age is one that has discursively dispensed with the thinking head of monarchy—and literally, by guillotine—and instead of rationality now affirms a logic of affectivity: a social order that, having done away with the erstwhile sovereign head, vindicates itself, the formerly abject body, as a headless soma that can feel its way toward order. The passions that were once used as a label of dismissive vilification of the commoners by the ruling elite are now rehabilitated as an epistemological elegization of that very class. The bourgeois remainder—what in France was indistinct from the rest of the Third Estate, that is, all who were not nobility or clergy—takes its revenge by investing with the power of political self-determination and autonomy the very body that had been discounted within the epistemological schema of rationality, and, moreover, identifying its base passions as the medium of its felicitous self-governance. As though by homeostatic principle, the headless bourgeois soma *feels* its way toward social—political and economic—equilibrium. Historian Nicole Eustace claims as much in her analysis of the American Revolution as a political movement made possible by the discursive valorization of emotion in its universal dimension.

"Passion is the gale," her book avers in its subtitle.[13] During the eighteenth-century Age of Revolution, Eustace affirms, emotion becomes what I would call the epistemological glue of political horizontality, as that which underpins perfect brotherhood and perfect democracy, because it is what binds all people—and not just an elite—together, creating a "we" and legitimizing its power.

An Epistemological Analysis of the Modern Hispanist Canon

How does the birth of epistemological affectivity as a function of capitalist democracy in the eighteenth century affect cultural representation since that time? I argue that epistemological affectivity is most salient in the aforementioned explosion of storytelling interest in emotion—and I use the term "storytelling" in the broadest possible way, akin to the poststructuralist notion of a "text" that goes far beyond the borders of a book or the parameters of a discipline marked as literary, to include all inquiries into human knowledge, whether in the humanities or sciences, whether empirical or representational. For the purposes of periodization, it is telling, as I have already underscored, that the onset of broad investigative and representational interest in affect coincides with the definitive end of formal empire and colonialism—both in the process of decolonization and the end of the Cold War, which had perpetuated a colonialist division of global territory.

But what of the centuries that lie in between? The tracing of an epistemological historiography of the cultural discourse of emotion would be tantamount to rewriting Foucault's *Order of Things*, beginning after the seismic shift he identifies at the end of the eighteenth century and replacing his persistently rational lens with that of affect. This is a challenging proposition, for between the birth of capitalist democracy and its so-called, though fiercely disputed, universal triumph, there lie three centuries of complex global politics.

There is a course that I have taught many times over which affords me precisely this diachronic optic. It is a survey of canonical modern Hispanic texts from 1700 to the present in both Spain and Latin America. I would here like to offer a meditation on how I have been teasing out the relationship between the epistemological model of the democratic-capitalist feeling soma and the texts that I treat from the perspective of my training as a Latin Americanist critic.

The beginning of the course has a certain simplicity and ease because of the fact that it involves received epistemological knowledge: I explain to my students what the Enlightenment is—an obsession with reason, they conclude—and we proceed to consider the ways in which reason turns up in texts from Bourbon Spain and colonial Spanish America. In Benito Jerónimo Feijoo's "Causas del atraso que se padece en España en orden a las ciencias naturales" ("On the Causes of Spain's Backwardness in the Order of the

Natural Sciences"; 1742), we see a carefully constructed plea for the acceptance of scientific empiricism by the theologically-minded institutional status quo.[14] Feijoo casts God as the "Author of Nature" ("Autor de la Naturaleza"; section 12), thereby discursively legitimizing the study of the material world (as opposed to the spiritual) and the acquisition of knowledge through direct observation (as opposed to faith). Tomás de Iriarte's "El gato, el lagarto y el grillo" ("The Cat, the Lizard, and the Cricket"; 1782) constitutes a lyrical paraphrasis of Feijoo's position.[15] In this fable from the animal world, a learned cat—much like Feijoo's anecdotal character "Teopompo," an ecclesiastical scholar profoundly ignorant in the natural sciences—pontificates aloud in incomprehensibly complicated terminology. A lizard looks on, utterly perplexed by the cat's opaque language, yet finally comprehends the situation when he deduces—through direct observation, like Feijoo's "Charistio," an expert on Enlightenment thought—that the cat's unintelligible latinate utterances mean to communicate his intention to ingest sunflower nectar to reduce his abdominal swelling. The cricket of the story, like Feijoo's "rudo Vulgo" ("vulgar Commoners"), entirely lacking in the lizard's powers of direct observation, instead applauds the cat's pompous display, failing to condemn him for unintelligibility or to comprehend the merits of the lizard's comparatively simple, plain speech. Revolving around the grammatical figure of the *esdrújula*, words whose emphasis falls on the antepenultimate syllable, and which are quintessentially emblematic of the scholarly register, the poem performs an intimate knowledge of the very form it critiques, in the process amassing a long list of *esdrújulas* comprised of the medical, pedagogical, and poetic terms either employed by the pedantic cat or used to disparage him.

This performance of an exhaustive inventory as a means of representing the possession of knowledge—and power over what is known through its display—is a narrative rendering of the dominion of the thinking mind over the unruly material body. In Iriarte's case, the raw material whose mastery is demonstrated, positioning the poetic subject as its reigning authority, is the language of Spanish imperial culture—of the Church and Crown. Indeed, the poem concludes with the poetic subject's taunting summary of the fable that has been recounted as a medicinal antidote for the kind of pedantic institutionality that it critiques.

Iriarte's masterful catalogue of *esdrújulas* will further evolve into Linnean taxonomy in Alexander von Humboldt's letter, "A Willdenow" ("To Willdenow"; 1801), in which the celebrated German naturalist will treat the whole of Spanish American flora and fauna as raw material for his—decidedly European—collection of knowledge.[16] (The original iteration of this course paired Humboldt with Pratt's notion of "planetary consciousness" at this juncture to facilitate the consideration of Humboldt's epic travels through Latin America as a seminal instance of epistemological conquest.[17]) Simón Bolívar, Andrés Bello, and Esteban Echeverría—the "Liberator" of Latin America, its earliest lettered statesman, and writerly

political activist, respectively—all echo this central organizing principle at the heart of this rationalized cataloguing and taxonomizing. Bolívar's "Carta de Jamaica" (1815), written in the throes of the continental struggle for independence, begins with a genuflection to Humboldt that then strategically dethrones him from his seat of epistemological conquest.[18] Bolívar declares the continent to be impossibly enigmatic—therefore unknowable by outsiders, even the great Humboldt—yet then goes on to lay out a detailed region-by-region portrait of Latin America in three ways: first describing the rebellious populations of the colonies, then giving a summary of their inchoate revolutionary self-governance, and finally giving an analysis of their political futurity. It is this display of unparalleled territorial knowledge that Bolívar uses to establish his discursive sovereignty, counterbalancing the fact that he is, in truth, writing from the precarious position of requesting—almost begging for—England's military aid in procuring definitive independence from Spain. Bello's triumphal "Silva a la agricultura de la zona tórrida" (1826), penned in the first blush of definitive Latin American independence, takes as its point of departure the lyrical detailing of the continent's countryside.[19] Now this detailing focuses not on the development of botanical knowledge, but on the inventory of agricultural products; as Santiago Colás brilliantly argues, Bello is aware of the latent value of the Latin American landscape and anxious for Latin Americans—and not neocolonial interlopers, unnamed but implicit—to reap that wealth and resultant political power as their own, thus giving foundational stability to their fledgling nations.[20] In yet another echo of the same discursive pattern, Echeverría's "El matadero" (1838; published 1871), the most frequently cited and studied example of a Latin American *cuadro de costumbres*, includes an extensive and detailed description of an Argentine slaughterhouse, as though through an empirical lens.[21] Here the posture of empiricism is meant to lend incontrovertible truth value to the vision of the slaughterhouse as bloody, violent, and uncivilized, to the end of using it as a condemnatory metaphor for the dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas.

Mariano José de Larra's contemporaneous short story, "El castellano viejo" (1832), is also considered part of the genre of the *cuadro de costumbres* and shares the same hyperdetailed descriptiveness, here in the service of painting a picture of middle-class Spain.[22] The narrator, a refined and worldly writer by the pen name Fígaro—whose name implies the superiority of French culture—finds himself reluctantly compelled to attend the birthday dinner of a crass and uncultured acquaintance whose thorough lack of manners and social grace embody the cultural ills of the insular nation. Yet in the final clause of the very last sentence of this extended diatribe against uncouth Spain, Larra abruptly turns the full weight of the story's moralizing judgment against itself: he asks, quickly and concisely, whether the middle class, for all its painful gaffes and provincial gaudiness, might not in fact be morally superior after all. Why? Because—and here is where the entire course takes an abrupt turning point right along with the story—the tiny elite to which Fígaro belongs may know how to act with decorum

and gentility, but, the final confession goes, this social class knows no true bond of affection. It is the middle class which, rude and crude though it may be, is truly capable of loving and respecting its neighbor.[23]

This moment in the story cracks the course in two. All of a sudden, in the course of a single complex clause (which usually requires mapping on the whiteboard for students to fully comprehend), the terms of valorization are radically altered—and permanently so, as we will appreciate as we move forward in time. The logic and narrative patterns of rational all-seeing omniscience are undermined in one fell swoop, upended by a new criterion of critical judgment: affect.

At this juncture, I always find myself, without exception, in difficult terrain, and ironically so, since it is at this point in the course that I begin to enter my own comfort zone of disciplinary expertise. Its challenge lies in the sudden loss of established descriptors for a comprehensive epistemological framework. In the context of the course, we have spent the first third of the semester under the conceptual aegis of the Enlightenment insofar as we have come to understand its rationality as an epistemological model: inventories, catalogs, taxonomies, empiricism. In short, models of externally organized order imposed upon a body—be it language, continent, nature, or nation. Suddenly, all such meticulously and exhaustively crafted demonstrations of cultural power and control founder on their moorings, for the sudden shift sends fatal tremors through the fault lines of the old paradigm. Why does Larra suddenly talk about love and respect? This is, interestingly, a question my students do not ask. Instead, they nod their heads and acquiesce, coming at Larra's turning of the tables from an experiential perspective, regarding love and respect as thoroughly naturalized rather than constructed discourse. In other words, at this point they slide from the epistemological to the ontological: to them, it seems, love cannot be discursive; it can only be real. Are we so steeped in the epistemological supports of capitalist culture that they are invisible as such? I watch, acutely aware of the lack of adequate disciplinary vocabulary—of the lack of adequate epistemological vocabulary—to explicate this shift, much less to propose that they be just as suspicious of love as they have been of reason as a discursive construct.

In the next several readings, the shift toward a foundationally affective narrative logic only becomes more pronounced. Clarín's "¡Adiós, Cordera!" (1892) approaches the spread of modernity to rural Spain through the emotional response of a little girl, Rosa, who initially regards the telegraph pole and the train with excitement, but ultimately comes to resent technology and the wide world beyond for their role in stripping her humble family of all that is dear—first their cow, then her only brother to fight in one of the Carlist Wars—to satisfy the gluttony of far-off gentlemen, priests, and "indianos" (men made rich in the New World).[24] Rosa's internal sentimental landscape creates the story's arc; the somatic metaphor

of a city callously devouring the countryside serves as the foundation for its social critique, with Rosa's "loves" ("sus amores") being an affective synecdoche for all that is lost in this unsalutary crush of modernity. Miguel de Unamuno develops this line of critique, diagnosing Spain on the verge of the Spanish-American War and the loss of its last colonies as though it were a sick body, outlining a pathology of its moral, cultural, and institutional ailments as a paralytic stagnation ("marasmo") and prescribing a remedial rejuvenation by means of exposure to contemporary European intellectual currents.[25] José Martí's "Nuestra América" (1891) exhorts Latin Americans—particularly Cubans—to wake up to the imperial battle that looms overhead and to stand for independence. For the first time in the course, the first-person plural "nosotros" enters the lexicon of revolution. Martí defines this "we" through the prescriptive definition of where its affects should lie: with the autochthonous over the foreign. Correct politics, in effect, derive from correctly placed affective priorities: self-governance turns on self-knowledge; self-knowledge is rooted in a preferential love of the *mestizo* self ("Nuestra América mestiza" [121]) as against the European other.[26]

These late nineteenth-century texts are epistemologically hybrid in the sense that while they move toward affectivity, they also continue to evince some measure of faith in rational institutionality—where Martí, for instance, calls for a supplantation of European models of education, history, and governance by autochthonous ones (in the same way that Domingo Sarmiento has earlier proposed *Facundo* (1845) as the first sociological study of Argentina, imagining it as the Latin American counterpart of Alexander de Tocqueville's analysis of the United States).[27] But as the course enters the era of full-blown twentieth-century U.S. capitalist cultural dominance, affective logic becomes textually hegemonic. Federico García Lorca's "New York: oficina y denuncia" (1931) decries the injustice of U.S. social asymmetry through the metaphor of a continual sacrifice of animals symbolic of the powerless poor, imagining the Hudson River as coursing with their blood. Lorca establishes his poetic duty to serve as self-sacrificial empathetic witness as an emotionally charged cultural value judgment in which callous and cold impersonality is associated with the world of ciphers representing the indifference of the elite, whereas passionate feeling and vitality—albeit threatened—are associated with the "other half" ("la otra mitad"), those who occupy the bottom of the social spectrum.[28] Pablo Neruda's "Walking Around" (1935) likewise casts the structures of civilization as artificial and deadening, and fantasizes about the thrill that would come from using poetic language as a revolutionary weapon to interrupt insitutional culture and to achieve a salutary return to organic nature. This poetic desideratum takes on the stature of moral imperative by the close of the poem with the empathetic testimony and implicit wish to alleviate the suffering of the civilized world personified in "toallas que lloran lentas lágrimas sucias" ("towels that cry slow dirty tears").[29]

Toward mid-century, affective textual interiority bears more and more weight of narrative content and meaning. In Juan Rulfo's "Nos han dado la tierra" (1953), the injustices of Mexican post-revolutionary hypocrisy are communicated through the somatic experience of destitute campesinos walking toward the land granted them by a politics of agrarian reform. Far from fertile, this "comal acalorado" ("hot skillet") of a promised land cannot support even a modicum of life.[30] This theme of social asymmetry as deadening thus continues, here conveyed most centrally and powerfully as the compromise of the poor social subjects' bodies themselves: the *campesinos* seem to be walking backward even as they set feet forward; the heat and lack of water impedes the generation of ideas in their minds; they mean to speak but they cannot.[31] The material circumstance of poverty and its exacerbation by the very government that ideologically purports to alleviate it has the effect of subjugating the poor at the physiological level. Extreme poverty makes it physically impossible to think, to talk, to make literal and figurative progress—impossible to achieve political agency. This is, in other words, a narrative representation of political injustice as biopolitics.

