Deviant Narratives: Anomalous Subjective Positions
in Post-Boom Latin American Literature

BY

LUZ BIBIANA FUENTES
B. A., Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia, 1996
M.A., Carthage College, Kenosha, WI, 2002
M.A., Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, 2007

THESIS
Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Studies
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2013

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:
Gabriel Riera, Chair and Advisor
Dianna Niebylski, Spanish
Margarita Saona, Spanish
Silvia Rosman, Spanish
Ángela Inés Robledo Palomeque, Universidad Nacional de Colombia
This dissertation is dedicated to my aunt, Blanca Fuentes, and to my sister, Pilar Fuentes, for sharing my passion for literature and traveling. You are my pillars and that which motivates me to pursue new horizons. Con mucho amor y agradecimiento.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to all members of my committee, Dianna Niebylski, Margarita Saona, Silvia Rosman, and Ángela Robledo Palomeque for their generous support and guidance through the doctoral program and the research project. Their insightful comments have considerably contributed to this study. I acknowledge my indebtedness to my dissertation director, Gabriel Riera, whose insightful questions, reading suggestions, and feedback have been fundamental in my learning process as a writer and scholar. He guided me through every step of the process with dedication and enthusiasm and I thank him for his continuous encouragement.

I thank the Professors of the Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies for their support. The Audrey Lumsden-Kouvel Fellowship provided the financial support to dedicate an entire semester to research and to write part of this dissertation. I thank Kim Potowski and Steven Marsh for their advice and support.

I would like to express my gratitude to Susana Domingo and Maximiliano Sánchez for their advice on my research interests and for their willingness to discuss their projects with me. Thanks to friends and colleagues Diana González, Lilian Gorman, Clara Azevedo, Diomedes Solano, Martin Ponti, Ingrid Schaller, and Jessica Ramírez, for your encouragement and for all the good times we have shared together.

Another debt of gratitude goes to Melissa Huerta and Andrea Castelluccio, in our conversations I feel I am part of a group of fellow researchers that share similar concerns and interests. Thank you for inspiring me with your ideas and for all your words of confidence and support. I am fortunate to have your friendship.
I also want to thank my colleagues at Colby College, specially Bretton White, Dean Allbritton, Elsa Fan, Sonja Thomas, and Alexander Champoux, for giving me invaluable advice for the defense and supporting me through this last year.

I thank my aunt and sister for their love and support. They listened patiently to my concerns in difficult times and shared the excitement of every achievement.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. PSYCHOTIC DETERMINATION IN <em>DELIRIO</em> BY LAURA RESTREPO</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. The psychoanalytical machine</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. The drug trafficking machine</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ANOMALOUS SUBJECTIVE POSITIONS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL MODEL OF ANARCHY IN ROBERTO BOLAÑO’S <em>ESTRELLA DISTANTE</em> AND <em>NOCTURNO DE CHILE</em></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. <em>Estrella Distan</em></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1. Wieder’s ‘artistic’ performances and the economy of Sadean art</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. <em>Nocturno de Chile</em>: Sebastian Urrutia Lacroix and the doubles in the mirror</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. LINES OF FLIGHT IN DIAMELA ELTIT’S <em>LOS VIGILANTES</em></td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1. <em>Los vigilantes</em> a symptomatic narrative</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. An ethics of writing</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. GIVING ROOM TO DESIRE AND DIVING INTO DELIRIUM: SUBJECTIVE TRANSFORMATIONS IN JUAN JOSÉ SAER’S <em>LAS NUBES</em></td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITED LITERATURE</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY

This dissertation investigates the protocols the literary text uses to illustrate processes of subjectification and outline alternative subjective transformations. The corpus of study includes texts published between 1994 and 2004. This decade in Latin America is characterized by the pervasiveness of discourses on the need to implement new policies of re-democratization and market economy according to the parameters of Neoliberalism. I analyze the narrative strategies that these texts use to examine the mechanisms whereby power structures ensure the internalization of this hegemonic discourse. My inquiry focuses on how these texts reveal these mechanisms’ repressive character and their impact on individual and collective subjectivity.

The corpus of study includes four representative Latin American authors, Laura Restrepo, Roberto Bolaño, Diamela Eltit, and Juan José Saer, whose works outline anomalous subjective positions in the context of extreme socio historical upheavals. These texts locate themselves in transitional moments of power redistribution, in the case of Saer, Eltit and Bolaño from dictatorship to a Neoliberal democratic state, and from civil war to a Neoliberal discourse on terrorism in Restrepo. Within the transition, individuals and collectivities found themselves pushed into the Neoliberal path as the only possible exit road; however, certain elements remained in the interstice, resisting the strong current that demanded their allegiance to the cause. I claim that these literary texts are not exclusively diagnostic narratives that present the symptoms of collective subjective deterioration but also privileged sites for the display of an excess that allows individuals and collectivities to both resist the imposition of power and generate their own mechanisms of subjective survival.

This dissertation focuses on the protocols used by the literary texts to outline the conditions that contribute to the development, progression and reterritorialization of processes of
subjective adaptation. The narratives discussed deal with the other, the heterogeneous, and the anomalous and display alternative possibilities of seeing the world that can potentially support individual processes of subjective survival and social and political transformations. I concentrate on how the literary texts studied present blocs of sensations that render percepts and affects that mark the characters’ becoming-other. Consequently, I emphasize these narratives’ resistance to become a consumable product of the market but I also observe their potential to generate fissures in the hegemonic discourse by outlining alternative possibilities of being in the world.
1. INTRODUCTION

The literary text has the political potential to produce new paradigms of subjectivity and new ways of seeing, thinking and being in the world. This dissertation enquires on the protocols the literary text uses to illustrate processes of subjectification and outline alternative subjective transformations. The corpus of study includes texts published between 1994 and 2004. This decade in Latin America is characterized by the pervasiveness of discourses on the need to implement new policies of re-democratization and market economy according to the parameters of Neoliberalism. I analyze the narrative strategies that these texts use to examine the mechanisms whereby power structures ensure the internalization of this hegemonic discourse. After the dissolution of different dictatorial regimes, South American power structures implemented a new apparatus of control with a new set of mechanisms of interpellation and designation. These mechanisms sought to impose an absolute control over individual and collective subjectivities in order to guarantee the achievement of one single goal: optimal participation within the global market. My inquiry focuses on how these texts reveal these mechanisms’ repressive character and their impact on individual and collective subjectivity.

This dissertation addresses how Latin American literary narratives explore the interplay between individual and social processes of subjectification. Michel Foucault theorized subjectification as the process whereby the subject is constituted according to the self-knowledge provided by the discourse that precedes him. Consequently, normative subjectivity can be defined in general terms as the recognition of a self-knowledge in agreement with the hegemonic
discourse. Subjectivity, however, is a process that is not culminated as the individual acquires language and socialization but, like discourse, a process in constant redefinition and transformation. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari concentrate on the latter and elaborate on Foucault’s concept of subjectification by theorizing its potential as a point of origin for a process of transformation in the content of what constitutes our knowledge of the truth of reality. Subjectification constructs rigid segments of thought but it is by no means fixed, it is a point that creates a finite line of change that marks the deterritorialization from one specific segment and its reterritorialization into a new one. Subjectification as a self-knowledge according to a regime of codified significations is not the final determination of subjectivity but the point whereby subjective transformations can dismantle rigidified power structures and produce alternative forms of thinking.

Deleuze and Guattari use the term *socius* to refer to the social field in order to distance themselves from definitions of the individual as universally determined by a familiar matrix. The term *socius* refers to the social field as a surface where desire is invested, regulated, and continuously recoded determining all social production. This conception of the social field understands that all production is organized according to segments of social determination that Deleuze and Guattari define as strata and constitute together systems of regulation and signification. In *Negotiations* Deleuze explains that processes of subjectification have “nothing to do with "private lives" but characterize the way individuals and communities are constituted as subjects on the margins of established forms of knowledge and instituted powers, even if they thereby open the way for new kinds of knowledge and power” (151). The *socius* is in continuous

---

1 “I call subjectification the procedure by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or, more precisely, of a subjectivity which is of course only of the given possibilities of organization of a self-consciousness” (253) Michel Foucault in an interview published in Foucault, Michel and Kritzman, Lawrence. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*. Psychology Press, 1990.
transformation as desire flows motivate practices that dismantle conventional forms of seeing and being in the world requiring new significations in a never ending process of production and recodification. As rigid as these strata can be, they all have fissures, and desire is constantly leaking its flows and opening routes of escape whereby individuals and collectivities generate practices that free lines of flight that deviate from subjectification. This new perception entails the possibility of opening up the field for subjective transformations and new creative productions, “desire machines opening up flows beneath the social codes that seek to channel and block them” (Deleuze, Negotiations 153).

Power structures maintain their status by defining a space of exclusion. It is an empty space that is constantly redefined according to the continuous identification of elements that fall outside what the structure requires; it is its mechanism of self-regulation and definition. The hegemonic discourse designates some elements within marginal categories of exclusion from the social body. In Discipline and Punish and Madness and Civilization Foucault provides examples of such categories: the criminal and the clinical; the asylum’s main objective, for example, is to allow the individual to assume his or her own guilt. Power exerted on madness produced the internalization of a discourse that is accepted as the truth of madness ensuring general and voluntary acceptance of its marginalization. Subjectification creates objects of abjection rendering certain individuals as undesirable, threatening, and unintelligible. Abjection, however,

2 “Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers… find possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateau 178).

3 “I have been given the image of a melancholic historian of prohibitions and repressive power, a teller of tales with only two categories: insanity and its incarceration, the anomaly and its exclusion, delinquency and its imprisonment. But my problem has always been on the side of another term: truth. How did the power exerted in insanity produced psychiatry’s “true” discourse? The same applies to sexuality: to revive the will to know the source of power exerted upon sex. My aim is not to write the social history of a prohibition but the political history of the production of “truth.” (Foucault, Politics 112)
can be in itself a point of departure for an alternative process of subjectivity. Individuals and groups who are placed in categories of exclusion have the potential to generate their own processes of deviation from the system that rejects them.

Literature elucidates the power structures’ mechanisms of subjectification but it also reveals their inability to operate an absolute control over every domain of individual and social subjectivity. My enquiry focuses on the protocols used by the literary texts to outline the conditions that contribute to the development, progression and reterritorialization of these processes of subjective adaptation. I claim that literary texts are not exclusively diagnostic narratives that present the symptoms of collective subjective deterioration but also privileged sites for the display of an excess that allows individuals and collectivities to both resist the imposition of power and generate their own mechanisms of subjective survival.

The narratives analyzed in this dissertation present characters that experience anomalous subjective positions whereby they undertake lines of flight from normative subjectification. I am not implying that they have certain characteristics that make them different to everybody else, like categories of abnormality, illness or pathology. The anomalous is defined by Deleuze and Guattari in relation to multiplicity, variation and intensification. It is the precondition for becoming that borders multiplicity, determines the numbers of its dimensions, and carries it

---

4 In discussing the etymological root of the word anomalous, Deleuze and Guattari refer to George Canguilhem’s study On the Normal and the Pathological (1966) and explain the difference between the words abnormal and anomalous. Abnormal is “going against the rules,” whereas anomalie is “a Greek noun that has lost its adjective, designates the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 244).

5 “It has nothing to do with the preferred, domestic psychoanalytical individual. Nor is the anomalous the bearer of a species presenting specific or generic characteristics in their purest state; nor is it the eminent term of a series; nor is it the basis of an absolutely harmonious correspondence. The anomalous is neither an individual nor a species; it only has affects, it has neither familiar not subjectified feelings, nor specific or significant characteristics” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 244).
down the line of flight. The anomalous is a realm that finds its location outside, at the frontier between individuality and multiplicity, between subjectification and subjective transformation.

To be in an anomalous position entails subjectless individuation, instead of defining subjectivity according to self-knowledge one must forget about the I and experiment the world in order to become other. This is the reason why many delusional characters in these narratives find themselves in anomalous subjective positions, because they are not concerned with their ego; but madness is not the only possibility where individuals find themselves in the realm of the anomalous, characters who undertake life as an experience find themselves permeated by a delirious flow that removes them from subjectification and places them in the anomalous. The literary text as a delirious machine experiments with the anomalous by placing characters in its realm. Once there, they cannot distinguish between themselves and the outside world, they experience “a natural play full of haecceities, degrees, intensities, events, and accidents that compose individuations totally different from those of the well-formed subjects that receive them” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 279). In this study I concentrate on how the literary texts studied present blocs of sensations that render percepts and affects that mark the characters’

---

6 A line of flight is a pathway of change. It has three characteristics: First, it is connective since it attests to the encounter between bodies; second, it is expansive because it increases in intensity; and third, it is deterritorializing because it carries assemblages from its current form into a different state. It is these three characteristics that give the line of flight the potential to create becomings.

7 “The anomalous is always at the frontier, on the borders of a band or multiplicity; it is part of the latter, but is already making it pass into another multiplicity, it makes it become, it traces a line between” (Deleuze, Gilles. Parnet, Claire, Dialogues 42).

8 “Destratify, open up to a new function, a diagrammatic function. Let consciousness cease to be its own double, and passion the double of one person for another. Make consciousness an experimentation in life, and passion a field of continuous intensities, an emission of particles-signs. Make the body without organs of consciousness and love. Use love and consciousness to abolish subjectification. Use the I think for a becoming-animal, and love for a becoming-woman of man. Desubjectify consciousness and passion. Are there not diagrammatic redundancies distinct from both signifying redundancies and subjective redundancies? Redundancies that would no longer be knots of arborescence but resumptions and upsurges in a rhizome? Stammer language, be a foreigner in one’s own tongue” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 134).
becoming-other. In *Las nubes*, for example, the anomalous subjective position allows the characters to pass into the desert generating a particular relation with the landscape; I analyze how this relationship generates affective happenings, intensive alterations that make them become-other.

I read these novels with a cartographic approach that implies the mapping of regions of intensive properties. In the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, “Rhizome,” Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of cartography that will be later used in different contexts. In this first chapter, Deleuze and Guattari explain their approach differs from the traditional structural or generative process of tracing universal and codified complexes on geopolitical maps. They emphasize the tracing method goes along subjectification as it neutralizes multiplicities reproducing only points of structuration. On the contrary, the cartographic approach seeks to follow these multiplicities to observe not only the blockages but also how a narrative creates escape routes and consequently subjective alternatives. (13)

The literary text may display the cartography of a human, social or political body by presenting the different intensive zones where subjective transformations take place. A cartographic approach does not imply the identification of geographical markers—even when the narratives use geographical elements to mark different movements, which is the case in *Los vigilantes* and *Las nubes*— but movements, such as travel, nomadic, social, ideological, subjective, and ontological movements, etc. My enquiry emphasizes the impact these movements have in destabilizing repressive regimes and hegemonic discourses, but more importantly on their potential to place characters in anomalous subjective positions whereby they acquire the visionary potential to become everything and everyone, which brings about a subjective transformation.

---

9 In relation to the narrative of North American authors, for example, they mention there are certain “geographic traits” indexed in the flow of their narrative, “Every great American author creates a cartography” (*A Thousand 571*).
The characters I regard are delirious individuals in the etymological sense of the word; *delirer* is to go off the furrow. Their delirium is not simply a group of symptoms that can be categorized according to clinical categories, it is an excess, a productive flow that is invested in production. They are invested by desire and produce more desire, not simply sexual energy but the unconscious libidinal flow that underlies all the social production; and which only irrupts in the form of delirium. Delirium as deviation is not going against the norm or transgressing it but a movement in a band of multiplicities that takes the norm to its limit. Deleuze and Guattari observe in Artaud’s delirious discourse the anomalous carrying language as a multiplicity down a line of deviation/variation to the limit of its a-grammaticality. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* they explain it is not the transgression of the norm but a movement towards its outside, a minor language within language. It is in this sense that literature is an exploration of the limits.

The anomalous is the realm where a collective assemblage of enunciation is possible, where the characters can explore an impersonal collectivity that might be the basis for a people to come. Hence *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* and continuing in *A Thousand Plateau* Deleuze and Guattari expand the concept of the narrative machine and propose some narratives constitute a collective assemblage of enunciation. Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of the collective assemblage of enunciation is eminently pragmatic as this continuous variation is constantly generating affects that determine new becomings, which imply literature’s political

---

10 “To be delirious is exactly to go off the track.” “Delirer, c'est exactement sortir du sillon” (Deleuze, Gilles. Parnet, Claire, Dialogues 51).

11 “The orphan unconscious, the true unconscious, the one that does not pass through daddy-mommy, the one that passes through delirious machines, these being in a given relation with the large social machines”. (Le Cours de Gilles Deleuze Anti-Oedipe et Mille Plateaux 16/11/1971, 7)

12 They define the assemblage of enunciation as “the redundant complex of statements and the incorporeal transformations attributed to the bodies of a society” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 80).
potential for new possibilities of life, and a new kind of people. This novel’s selection is justified on the basis that the content of these narratives, what they reveal on the constitution of our knowledge about reality and the new subjective paradigms they propose, has the potential to determine new configurations for a different type of society. In other words, these texts have the capacity to generate substantial changes in the way people think and act.13

To be delirious in Lacanian terms is to be a witness of the workings of the libido. The delirious is the observant of the other scene (Lacan, The Psychosis 132). For Deleuze and Guattari, delire is not a passive state but an actual movement. To be delirious is to move along a line and experience alternative subjectivities. The libido invests the social field and delirious formations are not simply hallucinatory experiences but the production and consumption of those libidinal investments in a series of sensations, intensities, becomings, transitions, passages, and migrations. Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of delirium’s content also deviates from psychoanalysis. For psychoanalysis the delirious has foreclosed the Name of the Father and consequently signification. The delirious is trapped in a solitary and bewildering argument with the other that appears with different names but all occupying the position of the father. Deleuze and Guattari suggest all these names are part of the process in which the delirious identifies historical personages with specific historical, geopolitical, and social domains. To be delirious is to observe the operation of systems of signs and mechanisms of subjectification within each

---

13 The collective assemblage of enunciation pertains to the horizontal axis as it corresponds to expression. It is plugged into machinic assemblages, the abstract machine of language, and to the whole micropolitics of the social field. “A collective assemblage of enunciation requires as precondition constant variation. The abstract machine of language is intrinsically plugged into the collective assemblage of enunciation as its variables interact with each other creating new combinations. These repetitions are variations which escape the forces of stratified grammaticality enabling the development of lines of flight. A collective assemblage of enunciation is therefore the flow of language’s innate virtual quality of never ending continuous variation” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 94).
domain. More importantly it is to experience historical events and its personages as effects; in sum, to intensely feel and participate in the processes of becoming of the world.

When individuals and collectivities find themselves in anomalous subjective positions, they invest their desire in the creation and production of different social machines. By analyzing the elements and mechanisms that constitute each machine it is possible to recognize the libidinal investments that underlie both social structures and historical becoming. I argue that the literary text is one of these delirious machines, infused with a world-historical delirium, it follows a line of flight from a point of subjectification and experiences with multiplicities.

Deleuze and Guattari identify the writer as a clinician, not the therapist who diagnoses according to universal matrixes of her discipline, but as someone who exhibits symptoms and libidinal compounds. This does mean that she writes to tell her experiences, thoughts or traumas. The writer writes from the realm of the anomalous and creates an impersonal assemblage. The unconscious is productive and social since there is no separation between the private (individual or familiar) and the social. The literary work does not represent or actualize the libidinal compounds but captures the imperceptible forces it produces. The artist is an experimenter of the anomalous who captures the forces, experiments with them, and renders them visible in a productive machine, “a writer isn’t a writer-man; he is a machine-man and an experimental-man,” (Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka, 7).

This dissertation addresses the literary text as a productive machine, an assemblage of different narrative machines that connect with other fictional texts and with other social machines. This approach to literature as a machine does not mean that it is an object of technology that stands in opposition to the human. A literary work is neither enclosed in itself or open to a future unification, it is continuous immanence with reality. This technological term
refers to the fact it is determined by a state of forces that make it produce. In *A Thousand Plateau* Deleuze and Guattari observe the literary work as a rhizome able to, “connect any point to any other point” (21) on the immanent plane of the *socius* and “it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even non-sign states” (21). A novel connects itself not only to other narrative machines but also to social, historical and political machines each with their own regimes of signs. Art as a clinic of the society exposes its social critique and explores potential social becomings that entail new types of subjectivities.

Reading implies allowing the text to permeate us with its own libidinal flow. Enquiring about its content is a conscious attempt to identify how the machine functions, what kind of material it produces, and the character of the effects it generates.\(^{14}\) The work of fiction is analyzed, then, as an assemblage where different machinic, abstract and social machines plug into each other and potentially generate new ones. Laura Restrepo’s narratives plug into a detective narrative machine and a drug trafficking machine, Roberto Bolaño’s into a Sadean art machine, Juan Jose Saer’s into a travel narrative machine, Diamela Eltit’s into a paranoiac machine, among others.\(^ {15}\) In each chapter I analyze how the narrative machine functions as it connects to each one of these social and narrative machines.

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari provide a critical definition of the subject that stands against psychoanalytical interpretation. The concept of desire as social production

\(^ {14}\) Art as machine for producing certain effects: “What is involved is no longer an extraliterary experience that the man of letters reports or profits by, but an artistic experimentation produced by literature, a literary effect, in the sense in which we speak of an electric effect or an electromagnetic effect. This is a supreme instance in which one can say: the machine works” (Deleuze, Proust 153).

\(^ {15}\) The literary work is an assemblage of machines, “the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work. Kleist and a mad war machine, Kafka and a most extraordinary bureaucratic machine. Literature is an assemblage” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 5)
responds to the psychoanalytical definition of desire as lack. Desire is defined in terms of social production. Objects do not generate desire; on the contrary, the libido is invested in all erotic, labor, social and political production. Desire is a productive flow of psychical energy that permeates the entire social fabric. Desire is constituted by two different determinations, in other words two kind of libidinal flows: revolutionary and fascist. The *socius* is invested with both flows: the revolutionary determination is understood in terms of affectivity and empowerment as a flow that generates new connections with a collectivity and has a positive determination of continuous becoming; the fascist determination is the force that recaptures free desire and reterritorializes it in molar categories like institutions or correctional systems.

Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between two different types of investments: the preconscious investments of interest and the unconscious libidinal investments. The former refers to conscious motivations; they relate to causality as individuals derive their interests and aspirations from them. The latter refers to desire; the unconscious libidinal investments have no interests but intensities. Furthermore, these investments are also divided in two different types of motivations: revolutionary and fascist. Therefore, there are revolutionary

---

16 As Daniel Smith explains “Deleuze reconfigures the concept of desire: what we desire, what we invest our desire in, is a social formation, and in this sense desire is always positive. Lack appears only at the level of interest, because the social formation—the infrastructure—in which we have already invested our desire has in turn produced that lack” (Essays on Deleuze 186). Deleuze and Guattari inquire on the reason “why do we have such a stake in investing in a social system that constantly represses us, thwarts our interests, and introduces lack into our lives? In the end, the answer is simple: it is because your desire—that is, your drives and affects—are not your own, so to speak. They are, if I can put it this way, part of the capitalist infrastructure; they are not simply your own individual mental or psychic reality (Anti-Oedipus 30).

17 “The domain of schizoanalysis distinguishes itself at this moment from the domain of politics, in the sense that the preconscious political investments are investments of class interests that are determinable by certain types of studies, but these still do not tell us anything about the other type of investments, namely specifically libidinal investments--Desire. To the point that it can happen that a preconscious revolutionary investment can be doubled by a libidinal investment of the fascist type, which explains how displacements are made from one pole of delirium to another pole of delirium, how a delirium has fundamentally two poles —which Artaud said so well: the mystery of all is ‘Heliogabalus the Anarchist,’ — it is not only a contradiction, it is a fundamental human contradiction, namely a pole of unconscious investment of the fascist type, and an unconscious investment of the revolutionary type”. (Le cours 11)
preconscious investments of interest as well as revolutionary unconscious libidinal investments.\(^{18}\) In many cases an individual might display a preconscious revolutionary investment of interest in instigating a revolt but he or she is actually driven by a fascist libidinal investment to control all the individuals within the group. Individuals may invest their desire machines according to what they consider are their preconscious investments without being aware of a totally different determination of unconscious investment underlying its conduct. It is in production, in the liberation of desire, where there is a recording of the actual unconscious libidinal investments that underlie every enterprise.\(^{19}\) By analyzing the different desire machines displayed in the text I draw conclusions on how the conjunction of all processes of subjective adaptation mark the historical becoming’s fascist or revolutionary determination.

Within the critical corpus on Contemporary Latin American literature, narratives that introduce individuals in categories of insanity and criminality have been studied according to three different approaches: First, critical studies on narratives of trauma analyze these narratives in terms of victimization, denunciation and restoration.\(^{i}\) Second, other studies emphasize specifically on the discourse of individuals who find themselves in anomalous subjective positions as a result of traumatic experiences of physical and psychological violence. These studies observe the impossibility of reconstructing the actual experience and focus their attention

\(^{18}\) “Once interests have been defined within the confines of a society, the rational is the way in which people pursue those interest and attempt to realize them…But underneath that, you find desires, investments of desire that are not to be confused with investments of interest, and on which interests depend for their determination and very distribution: an enormous flow, all kinds of libidinal-unconscious flows that constitute the delirium of this society” (Deleuze, Gilles. Parnet, Claire, Dialogues 263).

\(^{19}\) For the truth of the matter—the glaring, sober truth that resides in delirium—is that there is no such thing as relatively independent spheres or circuits: production is immediately consumption and a recording process (enregistrement), without any sort of mediation,\(^{7}\) and the recording process and consumption directly determine production, though they do so within the production process itself. Hence everything is production: production of productions, of actions and of passions; productions of recording processes, of distributions and of co-ordinates that serve as points of reference; productions of consumptions, of sensual pleasures, of anxieties, and of pain. (Anti-Oedipus 4)
on what resists representation. Third, these narratives are framed within the discussion of the fictional discourse as a possible site for reimagining the nation and/ or historical revision.

These approaches emphasize on literature as a cultural product that has a fundamental role in social processes of restoration and healing in the aftermath of historical events marked by extreme violence and repression. Literature appears as an instrument to contest the official history and give voice to those who have been silenced. Furthermore, critical reception on some of these texts have emphasized on their quality as deviant narratives that resist the market’s demand for a content that supports the process of reconciliation with the past and a language that is easy to consume and that provides entertainment and a cathartic effect.

In *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War* Jean Franco problematizes the terms official history, the story of the oppressed and the market’s demand for sensationalism in narratives of trauma. In the chapter entitled “Obstinate Memory: Tainted History” Franco observes how the narration of torture has even become exploited to add sensationalism to a product and make it more marketable as a product of enjoyment. In *The Untimely Present Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning* Idelber Avelar considers the problem of present hegemonic political discourses that insist on the need to leave the past behind in order to move towards the future. He proposes the question on literature’s ability to seize hold of reminiscence in an environment where all material and cultural elements have become commodities, easily disposed and replaceable one after another. He finds a solution to his enquiry in a number of postdictatorial works that refuse story-telling

---

20 She refers to Lawrence Thornton *Imagining Argentina* and Omar Rivabella’s *Requiem for a woman’s soul.*

21 Jo Frazer In “Subverted Memories: Countermourning as Political Action in Chile” explains that the vocabulary of mourning supports the neoliberal discourse, since words such as compromise, opportunity, advantage, and reconciliation, “serve as a tool for soothing grief in order to supersede it” (108). She discusses how the “orphans of regime transition” (105) refuse to mourn and renounce the past and aims for a politics that integrates their memories in the construction of a possible future. Frazier mentions the works of Guillermo Ross-Murray as an example.
and undertake the task of mourning. Avelar suggests these narratives reduce the object of mourning to phantasmic doubles, “fantasized materializations of the world’s unnameable traumatic referent” (8). Mournful literature, therefore, looks for objects that can trigger the eruption of the traumatic past to ensure that the subject accepts and comes to terms with trauma. The purpose, however, of this task is to evince the impossibility to achieve a complete closure, since in mourning the libido reinvests a new object of affection but this substitution never erases the past because there is an unresolved remainder that Avelar describes as “the allegorically charged ruin” (10). In this way the literary work undertakes a process of active forgetting as opposed to the passive forgetting demanded by hegemonic political discourse. According to Avelar these narratives seek no rectification, no imaginary healing, they go beyond resistance by generating “a topology of defeat” (15) that avoids wrongdoing to be passively lost in oblivion.

This dissertation joins these and similar studies in their effort to maintain a space for reflection and discussion to counteract the general tendency to forget how our libidinal investments determine the historical becoming, and continue to mechanically consume and discard cultural products, in specific literary productions. By observing the protocols used by the text to render problematic the power structures’ strategic manipulation of discourses to ensure subjectification, this dissertation seeks to underscore the literary text is inherently political.

Critical literature on deviant subjectivities includes studies that rely on psychoanalysis for an interpretative approach. For example in her essay on Bolaño’s narrative “Pobre memoria la mía: Literatura y melancolía en el contexto de la postdictadura chilena,” Paula Aguilar observes the persistence of the question how to narrate the past. She identifies the narrator’s melancholic

---

22 “Roberto Bolaño no está ni en un extremo ni en el otro. Expone una estética que rechaza los significados totalizadores, que imposibilita una lectura que ponga en primer plano lo ideológico a partir de ambigüedades que iluminan zonas de homenaje-deuda a una generación de militantes de izquierda pero desde un distanciamiento
position as an aesthetic possibility to convey a disillusioned worldview after the dictatorship. Both Idelber Avelar and Paula Aguilar identify in these narratives the use of psychoanalysis as material for fiction and also as a productive lens for interpretation. They observe an active determination in the narrative voice’s melancholic position, which perpetuates, despite all, its denunciation, and resistance against both amnesia and exoneration. This melancholic position implies an active search, in which memory and writing seek to re-elaborate significations and new forms to render account on how horror affects all individuals.

Julio Premat in his book *La dicha de Saturno*, dedicated to the study of Juan José Saer’s narrative, also relates writing with the task of mourning. Symptoms such as sadness, obsession with the past, apathy, confusion, the inability to find any sense or meaning on the surrounding reality are mentioned by Premat as signs that the narrator writes from a melancholic position. Premat explains Saer’s narrators speak with a pessimistic tone searching in silence for something that escapes them. They are fixed in the contemplation of an object that resists representation: the other, the Real, and death. Premat proposes Saer’s path for this search is a return to the origin. For Premat there is an archetypal journey to the realm of the mother and a consequent reentry into the symbolic that renders multiple significations. Premat concludes that even though these significations do not provide a final resolution they do provide the text with a general sense.

---

23 Literature is marked by the failure of the great ideological narratives and the heroic enterprises of a whole generation. The texts reject totalizing ideological discourses but constitute a sad homage to those who were militants for the left and who disappeared.

24 Premat identifies three levels that work in a parallel correlation in Saer’s narrative. The first level works within the diegesis of the texts as a return to a geographical origin. The second level relates to the libidinal dimension of literary representation, Premat proposes Saer writes primary scenes in which he displays the different stages that constitute the oedipal conflict as part of the process of individual’s subjective formation as a rational and speaking being. The third level is concerned with writing, Premat is interested in the original threshold that goes from phantasm to literature. He concentrates on these three levels as part of one and the same process.
What separates this dissertation from the studies mentioned is a matter of approach. While I agree with Avelar in his proposal that an active dwelling on the object of mourning supports processes of resistance against the market’s imperative to forget, I contend that the narrator’s melancholic position is not the only possible anomalous subjective position that takes place in Post-dictatorial narratives. Instead I propose that some narratives introduce narrators and characters that fall outside this psychoanalytical category that defines subjectivity as the continuous circling around a lost object. I suggest some of these texts display delirious narratives that take failure and loss not as their final determination but as a point of departure to generate alternative processes of subjective transformation.

While I also observe the narrative’s use of the psychoanalytical machine, my enquiry seeks to identify whether it is displayed to illustrate universal determinants or if it is connected to the narrative in order to contest these definitions and evince the libidinal investment of the social field. My reading approach moves from an archeological angle which seeks to dig out the individual experiences that caused the trauma to a cartographic perspective which aims to observe how the different machines work and the lines of flight the literary work is able to draw in search of future possibilities.

This new approach is justified in the fact that thinking these anomalous subjective positions beyond discourses of trauma and marginality is itself an attempt to contest the hegemonic discourse. This study does not aim to celebrate or justify transgression, delinquency, or madness. It enquires on the narrative’s treatment of the subjective structure of affectivity that provides alternative modes of experimentation that deviate from current determinations imposed by a market driven society. I seek to observe if there is an alternative possibility that might keep individuals and collectivities from perpetuating the paradigms of power. When structures of
power fail to comply with their promise of humanity’s progress and well-being it becomes an ethical imperative to find new theoretical frames to define what we need as a society. I conceive literature as a creative space where these new alternatives can be outlined. The narratives I discuss in this dissertation deal with the other, the heterogeneous, and the excess and display alternative possibilities of seeing the world that can potentially support individual processes of subjective survival and social and political transformations. Consequently, I emphasize these narratives’ resistance to become a consumable product of the market but I also observe their potential to generate fissures in the hegemonic discourse by outlining alternative possibilities of being in the world. 

The corpus I examine includes four representative Latin American authors, Laura Restrepo, Roberto Bolaño, Diamela Eltit, and Juan José Saer, whose works outline anomalous subjective positions in the context of extreme socio historical upheavals. These texts locate themselves in transitional moments of power redistribution, in the case of Saer, Eltit and Bolaño from dictatorship to a Neoliberal democratic state, and from civil war to a Neoliberal discourse on terrorism in Restrepo. Within the transition, individuals and collectivities found themselves pushed into the neoliberal path as the only possible exit road; however, certain elements remained in the interstice, resisting the strong current that demanded their allegiance to the cause.

In chapter 2 I analyze Laura Restrepo’s novel Delirio (2004). My enquiry focuses on the protocols used by this novel to render visible the unconscious libidinal investments that permeate the social field and that determine both the revolutionary and reactionary empowerment of every

---

25 To flee, however, is not just to escape, but also "to make something flee" (faire fuir quelque chose), "to make a system leak (faire fuir un systeme, fuir) having the sense of both "to flee" and "to leak" as one breaks a pipe" (Deleuze, Gilles. Parnet, Claire, Dialogues 47).
character within the novel. I observe the strategies and devices the novel implements to diagnose the underlying cause of the violent encounter of different legal and illegal structures of power within the context of the so-called “cartel war” of the eighties in Colombia.

*Delirio* focuses on the fundamental role of world-historical experiences, such as migrations, deterritorializations, and social struggles, in processes of subjectification. Individuals appear, therefore, as objects permeated by the river of a virtual flow whose content includes both individual and world-historical elements. In accordance with the psychoanalytical machine, the novel suggests an archeological approach of digging out scenes of violence and repression as a therapeutic method. In the context of the political debate in Colombia, this novel demands for a confrontation with the truth about the social and political elite’s involvement with drug-trafficking, paramilitary violence and corruption as the first step to find a solution to the individual and historical trauma.

The social machines presented in the novel are evidence of the capitalist *socius’* production of new codes of social delimitation according to former codes of exclusion from the prior regime. *Delirum* presents the struggle between individuals transgressing the limits of social determination and a *socius* which reterritorializes them with mechanisms of exclusion, criminalization, and institutionalization. *Delirium* emphasizes on the fascist unconscious libidinal investments underlying the mechanisms of interpellation in individual and collective processes of subjectification in the context of Neoliberalism, the war on drugs and terrorism of the eighties and nineties in Colombia.

In chapter 3 I analyze the novels *Nocturno de Chile* and *Estrella Distante* by Roberto Bolaño. I concentrate on the main characters of each narrative, Wieder and Urrutia, which appear on a first reading as absolute opposites but on a closer look are evidence of a parallel desire
investment. Urrutia and Wieder shape postures and attitudes and channel desire into lines of passion for exclusion and the purification of the race. The difference between them is that while Urrutia hides his desire to annihilate the other Wieder literary puts it in display through his artistic exhibitions.

Wieder goes against a fundamental strategy of control by exposing the body of those who are meant to remain with the status of “desaparecidos.” Wieder fails to keep the pact of silence and connivance as torturer and assassin of the dictatorial regime. He is then displaced to a position of marginality due to its deviant conduct. He is a threat to the regime because he exposes its anarchical tendency. Urrutia, on the other hand, is a paranoiac psychotic who realizes the law that gave consistency to his subjectivity is a discursive fabrication. He finds himself in a melancholic position as he identifies himself with the corpses floating on the river of shit left by the regime’s violence. This melancholic position entails for Urrutia a confrontation with the object and as a consequence the realization of one’s individual responsibility for the shipwreck.

These characters’ deviant behaviors demonstrate that the lines of passion that constitute individual’s subjectification are not simply tendencies that determine relations among individuals, but part of what underlies all social phenomena. Historical becoming is fundamentally determined by desire’s investment on every individual and every segment of society. The narratives’ strategy is to emphasize on the singularity of these specific characters and create fictional universes around them in order to reflect on other segments of society that might be considered without responsibility for state violence. Political repression is not only found in large aggregate bodies like military institutions or revolutionary groups, desire is invested first of all at the micro-political level in specific segments of society like the family, churches, poetry clubs, and intellectual circles to mention some examples. These two texts
motivate a consideration on the fact that authoritarian systems succeed in applying repressive mechanism of control only when there is a fascist libidinal investment permeating the entire social fabric.

In chapter 4 I analyze *Los vigilantes* by Diamela Eltit. I observe the different intellectual, physical, psychological, and linguistic attributes of an anomalous narrative voice and its ability to extricate the protagonist from its subjection to a structure of power. This anomalous voice defines the line of flight from normative subjectification towards an alternative subjective transformation.

*Los vigilantes* displays two different narrative devices on a first level it presents the family triangle as an allegory of the nation, and on a second level it presents a metafictional device: the text addresses the narrator’s struggle with the page in an ongoing attempt to leave the stratified territory of symbolic language. The anomalous voice illustrates the opposition between the mechanized writing of the epistolary task and the work of the artisan who experiments with language in an undetermined form. What gives coherence to these parallel levels is the narrative’s desire to generate lines of flight from repressive systems and liberate the flow of creativity to pursue subjective transformations as an alternative to the regime’s normative subjectification.

In the first part of this chapter I concentrate on *Los vigilantes* as a symptomatic narrative in order to observe the context that outlines the novel’s spaces of stratification; in the second part, I concentrate on the movements of deterritorialization from these enclosures. *Los vigilantes* is divided in two voices one that writes and another that does not speak but manifests itself. These two voices constitute the text’s radical passivity; it is the submission to itself as if it were an exterior pre-symbolic voice. Consequently, I observe how *Los vigilantes* illustrates a specific
episode within the creative process, the intense force of a flow that tries to irrupt in the written word. My objective is to draw conclusions on the implications of these parallel processes of deterritorialization on both the inscribing surfaces: the *socius* and the page.

In Chapter 5 I analyze Juan José Saer’s *Las nubes*. This text uses the topos of the journey to illustrate a process of subjective transformation. This process is displayed in five different stages that correspond to five different movements of deterritorializations from the stratified territory of the city, the site of order and culture to the non-stratified space of the desert, the site of nature and nomadism, and back to the stratified territory. This cartographic disposition illustrates the struggle of forces between a group of individuals who find themselves in anomalous subjective positions and the *socius’* persistent repressive tendency to overcode every flow. Each territory and zone of fluidity exemplifies the *socius’* regulation of desire as flows continuously draw lines of flight moving into new territories.

In this text I observe the diverse and contradictory definitions of the concept of revolutionary fervor as they appear in each unique patient’s delirium. This revolutionary fervor in principle is meant to motivate individuals to run free of any restraining system and accomplish a new life for the collectivity. However, it is also manipulated to appropriate and control everyone’s desire and pursue personal interests. Power structures work under the pretense of progressive causes while hiding their tyrannical obsession.

Saer’s narrative uses different bodies of water to illustrate different states of subjective transformations. When the *socius* is permeated by a prevalent fascist libidinal investment individuals suffer traumatic experiences and fall into depression, this is compared to drowning in putrefied waters. The narrative then suggests as an alternative to cope with the threat of these dark waters to give into delirium. Delirium is a mechanism to maintain subjective consistency,
giving into delirium means giving room to desire to create new alternatives of life. Consequently, delirium and writing are placed in parallel. Delirium, and writing as a delirious task, is a mechanism of regulation, not repression, of desire used by individual subjectivities to maintain their mental health.
2. Psychotic determination in *Delirio* by Laura Restrepo

In 2004 Laura Restrepo was awarded the Alfaguara Literary Prize for her novel *Delirio* (2004) by a jury that included Nobel Prize winner Jose Saramago. This prize has afforded the author international recognition; her novels have been translated to all major languages, and she is a popular invited speaker at international literary and political forums. She has written ten novels including *La novia oscura* (1999), *Multitud errante* (2001), and her latest *Hot Sur* (2012).

*Delirio* presents the story of three generations of a wealthy Colombian family that hides under appearances a history of mental illness, violence and corruption. Agustina, a woman in her thirties, who suffers from episodes of psychological disturbance, is the novel’s center of attention. Her husband Aguilar undertakes an investigation to find out what has triggered her current psychological crisis. Furthermore, Agustina occupies the position of the listener as a family friend reveals to her his own story as a middleman for Pablo Escobar. *Delirio* narrates a variety of stories from multiple points of views in order to display as a parallel the microcosm of Agustina’s family and the macrocosm of Colombia’s socio-political crisis during the eighties, with the objective of illustrating the interplay between individual and social processes of subjective transformation and the psychotic determination of the historical becoming.

*Delirio* follows some well-known conventions of the detective genre and is read as a case file composed of four different accounts that constitute all together the universe of the novel: the

---

26 In 1997, Restrepo won the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Prize at the Guadalajara International Book Fair for her novel *The Angel of Galilea*. In 2002 she won the Arzobispo San Clemente Award for her novel *Leopard in the Sun*. In 2004 Restrepo won the VII Premio Alfaguara de Novela for *Delirio*. She won the Grinzane Cavour Prize in Italy for best foreign fiction in 2006. In 2007 she won the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. Her novel *Dulce Compañía* won the Prix France Culture in France. “*Delirio* es una expresión de todo lo que Colombia tiene de fascinante, incluso de terriblemente fascinante. Y cuando el nivel de la escritura llega hasta donde lo llevó Laura Restrepo, hay que quitarse el sombrero. Lo digo en mi nombre y en nombre del jurado, que no ha ahorrado aplausos para esta obra.” José Saramago’s words as he awarded Laura Restrepo the Premio Alfaguara de Novela 2004.
first page of the novel opens with the detective’s statement as Aguilar undertakes an investigation on what caused his wife’s latest psychological crisis; the second account is Midas McAlister’s narration of his personal life as middleman within Pablo Escobar’s drug-trafficking machine; the third is Agustina herself who attempts to recount her traumatic childhood; finally, the fourth is the diary of Agustina’s grandparents. These different declarations are inserted one by one in short passages. The result is a puzzle-like structure to the novel; one that needs to be (re)-organized and deciphered in order to discover what triggered Agustina’s psychological breakdown.

The novel does not deal exclusively with the case study of one individual who was traumatized as a result of her father’s violence; her condition is evidence of a psychological condition affecting the entire social field. The narrative uses the strategy of presenting short interspersed passages, instead of presenting the narration of each character in different chapters, in order to show that the relationship between each passage is not linear but thematic; the different narrations discuss similar behaviors, conditions and symptoms of psychological distress in different characters. What these narrations have in common is the struggle between two opposing tendencies: individuals who try to move outside categories of social stratification, Midas McAlister’s ascend within the social ladder as an example of one of these movements, and a socius that continuously represses them.²⁷

The novel’s first page introduces Aguilar’s account of Agustina’s condition. Aguilar complains that Agustina does not interact with him. Even though he understands the words she

²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari introduce the term socius to refer to society as a milieu of inscription where every element, individual, movement is marked on its surface: “The prime function incumbent upon the socius, has always been to codify the flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not properly dammed up, channeled, regulated” (Anti-Oedipus 33). “Desiring-production also exists from the beginning: there is desiring-production from the moment there is social production and reproduction…To code desire—and the fear, the anguish of decoded flows—is the business of the socius” (Anti-Oedipus 139).
uses the meaning of her statements remains incomprehensible. Aguilar undertakes his investigation because he believes revealing the past will help her go back to her usual self, the woman who despite eccentric, rebellious and temperamental tendencies maintains rational conduct and meaningful communication with him. Aguilar assumes Agustina’s psychological disorder is exclusively related to her personal history, consequently, his enquiry focuses on her family and the people she interacted with during his absence.

_Delirio_ presents an ineffective detective who follows the thread of his wife’s sickness without ever finding a solution to the puzzle. Aguilar, the husband-turned-detective, starts out as a model of the rational male but becomes an anti-detective seduced by the flows of madness and chaos that surround his wife and her family. He realizes early on that he is an unlikely person for the task when he notes the aimlessness of his searches in the city: “yo arranqué a caminar sin ton ni son por el frío de las calles con las manos entre los bolsillos y el cuello de la gabardina levantado, Humphrey Bogart de pacotilla” (66). Aguilar is unable to find an answer to what triggered his wife’s mental state and he fails to apprehend the socio-historical dimension of his wife’s madness. He remains so immersed in his obsession with her whereabouts the weekend he left that he is unable to observe that her delirium relates to circumstances that go beyond the family. Accordingly the sections where Aguilar narrates reveal more about his own preconceptions and insecurities than about what caused Agustina’s psychological crisis. The novel is then complemented by the other declarations, which reveal that a process of subjective transformation underlies Agustina’s delirious discourse and erratic behavior. She, her family and

---

28 “I went out to walk the streets aimlessly in the cold with my hands in my pockets and the collar of my raincoat turned up, a third-rate Humphrey Bogart among the fierce transvestites and the college-girl prostitutes in skintight jeans” (127). Hereafter the citations from the novels will be included within the text with the original’s pagination and in the footnotes with the corresponding pagination of the translated edition.
the whole social field are invested in the same libidinal flows that determine the development of psychotic symptoms.

Aguilar describes Agustina’s behavior from the position of the rational man, making evident his preconceptions of mental illness. Aguilar’s reflections on madness indicate he has three general assumptions. First, that madness is an object of abjection that can only lead to self-destruction, “la locura es un compendio de cosas desagradables, por ejemplo es pedante, es odiosa y es tortuosa” (107). Second, the content of delirium is a fabrication that has nothing to do with reality, “demencia, vieja conocida, zorra jodida, reconozco tus métodos camaleónicos, te alimentas de la normalidad y la utilizas para tus propios fines, o te le asemejas tanto que la suplantas” (125); And third, rationality immunizes against madness. Aguilar positions himself in a practical, distant position from the chaotic unfolding of the violence and assumes, as he defines it, a rational attitude towards the elements in conflict. Expressions such as “ha tratado por todos los medios de hacerla entrar en razón” (1) evidence Aguilar’s reliance on rationality as the only possible state of mind that guarantees a minimum of order when confronted with chaos. Aguilar sees the madman emptied out of reality but invaded by an alienation that uses the logic of rationality to mimic reality; he is unable to make a connection between Agustina’s psychological condition and the psychotic determination of the whole social milieu.

In *Madness and Civilization* Michel Foucault explains that in subjectification the rational individual defines himself in opposition to the other who is an object of abjection, he “must watch out for and guard against the subterranean danger of unreason, that threatening space of an

---

29 “Pedantic, hateful, tortuous, petrifying and horrendous” (129)

30 “Dementia my old friend, wily bitch, I recognize your chameleon like methods, you feed on normality and tum it to your own ends, or you mimic it so well you supplant it” (125)

31 “I’ve tried everything to make her see reason” (1)
absolute freedom” (83). The rational man avoids madness’ bedazzlement by trusting his sanity to his rationality. Aguilar avoids seeing the truth manifested in madness about the psychotic tendency of the social field and guards himself in the darkness of his reason.32

Aguilar is not aware of the fact that what he considers madness is the result of a set of learned truths about what constitutes the rational and the irrational, the same set of learned rules that define who is ‘someone’ and who is not.33 Despite his efforts to acquire an intellectual formation he is still not given his corresponding status within the social hierarchy by either Agustina’s family or society in general. He resigns his position at the National University for a less prestigious activity that grants him better financial compensation but he is still unrecognized by the social field because he cannot trace his ancestry to a wealthy European family “Aguilar será siempre invisible porque le faltó ropón” (136), he is the “invisible man,” because he is recoded as “a nobody.”34 The novel, then, disarticulates Aguilar’s assumptions on Agustina’s condition by revealing he is also an object of abjection within the social milieu.

Aguilar’s approach is ineffective because it maintains a narrow lens of observation focused on Agustina’s family. The title of the novel, Delirio, comprises a definition of delirium that goes beyond clinical and psychoanalytical definitions of individual development. The novel

32 “The rational man must watch out for and guard against the subterranean danger of unreason, that threatening space of an absolute freedom” (Foucault, Madness and Civilization. 83).

33 “Agustina esté enferma, pero eso no quiere decir que no haya hecho todo lo que ha estado a mi alcance por curarla, con decirle que dejé mi trabajo como profesor, bueno, al principio fue porque cerraron la universidad, pero como cualquiera sabe la reabrieron hace meses, lo que pasa es que la Purina si me deja tiempo libre para darle a ella la atención que requiere” (105). “I even left my job as a professor, well, at first it was because they closed the university, but as everyone knows it reopened months ago, and Purina leaves me enough free time to give her the attention she needs”(252).

34 “Por eso me he vuelto invisible, desde que Agustina no me ve, me he vuelto el hombre invisible (67) “I've become invisible, ever since Agustina won't see me, I've become the invisible man” (63). “Aguilar, mi reina Agustina, decir que tu madre lo odia es hacerle a él un favor, porque la verdad es que tu madre ni lo ve siquiera, y a la hora de la verdad tampoco lo ves tú, no hay nada que hacer, así se sacrifique y se santifique por ti, Aguilar será siempre invisible porque le faltó ropón” (136). “No matter how he martyrs himself for you, Aguilar will always be invisible because he didn't have a christening gown” (138).
places alongside the individual and the social emphasizing Agustina’s delirium exceeds her personal experience. It seems productive, therefore, to bring about an alternative definition of delirium in order to analyze what the novel accomplishes by placing in parallel these two realms. Consequently, in this chapter I will discuss delirium in this novel using both its Lacanian definition as well as the one formulated by Deleuze and Guattari.

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari define delirium as the recording of both revolutionary and fascist libidinal investments that permeate the entire social field generating socio, political and historical determinations. They explain the libido invests the social field with two types of flows, “revolutionary and fascist,” which underlie individual and collective behaviors and interactions (378). In *Essays Critical and Clinical* Deleuze explains delirium’s revolutionary flows can be “the measure of health when it invokes this oppressed bastard race that ceaselessly stirs beneath dominations, resisting everything that crushes and imprisons, a race that is outlined in relief in literature as process” (4). The higher the investment of revolutionary flows the stronger is the reaction of the fascist investments, causing the emergence of psychotic machines whose sole purpose is to control all revolutionary flows, “delirium is a disease, the disease par excellence, whenever it erects a race it claims is pure and dominant” (Deleuze, Critical 4).

*Delirio* presents characters invested by revolutionary flows that drive them to break the boundaries of social determination and a social field that reacts in order to counteract this fleeing tendency. Each narrator refers to a different historical time demonstrating this struggle of libidinal investments is not an isolated phenomenon but a persistent condition of the social field. The prevalence of fascist libidinal investments marks the violent and repressive determination of historical becoming. The novel’s political objective, then, is to contest the general assumption
that the violence during the eighties in Colombia was exclusively related to the cartel war but a more extensive social and historical phenomenon. Corruption indicates the predominance of fascist investments underlining all social and political struggles throughout the country’s history.

In *Proust and Signs* Deleuze introduces the idea that the literary text is a narrative machine that produces effects, “it is the work of art that produces within itself and upon itself its own effects, and is filled with them and nourished by them: the work of art is nourished by the truths it engenders” (154). In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze elaborates with Guattari on this concept, they propose that in order to work and produce these effects the literary machine “must be plugged into other machines” (5); they give the example of Kafka’s narratives that connect to a bureaucratic machine. I am resorting to this concept of the literary text as a narrative machine in order to observe what type of effects this novel produces. *Delirio* is an assemblage of different narrative machines that connect with social machines. For example, the different sections that narrate Agustina’s grandparents’ story constitute a diary narrative machine that connects with a psychoanalytical machine of dreams’ interpretation, and a delirious machine. In this chapter I analyze two different narrative machines in order to observe what each machine produces and how they relate to each other. My main objective is to demonstrate that *Delirio* uses these two narrative machines in order to display the interplay between individual and collective processes of subjective transformation.

2.1. **The psychoanalytical machine**

The novel connects a detective narrative machine with a psychoanalytical machine of interpretation. The novel’s dynamic of giving clues by using the testimony of different characters implies the assumption that memory and recollection can be a factor when confronting traumatic experiences and promoting healing. The omniscient third person narrator, who is not identified
by any of the characters, is located in the same subjective position in relation to the characters’ personal history. The third person narrator is then both the detective who receives all testimonies and the analyst who interprets all discourses. For example, the testimony of Agustina’s childhood is presented as a psychoanalytical case study in two interspersed voices: the third person narrator occupies the position of interpreter; this narrator relates the words of a voice that is Agustina as a child recalling her fears, “el padre cierra bien la casa y la hija le dice sin palabras Tú eres el poder, tú eres el poder verdadero y ante ti me doblego” (81). This transition of narrative persons within the same sentence conveys the scenario of a psychoanalytical practice in which the analyst applies a process of regression as the strategy to bring up to light past traumatic experiences.

*Delirio* assembles a coherent psychoanalytical matrix as its fundamental grid. The novel can be read as an array of psychoanalytical cases, each concerning the different delirious characters: Agustina, Portulinus, Ilse, and the rest of the family. On the one hand, the novel stages a family theater where childhood sexuality, including homosexual tendency, is repressed; on the other, as the narrative steps from the private to the public sphere, the novel emphasizes the relevance of violence as a traumatic experience. This extensive psychoanalytical display explores and evaluates different diagnoses. First it discards universal definitions of castration within the oedipal matrix and then it reterritorializes within the psychoanalytical machine as it maintains its emphasis on the familiar trauma and guides its diagnosis to the definition of a different universal concept: foreclosure; the narrative observes how the incompetence of an unfit father figure, provider of a model of the Law, produces the failure of the main signifier and leaves a hole in the place of signification.

35 “But her father locks up the house tight, and Agustina says to him wordlessly, You are the power, you are the true power, and I bow down before You” (77).
Agustina’s family is characterized by their adherence to strict and unquestioned heterosexuality, one which goes hand-in-hand with the valuation of hyper-masculinity; for example the younger son’s tenderness towards a baby triggers the violent reaction of the father “¡hable como un hombre, carajo, no sea maricón!” (220). As it is also the case in these traditional models of the family, there is a wide gap between gender roles. On the one end there stands a domineering father and an older brother and on the other, a weak and fearful mother along with the youngest sensitive child. Agustina’s relationship to each one of them becomes conflicting as she becomes exasperated both by ones’ inability to stand up for themselves and the others' cruelty. Agustina feels unrecognized, alienated, and impotent to solve the differences between polarities. Agustina’s distancing from her mother is due to her role as accomplice of the father’s violence, “tú desconoces los recursos de la madre, no debes confiar en ella, tenle miedo a la extrema debilidad de la madre, la debilidad de la madre es más peligrosa que la ira del Padre” (226).

---

36 “Talk like a man, for God's sake, not a queer!” (230).

37 Agustina expresses her feelings towards each member of the family: the rivalry with her mother, her resentment towards her father's distance and preference for her brothers, and the anguish of losing him. On a first reading it is tempting to identify psychoanalytical theories of childhood sexuality and subjectivity within these first passages, which would lead the reader into assigning Agustina a diagnosis of neurosis. As her unfulfilled desire had remained suppressed in her unconscious, something in her present adulthood had uprooted the traumatic experience from the unconscious and turned into a neurosis. However, as the narrative unfolds it becomes evident Agustina’s trauma is related to the dynamics of power within the microcosm of the family. Agustina’s relationship to the family patriarch is in fact a plea for affection, a supplication that is never fulfilled in this patriarchal and male-loving household. Agustina presents the first symptoms of childhood aggressiveness as she sees others receiving that affection she is unable to elicit from her father.

38 Once the father dies Joaco the oldest son takes control of the house and Eugenia locates herself once again on a secondary position. When referring to compulsory heterosexuality, Adrienne Rich explains what women’s male-identification means: “Male identification is the act whereby women place men above women, including themselves, in credibility, status, and importance in most situations, regardless of the comparative quality the women may bring to the situation.... Interaction with women is seen as a lesser form of relating on every level” (“Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” 39)

39 “Don't do it, Bichi you don't know what the mother is capable of, you shouldn't trust her, you should fear the mother's extreme weakness, the mother's weakness is more dangerous that the Father's wrath” (236).
Sexuality is not a private matter but a socio-political element that requires stratification in institutions such as marriage. Agustina’s mother, Eugenia, complies with the phallocentric order because of her reactionary tendency to maintain sexual libido within the institution. Her aversion to sexuality relates to values of virtue and decency, elements that determine the family’s position within a social circle. The fear of non-normative sexual behavior can be traced back to Agustina’s grandaunt Ilse whose behavior marked the disgrace of the entire family. The grandparents’ diaries reveal Ilse had a medical condition that pushed her to incessantly scratch her genitals. Even though it is evident that Ilse’s behavior is a medical condition and not the sign of a perverse tendency her parents interpret it as “actos impropios y muy desagradables” that must be punished with violence and confinement.

Agustina’s father, as Ilse’s father, acts as a despot, he imposes his authority with violence because he fears any sexual transgression or deviance might compromise his status within the social hierarchy, aware of the sexual flow he attaches all the organs and bodies to his own body in order to control the flow of sexual desire: He assumes the teaching of gender normality to his sons and claims ownership on the body of his daughter Agustina, his wife and even his sister in

40 When Eugenia is informed of her daughter’s delirium, her defense mechanism is to deny the existence of a real problem. She decides that the right treatment for her would be to fly to the United States and find an expensive spa to escape reality. Even when the family has been fragmented for years, Eugenia still feels the need to cover up her daughter’s state so that her circle might not find out about her mental breakdown.

41 Ilse loses all her productive functions and, driven both by pain and pleasure, becomes a dysfunctional masturbating machine, “un progresivo volcarse hacia adentro de tal manera que lo que de ella se percibía desde el exterior era una desconcertante y para muchos intolerable combinación de introspección y exhibición, de catatonia y masturbación”.

42 “Cochina, eso es sucio, y lo veía recurrir a la fuerza física, entre energúmeno y transido, para impedir que ella se llevara la mano allá abajo, que era lo peor que podia sucederle a la familia; cualquier cosa es preferible, lloraba la señora madre, cualquier cosa, hasta la muerte” (239).
He is a despot because he positions himself at the center of power as supreme ruler; he lives under the menace of individuals giving into desire, consequently he seeks to canalize all desire into socially accepted practices in order to perpetuate his status.

The regulation on sexuality does not relate to moral or religious values but to social and economic consequences: Sexuality is tolerated as long as it does not disturb the social status of the family. Any behavior that does not conform to tradition would imply the mark of ignominy and generate economic consequences; Eugenia is extremely aware of the *socius*’ inscribing mechanisms and sacrifices even her own dignity to maintain appearances. Sophie, for example, contributes to the function of the family as care giver, she is attached as a second wife to the family structure and as long as the transgression is kept inside closed doors it can be tolerated. Any non-heteronormative behavior is discredited since it might generate a domino effect: the family will be marked and inscribed with a negative sign and this will keep them from generating new alliances required for economic stability in the future. This connection between sexuality and social inscription and its economic consequences is evident in Midas McAlister’s relationship with Agustina: Despite the premarital relation and consequent abortion, Midas McAlister is still welcomed in the family home because their affair has been kept a secret and because financial stability depends on his position as manager of their underground illegal investments. Sexuality is not repressed because of moral concerns but because the liberation of

---

43 Eugenia turns a blind eye to the affair because she adheres to this phallocentric ruling of male ownership over all female bodies: “Esa compulsión a censurar y reglamentar la vida sexual de los otros fue una actitud que compartió con Carlos Vicente, en esa inclinación sombría se encontraban los dos, ahí coincidían, ahí eran cómplices y ése era el pilar de la autoridad tanto del uno como del otro, algo así como la columna vertebral de la dignidad de la familia, como si por aprendizaje hereditario supieran que adquiere el mando quien logra controlar la sexualidad del resto de la tribu” (217-218). “This compulsion to censure and regulate the sex life of others was something she shared with Carlos Vicente, the two were united by the joyless pursuit they coincided in it, they were accomplices in it, and it was the pillar of their authority, maybe even the mainstay of the family honor, as if by hereditary training they knew that whoever controls the sexuality of the rest of the tribe is in command…” (225)
its flow is recorded on the socius, individuals are marked, generating changes in the circulation of its elements.44

In “La frontera invisible: Razón y sinrazón” Elvira Sánchez-Blake refers to the intertextual relationship between Saramago’s Ensaio sobre a Cegueira (1995) and Delirio, and makes a connection between blindness and denial. She associates Saramago’s white cloud with society’s tendency to cover everything under appearances.45 Sánchez-Blake examines in contrast Foucault’s metaphor of the mirror for madness, “la capacidad del personaje de ser la receptora a nivel sensible de todos los procesos de encubrimiento y de falsedad que ocurren a su alrededor” (327).46 Agustina, is like the madman Foucault describes, she sees “a crystal ball, which for all others is empty, in her eyes filled with the density of an invisible knowledge” able to see behind the appearances (Foucault 19).47

---

44 “Society is not exchangist, the socius is inscriptive: not exchanging but marking bodies, which are part of the earth... the essential thing seemed to us to be, not exchange and circulation, which closely depend on the requirements of inscription, but inscription itself, with its imprint of fire, its alphabet inscribed in bodies, and its blocks of debts. The soft structure would never function, would never cause a circulation, without the hard machinic element that presides over inscriptions” (Anti-Oedipus 188)

45 Saramago’s white cloud is a metaphor of subjectification, “Saramago advierte a la humanidad sobre la nube blanca que le impide ver lo que sucede a su alrededor porque los sistemas de poder están diseñados para controlar lo que el individuo percibe de su entorno,” (Sánchez-Blake 334) it impedes individuals from seeing their surroundings; Delirio demonstrates individuals accept subjectification because it allows them to survive in denial of the prevalent horror, “Laura Restrepo transmite en su obra un mensaje que explica los orígenes del caos en que se encuentra sumida una región que vive bajo la inconsciencia de la hiperrealidad que escoge una mayoría para sobrevivir al horror de su existencia” (Sánchez-Blake 335).

46 Sánchez-Blake’s use of the mirror metaphor as defined by Foucault motivates my reflection on the definition of madness in Restrepo’s narrative. I think it is accurate to relate Foucault’s identification of the definition of the madman, as the one who witnesses “the strange path of knowledge” (Foucault 22) in the discourses from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, with the characteristics assigned to Agustina in Delirio. Foucault explains that one element that distinguishes these two historical periods is the change in the perception of madness from an enigmatic power of knowledge to idiocy, the fool believes in the reality of this knowledge. Parallel to Agustina’s description of her powers of divination, Delirio presents the perspective of both Aguilar and Midas for whom Agustina’s reading of the crease on the bed sheets and her rituals of cleansing are fundamentally signs of a senseless and maniac mind. Madness is not simply a diegetic resource in Restrepo’s narrative. It is a central theme in her fictional universe as an element that can be both an object of abjection and a position of empowerment.

47 “A mirror which without reflecting anything real, will secretly offer the man who observes himself in it the dream of his own presumption. Madness deals not as much with truth and the world, as with man and whatever truth about himself he is able to perceive”. (Foucault 23)
Since childhood, Agustina has understood that sexuality is something that must remain unspoken, but she is aware of its disruptive potential, “por fin Agustina había aprendido a hacer algo que acaparaba la atención de su padre” (188). Carlos Vicente sees his masculine supremacy threatened by the flow of sexual libido as it would deterritorialize Agustina’s organ out of his control and threaten future alliances and exchange possibilities.

In History of Sexuality Michel Foucault argues that power relationships have a relational character; the whole social field is organized by a power network that includes points of resistance. Deleuze and Guattari, elaborate on this notion and explain it is not simply that one body can exercise power over another body that resists it; if beings are affected by forces all individuals can use their power to maximize their potential. Agustina understands the symbolic potential of the phallus as the signifier of power, “su Gran Vela Blanca… su Gran Bastón de mando,” that kept all the female organs under his power (189). The description of the male organ as a “Great staff” demonstrates Agustina understands sexuality is an element subject to power dynamics. She also realizes that power is not something individuals own but something everyone, included her, has and can activate. Consequently, the competition with Carlos Vicente becomes a play of forces that changes from a vertical imposition, from despot to subject, to a horizontal encounter of adversaries.

48 "at last Agustina had learned to do something to get her father's attention” (195)

49 The *socius* is invested by two kinds of libidinal flows, a revolutionary flow that seeks to escape all restriction and a fascist flow that is reactionary and paranoiac. This means the fascist flow is permanently afraid of any possible production of the revolutionary flow so it imposes violent repression to prevent it.

50 “El muchacho del Volkswagen me invitó a cine pero no me llevó, estuvimos conversando sin salir del carro mientras comíamos perros calientes en el Crem Helado, hasta que él sacó del pantalón su Gran Vela Blanca,… se preguntó si también lo tendría el padre y si ése era su Gran Bastón de mando” (189).
“The boy in the Volkswagen had invited me to the movies but didn't take me there; we stayed in the car and talked, eating hot dogs at the Icy Cream, until he pulled his Great White Candle out of his pants... wondering whether her father had one, too, and whether it was the Great Staff with which he ruled” (194)
Agustina’s ritual with the photographs exposes the father’s vulnerability.\textsuperscript{51} These images in themselves have no value, only hidden they represent a threat. It is the knowledge of the father’s sexual libidinal investment and transgression of the law he himself embodies, what gives the children a sense of power over him. “las llaves de la destrucción sólo resplandecen e infunden terror mientras permanecen ocultas, me derrotas si las revelas y ante mi derrota ya nadie podrá protegerte de la mano del Padre” (226).\textsuperscript{52} The photographs are in themselves worthless but they are used in Agustina’s ritual as the signifier of power stripped from the father.\textsuperscript{53} On the side of the father, he represses the primitive scene: when he hid the photographs he believed he controlled power by deceiving his family. This repression, consequently, keeps him from finding out that Agustina has them. This neurotic structure defines Carlos Vicente’s dependence to social demands; he believes he is the holder of power without realizing he has been manipulated all along within the second position, he cannot strip himself of his subjectification. He is repressing his own inferiority complex of racial, economic and social ineptitude, the humiliation of having

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{51} This complicity can be seen in Nicholas with Ilse too. Portulinu believes this power comes from music as it has the potential to soothe his sister’s pain.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{52} “If you show them what you’ve got, if anyone else sees, the pictures will lose their value, if you show them my powers will slip through my fingers like water, because they're hidden powers and light makes them melt away, and I repeated the Warning: the keys of destruction only shine bright and instill terror so long as they're hidden, you'll vanquish me if you reveal them and once I'm vanquished no one will be able to protect you from the hand of the Father” (234).
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{53} The photographs have power provided they remain unrevealed. By prolonging its diversion they stand as a pure signifier. They are only useful as a thread to the father. As Lacan’s analysis of Poe’s Purloined letter observes, Agustina assumes the third position as holder of the signifier when she brings them out in the ritual; the father is relegated to the second position, like the minister, blinded to the fact that the signifier is not in his hands anymore. She deprives the father of his position as the signifier of the law and assumes this position as she holds the phallic signifier. The family as an institution is threatened by its content. Their display would definitely generate disarray within the structure. It could momentarily overthrow the father as the signifier of the law and transfer it to the mother, but as the diegesis proves she immediately restores his position betraying her children trust in her potential.
\end{flushright}
Agustina admires her father but she resents his violence against the youngest son. She observes the cowardice of an individual who beats a defenseless child. Agustina is in conflict with the parameters of gender differentiation that her parents impose on her and her siblings. Consequently, she rejects subjectification, the imposition of a self-knowledge according to the hegemonic discourse. If Carlos Vicente’s power resides in his violence, Agustina believes she has the gift of divination. She can foresee when the father is going to raise his hand and this gives her an advantage to warn her brother. She declares that she is empowered by a flow that shakes her and opens her eyes, giving her the ability to foresee the future. A child’s fabulation or delusion, this experience that borders outside the rational implies an anomalous subjective position; the power of divination, as Agustina defines it, is the vision that can only be achieved when one enters the decentered realm of the anomalous.

In her essay “La construcción del personaje femenino en Dulce compañía” Mery Cruz identifies similar characteristics in some of the female characters in this novel, the narrator, Ara, Ofelia, las locas, and las muñis share a sensitivity for the supernatural and the power of divination, “todas estas mujeres pertenecen a un mundo que está más cercano del misterio, de lo otro desconocido; pertenecen a un orden distinto del normal, distinto del patriarcal” (Cruz 140). VII In Delirio, Agustina is described as someone who is interested in esoteric knowledge and who performs rituals of purification. In addition, Agustina explains that when she feels the proximity

---

54 The father’s life is a total farce, the only time he gets to be himself is a week once a year when he is left alone with Sofi, and the rest is just the imposture of the traditional high class family man. He is a victim of the phallocentric order imposed by society to sustain the dual system of male supremacy. In order to keep his reputation, which guarantees his socioeconomic status, he has to maintain preexisting rules of behavior, clothing, attitudes, treatment of his wife, raising the children, etc.
of her powers, the “third call,” is a sensation between her legs, she identifies the source of the power that sends her the gift of sight in relation to the sexual libido and the feminine body. Delirio presents Agustina’s empowerment as a three step process of becoming- sorceress. A libidinal flow invests her from outside and she experiences a sequence of sensations: the flicker of the eyelids, the rolling of the eyes back in the head, the head tilts back, she feels sexual stimulation, and then she hears a voice that from the outside that urges her to perform the rituals. The anomalous in Restrepo’s narrative then deviates from subjectification and empirical knowledge and puts forward a collective, feminine, spiritual alternative that does not seek to reveal any mysteries but to dwell in its realm; the protagonist in Dulce compañía, for example, surrenders completely to the alleged angel.

The anomalous in Delirio is characterized by its intensity, fluidity, and multiplicity. The rituals with water create “quietos ojos que miran a la nada o al misterio” (15) and have the potential to protect individuals, like “las aguas del Estige” que hace a Aquiles “invulnerable” (5). Its intensity implies the experience of extreme sensations from a calming feeling to an absolute feverish state, “a Nicolás lo tranquiliza ver correr el agua del río, pero si la escena se prolonga demasiado, se empieza a exaltar y debemos alejarnos de allí cuanto antes” (115).

55 Agustina’s imaginary of herself is idiosyncratic of oral tradition as she describes herself as ‘la Llorona,’ the witch-like figure who seeks to take revenge for the violence and abuse of her male counterpart. “En cambio quando van a llegar se anuncian con un temblor en los párpados que lleva por nombre Primera Llamada, porque los poderes de Agustina eran, son, capacidad de los ojos de ver más allá hacia lo que ha de pasar y todavía no ha pasado. La Segunda Llamada es la libre voluntad con que la cabeza se le va hacia atrás como bajando una escalera, como si la nuca tironeara y la hiciera estremecerse y agitar el pelo como la Llorona Loca cuando vaga por el monte” (14). “When they’re going to come they announce their arrival with a flicker of the eyelids, the First Call, because Agustina's powers were, are, her eyes' ability to see beyond, to what's still to come, to what hasn't come yet. The Second Call is when the head tilts back of its own accord, as if it were descending a staircase, as if the neck were tugging it down and making it toss its hair like the Weeping Woman when she wanders the hills” (6).