Gabriel García Márquez's "Un día de éstos" (1962) also turns an affective optic on political realities, treating brutal dictatorship through an encounter between the powerful and the powerless—a lieutenant turned mayor and a dentist—in which the nuanced subtleties of their physical and emotional dispositions tell the story.[32] The way the characters' eyes move, the extent to which their bodies are tense or relaxed, the way they speak to each other through verbal and body language, all work to narrate a tooth extraction that in turn tells a back story of violent military repression cum corrupt civil governance. This reliance on mood and emotion to tell a political story is arguably nowhere better exemplified than in Víctor Érice's *El espíritu de la colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*; 1973), which offers a scathing retrospective critique of three decades of dictatorship under Franco as an education in trauma.[33] The young protagonist Ana is an independent thinker whose heart naturally draws her to all that is officially categorized as dangerous: presented with *Frankenstein*, she feels empathy for the putative monster; warned away from poisonous mushrooms, she nevertheless thinks they smell good. Her expansive judgment of the heart leads her to care for a wounded and hungry fugitive in a wordless friendship that contains one of the only true smiles of the film, yet also runs counter to official sanction: the fugitive, presumably a Republican soldier and possibly the addressee of Ana's mother's clandestine letters, is soon killed by the resident official of the Francoism that deems him a criminal rather than friend. Yet Ana's experience proves otherwise: this "Frankenstein" played gently without killing, only to have been victimized as a monster. The film ends with Ana's renewing her call to this martyred "spirit" of her father's beehive, the latter being a metaphor for the coerced ideological conformism of Francoist Spain. Ana's sustained affection for the fugitive, which is more enduring than the letter her mother burns after his death, symbolizes the subterranean

persistence of counterinstitutional memory and the possibility of political resistance. (Another film that I often include in this course, *El laberinto del fauno* [*Pan's Labyrinth*; 2006], is a quasi-fantastical period piece that defies history in returning to the scene of the Spanish Civil War to stage not the destruction but rather the triumph of the *maqui* resistance, characterizing anti-Francoist resistance as a community network defined by impulses toward love and healing whose spirit will outlive the dictatorship even if historical fact tells us that their bodies would inevitably fall victim to its violence. [34] If both *El espíritu de la colmena* and *El laberinto del fauno* construct the expectation of an emotionally charged phoenix of political resistance, the 2011 movement of the so-called "indignados" in protest of neoliberal asymmetry and the conservative political status quo presents itself discursively as following this epistemological script, as I will discuss in the final section of this essay.)

As the course takes its final turn into the post-Soviet twenty-first-century era of globalization, the theme of health and well-being (both emotional and bodily) that we have seen with particular insistence since 1898 becomes even more salient. In the final two films of the semester, Lucrecia Martel's *La Ciénaga* (*The Swamp*; 2001) and Walter Salles's *Diarios de motocicleta* (*The Motorcycle Diaries*; 2004), the decadence of landed social elitism is treated as what we could call ill-being. [35] In *La Ciénaga*, a provincial Argentine family of pepper-growers lives in a state of physical decay that finds its moral equivalent in the swamp-like paralytic lethargy of their inner lives. The family's bodies are riddled with scars and wounds from their auto-abusive lack of self-care, and they project this self-abuse as racialized "savagery" onto the indigenous working class. The dominant class thus inflicts the emotional cruelty of discrimination onto its own hired help as an unsuccessful palliative for its own pain, which the family also tries, equally unsuccessfully, to alleviate with alcohol, sex—including sensual sibling relationships that flirt discomfittingly with incest—and violent sport.

Diarios de motocicleta picks up where *La Ciénaga* leaves off: with a bourgeois-dominated social order in desperate need of a cure for its deep structural injustices. Positing Ernesto Guevara's political awakening as a process of coming into his own as a healer, the film suggests that the young "Che" must first learn the care of self. From the outset, Ernesto's asthmatic condition is foregrounded; the act of becoming a caring healer of the body politic—i.e., a revolutionary—is figured as tantamount to conquering his own asthma. This care of self that is also therapeutic dominion of the self becomes manifest when Ernesto swims the Amazon from the caregivers' side of a leprosy colony to the patients' side, bridging the social divide and dissolving false hierarchies within the universal humanity of what Ernesto has declared to be "una sola América Latina mestiza." The members of this newly unified community call out together, wave together, and stand together in emotional health and harmony as they bid

Ernesto goodbye, with the well-being of the group, which represents all of Latin America, having reached what we understand to be an unprecedented apex.

This exercise in diachronic textual interpretation demonstrates most clearly an arc over the three hundred years in question, 1700-2000, in which the beginning and end points show a marked contrast between epistemological rationality and affectivity, respectively. At the poles of this spectrum, eighteenth-century texts are concerned with rationally organized systems of classification, order, and intellectually justified control; twenty-first century texts are concerned with affectively organized mechanisms of assessment, judgment, and a moral claim to power.

How we chart a historiography to explicate all that lies in between is a more complex proposition. In Spain, the shift from the Habsburg to the Bourbon dynasties in 1700 opens the country up to an uneven but significant influx of liberal thought from the rest of Europe. By the mid-late 1700s such aristocratic entities as the Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País have formed in many cities in both Spain and Spanish America with the general agenda of advancing industry and agriculture, and encouraging the Crown toward free trade. We might say that this period also initiates the conflictive cycles of liberal-conservative alternation between what José Ortega y Gasset would later call the "two Spains." At the same time, Latin America is developing a bourgeois *criollo* class of Spanish-descended natives who will break free from Spain in the Age of Revolution. Yet, if we accept the argument that the nominally sovereign Latin America immediately enters into a neocolonial economic relationship with Great Britain, and so from the standpoint of epistemological analysis, in some ways the entire continent makes the same seismic shift away from colonial empire and toward global capital—arguably a new form of neocolonialism, though by a democratic power—when Spain loses its last colonies in 1898 and England begins to suffer the same fate in the aftermath of World War I, putting an end to what British revisionist historians John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson controversially called in 1953 its "imperialism of free trade."[36] Santiago Colás's aforementioned 1995 analysis of post-independence Latin American discourse as desirous of colonial structures of hierarchical power and textually reenacting them is instructive on this point in the sense that it helps to comprehend how colonial rationality could persist in Latin American discourse well into the post-independence era.[37]

It is important to note that, in this regard, the preceding evidentiary consideration of canonical Hispanic texts thus suggests that the dynamic interplay between rationality and affectivity is different in the Iberoamerican circumstance where imperial and colonial structures, in their material and epistemological dimensions alike, were more culturally powerful for a significantly longer period of time than were their democratic and free-market counterparts. Yet, regardless of how we periodize this lengthy epistemologically hybrid coexistence of

formal empire and capitalist democracy on the world stage, what seems clear is that affectivity holds epistemological sway in the contemporary era of neoliberal globalization.

Toward a Contemporary Model of Epistemological Affect

In the first section of this essay, I suggested that we understand modern Western epistemology as being most foundationally constituted by the shift from rationality to affectivity, and underwriting imperialism and capitalist democracy, respectively, in non-Spanish Europe and the United States. As a second movement, I turned to the transatlantic context of Spain and Latin America to consider how a diachronic overview of canonical texts during this same time period squares with this periodization. There my goal was to underscore that the same shift from rationality to affectivity is operative in the Hispanic context over the course of the time period that we generally consider modernity—the eighteenth century to the present—irrespective of the particular ways in which rationality and affectivity were entwined in epistemological competition from the Age of Revolution to late twentieth-century globalization in Iberoamerican discourse. Whereas in the second section I framed my brief textual analyses with an eye to a broader measure of a diachronic epistemological differential, since my objective was the demonstration of an overarching pattern across centuries, here in a third section I would like to focus in depth on the contours of affectivity as an epistemological model in the present cultural moment.

To this end, I have paired two Latin American films made in the past decade by renowned directors and enjoying significant distribution and critical reception: Fernando Meirelles's *Blindness* (Canada/Brazil/Japan, 2008) and Pablo Trapero's *Carancho* (*The Vulture*; Argentina, 2010), both of which develop a symbology of dystopian car culture that serves to theorize the pathways of neoliberal power. [38]

I would like to give a brief analysis of each film before turning to a final consideration of how their representations of the social as a function of car culture evince a common epistemological model that I hypothesize is in play in broader global culture.

Blindness begins with a full-screen close-up of lights clicking red and green before giving way to a long shot of generic "anywhere" urban streets at rush hour, which look like a crawling parking lot, one false move away from gridlock. As the film shows us a range of characters moving through that milieu, we appreciate how social life is defined as a grid of hierarchies based on inequities of social class, race, and gender; in this light, the red and green traffic signals represent these strict segregations. That hierarchical verticality should be decried as the backbone of neoliberal culture is its worst possible accusation, for it suggests that the capitalist claim to happy and salutary democratic horizontality is a false and empty ideological shell masking a deeper reality of neocolonial asymmetry. This accusation grows in crescendo when

the outbreak of a pandemic affliction of blindness abruptly moves the neoliberal grid into quarantine, where the logic of materialist asymmetry is perversely exaggerated and patently sovereign. One group manages to achieve liberation from the quarantine and, against the backdrop of a sea of motionless cars that symbolizes social death, this small band practices a new form of being-together by moving through the chaos of neoliberal post-apocalypse by holding hands and feeling their way through space as a collective—feeling with their hands and their hearts alike, in both tactile and moral terms. The small renegade community reinhabits private property now defined as shared space, bathing together in a symbolic rebirth and breaking bread together in a first supper. Black, white, Asian, male, female, old, young, rich, poor: all such distinctions are swept away in favor of a common togetherness held together by caresses and laughter. The film ends with the regaining of sight by a member of the group whose first words are a declaration of how beautiful his companions are. When we truly see, the film suggests, our vision reveals the communal beauty of humanity, without unjust asymmetries of any kind. The car culture of asymmetrical isolation—of living in individual and hierarchical compartments—cedes to a culture of perfectly horizontal touch and commingling in which material goods flow according to need, without the hoarding or stagnation of their greed-driven accumulation as capital.

Pablo Trapero's *Carancho* also treats dystopian neoliberal culture through the metaphor of cars, but it is infinitely more pessimistic in its vision. Nominally, the film is about the romance between an ambulance-chasing lawyer and a paramedic whose relationship is threaded through the lawyer's criminal activity of staging accidents for the purpose of gaining clients. But the overarching character in the film is the traffic that courses incessantly through the dark and lugubrious city. The film begins with an opening caption that gives a staggering statistic of some 10,000 deaths from automobile accidents in the last ten years in Buenos Aires. Later, the first flirtatious conversation between the lawyer and the paramedic turns on how commonplace it has come to be for cars to run red lights. From that point on, the film develops quickly as a crime noir thriller; the lawyer and the paramedic are forced to bet their lives on the success of an elaborate scheme for liberation from the corrupt forces bearing down upon them. This proposition is vertiginous: the lawyer's unscrupulous boss makes clear the extent to which this underbelly of neoliberalism has every thread of the social fabric in its grip when he hisses, "Los clientes son míos, el caso es mío, la policlínica es mía, el país es mío" ("The clients are mine, the case is mine, the clinic is mine, the country is mine"). Indeed, we see that corruption has woven a seamless connection between hospital, police, and law, rendering perfectly powerless what is portrayed as an unwitting and helpless working class. The lawyer and paramedic wage an epic battle to exercise their free will and to fight for their moral integrity within this system that derives profit at any cost and from the most extreme victimization. The film's breathless climax resolves into a miraculous getaway on the strength

of the couple's newfound love and commitment to do good. Just as the plot seems to settle into this triumph and the victorious couple drives on through a green light, a truck—barreling through a red light—slams into their car. The screen goes black and emergency-medicine technicians speaking in voiceover give us to understand that the lawyer has been killed and the paramedic critically wounded. There is no utopia in *Carancho*. The final car crash works like a deus ex machina that crushes the protagonists' bodies, and, just as importantly, quashes their stories. Their story of love, their quest for redemption, their fight for freedom and a modicum of social justice, their very narratives of unique selfhood in the world—none of this matters because it all succumbs to the immanent force of violence that envelops, defines, and determines their subjectivity and their fate. There are no persons, in the sense of personhood, of which to speak in the context of this kind of unremitting, generalized violence that is posited as the state of neoliberal cultural affairs; there are only numbers of victims.