56 “Quiet eyes of water open up, gazing into nothing or the unknown” (7). “When Achilles, he of the golden down, is bathed in the waters of the Styx to make him invincible” (17).

57 “When he's tired and nervous from too much work, it soothes Nicholas to watch the river, but if he stays too long, he begins to get excited and then we must leave as soon as possible” (114).
multiplicity is interpreted by the narrator as the sign of a maniac disorder, especially since Portulinus repeats the name in strictly alphabetical order, “el Aisch, el Aller y el Altnuh, el Recknitz, el Regen, el Rhein El Saale, el Sree, el Sude y el Tauber, el Warnow, el Warta” (115), but Portulinus explains this multiplicity is a line of flight that allows him to see everything at the molecular level: “yo vuelo sobre tu cabeza, liviano y sin ataduras, y comprendo la simetría de los cristales, los circuitos de la sangre, las analogías de los números, la marcha de las constelaciones, las etapas de la vida” (44). In *Essays Critical and Clinical* Deleuze explains delirium is not a familiar affair but a libidinal flow that “passes through peoples, races, and tribes, and that haunts universal history. All delirium is world-historical, a displacement of races and continents” (4).

Agustina’s grandfather, Portulinus displays a delirium that exceeds the familiar drama and comprises different world-historical elements such as geographical locations in Europe and Colombia, philosophical concerns with the universe and images of violence in remote historical locations.

*Delirio* points the potential of this realm but it also demonstrates there is a psychotic determination in Agustina that dooms her to a continuous return to the father. The description of her childhood memories anticipates that the anomalous remains as a possibility not pursued

---

58 “The Aisch, the Aller, and the Altmilh, the Warnow, the Warta, and the Weser, he does it in strict alphabetical order. A madman's habit, manias destined to send him to his grave, or to put it another way, tics and repetitions that help him disconnect from reality, or at least from what's real for someone like Blanca. The Saale, the Spree, the Sude, and the Tauber, intones Nicholas like a prayer, and inside of him a noise begins to echo and carries him away” (114).

“I fly over your head, light and unfettered, and comprehend the symmetry of crystals, the pathways of the blood, numbers and their analogies, the march of the constellations, the stages of life” (38).

59 Agustina displays her imaginary of a sacred offering in a ritual where she combines Christian and pagan elements. She plays the role of the priestess and performs actions that reveal her interpretation of the religious education she receives at school. The cleansing of the body, the diaper change of a baby Jesus and the offering of the sacrifice of the Agnus Dei that takes away the sins of the world, reveal her desire to forgive the father in the hope he might not sin again.
within the diegesis; the movement to a new possibility of subjectivity outside the law of the father seems unlikely even after Agustina decides to return to her grandparents’ house.

Agustina cannot remain silent and passive in the face of violence. She is invested by a revolutionary libidinal flow that motivates her to go against the standards of obedience and prudence imposed by her parents. At the same time, Agustina’s unconscious is invested by the same libidinal flow that characterizes her grandfather’s delirium, which gives her the experience of being empowered with a different vision and the potential to follow alternative subjective possibilities to the violent determination. However, this potential of the anomalous is completely repressed by the psychotic determination of the socius. Delirio illustrates the supremacy of the reactionary flow over the revolutionary in the metaphors of rivers of blood and water.

Agustina tries to invoke her powers with rituals of water but this attempt is unsuccessful and the experience in the realm of the anomalous, a subjective alternative, is denied to her. This is a consequence of the prevalence of rivers of blood that cannot be washed away with water. Her attempt to undertake a process of subjective transformation is overpowered by the socius’ psychotic determination. She is doomed to remain in a structure of eternal return to the signifying chain of trauma.

The incursion of the exterior within the household coincides with Agustina’s first experience with death. The neighborhood’s watchman is shot in front of the family home. Agustina’s parents are absent and their maid has momentarily left the children unsupervised. Agustina hears someone knocking at the door, so she opens and sees a dying man begging for a glass of water. When her parents return to find the dead man they tell the children to go to their rooms. Agustina does not understand what she sees, and her parents’ negligence to explain the event generates a new traumatic experience. The encounter with death generates the foreclosure
of meaning and the formation of a psychotic structure. Trauma occurs belatedly and through the repetition of the same signifying chain of this first scene. In Agustina’s case, this scene introduces a signifying chain of elements that include running blood, violence, corruption, death, fear, and all that should be forbidden, denied, and hidden.

In regards to language, Lacan argues there is synchronic dimension in language that marks an associative effect between signifiers (Écrits 95). The repetition of the traumatic experience maintains the structure of the same primitive scene but with different interrelations among the elements of the signifying chain. The traumatic scene is repeated when an event—the sight of spilled blood in the pool, her brother’s finger, the father’s wrath, street violence, and the terrorist attack to the DAS—triggers a connection among the series of signifiers from the first signifying chain. Years later Midas McAlister decides to take Agustina to a room where an assassination has taken place. Since she has acquired the reputation of having supernatural powers to locate lost individuals, he wants her to put on a show where she would tell everyone that she could visualize Dolores, the woman assassinated at the premises, alive and travelling abroad. Midas McAlister tells Agustina the details and circumstances of Dolores’ death, hoping she would help him with his farce, but as soon as Agustina finds herself in the site of the murder, images of the dead woman trigger the irruption of the traumatic scene with different interrelations between the signifiers in the signifying chain,

En el batuque de esa coctelera que es tu cerebro todo se convierte en un solo mazacote, patadas las que el espanto de tu padre difunto y el bestia de tu hermano Joaco le quieren dar al Bichi por andar mariconeando, pero que yo sepa a la Dolores lo único que no le dieron esa noche fue patadas. (260)\(^60\)

---

\(^60\) “I don't know what that whole blood thing was, because Dolores didn't lose a drop, the poor thing was all broken up inside but there was no blood to speak of...and still you insisted, you'd already started down that path and there
The novel defines Agustina’s madness within a psychotic structure of foreclosure. The content of Agustina’s delirious discourse is a signifying chain of elements where both familiar and social violence meet in a landscape of decomposition and death: Leper-fear-hand of the father-infection-blood-rotting skin-cemetery breath(dirty)-panic-abandonment; signifiers that spread like leprosy but always returning to the same center of empty signification, the hand of the father. Furthermore, Agustina relates the threat of madness with the leper as object of abjection, leprosy as the menace from the outside that seeks to invade not only her house but also her head,

Si él aprende a nombrarme me contamina, se vuelve dueño de mi nombre y se me cue la adentro, llega hasta el fondo de mi cabeza y ahí hace su cueva y se queda a vivir para siempre, en un nido de pánico. En el fondo de mi cabeza vive un pánico que se llama Lepra, que se llama Lazareto, que se llama Agua de Dios, y que tiene el don de ir cambiando de nombres. A veces, cuando hablo en Lengua, mi pánico se llama La Mano de mi Padre, y a medida que voy creciendo me voy dando cuenta de que hay otros acosos. (119) 

The persistence of the same elements within the signifying chain reveals a tendency to revolve around an empty whole of signification. In Agustina’s family the hand of the father failed to protect the children and was used to inflict violence; Agustina has learnt his moral standing was just a façade, his image as ideal husband, provider and protecting father had been tainted by unfaithfulness, corruption and violence, consequently, her conflict with the signifier of

---

61 “He’ll burrow deep in my head and make his cave there, in a nest of panic. Deep in my head there lives a panic called Leper, called leprosarium, called Agua de Dios that has the power to change its name whenever it wants. Sometimes, when I speak in Tongues, my panic is called the Hand of My Father, and as I grow up I realize that there are other threats” (119).
the father is not an Oedipal complex but a foreclusion of the main signifier due to an unfitting father; foreclusion that leaves a void where the main signifier would be found.\textsuperscript{ix}

The novel presents Agustina’s psychotic structure in order to bring attention to two factors that determine the psychotic determination of the historical becoming: there is no signifier of the law because of an ineffective judicial, economic, social and political system and instead of providing protection and well-being to individuals it activates paranoiac mechanisms of control that react with violence and repression. The novel emphasizes it is not simply a matter of blaming a state that has failed to ensure the conditions for the wellbeing of its citizens but as the corruption of the social and political elite that has inflicted violence as a reactionary measure to defer its imminent fall.

In “Vestigios de realismo mágico, narco-narrativa y escritura de mujer” Laura Romero Quintana underlines some of the characteristics of this group of rich individuals in the novel,

Cabe destacar el manejo del tema del narcotráfico realizado por la autora, al situar la marginalidad no en los sectores de clase baja y media sino en los más acomodados, donde Héctor Abad Faciolince (2008) localiza el desarrollo de una estética de narcotráfico asociada a la promulgación de los valores consumistas propios de la cultura norteamericana más pudiente y ostentosa. (24)

The novel presents a group of corrupt individuals who spend their time in social clubs, gyms and country houses. Even though the characteristics identified by Romero Quintana are depicted in the novel, these characters are not presented as marginal, with the exception of McAlister whom I will discuss in the next section, but parodied as a group in decline. These members of the social elite lose their position when their involvement with the drug organizations is exposed. The novel reveals the disclosure of their connection to the cocaine
mafia as the beginning of the fall of their supremacy as the ruling leaders within their families and society in general. This decadence is specially portrayed in the character of Spider Salazar whose sexual impotence stands as a symbol of the elite’s inability to maintain their power. On a final attempt to recover his virility, Spider Salazar asks Midas McAlister to hire a group of sadomasochistic performers. His masculinity has been subjected to humiliation, and this in turn, makes him want to inflict pain, “en esta instancia el delirio es paranoico porque le flujo del deseo se concentra en un objetivo: lograr la erección del falo respondiendo al código social que impone su supremacía como garantía de la masculinidad” (Montes 256). A final, desperate attempt to stand as the signifier of the law is to intimidate with all its violence those who have always been at the bottom of the hierarchy of power: a lower class woman, in Salazar’s case.62 This is the psychotic determination of the *socius*, the fascist and reactionary libidinal flow that invests individuals with the desire to occupy the position of the father, to privatize justice, take over the territory by force, and occupy the place of control in a society without law.

2.2. The drug trafficking machine

The passages where Midas McAlister relates his involvement with the drug trafficking machine are used within the novel to illustrate the definition of delirium as the compound of revolutionary and reactionary libidinal investments. The former generate movements across different social classes, while the latest reterritorialize them. Midas McAlister’s account

---

62 Adrienne rich refers to some men’s tendency to use women as a sexual commodity as a sign of compulsory heterosexuality. She challenges the messages that make “sexuality and violence congruent, and that for women essential masochistic, humiliation pleasurable, physical abuse erotic” (3). Salazar’s compulsory heterosexuality, driven to the extremes due to his inability to have an erection, encourages his desire to see pain in the other, the woman. By inflicting pain on the opposite sex, Salazar would position himself away from the center where his impotent penis has located him, towards the extreme masculine stereotype, brutality. However, what started as a sexual game to bring his virile member back to life turns into tragedy as him and his bodyguards torture the woman to death.
proposes the combination of social inequality and the capitalist *socius*’ revolutionary investment of interest, are major contributing factors to the drug trafficking machine.

*Delirio* dialogues with other Latin American literary narratives that seek to expose the historical inequality of land distribution and the agrarian problem in Latin America as a significant factor in the socio-political struggles of the twentieth century.\(^x\) It is no surprise that the novel frequently resorts to images of the family hacienda as part of the novel’s critique of nineteen-century imaginaries of the landed gentry.\(^{xi}\) More than a location, the hacienda plays a fundamental role in the Londoño family’s self-image.\(^{63}\) This is especially evident through the character of Joaco, who identifies with the country’s elite thanks to his image of the “hacendado”\(^{xii}\). Midas McAlister explains to Agustina that there are no entrepreneurial activities within the state, and the agricultural sources of the wealth are completely a façade; the land has become simply space for recreation, “…tu hermano, «Bisabuelo arriero, abuelo hacendado, hijo rentista y nieto pordiosero », o sea un lento espiral descendente…la riqueza originaria se va erosionando y de ella no van quedando sino el gesto, la pompa, el sentimiento de superioridad, el ademán de grandeza” (180).\(^{64}\) Joaco is the “hidalgo” who confronted with the possibility of being the beggar relies on crime to maintain his economic status.\(^{xiii}\)

The novel emphasizes the contrast between a member of the elite like Joaco and a subaltern individual like Midas McAlister, who also defines himself in relation to the land but precisely because not having it means he belongs to a different type of people. Joaco and

\(^{63}\) The family’s property in the highlands is the site where the first signs of psychological distress appear and the one in Sasaima where she has to return in order to dig out the answers for her healing. It is this trip, back to her grandparents’ farm, what closes the novel. The archeological approach of digging out the family history goes as far as the childhood of Agustina’s grandfather in Germany. Delirium relies on the psychoanalytical method according to which all present psychological symptoms find their root in past childhood traumas.

\(^{64}\) “Great grandfather a mule driver, grandfather lord of the manor, son a man of leisure, grandson a beggar… there’s a slow spiral downward, Agustina princess, with past splendor gradually losing its luster without anyone noticing and the original fortune dwindling until all that’s left are the mannerisms, the pomp, the sense of superiority, the grand gesture” (184).
McAlister meet on the first day of classes at an exceedingly costly school, where McAlister’s mother invested all her savings for his education, and Joaco beats him for wearing white socks, a clue to his humble origin. The first encounter between Joaco and McAlister illustrates a recurrent motif: the violence of the privileged one who disciplines the commoner for daring to cross the boundaries of the social coding. It is Joaco’s violent reaction that makes McAlister recognize his identity as the other. Exclusion, violence and humiliation are the punishment for attempting to cross into the territory of the elite. Nevertheless, McAlister refuses to assume his position as the marginal and to patiently accept the burden of his class. Naively he believes he has a special gift to interpret the codes of the social elite and assumes the challenge of imposture.

McAlister identifies with Lacoste’s little alligator logo what his classmates would consider as his mark of inscription among the high classes, but his efforts to master the code of appearances are worthless since he cannot strip himself of the colonial coding of servitude. Eventually he becomes aware of the classifying codes of filiation that keep him from belonging to the elite. He knows his friends are well aware of this lack and understands his position as their subaltern. His is a naïve perception caused by his reliance on the homeoconomicus imaginary.

Furthermore, there is a correlation between the colonial coding and the elite’s control over state institutions. This generates the commoner’s disregard for institutions and for the law in general. As a consequence, the humiliated victim seeks to take justice into his own hands and by any means including illegal activities. “… Your brother Joaco, young leader of the pack, came after me and beat me to a pulp, which I thank him for to this day because he walloped the whole fatherless-boy-from-the-provinces identity out of me once and for all, and that same afternoon I stole money from my mother's purse to buy myself black socks and a pair of jeans” (181).

“Pues si el problema es sólo de empaque, me dije ese día, y ya te advertí que sólo tenía trece años, entonces yo podré franquear esa diferencia infranqueable, y en efecto al cumplir los treinta ya la había franqueado… y sin embargo mirame hoy, convertido en la sombra de mi mismo, derrotado por ese error de percepción -a fin de cuentas no se podía esperar tanto de la inteligencia de un niño- que consistió en deducir que la diferencia era mera cuestión de empaque. No lo era, claro que no lo era, y heme aquí pagando con sangre mi equivocación.” (181) “Well, if it's just a question of packaging, I said to myself that day (and I've already told you that I was only thirteen), then I'll be able to bridge that seemingly unbridgeable gap, and in fact by the time I was thirty I had bridged it.. and yet look at me today, a shadow of my former self, brought down by the mistaken perception” (187).
As Montes explains “la definición de Midas como individuo depende del medio social en el cual crece y de los flujos del deseo que allí se fomentan” (255). This flow, however, is not unconscious libido but the revolutionary investment of interest of the capitalist socius that generates this image of the driven individual who has the potential to cross social limitations and become a productive machine of surplus value. McAlister has being indoctrinated with a discourse of self-determination, the capitalist ideal of the self-made individual who is able to turn himself from a middle class boy into a wealthy man, “yo sabía hacer dinero, princesita mía, eso se me daba como respirar” (184).

McAlister admires his own fearlessness, he justifies the use of violence according to the requirements of the business, and he is definitely in a position of marginality in relation to the law. What he does not realize at the moment is that the capitalist socius’ fascist libidinal investment generates its own mechanisms to reterritorialize individuals. McAlister does not only fail to break away from the code of the former social regime, but he uses the code to exclude Pablo Escobar’s family from the gym, which evidences his own reactionary libidinal investment. Acting as if he were a member of the elite, he applies the exclusion of the other following the colonial code. This generates a domino effect, first, his complete withdrawal from the drug-trafficking machine; second, he becomes a target of interest for the prosecuting state machine since the elite suspects he has captured the flows of money that belonged to them. Alone, locked in his house McAlister reflects on the fact that when it comes to economic success, the class of new rich exchanges positions with the elite in the hierarchy of power, but culturally they are still non Europeans and consequently unworthy of their recognition.

---

67 “I knew how to make money, princess; it was as easy for me as breathing” (184).

68 “I’m a true phenomenon of self-improvement, a champion of self-help” (181). Es que soy un auténtico fenómeno de autosuperación, un tigre de la autoayuda” (171). These words, which McAlister articulates sarcastically, illustrate
desire flows are completely repressed he can only fall into depression and return back to the mother’s house, the locus of social marginality, psychological escape from symbolic stratification, and permanent escape from the law.

The capitalist socius produces new codes of social delimitation according to former codes of exclusion from the prior regime still inscribed on the surface of the capitalist socius. The colonial coding of social hierarchy based on race and blood is still latent. There is a constant struggle between desire machines trying to flee the territory and cross social margins and a socius which reterritorializes them within new groups such as new rich, ‘traquetos’, etc, reaffirming in this way the superiority of the traditional elite. Delirio indicates elements like McAlister, who become devices within the drug-trafficking machine, are driven by a revolutionary libidinal investment to move across social territories. At the same time, the novel demonstrates the drug trafficking machine is also infused with reactionary libidinal investments, which are made evident in the way individuals assume positions of omnipotence, have reactionary tendencies, and a determination to impose their power and control all individuals and all flows of product and money.\textsuperscript{xx}

As described in the novel, we can easily envision Pablo Escobar’s organization as a capitalist machine on the Deleuzean sense, as it accomplishes the axiom of production of a surplus value of flows.\textsuperscript{69} Its machinic index resides on its potential to permeate the surface of the

\textsuperscript{69} In Blood and Capital Jasmin Hristov points to the fact that the drug-trafficking machine finds itself in the conjunction of processes of decoding similar to other capitalist machines: the decoding of land flows as a consequence of the industrial imperative, landlordism as the former code is replaced slowly by corporate production; the decoding of flows of agricultural inputs, marijuana or poppy, from pre-colonial uses to industrial manipulation; and consequently, the deterritorialization of the laborer to marginalized positions into either the urban areas or the deep jungle forests. In the city, displaced individuals either joined the lines of cheap labor or opted for common
earth with flows of laundered money, drugs, individuals and blood. Furthermore, it is an effective and expedite avenue for individuals invested in the interest for capital accumulation and acquisition of status goods. Despite the fact that Delirio provides evidence of its rational functioning, the novel presents the drug-trafficking machine in one of its most psychotic moments: the eighties. Referred many times as the bloodiest decades in Colombia’s history it is marked primarily by the competition among the main oligopolies, better known as the cartel war, neoliberal policies of market opening and the international policing of illegal substances or ‘War on Drugs’.

Far from being a conflict between two organizations, the eighties in Colombia was a decade marked by the reactionary tendency of a substantial number of legal and illegal apparatuses, “en un país como éste…las carreteras son tomadas un día sí y otro también por los militares, los paramilitares o los enguerrillados, que te secuestran, te matan o te agreden con granadas, con ráfagas, mina antipersonal o ataque masivo con pipetas de gas” (36). The drug-trafficking machine showed signs of its dysfunctional behavior as the two main cartels started to fight over routes and territory, which consequently developed into a chain of retaliation. This delinquency. In the jungle, peasants were attached to the drug-trafficking machine to perform the same task they did before, but with a higher retribution, to create farmland and grow the most profitable crops: marihuana, poppy, and coca. (Hristov 6)

70 The phenomenon of drug-trafficking was not, however, the beginning of a culture of crime, most individuals who enter the drug-trafficking machine had previously built a history of common delinquency. “En Colombia no ha existido una democracia real, en sentido moderno, todos los estudios que hablan de una sociedad elitista, autoritaria, de una "democracia" históricamente cerrada contra las fuerzas alternativas y preñada de vicios como el clientelismo; donde se ha instaurado la tradición de que quien tiene más dinero tiene más poder. Los traficantes nacionales se insertaron en una estructura capitalista tardía y dependiente, caracterizada en las últimas cuatro décadas por un crecimiento económico acelerado y dinámico, pero rapaz, que genero un proceso vertiginoso y contradictorio de modelización.” (Salazar 6)

71 “… in a country like this, split from top to bottom by a mountain range, the highways, which are already in bad shape, twist and twine around abysses and as if that weren't enough, they're seized every other day by the army, the paramilitaries, or the guerrillas, who kidnap you, kill you, or assault you with grenades, beatings, gunfire, explosives, antipersonnel mines, or the massive detonation of propane tanks” (29)
phenomenon of rivalry between the oligopolies, and the legal and illegal armies, however, is only briefly mentioned within the novel in order to explain the generalized state of paranoia was justified according to this play of forces. xxii This is due to the fact that its inclusion would entail a detour from the basic story line but more importantly it would obliterate its structural pillar: the omnipotence of a psychotic despot, ruler of the entire drug-trafficking machine.

The functioning of the Drug-trafficking apparatus is a recurrent subject in different disciplines; economic, sociological, historical, political, environmental and literary studies have aimed to describe its nature. The analysis of its elements, developments, and fluidity has resulted in a variety of perspectives. One of those elements in question is its clinical diagnosis as some studies suggest that despite its illegality the drug-trafficking machine behaves as any other rational apparatus; while others define it as a chaotic, fluid, schizophrenic machine. xxiv Delirio presents a third possible diagnosis between these two polarities of chaos and order: a restrained fluidity repressed by specific systems of control which dooms the drug-trafficking machine to a psychotic vicious cycle. Montes identifies how in Delirio Pablo Escobar is placed into the category of what Deleuze and Guattari called the psychotic despot,

Como supremo manipulador de los deseos, Escobar es el padre paranoico y déspota del modelo deluziano que controla los deseos y al que todos le deben… “la verdad es que el gordazo ya nos comió a todos crudos” (83). La imagen que utiliza Mídias en su relato es curiosa porque en ella se presenta a Escobar como una máquina deseante y a los oligarcas como el flujo con el que se conecta devorándolos. (257)

The drug trafficking machine as a capitalist machine is supposed to liberate the flows of production but it turns into a despotic machine when it places Escobar at the apex of a pyramid structure and starts monopolizing the decoded flows of production. The illusion of an omnipotent
individual is perpetuated in the novel through the display of a molar hierarchy of power. Pablo Escobar is located at the top of a descending line of power from where he is able to manipulate every single individual within the drug-trafficking machine. His immediate subordinates, his messengers like Mystery, his money launderers, like Midas McAlister, all his investors, like Salazar are under his ruling; he even finds ways to involve individuals from the control machine, like Rony Silver who works for the DEA. Every individual in the drug trafficking machine assumes a position in the pyramid and becomes a debtor that must pay tribute to the despot.

This semblance of the ruling despot is absolutely intended as it works as the fundamental structural device of the novel. The ruling “Capo” is set in parallel to the ruling “father” thus defining the source of the law in both the microcosm of the family and the drug-trafficking machine. Carlos Vicente controls all bodies and all organs under his wing; his wife, his sister in law and his daughter are attached to his body. In the same way, Pablo acquires a mythical likeness as the Robin Hood protector of people, especially of his own family, “Pablo le manda decir que las ofensas contra la familia son las únicas que él no perdona” (261). This protection from others, however, does not extend to the hand of the father himself who represses any possible flow of desire that might escape his control with a violent blow.

---

72 Studies on Pablo Escobar do observe this paranoiac behavior as one of his characteristics. Pablo controlled absolutely every element within the processes of his enterprise, subordinates, production, collection and labs, distribution, landing runways pilots, absolutely everything. “Mientras que los hermanos Orejuela y los hermanos Santa cruz Londoño en Cali acaso tienden a delegar la coordinación de las transacciones y las relaciones con los lugartenientes de segundo grado en sus más estrechos colaboradores, del capo Pablo Escobar se presume que controlaba personalmente a sus lugartenientes de segundo grado, hasta tal punto de pedirles cuenta sobre tan solo un kilo de cocaína extraviado e inspeccionar regularmente laboratorios y pistas de aterrizaje. (Krauthausen and Sarmiento 46)

73 “I'm just calling you, Mr. McAlister, to give you a message from my cousin Pablo, Pablo asked me to tell you that insults to his family are the only kind he doesn't forgive” (278).
More than fulfilling the archetype of the protector, Pablo Escobar appears as the
revengeful villain who has created a whole machine to grind his former oppressors. His highest
goal is to get the elite so trapped in the corruption of the illegal businesses that they will find
themselves unable to get away from his hold. If the effective production of surplus capital and
unaffected balance among all its individuals was its rational state, the uprising of the despot’s
desire to control the fluxes and subjugate the individuals marks its paranoiac psychotic state.
What is interesting about this psychotic machine is that it does not repress capital production but
uses the interest for accumulation as its strategy to enslave more elements to its system and
deterritorialize the structure of power,

Él, nacido en el tugurio, criado en la miseria, siempre apabullado por la infinita riqueza y
el poder absoluto de los que por generaciones se han llamado ricos, de pronto va y
descubre el gran secreto, el que tenía prohibido descubrir, y es que a estas alturas de su
corta vida ya es cien veces más rico que cualquiera de los ricos de este país y que si se le
antoja los puede poner a comer de su mano y echárselos al bolsillo. (73)74

In Delirio the father figure is associated with a diegetic character, a missing signifier, the
ruling despot, and the social and political elite. The father figure is unfitting, violent, and
psychotic, in addition it is ridiculed for believing in its omnipotence and underestimating the
reactionary determination of the socius. There is always a resistance that will try to control it and
return to its prior state of stratification.

Delirio explains Escobar’s violence as retaliation for denying him the possibility to be the
father of the nation; he was expelled of the political elite for being a drug lord,

---

74 “Born in the slums, raised in poverty, always oppressed by the infinite wealth and absolute power of those who
for generations have called themselves rich, he suddenly stumbles on the great secret, the one he was forbidden to
discover, and the secret is that at this point in his short life he’s already one hundred times richer than any of this
country’s rich men, and if he wants he can make them eat out of his hand and tuck them away in his pocket” (68).
Pablo Escobar está de mal humor… tanta bomba se debe a que el Partido Liberal lo acaba de expulsar por narco de las listas electorales para el Senado, Al hombre no le gusta el título de Rey de la Coca, dijo Silver, prefiere el de Padre de la Patria, No le falta razón, suena más democrático. (103)

McAlister’s account is marked by a sarcastic, humorous tone that emphasizes his awareness of the ingenuousness that characterizes all characters, including him, for believing they could infiltrate the structure of power. Delirio maintains a humorous and melodramatic tone throughout in order to emphasize how ironical the turn of events is and the fact that no matter how different elements react, corruption is what predominates.

Furthermore, McAlister’s joke about the president, “a ver, hombre Silver, decinos qué más detectas con tu aparato detector de explosiones allá en la embajada, este berraco espía debe informarle al Pentágono hasta cuántos pedos se tira el presidente de Colombia” (103), insinuates the international policing apparatus has control over the state institutions. The state appears only as a marionette moved with strings from a higher power. The thread of international economic sanctions forces the state to generate legal policies that allow the transnational apparatus to control directly individuals who might represent a thread to economic and social stability. The novel questions the actual purpose of all these international agencies. Silver, for

---

75 “…Silver told us that at the American embassy, where he works, they have a machine that detects explosions and that just last Tuesday in Bogota sixty-three bombs had gone off, Fucking stupid gringos, I said, they need machines to pick up blasts that slam us all against the ceiling, Pablo Escobar is in a bad mood, said your brother Joaco, all those bombs are because the Liberal Party has just expelled him from its slate for being a drug lord.” (102)

76 “Come on, Silver, man, tell us what else you pick up with that bomb-detecting machine at the embassy, your goddamn spy box must be able to let the Pentagon know each time the president of Colombia farts.” (102)

77 “La apertura económica” the deregulation of former territorial boundaries as the strategic plan for furthering the world economy was absolutely advantageous for the drug-trafficking machine. It meant the emergence of infinite possibilities of market routes and destinations. This generated a reaction from the transnational policing apparatus which demanded a repressive response from the state control apparatus.
example, does not stand for justice; he does not persecute drug lords for their crimes, and only uses the mechanisms of the transnational policing apparatus when he realizes he will not receive a return for his investments.

El Congreso ha aprobado la puesta en práctica del Tratado de Extradición y la DEA - léase Ronald Silverstein, mi amigo el Rony Silver, el 007, ha presentado un amplio expediente contra mí en el que se me acusa de lavado de dólares con pruebas suficientes y contundentes… soy criminal solicitado en extradición por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos y buscado en este preciso momento por tierra, mar y aire por cuanto organismo de seguridad, buró de inteligencia y policía internacional. (291)

The state uses its military and legal system to persecute the drug lords who in turn retaliate with car bombs in major public centers. Delirio makes a direct connection between the despotic father that is reterritorialized by the socius and his desperate retaliation with extreme violence. Madness defined by a violent determination, staged by la araña Salazar on Dolores, “se me han despertado unas ganas locas de ver una hembrita que sufra en serio,” (136) and by Pablo Escobar on the entire country: the desire to see them suffer “Con respecto al Tratado de Extradición de narcotraficantes a Estados Unidos… fue la proclamación histórica de su venganza: voy a invertir mi fortuna en hacer llorar a este país” (211).

78 “Congress has approved the enforcement of the Extradition Treaty, and the DEA-in other words, Ronald Silverstein, my friend Rony Silver, 007, Mr. Double Trouble-has put together a thick file on me in which sufficient and conclusive evidence is presented to accuse me of money laundering, I'm a criminal wanted for extradition by the United States of America and I'm being sought at this very moment by land, sea, and air by every security organization, intelligence bureau, and international police force in existence.” (307)

79 “I've been in the mood to see a girl suffer for real” (136).

80 “… with regard to the Extradition Treaty that would surrender drug traffickers to the United States, and when I took him it was almost certain that Congress would enforce it, I saw him tremble with righteous fury and heard him speak a momentous sentence, the same sentence that later echoed in my memory when the bomb exploded at L'Esplanade, and take careful note, Agustina princess, because what he said was the historic proclamation of his vengeance: I'm going to spend my fortune making this country weep” (218).
In regards to the drug-trafficking machine extradition generates an important agitation as its main lords get extradited or executed. There is a restructuring of hierarchies within the drug-trafficking machine but it continues functioning, even more efficiently than it did before. It is not the end of this capitalist machine but a crisis that helps it renovate itself.\textsuperscript{xxvi} In economic terms this struggle of reactionary forces can only generate profit. The war on terrorism and drugs justifies violence and the increase of prices. As McAlister expresses they were filling their pockets thanks to “la gloriosa War on Drugs de los gringos” (71).\textsuperscript{81} Any way capital wins as the clash among legal and illegal apparatuses generates a surplus value of both dead bodies and a good amount of cash. The more control, the higher the prices, the production and in general the growth of the machine. Evidencing that as a capitalist machine the drug-trafficking machine can only push towards its optimization. In the drug-trafficking machine the capital product fluctuates capriciously sometimes leaving a minor gain or multiplying itself up to five times always escaping the total control of the investors, “el otro marco de la novela es el lavado de dólares, otra de las grandes mentiras a nivel mundial. El lavado de dólares es la delincuencia de cuello blanco que se esparce y va fermentando todos los segmentos de la sociedad” (Sanchez-Blake, 333). The same can be said about the rest of its products: surplus-values of bodies, drugs, defense mechanisms, etc. More importantly, the drug-trafficking machine’s performance cannot be seen independently from the socio-historical delirium that makes it ever more productive.\textsuperscript{xxvii}

It is not accurate to define the violence within the eighties only in relation to the drug-trafficking machine. By illustrating the relationship between the private family and the social fabric, and the strict determinations of social stratification, \textit{Delirio} demonstrates Colombia’s socio political conflicts throughout the twentieth century cannot be understood purely in regards

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{81} “Thanks to the gringo’s glorious war on drugs” (66)
\end{footnotesize}
to the emergence of illegal apparatuses, but instead as the result of the inherent social inequality that has determined the historical struggle between a restrictive and oppressive power elite and a revengeful lower class. In the introduction to *El universo literario de Laura Restrepo* Carmiña Navia defines the drug-trafficking machine as the triggering force which impacts Colombian society and marks the transition from order to chaos,

Asistimos a un momento clave de la historia nacional que de una u otra manera vuelve a interesarles a los novelistas colombianos más recientes: el momento en el que se destruye un orden, en el que una tradición se hace pedazos, en el que surgen rutas nuevas todavía muy oscuras y la moral tradicional queda tendiendo de hilos rotos momento que coincide en nuestro país con la aparición del narcotráfico y su modo de vida, en todos los estratos de la sociedad. (22)

*Délirio* does not present a moment of change; on the contrary, it reveals the violence of the eighties as connected with the political violence that has determined the country’s history since colonial times. The holes in the Chapinero house, punctures left by the bullets from el Bogotazo, are remainders that violence is latent and it can crawl through the holes at any point and irrupt with its terror into the household/nation, “va creciendo el número de los seres dañinos contra los que debemos protegernos, los leprosos de Agua de Dios, los francotiradores del Nueve de Abril, los estudiantes con la cabeza rota y llena de sangre, y sobre todo la chusma enguerrillada que se tomó Sasaima” (119).  

---

82 “¿Qué son esos agujeritos, madre? ¿Qué son esos agujeritos, padre? Siempre me responden No es nada, No es nada. O sea que los postigos tienen agujeros y ya está, es lo propio de ellos, como tener ojos las personas. Una noche, durante la ronda de las llaves a la hora de nona, mi padre me confiesa que han sido los francotiradores del Nueve de Abril. Yo comprendo sus palabras: los francotiradores del Nueve de Abril han abierto esos agujeros en los postigos de nuestra casa. ¿Y con qué los abrieron, padre?, Con sus disparos, ¿Dispararon contra nosotros?, No, contra la gente, me dice, pero no añade una palabra más. ¿Contra cuál gente, padre? La gente, la gente, las cosas son como son y no hay por qué estar hablando de ellas. ¿Y tuvimos miedo?, le pregunto entonces y él me responde que yo no había nacido cuando sucedió eso” (119)
Delirio proposes a change of perspective on how to apprehend the social field. When Agustina is a child she sees her family as the house in Teusaquillo, locked up from the inside but full of bullet holes that allow flows from the external world to enter and corrupt it. Throughout the novel it is demonstrated that there is no inside protection and outside thread. There is no difference between the private and the public. There is only one social surface and individuals undertake processes of subjective transformation according to the libidinal investments that permeate this surface.