Both films figure car culture metaphorically as a kind of circulatory system of the social. *Blindness* imputes a vertical dimension of power dynamics to the ostensibly horizontal car culture, viewing materialist, capital-accumulating, and race/gender/class-based hierarchies as primary in the constitution of neoliberal cultural logic. But *Blindness* also holds out the optimism that this culture can be abandoned like so many shells of cars left to rust on the congested highways, in favor of a logic of truly horizontal community togetherness enacted through a holding of hands and walking in a group as one with mutual trust, cooperation, and sharing. *Carancho*, on the other hand, suggests that any bid for dissent, autonomy, and withdrawal from the system will meet with failure. This failure will not stem from an inadequacy of the will or the imagination; it is possible to outsmart neoliberal logic—which, after all, turns monotonously on the vulture-like maximization of profit—but it is not possible to outrun it. There is no outside to the neoliberal circulatory system in *Carancho*, where the flow is congested and fatal. Cars in continually and spasmodically violent circulation frame and subsume the story of the lawyer and the paramedic like an autonomic system that has gone haywire and evinces a chronic state of fatal precarity. Whereas in *Blindness* social death is sudden and swift, bringing with it the possibility of social rebirth into a utopian common, in *Carancho* social death is continuous and progressive, like a body whose own vital fluids have become toxic and disease-addled. Perhaps most disturbing about this film is the suggestion that the sick social collective precludes any and all autonomy; self-determination as an act of narration and of liberation is thwarted not by some rival philosophy or ideology but by the senseless violence of a body that is putrefact, in the throes of slow internal death. Whereas *Blindness* stages a return to health as the utopian opening of a common, *Carancho* morbidly suggests that neither health nor common is possible in a neoliberal order that maintains a perfect biopolitical vise grip on its integrants.

Despite the diametrically opposed outcomes with which the imagination of power, dissent, and self-determination culminates in these two films, I would like to underscore the extent to which the component parts of these very different political imaginaries are nevertheless common to a shared epistemological framework. In both films, urban life is a visually horizontal mass, a collective body whose comparative dynamism is indicative of its level of health and functionality. That the circulation within this body should creep along or crash in lethal spurts should be understood as a serious critique: unfettered flow is implicitly privileged as the underlying measure, its obstruction signaling poor social health. *Blindness* suggests that the reason for this social malaise, in which cultural dis-ease manifests as pandemic disease—figuring a literally sick body politic—is that the urban way of life cannot shake either verticality of power and privilege or the greed-driven and static accumulation of material goods that creates and sustains that verticality. *Carancho* coincides with this diagnosis, and goes further to suggest a causal connection between exploitative profit and ill-being to the point of death. The health and very life of the body, whether of the broader population or extrapolated to the individual, are the baseline epistemological terms of critique. In the final turn to social and physiological health in *Blindness*, we see this model expressed positively as a utopian realization of the ideals of flow, though it is represented as a post-apocalyptic outside to the neoliberal culture to which it is epistemologically proper. *Carancho* seems to say that there is no cure for neoliberal illness because there is no outside of neoliberalism wherein to seek salutary refuge; there is only the putrefaction of the inside. The films' aesthetics mirror these inner states: *Blindness* represents social disease as a cold whiteness that gives way to a rich warm palette of earthy reds and oranges symbolizing the healthy vitality of the perfectly horizontal group that has managed to inaugurate a de facto political common; *Carancho* communicates its comparative cynicism about such a possibility with unrelenting yellow and green hues that make the city's interior seem like diseased innards. In both cases, contemporary social life is foundationally imagined as a sentient horizontal body in flow, with a healthy, happy flow being the explicit or implicit ideal, respectively, and its circulatory interruption, accompanied by unhappiness and disease, constituting social critique.

From Kant to the Arab Spring: A Politics of Affect, and Its Critical Apprehension

I opened with an anecdote about the taking of sides around Slavoj Žižek's decontextualized claim of an affective equivalence between falling in love and engaging in politics. As proposed, I would like to sidestep the ontological dimension of this debate in favor of the epistemological, which I suggest we may do by returning to Žižek's pages. If we resituate his claim in context, we appreciate an uncanny echo of this essay's central proposition that affective epistemicity is born in the Age of Revolution and fully realized in the current post-Soviet era of globalization.

In the sentences immediately following Žižek's positing of this analogous relationship between love and politics, he goes on to name the historical and textual precedent that both inspires and evidences such a consideration: the French Revolution as analyzed by Immanuel Kant. Indeed, immediately after suggesting the affective homology between love and politics, Žižek cites Kant's characterization of the French Revolution as an instance in which politics stirred high emotion in the form of an "enthusiasm" capable of inspiring imitation. Žižek goes on to say that Kant's assessment of the French Revolution also "fit[s] perfectly" the popular Egyptian revolution of 2011 in which colossal public protest ousted the president: "for that instant of enthusiasm," says Žižek of the Egyptian uprising, "each of us was free and participating in the universal freedom of humanity." [39] Žižek cites the protestors' chants as demonstrative of this latter sentiment—"We are One!"; "We are brothers! Join us!"—and argues that what they are seeking is "social and economic justice" as well as "market freedom" (2012: 34). [40] In Žižek's analysis, we see the reemergence of the affectively constituted headless soma, the democratic-capitalist episteme of old, again in its revolutionary aspect. [41]

The 2012 documentary film by the Canadian director Velcrow Ripper entitled *Occupy Love* echoes Žižek—and Kant before him—in theorizing the Arab Spring and Occupy movements in global terms as arising on the strength of love as the new revolution. [42] But enthusiasm and love are not the only emotions associated with these most recent "revolutions"; rage and indignation are their inverse mirror image. Stéphane Hessel is credited with seminally inspiring these movements with his 2010 *Indignez-vous!*, directly linked to the name of the "indignados" movement in Spain that called for "¡democracia real, ya!" ("Democracy, Now!"). [43] In the accounts of the origins of Mexico's 2012 "Yo Soy 132" ("I Am 132") student-propelled national protest movement—the "Mexican Spring" perhaps best known by its Twitter hashtag #yosoy132—there is a key moment during a visit made by then presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto, staunch proponent of neoliberalism and unrepentant wielder of repressive police force, to the Ibero-American University where a college student, in defiance of the mandate to cease and desist from protest, held up a handmade sign that read, simply, "TE ODIO" ("I hate you"). [44] This social media panorama resolves into an emotional spectrum in which negative feelings represent oppositional critique and positive feelings supportive affirmation. It is interesting to observe the extent to which Latin America's revolutionary icon, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, has been slowly remade through selective citation into a synthesis of these two emotional poles of love and indignation. [45]

Žižek's emotional homology between love and politics as bookended by Kant's admiration of the French Revolution and Mubarak's resignation after popular revolution draws for us a through-line from the eighteenth-century Age of Revolution to the Occupy movements of the twenty-first. Underwriting this arc, the sentient headless soma—leaderless and guided by

feeling—figures as political protagonist on a grand scale in movements that seek democracy and free markets as obverse sides of the same politico-economic structure. Seen in this epistemological light, our notions of first-person plural "oneness," universal freedom, and well-being take on a discursive value beyond their immediate literal meanings: they epistemically underwrite the multi-century project of democratic capitalism itself. And so regardless of who wields it, affirmative discourse will privilege conditions favorable to the integrity of the headless soma: happiness, vitality, good circulation of capital, positive moral disposition—in short, health and love. Critical discourse will underscore conditions detrimental to the integrity of the headless soma: unhappiness, torpidity, poor or asymmetrical circulation of capital, negative moral disposition—in a word, disease and hate.

Social media—technological networks of communication—are as inextricable from the contemporary avatar of affective epistemicity as were pamphlets and coffee houses of the Age of Revolution. Some months after the Egyptian revolution, a cover of the *Economist* acknowledged their continuity with a cartoon of wigged and culotted American revolutionaries with bubble captions that fused the revolutionary discourse and media of the two time periods: "Wilt thou be my Visagebook friend?"; "How goeth ye American Spring?"; "I hear Tom Paine's all a-twitter"; and a news scroll entitled "Wikye-Leakes Latest."[46] Indeed, the role of social media and emotion in shaping political action has garnered considerable corporate, governmental, and academic attention. To wit, in 2014, Cornell researchers published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* the findings of a highly controversial "emotional contagion" experiment that consisted of covertly manipulating the news feeds of almost seven hundred Facebook users, a study initially announced as having been funded in part by the US Army, though this connection was quickly retracted.[47] Speculation continued about the relationship between Facebook and the Pentagon, particularly given that the principal investigator of the Facebook study had been funded in 2009 for research on "Modeling Discourse and Social Dynamics in Authoritarian Regimes" by the U.S. Department of Defense's Minerva Initiative, launched in 2008 to fund academic inquiry into "areas of strategic importance to U.S. national security policy."[48] Even closer to the question of emotion-driven social media communicativity is the 2014 Minerva Initiative award for another Cornell study, "Tracking Critical-Mass Outbreaks in Social Contagions" (2014, expected), which proposes to evaluate the "critical mass (tipping point) model on … datasets of digital traces of social contagions, which include Twitter posts and conversations around the 2011 Egyptian revolution" ("University-Led Research"). If we lay Facebook's emotional contagion experiment and the Minerva Initiative's social contagion research alongside Žižek's citation of Kant's commentary on the contagion of revolutionary enthusiasm from over two centuries past, we appreciate a shared language of the communicability of emotion and its privileging as central to the workings of popular politics.

As academics, what will we do with this knowledge? Will we be ontological arbiters of affect without profoundly questioning the epistemological underpinnings of our sense of universal authority on the matter? Will we be activists for affect, privileging non-rationality over the now politically suspect Cartesian rationality of old without interrogating the epistemological impetus for our respective valorizations?[49]

Coming full circle to the beginning of this essay, I reiterate my concern that we develop the critical language and conceptual framework necessary for the analysis of affect on the epistemological plane. There is certainly an important place for what we might call experiential heuristics—the empiricist teasing out of emotional ontologies on the basis of experience to define what it means to be a sentient living being. There is an equally important place for the definition of a politics of feeling, as distinct from a politics of reasoning. What I suggest in the present intervention is that to engage with affect on either of these planes without considering the epistemological basis for our current cultural interest in and privileging of affective logic and inquiry is tantamount to missing the forest of knowledge construction for the trees of knowledge subsets. Corporations and government are fast researching the workings of affect and developing technologies for their manipulation on a massive scale. In order to comprehend and contest these affective biopolitics, it is of the essence to understand the ways in which they are not only empirical, but also discursive.

Affective epistemicity—the idea of a self-regulating, homeostatic, non-rational flow of well-being in both moral and material terms throughout the headlessly horizontal body politic—is the conceptual framework informing how we view the human experience itself. I argue that the importance we accord to happiness, health, and wealth—in the kaleidoscope of ways that we define these terms, particularly the latter contentious one—as well as the definition of freedom as the universal right to enjoy them all, on the one hand, and, on the other, our denunciation of their lack and deprivation as tragic and even criminal, are discursive movements that take place under the epistemological aegis established by democratic capitalism. Investigating the origins and force of affect as an epistemological cultural structure will help us to comprehend and navigate the premium on affective well-being in contemporary politics. Powers that be assert themselves as purveyors of well-being; critics, in the spirit of Marx and Engels, decry an inverse relationship between ideology and material reality, accusing a reality of ill-being under the false promise of health, happiness, and wealth—"cruel optimism," in Lauren Berlant's turn of phrase, as we saw illustrated in the film *Carancho*.[50] Yet even the elaboration of an alternative scheme for the optimization of the homeostatic principle, such as the utopian common that takes shape at the close of the film *Blindness* as a therapeutic evolution in social structure, privileges this same epistemological model of moral and material headless flow, and stages its realization as a return to truth.

To what extent can we reshape democratic capitalism if we are continually staging its epistemological return? Even my own interpellative use of the first-person plural "we" traffics in the same epistemological currency. Be that as it may, I nevertheless maintain the hope that the critical interrogation of the contours we seek to give affect in research and the truth values we assign to affect in our discourse may yet yield an understanding of affective epistemology that proves liberating.

NOTES

1. Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), 33.

2. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994), xxiv.

3. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke UP, 2007).

4. Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2003); *Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999); and *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995). Behavioral psychologist Jocelyne Bachevalier offers a statistical discussion of the rate at which U.S. federal funding in the sciences has supported projects related to affect. In broad terms, there is a dramatic rise that begins in the early 1990s and becomes the rule rather than the exception in the 2010s, when the majority of projects funded have to do with affect. Jocelyne Bachevalier and Dierdra Reber, "Cultural and Neuroscientific Perspectives on Emotion": https://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/center-for-mind-brain-culture/id503937750.

5. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992; New York: Routledge, 2007).

6. Ángel Rama, *The Lettered City*, trans. John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), translation of *La ciudad letrada* (Hanover, NH: Ediciones del Norte, 1984).

7. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1963), translation of *Les Damnés de la terre* (Paris: François Maspero, 1961).

8. See, for example, Slavoj Žižek's *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999) for an analysis of the late twentieth-century tendency to critique the Cartesian subject.

9. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651).

10. Edward R. Kittrell, "Laissez Faire in English Classical Economics," in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27.4 (1966), 610.

11. "Lettre à l'Auteur du Journal Œconomique, au sujet de la dissertation sur le commerce de M. le Marquis Belloni," in *Journal Œconomique ou Mémoires, Notes et Avis sur les Arts, l'Agriculture, le Commerce, & tout ce qui peut y avoir rapport, ainsi qu'à la conservation & à l'augmentation des Biens des Familles, &c.*: http://books.google.com/books?id=k4ABAAAAYAAJ&vq=morbleu&dq=editions%3ANYPL33433007441680&lr&pg=RA3-PA111#v=onepage&q

12. Adam Smith references the "invisible hand" in both the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759; ed. Ryan Patrick Hanley, [New York: Penguin, 2010]) and the *Wealth of Nations* (1776): http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html.

13. Eustace's book title, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), quotes English poet Alexander Pope's 1734 "Essay on Man."

14. Feijoo Benito Jerónimo, "Causas del atraso que se padece en España en orden a las ciencias naturales," in *Antología de autores españoles antiguos y modernos*, vol. II, ed. Fernando Ibarra and Alberto Machado da Rosa (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 8-14.

15. Tomás de Iriarte, "El gato, el lagarto y el grillo," in *Fábulas literarias*, ed. Jaime Fitzmaurice-Kelly (London: Oxford UP, 1917), 41-42.

16. Alexander von Humboldt, "A Willdenow," in *Cartas americanas*, ed. Charles Minguet (Caracas: Ayacucho, 1980), 73-78.

17. See in particular Pratt's Chapter 2, "Science, planetary consciousness, interiors" (15-36).

18. Simón Bolívar, "Contestación de un americano meidional a un caballero de esta isla" ("Carta de Jamaica"), in *Obras completas*, vol. I (Madrid: Maveco, 1984), 159-74.

19. Andrés, Bello, "Silva a la agricultura de la zona tórrida," in *GeoTrópico* 1.1 (June 2003): http://www.geotropico.org/1_1_Documentos_Torrida.html.

20. Santiago Colás, "Of Creole Symptoms, Cuban Fantasies, and Other Latin American Postcolonial Ideologies," *PMLA* 110.3 (1995): 382-96.

21. Esteban Echeverría, "El matadero," in *Proyecto Biblioteca Digital Argentina*: http://www.biblioteca.clarin.com/pbda/cuentos/matadero/matadero.htm.

22. Mariano José de Larra, "El castellano viejo," in *Artículos varios*, ed. Evaristo Correa Calderón (Madrid: Castalia, 1986) 311-23.

23. "I dress and hurry off to forget such an ill-fated day among the small number of people who think, who live subject to the beneficial yoke of a good education, free and unrestrained, and who perhaps feign a mutual respect and high regard in order to avoid causing each other discomfort, at the same time that the others make a fanfare of causing each other discomfort, and they offend and mistreat each other, perhaps truly loving and esteeming one another highly." ["Vístome y vuelo a olvidar tan funesto día entre el corto número de gentes que piensan, que viven sujetas al provechoso yugo de una buena educación libre y desembarazada, y que fingen acaso estimarse y respetarse mutuamente para no incomodarse, al paso que las otras hacen ostentación de incomodarse, y se ofenden y se maltratan, queriéndose y estimándose tal vez verdaderamente"] (323).

24. Clarín (Leopoldo Alas), "¡Adiós, Cordera!" in *Páginas escogidas*, ed. Azorín (José Augusto Trinidad Martínez Ruiz) (Madrid: Calleja, 1917), 306-07.

25. Miguel de Unamuno, *En torno al casticismo*, ed. Francisco Fernández (Turienzo. Madrid: Alcalá, 1971), 221-44.

26. José Martí, "Nuestra América," in *Ensayos y crónicas*, ed. José Olivio Jiménez (Madrid: Anaya and Mario Muchnik, 1995), 121.

27. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo*, ed. Roberto Yahni (Madrid: Cátedra, 2006).

28. Federico García Lorca, "New York: oficina y denuncia," in *Antología comentada*, vol. I (Poesía), ed. Eutimio Martín (Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1988), 241.

29. Pablo Neruda, "Walking Around," in *Residencia en la tierra*, ed. Hernán Loyola (Madrid: Cátedra, 1987), 221.

30. Juan Rulfo, "Nos han dado la tierra," in *El llano en llamas* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1953), 16.

31. Ibid., 14, 16.

32. Gabriel García Márquez, "Un día de éstos," in *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande* (Mexico City: Sudamericana, 2001), 9-10.

33. *El espíritu de la colmena*, DVD, directed by Víctor Érice (Irvington, NY: Criterion Collection, 1973).

34. *El laberinto del fauno*, DVD, directed by Guillermo del Toro (Burbank, CA : New Line Home Entertainment, 2007).

35. *La Ciénaga*, DVD, directed by Lucrecia Martel (Chicago: Home Vision Entertainment, 2001); *Diarios de motocicleta*, directed by Walter Salles (Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 2004).

36. John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," in *The Economic History Review*, New Series 6.1 (1953): 1-15. Gallagher and Robinson's argument that Latin America becomes a neocolony of Britain in the very juncture of its independence is also echoed in contemporaneous Latin American economic dependency theory and revolutionary discourse.

37. See especially Colás's final section of his essay, "Latin Americanism and the Negation of Intellectuals" (392-93), in which he suggests that Latin American intellectualism born of the colonial condition should be resisted as a symptom of that condition, with the only thinly veiled implication that Latin American intellectualism has not been able to embrace postcoloniality because it is still symptomatically linked to colonial structures of thought and action.

38. *Blindness*, DVD, directed by Fernando Meirelles (Burbank, CA: Miramax Films, 2008); *Carancho*, DVD, directed by Pablo Trapero (Buenos Aires: Matanza Cine SRL, 2011).

39. Žižek, *Less than Nothing*, 33.

40. Ibid., 34-35.

41. The so-called "99%" coined by the Occupy Wall Street movement to describe the heterogeneous masses that are brethren in their comparative economic disempowerment vis-à-vis the 1% super-rich elite maps onto Hardt and Negri's notion of the "multitude" as the global body subject to diffuse empire. These concepts certainly resonate with the notion of the feeling headless soma. I emphasize here the epistemological bent of affect, but they are otherwise conceptually homologous with the figure I propose.

42. *Occupy Love*, directed by Velcro Ripper (Fierce Love Films, 2012).

43. Stéphane Hessel, *Indignez-vous!* (Montellier: Indigène, 2010). ¡Democracia real, ya! ("Democracy, Now!") has become a group rubric for the Spanish Occupy movement known as "15-M" for the 15th of May, 2011, when it began in Madrid's Plaza de la Puerta del Sol. The slogan is itself a URL for the "nosotros" ("we") of the movement: http://www.democraciarealya.es/.

44. See the short film documentary "131 más uno: el origen del movimiento" ("#yosoy132: The Origins of the Mexican Student Movement," *Vice News*: http://www.vice.com/vice-news/yo-soy-132), especially 2:09-2:30 for discussion and footage of the student whose two handwritten signs, "TE ODIO" ("I hate you") and "NI UN APLAUSO PARA ESTE

ASESINO" ("No applause for this murderer"), sparked the booing of Mexican presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto's speech at Ibero-American University, and the subsequent movement born of 131 students displaying their Ibero-American student identification cards to dispel accusations that they were outside agitators rather than legitimately enrolled students. Hence the movement proclaiming solidarity as the next student to join their ranks—"Yo soy 132" ("I am 132").

45. I have elsewhere analyzed in greater depth the somewhat revisionist attribution of love to Che Guevara's revolutionary philosophy in connection with his frequently cited affirmation that "el revolucionario verdadero está guiado por grandes sentimientos de amor" ("the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love") ("El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba" [1965], Marxists Internet Archive: https://www.marxists.org/espanol/guevara/65-socyh.htm). In this discursive refashioning of el Che in contemporary media, a reference to indignation has become equally prevalent: "[S]i Ud. es capaz de temblar con indignación cada vez que se comete una injusticia en el mundo, somos compañeros" ("If you are capable of trembling with indignation each time an injustice is committed in the world, we are comrades") ("A María Rosario Guevara" [1964], URUMELB: http://urumelb.tripod.com/che/literatura/cartasrosarioguevara.htm).

46. *The March of Protest*, *Economist*, June 29, 2013: http://bookofjoe.typepad.com/.a/6a00d8341c5dea53ef015433a36663970c-pi.

47. H. Roger Segelken and Stacey Shackford, "News Feed: 'Emotional Contagion' Sweeps Facebook," *Cornell Chronicle*, June 10, 2014: http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2014/06/news-feed-emotional-contagion-sweeps-facebook; Adam D.I. Kramer, Jamie E. Guillory, and Jeffrey T. Hancock, "Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion through Social Networks," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*: http://www.pnas.org/content/111/24/8788.full.

48. The Minerva Initiative, U.S. Department of Defense, "Program History and Overview": http://minerva.dtic.mil/overview.html; "University-Led Research": http://minerva.dtic.mil/funded.html.

49. See, for example, Kathleen Stewart's *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) and the introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader* (Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. [Durham: Duke University Press, 2010]) for treatments of affect that turn on its affinity with poststructuralist ideals of non-fixity, open-endedness, fluidity, etc., that align with a leftist posture contestatory of the cultural status quo. In a similar vein, an intervention like Ruth Leys's "The Turn to Affect: A Critique" (*Critical Inquiry* 37 [Spring 2011]: 434–72) takes on what we might call an epistemological activism on behalf of affect, seeking to extend the category of cognition to encompass affect as much as reason.

50. I am thinking of the *German Ideology* (1846) where Marx and Engels define an inverse relationship operative in the structure of capitalist power between ideological superstructure and material base in which the reality of a lack of equitable distribution of resources and power is overwritten—and maintained (cruelly, as Lauren Berlant [*Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)] argues)—by a false ideology of perfect freedoms and equality.

Dierdra Reber is Assistant Professor of Spanish at Emory University. She is the author of essays on Latin American film and fiction, post-dictatorial and post-revolutionary memory, and the epistemology of globalization. Her current book manuscript, *Coming to Our Senses: Affect and an Order of Things for Global Culture* (forthcoming, Columbia University Press), engages studies in Hispanism, film and media, affect, capitalism, and sustainability.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

FEATURES

CINEMATIC IRONY: THE STRANGE CASE OF NICHOLAS RAY'S JOHNNY GUITAR

ROBERT PIPPIN

Westerns and "Westerns"

There is little question that Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954) is immediately recognizable as an instance of a genre that had become quite important to Hollywood well into the 1950s. It is a Western. It is set in the West in the post-Civil War nineteenth century (probably in New Mexico; Albuquerque is mentioned a couple of times), people ride horses, drink whiskey in saloons, dress in the usual Western clothes and wear six shooters. There are recognizable character types: the saloon woman (i.e., prostitute and/or madame), the gunslinger, the young gun eager to prove himself, an incorrigible, thoroughly evil villain (in a black hat, no less), a vengeful posse (also all in black, as if some horde of ancient furies [1]), and a horrific lynching. The gunslinger is also a recognizable subtype; one who no longer wears his guns and appears to be trying to quit, in the manner of Gregory Peck in Henry King's *The Gunfighter* (1950), and Gary Cooper in Anthony Mann's *Man of the West* (1958). [2] There are the crimes we associate with Westerns: the stagecoach hold up, the bank robbery. There is the familiar, final, decisive shootout between two principals. And there is the invocation of elements of the mythic narrative form common in many Westerns. [3] That is, "the railroad is coming," and everyone in the frontier community realizes that this will change everything, creating a situation both of anxiety and opportunity. Usually this event presages a fundamental transition from a situation with weak or no rule of law to a full integration into modern commercial and law-abiding society (with its families, schools, churches, small farmers and shopkeepers), and it is resisted by large landowners and cattlemen, who exist as feudal barons and are unwilling to surrender authority. (The paradigm here could be King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1958). There are similar elements in John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* [1962].) This is often the epochal transition that gives the Western at once its mythic universality and its specific inflection in

an American experience of the frontier and of its disappearance. In this film, the theme is pictorially invoked, or, to introduce the main theme in the following, rather more "cited" imagistically as a theme than straightforwardly assumed. The presence of the images seems too self-conscious to be "natural." For instance, over the back of the bar there is a large replica of a railroad engine.

The future, it would seem. Over the entryway to the kitchen (the frame of the opening doorway does not reach the ceiling) there is a replica of a stagecoach.

The present and past, perhaps, but again rather self-consciously displayed, as if primarily decorative. The reference seems to address audience expectations about classic Westerns, foregrounded as such, rather than to permit a Western narrative framework to shape audience expectations.

Moreover, if we start with this last element and work through these familiar elements, virtually every aspect of this traditional framework is present, but "off" in some way, so much so that the excess emotion, elaborate, self-conscious emphasis on costumes, posed and theatrical sets and staging, have seemed to some to cross the line over into camp, or at least near self-parody. At the very least one can say that these major "Westerns" conventions seem, as just noted, more "quoted" or "mentioned" than simply invoked or used, and therein lie issues deeper than genre conventions alone. For example, the railroad is coming, but the work of constructing it is not presented in the usual way, as an opening from the civilized East, but rather as a closing of the West. When the robber gang at the end try to escape (the leader says they are headed for California; that is, they are headed west), they find that construction has temporarily closed the pass in that direction. That construction is presented as a series of spectacular explosions that seal off the direction that at one point in American history seemed

ever available–west.[4] Moreover, in this film what the railroad is bringing is not so much "the East" in the sense of culture, domesticity, boundaries, the rule of law and so forth, but rather, in the starkest terms, a new social reality built on money, the world of speculation, investment and so the kind of social mobility eagerly embraced by Vienna, the ex-prostitute played by Joan Crawford (how "ex" is not all that clear), a new world where a clever ex-prostitute might quickly become the richest person in town, and a corresponding anxiety among the forces of traditional rectitude so oddly led in this movie by a woman so hysterical, hateful, and bloodthirsty that she seems more like some psychological force of nature than human, Emma Small (Mercedes McCambridge).

The central social conflict in the film is one between the townspeople, led by Emma and to some extent by a cattleman, John McIvers (Ward Bond), and the saloon owner, Vienna, who, more than anyone in the town, is pro-railroad. Toward the very end of the film, Emma does (finally) invoke the archetypal fear of the coming of the railroad ("they'll push us out," bring "farmers, dirt farmers, squatters," "barbed wire and fence posts") but by this point it is obvious that this is somewhat pro forma, again, strangely, as if quoted, not meant; "what characters say at some point in a Western like this." This impression is heightened because the logic of her claim is absurd on the face of it; as if killing Vienna and destroying her saloon will have any effect at all on the massive railroad enterprise inexorably making its way toward the area. And this doesn't seem any part of her real motivation, which is much more complicated and much darker. For we have seen for nearly two hours that the townspeople have allowed themselves to be led by Emma against Vienna because of Emma's personal and intense hatred of Vienna (much more on that to come) and because of what appears to be, on the part of everyone else, resentment and envy that Vienna has acted cleverly, far more cleverly than they have, by buying real estate and building her emporium right smack in the path of the coming railroad. This explains the otherwise bizarre totally isolated location of the saloon. She stands to get very rich either if she sells or continues to build in the area that will soon be a depot. (She has, like a modern urban planner, an elaborate mockup of the whole town she envisions coming soon to her doorstep. Our sense of her strength, authority and above all, commercial competence is never challenged in the film.)