Delirium is not the condition that defines Agustina’s psychological state, it is the unconscious libidinal investment that permeates the social field and that determines both the revolutionary and reactionary empowerment of every character within the novel. Agustina and McAlister are both invested by a revolutionary flow that empowers them to cross from one territory of social stratification to another. McAlister is characterized by his ability to get around the city, from the popular to the most exclusive neighborhoods, he relates to people from all social levels, and he is an expert in controlling the flows of money from Miami to the investors. Agustina, on the other hand, understands and subverts gender roles, crosses class boundaries, and creates alliances with those who are in vulnerable positions, which evidences her tendency towards a collective subjective transformation. These revolutionary flows however, are reterritorialized and both McAlister and Agustina remain in a precarious survival state, locked within their private worlds trying to deny the horror outside. The psychotic determination prevails and it will continue triggering the trauma every time a bomb goes off,

Es como si el Midas McAlister ya se hubiera desprendido de todo y se hubiera instalado

“The number of harmful beings against whom we must protect ourselves keeps growing, the Agua de Dios lepers, the April 9 snipers, the students with battered and bloody heads, and especially the guerrilla rabble that took Sasaima; and that killed Grandfather Portulinus? Mother, did the rabble kill Grandfather Portulinus? No, Grandfather Portulinus left Grandmother Blanca and returned alone to Germany” (119).
en el más allá; con el paso de sus días de encierro se afianza más y más en la impresión de que nunca existió realmente esa otra vida … para mí son todos fantasmas, y escenarios de una obra que ya terminó, y vinieron los utileros y alzaron con todo y ya cayó el telón, hasta el mismísimo Pablo un fantasma, y fantasmal por completo este país; si no fuera por las bombas y las ráfagas de metralla que resuenan a distancia y que me mandan sus vibraciones hasta acá, juraría que ese lugar llamado Colombia hace mucho dejó de existir. (209)

The novel suggests delirium is what made the eighties in Colombia particularly violent. The exceptional influx of revolutionary flow produced by capitalism combined with the extremely repressive fascist libidinal flow of the socius that seeks to control and reterritorializes all flows within the same categories of class stratification. Delirio shows the persistence of colonial entitlement over the lower classes, so that even present-day Colombia appears to be a society that privileges in favor of individuals of European descent who have inherited social, economic and political power and perpetuates the culture of exclusion, which in turn produces a deeper resentment in the popular classes.  

The drug trade, as a capitalist machine, emerges out of this class conflict and this history of inequality, but instead of creating a more tolerant and egalitarian society it triggers the fascist libidinal investment of the socius: the elite, the pure race, the legitimate inheritors of power by

---

83 "The stagehands have carried everything away and now the curtain has fallen, even Pablo is a ghost, the whole country itself is ghostly, and if it wasn't for the bombs and the bursts of machine-gun fire that echo in the distance, the tremors reaching me here, I'd swear that the place called Colombia had stopped existing long ago." (305)

84 William Ospina points to this rooted individuality and intolerance, “Colombia es por excelencia el país el otro. Esta extrema individualidad es el fruto de todas las tensiones de Occidente condensadas en un solo territorio. Del choque entre Europa y América, del choque entre los blancos y los indios… del choque entre las fuerzas armadas y los subversivos, de las largas y recíprocas descalificaciones entre todos estos bandos que se odian y se niegan, sin saber que no son más que los herederos y los perpetuadores de una antigua maldición, en el país de los odios heredados y de las pedagogías de la intolerancia y el resentimiento” (3).
filiation need to reterritorialize those who dared to deviate from the social and judiciary law. The outlaw responds with extreme violence unleashing a domino effect of retaliations. At the end the only real despot is capital as it captures all flows of desire for its optimization.

Following the psychoanalytical machine’s archeological approach of digging out family history, the narrative proposes the confrontation with the facts and the awareness of the prevalence of corruption as the first step to find a solution to the individual and historical trauma. The narrative encourages the unveiling of appearances, lies, and the expiation of sins. The Londoño family, as well as society, uses different mechanisms, especially denial and distortion, “historical revisions,” (234) to blind itself to the truth of the delirious flows that permeate it. Society denies social injustice, violence, and the involvement of individuals from every social and institutional body with drug-trafficking and money laundering and distorts it with discourses on war against terrorism and drugs by state and international regulators.

Agustina is empowered by a libidinal flow that gives her the sight of the realm of the anomalous but her psychotic determination to address the father keeps her from experiencing it

---

85 Within the family, everyone denies Carlos Vicente’s unfaithfulness, Agustina’s madness, Joaco’s corruption and Bicho’s homosexuality and generate a new imaginary of their lives that Midas McAlister defines as “el Catálogo Londoño de Falsedades Básicas” (234) “Catalog of Basic Falsehoods” (244). “Tu madre se aproxima al tema y se aleja de él dando rodeos y endulzando las frases con ese asombroso don de encubrir que siempre la ha caracterizado y al que Joaco le hace el juego con tanta agilidad porque desde pequeño se viene entrenando, y las verdades llanas van quedando atrapadas en ese almíbar de ambigüedad que todo lo adecua y lo civiliza hasta despojarlo de sustancia, o hasta producir convenientes revisiones históricas y mentiras grandes como montañas que el consenso entre ellos dos va transformado en auténticas” (233). “Each lie was like torture for you and that each omission was a snare for your fragile mind…the plain truths keep getting caught in the honeyed ambiguity that smoothes and civilizes everything until there's no substance left to any of it, or until it produces convenient historical revisions and lies as big as mountains that are gradually transformed into realities by mutual consensus. (246)

86 Blindness as a fundamental topic within the novel appears throughout every machine including the drug-trafficking one. Within it, most of the individuals seem absolutely divested of any power of action and serve only as passive devices through which the money flows. First of all they are kept away from any information beyond the investment, but more importantly, they are blinded by the imperative of accumulation. They fail to see obvious signs of imminent change in the political sphere which will eventually trigger the drug-trafficking machine’s defense mechanisms and attack on the political and economical elite. This is quite evident in a character like Midas who fails at the end to read the signs and is excluded and persecuted by the apparatus.
and generating any process of subjective transformation that deviates from subjectification. The extreme violent determination of the *socius* obstructs her powers of divination and instead of reacting she hides behind closed doors to avoid confronting the dangers outside her house. As Blimunda states in *Memorial do convent* (1982), intertextual reference of the novel, “what is hidden under the skin is always better not to look at,” so Agustina looks away. Agustina avoids reading the newspapers and shows no awareness of society’s problems, such as inequality and violence, that confront her daily in the streets. Midas McAlister, who talks to her in all the passages where we hear his account, has to confront her with the crude reality because she keeps trying to escape the truth by getting involved in her own projects.

Elizabeth Montes postulates Agustina’s life style as an attempt to go against the capitalist mandate of surplus-value production since she disregards rules of class distinctions and traditional family mandates:

> Los deseos y preferencias de Agustina no corresponden con los que auspician el poder hegemónico al que pertenece su familia. Contrariamente a lo que los Londoño esperaban, Agustina no se casa con alguien que pertenezca a su mismo grupo social. En realidad, ella ni siquiera se casa, sino que decide involucrarse con Aguilar, un ‘manteca’ irreducible, según su familia, y a quien Eugenia de Londoño ni siquiera Le dirige la palabra. (258)

I concur with Montes in that Agustina’s main transgression of the family code has been her relation with Aguilar. Agustina undertakes a different life style than the one demanded by society but this subterfuge is just her way of justifying her distance from the world outside her house. Her lack of agency in a way contributes to the perpetuation of the elite in its façade as

---

(Baltasar e Blimunda 1998) “What the eye doesn’t see the heart doesn’t grieve over” (Saramago Todos os nomes 181)
legitimate power. Agustina’s life style more than a conscious rejection the capitalist mentality is the rebellious performance of a hippie poser who is still attached to her sitting-room bourgeois mentality.

Delirio demands the recognition of the fact that there is a prevalence of fascist libidinal investments, which motivate individuals to place themselves in a position of domination as the privileged elite, and fascist investments of interest, which motivate all corruption for the sake of capital accumulation. In addition, Delirio proposes the first steps to counteract this psychotic tendency in order to generate a new possibility of psychological health for the entire social field as the recognition that violence is rooted in the historical tendency to exclude the other and the need for a process of acceptance and reconciliation.

Delirio is fundamentally a love story and its intertextual connection with Memorial do convent emphasizes the importance of loyalty and relentless love that endures despite the psychotic determination of the historical becoming. The final scene asserts the bond between Agustina and Aguilar and emphasizes the acceptance of the other that overcomes all former prejudices of exclusion and violence of the colonial regime. However, the cliché of the red tie suggests Agustina has not abandoned completely her tendency to impose on the other certain codes of social class, which appears contradictory to its intended message.

Delirio is a productive narrative machine that connects with psychotic machines. It plugs into delirious machines like those displayed in both Agustina’s and Portulín’s delirium and outlines the realm of the anomalous. At the same time, the ‘hand of the father’ creates blockages that keep both characters from undertaking a line of flight. In this way Delirio illustrates the psychotic determination of the socius. The same way that Agustina cannot avoid her return to the father, this novel cannot deviate from its psychoanalytical frame.
3. Anomalous subjective positions and the institutional model of anarchy in Roberto Bolaño’s *Estrella Distante* and *Nocturno de Chile*

Roberto Bolaño produced ten novels, four collections of short stories, including the posthumously published *The Secret of Evil* (2007), and six poetry compilations over the course of three decades. His narratives include stories set in different locations throughout Europe and Latin America, predominantly in Chile, Spain and México where the author resided for extended periods of time. He has received international recognition especially for his last novels the *Savage Detectives* (1988) and *2666* (2005). He was awarded in life and posthumously nine different awards for these two novels. Bolaño’s narrative has generated a substantial body of critical literature that points to the impressive reception and furor achieved by his last works. This critical body includes essay compilations such as *Roberto Bolaño: Ruptura y violencia en la literatura finisecular, Roberto Bolaño: la escritura como tauromaquia, Territorios en fuga, Bolaño salvaje,* and *Memoria y desencanto*; in addition to essays published in different literary journals and magazines. For the purpose of this study I will concentrate on *Estrella distante* (1996) and *Nocturno de Chile* (2000). I selected these two narratives in particular because both texts take place in Chile during the dictatorship and consequent transition to democracy.⁸⁸

Sebastian Urrutia Lacroix, *Nocturno de Chile*’s narrator and protagonist, feels persecuted by someone who accuses him of pretense and cowardice. He revisits the past to justify his behavior but these memories only corroborate he is in denial of his guilt. More importantly, the different recollections of his activities as a priest and literary critic hold hallucinatory images that reveal his psychotic symptoms were already advancing towards full irruption in the last years of

---

⁸⁸ This selection, however, does not imply that I assign a representational character to Bolaño’s narrative. The framing within a determined historical period seeks no representational or mimetic objective but the creation of a fictional space for reflection on the libidinal investments that underlie the movements within the social field and historical becoming.
his life. In contrast, Carlos Wieder, *Estrella Distante*’s protagonist, does not have hallucinations, his discourse does not indicate that he is the receiver of a message he is unable to comprehend, nor does he feel victimized or persecuted. His psychotic symptoms are marked by erratic outbursts of anger that motivate his violent behavior. In addition, he is driven by a pervasive megalomaniac delusion of being the creator of a new and revealing aesthetic phenomenon. Wieder, like many other psychotics, believes to be the emissary, the chosen one, who holds the key to solving everything and bringing prosperity to a new race.

Bolaño’s texts are full of references to historic, artistic and literary names, including his own. Bolaño uses the names of people with certain prominence in the events surrounding Pinochet’s dictatorship in order to create a fictional universe based on some specific characteristics that have made these real life characters memorable. For example, Ignacio Valente’s leniency towards Pinochet’s regime inspires the fictional character of the priest Urrutia Lacroix. Bolaño imagines this character in a critical moment of physical and psychological deterioration and from there he creates a fictional universe as a space of reflection on the social, historical, and psychological conditions that could determine an individual’s intervention in any critical historical juncture.

This chapter is divided in two sections, one for each novel. In the first part I will analyze what underlies the anomalous subjective position of the character of Carlos Wieder, with its multiple identities, in order to illustrate how his ‘artistic’ acts constitute a dramatic threat to the

---

89 “Wieder is seized by a desire to kick the bed, smash up the rickety old chest of drawers in which Amalia Maluenda’s clothes are piled” (ED 22).

90 Ximena Briceño in her essay “Así se hace literatura”: historia literaria y políticas del olvido en *Nocturno de chile y Soldados de Salamina* inform us about Ignacio Valente “José Miguel Ibáñez Langlois, un importante sacerdote y poeta chileno conocido como “Ignacio Valente”. Este último es el referente histórico sobre el cual Bolaño modela a su protagonista, llamado Sebastián Urrutia Lacroix y cuyo nom de plume es “H. Ibacache”. Del mismo modo, Urrutia será discípulo de González Lamarca, alias “Farewell”, quien corresponde en la realidad al crítico Hernán Díaz Arrieta, alias Alone” (Briceño 602).
regime since it exposes mechanisms of subjectification. In the second part of this chapter I will focus on the character of Sebastian Urrutia Lacroix. Since he represses all desire, which determines his fall into psychosis, as such, it is my objective to analyze what characterizes his subjectification. Finally, in the last pages of this chapter I will draw conclusions on what makes these two characters and the narrator a mirror image of each other.

Bolaño’s psychotic characters are a rhetorical trope used to reflect on the relationship between desire and micro-politics. In *A Thousand Plateau* Deleuze and Guattari explain the process of desiring repression at the micro-political level: micro-powers are generated according to processes of subjectification that shape postures and attitudes and channel desire into lines of passion for death, resentment, the pure race, revenge against the other, etc. These lines of passion apply not as imaginary relations among individuals, but as part of what underlies the “social-Real” both at the micro-political level as well as within the power center of the authoritarian regime (A Thousand 215). Political repression and resistance, then, is not only found in large aggregate bodies like the court or the Junta but in micro-political powers in the neighborhood, the family, the church, the university, etc, “what makes fascism dangerous is its molecular or micro-political power, for it is a mass movement: a cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism” (A thousand 215). These psychotic characters illustrate how the dynamic between desire and its repression underlies the proceedings not only of governmental entities but also at a micro-political level in different segments of the social field. Urrutia and Wieder, for example, are elements of completely different social institutions, the church, the intellectual elite and the

---

91 Deleuze and Guattari explain there is a correlation between desire and politics since “Desire is never separable from complex assemblages that necessarily tie into molecular levels, from microformations already shaping postures, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, semiotic systems, etc” (A Thousand 215). It is this fascist determination of desire, the fascist libidinal investments, what underlies the dictatorships’ power and what allows human rights violations to remain unpunished. This is made evident in the texts as the fascist libidinal investments permeate in a particular way every segment of society within the fictional universe.
armed forces but they are both invested by a similar dynamic of desire. It is my contention, then, that Bolaño’s texts explore how the dictatorship exerts its control over the social field beyond a central authoritarian imposition of power.\textsuperscript{92}

3.1. \textit{Estrella Distante}

Roberto Bolaño’s conceptualization of evil in \textit{Estrella distante} has been studied by Patricia Poblete Alday, Paula Aguilar, Edmundo Paz Soldán, Ainhoa Vásquez Mejías, Ricardo Cuadros, María José Bruña, Inna Jennerjahn, Dunia Gras Miravet and others, which allows me to affirm that evil is a fundamental theme in Bolaño’s narrative. I am suggesting that one can further shed light on Bolaño’s preoccupation with evil by looking at it through the lens of the Deleuzean definition of the relationship desire/micropolitics. While different critical analyses on post-dictatorship narratives observe the individual and collective repercussion of violence and repression, this new approach focuses on the dynamics of social interaction at a micro-political level in order to identify the conditions that determine the historical becoming.

Bolaño’s narrative seeks to argue against the idea that evil makes itself present in certain particular circumstances as the result of the wrongdoing of a few individuals. On the contrary, evil is desire’s fascist determination that permeates the entire \textit{socius} throughout history and along the world.\textsuperscript{xxviii} On a political level the fascist determination that I am discussing relates to the internalization of the despot within the \textit{socius}. Despotic power understood at the micro-political level of the social fabric as it is segmented in different strata like the family, the school, the prison, and the hospital, where desire is repressed according to hierarchies and organizations. Despotic internalization in the context of the Latin American dictatorships, then, includes any

\textsuperscript{92} Deleuze and Guattari refer to these points as micro-black holes that communicate with others and resonate in the generalized central black hole of the authoritarian central power. (A Thousand 214) The reason for designating them as black holes relies on the fact that these lines of passion are precisely the desire’s repressive determination and consequently imply a consequent reterritorialization within the strata. Furthermore, these black holes elude signification as they are part of the unconscious libidinal investments of the socius.
type of human rights’ violation, not only the torture, assassination, and disappearance of individuals but also all social injustices and abuses of power in every segment of the social field.

*Estrella distante*’s narrator seeks to reconstruct the life and works of a poet and military assassin during Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile. This enigmatic character appears with many names along the narrative, but I would like to draw attention on the contrast between his two main identities: Alberto Ruiz-Tagle the underground spy and Carlos Wieder the assassin who writes poems in the sky. The contrast between these two identities illustrates there is a distinction between what remains obscure and what is exposed. The former contributes to the despot’s workings while the latter has the potential to destabilize the regime of terror. What allows for evil, the despotic internalization, to exert its power is its ability to remain undisclosed. *Estrella distante*, then, introduces the possibility of unveiling evil as a strategy to contain its undetected proliferation. In the following pages I will briefly explore the identity of Alberto Ruiz-Tagle and his unrevealed despotic tendency, and subsequently concentrate on the character of Carlos Wieder.

Despite Alberto Ruiz-Tagle’s congeniality towards most members of the poetry club, both the narrator and Bibiano feel from the beginning that he is full of inconsistencies and oddities; as if behind the impeccable imposture there was something really obscure. The framing of the scene in Ruiz-Tagle’s house allows Bibiano to convey the experience of an encounter with evil. As the narrator explains there was something missing from view, something that could not be named but that was present and tangible. Manuel Asensi Pérez explains this treatment of evil in other works:

> En la narrativa de Bolaño hay la tendencia a poner de relieve el conflicto entre el significado, y el fuera-del- significado. Tal es el caso, por ejemplo, de narraciones cortas
como los cuentos "El secreto del mal" o "Laberinto". De hecho, la elipsis juega aquí un papel de primer grado, como no podía ser de otra manera, una elipsis que funciona como la intuición de una presencia maléfica que no queda formulada lingüísticamente. (345)

_Estrella distante_ illustrates in the above-mentioned scene what characterizes the unconscious libidinal material of the _socius_: first, its virtual quality as a flow that has the potential to irrupt in the text but remains without actualization, right on the limit where the observer can discern it; second the fact that it resists symbolization, it is impossible to give material consistency to its force and symbolic representation. Bibiano exemplifies this void with the reference to _Rosemary’s Baby_: this sensation is like the one given by the devil’s missing pictures inside the Castevets’ home in the movie, which have been removed leaving the mark of their lingering presence. Bibiano feels the gaze of something upon him from the other room but he is not even sure there is a person behind the door. This gaze has no entity; it does not even require a subject. This gaze is an example of the object petite a, the object that can never be attained but that produces desire. It is the Freudian _Das Ding_ as the thing in the real that Jacques Lacan defined as “the beyond the signified” in his seminar _The Ethics of Psychoanalysis_, outside language, “characterized by the fact that it is impossible for us to imagine it” (125).

The fascist libidinal investment underlying the social field is not described or articulated, its virtual force is found in the spaces left open by the narrative. As Patricia Poblete Alday explains, the mysterious force that promotes the sensation of terror is that entity hidden behind the thick curtain, that dangerous element haunting the observer, ready to attack without a moment’s notice. The narrative is motivated by the desire to attain and articulate this mysterious

---

force but can only point towards its concealment.\textsuperscript{94} Confronted with this difficulty the narrative makes use of film references to support its mechanism of figuration. The text presents a bloc of sensations in order to outline the pure affect of terror.\textsuperscript{xxix}

The reference to Ingmar Bergman, director, writer and producer for film, stage and television, is deliberate and fundamental to outline this affect. \textit{Estrella distante} describes Ruiz-Tagle’s apartment from two different perspectives, as if they were two types of shots from the camera’s lens, the first one is an open shot, from the center of the apartment, where one sees the rooms from afar; and a second shot where the camera focuses on the actors’ faces: Bibiano, Ruiz-Tagle and Verónica. In Bergman’s \textit{Through a Glass Darkly}, Karin has hallucinatory episodes as she stands in the center of an empty room listening to whispering voices that she identifies as coming from a large crack on the wall. While for Karin these messages announce the arrival of an intimidating God that later appears in the form of a giant spider, for Bibiano it is a dark presence, something or someone lurking behind closed doors.

The first shot addresses the unknown, an evil presence, and it allows the spectator to discern all the macabre images of events that have taken place in its interior. The second shot brings up to life affects as pure entities that strip the characters of their individuality and turn them into receptacles of a virtual affect. Bibiano has feelings of anxiety and nervousness, but it is the close up that evidences the virtual affect of terror: Bibiano’s face is not his own anymore, it confronts its own effacement. It becomes inhuman, a blank page, a white piece of paper, without words, incapable of breaking the silence that would warn Verónica of her fate.\textsuperscript{xxx} As Deleuze explains in \textit{The Movement-Image}, in the close up the face becomes an autonomous entity that

\textsuperscript{94} “La intertextualidad aquí ya no es solo una contorsión formal del tejido narrativo, sino que en sí misma y como operación, adquiere un valor semántico, al evidenciar la imposibilidad de correr el tupido velo que recubre al mal. Filme y novela se inscriben así en una serie de recurrencias textuales que, en el mero gesto de la cita, delatan su incapacidad denotativa” (Poblete Alday 428).
tends to destroy its triple function: social roles are renounced, communication ceases, individuation is suspended. Pure terror has assumed its position of power over the individual, eliminating him and leaving only its image. The purpose of this affect is to “render invisible forces visible” (Deleuze, *Bacon* 40). The scene at Ruiz Tagle’s apartment renders visible the invisible force of the libidinal flow and exhibits affects and blocs of sensations that go beyond feelings or perceptions. Sensation is what strikes the reader before meaning is discerned because “it acts upon the nervous system” not the intellect (Deleuze, *Bacon* 25). The objective of the scene is not to describe or express with words what fear means but to make the reader experience fear.

The narration maintains the mystery of the crime that might have taken place during an obscure ritual but hints at the latency of a past or future murder in the description of the amputated house, which stands as a metaphor for the female mutilated body. It is the despotic tendency of the assassin’s desire that drives him to appropriate all female bodies in order to repress all sexual flow from permeating the *socius*. Dismembering will be part of his ritual as his final exhibition will illustrate. Bibiano cannot predict what is about to happen to all these women but the lurking of this libidinal flow becomes intensely evident to his senses as the vivid premonition of an imminent curse. Ruiz Tagle is aware of this and tries to keep him inside the house to extend the torture. The pleasure of the torturer is framed in the close up of Ruiz Tagle’s mouth, which is able to produce words without altering the evil smile or breaking the macabre silence. Silence and obscurity will support the spy’s assassination of the Garmendia sisters and all the “poetesses.” Ruiz Tagle’s transformation as he becomes Carlos Wieder will determine violence’s revelation and consequently a disruption within the regime.
3.1.1. **Wieder’s ‘artistic’ performances and the economy of Sadean art**

After performing a number of times in different cities throughout the country Wieder decides to give a private exhibition of what he considers to be a revolutionary poetic work. In this exhibition he displays hundreds of pictures of dismembered bodies he has tortured and assassinated. Even though most people attending the event are military men, who have participated in the disappearance of hundreds of people, the photographs are destroyed; Wieder is arrested and presumably sent into exile. In “El arte según Wieder: estética y política de lo abyecto en *Estrella distante*” Silvana Mandolessi observes that the reasons for excluding Wieder are not stated within the novel, “las razones por las que la representación de los cadáveres resulta inasimilable para el régimen, no están expuestas en la novela” (77). I believe that an analysis of the economy of Sadean art that underlies Wieder’s ‘artistic’ performances can provide an answer to Mandolessi’s question on the reasons why his exhibition became an object of abjection for the regime.

In *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* Georges Bataille describes some of the characteristics that determine the archetype of the Sadean hero. In *Coldness and Cruelty* Gilles Deleuze elaborates on Bataille’s definition of the Sadean hero and describes the economy of Sadean art as the repetition of a demonstrative function. Since Carlos Wieder is such an incredibly obscure character it is difficult to categorize him within any genre or movement, however, in this section of the chapter I am going to address the definition of Wieder as a Sadist hero, by observing three of the most important Sadist characteristics as defined by Bataille: exposure, sovereign attitude and total negation, in order to identify what determines his elimination as an object of abjection. I intend to determine if Wieder fulfills the characteristics of the Sadean character. More
importantly, I demonstrate with this analysis that as an anomalous artistic phenomenon Wieder’s exhibition has the potential to introduce chaos within the apparent order of the regime.

The first characteristic of the Sadean character is the fact that he breaks the silence and exposes himself openly to the public. As already mentioned, the first chapter of *Estrella distante* introduces the character of Carlos Wieder as one of his multiple aliases: Alberto Ruiz-Tagle. He is a spy who infiltrates two poetry clubs in order to identify the young individuals who support Allende’s government. He is a very seductive and mysterious character that has an almost supernatural power to attract and ensnare his victims. One of his most prevalent characteristics, as recalled by the poets, is his laconism, “Hasta entonces su actitud era de una cordialidad distante… era discreto y mesurado en su apreciación crítica, jamás defendía sus textos de nuestros ataques” (ED 16).95 In the poetry club, as Ruiz-Tagle, he always provides a polite and obsequious response in order to call the least possible attention to his poems. This silence in respect to his poetry is due to the fact that they are not really his own as ‘fat’ Marta states, “es como si no fueran poemas suyos, suyos de verdad, Alberto es un buen poeta pero aún no ha explotado” (ED 24).96 The reader will find out later that his poetic project entails completely different material.

After the coup d’état and consequent establishment of the dictatorial regime Alberto Ruiz-Tagle disappears only to return some time later as Carlos Wieder the poet of the sky. Wieder, contrary to Ruiz-Tagle wants to exhibit his poetry in spectacular displays. Wieder does not hide or remain silent, he is outspoken and seeks public attention. It is precisely this contrast

---

95 “up until then he had been affable but distant… he was discreet and measured in his critical judgments; he never defended his work against our generally devastating attacks” (ED 6).

96 “It is as if they weren’t his poems. His real poems… Alberto is a good poet but he still hasn’t made his breakthrough” (ED 14).
between the one who acts secretive and the one who openly exposes himself is what motivates my exploration of Wieder as a Sadean character.

An interesting narrative device is the use of the two names within the same scene. The actions are described in a sequence that goes from the imposture to the exposition of the monster, as if Ruiz-Tagle had some type of mysterious transformation and became Wieder as required. In the whole scene at the Garmendia’s house the narrator describes how Ruiz-Tagle spends the evening with the sisters and their aunt, and only uses the name Wieder at the end when he gets up from bed, in the middle of the night, to slit the aunt’s throat, “unas horas después Alberto Ruiz-Tagle, aunque debería empezar a llamarle Carlos Wieder, se levanta” (ED 31).97

The double identity, placed in parallel like the two sides of a coin, point to the narrative’s movement from complicity to defiance. Wieder is completely different from the reserved, laconic, submissive, respectful Ruiz-Tagle, he is aggressive, audacious, and insubordinate. He does not hide anything; his actions and his discourse are completely open for display. As Ruiz-Tagle, he fulfills the role of infiltrated spy and informer; he is a stratified device within the mechanism of control. As Wieder, he takes advantage of his rank and skills as a pilot for the Air Force to launch his artistic project as the poet of the sky. In his poetry he literally makes his position clear on the side of violence, sacrifice and death.

Wieder’s first poetic act takes place in the outskirts of the city of Concepción, flying a plane he spells out words from the book of the Genesis on the sky: “IN PRINCIPIO... CREAVIT DEUS... COELUM ET TERRAM, TERRA AUTEM ERAT INANIS... ET VACUA... ET TENEBRAE ERANT... SUPER FACIEM ABYSSI... ET SPIRITUS DEL...FEREBATUR

97 “A few hours later Alberto Ruiz-Tagle, although from here on I should call him Carlos Wieder, gets up” (ED 21).
SUPER AQUAS” (ED 25). As Daniuska González notes the exercise of terror finds its method in the implementation of two basic strategies: first, a discourse that justifies evildoing to the point it is considered a necessary and beneficial action for the wellbeing of all citizens, “a la larga, se produce el estallido: cuesta reconocer al mal porque se ha camuflado, y casi se parece a su antítesis, el bien,” (González 38) and second, the open exposition of evil intentions: direct intimidation. While Wieder’s supporters intend to use the first strategy, Wieder uses the latter, even if the majority does not acknowledge it.

Wieder uses the imperative language of the Sadean character. He imposes a single imperative that has the quality of a hidden meaning; as if it were the enigma that concerns his whole production: “LEARN.” This does not mean he has an altruistic tendency to help his fellow men. As Deleuze explains Sadean characters are “not even attempting to prove anything to anyone, but to perform a demonstration related essentially to the solitude and omnipotence of the author” (Coldness and Cruelty 19). Wieder’s project goes beyond a simple threat. His last word “LEARN” is an imperative and a promise, learn about violence and death, knowledge he will continue imposing through his poems and eventually through his artistic exhibition. As I will explain later, this imperative relates to a specific theory the poet seeks to put into display.

Wieder has no intention of being the messenger of the regime; he is a psychotic despot who considers himself the creator of a new aesthetic. His fans do not identify what his message entails, and justify their support with the argument of novelty: “comprendieron o creyeron comprender la voluntad del piloto y supieron que aunque no entendieran nada estaban asistiendo

---

98 “En el principio creó Dios los cielos y la tierra. La tierra era caos y confusión y oscuridad por encima del abismo, y un viento de Dios aleteaba por encima de las aguas” (ED 35).

99 “The imperative and descriptive factor directs and describes the personal violence of the sadist” (Deleuze CR 19)
a un acto único, a un evento importante para el arte del futuro” (ED 38). The prisoners and guards at La Peña disregard Wieder’s poetic act as some type of publicity stunt, some of them laugh at it while others seem confused by the whole incident. The narrator observes some women asking Norberto for an explanation, and declares the absurdity of the scene, “Dios mío, le pedían consejo a un loco” (ED 39). The narrative machine outlines the delirious discourse of an inmate in order to display the libidinal investments underlying Wieder’s poetic act. Once again the text generates its own strategies to generate a bloc of sensations that goes beyond the description of the situation. In this scene it is Roberto who becomes an affect of terror as a result of Wieder’s poetic act.

Norberto’s reaction shows the beginning of a psychotic paranoia where the subject addresses the other that is the source of his terror. His statements contradict each other demonstrating the panic this exhibition generates, “nos tocó a nosotros, los chilenos, qué pueblo más afortunado, recibirla, darle la bienvenida” (ED 39). On the one hand, the content of this statement he utters out loud refers to a message of hope and celebration, but his prayer demonstrates he feels threatened by Wieder’s exhibition: “Santo cielo, dijo, padre nuestro, perdónanos por los pecados de nuestros hermanos y perdónanos por nuestros pecados. Sólo somos chilenos, señor, dijo, inocentes, inocentes” (ED 39). On the other, the form, the nervous way he speaks, rushing one word after another, and the excessive drooling of his mouth, are all part of a bloc of sensations that negates the message and produces and affect of terror, “la saliva

100 “They understood or thought they understood the pilot’s will, and they knew that although they couldn’t make head or tail of it, they were witnessing a unique event, of great significance for the art of the future” (ED 82).

101 “My God, they are asking a madman for advice!” (ED 29)

102 “It has fallen to us, the people of Chile, to greet and welcome it –oh lucky day! (ED 29)

103 “Our Father in heaven, forgive the sins of our brothers and forgive us our sins. We are only Chileans, Lord, innocents innocents” (ED 28).
le caía por la barbilla, le mojaba el cuello de la camisa y terminaba, en una suerte de gran mancha húmeda, en el pecho” (ED 37). Norberto’s display of a psychotic episode evidences there is a superfluity in Wieder’s poetic act. The madman is the only one who is sensitive to the fascist libidinal flow that underlies Wieder’s exhibition, he can intuit the threat of extermination, “Norberto, delante de mí, las manos enganchadas a la cerca y sin dejar de mover los pies, como si pretendiera hacer un hoyo en el suelo, susurró: éste es el renacimiento de la Blitzkrieg o me estoy volviendo loco sin remedio” (ED 38). Evil, Wieder’s desire for extermination, remains, despite his exposure, within what cannot be represented but only intuited by the delirious subject.

The second characteristic of the Sadean character is the repudiation of all relationships. As George Bataille explains the Sadean character seeks to cut all social ties. Despite being part of the armed forces Wieder feels no attachment or commitment to any group, “Wieder, lo sabíamos, no volaba en escuadrilla. Wieder volaba en un pequeño avión y volaba solo” (ED 55).

Wieder “is caught in the hermetic circle of his own solitude and uniqueness,” he is a renegade whose rationale for violence has its own individual aim. (Deleuze, Coldness 19) Despite his horrible crimes, the narrator cannot help but describe him, almost with admiration, as self-assured, “a su manera y dentro de su ley, cualquiera que fuera, era más dueño de si mismo que todos los que estabamos en aquel bar silencioso” (ED 153).

104 “He cried, as the white froth of his saliva, contrasting with the dominant tone of grey, ran down his chin, dripped onto the collar of his shirt and spread out in a large wet patch on his chest” (ED 27).

105 “Norberto, clasping the fence, scraping and scraping at the ground with his feet as if he were trying to dig a hole, whispered, either the Blitzkrieg has come again or I’m floating on a cloud, he replied” (ED 28).

106 “A paradox underlies his behavior. De Sade speaks but he is the mouthpiece of a silent life, of utter and inevitably speechless solitude… Unfettered freedom opens out into a void where the possibilities match the most intense aspirations at the expense of secondary ones; a sort of heroic cynicism cuts the ties of consideration and tenderness of others without which we cannot bear ourselves in the normal way” (Bataille Erotism 171).

107 “Wieder did not fly in a squadron, he flew a light plane and he flew alone” (ED 46).

108 “Wieder era la seguridad y la audacia personificadas…reflejo de una voluntad sin fisuras” (ED53).
what Bataille defined as a sovereign attitude, which separates him completely from the rest of the officers:

The solitary man for whom he speaks pays not the slightest heed to his fellows in his loneliness he is a sovereign being, never called to account, never needing to justify himself to anyone. He never pauses at the fear that the wrongs he inflicts on others will recoil upon himself; he is alone and never subject to the bounds that a common feeling of weakness imposes on other people. (189)

This sovereign attitude, however, is later questioned by Bibiano. He considers Carlos Wieder’s assurance an imposture, which this character assumes to hide his absolute dependence on the regime’s approval. As María Luisa Fischer explains in her essay “La memória de las historias en Estrella distante de Roberto Bolaño” one of the novel’s characteristics is its exploration on how an event can take different meanings according to the immediate or deferred effect it has on its witness and the narrator, “se enfoca en el sentido cambiante que adquieren vidas y hechos en su transmigración temporal y espacial y en la significación situacional y personal de los mismos” (155).

Wieder sovereign’s character is one example of how the novel

---

109 In a text, that Bibiano identifies as Wieder’s, the criminal expresses his desire to be recognized and taken under the regimes’ tutelage, “en las respuestas, largos monólogos divagantes, se bosqueja su teoría del arte. Según Bibiano, decepcionante, como si Wieder estuviera pasando por horas bajas y añorara una normalidad que nunca tuvo, un status de poeta chileno «protegido por el Estado, que de esa manera protege a la cultura». Vomitivo, como para creerles a quienes dicen que han visto a Wieder vendiendo calcetines y corbatas por Valparaíso” (ED 106).

“Disappointing, according to Bibiano, as if Wieder, in a moment of weakness, were yearning for a normality he had never possessed, longing to be adopted as official poet by the Chilean state “in its capacity of guardian of culture. It was sickening: almost enough to make you believe the people who said they had seen Wieder selling socks and ties in Valparaiso” (ED 97).