So Vienna is only a "saloon owner" strategically; in essence, she is an investor and speculator, and clearly a very good one. (One could say that she gives the old cliché, "a prostitute with *a heart of gold*," a whole new meaning.) Soon after we first see her, we find her having dinner with a railroad executive. She is trying to persuade him to invest with her in more local real estate before the railroad arrives and prices escalate. Despite the fact that there is indeed a very great deal of money to be made (when Vienna asks him how much her property will be worth, he responds, "How much is Albuquerq' worth?"), he has already sensed that there are many in

the town who violently object to Vienna, and he clearly does not have the courage for such a fight (courage that Vienna has), and he declines. But what is obvious in the scene is that he genuinely respects Vienna–as a business equal, or even superior–for her acumen and strength. Given the usual treatment of the "saloon woman" the scene is also remarkable for how de-sexualized and professional it all is.[5] No flirting, no cajoling, and this even though Vienna has no qualms about, is not embarrassed about, admitting without qualification that she got her information about the railroad's route from sleeping with the surveyor who planned the route.[6] ("We exchanged confidences," she says; what we would call "insider trading.")

The "townsfolk," or the anonymous mass that follows Emma and McIvers around (it includes a well-meaning but, typically for "pre-railroad Westerns," weak and ineffective marshal)[7] also seem responsive to Emma's nearly psychotic hatred of Vienna's "loose" virtue. It is obvious that Vienna is a former prostitute and has from many years of plying that trade built up the considerable stake required to buy the land and build the saloon. (Crawford was forty-seven when the movie was made in 1953 and there is no real pretense in the film that she is anything but that age.) This is infuriating enough to Emma and apparently the townsfolk. (Emma says to Vienna, "You're nothing but a railroad tramp; not fit to live among decent people.") But it appears to be especially infuriating that Vienna is not ashamed of her past, does not deny it, and thereby infuriates everyone exponentially; even, as we shall see, her former and perhaps future lover, Johnny Guitar (Sterling Hayden). The stark and ironic truth of her fundamental claim–that she is no different than they are, or even that she is much better at "what they are" *than they are*–is what seems so infuriating; what must be repressed, silenced. This is not to say that, finally, bourgeois respectability is not important to Vienna. It certainly is. "Vienna" is likely a pseudonym and already expresses her desire for old world status and standing.[8] As Victor Perkins has pointed out, this aspiration is embodied by the elaborate and somewhat out of place chandelier in the saloon, the one Emma intuitively realizes must be destroyed.[9] But Vienna clearly wants to buy that standing, on the assumption that money is always the real basis of social status. One could say that Vienna believes in, is the representation of, absolute exchange value (both as a prostitute and as an investor), and when she is posed against the representation of bourgeois moral rectitude (home, school, church, law) in the person of Emma, remarkably, our sympathies are with the honest, unapologetic speculator, not the hypocritical, resentment-fueled townsfolk. They are either self-deceived or hypocritical about their motives, and those real motives are ugly.

The successful saloon woman is not unheard of in Westerns but is not often associated with Vienna's frankness and her psychological strength, her command of herself.[10] But this variation, almost inversion, rather than straightforward invocation of the "railroad arrival" theme and all that it suggests, and the unusual complexity of the psychological motivation of

the characters, is only the beginning of what is "off," what is both Western mythology, and at the same time its citation and inversion. Most obviously, the main character, Vienna, is a woman, and even more unusually, her main opponent is also a woman, Emma. The climactic duel, the final decisive shootout, is *theirs*. This is hardly the traditional dénouement.[11] There were other actresses from the thirties and forties who could credibly play the lead in a Western (Barbara Stanwyck in Samuel Fuller's *Forty Guns* [1957], for example; or Stanwyck again in Anthony Mann's *The Furies* [1950], or perhaps Marlene Dietrich in Fritz Lang's *Rancho Notorious* [1952]), and there are earlier examples (Lillian Gish in Victor Sjöström's *The Wind* [1928]), and later (in some ways, Claudia Cardinale in Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* [1968]), but none with Crawford's total self-assertiveness and command,[12] and none in such a fundamental, to-the-death struggle with another woman.

Vienna is clearly the heroine of the movie.[13] She is wronged but never wrongs, treats her employees with dignity, and unusual equality (if they put in their money she will split evenly with them), and goes to what seems certain death with great bravery and even a kind of hauteur. (This is all so, even though, if we ask a typical "Westerns"-like question–what is all this heroism in the service of?–the clearest answer is simply: profit, her own interest, what she regards, correctly, obviously, as what is rightly hers.) Her former boyfriend, the Dancing Kid (Scott Brady) is often petty, lacks any of Vienna's gravitas and is childish (the way a child might reason: "if they are going to accuse us of a crime, let's at least commit the crime and get the money") and Johnny Guitar, we are told with authority twice by Vienna, remains "gun crazy." This is apparently a polite term for "seriously disturbed," given that when he hears Turkey (Ben Cooper), the young gun, demonstrating his shooting prowess, he rushes in wildly (as if stimulated by some Pavlovian response), firing rapidly and, according to Vienna, would have recklessly killed the boy had Vienna not stepped between them. Later, after she appears to believe he has changed, he offers to pick off a few of the posse, shoot them from ambush, to weaken their will to go on. Disappointed, she notes yet again, that he is "gun crazy."[14]

There are very few characters in Hollywood movies, and certainly nothing remotely similar in other Westerns, as over-the-top insane with sexual jealousy and repressed sexuality as McCambridge's Emma.[15] Ray is willing to go right up to the line of absurdity and parody in his treatment of her. She never simply speaks; she rather hysterically rasps virtually every line, cowing the men around her, none of whom really stands up to her. Much of what she actually charges is simply ludicrous. In the first "invasion" of the townsfolk into the saloon, after a stagecoach robbery in which Emma's brother is killed, when Emma is trying to make a case that it was the Dancing Kid and his gang who committed the crime, she argues that the Kid "was always eyein' me," and that he, the Kid, staged the robbery so that he could kill the protective brother, and so "now he thinks he can get me." She says all this in such a

crazy, deluded way that it is impossible to believe that anyone takes it seriously. It is widely and rightly assumed that the Kid has eyes only for Vienna. Indeed the Kid and Vienna clearly think it is funny that Emma has such a complicated fantasy about the Kid going on and that she doesn't seem to realize it.[16] (This is all, of course, before the implications of that fantasy, much of which must also involve a dose of self-hatred, becomes deadly.) The injustice of her attacks on Vienna–there is never a shred of evidence until, by bad luck, misleading evidence at the end–is always obvious, but never noted by anyone. McIver's announcement that he, as if an all-powerful tyrant, will simply pass a law that will forbid Vienna's place from opening, is not seriously challenged by anyone except Vienna.[17] And so until the very end and the final duel, Emma actually succeeds, comes within seconds of hanging Vienna.

Finally, moving closer to the surface strangeness of the movie, there are the names, the sets, and the music. The first time Johnny Guitar has to tell someone his name, he pauses a beat and almost smiles when he says (again rather quotes, or says in irony quotes) his new surname. (His real name is Johnny Logan, and he is a very famous and deadly gunfighter.)

When he is asked why he does not wear his guns, he again quotes a phrase as if "from a Western," as if in ironic quotes: "because I'm not the fastest gun west of the Pecos." (He quotes rather than speaks a line later, too; outside the bank being robbed: "Besides, I'm a stranger here myself.")[18] And a tough guy, macho leader named The Dancing Kid? The women are going to have a fight to the death and the two male counterparts are "of the arts"? There is a kind of sly knowingness between the men about their names, but Johnny really does play the guitar and, lo and behold, the Kid really does dance! In fact, to mock what every intelligent character seems to realize is Emma's true motivation–hatred of Vienna because the man she, in self-denial, lusts after, prefers Vienna–he demonstrates his dancing talent by dancing with Emma. And she lets him! She does not pull or wrestle herself away, but sweeps across the floor with the Kid for some time, clearly both bothered and thrilled. The two male names in other words are so flamboyantly non-macho that their use seems to ironically cite the Western tradition of nicknames (the Ringo Kid, Billy the Kid, Buffalo Bill, the Sundance Kid) only to mock them.

Most of the first thirty-five minutes of the movie take place in the main room of Vienna's saloon and gambling parlor. The setting is immediately eerie. It is empty and deathly quiet when Johnny enters, even though there are two croupiers and a barman at work, or at least ready to work. And we are never given any reason to believe there are ever any customers

other than the Kid and his gang. The employees are hardly welcoming and seem overtly hostile to the newcomer. It is as if Johnny has walked onto the stage of some absurdist drama. (The feeling that we are watching a filmed version of a stage play is hard to avoid when the scene is either of the two interiors, the saloon and the hideout. This again contributes to the feeling of a certain staginess, a self-consciousness about conventions, in the film's representational style. Movies can easily tolerate this "double vision," wherein we see at the same time the same object as both "Nicholas Ray's set" and "Vienna's saloon," but in this film, the former is more pronounced than usual.) The saloon has been built into an ochre rock formation and that rock has been left exposed at the rear of the saloon. This is likely some indication of Vienna's tenacity; her insistence that she is anchored to that spot and is not going anywhere.[19] And there is that elaborate chandelier and Vienna's piano, both of which will play an important role later. The set is also huge, much larger than conventional movie portrayals of a saloon. The effect of this is rather more opera than theater, especially since so many different sorts of elements of the mise-en-scène are also so "outsized" and flamboyant. This goes for the costumes too, which are in bold, even extravagant, bright colors. The costume changes for Vienna are the most elaborate and dramatically important. She goes from a conventionally mannish black-shirted pants outfit, complete with six-shooter (when defending herself from the townsfolk),

to a red, alluring evening outfit (the old Vienna perhaps, in her late-night and decisive conversation with Johnny),

to a kind of neutral grey and brown utilitarian outfit (during a period when a normal life with Johnny seemed fleetingly possible),

to that famous spectacular white dress, a final and self-consciously ironic (virginal) gesture. [20]

It is also her final insistence that not only was she a prostitute, but that there was nothing, nothing at all wrong in having been one. In moral terms, her conscience is clear; that is, absolutely clear, pure, white as the driven snow. All these codes seem so explicit that the film's romantic and ironic expressivism often dominates any traditional realism.

And as if all this weren't enough exaggeration, irony, self-reference, and deliberate theatricality, there is a striking moment in the opening scene in the saloon that is clearly intended to upset normal expectations and to encourage the "double vision" just mentioned. After witnessing the stagecoach robbery in which Emma's brother is killed (Johnny is too far away to identify anyone[21]), Johnny rides up to Vienna's (he has been sent for by her after an absence of five years) in a violent dust storm. It is an appropriate opening image for the emotional turmoil, confusion, and unclarity we will see between the two romantic leads. But it prompts Vienna to tell Sam, one of her employees, to light a lantern and hang it outside so that potential customers can see their way to the saloon. (Given the violence of the storm and the thickness of the dust, this is pretty useless, but it is a mark of Vienna's optimism, for all her hard-headedness and world-weariness.) Ray has Sam walk directly toward the camera and complain about working for a woman, all while looking directly *at* the camera; that is, at

the viewer, violating the first rule of movie acting and destroying any illusion of unobserved observers.[22] Ray then, in effect, "corrects" this by showing us that it was a point of view shot, that Sam was walking towards and speaking to Tom (John Carradine),[23] Vienna's trusted kitchen employee.

But the damage has been done, and at the very least the problem of the film's realism has been raised right at the outset. I would say that here again the effect is that the movie itself, as a "Western," has been attended to as such, cited, quoted, mentioned, thematized, not allowed to simply play out conventionally and unproblematically.

Victor Young's music often makes use of the "Johnny Guitar" theme, the song we only hear finally sung with lyrics by Peggy Lee over the closing scene. When that refrain is not playing the music is as "overdone" as much else in the movie, "cuing" our responses too obviously, always opting for lush when spare would have been just as, if not more, effective.[24] But the Johnny Guitar theme and the romantic and sometimes melancholic mood set by the music is a reminder that the conflict between Emma and Vienna is only one aspect of the movie's focus. The other is a love story, or a love that, as Vienna says, "burned up" and was left in

"ashes."[25] And that element of the plot, a melodrama inside a Western, functions itself like some resistance to the Western framework, forcing it into near parodic self-reference.

Near to parody, but it never crosses the line. Bazin is right when he notes that "not once does Ray adopt a condescending or paternalist attitude toward his film. He may have fun with it, but he is not making fun of it."[26] So what *is* he doing? Why make a Western that works *against* simply being a Western, that exposes a kind of conflict between content and form, that upsets the "balance" that Perkins has claimed is an ideal in a film, between "what is shown and the way of showing"?[27]

Genre-Bending

There is no question that our expectations and interpretive assumptions are mainly shaped by the film's surface conformity to the Western genre conventions. But not exclusively so. The wise-cracking, laconic Johnny Guitar character, unable to free himself from Vienna, and the gambling theme, invoke film noir conventions.[28] The sets and costumes and choral movements of the posse suggest the conventions of a movie musical.[29] But the excess, even hysterical emotional expressivism also suggests melodrama, a most unusual combination with presumably "masculinst" Westerns. There is no space here to sketch even a crude view about the genre conventions of film melodrama. I will just assume that it is safe to say that there are many types, and that besides, say, Cavell's "melodrama of the unknown woman,"[30] there is at least something like the "melodrama of the wronged, suffering, unjustly judged woman," known or unknown, and that what such a fate (the quality of being wronged) mostly prevents (in these films, at any rate) is the realization of the possibility of love, the very state often believed to count as some sort of redemption and overcoming of such fate, a second chance or a new beginning, the American hope. The emotional register of the suffering and the hope is intense in melodramas, "boosted" by music and gesture, sometimes said to be exaggerated, even as noted, bordering on camp.[31] Another way to say this is that often lovers in melodramas struggle against what appears to be the very bad hands they have been dealt by fate, a fate they can defeat if they can become and remain lovers, despite it all. In this typically melodramatic case: Can a woman once a prostitute ever be anything other than an "ex-prostitute"? Can a man who killed other men be anything more than "a killer" who now (or at least recently) no longer kills? Can each forgive the other for their pasts? Under what conditions? Only if a killer can truly become an ex-killer? A prostitute an ex-prostitute? Finally, melodramas, especially Ray's romantic (*In a Lonely Place*, *On Dangerous Ground*) or familial melodramas (*Bigger than Life*) portray characters so profoundly invested in their love, that no real relationship could ever "contain" it. There is "excess" emotional turmoil everywhere, destabilizing, undermining, enraging.