110 The description of Wieder’s exhibition passes through different narrative filters. The narrator transcribes and comments the narration of someone’s memories. Muñoz Cano’s narration is similar to Urrutia’s text since it is the justification of someone close to the regime who in reaction to others signaling their complicity decides to relate the events they witnessed and justify their presence and action
proposes different perspectives according to the narration of various individuals who either witnessed the event or were told by someone who did.\textsuperscript{111}

Wieder’s denial of any affiliation, simulated or legitimate, seems to be taken to the next level of total negation, which characterizes the third trait of the Sadean character: “denial of other people first, and then by some monstrous logic denial of himself” (Bataille 199).\textsuperscript{xxxii} He risks his life, career and freedom in order to reveal his artistic project. Even after he has been arrested and faces exclusion from the army his attitude continues to be apathetic as if his whole life was worthless compared to the achievement of his artistic display, “Carlos Wieder junto a la ventana, en perfecto estado, sosteniendo una copa de whisky en una mano que ciertamente no temblaba y mirando el paisaje nocturno” (ED 103).\textsuperscript{112} It is my contention, however, that he does not fulfill this characteristic of the Sadean character: total negation. On the contrary, Wieder is a psychotic megalomaniac who believes himself to be an angel; even if it is a fallen one, an antichrist, “el ángel de nuestro infortunio” (ED 54).\textsuperscript{113} He believes himself to be the designated one to instruct on the new poetry.

Wieder does not want to revolutionize Chilean literature; his objectives have nothing to do with his desire to be canonized among the best Chilean writers, “hablaba de poesía no de poesía chilena o poesía latinoamericana, sino de poesía y punto” (ED 53).\textsuperscript{114} His goal is to demonstrate a universal theory about art, language and cruelty: the poet must expose “la

\textsuperscript{111} On the other hand, according to the narrator’s description, Wieder thought of himself as the romantic hero of the Avant-garde. As Gamboa Cardenas explains in his essay “¿Siameses o dobles? vanguardia y postmodernismo en Estrella distante de Roberto Bolaño” “la relación entre dandismo, crimen y heroicidad que explican la fórmula explosiva que es Wieder ya había sido establecida dentro de los orígenes de la vanguardia por Charles Baudelaire” (217).

\textsuperscript{112} “At the window, showing no sign of fatigue, with a glass of whisky in his perfectly steady hand, contemplating the dark cityscape” (ED 93).

\textsuperscript{113} “The angel of our misfortune” (ED 45).

\textsuperscript{114} “He spoke of poetry (not Chilean or Latin American poetry, but poetry full stop)” (ED 43)
desmesura inútil” (ED 105) what is excessive, cruel, grotesque, and even ludicrous. He evinces what is disproportionate, what overflows the border of reasonableness and becomes simply an excessive flow.

I believe Wieder’s megalomania is not an imposture. He is obsessed with violence, cruelty, horror, and evil as a nonproductive excess. As Bataille explains of the relationship between Sadean art and nonproductive expenditure, “it is simple an excess, an excess to make our heads reel, but the excess of our own extravagance” (Bataille 192). Bolaño had already pointed out Ramirez-Hoffman’s overflow when referring to Willy Schürholz’s inability to achieve “the master’s excess” in La literatura Nazi en América (97). “It is the aesthetics of the beast, not of the sensible man, but the flow of an animalistic force that puts life at risk for the sake of intensification” (Grosz 63). What separates Wieder from the Sadean character is the fact that his acts are not the denial of his own self for the sake of the crime; on the contrary, the crime is the mechanism to affirm his delusion of being the originator of the new art. The imperative is to learn from that excess that can only be experienced at limit of death, “como si el piloto hubiera desconectado el motor y diera el primer ejemplo del aprendizaje al que se refería o al que nos instaba” (ED 39).

It is my contention, however, that Wieder feeds on risk and violence because of a general deficiency, which becomes visible in the victims he chooses to kill. In the scene at the

---

115 “Wieder, bajo el seudónimo de Masanobu (que no evoca, como pudiera pensarse, a un guerrero samurai sino al pintor japonés Okumura Masanobu, 1686-1764), habla sobre el humor, sobre el sentido del ridículo, sobre los chistes cruentos e incruentos de la literatura, todos atrocios, sobre el grotesco privado y público, sobre lo risible, sobre la desmesura inútil, y concluye que nadie, absolutamente nadie, puede erigirse en juez de esa literatura menor que nace en la mofa, que se desarrolla en la mofa, que muere en la mofa. Todos los escritores son grotescos, escribe Wieder. Todos los escritores son Miserables, incluso los que nacen en el seno de familias acomodadas, incluso los que ganan el Premio Nobel” (ED015).

116 “As if the pilot had switched off the motor and were giving us a practical demonstration, a first example from which to learn” (ED 29)
Garmendias’ house the victims have dinner with the one who later kills them. The sisters think they understand Wieder’s refusal to present his poetry around the table without realizing that, “está a punto de hacer «la nueva poesía chilena»” (ED 31). He will perform what he considers an act of poetry: their assassination. What Wieder calls “the learners of the fire” are those assassinated women: “todas las poetisas están muertas” (ED 49). They are all very different women and belong to different social classes and political interests. The only element they have in common is their interest in poetry as if their sensitivity for the arts would place them in a special category. It is not coincidental that ‘la gorda’ writes in prose, but what really saves her is Wieder’s belief that she understands him. She knows what it feels like to be denied the intensities that make anyone feel alive; “contemplaba el espectáculo, el espectáculo del sexo y de la sangre, también el del amor, desde una platea sin salida al escenario, incomunicada, blindada” (ED 49). Wieder has a heart of ice, “Toma mi corazón. Y después su nombre: Carlos Wieder” (ED 95), he is a sociopath who has no intensive emotions. His desire has a reactionary determination to capture all that intensity and passion he himself does not have.

Wieder’s poetry is a desire machine invested with a reactionary determination, and it produces violence that translates in the dismembering of his victims. Its objective is not only to

---

117 “The “New Chilean Poetry” is about to be born” (ED 20).

118 “All the girls who wrote poetry are dead” (ED 39).

119 “En uno de sus versos hablaba veladamente de las hermanas Garmendia. Las llamaba «las gemelas» y hablaba de un huracán y de unos labios. Y aunque acto seguido se contradecía, quien lo leyera cabalmente ya podía darlas por muertas... La diferencia entre ambas era notable, Carmen leía a Michel Leiris en francés y pertenecía a una familia de clase media; Patricia Méndez, además de ser más joven, era una devota de Pablo Neruda y su origen era proletario. No estudiaba en la universidad, como Carmen, aunque aspiraba algún día a estudiar pedagogía; trabajaba, mientras tanto, en una tienda de electrodomésticos” (ED 42).

120 “She was watching the show, with all its sex and violence, and its love, from a seat in the stalls, cut off from the stage, behind bullet-proof glass” (ED 39).

121 “Death is my heart… Take my heart. And then his name Carlos Wieder” (ED 85).
produce violence but to capture flows of intensity. He requires the experience of torture and assassination, not to feel, but to witness the limit of death where life’s intensities become more evident. Like the Chinese torture discussed by Bataille the photographs capture an instant and prolong it as a film played in slow motion. The images remain static but preserve certain fluidity, their voluptuousness indicate the transitional movement that marks the limit of death.xxxiv

In sum, Wieder fulfills the first characteristics of the Sadean character, he is outspoken, and he uses an imperative language. The criminal for the regime acts for the sake of the dictatorship in order to achieve order and stands in opposition to the sovereign criminal that creates chaos and triggers the mechanisms of control.122 The narrative demonstrates Wieder has a conflicting relationship with rejection/dependence in the regime; therefore, the second characteristic, his sovereign attitude, remains undetermined. He does not fulfill the most important Sadean characteristic, which is the total negation for the sake of crime, since he places himself in the despotic position of being the only artist to have the material to revolutionize poetry.

Wieder does not fit completely with the archetype of the Sadean character but his ‘artistic’ performances do evince the underlying economy of Sadean art: economy of repetition as demonstrative function. The writing in the air combined with the final exhibition seeks to demonstrate a specific theory: in life there is inevitably something that exceeds the normative and order. This excess produces panic and chaos, which triggers the reactionary pole of the libido that invests all its flow in recapturing all excess, even if this requires the use of violence.

122 Patricia Poblete identifies this connection between sovereignty and creation in the term she gives to Wieder as the demiurge of evil: “El gigante será el demiurgo del Mal, pero no en el sentido de una divinidad oscura e imprecisa a la que se le rinde culto, sino como (auto) imagen proyectada por el criminal que se piensa omnipotente. El villano, el gigante, se convierte en el (anti)héroe moderno, aquel que se atreve a desafiar las leyes, a remontar los límites, y a llevar el deseo -que según Freud es siempre, y en su raíz, amoroso y a la vez homicida- desde el reducto de la imaginación o el sueño, a la realidad” (425).
The economy of repetition of the same discourse added to its demonstration in the final exhibition finally achieves its intended objective: to bring attention to that which cannot be represented. Wieder is not a Sadean hero but his project’s economy achieves the disruption it intends determining its rejection and the pilot’s disappearance.

There is a personal and impersonal element in Sadism. The personal element has to do with Wieder’s theory of life’s excess. The pleasure of the one who inflicts pain, “the man subject to no restraints of any kind falls on his victims with the devouring fury of a vicious hound” (Bataille 167). This is the celebration of what exceeds the normative. The impersonal element on the other hand, relates to the demonstrative use of language. Wieder’s poetry is an act of enunciation that uses demonstrative language as part of a solitary argument. The impersonal level seeks to rationalize what remains outside of rationality: violence. Sadism “identifies the impersonal violence with an Idea of pure reason… the endless repetitions, the reiterative quantitative process of multiplying illustrations and adding victim upon victim, again and again retracting the thousand circles of an irreducibly solitary argument” (Deleuze, Coldness 18). For Wieder, violence is the manifestation of life’s excess and at the same time the instrument that guarantees a return to order.

Sadism’s economy of repetition achieves its demonstrative function by combining these two elements. The solitary argument, the poetic acts in the sky, are the theoretical statements, while the assassinations and subsequent exposition of the photographs are performative acts that put the theory into practice, “se dedicó a preparar por su cuenta, en el departamento, en las paredes del cuarto de huéspedes, una exposición de fotografías cuya inauguración hizo coincidir con su exhibición de poesía aérea” (ED 87).123

---

123 “Exhibition to be held in the flat, using the walls of the spare bedroom, which was to open on the same day as his display of aerial poetry.” (ED 78)
The exhibition conveys more eloquently the message intended by the aerial poetic acts. First, it displays the economy of endless repetitions of the same ritual of cutting women into pieces, body after body placed in a specific position as if they were modeling for the camera, “Las mujeres parecen maniquíes, en algunos casos maniquíes desmembrados, destrozados, aunque Muñoz Cano no descarta que en un treinta por ciento de los casos estuvieran vivas en el momento de hacerles la instantánea. (ED 97). 

Second, it shows Wieder’s personal goal of transgression and exposure of life’s excess.

Third, it makes evident what underlies Wieder’ paranoid psychosis: the threat of an impure other. The first three sections of the exhibition, inferno, madness and melancholia, point to a foreclusion of signification. Violence, fear and hate cannot be articulated, consequently Wieder finds himself confronted with a void of signification. Emptied out, he fears the silence which surrounds him. His broken subjectivity relies on delirium to achieve some consistency, to express with words what cannot be spoken: violence and death. Wieder’s poetic goal is to remove terror with its own language:

El silencio es como la lepra, declaró Wieder, el silencio es como el comunismo, el silencio es como una pantalla blanca que hay que llenar. Si la llenas, ya nada malo puede ocurrirte. Si eres puro, ya nada malo puede ocurrirte. Si no tienes miedo, ya nada malo puede ocurrirte. (ED 54)

The attempt to create the language of what remains inexpressible is the only way to exorcise fear. Fourth, Wieder’s reaction to this terror is a passionate line of flight for a new race.

124 “The women looked like mannequins, broken, dismembered, mannequins in some pictures, although Munoz Cano could not rule out the possibility that up to thirty percent of the subjects had been alive when the snapshots were taken” (ED 88).

125 “Silence is like leprosy, declared Wieder, silence is like communism; silence is like a blank screen that must be filled. If you fill it, nothing bad can happen to you. If you are pure, nothing bad can happen to you” (ED 45).
This is evident in the manipulation of Zurita’s poem. Wieder’s poetic act in Santiago is evidently the reworking of Zurita’s performance of Anteparaiso on June 1982 in New York. As Ina Jennerjahn explains in her essay “Escríto en los cielos y fotografías del infierno. Las "Acciones de arte" de Carlos Ramírez Hoffman, según Roberto Bolaño”, a fundamental objective of the Neo-Avant-Garde groups during the seventies in Chile is the democratization of cultural expressions. Groups like CADA worked to produce the conditions that would bring art to marginal spaces in order to encourage the traditionally excluded population to generate a collective identification and promote political and social initiatives. Wieder’s determination to reach a wider audience through his aerial poetic act has no democratic intention. The conditions of production and manipulation differ completely from the objectives of the Neo-Avant-Garde. The writing in the sky is performed by someone in a position of power, located in a high social, economic and military rank and one who imposes the imperative to learn, not to promote a collective identification, but to subjugate individuals to his command.

Zurita’s poem includes elements that relate to subaltern communities which connect the Chilean experience, the lonely star in the sky, with the repression suffered by many in different contexts. Hunger, deceit, carrion, disappointment, have an eschatological quality, like a miserable wasteland after a horrible catastrophe. Despite its melancholic tone the mentioning of god as common denominator gives it a commemorative tone as if it were a monument to all victims and the consolation of a higher being.

---

126 “Los años setenta en Chile se caracterizan por la búsqueda de formas expresivas y posibilidades de representación nuevas más allá del espacio semisacral del cuadro y por la nueva permeabilidad constatada entre arte de elite y arte de masas” (Jennerjahn 73).

127 “In 1982 Zurita had the first poem of Anteparaiso written over Queens. New York. An “homage to minorities throughout the world” and, in particular, to the “Hispanic population in the United States,” the white smoke of five planes spelled out verses that include: MY GOD IS CANCER/ MY GOD IS EMPTINESS/ MY GOD IS WOUND/ MY GOD IS GETHO. (Zurita 103)
MI DIOS ES CANCER, MI DIOS ES VACIO, MI DIOS ES HERIDA, MI DIOS ES Ghetto” (Zurita 103).

“LA MUERTE ES AMISTAD… LA MUERTE ES CHILE… LA MUERTE ES RESPONSABILIDAD… LA MUERTE ES AMOR Y LA MUERTE ES CRECIMIENTO… LA MUERTE ES COMUNIÓN… LA MUERTE ES LIMPIEZA… LA MUERTE ES MI CORAZÓN… TOMA MI CORAZÓN”. (ED 89)

Wieder’s text, on the other hand, uses the same structure of enumeration of identical subject clauses with a single word as predicate but replaces god with death. Wieder’s god is death itself and the commemorative element is substituted by an interpellation to Chilean society: Chile must be responsible; the only possibility for it to grow is to generate a communion among its citizens.

His artistic performances seek to recreate a ritual where consecration meets perversion: “Widernatürlichkeit, «monstruosidad» y «aberración»” (ED 51). He uses language that relates to communion, sacrifice and redemption but outside of any religious connotation. The sign of love to the nation, the duty must be a cleansing sacrifice. As Mandolessi observes, using Kristeva’s definition of the abject as the limit of destruction of the other “Kristeva muestra cómo en todas las sociedades existen rituales en torno a lo puro y lo impuro cuyo objetivo es sostener los límites que constituyen la organización social misma” (75), the abject in Estrella distante reveals the way in which systems are built and how they found their coherence by excluding

128 “DEATH IS FRIENDSHIP… DEATH IS CHILE… DEATH IS RESPONSIBILITY… DEATH IS LOVE AND DEATH IS GROWTH… DEATH IS COMMUNION… DEATH IS CLEANSING… DEATH IS MY HEART… DEATH IS RESURRECTION”(ED 81-82).

what has been stigmatized as other.  

On the first reading, the preposterous acrobatics involved in writing the words in the sky could be read as a messianic announcement of the Junta’s triumph. It may well be that for Wieder the junta is the redeeming power that rescues Chile from the darkness of socialism. The content of his poetry is publicized as the statement of the new regime, a statement Wieder does not care to deny. The imperative of the cleansing sacrifice is the mechanism of interpellation that makes individuals identify with a new race and a specific task. Wieder’s art would be then just another mechanism of subjectification.

Wieder, however, is a traitor and Mandolessi explains his deviance makes him “una figura de lo abyecto precisamente porque desafía las fronteras que garantizan el orden establecido” (71). Ruiz-Tagle fulfilled the ordinary position occupied by any other agent within the mechanism of control, infiltrator, informer, and executer, but Wieder fails to keep the pact of silence and connivance as torturer and assassin of the dictatorial regime.  

As Bataille explains in relation to the paradox of violence and language that defines Sade’s production:

As a general rule the torturer does not use the language of the violence exerted by him in the name of an established authority; he uses the language of the authority, and that gives him what looks like an excuse, a lofty justification. The violent man is willing to keep quite and connives at cheating. On his side the willingness to cheat leaves the way clear for violence. (188)

---

130 To support her use of Kristeva’s concept of abjection Mandolessi cites Tina Chanter’s The Picture of Abjection. Film Fetish and the Nature of Difference. “Whether it is a matter of subjects identifying their subjectivity, or communities cementing what binds them by way of expelling that which comes to be constituted as radically other, the movement of expulsion is constitutive of subjects and communities” (Chanter 7)

131 Not only Ruiz-Tagle but multiple pseudonyms and projections of the same signifier: Wieder, Ramirez Hoffman, Octavio Pacheco. “Wieder es construido como una especie de significante vacio a través de la relación de los géneros discursivos puestos en juego” (Gamboa Cárdenas 228).
Wieder goes against a fundamental strategy of control by exposing the body of those who are meant to remain with the status of “desaparecidos.” Wieder exposes the deceit and violence that are meant to be kept in silence, “for violence never declares either its own existence or its right to exist; it simply exists” (Bataille 188). Wieder tells other officers, who have all participated in the disappearance and assassination of individuals, that they do know about art, “les decía que sí sabían, que sabían más que mucha gente” (ED 43), they are also ‘artists,’ capable of tearing up all humanity from a body and turning it into an object to be enjoyed. Wieder wants to display in their presence the ‘artistic’ side of their task. Wieder’s main substance is blood so he impels them to have an erotic experience with those intensely sexualized objects, to get drenched with their blood, “ya era hora de empaparse un poco con el nuevo arte,” (ED 93). The exhibition is supposed to be an entertaining one for those used to the bloody task.

Deleuze’s definition of an institutional model of anarchy can help explain why Carlos Wieder’s exhibition of photographs was reterritorialized as an abject object. Abolishing the old regime in order to give birth to the new one requires the subversion of the law. “Sade often

132 “They knew about poetry more than most people” (ED 33).

133 “Pero estos últimos no sabían nada de poesía. O eso creían. (Wieder, por supuesto, “les decía que sí sabían, que sabían más que mucha gente, poetas y profesores, por ejemplo, la gente de los oasis o de los miserables desiertos inmaculados, pero sus rufianes no lo entendían o en el mejor de los casos pensaban con indulgencia que el teniente les decía eso para burlarse.) Para ellos lo que Wieder hacia a bordo del avión no pasaba de ser una exhibición peligrosa, peligrosa en todos los sentidos, pero no poesía” (ED 43).

134 “The art of the future” (ED 84)

135 “Si bien, el femicidio en cuanto tal se elide, resulta fundamental la forma en que este se presenta. Las fotografías de las mujeres cercenadas remiten a aquel tipo de pornografía violenta denominada gorenografía, en el cual se devuelve a la mujer al terreno del objeto sexual. De esta manera, mujeres intelectuales, bellas e inteligentes, que cumplían una función y eran reconocidas en el ámbito público, quedan reducidas a un cuerpo sangrante, a unos labios, a unos dedos, a su dolor y a la intención del femicida de "divertir" con esa representación. Cuerpos inertes que portan el sufrimiento de una época, que visibilizan la crisis política que se vive, diversión para algunos, la prueba de la violencia más brutal para otros” (Vásquez Mejías 321).
stresses the fact that the law can only be transcended towards an institutional model of anarchy. The law can only be transcended by virtue of a principle that subverts and denies its power” (Deleuze CR 89). The institutionalization of the new regime takes precedence over the preservation of the law. The military follow a model of anarchy that allows them to get away with human right violations for the sake of changing the status quo. Anarchy in this sense implies lawlessness in a society. However, a new regime cannot be established strictly through the use of violence it also requires the subjectification of a large percentage of the population. This subjectification is achieved thanks to a mechanism of interpellation that calls individuals to be part of the new project. The tyrant draws his authority to rule over people from the law. The tyrant makes an interpellation to his subjects by promising his law will ensure a higher good for the people. The exhibition cannot be categorized as acceptable because it makes evident that the military has broken the law and used extreme violence and brutality in order to impose the new regime. The exhibition of hundreds of dismembered bodies as a work of art that represents the regime would destroy completely the discursive foundation of the tyrant.

The reference to Joseph de Maistre’s *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* reterritorializes Wieder as key element within the regime’s mechanism of control. Wieder’s imperative to LEARN has to do with the experience of what exceeds the normative. He seems to share with Maistre the idea that man has an innate nature towards chaos and violence and that a repressive force is necessary to control it and keep it in check.\(^{136}\) From Wieder’s perspective the former socialist government was a complete chaos and the only remedy to restore order is to perform the sacrifice of some: “in the sensible order as in the higher order the law is the same and as old as

\(^{136}\) “There reigns an open violence, a prescriptive fury which arms all creatures to their common doom. As soon as you leave the inanimate kingdom, you find the decree of violent death is inscribed on the very frontiers of life”
evil: the remedy for disorder will be pain” (Maistre 272). Wieder identifies himself with Maistre’s definition of the executioner and assumes his role as perpetrator:

All greatness, all power, all social order depends upon the executioner; he is the terror of human society and the tie that holds it together; take away this incomprehensible force from the world, and at that very moment order is superseded by chaos, thrones fall, society disappears. (Maistre 20)

He kills women randomly without identifying their political affiliation because it does not matter if they are innocent or guilty, they are simply elements to be sacrificed in order to exterminate evil, “the all-powerful goodness knows how to use one evil to exterminate another, it is believed that evil is an integral part of the whole” (Maistre 126).

Wieder is at the same time an advocate and denouncer of the regime. He is the ideal executioner but he exposes the regime’s violence. His name seems to conceal this double tendency to stand in support and against the regime: “Wider, en antiguo alemán Widar o Widari, significa «contra», «frente a», a veces «para con». Widerchrist, «anticristo»; Widerraten, «disuasión»; Widerlegung, «apología», «refutación»; Widerlage, «espolón»; Widerrlage, «contraacusación», «contradenuncia»” (ED 51).137 His air exhibitions are the performative act that establishes a new reign in a devastated land; reason why it is considered propaganda for the regime. However, his aesthetic exhibition exposes what is meant to remain silent: the transition from one regime to another requires the institutional model of anarchy and the extermination of a substantial number of individuals.138

---


138 His sacrifice is not accepted or validated by the regime: “El intento de volver comunitario el ritual, fracasa por completo. La colectividad no ve estos actos como una restauración del orden, por el contrario, vislumbra en la figura del poeta a un asesino en serie. El sacrificio se trasmuta en femicidio y el ritual en delito. Ninguno de los invitados a la reunión se adhiere a su causa, por el contrario, la reprueban, generando un caos aun mayor” (Vásquez Mejías 317)
In *Estrella distante* Bolaño revisits the controversial theme of art’s connection with infamy. As Jeremías Gamboa Cárdenas explains, all the characters within the narrative can be placed within one of two categories of the *Avant-Garde*, the social activism or the futurist.\(^ {139}\) The social activism promulgates the armed revolution, leftist ideologies, and collective projects in opposition to the futurism’s nationalism, celebration of virility, and cult of the machine. There are definitely elements, especially in relation to the form, that connect Wieder’s work with the European *Avant-Garde*.\(^ {140}\) His writing in the sky evidences a connection with the Italian futurism, especially in the metaphor of the flying machine.\(^ {141}\) The problem does not arise from the differences of these tendencies that despite its opposition may maintain some fluidity. The dictatorship, the exile and the annihilation of the majority of those who identified themselves as the social activists of the *Avant-Garde*, generates O’Ryan’s, and Belano’s move towards a more decadent tendency. Both categories, therefore, move to a center where they become the Siamese twins of the decadent *Avant-Garde*. Felipe Ríos Baeza, in his essay “Los <<lados B>> de B. Una aproximación a lo anticanónico en la narrativa de Roberto” considers that of all poets in Bolaño’s constellation of artists Carlos Wieder is the actual *Avant-Garde* artist who deconstructs canonical frontiers and introduces offensive topics.\(^ {142}\) But Wieder explodes the *Avant-Garde*.

\(^ {139}\) “Ruiz Tagle se va a convertir en el poeta oficial futurista del régimen. Los otros personajes de la novela responden al modelo del artista asociado al activismo socialista” (214-215).

\(^ {140}\) “Al margen de la ironía, una estética que propone la ocupación del espacio en base a puntos que permiten el trazado de líneas imaginarias, en un movimiento que recupera el sistema de lectura de las constelaciones, connota algunas de las experiencias más audaces de la vanguardia europea, y recuerda la pretensión de “escribir en el aire” de César Vallejo. El campo de concentración ideal” (Manzoni, Biografías mínimas ínfimas y el equivoco del mal 28)

\(^ {141}\) Los autores de la segunda fase del futurismo pusieron su aeropittura, creada en 1924, al servicio del fascismo, tributando homenajes a Mussolini y a Hitler. La planificación minuciosa, los avisos públicos y la realización de las acciones aéreas de la figura de Bolaño, remiten a las puestas en escena de y los escándalos suscitados por Marinetti.

\(^ {142}\) “Puede decirse que más que los realvisceralistas de Los detectives salvajes, los verdaderos vanguardistas serán los escritores nazis y Carlos Wieder. La verdadera y más arriesgada “vanguardia” en la literatura de Bolaño no
precepts and becomes “un ángel caído de la generación,” (ED 226) which according to Gamboa marks him as an extreme case of the movement. As Marcelo Cohen explains in his essay “Donde mueren los poetas” Carlos Wieder assumes in an ironical way the Avant-Garde’s imperative to disarticulate the syntactical rules of language.\textsuperscript{143} If the Avant-Garde’s project was a war machine against the stratification of language, Wieder’s dismembering of the bodies is a parody of this revolutionary investment as it is framed in a fascist machine of social cleansing. Wieder is the monstrous son who commits the parricide of his own movement. Fischer goes beyond the identification of an ironical manipulation and deconstruction of the Avant-Garde precepts and proposes Bolaño’s magnification and deformation of Zurita’s poem is a performative act of interpellation to readers, intellectuals and artists to give a condemning and compensatory response to the extreme experience of terror displayed in the novel.\textsuperscript{144} I agree with Fischer in relation to Bolaño’s defiant tendency. I believe both novels Estrella distante and Nocturno de Chile confront intellectuals and artists, and questions their active or passive participation in the perpetuation of repressive regimes and impunity of human right violations. Consequently, in

\begin{quote}
estará simbolizada en los realvisceralistas, sino en la capacidad literaria de “deconstruir”, al más puro estilo derridiano, las fronteras del canon y permitir el ingreso de asuntos que no habían sido considerados como temas plausibles en un poema o en una narración” (Ríos Baeza 17)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{143} “Por mucho que uno admire las vanguardias, algunos de sus gestos mas desencajados le causan vergüenza ajena; Passolini pensaba que muchos vanguardistas colaboraron con el mal, y se sabe en que fiasco terminó el futurismo. En 1912, en su segundo manifiesto, Marinetti, devoto del peligro y la temeridad, explicó que la hélice de su avión le había dictado un nuevo credo: “hay que destruir la sintaxis disponiendo los sustantivos al azar… Hay que formar estrechas redes de imágenes… que serán lanzadas al mar misterioso de los fenómenos…” Máquinas y misterio: si Estrella distante cuenta el desarrollo de un posible vanguardista ideal, el que realiza el asesinato de la lengua en el despedazamiento de cuerpos, lo cuenta en el marco perfecto /una máquina política de limpieza social/ para sus fines de sobria ironía” (Cohen 34)

\textsuperscript{144} “Tenemos a un asesino que, en vez de unir la literatura a la vida, como preconizan Zurita y la vanguardia en general, al une a la muerte… podría pensarse que con el gesto citacional se está afirmando la igualdad, simplemente de signo opuesto, entre un proyecto poético y otro —el humo negro de Wieder como la imagen invertida del blanco de Zurita-. Se produce más bien la resignificación de la escritura celeste de Zurita, trasladándola hacia el espacio del Chile bajo dictadura, expandiéndola y deformándola como ocurre con las historias y la historia en Estrella distante, y cargándola del imperativo de responder y acaso purgar la escritura y la experiencia limite del horror que se relata en la novela (Fischer 154).
regards to art’s connection to infamy the text acknowledges its existence but concedes that even when art departs from humanity, as Wieder’s exhibition does, it still has the potential to be a space for reflection and political resistance. *Estrella distante* does not celebrate or motivate infamy, it does not parody the *Neo-Avant-Garde* as failed enterprise but reiterates art’s political role.

### 3.2. *Nocturno de Chile*: Sebastian Urrutia Lacroix and the doubles in the mirror

The narrative machine of *Nocturno de Chile* uses a mnemonic psychoanalytical machine to illustrate the mechanisms of the regime’s paranoiac machine and its gradual fall into the abyss of psychosis. *Nocturno de Chile* does not constitute a collective assemblage of enunciation according to Deleuze and Guattari’s definition since it does not suggest a new possibility of life; on the contrary, it is an effective narrative machine that exposes the paranoia and melancholia that leads to death.

*Nocturno de Chile* introduces the Oedipal family triangle emphasizing three different psychoanalytical paradigms: The second Freudian definition of the psyche, paranoiac psychosis, and melancholia. Subsequently, it deterritorializes the familial configuration by showing that these symptoms have no universal determination but they are evidence of the *socius*’ reactionary tendency to reterritorialize revolutionary flows by repressing individuals’ tendency to give into their own desire.

In *Nocturno de Chile* Urrutia Lacroix frames his dreams within the psychoanalytical matrix of the second Freudian definition of the psyche in order to demonstrate his unaccountability for Chile’s historical becoming. Urrutia might misinterpret his dreams by applying universal psychoanalytical categories but this mistake only supports the narrative’s strategy to display the content of his delirium. This strategy is the display of a bloc of sensations that render affects like terror and disgust in images that have a hallucinatory quality. The dream
is not the regulation of the libido but just another desire machine invested by reactionary libidinal investments, a machine that produces Urrutia’s writing. Urrutia’s attempt to present himself as a victim of the times has a contrary effect since the content of his dream actually reveals his silence and connivance were caused by his unconscious fascist determination.

The main difference between the Freudian psychoanalytical definition of the unconscious and the one proposed by Deleuze and Guattari is between theater and factory. Psychoanalysis formulates dreams as the staging of a symbolic regulation: the unconscious releases some of its content in a censored way to avoid the harmful consequences it could have in the vigil. Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, define the unconscious as a factory that produces desire all the time and expresses itself in all social production not only in dreams. Consequently, evidence of what underlies the socius’ production of desire appears in all social production.

During the first part of the novel the story is framed during Allende’s government and Urrutia apparently maintains a rational and controlled behavior when he is awake but it is in the realm of the dream that reveals the fear and hate that underlie his conduct. He narrates his dreams in his mnemonic machine through the Freudian second structure of the psyche according to which the super ego would be his accusatory consciousness fleeing from the scene; the id is the source of all his repressed desire “mientras el ello gemía y hablaba en una jerga que parecía micénico” (NC 36) and the ego is the disconnected part of his psyche which simply “sleeps.”

---

145 In relation to the explanatory apparatuses set into motion by Freud, Deleuze and Guattari observe: “The discovery of the productive unconscious has what appear to be two correlates: on the one hand, hand, the repression that the social machine exercises on desiring-machines, and the relationship of psychic repression with social repression.” “The great discovery of psychoanalysis was that of the production of desire, of the productions of the unconscious. But once Oedipus entered the picture, this discovery was soon buried beneath a new brand of idealism: a classical theater was substituted for the unconscious as a factory; representation was substituted for the units of production of the unconscious; and an unconscious that was capable of nothing but expressing itself—in myth, tragedy, dreams—was substituted for the productive unconscious” (Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus 61).

146 “groaning and rambling on in a vaguely Mycenaean jargon” (NC 131)
The ego maintains a rational balance by disregarding the conflict between the other two elements. He hears his super ego ordering him to remain silent about his fear and hate for Allende’s government “toda conversación, todo diálogo, decía una voz, está vedado” (NC 35). He is the witness of his own psyche’s working: his id is absolutely active and out of control. The super ego can barely maintain the ego from giving into desire and it has to flee at high speed from his burning fire.

Urrutia, however, pretends his production has no relation to the content of his dream: “Por aquella época empecé a trabajar en la Universidad Católica. Por aquella época empecé a publicar mis primeros poemas y luego mis primeras críticas de libros, mis apuntes de la vida literaria de Santiago” (NC 30). But when the coup d’état and the military uprising takes place he gives room to his desire allowing the fascist libidinal investments to permeate his writing, then all the fear and hate are released onto the page, “escribía sobre mujeres a las que zahería sin piedad, escribía sobre invertidos, sobre niños perdidos en estaciones de trenes abandonadas” (NC 30).

Urrutia explains his dreams in psychoanalytical terms as universal phenomena as the normal psychic reaction anyone would have in those days of social instability. These dreams

---

147 “all dialogue is forbidden” (NC 23)
This attitude of allowing a super ego element control all desire so that we have no pain or trouble Deleuze and Guattari define it as “the neurotic’s dream of a tranquilized and conflict-free existence.” This is the herd instinct a “desire to have someone else legislate life”, they add this is “the very desire that was brought so glaringly into focus in Europe with Hitler, Mussolini, and fascism; the desire that is still at work, making us all sick, today” (Anti-Oedipus 14).

148 “All I am doing here is putting into words, with a bit more rigor to bring out the paradox, the fact that the drives and the ego ‘are in conflict and that there is a choice that has to be made. The order that prevents the collision and explosion of the situation as a whole is founded on the existence of this name of the father” (Lacan The Psychoses 96). 

149 “I started working at the catholic university. It was around this time I published my first poems, my first reviews and my notes on the literary life of Santiago” (NC 23).

150 “I wrote about women, hatefully, cruelly, I wrote about homosexuals and children lost in derelict railway stations,” (NC 77).
however are used by the narrative to outline Urrutia’s desire production. The delirious content of these dreams do more than evidence the struggle between the libido and repression, they are evidence of the libidinal investments that underlie not only Urrutia’s subjectivity but the entire social fabric.

The delirious content of these dreams reveal desire and its repression not as universal human determinants but as a set of forces among the libidinal investments of the *socius*. What Urrutia describes as the struggle between the three elements of the second Freudian structure of the psyche is actually the dynamic between the unconscious and preconscious libidinal investments. Urrutia represses his fascist libidinal investments, the desire to eliminate what he considers the other (poor, women, homosexuals, illiterate, and socialists). Then he invests his revolutionary preconscious libidinal investments in a life of institutional commitment and intellectual endeavors. What he does not realize is that these preconscious investments in pro of an intellectual and civilized Chilean society are driven by his unconscious investments to eliminate the other that he fears and hates.