Their initial banter makes clear that this is no joyous reunion, even though Vienna has sent for him, and Johnny has come at her bidding. They both initially pretend, perhaps also to themselves, that it is a just a business relationship. But a deep hostility and so a deep emotional connection, is apparent immediately. They clearly each feel betrayed by the other,[32] but the fact that they are together again in itself also indicates *some* hope for a new start, even though neither is willing to admit that hope to the other. In a movie where almost every other line is dripping with irony, the first unmistakable indication of the tonality Ray wants to create between the two is a line of Vienna's. Johnny is to play something, and asks for requests. She tells him, with a clear trace of bitterness, that whatever he plays, "just put a lot of love in it." She obviously means: "you're so good at pretending to love, at 'performing' love, and then betraying, leaving." But of course she also means, as is often the case with irony, *exactly what she says*: please *do* put a lot of love in it, return to loving me. What the music helps her recall is ultimately too intense for her to maintain her ironic stance, and she asks him to stop. (Perhaps the ultimate ironic line in the film occurs after the villain Bart [Ernest Borgnine] kills Corey [Royal Dano], brutally stabbing him in the back, and then says simply and self-righteously, "Some people just don't listen.") In a later conversation, Johnny reveals that he had had some hope of a reunion, but he is so clumsy and maladroit in expressing himself that he succeeds only in infuriating Vienna. He says, "A man's gotta stop somewhere; this is as good a place as any." A "touching" proposal, Vienna responds; and, yet again the irony: "I'm overwhelmed."

But the heart of the (noirish) melodrama plot–ex-lovers who have been burned badly but cannot help wanting to re-ignite the flame, however dangerous–is revealed in an extraordinary late-night scene in the saloon. Johnny cannot sleep and has been drinking. Vienna clearly cannot sleep either and comes downstairs in her out-of-the-past scarlet evening dress (or negligée?) get-up. Things don't start off well. Johnny gets right to the point that he cannot get over, asking bluntly: "How many men have you forgotten?" The obvious absurdity of the question (it's like asking a crowd: how many people are not here? one can't remember a number if one has forgotten the men) is some indication that there is no resolution, no reassuring answer, for the problem Johnny has. Vienna *has* slept with a lot of men. And she responds, "As many women as you remembered." That is, you are no innocent and, perhaps she means, at least I have forgotten those men; they were not important. But then Johnny asks her to tell him something nice. "Lie to me" he requests and she does. He gives her lines to say and she robotically repeats them, in effect negating them, blocking their pragmatic force, by the way she says them. She says them but clearly does not mean what she says; she in effect expresses the opposite of what is said. Or at least performs this negation. At some level she probably does mean them.

> "All these years I've waited."
> "I would have died if you hadn't come back."
> "I still love you like you love me."

So a theatrical display in a film full of theater, posturing, and ironic reversals; taking back with one hand what is given with the other.[33] Here Vienna enacts some of the pathos of an ironic stance; she speaks only in quotations (Johnny's), cannot be "in" the lines herself. This seems another indication that there is nothing in their attempts at mutual explanation and exculpation that will be of any use in overcoming their impasse; certainly not mere words said now. Perhaps they will all sound like someone else's words, quotations. Johnny bolted when Vienna suggested settling down and remains "gun crazy"; she did not quietly wait for him to return, but used her talents to build a budding empire, making clear that she did not need him, could live without him. (There is no question of what she had to do to acquire the necessary capital. She tries to tell Johnny what "every board, every plank, every beam" in the place cost her in dignity and self-respect, but Johnny doesn't want to hear.) Neither of these facts can be changed or explained away.

But in an impulsive moment, they briefly indulge the fantasy that the past and the doubts it creates can simply be willed away, willfully forgotten. Johnny asks her to imagine it is her wedding day; she breaks down and admits she has been carrying a torch for him; they embrace and the strings swell, the Johnny Guitar theme washes over them and us.

Events unfold very quickly from this point on. They are inadvertently caught up in the Kid's bank robbery so that suspicion is cast on them and they have to escape the posse. This is when Johnny makes his proposal to pick off a few posse members and Vienna knows that he will always be "gun crazy." They separate; she tells him that it was a mistake to have sent for him; he should stop by and pick up his pay.

The posse arrives at Vienna's. Emma and McIvers trick Turkey into falsely implicating, betraying, Vienna. Emma shoots down the chandelier with a shotgun and Vienna's saloon burns in a spectacular fire.

They hang Turkey. [34] They are about to hang Vienna. Johnny has not abandoned Vienna, but has hidden and climbed to the top of the hanging tree and cuts Vienna loose just as Emma (who else?) whacks the horse carrying Vienna in the hanging noose. They escape through a mineshaft and make their way to the Kid's lair, where the posse also tracks them. There is

a final shootout between Vienna and Emma. Emma shoots the Kid between the eyes as he calls out Vienna's name and is then herself shot and killed by Vienna, who is wounded. She and Johnny walk through the waterfall that hides the lair and happily embrace. This is when we finally hear the lyrics for the Johnny Guitar theme, sung in a wistful, melancholic tone by Peggy Lee.

> Whether you go, whether you stay,
> I love you.
> What if you're cruel, you can be kind,
> I know.
> There was never a man like my Johnny,
> Like the one they call Johnny Guitar.

The contrast is striking. This uncertainty ("whether you go or whether you stay") and melancholy ("you can be cruel") stands in counterpoint to what looks like a Hollywood happy ending, the embrace. But of course, nothing has changed. Vienna's last assessment of their relationship, that Johnny was still gun crazy and that it was a mistake to have sent for him,

is no doubt still true. Vienna had said that she would not kill to protect what she has, and perhaps she has learned otherwise and so now accepts the need for a bit of gun craziness, but that is not discussed. Perhaps, with those lyrics, all one can conclude is that the status of their relationship remains highly uncertain.

Counterpoint

Let us say that there are two senses of "not meaning what one says," the traditional understanding of irony. There is a knowing form, and this is predominant in all the cracking wise in the film. Vienna's "I'm overwhelmed" in reaction to Johnny's "proposal" is typical, as are her mere recitations of the lines Johnny feeds her. There is also an unknowing form. We might say that someone ironically reveals (even, in some very complicated way, intends to reveal) the opposite of what they deliberately or consciously intend to reveal by what they say. [35]

Emma says that the Kid is always eyeing her, but that is not what she "really means." Unbeknownst to her, unconsciously or in self-deceit, she really means she is always eyeing *him*, lusts after him. (What she really means to say when she says to Vienna, "That's big talk for a little gun" is anyone's guess.) The townsfolk say that their motives in attacking Vienna are moral considerations, but what they really mean to do is, unknowingly but effectively, strike out against the new world of money, speculation and social mobility that she represents; or, they partly mean to protect themselves from their own desires, which Vienna excites; or, simply *they* want the property Vienna has cleverly secured, they are acting out of envy. As we have seen, sometimes a single statement can embody both forms, as when Vienna says, "Put a little love in it," knowingly not meaning that, meaning to say he has no love to give, and yet unknowingly meaning the request literally. (Admittedly, the "unknowing" side of this is extremely controversial in philosophy. There are many who will say that they cannot understand what the claim even means. In this limited context, I can only suggest that we would be restricting our interpretive capacity in an extreme way if we must believe either that Emma means exactly what she says, or that she knows perfectly well what she really means, but is simply a hypocrite.) In the melodrama plot this is all intensified by what is clearly a great reservoir of hate and resentment motivating what the two principals say, even as feelings of love and aspirations for reunion also motivate what they say and do, a kind of psychological complexity that is something of a trademark for Ray's films. This can all make even a single small phrase unusually complicated. When Johnny and Vienna are arguing and Johnny returns to his absurd "why didn't you wait for me?" theme and notes that between the time they separated and now, there must have been other men, Vienna coyly smiles, almost coquettishly, and says, "enough." What did she mean to communicate by saying that in that way? That she was proud of the fact? Inadvertently revealing that she enjoys having many lovers? Is

she boasting that there were enough (scores, hundreds) to pay for her saloon? Is she simply defiant in the face of his accusations? Unconcerned about his reaction? All of the above?

At any rate, this is often the situation–unknowingness, misunderstanding, missed signals, honest expression but in a state of self-deceit–that is typical of intense melodramas.[36] What I want to conclude by noting is that it is all not typical of conventional Westerns, and that this helps explain why the Western framework in such a situation cannot "mean what it says," why the expectations and meaning intended by narrating within such a frame cannot but point instead *to* those expectations and *to* that framework, rather than that the frame just *creates* the expectations or orders the plot.

There are of course Westerns with love stories at their center. *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* concerns a love triangle. There is also a triangle in *High Noon* and *Shane* and even in another very fine "quasi-Western," I suppose we have to say, also directed by Ray, *The Lusty Men* (1952). But the meaning of the love stories within the Westerns is intertwined with the mythic elements of the plot and are bereft of either sort of irony. When Hattie chooses the educated Ranse over the small rancher Tom in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, there is no emotionally charged or as we say "melodramatic" scene (in fact the choice happens offstage), and there is no suggestion of complicated mixed motives or self-deceit. She probably, much later, considered it a mistake, or at least has some regrets, but she knew she was also choosing a way of life–simple literacy for one thing–but also culture, travel, sophisticated politics, and our appreciation of what that sacrifice of Tom cost her could not be as keen as it is if the emotional undercurrents were as complicated as they are in *Johnny Guitar*.

It would be far too simple to say by contrast that in these epic Westerns people say what they mean and mean what they say, but it is true that there is usually not this melodramatic potential for misunderstanding, and the general drift of such a characterization would not be wrong. And in that context, the context of myth at both a universal and historical level, this is not a limitation. The elemental psychological issues raised–love of one's own, fear of death, pride, vengeance–are profoundly important and quite complicated. But it is another sort of complication that confronts the Western's characters, having mostly to do with the taming, education, direction of the political passions, and not with, let us say, first of all, interpretation, the problem of meaning. When the latter becomes central, the Western framework cannot contain them and the framework looks ironic.

This means that there is a large issue to discuss here, too large for this context. Put it this way: The Western at its best is a classical narrative framework, in league with the epic, and often with the tragic (*The Searchers*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, The Gunfighter*, *Shane*). In melodrama, neither the inevitable "objective" conflicts in what social roles require, nor

the subjective crises stemming from having to determine what to do (the sources of ancient and modern tragedy), propels the action. And it is *because* no great principles are at stake, are credible (given, perhaps, what we "now" believe about psychological motivation), that love and being loved assume the role of such principles of significance, a role they cannot bear, producing the hysteria and excess of melodrama.

This is partly why, when, in *Johnny Guitar,* someone voices what would be, in a typical Western, a typical motivation relevant to the epic context, we notice the framework, our attention is directed to the narrative pattern rather than carried along by the narration, because we have seen enough to know that it "can't be that simple." As noted, a paradigmatic instance of this is when Emma invoked finally the "cattlemen-farmer" archetypal conflict as a reason for her hostility to Vienna and all that she represents.

It is as if Ray had set down, perhaps as a kind of experiment, inside a classic Western setting, the much later historical world of Sirk, or even the world of Dix and Laurel from *In a Lonely Place* (1950), and then let us watch the grating, anomalous implications roll out.[37] (Ray does just about everything he can to say: this may be a Western movie but these are not Western characters. For example, Corey, one of the Kid's band, is several times shown reading a book; not a common occupation in Westerns.) Somebody in some Western might be able to say, "All a man needs is just a smoke and a cup of coffee," but among these ironists, the quotation marks are almost visible.[38] The seriousness and the sheer "adultness," one might say, of Vienna's defense of herself to Johnny (and her withering destruction, in her "if a woman just slips once" speech, of the male double-standard on which many Western "virtues" were built) and the sophistication of her analysis of where they are fit uneasily into the archetypal purposes of the classical Western, and so make that uneasiness visible and the Western frame more cited than used, seem like a narrative structure and set of problems no longer relevant to subjects of this level of self-consciousness. And even more strikingly the characters *seem to know this*; this seems to be the meaning of their air of wise-guy knowingness, at least on the part of Vienna, the Kid and Johnny, none of whom ever met a wisecrack they didn't like. One can quite plausibly imagine Vienna simply saying, "Oh for God's sake, Emma. Stop with all this public morals, collusion with the Kid in crime, hooray for bourgeois domesticity, the railroad will destroy our traditional way of life crap. You want to kill me because the Kid prefers me to you and you hate yourself for desiring him." (She actually does say something close to this.) Or, more imaginatively, one can picture the Kid saying to his colleagues, "Well, we look and talk like an outlaw band; you've all seen Westerns. We must *be* an outlaw band. Let's finally act like it."

A dominant "knowing irony" can suggest the kind of uncertainty, or reluctance to take any side in some important dispute, which is inconsistent with the high seriousness and mythic ambition of great Westerns. In the crisis situations portrayed in Westerns, indulge such an irony and you begin to sound like a Lee Marvin character, a cynic. The great problem in great Westerns is the possibility of and the nature of and especially the cost of civilized life itself. Such a film cannot do everything and so cannot portray as well the problems that arise at a much more intimate and self-consciousness level, a level not tied to the basic problem of safety from decline into the state of nature. Those problems include the "unknowing irony" that make stable romantic relations so highly individualized and thus ungeneralizable and the socio-political issues much harder to manage. The relationship between Johnny and Vienna doesn't *mean* anything of some mythic importance in the way the relation between Hattie and Ranse in *Liberty Valance* does, or between Marshal Kane and his wife, Amy, in *High Noon*, or between Shane and Marian in *Shane*, or between Dan Evans and Emmy in Delmer Daves's *3:10 to Yuma (1957)* or between Ben Stride and Annie in Budd Boetticher's *Seven Men from Now* (1956).

If this is so then it means that the melodramatic and romantic world of a Nicholas Ray film serves rather as a counterpoint to the assumptions and ends of a traditional Western, not an instance of them, even though it is formally presented that way. It is in this sense that a Western, as treated by Ray, cannot mean what it says, must become, as a mere form, visible and so mannered or perhaps "baroque," a form that cannot contain the melodrama "within" it.[39]

But if this is the right way to begin to understand the ironic dialogue, the studied self-consciousness of the Kid and Johnny and Vienna, the melodramatically exaggerated sets, costumes, and music, the occasional flirtation with self-parody, the inversions of character types, the intense hate-love nature of the central love story, and the appeal to psychological motivation like repressed sexuality,[40] then it all obviously returns us to the most important and difficult question posed in the first section above. Why would Nicholas Ray make a Western that cannot be what it is without a great deal of irony, given what he asks it to contain? Why bring that issue, the lack of fit between form and content, so much to the foreground?

Whatever answer there is to this question, it is present in the film only by implication, and drawing out such implications is difficult. We can though, notice what is not present, what is conspicuously absent, in *Johnny Guitar*. The great epic Westerns all have some ethical and often a straightforwardly political dimension. The central question usually concerns some dimension of the problem of justice, whether as a question about the relation between justice and vengeance, or the legitimacy of some act of violence, about the relation between violence

and the rule of law, or about the conquest and near-extermination of native peoples, or about the injustice of some form of historical memory, or about the psychological costs of the founding of a civil order in a context where it was absent. As we have been noting, by and large this sort of framework of meaning is absent or present only ironically in *Johnny Guitar*. I have said that the love affair between Johnny and Vienna doesn't mean anything epic or mythic, carries no larger significance. But one could also say that the central events in the other plot, the attacks on Vienna by Emma, McIvers and the townsfolk, do not draw our attention to any social or political issue larger than anxiety about social change. (The exception is to the clear reference to the McCarthy witch hunts and so to forced confessions, self-serving, erroneous accusations, and mob behavior. But even that already suggests a context of corrupt or failed politics; that is, a hypocritical, posed politics, behind which there is only self-aggrandizement, self-interest and venality. McCarthy's and Nixon's speeches were both phony, and unknowingly, ironically self-revealing. The framework of national security politics contained the reality of hysteria and power-lust.)

Moreover, there is nothing unusual in Westerns about the portrayal of "ordinary citizens" as easily cowed, acting like a mob. *High Noon* comes to mind immediately. But that crowd expressed its timidity by inaction; this one by becoming a lynch mob. What, though, is the great issue animating their intense hatred of Vienna? That she is in league with the Dancing Kid and his group? This just on the basis of the fact that they drink at her place on Fridays? That she is not respectable? For that matter, what is McIvers's motivation? Before he becomes part of the group accusing Vienna of complicity with the stagecoach robbery, he seems to have already formed some resolve to join with Emma and get rid of Vienna. (McIvers and Emma are said to be the two largest land owners in town and to have the most cattle.) The only possible explanation is the one Vienna gives: that he cannot stand for her to make such a profit and so eventually enjoy such influence in the post-railroad town.[41] But that is venal, petty; that is, private (which doesn't, of course, mean it isn't true), and when joined with Emma's bizarre sexual and violent fantasies, and the fact that there is no character in the film who defends any principle higher or more complicated than individual entitlement, one could venture the guess that the nearly explicit inappropriateness of the Western's frame appears motivated by a general skepticism about that political dimension of human life in general, a skepticism that is in this film most often expressed by irony. If this is so, one might venture far out onto a thin limb, and suggest that this skepticism touches on the problematic link between the political psychology required by capitalism and that required by liberal democracy. The latter requires some commitment to a common good; some allegiance to the community that is more than merely strategic. The questions about justice noted above as typical of classical Westerns are not in play if we restrict the basic question of the political bond to "You can get yours if I can get mine." Yet the "political" rhetoric of "the town,"

of Emma and McIver, is mere appearance; the motivational reality is darker or transparently self-serving. The former, a speculative market economy, requires competitive individualism, often a ruthless form that sets everyone off against the other and foments paranoia, justifiably so in Vienna's case. I don't mean that Ray's film means to raise this issue as a question, but rather that the "Western's" ironic status in the film is an indication that he thinks the issue *is settled*. Vienna's shrewdness is the future; the ostensibly countering political rhetoric is phony, an excuse for the prosecution of private interests. Thus Johnny's extraordinarily unusual (for a Western) cynicism and cold indifference to the conflicts around him. To him, Vienna is a mercenary who will do anything for status and money (though he still loves her, after his fashion); the townsfolk are hypocrites, and the Dancing Kid's gang are children, or the Western equivalent of unserious fraternity boys.

What we have instead is typical of Ray's much more psychologically than politically complex films; that is, we have a great investiture of importance in love and being loved as the central human problem,[42] or, we should probably say, we have what has become the central and most difficult human problem, since the Western is now noticeably of historical rather than thematic significance. This is so even though Ray was certainly aware, as few directors ever were or are, of the nearly certain impossibility of such redemption. And yet this does not mean that the film should be characterized as another of the more "psychological" Westerns, such as those by Anthony Mann or Budd Boetticher. It is fair to say that those Westerns explore more self-consciously the psychological costs of the frontier-town transition or the legal-extra-legal violence problem, than the "objective" problem itself. But the Western framework itself is secure, just given a different, more-psychological-than-epic inflection. A question like, "What really *is* the difference between a sheriff and a bounty hunter, if any?" might be explored by asking "What does it mean for this individual (the Jimmy Stewart character in Mann's Westerns) to face that challenge?" But it is still the classical question at issue. We are still within the generic language and concerns of the Western.

There is one more element that connects the love story melodrama with the "Western" plot. Put simply, both raise the question of the possibility of "new beginnings," sort of escape from, or reconciliation with, the past. As in many epic Westerns, the question is whether a "second founding" for the country, after the hatred and brutality of the Civil War, is possible; in this as in other films, whether the re-founding of a modern commercial republic is possible in the shadow of that hatred and brutality, in a context of virtual lawlessness. The Vienna-Johnny relationship poses at a personal and psychological level a similar sort of question about a new beginning, shadowed by the bitterness of their break-up. Vienna has "become" an entrepreneur and insists on being so treated, and for all of Johnny's persistent "gun craziness," he has, after all, changed his name, trying for a new identity, his guns are in his saddlebags,

and he carries a guitar instead. The surface image at the end–the purification by water, or the waters of forgetfulness–suggests that they have succeeded. But, one final time, we cannot escape the irony of the embrace. Vienna had thought once before that Johnny was over his "gun craziness" and had been disappointed, likely will be again, perhaps the same sort of disappointment the "gun crazy" country seems to experience regularly in trying to hold together its fragile union.

NOTES

I have benefited a great deal from several conversations with, and from generous written comments by, a number of people. The footnotes would be three times as long if I tried to note each influence. I can only express my gratitude to, above all, Victor Perkins, as well as many thanks to Michael Fried, Tom Gunning, Tom Mitchell, Daniel Morgan, Evgenia Mylonaki, and to the audience at a recent screening and discussion organized by Tom Gunning.

1. As with everything else, they seem so "ironically." They are actually easily intimidated by Emma, more sheep than *Eumenides*.

2. This will turn out to be an illusion. Johnny Guitar, we come to learn, is, always was and always will be, "gun crazy."

3. For more on the "founding myth" central to many great Westerns, see my *Hollywood Westerns and American Myth: The Importance of Howard Hawks and John Ford for Political Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

4. I assume that, as was the case with early trans-continental railroads, the builders built from both directions and that the Kid's desire to head for California is mentioned so that we would understand that the construction is headed for the town from the west.

5. It is true that the dining area where they are seated opens directly onto her bedroom, and her large bed is visible several times during the scene. Nevertheless Vienna never alludes to any "reward" for Andrews if he cooperates. Perhaps the bed is there to indicate that Vienna is in principle willing to go to any lengths necessary to realize her plan. (She does try to give him more wine, but who doesn't at a business meeting?) What we see is that it just would not have helped in this case.

6. Like everything else having to do with motivation, the railroad executive's response could be understood to be more layered. Vienna is asking him for help with the townspeople. She may not last long enough to deal with the railroad. Given that Vienna is a formidable business woman, it is not entirely clear that it would be in Andrew's interest to deal with her, rather than someone else in town. It might be better for him if she is "run off." It is my impression that there is some sort of knowing undercurrent in their conversation that acknowledges this; some sort of "I know what you are thinking, and know that you know that I know." But that is not the sort of claim that can be easily demonstrated.

7. Also typically, the weak marshal finally does rise to the occasion, stops allowing himself to be ordered around by the forces of money and power, and promptly dies for his efforts.

8. To the puritanical townsfolk, this would probably suggest not sophistication and social standing, but the decadence of "old Europe."

9. V.F. Perkins's "Action on Objects," *Cine-Files* 4 (Spring 2013). n.p.

10. This steely command breaks only once in the film. After her tense, late-night conversation with Johnny, at one point she stops the ironic posturing, seems to physically relax or even soften, says she has "waited for him," and embraces him. The movie conventions of the day tell us that she then sleeps with him. See also Perkins's interesting remark that there is an "undertow of panic in Crawford's self-assertion," V.F. Perkins, "Johnny Guitar," in *The Movie Book of The Western*, ed. I. Cameron and D. Pye (Studio Vista Books, 1996), 224. I am much indebted to this article throughout the following.

11. Women certainly take part in the final shootout, as the Grace Kelly character does in *High Noon*, but this woman-against-woman duel is, I think, almost unique. "Almost" because (so I learned from Tom Gunning) there is at least one other, the 1953 movie *The Woman They Almost Lynched*.

12. The contrast and comparison with Dietrich (fifty-one at the time of the Lang film) would require considerably more discussion. Almost everything Dietrich did with Sternberg was done with some element of irony or self-parody, but she plays it largely straight in Lang's *Rancho Notorious*, and still dominates every scene she is in. One similarity with the strange tone of *Johnny Guitar* is the baffling "voice over song," "Chuck-a-Luck," that narrates what we are seeing with wildly overdone expressiveness.

13. As always, one has to say "heroine," not simply *heroine*. She owes her success to prostitution and a kind of "insider trading," making use of the information she got in bed from the surveyor. Whether Ray considers that a qualification on her heroism, or another feature of her honesty (prostitution being perhaps not an anomaly but paradigmatic of capitalist exchange values) is unclear. See T.J. Clark on the theme with respect to Manet's *Olympia* in *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 79, 102-3.

14. He does not, however, end up shooting anyone. His one important act is to cut down Vienna at the hanging. Other than that, it is all talk and music.

15. Lee Marvin's portrayal of Liberty Valance comes close.

[16.] Another possibility is that Emma's self-hatred, redirected outward at the Kid, is actually or also, self-hatred at herself for her desire for Vienna. In the clearest expression of her hatred of Vienna, when she says "I'm going to kill you" to Vienna–about the only line she delivers softly–and Vienna responds, "I know, but not if I kill you first," Vienna is standing on the stairway, and Emma has begun to ascend, standing very close to her, but with her face therefore in a particularly intimate position in relation to Vienna's lower body. The erotic dimension of her hatred is noted by Perkins in *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies (New York: Penguin, 1972), 77-79*, "Johnny Guitar,", 228, and "Action on Objects." n.p.

[17.] The marshal mumbles a slight reservation. The brutal injustice of the "rule of the town" is never clearer than in the case of Turkey, who is told he will be spared and tried if he implicates Vienna. He does. They hang him anyway. No one in the mob protests.

[18.] The phrase became the title of the 1975 documentary about Ray by David Helpern, and in it, Ray says that the phrase was the working title of every movie he ever made.

[19.] Cf. Perkins on the "fortress" quality of the saloon, and its relation to "the owner's quest for security," "Johnny Guitar," 224.

[20.] Vienna finally ends up dressed in some old clothes of the executed young boy in the gang, Turkey (Ben Cooper), whom she had treated maternally and whom she had encouraged to lie, to incriminate and doom her, when they both believed Emma's and McIver's promises that such a lie would spare Turkey's life. There is no particular reason that Ray had to have her change yet again and into these clothes, suggesting a kind of identification (or guilt), but its significance is unclear, at least to me.

[21.] Johnny's distance from the events, the impossibility of his intervention, and even his complete disinterestedness–that is, beginning a Western with "inaction" and passivity–is also quite odd. Cf. the interesting remarks about this issue and about Ray's play with Western typologies, his inversions of traditional types, in Raymond Durgnat, *Film as Feeling* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 188ff.

[22.] Cf. Perkins's account of the scene, which is different from that presented here. "Johnny Guitar," 226.

[23.] Tom is party to another parody, this time of homespun Westerns wisdom. Johnny remarks to Tom, in clear anticipation that what he really wants, needs, cannot live without, is Vienna, that all a man *really* needs is "just a smoke and a cup of coffee." Later, after Johnny and Vienna have clearly slept together, Tom remembers the words and repeats them in even clearer irony, *as if* all a man would really need is a smoke and coffee, and not love and sexual intimacy (in the way teenagers used to say "as if").

[24.] There is an interesting, "overture" like movement over the opening credits. The music begins with an ominous, martial sound and then transitions to the lush Johnny Guitar theme, as if to introduce the two halves of the films: the violent confrontation between Emma and the townsfolk on the one hand, and Vienna/Johnny on the other. I take it to be the chief task of any interpreter to understand the relation between these two parts.