Urrutia’s description of his texts as a poet and literary critic, more than his dream, is what actually reveals what underlies his desire production. *Estrella distante* had already mentioned Ibacache as the pseudonym of a literary critic who had offered a positive review of Wieder’s writing in the sky of the city of Concepción. This one page description of Ibacache’s review condenses Urrutia’s insensitivity and arrogance: he discusses Wieder’s decision not to use a translation only as an excuse to display his erudition. It is this combination between denseness, self-importance and opportunism what defines the class of Wieder’s enthusiasts; those who want to fabricate a message of optimism and renovation in his work. Furthermore, there are some

---

151 The abject elements that make him faint and feel disgust.
similarities between Wieder’s and Urrutia’s artistic projects: “una obra poética para el futuro, una obra de ambición canónica que iba a cristalizar únicamente con el paso de los años, en una métrica que ya nadie en Chile practicaba, ¿qué digo!, que nunca nadie jamás había practicado en Chile” (NC 37). Urrutia fantasizes with the image of the heroic poet who, filled with a torrential grace, sacrifices himself and sets out for immortality only with his writings (NC 37). This work of art would be the celebration of heroism, purity, god, civilization, patriotism and the promise of an ideal future to come.

The story of the shoemaker in Nocturno de Chile proves this masterpiece of purity is the delusional obsession of an individual who seeks to impose a specific genealogy of patriotic heroes to determine the future of a nation. The literary celebration of purity allows evil to be exerted unnoticed as it avoids discussing the fascist libidinal investments and opts for a discourse on the work of heroes who will bring goodness and prosperity for a glorious future. The term purity is repeated to parody Ibacache’s work as literary critic,

En un esfuerzo dilucidador de nuestra literatura, en un esfuerzo razonable, en un esfuerzo civilizador, en un esfuerzo de tono comedido y conciliador, como un humilde faro en la costa de la muerte… un ejercicio vivo de despojamiento y de racionalidad, es decir de valor cívico. (NC 33)

Urrutia like the shoemaker embarks in the celebration of all Chilean literary names, he had reviewed them, “todos buenas personas, todos espléndidos escritores,” (NC 36) pretending

152 “A body of poetic work for prosperity, an oeuvre of canonical ambition” (NC 24)
153 The noble cause that keeps him busy in the vigil reveals its fascist intentions in the realm of the dream. He disregards the Mycenaean characters, which also appear in Urrutia’s dream and will be discussed later, and which reveal the fascist libidinal investments hidden in a tormented heart.
154 “A reasonable endeavor, a civilized endeavor, an endeavor pursued in a measured, conciliatory tone, like a humble lighthouse on the fatal shore…. dispassionate analysis and rationality; that is to say in civic virtue” (NC 25).
not to be aware of the dark night surrounding him.\textsuperscript{155} In the meantime, the literary elite both in Chile and Vienna continue “llamando a sus musas”. (NC 60)\textsuperscript{156}

Besides the parody of the critics’ impartiality, it is impossible not to connect the use of the term purity with the Arian imperative of Nazism. Don Salvador Reyes considers Jünger “uno de los hombres más puros que había conocido” (NC 37) a writer whose texts could be read as plans for a new hierarchically ordered society.\textsuperscript{157} Jünger does not see in the painting the defeat of European culture, on the contrary he sees the defeat of an incompetent Latin American who was not able to achieve the splendor of the City of Light. Jünger states the painter will not live until the following winter. He is just a failure and his death irrelevant, almost required. What Urrutia calls purity is not a neutral, apolitical position on his part but the surreptitious way to support an elite group with the authority to choose who should receive benefits and who should be annihilated. In “Theories of German Fascism” Walter Benjamin discusses a collection of essays edited by Ernst Jünger. He observes in Jünger’s texts a continuous celebration of war that removes all humanistic ends. There is an imperfect reality that requires the soldier’s sacrifice in order to achieve the ideal goal of an eternal Germany. Behind this concept of purity Benjamin identifies the fascist desire of the bourgeoisie to be the ruling class supported by this caste of soldiers.\textsuperscript{158} Urrutia intends to inhabit an elite space at every institutional level, the church, intellectual circles, and even among the members of the Junta.

\textsuperscript{155} “all of them good people, all of them splendid writers” (NC 24)

\textsuperscript{156} “Evoking their muses” (NC 44).

\textsuperscript{157} “One of the purest men he had ever met,” (NC 25)

\textsuperscript{158} “Since gas warfare obviously eliminates the distinction between civilian and military personnel, the most important basis of international law is removed. It is symptomatic that something written in 1930 about "war and warriors" overlooks all this. It is symptomatic that the same boyish rapture that leads to a cult, to an apotheosis of war. It should be clear that behind their "eternal" war lies the idea of cultic war, just as behind the most recent war lies that of technological war, and it should also be clear that these authors have had little success in perceiving these
Bolaño’s narrators undertake the classical journey into the depths of the inferno to confront the face of evil.¹⁵⁹ Urrutia Lacroix is driven to Là-Bas in a carriage which “como si aquel carricoche fuera a buscar a alguien para llevarlo al infierno” (NC 18).¹⁶⁰ This encounter differs from the classical tradition of challenging one’s antagonist to become a play of mirrors where the subject realizes his affinity with the monster. The resemblance between two or more characters within Bolaño’s texts is found both within the same text and intertextually. The most remarkable character is Arturo Belano who appears with different names throughout Bolaño’s entire production: Arturo B, el joven envejecido, simply B, even as Bolaño in La literatura Nazi en América. The similarity among the names has generated a hypothesis about autobiographical and alter ego intentions, which ignore the persistent vindication of their fictional character by the author.¹⁶¹ It has also contributed to the evaluation of his work as a whole masterpiece, where every single text of his production is a new chapter within an infinite novel.¹⁶² The author, however, highlights the particular nature of the texts as independent fictional universes.¹⁶³

relationships. They continued to celebrate the cult of war when there was no longer any real enemy. They complied with the desires of the bourgeoisie, which longed for the decline of the West, the way a schoolboy longs for an inkblot in place of his wrong answer. “The dead,” we are told, "went in their death from an imperfect reality to a perfect reality, from Germany in its temporal manifestation to the eternal Germany” (Benjamin 122)

¹⁵⁹ In the author’s own words: “Es una inmersión en el mal. El mal absoluto, si es que existe. Es intentar ver el rostro del mal absoluto, pero absoluto, absoluto” (Gras Miravet 58).

¹⁶⁰ “As it drew near its silhouette looming on the horizon cut a figure as if that equipage were coming to take someone away to hell” (NC 8).

¹⁶¹ Luis Bagué Quílez discusses the autobiographical pact in Bolaño’s narrative in his essay ‘Yo soy Arturo Belano’: voces y ecos autobiográficos en la narrativa de Roberto Bolaño.” Bulletin of Spanish Studies, Volume LXXXVII, Number 6, 2010

¹⁶² Farewell refers to Dante as an author Urrutia should reflect upon in order to understand his insistence on Sordello.

¹⁶³ “Todos los destinos, como espejos deformantes, se remiten unos a otros. Escribir sobre un personaje, desde los mecanismos de caracterización de Bolaño, es escribir sobre todos” (Gamboa Cárdenas 222)
The narrative’s dynamic is fundamentally the confrontation with the other. The narrators’ discourse is essentially the diatribe against their adversary, Urrutia wants to respond to the *joven envejecido’s* accusations, but the narrative exercise turns into an experience of self-awareness of one’s connection with the antagonist. This awareness of the other that produces rejection is achieved through the metaphor of the mirror.

The best example of this strategy is found in the short story “Detectives” of *Llamadas telefónicas* where the two characters, Belano and Contreras, find themselves on opposite sides: prisoner and potential torturer. In this scene I observe once again Bolaño’s use of psychoanalysis as material for fiction, in a way parodying the concept of the mirror stage, but more importantly subverting the regime’s imposition of symbolic identification and social determination, the political prisoner’s transference of the main signifier from ideology to the armed forces that now impose their reality, with a phantasmagoric image. Contreras seeks to reconstruct Belano’s subjectivity by recreating the mirror stage, where the subject is supposed to have a symbolic identification according to the other. Contreras believes he is doing his former classmate a favor by providing him with an assurance of the consistency of his identity as prisoner but soon he realizes it is him who is being given an image of his delusional and fragmented reality.

164 According to the standard biographical accounts, Mr. Bolaño moved to Mexico in 1968, but returned to Chile in the early 1970s to support the Socialist government of President Salvador Allende. He was then supposedly arrested and jailed during the coup that brought General Pinochet to power on Sept. 11, 1973, but was saved from possible execution and allowed to escape by two guards who were high school classmates and recognized him…But several of Mr. Bolaño’s Mexican friends, some of whom were in Chile themselves during the Allende years, say that the writer was in Mexico during the time he claimed to have been in Chile. They say that Mr. Bolaño, who is rapidly emerging as the pre-eminent Latin American writer of his generation, was not in Chile during the military coup that brought Gen. Augusto Pinochet to power, despite his claim to that badge of honor” (Rohter).

165 Lacan redefines the mirror stage, first exposed in his *Seminar I Freud’s Papers on Technique* in *Écrits*: “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*. 
Se miró de golpe la cara y vio a otra persona…se me ocurrió que podía llevarlo al corredor donde estaba el espejo y decirle mirate otra vez… cuando yo me mire tú me vas a mirar a mí, vas a mirar mi imagen en el espejo, y te vas a dar cuenta de que soy el mismo. (LT 61)

The result of Contrera’s experiment has completely opposite results as he sees a fragmented surface invaded by a cluster of faces among which he discovers himself and Belano as a “joven envejecido”. In the normative structure of subjectivity according to psychoanalysis, there is first of all identification with the image which determines the ego formation before his social and symbolic identification, subsequently, the big Other ratifies this image. Belano cannot achieve a primary identification with the counterpart, the image in the mirror; he simply does not recognize himself. By failing to identifying his own specular image he fails to achieve ego consistency. He remains in what Lacan defined as the initial rivalry felt as soon as there is gestalt, the observation of an image as a whole but rejected as foreign. What Contreras suggest is that by standing in the mirror he will ratify his image. The torturer standing as the big Other who gives signification would ratify Belano’s image as the prisoner he is.

In the experience of seeing his own image Contreras is the one who remains in rivalry with the Gestalt, he “is pregnant with the phantoms that dominate him” He sees “the imago of one’s own body as it appears in hallucinations” (Lacan, Écrits 78). In this stage the fragmented body acquires an alienated identity and develops his aggressiveness against the other: the threat of the other behind him. 166 What makes Contreras remove his image from the mirror is the fact that this phantasmagoric image has provided him with the truth of his own subjective alienation,

166 “It can be seen that the slightest pretext is enough to arouse the aggressive intention, that re-actualizes the imago, which has remained permanent at the level of symbolic overdetermination that we call the subject’s unconscious, together with intentional correlation”.
an image that brings back the awareness of his own death. Psychoanalysis reduces phantasy to a purely individual dimension. In this double image he identifies his ego under attack. Even though the narrative connects to a psychoanalytical machine it deterritorializes it by turning the mirror against it and showing that these universal determinants emphasize on the singular sinister tendency of a number of psychotic individuals, leaving aside the fact that the libido permeates the entire social fabric and not simply a number of individuals. This scene requires an alternative reading as an assemblage of elements that constitute the affect of terror.

In this scene the narrative displays a process of becoming. First, Belano has been stripped of all his individuality and has come to occupy the mass of prisoners. The dictatorship uses different mechanisms of torture to strip individuals of their sense of self in order to exclude them from society. Belano looks at his reflection in the mirror and does not recognize his image. In this side of the wall is the patio where they hold the political prisoners, both prisoners and guards have lost their identity and can only experience fear. However, the mirror scene between Belano and Contreras is the encounter of two individualities that enter into a process of becoming. This does not mean Belano becomes Contreras or the reverse; on the contrary, in this encounter two images, two intensities, come together to form a single affect: the wide open eyes and the multiplicity of superimposed faces, create a bloc of sensations of fear and failure. This is the affect that marks their generation’s failure. A whole generation who awakens from the dream into the nightmare and suddenly realizes their youth has been replaced by fear and guilt. Contreras had not really confronted the horror invading the prison, Chile, or himself, merely a

---

167 “This image would be the repetition of the subject’s first awareness of his death as explained by Lacan: In effect, it is by means of the gap opened up by this prematuration in the imaginary, and in which the effects of the mirror stage proliferate, that the human animal is capable of imagining himself as mortal, which does not mean that he would be able to do so without his symbiosis with the symbolic, but rather that without this gap that alienates him from his own image, this symbiosis with the symbolic, in which he constitutes himself as subject to death, could not have occurred” (Lacan E 461).
passive horror he had intuited but not confronted. Neither Belaño nor Contreras can remain the same after experiencing this scene. Contreras loses his innocence and like the ‘joven envejecido’ ages ten years. Contreras needs to take a stand on either side of the wall. He chooses the one that separates him from the prisoners because he has become a tira for the regime and Belano is the abject other that produces disgust and needs to be rejected.168

Contreras’ sensation of being accused by the other “un tipo de unos veinte años pero que aparentaba por lo menos diez más, barbudo, ojeroso, flaco” (LT 64) is the same Urrutia Lacroix mentions in relation to the joven envejecido in Nocturno de Chile “aún tengo fuerzas para recordar y para responder a los agravios de ese joven envejecido” (NC 12).169 Both Urrutia and Contreras eventually realize the faces in the mirror are the sensation of their own screaming for no one to hear, “¿esto es el verdadero, el gran terror, ser yo el joven envejecido que grita sin que nadie lo escuche?”(NC 149).170 A whole generation marked by terror, silence, failure and guilt.

Another intertextual example of the use of the double as the encounter of two elements that determines a process of becoming is the metaphor of Chile as a shipwreck. The title of the novel, Nocturno de Chile, is part of a rizhome of intertextual connections among the narrative machines of José Asunción Silva’s Nocturno, the narrator’s dream in Estrella distante, and Urrutia’s diegetic trip to Europe. The elements of the dream in Estrella distante are repeated

---

168 In a different level, the officer’s desire to kill responds to a need for survival. Even though he tries to convince Belano of his loyalty to the left he is absolutely scared of being connected to a political prisoner. The image in the mirror expels him from the comfortable center between the regime and the left and forces him to take sides. Taking into account the mandate of submission and loyalty imposed by the regime, individuals are guaranteed their own salvation provided they betray, expose and annihilate the other.

169 “I still have strength enough to remember and rebut the wizened youth’s affronts” (NC 4)

170 “the supreme terror, to discover that I am the wizened youth whose cries no one can hear” (NC 118)
within the diegesis of *Nocturno de Chile* with some variations, which makes *Estrella distante*’s narrator another of Urrutia’s doubles.\(^\text{171}\)

The metaphor of the transatlantic evidences the persistence of the imaginary of a continuous connection with Europe; literary, ideological and historical influences which determine the individual’s position in relation to a center that is Chile as a shipwreck. In *Nocturno de Chile* Sebastian Urrutia occupies his time in literary exercises, takes refuge in the classics, without realizing the imminent destruction of the ship; like Santiago’s elite who have their literary readings at María Canales’ parties.\(^\text{172}\) The dialogue between the scene in *Nocturno de Chile* and *Estrella distante* is not only marked by the fact the narrators are on board of a transatlantic but also by mentioning Silva’s poem. Silva’s *Nocturno* is congruent with the ambiance of desolation and fear the diegesis’ present as it points to the presence of death and the imminence of a tragic end but Urrutia only reads the poem to entertain the travelers and exhibit his erudition.

In *Estrella distante* the narrator sees Wieder in his dreams and comes to the most horrifying but eye opening truth, his inactivity puts him on the side of the victimizers, those responsible for the shipwreck. The image of the two lovers walking together under the moon and projecting one single shadow takes a sinister turn in *Estrella distante*: assassin and the silent accomplice form a single shadow trying to escape from the wreckage they have both created by

---

\(^\text{171}\) Bolaño as the character and narrator of *Estrella distante*. The reader is only informed of the narrator’s name until the last line of the novel when Romero says “Bolaño take care of yourself”.

\(^\text{172}\) Tal como el Urrutia Lacroix de la novela, Ibáñez Langlois dio clases de marxismo a los generales de la Junta - en 1964 había publicado un ensayo hoy más que olvidado: "El marxismo como teoría y como práctica" - y fue el sucesor del maestro nacional de la reseña literaria, Hernán Díaz Arrieta, de seudónimo Alone, el Farewell de *Nocturno de Chile*. Y si bien Ibáñez Langlois nunca ha reconocido ni negado su asistencia a las veladas literarias de Mariana Callejas en el caserón del barrio alto santiaguino que compartía con su marido, el agente de la DINA Michael Townly, aquellas reuniones fueron reales y en los sótanos del caserón fue torturado hasta la muerte, entre otros, Carmelo Soria, funcionario español de la ONU (Cuadros)
action or omission. Since the narrator does not even read the papers, he realizes he is using literature and exile to avoid confronting what is happening in Chile. This awareness generates a sense of guilt which is fundamental in his decision to help Romero find Wieder. The narrator is the one who determines Wieder’s assassination.

While in *Estrella distante* the narrator feels remorse for his inactivity, in *Nocturno de Chile* Sebastian Urrutia decides to ignore what is happening in his country. The metaphor of the double on the shipwreck points fundamentally to collective guilt. If in *Llamadas telefónicas* the encounter between Belano and Contreras demanded Contreras’ definition on his standing in relation to the regime, the encounter in *Estrella distante* between the narrator and Wieder called for the same definition. The narrator cannot remain in the margins; he has to make a decision about Wieder. As the author explains guilt is the common denominator that connects him with someone like Urrutia and in a way all Chileans “Si yo, que fui una víctima de Pinochet, me siento culpable de sus crímenes, ¿cómo alguien que fue su cómplice, por acción o por omisión, puede no sentirse culpable?” (Aussenac 1). The narratives suggest guilt goes beyond acceptance and repentance and that there must be accountability.

Urrutia does not feel guilt; on the contrary, he feels he is the victim of an unjust persecution. It might be fruitful, for a moment, to analyze Urrutia’s paranoia in relation to Lacan’s definition of psychosis even thought my analysis is rooted in the idea that the libido invests the social field and not simply familiar relationships: Sebastian Urrutia Lacroix makes a connection between those delusional intensities that torment him and the image of his father. The priest suggests his dreams are connected to the image of his father’s “su sombra deslizándose por las habitaciones de nuestra casa, como si se tratara de la sombra de una comadreja o de una
anguila” (NC 35). In fact, this metaphor of the eel inside a container suggests his father became ill due to the impossibility of escaping the *socius*’ repression. Sebastian Urrutia implies his father was an inadequate father figure and therefore was unable to fulfill the position of the law. Following Urrutia’s familiar matrix one may conclude that he failed to achieve a normal subjectivity as the symbolic order was completely foreclosed, leaving a hole where meaning and sense and more importantly the acceptance of the law would have taken place. “The Name-of-the-Father was –*verworfen*, foreclosed, that is, never having come to the place of the Other – must be summoned to that place in symbolic opposition to the subject by seeking a different father” (Lacan, Écrits 206).

Urrutia then finds in Farewell, and later Pinochet, the father figure that would give symbolic consistency to his subjectivity. The Name-of-the-Father begins to collapse, Farewell dies, the dictatorship comes to an end, and he becomes aware of the atrocities of the regime. Once again the hole opens up in the signified, “sets off a cascade of reworking of the signifier… until the level is reached at which signifier and signified stabilize in a delusional metaphor” (Lacan, Écrits 207).

---

173 “shadow slipping away down the corridors of the house as an eel in an inadequate container” (NC 23)

174 Verwerfung/foreclusion was first defined by Lacan in his seminar 3 on psychosis: “Projection in psychosis is the mechanism that makes what has got caught up in the Verwerfung (foreclusion: Something primordial regarding the subject's being does not enter into symbolization and is not repressed, but rejected. Repudiation, primordial expulsion of a fundamental signifier -e.g. the phallus as signifier of the castration complex- from the subjects’ symbolic universe)- that is, what has been placed outside the general symbolization structuring the subject - return from without (It does not return from the inside like neurosis but they re-emerge in the Real in hallucination) (The Freudian expressions ‘withdrawal of cathexis from the external world’ and ‘loss of reality’ should also be taken as referring to this primary mechanism of separation from and expulsion of the intolerable perception into the outside world)” (Lacan *The Psychoses* 47).

175 Lacan observes how in Schreber’s delusion the small other has an unreal appear when the big Other has been excluded, “The Other being truly excluded, what concerns the subject is actually said by the little other, by shadows of others, or, as Schreber will express himself to designate all human beings he encounters, by fabricated, or improvised men. The small other effectively presents an unreal character, tending towards the unreal” (Lacan *The Psychoses* 53).
Urrutia is persecuted by the other, the wizened youth who accuses and torments him. He recognizes his presence in his memories always among those for whom he feels repulsion, the poor and illiterate. As Deleuze and Guattari explain the lack of a repressive father does not imply a lack of oedipalization, “in psychosis the familial complex appears precisely as a stimulus whose quality is a matter of indifference, where the intensive investments of reality bear on something totally different (the social historical and cultural fields)” (Anti-Oedipus 134). Urrutia is victim to the same force of repression that drove his father into madness in the first place. The difference between Urrutia and his father is that the priest has accepted oedipalization from the institution and the discriminating social elite; “some tolerated it and are even content with it and evolve within it” (Anti-Oedipus 135). He has repressed his libidinal investments; all his desire has been sacrificed for a life of institutional commitment and intellectual endeavors. Urrutia has devoted his efforts in the pursuit of his libidinal interests of fame and recognition. By the time he understands the only fame he is going to achieve is that of a supporter of the regime it is too late to make changes to his plan.

Mónica Zapata in her essay “Nocturno de Chile: la melancolía de Ibacache” identifies apathy depression, and delirium as the main elements that constitute Ibacache’s melancholia. I agree with Zapata when she suggests the priest tries to place himself in the same melancholic position as the Guatemaltecan painter in an attempt to prove his innocence, “el pasado se desdibuja tras el velo de ese discurso narcisista que aspira a blanquear la imagen de quien se autorelata” (Zapata 139). I also concur in her observation of a sarcastic tone in the two dialogues that deal with melancholia: Reyes with Jünger and Urrutia with Farewell. Zapata also identifies religious faith as Ibacache’s lost object of desire. “La pérdida de la fe en el cura corresponde a la llamada acedia, de ahí sin duda el sentimiento de haber pecado, la angustia que provoca la voz de
la conciencia y la necesidad de confesarlo todo” (Zapata 142). She identifies Ibacache’s confession as a melancholic attachment to the lost object, “En su noche de delirio ese “caníbal melancólico” que es el cura Icabache mantiene presente todo su pasado: rumiando los episodios y los seres que ha perdido” (Zapata 143).

Urrutia’s lost object is not only religious faith but a compound of elements that include heroism, purity, civilization, and patriotism. Urrutia believed this imaginary would be guaranteed by the dictatorship. If there is a foreclusion, it takes place where Urrutia thought it pure and ideal yet it loses all meaning. When he realizes that the law that kept everything under control was a fabricated discourse behind an anarchic tendency to assassinate indiscriminately, Urrutia needs to generate a new signifier that may allow him to regulate his existence outside the faith in the utopia of progress. His discourse is an attempt to find within his memories any signifier that might restore his mental health. Urrutia soon realizes he is a victim of time’s passing and its venom: amnesia. Memories flee; they get confused with horrific images that irrupt in his discourse without his control. Every attempt is useless confronted with the strength of time and oblivion.

Patricia Espinosa defines Urrutia’s discourse as the discourse of a terrified consciente, “Bolaño trata de responder que se hace con el dolor, con el resentimiento, como experimentar o pensar al mal, desde donde ubicarse para lograr entender lo más profundo de una lógica que a pesar de todo siempre será la de un rostro desviado” (3).¹⁷⁶ What really terrifies Urutia is the intuition of the reactionary libidinal investment that underlies his project of creating the revolutionary poetry of purity for the new and progressive race. All the images reveal behind the discourse on purity there is only hate, fear, “el señor Odeim y el señor Oido,” and the desire to

¹⁷⁶
annihilate the other. Only in the last pages he identifies his image in the other, the wizened youth and realizes the disgust he felt for his own people was the hate he felt for himself. The last scene recalls the bloc of sensations experienced by Contreras in *Llamadas teléfonicas* showing the failure was not only for some individuals but for the whole generation, the whole shipwreck of Chile, “entonces pasan a una velocidad de vértigo los rostros que admiré, los rostros que amé, odié, envidié, desprecié. Los rostros que protegí, los que ataque, los rostros de los que me defendí, los que busqué vanamente” (NC 150). The fascist libidinal flow is illustrated in that last scene: a storm of shit carrying the images of them all.

The descent into inferno is not a heroic adventure; there is no epic return to the wasteland, no promise or glorious prophesy for Chile. There is no ascending from hell but the awareness of its omnipresence. There is no physical journey but a subjective experience of confrontation with the other; the antagonist who is apparently our opposite. This experience is the recognition of one’s resemblance and filiation with the other. The narrators do not simply remain within a melancholic frame dwelling on the void left by the lost object, the generation exterminated throughout Latin America; they actually acknowledge their similarities with the victimizer; a terrifying experience but one undertaken over and over again in Bolaño’s work. Everyone has a role to play and no one can deny his/her responsibility with history. There is no possibility to disconnect oneself from the generational determination; all individuals are relatives, descendants of history.

As the preface for *Estrella distante* states the novel is not a mirror, continuation or explosion of a different text but “espejo y explosión en sí misma” (ED 11). Intertextual elements do not intend to narrate stories around a character, as if they were the adventures of a single

---

177 “The faces flash before my eyes at a vertiginous speed, the faces I admired, those I loved, hated, envied and despised. The faces I protected, those I attacked, the faces I hardened myself against and those I sought in vain “(NC 118)
individual. What connects a character like Belano with B or Wieder with Hoffman is not the identity of one single individual, this is not a referential game, but the fact that they are connected by a common denominator, a coincidental element which influences their position and action within the narrative.

The common denominator among characters appears within the texts in order to define specific filiations and historical referents that place them, despite their differences, as elements subject to the flows of libidinal investments within the same social field. It is possible to identify some commonalities within the structure of *Estrella distante* and *Nocturno de Chile*, both novels have a single narrator who relates the events throughout the novel (*Amuleto* does too), and their narration contains independent narrative blocks which stem from the central diegesis: The Guatemalan painter, the Austro-Hungarian shoemaker, etc. In *Estrella distante*, the narrator devotes a different chapter to tell the story of three different characters Diego Soto, Juan Stein and Lorenzo who after Allende’s death seem to have taken different paths. The narrator, however, concludes there is a connection among the three which is signaled by the reading of a book by Frederick Perls *Ma Gestalt-thérapie*. Besides the historical reference to Nazism, its title indicates psychoanalysis as an underlying discourse that serves both as material for fiction and structural matrix. Furthermore, the reading of this text places them within the same generational category and the same ideological line.

What connects these characters is their awareness of the fascist libidinal investment that, as a virtual flow, has permeated the *socius* from Europe to Latin America. They identify the signs of its presence in the dictatorial regimes and find a way to flee from its repression. These
characters are eventually stripped of any possible heroic categorization. The legend of the ideal revolutionary, and nomad, who fights on every single front and has an epic death, is completely demythologized and everything remains uncertain. Neither Belano, nor Stein can be considered heroes, their epic deaths fighting on the front is what should have been within their generation’s imaginary.

The narrative undertakes the display of a universe of virtual possibilities. Cecilia Manzoni emphasizes in her essay “Biografías mínimas ínfimas y el equívoco del mal,” the title “literatura nazi” as the syntagm that condenses “la acumulación y la proliferación de la común afición a formas degradadas de la literatura” (Manzoni 23). This implies fiction can delineate psychotic universes where crime and violence are elevated ideals, like Schürholz concentration camps or poetry to honor assassins and despots. I would include Wieder’s ‘artistic’ acts in Estrella distante and Ibacache’s literary reviews in Nocturno de Chile, as they deal with fascists writers, as part of that genealogy of independent fictional universes under the syntagm of “literatura nazi”. This does not mean La literatura Nazi en América celebrates those ‘degraded forms’, on the contrary it acknowledges its existence and creates a fictional space to evince the fascist flow that permeates its pages.

Emilio Sauri suggests Bolaño’s characters in Los detectives salvajes have exhausted all aesthetic and political possibilities. I consider this exhaustion was already present in prior texts and displayed as agonizing last attempts. This exhaustion, however, can be viewed in two different forms: on the one hand, characters like Stein, even Belano, are reinvented in fiction as

---

178 Lorenzo becomes a celebrity as a special-Olympics acrobat but dies of AIDS, Stein dies of cancer without ever leaving his town, Soto’s intellectual life has no political intention and his absurd death is more like destiny’s way of laughing at his face for thinking he could escape and hide within his books and his bourgeois life style.

179 The characters in La literatura Nazi en América either write about things that have no relevance or undertake ambitious projects that end up in nothing. They praise ‘civilization’ and a European centered mentality. They have somehow a connection with Hitler which makes them fear Communism and hate all humanity. Many of them are celebrated, others despised and excluded, but they are all sad, spiteful psychotic individuals.
the aesthetic and political heroes they were meant to be, but their end is always a failure because no matter where they go or how much they fight in all different fronts throughout Latin America, Europe, Africa the result will always be the same: artistic sterility and death. Rumors among poets keep the faint flame of hope that there is still someone fighting for the cause. The narrative, however, revises these stories and suggests they have been absorbed by the regime and become emptied out, anonymous elements like O’Ryan himself buried in the disgusting but endearing shoe repair store. On the other hand, this exhaustion demands inventiveness. The artist cannot simply dwell on failure but has to come up with a new strategy. The narration of Stein’s involvement in every revolutionary movement is the display of what Deleuze has defined as the alternative of the chaosmos when there are no representational options within what we know as the world.

In fiction the generation of excluded poets can overcome failure and become literary detectives and even avengers that finally put an end to the infamous criminal. In these two novels different stories coexist presenting “a plurality of ways of being in the world”, including the stories of fascist writers. Therefore, Bolaño’s narrations, the heroic and the infamous, make possible the emergence of other possible worlds and in turn alternative pathways to the one

---

180 One important element is that of all multiple paths, only a few of them have a resolution in Chile. If all characters died under the dictatorship’s mechanism of control it would imply the isolation of violence in Chile as a particular case. The dictatorship is not simply a Chilean curse in which all Chileans are destined to die, but the consequence of a flow capable of permeating the entire socius determining these characters’ fatal destiny.

181 Stein goes through a process of “Schizophrenization: The monadic subject who is Stein becomes a nomadic subject through narration. “Schizophrenization” is a limit-process in which the identity of the individual is dissolved and passes entirely into the virtual chaosmos of included disjunctions. The schizophrenic quickly shifts from one singularity to another, never explaining events in the same manner, never invoking the same genealogy. (Deleuze Critique xxvi)

182 “Divergences, bifurcations, and incompossibles now belong to one and the same universe, a chaotic universe in which divergent series trace endlessly bifurcating paths: a "chaosmos" and no longer a world” (Deleuze Critique xxvi).
imposed by history.\textsuperscript{183} Faced with exhaustion the narrator can only invent other scenarios and hopefully these contribute alternative possibilities of life.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{183} Deleuze sites as an example Borges’ “the Garden of the Forking Paths.”
\end{flushright}
4. Lines of flight in Diamela Eltit’s *Los vigilantes*

Diamela Eltit’s novels depict characters that are subject to stratification within marginal categories due to their inability to fulfill the parameters of normalcy and productivity. Autistic children, incestuous siblings, beggars, and prostitutes are targeted as different because their appearance and behavior are considered grotesque, transgressive or generally detrimental for the wellbeing of the family, the community or the nation. Additionally, these novels bring attention to the correctional systems created to reform these wayward characters, to repress their deviant behaviors and to keep them off the sight of the community. A chronological reading of Eltit’s fiction reveals that novel after novel these systems of repression become more specialized and effective in reducing characters’ psyches to a deeper more agonizing state of affliction.

In *Los vigilantes* Diamela Eltit introduces characters in precarious physical and mental condition; the novel is a symptomatic narrative as it presents a diagnosis of a state of illness affecting Latin American nations during the nineties.\(^\text{184}\) Eltit’s narrative exposes Latin America’s historical tendency to forfeit its natural and human resources. Her works signal the persistence of colonialist practices in the context of the neoliberal model. This is especially relevant in her post-dictatorial works, *El cuarto mundo* (1988), *Los vigilantes* (1994), *Mano de obra* (2002), and takes a central role in her latest novel *Impuesto a la carne* (2010) where the nation speaks about itself encouraged by all the celebrations of the bicentenary and denounces the ailing state of the patria/matria she carries within. The nation is in the throes of death barely surviving despite

\(^{184}\) In *Coldness and Cruelty* Gilles Deleuze describes how writers can be, besides artists, great clinicians and anthropologists, “of the type whose work succeeds in embracing a whole conception of man, culture and nature” (16). He uses the term clinician to refer to someone who illustrates a clinical picture of the symptoms that constitute a specific illness. The literary text, then, may be read from a critical/clinical approach as the diagnosis of a state of illness and as the creation of a potential measure to restore health.
having all her organs taken away from her body and sold to the market; a metaphor almost too evident of capitalism’s appropriation of the country’s natural and human resources.

The psychic deterioration is especially evident in the characters’ ever more dramatic struggle to generate collective subjectivities. From Lumpérica to Los vigilantes, the narratives’ protocols vary in the use of two different scenarios, where the heterogeneous performances generate alternative articulations of agency. In Lumpérica (1983) and Por la patria (1986) the narrative’s attempt to produce an alternative subjectivity to the regime’s subjectification is displayed in the public sphere and entails the encounter and integration of a marginal collectivity. The performances of both L. Iluminada and Coya/Coa are shadows of movements along underground lines of flight that deterritorialize the designation of marginality imposed by the luminous signs. In these early novels, the anonymous collective entity, formed from the characters’ non-phallic experience, circumvents the dictatorship’s control and resists its designation and inscription. According to Idelber Avelar, to a subjectification that takes place under the light, “in the precise sense of being-before-interpellation,” (172) Lumpérica opposes the construction of a collective subjectivity through the performance of L. Iluminada who, in the darkness, rubs herself with other bodies within the multitude of anonymous individuals. L. Iluminada’s performance presupposes a utopian agency, “to glimpse into a residue of experience – the fleeting moment when writing is collectively shared- not captured by the representational apparatus” (172). Lumpérica insists on the writing of an unofficial collective story that avoids validating the inscribing language of the designator.

In El cuarto mundo (1988) the action at the center of the novel has left the plaza and entered the space of the home. In this novel the sexual metaphor of the phallic inscription is literally developed in the first scene as the father rapes the ailing mother. Hence, the
transgressive orgy that in Lumpérica takes place in a public space is transposed into the domestic realm as an incestuous relation, between the two siblings who were procreated as a result of the rape. This transition into the private sphere would seem to indicate that the possibility of a collective political performance in the main plaza, still imaginable in the Lumpérica of 1983, ceases to be possible for Eltit a few years later. Yet the subversive potential of the “sudaca” presence persists, even if now it must hide itself in private spaces. In Los vigilantes (1994) the protagonist finds herself isolated in the space of the house, completely stratified in her role as a mother, which is inseparable from her role as ex-wife, and it is as ex-wife and mother-under-vigilance that she writes most of what she writes. In Los vigilantes there is no underground collectivity left.\textsuperscript{185}

Even though Los vigilantes and El cuarto mundo present a diagnosis of the ailing nation through the allegory of the disintegrated family, there is a fundamental difference between these two novels. In both texts there is an exploration of the forbidden zones outside the house. In El cuarto mundo the siblings venture outside of the house and have encounters with the sudaca but eventually return and remain in the space of the house. The final product of their incestuous relationship is the book El cuarto mundo; the defective sudaca narrative, procreated by Diamela Eltit, that will be sold in the market. On the contrary, in Los vigilantes there is no return to the house, there is no resolution, and the novel remains in a perpetual tension drawing a line of escape that resist being reterritorialized.

Los vigilantes maps areas of stratification, lines of flight from these restrictive spaces, and new escape routes, in order to find zones of fluidity where other transformational operations might facilitate subjective changes. There are physical territories of social determination and

\textsuperscript{185} During the first fifteen letters a mother addresses her absent husband in order to respond to his accusations, demand that he fulfills his responsibilities as a father to their son, and denounce the her neighbors’ harassment.
boundaries between the higher and lower classes. The mother, Margarita, describes in her letters her movements along the city streets and her experiences as she enters each different zone. Furthermore, *Los vigilantes* presents non-geographical territories of stratification that are specifically related to the demand for a normative use of language; the narrative voice then introduces alternative forms of writing that deviate from this imperative. Consequently, this chapter’s reading approach is to follow these movements within *Los vigilantes*, in order to identify the symptoms of the ailing nation, draw the novel’s mapping of alternative possibilities for subjective adaptation and explore its virtual line of flight from normative and representational writing.\(^{186}\)

*Los vigilantes* tells the story of family triangle that can be read as an allegory of the Chilean nation. At the same time, the novel is acutely metafictional, the narrative voice struggles with normative and representational language and tries to write resisting the demand for referentiality and legibility. What gives coherence to these parallel levels is the narrative voices’ desire to generate lines of flight from repressive systems and liberate the flow of creativity to pursue subjective transformations as an alternative to the regime’s normative subjectification.\(^{187}\)

In the first part of this chapter I approach the mother’s letters in order to analyze what they inform us on her relationship with the father and her reflections on the new economic and law enforcement measures. This reading seeks to identify how the narrative introduces a symptomatology of a state of illness pervading the social milieu. In the second part, I approach

---

\(^{186}\) I am using Deleuze and Guattari’s term *socius* to distinguish it from the term society. Society refers to a group of individuals while the *socius* is the definition of the social field as a body permeated by flows of desire. I am suggesting the *socius* and the page are both surfaces where the social investment of desire is recorded.

\(^{187}\) The Greeks used the term Subjectification (subjectivation) to refer to the process by which the individual folded the outside, the relation to others, and constituted an inside, a relation to oneself. Foucault uses it in The Archeology of Knowledge to study the constitution of the subject as a process of observation where he experience himself recognizing himself as a domain of knowledge. Deleuze observes a positive sign in Foucault’s definition: from subjectification there is a possibility to open up the field for new subjectivities and new ways of resistance.
how the narrative voice undertakes physical, psychological and subjective deterritorializations, as she escapes from the surveillance of different control entities: First, from a domestic site controlled by the father’s interpellation, second from the streets watched by the neighbors, third from the city where surveillance is faceless but omnipresent. By so doing I will be able to show Eltit’s conception of literature with its political, ethical and aesthetic potentialities.

4.1. *Los vigilantes* a symptomatic narrative

It is my contention that, in *Los vigilantes*, Eltit recreates the persistence of intensely repressive tendencies within the *socius*. The deterioration of psychological health is evidence of the fascist determination of the historical becoming. The consequence of this determination is the authoritarian regimes’ successful imposition of power on entire populations, as it was the case in Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile. Against the facile optimism that marked Chile’s gradual transition to democracy after the plebiscite, *Los vigilantes* articulates a counter-discourse of resistance that brings to the fore the unresolved aftereffects of the dictatorship and the continuous stronghold of the power elite on the nation. *Los vigilantes* demonstrates the mechanisms of interpellation implemented during the transition are as detrimental to individuals’ psyche as those used during the dictatorship. There is a consensus among critics on the pessimistic nature of the diagnosis this narrative presents, Leonidas Morales defines it as “el paisaje de una ruina generalizada,” (76) Idelber Avelar locates it within the category of apocalyptic narratives, and Guillermo García Corrales within the poetics of disenchantment.

1990 stands as a crucial year in Chile’s official history since it marks the transition to a democratic government after sixteen years of Pinochet’s dictatorship. This change entails changes within the power structure, the power elite is faceless, there is no dictator, and at the same time it has many faces as citizens start policing themselves. The narrative of *Los vigilantes*
is set precisely within this interstitial space-time between the remnants of a dictatorial atmosphere and the anticipation of a democratic system. *Los vigilantes* presents an allegory of the nation through the display of a disintegrated family. Margarita Saona in her article “Maternidad y paranoia en el estado autoritario: leyendo Eltit desde Schreber” relates the space of the house in *Los vigilantes* with the invasion of the dictatorship in the private sphere, “la demarcación de su mundo entre el espacio doméstico, adentro, y un afuera amenazador, la calle… denuncia política en la que la condición materna se presenta como el terreno en el que el totalitarismo invade el ámbito privado bajo una apariencia liberal” (63). The novel narrates the story of a woman, Margarita, who struggles to provide for her son. Mother and son are isolated, starving, and freezing. Margarita spends her days writing to the father, who has left them both, and her nights awake wandering the house or the streets. Margarita complains about his ability to exert his authority over the family without fulfilling his responsibility to procure for their basic needs.

In the family triangle, the son is the source of conflict and the excuse for the father’s constant surveillance over the mother. As Mary Green states in her book *Diamela Eltit: Reading the Mother*, the educational system seeks to prepare the child to become a member of society and a product of circulation within the market, “the father thus endorses his son's development of an empirical knowledge that reflects his own, and which would be instilled in him in an educational institution through training, surveillance, punishment and control” (120). The son is an anomalous character who deviates from the *socius’* shaping mechanism of indoctrination.188

188 “The various forms of education or “normalization” imposed upon an individual consist in making him or her change points of subjectification, always moving toward a higher, nobler one in closer conformity with the supposed ideal. Then from the point of subjectification issues a subject of enunciation, as a function of a mental reality determined by that point. Then from the subject of enunciation issues a subject of the statement, in other words, a subject bound to statements in conformity with a dominant reality (of which the mental reality just mentioned is a part, even when it seems to oppose it)” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 128)
From the mother’s first letters it is evident that the son has decided to take a different path, he has generated his own detachment from the system by getting himself expelled from school, “it was your son’s entirely personal action… his conduct was charged with a great deal of wickedness” (LV 21). His behavior has been so improper and disturbing that the mother cannot even bring herself to revealing his actions out of embarrassment. The father is absent and all information about his thoughts, words and actions is provided through Margarita’s letters or the son’s narrative voice. The father occupies the space of the faceless power elite, which is driven by a fascist libidinal investment to capture, alienate and destroy completely the mother’s/nation’s subjectivity in order to make her an automaton, agent of surveillance, perpetuator of the neoliberal discourse through the son and following generations.

The disappearance of the father-husband-despot, in conjunction with the discourse of progress promotes a twisted symbolic transference of power from the dictator to those committed to keeping stability and the potential of economic progress at all costs. As Bernardita Llanos notes in her book *Passionate Subjects/Split Subjects in Twentieth-Century Literature in Chile*,

The forms of surveillance introduced by the dictatorship and continued through the post-dictatorial period became informal and parallel mechanisms carried on by the citizens themselves in which rumors, accusations, and denunciations played a major role. Globalization or neoliberalism in the Chilean version meant a drastic reduction of the

---

189 “[f]ue una acción de tu hijo del todo personal… su actuación estuvo provista de una gran dosis de maldad” (LV 49).

190 The narrative advocates for Latin America’s idiosyncrasy and contest the global discourse for assimilation with the western world. Latin America as a social organism has its own distinctive qualities that make it unique and different from other societies. Since the western discourse supposes the inferiority of a race with structural abnormalities, society seeks to extricate and deny anything that might expose its anatomy.
state and its withdrawal from social and economic areas, letting the market rule. (Llanos, 195)

Margarita describes her neighbors driven by suspicion and self-interest. So extensive is this web of self-declared defenders of the nation that the entire city becomes suspect: “La vigilancia ahora se extiende y cerca la ciudad. Esta vigilancia que auspician los vecinos para implantar las leyes, que aseguran, pondrán freno a la decadencia que se advierte” (LV 53). Before the transition to a democratic government it was the military and local police who inflicted a physical, recognizable control by capturing, torturing and disappearing individuals, now it is ordinary citizens in general that enforce allegiance to a cause.

In her letters Margarita suggests this new system of control maintains some of the observable mechanisms of the prior regime, such as curfew and the presence of military authority, but it has added new discourses on reconciliation and progress that support the complete implementation of neo-liberal policies. Writing about this aspect of Los vigilantes, Green notes that, “Eltit's perception of post-dictatorship Chilean society at this time as reified, acritical and depoliticized, and traversed by consumerism, competition and social inequality, is embedded within the novel” (113). Los vigilantes denounces the manipulation of a discourse on economic prosperity that has from the beginning of the dictatorship joined military repression in its effort to maintain capital production and social exclusion.

Saona suggests that Los vigilantes, “denuncia el autoritarismo escondido bajo la fachada de la “economía de mercado,” que supuestamente era uno de los mayores logros de Pinochet” (57). The dictatorship generated the ideal conditions for the application of the neoliberal model’s economic measures; it successfully instilled within individuals the preconscious investment of

\[191\] "The surveillance is extended now and encloses the city. This surveillance supports the neighbors' instituting laws, which, they assert, could curb the decadence they observe” (LV 25).
interest for an industrial, progressive, and consumerist mentality. During Pinochet’s dictatorship neoliberal free market policies, designed by economist Milton Friedman and espoused by the ‘Chicago Boys’, were implemented as the panacea for Latin America’s economic problems. However, in order to implement the entire model it was necessary to eliminate the dictatorial government and allow the free market to determine the economy. The removal of the figure of the dictator did not mean, however, that there was a change in the power structure. The despot requires losing its identified position to mislead the population into thinking there will be a democratic future, but as Llanos explains, the democratic discourse of citizen participation in the prospect of the country allows the power elite to achieve a consensus and remain in place without changing the mechanisms of coercion.

The absent husband and father, a ready-made metaphor of the faceless unidentifiable power elite, can distance himself without designating a replacement because the general population has already been indoctrinated into policing itself, and its neighbors. The members of the power elite do not even need to recruit these individuals to be their agents of control since the dictatorship has already prepared them for this task. At this point to persecute their neighbors has become their only delusional goal. Deleuze and Guattari’s paradox of the “legislator-subject” is useful to explain the process by which individuals internalize the statements of hegemonic discourses:

---

192 As John Chasteen has explained in his book *Born in blood and fire: a concise history of Latin America*, these policies only served to aggravate social inequality: “The expansion of the Chilean economy has been so steady and vigorous that it benefited all Chileans to some extent –but, as elsewhere, the middle classes benefited most. Meanwhile, Chile’s distribution of wealth remained among the most unequal in Latin America. The best case scenario of neoliberalism, in other words, still promised least to the neediest” (311).

193 “The transition to democracy left untouched the authoritarian and coercive mechanisms that the Pinochet dictatorship had put in place. From 1990 onward, the democratic governments of the Concertación were more concerned with finding a "consensus" that would leave the economic model and past authoritarian mechanisms of social control almost intact” (Llanos, 195).
There is no longer even a need for a transcendent center of power; power is instead immanent and melds with the "real," operating through normalization. A strange invention: as if in one form the doubled subject were the cause of the statements of which, in its other form, it itself is a part. This is the paradox of the legislator-subject replacing the signifying despot: the more you obey the statements of the dominant reality, the more in command you are as subject of enunciation in mental reality, for in the end you are only obeying yourself! You are the one in command, in your capacity as a rational being. (A Thousand 130)

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault discusses the change in control mechanisms from penalty to surveillance, and theorizes *panoptic* as its disciplinary model. As power becomes disassociated from a centralized institution it operates throughout the social body instilling in every individual the desire to control and supervise the others. Different critics have analyzed the *panoptic* in *Los vigilantes*. Among them Green observes the imposition of social norms by micro agents infused with a circulating power:

The aim of the neighbors’ surveillance is to guard against disorder and crime, but they are also their own overseers, in the sense that they police themselves and thus interiorize power. Power is revealed as circulating through a dispersed network of micro-powers, creating a homogeneous society that complies with social norms through the mistrust and estrangement induced by surveillance. (122)

By manipulating individuals with the promise of economic incentives the power elite generates a competitive environment where everyone polices each other minimizing the possibility for any collective formation. As Deleuze analyzes in his “Postscript on the Societies of Control” there is a change in the mechanism of/for social control that finds its best example
in the corporation’s program of challenging motivation.\textsuperscript{194} By creating a system of hierarchical mobility, the successful corporation generates individual rivalry and neutralizes collective resistance. During Pinochet’s dictatorship, an effective system of control relied on its ability to instill fear on the social body. Furthermore, this system required a continuous indoctrination that instilled on citizens the national project.

As in other Latin American dictatorship novels, \textit{Los vigilantes} recreates the atmosphere of suspicion that prevailed in the Chile of the Pinochet era. Fear and hatred tore apart families and communities, as individuals, frightened by the very possibility of being observed and turned in to the authorities, developed symptoms of persecution. As one would expect, \textit{Los vigilantes} suggests this fear plays havoc on the population’s mental health. In her essay “Discurso transgresor y estrategias epistolares en \textit{Los vigilantes} de Diamela Eltit” Miriam Rivera-Hokanson explains that the description of the neighbors in \textit{Los vigilantes} is analogous to the social crisis, “como resultado trágico de la devaluación humana, alegorizan la pérdida del habla en una sociedad represiva” (69). In the novel characters present paranoiac feelings of persecution, submissive behaviors, stuttering, and cries of desperation. Through the protagonist’s letters, the novel records the degeneration of individual subjective formations into inconsistent, indeterminate and subservient existences.

The novel also suggests that this commitment to the surveillance force seeks to hide the feeling of inadequacy to conform to the prototype for the ‘West’ (LV 33).\textsuperscript{195} The neighbors

\textsuperscript{194} “[t]he corporation constantly presents the brashest rivalry as a healthy form of emulation, an excellent motivational force that opposes individuals against one another and runs through each, dividing each within...We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair...Individuals have become "individuals," and masses, samples, data, markets, or 'banks’” (Postscript 3)

\textsuperscript{195} They seek to hide the fact that they are in conflict with themselves for their inability to fit into the mold for the West. In her \textit{Ficciones somáticas}, Gabriela Nouzeilles observes this neurotic tendency in the national narratives of Latin American romanticism/ naturalism. The fact that we observe the same symptom in end of the century texts
seem to have failed to metamorphose completely into the individual required by the neoliberal model; therefore, they make extreme sacrifices to compensate for their deficiencies. They exhibit the pain their surveillance task entails, a public scourging to prove the lavishness of their sacrifice and their commitment to the cause, “la vigilancia circular que él ha inventado, es únicamente un pretexto para exhibir su cojera.”

Margarita describes a neighbor who “recorre una parte de la ciudad con su ser destrozado entre el cansancio y la amargura, esperando encontrar no sé que clase de corrupción cuando se desata el atardecer” (LV 81). This character has suffered physical and mental damage, and since he is no longer a productive element, the system disposes him and leaves him wandering the streets in a state of paranoia. The character’s delusional psychosis is a sign of the innate corruption that Eltit wants to denounce in her novel.

The mechanism of interpellation consists in subjugating individuals to the impossible task of proving themselves worthy of the West. The collective subjectivity is formed according to the question of the Other’s desire since the goal is to become its object of desire. Therefore, it is imperative to demonstrate that the country is a desirable market for international investors. This demand has two immediate consequences: it institutes the imperative of working incessantly towards a specific goal and generates the paranoiac delusion that corruption is points to the persistence of an original conflict within national discourses: the assumed inferiority in the nature of its people.

196 “Sometimes I believe that the circular surveillance he's created is merely a pretext for exhibiting his limp” (LV 50). Their excessive obsequiousness reminds us of some of José Donoso’s characters in El obsceno pájaro de la noche, including Peñaloza and the old women retired in ‘la Casa’, who naively seeks to generate a sense of dependence and debt in those they serve while resenting them for the years of abuse and subjugation. Like Peñaloza, they achieve a fleeting sense of wholeness at being addressed by that other they both admire and hate, the irony being that in order to become that other one needs to extricate its very essence. “Ante la solicitud de don Jerónimo por su persona Humberto sentía que se encontraba con la otra parte suya, y que sólo así, una vez al año, podía ser un hombre completo” (Donoso 244).

197 “Roams one part of the city, his very being shattered by weariness and bitterness, hoping to find I don't know what sort of corruption when dusk breaks loose” (LV 50).
everywhere ready to creep in and disrupt the system. Consequently, it is the psychological manipulation of investments of interest and fear that prepares the conditions for individuals to give into these models of automaton labor and surveillance.

As discussed earlier in relation to Eltit’s fiction, *Los vigilantes* dramatizes the complete obliteration of any subversive movement against the mechanisms of interpellation and designation. On the contrary, the conservative elite that led Chile during the transition used the neoliberal discourse to designate and interpellate the general population and by these means pursue its investments of interest for capital accumulation. In the novel, this becomes clear in the scene at the plaza, described by Margarita as intrusive and hostile, “se hicieron dueños de los peores instrumentos. Consiguieron un uniforme, un arma, un garrote, un territorio” (LV 120).198 In one of her letters Margarita describes how the neighbors-turned-vigilantes are bombarded with abstract slogans that designate them as responsible of ensuring the country’s new image of productivity:

Lo consiguieron inundando la ciudad con una infinidad de lemas banales: “el orden contra la indisciplina,” “la lealtad frente a la traición,” “la modernidad frente a la barbarie” “el trabajo frente a la pereza,” “la salud frente a la enfermedad,” “la castidad frente a la lujuria,” “el bien.” Lo dijeron, lo vociferaron. (LV 120)199

These dichotomies succeed in generating a homogeneous class with a single objective: surplus production.200 There is no discussion on the fact that modernity and economic success

---

198 “They turned themselves into masters of the worst instruments. They obtained a uniform, a weapon, a club, a territory” (LV 85).

199 “order vs. disobedience,” “loyalty not treason,” “modernity not barbarism,” “labor not laziness,” “health not sickness,” “chastity not excess” (LV 86).

200 “Ultimately, then, it is the disciplining of the maternal body which is portrayed as underlying the social order that makes possible the global discourse of neoliberalism in Chilean society” (Green, 123).
might only benefit a portion of the population. These messages define what is acceptable and what is not for an image appealing to investors. Margarita complains in one of her letters about the “nuevas leyes que buscan provocar la mirada amorosa del otro lado de Occidente,” (LV 62) and emphasizes on the futility of these efforts since the neoliberal model was implemented in Chile only as a testing site, not because developed countries had an actual interest in Chilean society, “pero el otro Occidente es terriblemente indiferente a cualquier seducción y solo parece ver a la ciudad como una gastada obra teatral” (LV 62).

In regards to the demand for alligance to the neoliberal cause, Saona explains “la madre paranoica de Los vigilantes demuestra que la aparente reconciliación de la nación después de la dictadura seguía siendo una forma de coerción, chantajeando a los ciudadanos para que se sometan al neoliberalismo o que se resignen a ser marginales a la sociedad” (66). Margarita resents the fact that the neighbors try to force her to participate in their plans and she wants to make sure the father understands she is not being deceived by all their falsehoods. She questions the validity of the pro-West discourse: “¿Acaso no has pensado que Occidente podría estar en la dirección opuesta?” (LV 81). As Deleuze and Guattari explain “subjectification has its own way of repudiating the positivity it frees, or of relativizing the absoluteness it attains, without, however, falling back to the preceding regime” (A Thousand 133). The slogans create an ideal that presupposes an improvement in the quality of life but the result is completely the opposite.

---

201. “The signifying semiotic: overcoding is fully effectuated by the signifier, and by the State apparatus that emits it; there is uniformity of enunciation, unification of the substance of expression, and control over statements in a regime of circularity; relative deterritorialization is taken as far as it can go by a redundant and perpetual referral from sign to sign” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 135)

202. “New laws that seek to arouse the amorous glance of the West's other side” (LV 33)

203. “The West is frightfully indifferent to any seduction and seems to view the city only as a threadbare theater piece” (LV 33).

204. “Has it ever occurred to you that the West could lie in the opposite direction?” (LV 50).
since the economic elite captures all resources and profit. Her words denounce the failed promise of the neoliberal discourse in the context of the transition: “Mintieron sin contemplaciones cuando hicieron circular maliciosamente la última consigna: "Occidente puede estar al alcance de tu mano"” (LV 120).\textsuperscript{205} Individuals have undertaken a cycle of perpetual repetition trying to achieve the chimerical goal of being the West’s object of desire, but all they have achieved is higher economic inequality and social disintegration, “llora porque su vida occidental se le ha dado vuelta”.\textsuperscript{206}

Margarita declares she is the victim of defamation by the neighbors and that the father uses these lies to keep her busy responding to the accusations. Epistolary writing is a strategy of interpellation that seeks to keep Margarita from denouncing the regime and from generating a creative work. The struggle between the father and the mother takes place on the written word, he tries to keep her responding to the neighbors’ calumnies and she denounces his neglect and psychological violence. The only possibility for absolution is her identification and allegiance to the neighbors’ cause. Eventually she loses the fight in the witness stand since the law has been corrupted by the hand of the father, but her writing is successful in her goal to resist and denounce the regime:

Harás de mi la victima perfecta pues el mio será un juicio fuera de la historia, cuya concurrencia va a marcar el arbitrario y maligno signo de los tiempos. Ah, pero yo puedo

\textsuperscript{205} “They lied without compunction when they maliciously ordered the circulation of their last rallying cry: ‘The West can be within your reach’” (LV 86).

\textsuperscript{206} “I can hear her desperate weeping. She cries because her Western life has turned upside down” (LV 24).
presentir cómo tú permanecerás todo ese tiempo resguardado tras una cobarde oscuridad moviendo los hilos del proceso. (LV 112)\textsuperscript{207}

Margarita’s letters reveal paranoia is the prevalent symptom permeating the socius. The father uses surveillance to maintain an eye on the entire social milieu and control any possible flow of revolutionary investment. This is illustrated in his obsession with her thoughts, besides demanding information on the son and their daily routine, the father requires the mother to give an account of her dreams and thoughts; the paranoiac despot suspects their content to represent some kind of threat. The father demands Margarita to state in writing her alliance to the new order and to prove her worth as a fitting mother, ideal citizen complying with the new laws, and productive individual.

In “Hacia una estética de la carencia: estrategias formales de resistencia en Diamela Eltit” Dianna Niebylski argues that atrophy is the sign of physical deterioration that marks the effects of power in Eltit’s post-dictatorial works. She analyses the relationship between atrophy and the deterioration of individual’s ability for self-determination in Eltit’s \textit{Mano de obra}, “[l]a mano de obra, y la mano que a duras penas obra, se automatiza hasta atrofiar la voluntad del individuo” (488).\textsuperscript{208} In \textit{Mano de obra}, hands and legs are appropriated for manual labor, attached to productive mechanisms; they work to the point of attrition.\textsuperscript{209} In \textit{Los vigilantes} writing to answer

\textsuperscript{207} “You will turn me into the perfect victim since mine will be a trial outside history…I can foresee how you will bide your time all that while, taking cover behind a cowardly obscurity, pulling the strings of the trial” (LV 79).

\textsuperscript{208} Dianna Niebylski analyzes the aesthetic of what she designates as “la metáfora truncada” in \textit{Mano de obra} as evidence individuals’ struggle to adapt to the demands of a consumer society.

\textsuperscript{209} The imperative of production and the mechanization of labor put individuals in settings where they continually have to repeat the same action, like a hamster in a wheel, which keeps them from developing any other type of mental process. The total investment of the body in the productive machine ensures one is part of the mechanisms of production, consequently, any failure to maintain productivity will have direct consequences on the body; “la inscripción social condiciona a la mano a funcionar de manera específica, a hacerse productiva. El doble corte de la mano[…] se puede leer también como amenaza o sanción en caso de desviación de la productividad manual de sus límites”(Bachner 253). In fact, the Mano de obra novel there are scenes where individuals literally lose a part of their body, fingers or limbs, while performing repetitive tasks in industrial settings. Automation works with a
the numerous accusations becomes a tortuous repetitive task that produces physical damage in
her hand and back, “me yergo pasando sobre este dolor considerable y logro reponer mi muñeca
trabada. Sé que este es un terrible amanecer para mi espalda que está cansada de curvarse para
escribirte tantas inútiles explicaciones” (LV 114).\textsuperscript{210} The father demands that she responds to his
letters, “insistes en el imperativo de la correspondencia y en mi obligación de responder a tus
cartas,” (LV 77) in order to wear her hand out and avoid any dissident writing.\textsuperscript{211}

The atrophied hand goes along with an atrophied writing. \textit{Los vigilantes} is the display of
a failed enterprise, the realization of this failure and a new undertaking of creative writing. As
explained in letter ten, Margarita believes her mother in law has gone to the authorities and
accused her of neglecting the son. When Margarita realizes they might take her son away she
apologizes to the father and pleads for his support. In this specific letter, then, she tries to
convince him she will not use her writing to attack him, “quiero que estés seguro de que mi
mano jamás se volvería en contra de tu cuerpo,” (LV 69) in hopes he might withdraw his
persecution on her.\textsuperscript{212} There is a different tone in each letter that evinces Margarita herself
displays paranoiac symptoms, in her psychotic state she identifies every external sign as coming
from the father and intended for her destruction. She defends herself from his accusations, she
accuses him of neglect, she threatens to kill him, she apologizes for her words, and she begs for
his forgiveness. Eventually, she becomes aware that all her attempts to justify her actions or
appeal to his humanity are ineffective and writing only makes her condemnation more imminent.

determinate deadline; individuals achieve a limit of attrition when they lose their limbs and enter the stratum of the
disposable.

\textsuperscript{210} “But now I submit to forgetting and I straighten up, rising above this considerable pain, and I succeed in reviving
my good wrist. I know this is a terrible dawn for my back, wearied from bending over in order to write so many
useless explanations” (LV 81).

\textsuperscript{211} “You emphasize how imperative it is to write letters and my obligation to answer your letters” (LV 46).

\textsuperscript{212} “I want you to be sure that I shall never lift a hand against your body” (LV 39).
She comes to the conclusion that trying to become the father’s object of desire in her writing is counterproductive, “simplemente escribí para ver como fracasaban mis palabras” (LV 119).213 Her pere-version, this constant search for the father’s validation of her discourse, is what marks the failure of her page. Consequently, the only way to avoid being subject to the continuous interpellation is to undertake a new line of experimentation.214

The domestic site is the allegorical prison-house of the family/nation but chaos threatens to seep through the fissures of a decadent structure. The novel draws physical, mental and psychological lines of flight that lead to zones of fluidity and new stratified territories. The first physical threshold is the one between the house and the plaza, where the neighbors apply the constant surveillance. The description of the oppressive conditions Margarita feels subjected to is provided through her own writing. Her letters seek to display a scenario where order is established through the submission of everyone to an omnipresent and impenetrable gaze. She seeks to represent how this surveillance has driven individuals to be terrified even of their own image.

In her third and fourth letter Margarita describes one of her neighbors who harasses her with her gaze, “ah, mi vecina busca envilecernos. Su pupila, siempre agazapada, no deja de mostrar una furia incomprensible hacia nosotros.”215 In “Las cartas marcadas: política urbana y convivencia textual en Los vigilantes de Diamela Eltit” Alvaro Kaempfer proposes that

---

213 “I simply wrote to find out how my words failed” (LV 85).

214 “Thus subjectification imposes on the line of flight a segmentarity that is forever repudiating that line, and upon absolute deterritorialization a point of abolition that is forever blocking that deterritorialization or diverting it. The reason for this is simple: forms of expression and regimes of signs are still strata (even considered in themselves, after abstracting forms of content); subjectification is no less a stratum than significance” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 133).

215 “Oh, my neighbor is looking to vilify us. Her pupils, always crouching and ready to pounce, never fail to show an incomprehensible fury toward us” (LV 25)
Margarita writes this letter in order to dramatize in writing the mechanisms of power that maintain the established hostile order.\textsuperscript{216} There is no solidarity in disgrace consequently seeing and writing about the other are mechanisms of power imposition. Margarita explains she is constantly followed and watched by her neighbor who happens to be another mother. Kaempfer explains that when Margarita writes this letter she is actually assuming the role of the observer, she becomes another agent of surveillance.

Kaempfer’s analysis of Margarita’s language is illuminating in terms of Margarita’s subjectification as an overseer of individual’s compliance with their roles in society, Margarita complains this other woman neglects her own child, the same accusation she has received from her mother in law. I agree with Kaempfer’s statement that these letters put into scene the way subjectification generates divisions among individuals who should have a sense of solidarity of gender or class identification. Margarita identifies in her neighbor the signs of a lamentable psychological state and she categorizes her madness as threatening. As Kaempfer claims, by placing the neighbor in the position of the other Margarita constitutes herself as the reasonable one. This is congruent with the defensive tone of her letter, since she is being attacked of having delusions she responds by pointing it is the neighbor and the father who are delusional, “según tú… mis aseveraciones son el resultado del efecto anestésico de un peligroso sueño… ¿No será el delirio en el que me implicas, lo que en verdad dirige tu letra?” (LV 53).\textsuperscript{217}

Besides the exchange of accusations, however, this letter demonstrates that her writing is invested with a different kind of libidinal flow. I believe the language of this letter demonstrates

\textsuperscript{216} “En el juego transpolítico de Los vigilantes, la narradora tira sus canas para mencionar y reforzar un orden ya fijado, y las arroja con el cinismo (incluyendo la sospechosa hidalguía filosófica de este término) de saberlas marcadas y encubrir su adaptación, su franca complicidad con un orden hostil, experimentado como cotidiano desalojo.” (Kaempfer 43)

\textsuperscript{217} “You claim that my assertions, as you have stated, result from the anesthetic effect of a dangerous dream.” (LV 25)
Margarita’s writing does more than simply respond to the father’s accusations, it presents an excess that resist signification and consequently falls outside the father’s control, “me acusas de ser la responsable de un pensamiento que, según tú, alude a una posición asombrosamente ambigua” (LV 53). The first letter starts with the sentence “amaneces mientras te escribo,” (LV 47) and with it Margarita’s address to the father, but at the end of the fourth letter, which concerns us right now, Margarita and her son have undertaken a process of becoming-dusk, a line of escape that “resulta difícil describir” (LV55), but that relates to “el atardecer que se deteriora y se desploma con un increíble dramatismo” (LV55). I believe this letter dramatizes how delirium gradually permeates her writing. This delirium is a revolutionary libidinal flow that seeks to counteract the fascist determination of her psychotic state. This letter illustrates that delirium is what supports her subjective transformation and what keeps her from falling down the same path her neighbors have already taken.

The woman behind the window looks at Margarita and her child in a resentful way, as if they were the source of a corruption creeping into the mother’s body. Margarita finds herself trying to figure out what her spying neighbor wants of her. There is no direct eye contact between any of the three individuals in the scene, mother, son and neighbor, however, the power of her gaze makes Margarita and her son lower their eyes and enter into the realm of the frame. Margarita is caught up by the enigma of this face. As a narrator Margarita tries to convey the meaning of the scene she has behind the window but her vision is unable to grasp what exceeds rationality, consequently, she finds herself struggling with the task of writing about the excess that cannot be grasped, “somos vigilados por una mujer que se ha reducido a su carne

---

218 “You accuse me of being the one responsible for a thought that, according to you, alludes to an astonishingly ambiguous position” (LV 25).
219 “Dawn is breaking as I write” (LV 19). “Oh, the dusk deteriorates and collapses with incredible drama” (LV 26).
The experience of being the object of the gaze is absolutely perplexing; the window gives her an image that exceeds signification. This particular woman is reduced to “gesticulating flesh,” her face has disappeared and has only left this grimace from where offensive words and disconnected gestures explode like an excess flow of bile, “ella realiza, desde su ventana, acciones desconectadas y en gran medida apáticas, una serie de acciones en las que apenas se disimula el balbuceo de un raudal de palabras ofensivas” (LV 53).

The window is the irruption of a threshold that will take her towards a pre-symbolic territory of libidinal intensity; it is the beginning of her escape from symbolic stratification. She enters into this threshold holding the hand of her son, a character who has been present from the beginning of her narration. In the description of the window Margarita underlines that he is joining her in undertaking this underground line of flight, “Tu hijo, que ha entendido, ahora también juega agazapado” (LV 53).

4.2. An ethics of writing

Los vigilantes is divided in three different chapters, the first and third chapters are narrated by a voice that fulfills two different roles within the narrative. First, within the diegesis it is the voice of the son, “mamá y yo nos compartimos en toda la extension de la casa” (LV 25).

220 “We are kept under surveillance by a woman who's been reduced to gesticulating flesh, a woman terrified of herself, who with the power of her gaze snatches a few moments of enthusiasm to ease her monotonous life” (LV 25).

221 “From her window she executes disconnected and to a large degree apathetic actions, a series of actions in which she scarcely conceals a stuttering stream of offensive words” (LV 25).

222 “Your son, who has understood, now also plays while crouching down” (LV 25).
Second, this narrative voice is the virtual other that supports the process of writing. The novel begins with the irruption of an onomatopoeic sound “Baaam;” it is not a word but the written transcription of an experience: The page is permeated by a delirious discourse that is characterized by a multiplicity of intensities heat, humidity, rage, fear, vertigo, intertwined with onomatopoeic outbursts, fragmented language, and delirious images.

The mother describes the child in her letters as an anomalous individual who has a disturbing laugh, and an upsetting, primitive, and amoral conduct. He exposes a precocious sexual desire and a vigorous sensuous activity as he touches tastes and experiences organs, objects and substances. His physical abilities seem unnatural as he endures the cold temperature and starvation. His inability to speak and to relate with her and other individuals, added to his disturbing noises and movements generates aversion and apprehension. The description of the son disrupts traditional parameters of verisimilitude, not only challenging the text’s representational character, but also suggesting the possibility that he might just be a delusion. Like Bobi, the protagonist of Carlos Drogett’s Patas de perro, whose animalistic instinct disturbs and generates abhorrence; his actual existence remains a mystery as no one, besides the narrator, remembers having ever seen him. This voice plays these two different roles within the narrative because it is at the same time an actual character, the fabrication of a delirious mind, and something that resists actualization within the text.

In The Revolution in Poetic Language, Julia Kristeva explains there is a threshold between the pre-symbolic realm and the symbolic acquisition of language,

This distortion of words, the repetition of words and syntagms, and hyperkinesia or stereotypy reveal that a semiotic network—the chora—has been established, one that

---

223 “Mama and I share the whole house in every sense” (LV 9).
simultaneously defies both verbal symbolization and the formulation of a superego patterned after paternal law and sealed by language acquisition. (153)

The child’s voice in *Los vigilantes* locates itself in this stage, “Mi cuerpo habla, mi boca esta adormilada… Mi cuerpo laxo habla, mi lengua no tiene musculatura No habla” (LV 35).\(^{224}\) This narrative voice does not speak but it does make noise, “Babeando lanzo una estruendosa risa. Ay, como me río. Como me río. Caigo al suelo y en el suelo me arrastro. Es bonito, duro, dulce. Golpeo mi cabeza de tonto PAC PAC PAC PAC suena duro mi cabeza de tonto, de tonto. TO N TON TON To” (LV 36).\(^{225}\)

In this site, the narrative voice is able to observe how the libido is invested in sexuality and all social production. In *El cuarto mundo*, for example, this pre-symbolic realm is staged within the mother’s womb, as dreams pass, like delirious flows, between mother and the unborn son in a two way current. The narrative voice of the unborn child has a direct access to the place of his mother’s unconscious, where he is the delirious witness of her dreams. The child’s voice in *Los vigilantes* has the knowledge on what constitutes the libidinal investments, he fears it but he knows it: “¿tendrá existencia el bosque de mis deseos?/. No quiero entenderlo. Entiendo todo” (LV 35).\(^{226}\) He is aware of the fascist libidinal investment to capture and subjugate the other; he is especially aware of the father’s desire to appropriate the mother and impose his phallocentric language:

Él le escribe porquerías. Porquerías. (Ya apúrate / ¿Quieres más fuerte? / ¿Más fuerte? / APÚRATE / ¿Dónde más? / por que no te apuras / basta / no llores / no me molestes / ya

\(^{224}\)“My slack body speaks, my tongue has no Musculature” (LV 9).