[25.] For important remarks on the importance of the music in the film, and especially of the main theme, see Perkins, "Johnny Guitar," 225ff.

[26.] André Bazin, cited in M. Wilmington, "Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar*," *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 12 (1974) 20.

[27.] V.S. Perkins, *Film as Film,*78.

[28.] There is something, a good deal actually, of the "Gilda-Johnny" relationship from Charles Vidor's 1946 noir, *Gilda*, in the Vienna-Johnny pairing.

[29.] Richard Neer has also pointed out that there even elements of the fairy tale in the staging of the secret hideout, enterable only through what appears a magical wall of water. See the reference to Truffault below, in note 39.

[30.] Stanley Cavell, *Contesting Tears: the Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[31.] Viewed in this way, perhaps the master of melodrama would be Douglas Sirk, although films by George Cukor and Vincente Minnelli or Michael Curtiz's *Mildred Pierce* (1945) could stand as good examples.

[32.] From what we learn of their breakup, there is no reason for Johnny to feel this way. In his own mind, he apparently feels betrayed because Vienna didn't sit around patiently, knitting or something, until he deigned to return. This is another factor that would lead one to doubt they can really reconcile, as the ending suggests.

[33.] A clever final example of this stylistic oddity resulting from the sort of irony attendant on hyper self-consciousness: when Emma and the posse find Vienna in white at the piano, she plays the Johnny Guitar theme as if sampling it, not playing it, or rather playing around it, playing with it; not simply playing it. (Perkins says that she plays it "in the reflective

vein of a nocturne." "Johnny Guitar," 225.) The theme too, as played in such a way, is not *meant*, as much as it is *said*. It is as if Vienna is exploring the meaning of the theme reflectively, not directly meaning the theme.

34. The interrogation of Turkey is clearly designed to echo everything from Soviet show trials to the McCarthy witchhunts. See Bernard Eisenschitz, *Nicholas Ray: An American Journey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 212. The betrayal is staged by Ray with, somehow, both sympathy and condemnation. One of the most interesting, but relatively unexplored confluence of themes in the film is the link between the posse's (or the mob's) willingness to be led against Vienna, the nature of the enmity they bear against her, and Emma's transparently sexual repression and its resulting hatred.

35. The most important discussion of this issue is Stanley Cavell's *Must We Mean What We Say*, and the article by that name in the collection, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-43. The essays in this collection raise a number of issues of relevance to Ray's films, as I try to show in "Passive and Active Skepticism in Nicholas Ray's *In a Lonely Place*," in *nonsite*, at: *http://nonsite.org/issue-5-agency-and-experience*

36. Cf., for example, the greatest of film melodramas, Max Ophuls's *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948).

37. Michael Wilmington, "Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar*," says that the film "reshapes the poetry and the myth [of Westerns] to fit an essentially modern situation," 21. I would say that the whole point, what is most interesting about the experiment, is that the content does not "fit" the form.

38. The same could be said for stock "cowboy" lines as "I never shake hands with a left-handed draw." Or, "Luck had nothing to do with it."

39. Perkins in "Acting on Objects," has noted that the film has an "aura of the baroque." Geoff Andrew reports (without citation) that "Ray himself regarded the film as baroque." Geoff Andrew, *The Films of Nicholas Ray* (London: BFI, 1991), 71, and he cites Truffault's characterizations of the film as "a fairy tale, a hallucinatory Western, a Western Dream." *Ibid.* Michael Wilmington attribute to Bertolucci the description of *Johnny Guitar* as "the first of the baroque Westerns," "Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar*," 20.

40. Cf. such a theme in *Stagecoach*, *The Far Country*, *Ride Lonesome*.

41. It is true, though, that in the closing scene Ray allows the camera to linger significantly on McIver's expression as he stands over the body of Emma and looks up to Johnny and Vienna descending from the hideout. What we see is unquestionably regret and even shame at how far he had indulged his venal concerns, now with Turkey, Corey, Bart, the Kid and Emma all dead. He no longer, in other words, considers himself righteous. Just his expression alone concedes that the language of righteousness and justice was a façade for his own envy and greed.

42. And in other films, home, the family.

Robert B. Pippin is the Evelyn Stefansson Nef Distinguished Service Professor in the John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought, the Department of Philosophy, and the College at the University of Chicago. He is the author of several books on German Idealism and related topics, including *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self–Consciousness*, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations*, and *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*. He has also published essays on literature, and the book, *Henry James and Modern Moral Life*. His latest books are: *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (2008), *Hollywood Westerns and American Myth* (Yale University Press, 2010), *Nietzsche, Psychology and First Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), *Hegel on Self–Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton University Press, 2011), *Fatalism in American Film Noir: Some Cinematic Philosophy* (University of Virginia Press, 2012), and *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (University of Chicago Press, 2014).

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

EDITORIALS

RESPONSE TO JAY AND SUSTAR & BEAN

ADOLPH REED, JR.

I recently read two quite similar calls for concern about Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis's possible campaign for mayor: Scott Jay's "Karen Lewis and the Long Arm of Lesser Evilism" in *New Politics*—http://newpol.org/content/karen-lewis-and-long-arm-lesser-evilism and Lee Sustar and Brian Bean's "Don't Back Down" in *Jacobin*—https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/09/dont-back-down/. I admit that I was a little surprised to see that this flavor of the left has already lobbed its charges of selling out before she's even declared her candidacy. The *New Politics* piece is just simple-minded and wrong-headed all the way through, pro forma stuff that Jay could have phoned in from and about anywhere. No one except maybe he and his political buddies ever imagined that she'd run as anything other than a Dem in the first place. And why should she in a race that's officially nonpartisan anyway? The only effect would be to increase the degree of difficulty in what would already be a steep uphill fight. (I was especially taken with Jay's declaration that he's not demanding ideological purity, which he follows by raising the bar of ideological purity in arguing that it's not enough that we avoid the sin of voting Democratic but that we need to take care that our actions not only don't lead anyone else to vote Dem but that they don't lead anyone to lead anyone else to do so. This brings to mind my fourth grade Catechism teacher.) He criticizes Lewis for supporting Illinois Senate Bill 7, "that attacked teachers' seniority and their right to strike," which certainly would be an odd move for the CTU president. In fact, she contingently supported the version of SB7 that passed over the worse one that had been proposed. He also attacks her for supporting Pat Quinn's re-election as governor, a move that Jay understands, consistent with his brand of sectarian fantasy, to expose her as a stooge for the Democrats. Of course she supports Quinn over kazillionaire privatizer (and Friend of Rahm) Bruce Rauner. Much as I dislike Quinn's earlier moves on public pensions, etc (and I think Lewis's argument is at least plausible that he gambled on backing a proposal that was so extreme the state legislature wouldn't accept it, which is in fact what happened), I sent him some money because Rauner promises to privatize as much

of state government as possible and destroy public education. That's also why the CTU endorsed him, not some shadowy "pressure to stay within the Democratic Party fold," as Sustar and Bean contend.

There's a flavor of Trotskyist that brings to mind a line from a truly horrible late 1970s Paul Schrader film, *Hardcore*, in which the stereotypical young hooker with a heart of gold who is helping upper Midwestern Calvinist George C. Scott find his daughter who was spirited into the sex industry on a Disneyland trip, remarks to him that their views about sex are fundamentally similar. When he looks at her like she's nuts, she explains that he cared so little about it that he didn't do it at all and she cared so little about it that she'd do it with anyone. The parallel in this domain is with Dems and their antagonists of that sort on the left. Both tend, as a matter of hallowed principle, to overvalue the significance of electoral action and to reduce electoral engagement to a matter of supporting Dems or not; they just take different sides on the question. But voting for a Dem or not is not the end all and be all of politics; whether or not to do so is fundamentally a tactical or strategic question, not a matter of principle. It is high principle for those leftist types because they operate within a mythology—not unlike mental illness—according to which, if we could just get the people to stop voting for Dems, they'll come to see the necessity for socialism, or the crazier-still version, that the masses already are pleading for socialism, but the elite gatekeepers in the labor movement, etc., keep duping them into supporting Dems. Sustar and Bean are no better than Jay in this regard. Like Jay, they imagine that a mass movement is already out there waiting to be called together, if only Lewis would demonstrate her independence from the Dems and adopt the proper laundry list of lefty proposals. For them that means:

> from raising the minimum wage, to a tax on financial transactions, to higher taxes on the wealthy. The fight against racism will have to be front and center. She will have to highlight underfunding in schools, residential discrimination, and the lack of genuine economic development—not gentrification—in black and brown neighborhoods. Such a campaign would also have to confront the reality of police brutality, from Ferguson to Chicago. Immigrant rights should be a major focus, too, in a city in which a growing Latino population faces a dramatic rise in deportations, as well as racism and poverty.

All those sound good as talking points (and Sustar and Bean note that Rahm supports increasing the minimum wage), but they generally lack content. What, after all, are the warrants of "the fight against racism" and what does it mean to make it "front and center"? How can we tell what counts as "genuine economic development—not gentrification"? What

can the mayor of Chicago do about police brutality in suburban Maywood or Evergreen Park, much less in metropolitan St. Louis?

Both these pieces betray a really naïve or underdeveloped understanding of electoral action, its costs and benefits, the unavoidable messiness of engaging in it. And, by the way, the same messiness applies to all efforts to build and maintain broad alliances, all of which require finding ways to navigate locating points of agreement and looking the other way at least temporarily at potentially serious differences and contradictions. Jay's essay is puerile in this regard, but the *Jacobin* essay isn't much better; both fall to the level of facile exposé—Lewis calls for more cops on the streets even though the FOP fundraised for Darren Wilson and the CPD has a history of racist brutality!!—and they fail to understand that you can't build a movement around an election campaign, which requires an approach to organizing built on thin and broad, diffuse even, appeals because the standard of success is tied to % of the vote received. And the logic of electoral campaigns is inexorable; it brings to mind an old college friend's quip about acid: once you buy the ticket, you have to take the ride.

And as for the "Lewis's turn to the right" line, and the need for "the fight against racism [whatever that is concretely] to be front and center," it's important to keep in mind the really existing black politics in Chicago, which presents a much more complicated field of action than either essay takes into account. There's a venerable history of black (and nonblack) aldermen and other politicos pledging to back the insurgents and then putting their troops out on election day to turn out for the machine. For the preachers that sort of duplicity is in their basic job description, and then you have the "community leaders," who're likely to be on the administration's teat either directly or via the nonprofit industrial complex. Then there are whatever remains of the South Side nationalists and Jesse Jackson's operation to which those "activists" are loosely linked. That element has its own history of cash and carry politics, and its minions have habitually found a way to denounce or quietly reject the insurgent candidates for some arcane political incorrectness and cut deals with the machine or in state politics with the GOP in exchange for working to demobilize around the edges. South Side "activists" did that when liberal Dem Dawn Clark Netsch ran against GOP incumbent Jim Edgar for governor in '95. They determined that they were affronted that she hadn't supported Harold Washington in the Dem primary in 1983 (though she did in the general election and again all the way in 1987). So they got some Edgar money. They also worked tirelessly to preempt the emergence of a serious progressive contender against the Lesser Daley during his reign by insisting that only a black challenger could embody the legacy of the Harold Washington coalition.

And another thing that lefties don't understand, especially to the extent that they harbor essentialist fantasies about "the black [or Latino] community," is that it's such institutional nodes that actually mobilize voters and turn them out. That's also why a Lewis campaign would need support of whatever unions and other organizations with political capacity it could get. Sustar and Bean's belief that the positions a Lewis campaign adopts would by themselves turn out voters, working class or otherwise, against an entrenched political apparatus is wishful thinking, and a particular species of wishful thinking at that, an electoral version of the Myth of the Spark that will condense the spontaneous mass demand for socialism. Yes, there are tradeoffs that have to be made; that would be true even for a serious protest candidacy. Such tradeoffs have to be made carefully and judiciously through collective processes, but they have to be made. I don't see a hint of recognition of that fact anywhere in either of these articles. To that extent they're not much more than political posturing and dilettantism. They don't engage at all with the specificities of Chicago politics—electoral or otherwise—and offer only cookie cutter proposals transcribed from those laundry lists so routinely cobbled together by the activistist left and parsed endlessly on the internet and in Brooklyn coffee houses.

Finally, the problem in Chicago isn't the need for a break from the Dems; it's the need to build a broad alliance against neoliberal policy and, it is to be hoped, beyond that. A Karen Lewis mayoral race could be a significant step in building such an alliance; if it is to be, it'll be a tough struggle that will require broad appeals and wide and deep mobilization. At the same time, I doubt that there are many people more acutely aware than I of the dangers—including the potential contradictions of success—that can come from winning a mayoralty. Some people think that, taking those dangers into account, Lewis might be more effective politically by remaining outside City Hall and agitating to broaden a base within the labor movement and among other constituent groups. That's ultimately a practical question and one to which there may be no clearly correct answer; nontrivial tradeoffs accompany each course. (However, Lewis's sudden health complications may be serious enough to render debate about her possible mayoral campaign moot.) That's the problem with real politics; it's messy, laden with contingencies and uncertain outcomes and, of course, odd bedfellows. It's ironic that the political element that is now prepared to denounce Lewis for capitulationism was also among the loudest voices urging her to run in the first place. I see now that what they had in mind, as these critiques make clear, is the sort of purist and pointless suicide mission that is the hallmark of their ideological tendency.

Adolph Reed, Jr. is a professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, specializing in race and American politics.

nonsite.org is an online, open access, peer-reviewed quarterly journal of scholarship in the arts and humanities affiliated with Emory College of Arts and Sciences. 2015 all rights reserved. ISSN 2164-1668.

NONSITE.ORG IS AN ONLINE, OPEN ACCESS, PEER-REVIEWED QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF SCHOLARSHIP IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES.
NONSITE.ORG IS AFFILIATED WITH EMORY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES.
© 2015 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ISSN 2164-1668