\(^{225}\)“Slobbering I let out a deafening laugh. Oh my, how I laugh. How I laugh. I fall to the floor and drag myself along the floor. It's nice, solid, sweet. I bang my head of a dum-dum, WAK WAK WAK WAK it sounds hard, my head of a dum-dum, of a dum-dum. DUM-DUM DUM-My” (LV 10).

\(^{226}\)“Does the forest of my desires really exist? I don’t want to know about it. I know about everything” (LV 9).
empezó / ya empezó / no pongas esa cara / ¿por qué tienes que poner esa cara?/) No le escribe esas palabras, solo piensa esas palabras. (LV 36)\textsuperscript{227}

In “Lenguaje, género y poder en Los vigilantes,” María Inés Lagos explains the son’s knowledge is acquired through his body, since it is his own heart that informs him about his mother’s fear and the population’s suffering. Lagos observes the parallel between an emotional and a logical language; but before the reader concludes the contrast refers to a feminine ability for emotion and a male rationality, Lagos clarifies Eltit’s novel is not about an argument between the genders but an exploration on power relations. The son understands fear, hunger, and pain because he is located in a position of complicity with those who are victims of subjugation, neglect and abuse. The son’s narrative voice speaks in first person but is also an omniscient narrator, as he asserts he can tell the feelings of both parents. This narrative device allows the son’s narrative voice to illustrate the struggle between a highly repressive and intrusive system of control and a group of individuals in precarious conditions that activate a collective force.\textsuperscript{xxxix}

The son’s narrative voice speaks about a precocious incestuous desire that moves him to cling to the mother’s body seeking to fuse his larva like consistence with her musculature. Some critics have pointed to this despotic desire in the son to impose his will over the mother, however his is not a phallic imposition but a fluid material that wants to take over the surface of the mother/page’s body. The anomalous narrative voice’s aim is an artisan one, he wants to mix his larva like consistency with the dirt, put it in his mouth, make a compact material out of his drool and her calf and create a sensual fusion that would give him the musculature to be able to speak.

\textsuperscript{227} He writes her crap. Crap. (Now/ hurry up/ You want it harder?/ Harder?/ HURRY UP/ More where?/ why don ‘t you hurry up/ enough/ don't cry/ don't bother me/ it's started/ it's started/ don't pull that face/ why do you have to pull that face?) He doesn’t write these words to her, he only thinks these words. I read her the words he thinks and doesn't write her. (LV 10)
Me muevo entre la multitud de mis vasijas soportando el peso de una honda necesidad sexual. Precoc. Precoc. Me hiere. Me agarro de la vasija. De la vasija Subiré como una larva por la vasija. Pero la vasija se convierte en una pantorrilla. Es musculosa. Musculosa. Yo no. Mi cuerpo laxo habla, mi lengua no tiene musculatura. No habla. Subiré para arriba agarrado fuertemente de la vasija, subirá el tonto baboso que soy. Mi lengua es tan difícil que no impide que se me caiga la baba y mancho de baba la vasija que ahora se ha convertido en una pantorrilla y quizás así se me pegue un poquito de musculatura. (LV 35)228

This is the second movement within the physical map of the narrative: the mother escapes the house and the surveillance of her closest neighbors and takes refuge herself in the city’s slums. Psychologically, the novel’s narrative abandons the realm of the normative to enter into the realm of the libidinal in the locus of the pre-symbolic, which implies a state prior to language and to prohibition; consequently, unconscious libidinal investments irrupt as hallucinatory images that the mother tries to relate.

There is no strong evidence that suggests that this deliverance actually takes place in the diegesis, Margarita is not certain if they are part of a dream or reality, but she fills the epistolary writing with a flow of non-stratified intensities that disrupt the father’s interpellation. The temporality of her experience in the slums is indeterminate, which abandons the epistolary writing’s obsession with defining the time of the day, the season and the passing of time in general. Margarita undertakes this underground line of flight as she leaves the enclosure of the

228 “I move among the multitude of my clay vessels, bearing the weight of a deep sexual need. Precocious. Precocious. It hurts me. I grab hold of the vessel. Of the vessel. Like a larva I’ll climb up the vessel. But the vessel changes into a calf. It's muscular. Muscular. Not me. My slack body speaks, my tongue has no musculature. Is dumb. I'll climb upward, clinging tightly to the vessel, dumb slobberer that I am I'll climb upward. My tongue is so difficult it doesn't stop the drool from dripping and my drool stains the vessel that now has changed into a calf and maybe that's how I'll snag a little musculature.” (LV 9)
house in order to wander the streets. As she relates the experience she emphasizes on the impossibility of assigning any specific meaning to the images with which she is confronted. The experience unfolds in a nightmarish environment as it takes place in deteriorated sectors of the city- Margarita is overcome with fear of an imminent assault. This experience occurs unexpectedly and confronts her violently. Suddenly she witnesses hallucinatory images of her own body losing its structure and rigidity and breaking into fragments leaving her panicking with the threat of paralysis. She starts experiencing her own body as something foreign. This encounter with other bodies is recalled completely as a sensuous experience of “corporal visions” which give it a new and wider consistency. Finally, her senses give in for an intense experience of affects and as each fragmented zone enters into sensuous interactions with other individuals’ regions a highly erotic and affective experience of perfection is achieved. The anxiety of seeing one’s fragmented body is released in this orgiastic-orgasmic experience where individuation is eliminated. The irruption of these revolutionary libidinal investments from the pre-symbolic realm proves Margarita has undertaken a subjective transformation outside of symbolic determination.

As Eugenia Brito explains in her essay “Los espacios significantes en Por la Patria de Diamela Eltit,” “al multiplicar los cuerpos, rompe la unidad del yo y hace que se produzca un yo multitud, un yo-otro, una aptitud metafísica que proviene del cuerpo (Bataille) para que la carne se amplíe y se integre en un todo. Un yo sin embargo, parcial, en que múltiples lenguas hablan, y se estrían, las unas con las otras e conjunción en que memoria, mito y deseo provocan una alteración a la linealidad parcial de los conceptos.” (37)

This first line of flight is the irruption of “The presignifying semiotic, in which the "overcoding" marking the privileged status of language operates diffusely: enunciation is collective, statements themselves are polyvocal, and substances of expression are multiple; relative deterritorialization is determined by the confrontation between the territorialities and segmentary lineages that ward off the State apparatus.” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 138)
pudo separar la pupila de la concavidad de mi ojo, mi pierna de mi oído, mi cuello de mi frente. (LV 96)\(^2\)

Aware of the father’s dismissal of her words, as a simple product of her imagination, she tries to make some sense of this encounter by relating discourses on social injustice and human compassion: the mother comes to the conclusion that it is in the most neglected areas of the city where an amorous, human, and sublime experience can be achieved. García Corrales in his book *Relaciones de poder y carnavalización en la literatura chilena contemporánea* identifies the ethical component of Margarita’s discourse, “la protagonista activa un profuso lenguaje que escenifica persistentes planteamientos de resonancia ética. Estos interpelan e interrogan desde la precariedad las palabras y las conductas que someten a Margarita y a su hijo a condiciones excluyentes y castigadoras” (372). In the erotic experience Margarita observes her true human reality and uses it to denounce the dehumanization of the individual as simple raw meat to be grinded by the system. “Ahora sé que mi cuello no es únicamente el material para la decapitación ni mi ojo el paso a la ceguera. Entendí, desde la sabiduría que contenía mi sueño, que mi carne no es solo el sendero para que tú efectúes la mejor caminata” (LV 96).\(^2\)

This letter is a *mise en abîme* of the entire novel. Margarita’s narration fluctuates between her attempt to recall her experience and her rebellion against the father’s interpellation. She realizes her words cannot actualize her experience but she is content to know her letter at least stands as a denunciation. Her writing, then, makes use of both narrative devices, it works as a

\(^2\)“During the dream I could appraise the beauty of the contact by recognizing, finally, my body in a different body and I understood then the exact feeling of each one of my parts and how my parts cry out for different treatment. During this amorous sensation I was able to separate the pupil from the concavity of my eye, my leg from my ear, my neck from my forehead.” (LV 64)

\(^2\)“Now I know that my neck is not solely raw material for decapitation, nor my eye the passage to blindness. I understood from the wisdom contained in my dream that my flesh is not merely the trail enabling you to take the best hike” (LV 64).
symptomatic narrative and at the same time it remains as a site where she can dwell on the images without determining any symbolic interpretation; thus, maintaining a balance between the criticism on the regime’s social injustices and the preservation of the other outside of representation. It can be concluded, then, that *Los vigilantes* puts into play different strategies for inscribing an ethics of writing.

At the diegetic level, the third movement of deterritorialization is the intrusion of the homeless into the domestic space. This movement implies a disruption in the delimitation of boundaries imposed by the neighbors. In “Cuerpos fuera de ley: Realidad nacional desde la cama y Los vigilantes,” Dianna Niebylski declares the homeless are an object of abjection because they are considered infectious and consequently dangerous,

El terror del cuerpo abyecto (sucio, mucoso, maltratado, enfermo) se transparenta en las protestas públicas de los vecinos, quienes buscan construir barreras cada vez más sólidas para evitar la infiltración de los pobres, quienes invaden el barrio en busca de alimento y cobijo. Cuando la protagonista admite haberlos amparado (y lo que es peor, haber tenido contacto físico con ellos), sella su suerte de marginada, indeseable y peligrosa ante los ojos de sus perseguidores. (235)

As observed before, Margarita undertakes a line of flight from the domestic enclosure and flees to the city’s most marginalized areas. In the novel there is already evidence that the homeless seek to cross the lines of vigilance erected by the neighbors in defense of middle-class morality: “Ellos se sentían majestuosos a pesar del infortunio de sus carnes e insistían en impugnar a los que buscaban monopolizar la ruina que devastaba sus figuras” (LV 118). They carry themselves with dignity, which stands in opposition to the vigilantes’ pathetic performance,

---

233 “Dijeron que por la desigualdad, los vecinos abusaron del nombre de Dios para ejecutar acciones que unieran lo sagrado, lo sangriento y lo omnipotente” (LV 118).
since their precarious survival is sufficient to keep the neighbors from achieving their goal of extermination, “ellos se sentían majestuosos a pesar del infortunio de sus carnes e insistían en impugnar a los que buscaban monopolizar la ruina que devastaba sus figuras” (LV 118). “En el Chile de Pinochet, como en la Alemania de Hitler, la fachada de una nación unificada, moderna y próspera valía la exterminación de todos aquellos que no se ajustan a la imagen que el régimen quería proyectar” (Saona 56). They reject their role as sacrificial offering since the homeless assumed God is foreign to them, “Dios jamás nos ha recompensado ni se ha aparecido ante nuestros ojos bajo ninguna forma” (LV 118).

The neighbors’ crusade against the homeless is contested with the same religious language, “la ciudad necesita de nuestras figuras agobiadas para ejecutar el sacrificio” (LV 118). To a sacrificial Old Testament approach, that puts God in a vertical position above humanity, the text presents a Christian act of redemption that emphasizes in compassion and service, “me vi en la necesidad de lavar sus cuerpos. Los desvestí uno por uno y, con el paño más fino de hilo que guardaba en el fondo del armario, quise encontrar la verdadera piel que envolvía la piel de la carencia” (LV 110). In his essay “Overcodification of the margins. The Figures of the Eternal Return and the Apocalypse”, Idelber Avelar dismisses these actions as “fantasies of victimization and self-commiseration” (184), but I believe the religious iconography is a rhetorical strategy to generate a counter-argument within the same religious discourse. It is indicative of the neoliberal model’s libidinal fascist investments to sacrifice and exterminate

---

234 “They felt themselves to be majestic despite the misfortune of their flesh and insisted on impugning those who sought to monopolize the decay devastating their figures” (LV 84).

235 “God has never recompensed us or appeared in any form before our eyes” (LV 84).

236 “The city needs our over-burdened figures in order to perform the sacrifice” (LV 84).

237 “I recognized my need to wash their bodies. I undressed them one by one and, with the finest linen I kept at the bottom of the chest” (LV 77).
non-productive elements and, thus, it contests it with a counter-discourse on community and equality.

In Los vigilantes there are two voices one that writes and another that does not speak but manifests itself. Within the diegetic level these two elements stand as the mother and son but at the metafictional level these two elements constitute the process of poetic creation. Both Kristeva’s concept of abjection and Blanchot’s concept of radical passivity can throw some light on the text’s thematization of its own process of production. The narrative voice undertakes the strategy of submitting to an instance coming from the outside. In other words, there is a becoming-anomalous of the narrative voice as it follows a line of flight from the strata of the constituted subject and immerses itself into a timeless pre-symbolic realm. It is this immersion that allows the narrative voice to experience the intense thrust of a flow that is trying to irrupt in the written word.

In Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection, Julia Kristeva proposes that our feeling of disgust and rejection for certain elements is rooted in hegemonic assumptions. There are identificatory regimes of signs that mark certain objects as abject in order to keep out what might threaten the system’s consistency. In other words, what we reject has no natural cause but is the result of what we have learned to reject. In Los vigilantes Margarita expresses her repugnance for the fluids coming out of the son’s body: saliva, vomit, mucus, and blood, to the point that she violently rejects his presence and touch. In Los vigilantes This physical revulsion is a sign of Margarita’s subjectification, but it also marks the starting point for the third movement of deterritorialization I am discussing here. The threshold to the pre-symbolic is abjection. Repugnance is one of the mechanisms for keeping the subject from crossing the threshold. In

---

238 “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules” (The Powers of Horror 4)
Eltit’s novel, the narrative voice takes a step beyond repulsion and achieves the immersion into the pre-symbolic realm where repulsion is overcome and a new experience awaits.

Kristeva gives an example of abjection, in biblical texts the female body and the image of the vessel is considered abject for its relation to the dead. Kristeva explains a discourse that seeks to impose a set of sexual prohibitions underlies this connection.\textsuperscript{239} Eltit takes this connection between the female body and the vessel beyond abjection. The crossing into the pre-symbolic implies a process of abjection that Kristeva explains as a spiting of oneself, the I becoming another at the expense of its own death. Abjection makes visible the problematic of the discourse of a completed subject, as it reveals a realm where the boundaries between subjects and objects have disappeared. In this state what is beyond the border of life and death has no signification: the voice beholds a world that has erased its borders. The immersion in the pre-symbolic is displayed in Eltit’s novel as a two-step process: first, the narrative voice in \textit{Los vigilantes} experiences abjection but instead of turning her back to the experience she moves forward and witnesses the irruption of the pre-symbolic flows. Second, and consequently, she crosses the threshold into the vessel, the maternal, the tomb, the eternal night where moral death cannot reach her anymore. The semiotic, that is poetic language as intensive and/or intensifying machine, is the text’s ultimate line of flight.\textsuperscript{xl}

The anomalous pre-symbolic narrative voice seems to correspond to what Blanchot defines as the \textit{other} of radical passivity. According to Blanchot the process of writing requires that the subject feel language as other, as an exterior voice that makes no sound but is always an exterior power displaying its virtuality. Immersed in the void of this eternal night the artist awaits

\textsuperscript{239} "Worshiping corpses on the one hand, eating objectionable meat on the other: those are the two abominations that bring about divine malediction and thus point to the two ends of the chain of prohibitions that binds the biblical text and entails, as I have suggested, a whole range of sexual or moral prohibitions" (The Powers of Horror 110)
for the encounter with the other that announces itself with an ancestral hymn. Unexpected, unintelligible, it is a sacred tone that generates a deep sadness. This hymn is Blanchot’s incessant murmur behind the poetic word that seems to come from the outside.xli

Mientras les abría el portón, creí escuchar una música desconocida para el pentagrama, un sonido ritual incomprensible, algunos bellos vocablos musitados entre el frío que recorre el altiplano, una forma de proclama señalando que la agonía ya se había tornado endémica. (LV 117)240

The pre-symbolic narrative voice that does not speak, but which lingers on the mother’s tongue without being actualized, without acquiring its musculature, is what precedes the spoken intelligible word. In the contrast between the voice that does not speak and the one that writes, the narrative acknowledges the fact that the act of speaking and writing is an erasure that annihilates that which it is trying to describe. In the image of the homeless that intrude the domestic territory Los vigilantes conveys the problematic of writing what eludes representation. This is made evident in the difficulty Margarita has to apprehend the content of something that appears as a hallucinatory image. She dwells on it, unable to define any sense, as she recalls them in her letter, “Un sueño presagiador de la muerte administrada por la ira de una mano arcaica” (LV 117).241 Writing is the image that replaces what it seeks to convey. The narrative

---

240 “As I opened the front door for them, I thought I heard music foreign to the staff, an incomprehensible ritual sound, some lovely words murmured amid the cold cutting across the highland, a sort of announcement signaling that the agony had already turned endemic I recognized in the music a still unhealed wound that chose the plague’s power with precise cruelty” (LV 83).

241 “I could make out the faces of the homeless, those faces I had already noticed in the course of a repeated bad dream. A dream foretelling death dealt by the wrath of an archaic hand” (LV 82).
voice can only admit the “wrath of an archaic hand,” the destructive quality of the act of naming.  

This erasure or annihilation does not mean there is nothing left in the act of writing. According to Blanchot what remains of the act of writing is a corpse that stands as the absence of a life in another realm. I believe Los vigilantes presents the mother’s ceremony of cleansing and the son’s mourning dances as rituals to address the problematic of trying to bring up to life what should remain in its passive state as a corpse. While Margarita cleans up the deteriorated bodies, the son performs mourning rituals where the combination of dancing and the rearrangement of objects point to a circular cycle of death and rebirth that cancels any type of chronological or spacial reterritorialization; the cycle turns the negativity of death into its eternal affirmation:

En el centro de su perfecta circunvalación se empieza a perfilar un mundo que tiene sus partes perfectamente unidas para formar un todo. Pero ahora disgrega las partes de su mundo y se mueve en un gesto que se parece a un baile solitario. Que maravilla. Tu hijo acaba de iniciar un baile extrañadamente solitario. En su rostro se advierte un aire regresivo que hace que el baile parezca inmemorial. (LV 123)

The narrator struggles with the tendency to stratify this flow of non-signifying language into the territory of meaning; a futile attempt that causes her desperation, “sus actos universales radican en su propio cuerpo y los ejecuta con la versatilidad de una pieza de baile creada para figuras condenadas. Parece que, en esas ocasiones, él se sumergiera en otro tiempo, en un tiempo

---

242 Hölderlin, Mallarmé, and all poets whose theme is the essence of poetry have felt that the act of naming is disquieting and marvelous… The word gives me the being but it gives it to me deprived of being. The word is the absence of that being, its nothingness, what is left of it when it has lost being-the very fact that it does not exist” (Blanchot 322)

243 “At the center of his perfect circumnavigation there begins to be described a world with its parts perfectly joined in order to form a whole. But now he's breaking up the parts of his world and he gestures in the semblance of a solitary dance. How wonderful. Your son has just begun a strangely solitary dance. In his face there's noticeable a regressive air that makes the dance seem timeless” (LV 89).
In opposition to Margarita’s tendency to stratify the son’s ritual, she finds herself giving into an aesthetic experience as she performs her cleansing ceremony. There is a transformation of these ghostly living dead creatures from devastation to aesthetic images. All the descriptions of the homeless have an aesthetic quality as if they were a series of paintings displayed in a virtual gallery. There is an element of jouissance in radical passivity that originates from the contemplation of the images.

The encounter with the homeless occurs while the mother remains awake in this sinister night. ‘Los vigilantes’ is a title that contains the two narrative devices used within the novel, on the one hand it refers, within the allegory of the nation, to the neighbors who oversee the compliance with the new economic measures; on the other hand, within the metafictional machine, it refers to the pillar of the symbolic order.

The voice of passivity is an anonymous voice. It is not the narrator’s voice but the voice of the collective. It is in this sense that Los vigilantes is minor literature, as explained by Deleuze and Guattari, “the second characteristic of minor literature is that everything is political and takes a collective value” (Kafka 17). It is literature that creates active solidarity with a collectivity. Within the diegesis this solidarity is illustrated in the hospitality given to the homeless despite its prohibition. The order to maintain the homeless without shelter has no moral standing and goes against any law for the sake of the people. As Deleuze explains, “the corresponding impulse at work in the case of the institution is toward the degradation of all laws and the establishment of a

---

244 “His universal acts take root in his own body and he performs them with all the versatility of a choreography created for condemned figures. It seems, at those moments, as though he submerges himself in some other time, in a time I have no knowledge of, that I'll never recognize” (LV 28).

245 The classic conception of the law —what is best for the people, is eliminated and replaced by the measure —a set of prohibitions. As Deleuze explains, “the institution tends to render laws unnecessary, and replaces the system of rights and duties by a dynamic model of action, authority and power” (Deleuze, Coldness 77).
superior power that sets itself above them” (Coldness 77). The mother justifies her conduct as commanded by her heart and conscience. *Los vigilantes* presents the shelter law as an allegory of the neoliberal economic ordinances and points to its incongruity with democratic and moral laws,

No tiene autenticidad lo que aseguras, no me parece admisible que los vecinos estén preparando una acusación basada en lo que no constituye delito. Si así fuera, creo que ellos mismos estarían poniéndose más allá de la potestad que les confiere la ley, obedeciendo a un mandato que tú mismo has propiciado. (LV 104)²⁴⁶

In her letters the mother finds herself on a crossroad: she confesses or denies her actions. To remain silent is not an option because it would imply a double defeat: silence accepts the measure and validates the authenticity of the accusations. Her decision to write her confession is, once again, an act of agency that denounces what she considers an injustice.²⁴⁷

Sé que aunque el resultado de este juicio me condena, no voy a morir en realidad. Quiero asegurarte que comprendo que no estoy expuesta a una extinción física, sino que mi aversión surge ante la inminencia de una muerte moral. Ah, imagínate, seguir aún viva y no sentir nada. (LV 121)²⁴⁸

*Los vigilantes* exposes its ethical imperative through the metaphor of death and exposes the difference between moral death and passive death. Margarita is not concerned with physical

²⁴⁶ “What you assert is not legitimate. It doesn't seem admissible to me that the neighbors might be preparing an accusation based on what doesn't constitute a crime. If it were as you say, I think they'd be positioning themselves outside the authority conferred on them by law, obeying an order you yourself have issued” (LV 72).

²⁴⁷ “El programa del silencio es un programa de ocupación del margen porque en ese margen se encuentra alguna forma del sosiego. Sin embargo, cuando un cerco se tiende no sólo sobre palabras sino también sobre cuerpos, cuando lo que se busca es una "muerte moral" del otro, el silencio es un limite que hay que franquear para no caer en la indignidad. (Domínguez 45)

²⁴⁸ “I know that although the outcome of this trial may condemn me, I am not really going to die. I want to assure you that I understand that I 'm not risking physical extinction but, rather, that my loathing arises from the imminence of a moral death. Oh, think of it: remaining still alive and not feeling anything” (LV 87).
death, but with the moral death that would fall over her if she accepts the social injustices created by the new measures. She and her son keep themselves from supporting the surveillance mechanism, “conseguimos derrotar las intenciones de los vecinos, escondemos de las injurias que nos podría ocasionar este tiempo” (LV 125).249 As Antigone, Margarita expresses her predisposition to death, not a destructive death that eliminates everything but a state of spiritual passivity where she can be dispossessed of desire, memory and all attachment to the world.250

“As Antigone, I express my predisposition to death, not a destructive death that eliminates everything but a state of spiritual passivity where she can be dispossessed of desire, memory and all attachment to the world.”

249 “Hiding ourselves from the wrongs this era could cause us” (LV 90).

250 Jacques Lacan identifies that which startles us in Antigone’s beauty, her desire for death “We know very well that over and beyond the dialogue, over and beyond the question of family and country, over and beyond moralizing arguments, it is Antigone herself who fascinates us, Antigone in her unbearable splendor. She has a quality that both attracts us and startles us, in the sense of intimidates us; this terrible, self-willed victim disturbs us” (L, VII, 247). “In effect, Antigone herself has been declaring from the beginning: “I am dead and I desire death.” When Antigone depicts herself as Niobe becoming petrified, what is she identifying herself with, if it isn’t that inanimate condition in which Freud taught us to recognize the form in which the death instinct is manifested? An illustration of the death instinct is what we find here” (L, VII, 281).

251 “Without a possible sky, I confronted a cold I could associate only with the vault in which I would one day lose myself forever. I found myself, absent any sort of shock, chilled by the foreboding specter of the death offered my body while still at the height of its growth” (LV 44).

252 “I want to assert that the only known death is weariness of life: its insult, its abuse,” (LV 124)
nothing. The opposition is between moral death that leads one into extinction, absolute annihilation, and the image of the corpse that suspends death in an eternal night:

Ah, la oscuridad me parece más infranqueable, más poderosa, solo sobrepasable por el acontecimiento de la muerte. Tú sabes bien que más allá, detrás de la oscuridad, yace la muerte. La oscuridad es pues la gran morada de la muerte, pero la empecinada muerte termina por reducir la oscuridad hasta la nada. Digo, la muerte y su oscura ceremonia sacra. (LV 124)\(^{253}\)

The ethical imperative of writing relates to both social denunciation, “te escribo ahora nada más que para anticiparme a la vergüenza que algún día podría llegar a provocarme el escudarme en el silencio” (LV 121),\(^{254}\) and the writer’s honesty, “what is striking is that in literature, deceit and mystification not only are inevitable but constitute the writer’s honesty” (Blanchot 310). The writer admits her text’s own failure to make present what she conveys, “literature denies the substance of what it represents” (Blanchot 310), but asserts its achievement too, she holds her writing as she holds the corpse in her dreams, as the evidence of an absence only made evident by the present of its image. Language is responsible for the corpse, “sosteniendo a unos despojos mutilados de los cuales yo era responsable” (LV 51),\(^{255}\) words have detached what they represent of their existence and have suspended death in the image of the corpse. She wants to recover what has disappeared and so she performs all her rituals to

\(^{253}\) “It's the end of the day, darkness now invades every corner and, with this darkness, the only images my mind can summon at present belong to the realm of night. Oh, to me the darkness seems more impenetrable, more powerful, surpassed only by the occurrence of death. You know well that beyond, behind the dark, lies death. Darkness is thus the great abode of death, but stubborn death ends by reducing darkness to nothingness. I mean, death and its dark, sacred ceremony.” (LV 90)

\(^{254}\) “I write you now solely to forestall the shame that someday could lead me into shielding myself with silence” (LV 88)

\(^{255}\) “Holding some corpse's mutilated viscera for which I was responsible” (LV 23).
dwell on Lazarus’ image, not to bring him back to life, all she is left with is words, “the language of literature is a search for this moment that precedes literature”, and the ethics of writing is to maintain its concealment and to keep “Lazarus in the tomb” (Blanchot 327). Writing makes evident its inability to portray anything but reveals what it destroys, it becomes its refuge.

The last line of escape is drawn when “la oscuridad ahora por fin se estabiliza” when the narrator feels she has a “mente despejada, aniquilo para siempre la sensación de muerte a la que nos sometieron.” (LV 125) The last movement of deterritorialization within the text appears to be from the city to its periphery. However, the actual location of this movement is irrelevant, the narrator might still be in one of the rooms at home, or imprisoned in a cell, what this image of the outskirts of the city implies is the boundary where there is no more surveillance and no more symbolic subjectification. What is fundamental for this movement is the final understanding and acceptance of the mind games she has been proposed from the beginning.

The son’s physical movements entail the continuous rearrangement of his surrounding, but these alterations seem completely disconnected from the actual material objects, revealing the intangible nature of his mental processes. A rigid surveillance society is put in parallel with an ever changing, transforming creative self-rejuvenating passion. The son designs a

---

256 “The language of literature is a search for this moment which precedes literature. Literature usually calls it existence; it wants the cat as it exists, the pebble taking the side of things, not man but the pebble, and in this pebble what man rejects by saying it, what is the foundation of speech and what speech excludes in speaking, the abyss, Lazarus in the tomb and not Lazarus brought back into the daylight, the one who already smells bad, who is Evil, Lazarus lost and not Lazarus saved and brought back to life” (Blanchot 327).

257 “If [literature] were to become as mute as a stone, as passive as the corpse enclosed behind that stone, its decision to lose the capacity for speech would still be legible on the stone and would be enough to wake that bogus corpse” (Blanchot 329).

258 “The darkness has finally stabilized…overcome forever the sense of death to which they subject us” (LV90).

259 What separates the boy from all other individuals is his incredibly brilliant mind. He appears to be an autistic child living in an alternate universe characterized by a different organization within a mathematical logic. His behavior is disrupting precisely because it is senseless and unintelligible. It goes against a positivist definition of human behavior.
continuously changing city that simulates a structure than soon assumes a new form, what
underlies this form is not a rigid permanent structure but a creative passion that seeks to renew
itself over and over again. Its repetition does not imply a continuous return in search of an object
of desire but the continuous flow of intense creative passion that, like energy, renews itself in
every step of rearrangement and creation.

Las vasijas se agrupan en su pieza y ensaya con ellas las más inflexibles de las
ordenaciones. Tu hijo y yo nos hemos trenzado en un complejo desafío. Me propone
aciertijos que yo debo resolver. Sé que hay una clave, una leyenda, un rito, una puesta en
escena, una provocación en cada una de las ordenaciones. Algunas veces la disposición
de las vasijas me resulta asombrosamente análoga al trazado que tiene la ciudad. Veo en
ellas la solemnidad de algunos de los edificios públicos, la procacidad de los sitios
eriazos, ciertas casas apartadas, intuyo trampas especialmente construidas para el
vagabundaje urbano. Es como si la ciudad completa fuera eliminada y repuesta en otra
dimensión, una ciudad transformada solo en un volumen estilizado y que, sin embargo,
retuviera la mayor exactitud. (LV 105)

The son’s games are metaphysical and completely abstract for her, which generates a
rivalry between them. At the beginning, she seeks to territorialize his game in symbolic
stratifications but he resists this reactionary strategy by generating new riddles for her.
Eventually, an anomalous process of subjectivity is finally achieved. Instead of feeling abjection
for the maternal body, the vessel receptacle, there is a complete immersion in it. The pre-
symbolic voice dares the narrator to play with the artifacts, words that have become vessels in

\[260\] “The vessels are grouped in his room and with them he tests the most rigid orderings. Your son and I have
locked ourselves in a complex rivalry. He proposes riddles to me that I must solve. I know there's a key, a story, a
rite, a mise-en-scene, a provocation in each of his arrangements” (LV 73).
their contact with the pre-symbolic. Only when the narrator has finally understood the game she realizes the vessels have generated an alternative city, an alternative poetic work.

La criatura y yo terminamos de ordenar las vasijas a lo largo de toda la casa. Hemos logrado una distribución que nos parece prodigiosa y que jamás podría haber sido concebida de una manera tan perfecta. Cruzamos indemnes las fronteras del juego para internarnos en el camino de una sobrevivencia escrita, desesperada y estética. (LV 125)

The boy cannot speak and in order to generate this poetic craft piece he needs to accomplish his desire to fuse with the mother. This is the irruption of the poetic word craft. There is an opposition between the mechanized writing of the epistolary task and the work of the artisan who experiments with language in an undetermined form.

Ah, la criatura siempre fue más sabia que todo mi saber. Durante meses, años, días, hemos transitado desde el juego a la angustia de la guerra. De la angustia de la guerra hacia la solemnidad de la palabra. Jugaremos infinitamente, infinitamente y con solemnidad lo más valioso que tenemos; la calavera, el hombro, el hambre, el fémur, la sílaba, la orgullosa cadera. (LV 126)

The son’s role is fundamental through this whole experience; he heightens her awareness and sensitivity to the surroundings. In her vulnerable subjective state the mother wants silence and inactivity to be able to fall asleep. While she wants him to freeze so they can both finally allow the cold to cause their demise, the son stimulates all the senses and obliges her to move

---

261 The child and I are bringing to an end the ordering of vessels throughout the house. We've managed an arrangement that seems wonderful to us and that never before could have been conceived so perfectly. We cross the game’s frontiers unscathed, in order to advance along the path of a written survival- desperate and aesthetic. Now that the sentence will not be carried out nothing can be done to oppose our decisions. (LV 90).

262 “Oh, the child always was wiser than all my wisdom. During months, years, days, we have traveled from the game to the war's anguish. From the war’s anguish to the solemnity of the word. We’ll play forever and forever, and with the most precious solemnity we can muster: our skull, shoulder, hunger, femur, syllable, proud hip. Oh yes, and all our intense, strange, growing, angry skin” (LV 92).
and stay active preserving their feeble existence. At the metafictional level, this pre-symbolic flow of non-signifying language is what keeps the mother awake in a different kind of consciousness; this flow comes from the depth of the night and drags the narrator outside of her daily life consciousness into a new existence where she dwells on the abyss of a timeless night.

The anomalous “creature” supports the mother’s escape from surveillance and is determinant in her process of subjective transformation. The mother is confronted with the total failure of the epistolary enterprise, “La TON TON TON Ta babosa de las calles de la ciudad apenas supo lo que escribía y jamás entendió a quien le escribía” (LV 136). The repetitive attempts of turning towards the father have achieved no success. She is faced with a total foreclusion and is ready to collapse. Her last letter comes to an end and a new section is introduced in the text’s structure, BRRRR, the anomalous creature has taken a hold of writing: “Debo tomar la letra de mamá y ponerla en el centro de mi pensamiento... La TON TON TON Ta babosa de las calles de la ciudad arruinó su letra y yo ahora debo corregirla” (LV 136).

The father’s word continues to threat the other with extinction, “una palabra terrible y poderosa quiere aniquilar mi pensamiento” (LV 136). All they have left is one single last thought, losing it would mean the ultimate collapse and the father’s victory, “Si yo no la sostengo, cierto ojo increíble que nos vigila la derribará para siempre. Para siempre” (LV 135). The son is the support that ensures the consistency of that last thought: an unreachable star in the sky. The son finally undertakes his own road carrying the mother on his side,

263 “hardly knew what she was writing and never understood to whom she was writing” (LV 82).
264 “I want to guide Mama's distorted hand and bring it into the center of my thoughts... The drooling dummy of the city streets ruined her writing and now I must correct it” (LV 102).
265 “A terrible and powerful word tries to erase my thought” (LV 101).
266 “If I don't hold her up, a certain incredible eye that keeps us under surveillance will demolish us forever” (LV 101).
Niebylski explains that the fusión between the bodies in these last pages is a reconstitution outside the patriarchal law that demands the separation of the child from the mother. (Niebylski 241) In terms of subjectivity there is no reentrance within the symbolic but an exploration of the line of flight, "la renovada risa que BAAAM, BAAAM atraviesa la noche" (LV 138). They have overcome any physical need; they have achieved a complete detachment from their voracious body and have entered into a different existence, “nos acercamos al fulgor constelado para quedarnos en este último, último, último refugio” (LV 138). That star is not the light of day but the trace of something else, like the materiality of the word, the image that stands in the place of what it conceals.

As Niebylski concludes “La sincronicidad lúdica…parece inscribir otras tácticas subversivas; otras maneras de imponerse sobre los sistemas que buscaban reformarla, rehabilitarla y regresarla al centro,” (Niebylski 239) the final escape is their subjective

---

267 “I have to lead Mama through this darkness which I know…. I look for a star and only bump into the darkness” (LV 103).

268 “Here is the sky we've wished for so long now and we greet it with a renewed laugh that BAAAM, BAAAM pierces the night” (LV 104).

269 “Here is the sky we've wished for so long now and we greet it with a renewed laugh that BAAAM, BAAAM pierces the night AAAIE, we draw near the starry brightness in order to remain in this last, last, last refuge” (LV 104).

270 “[the writer] must therefore oppose himself, deny himself even as he affirms himself, look for the deepness of the night in the facility of the day, look in the shadows which never begin, to find the sure light which cannot end. He must save the world and be the abyss, justify existence and allow what does not exist to speak; he must be at the end of all eras in the universal plenitude, and he is the origin, the birth of what does nothing but come into being”(Blanchot 312).
transformation. They are not the binary mother and son, their becoming-animal implies their becoming a pack, a collectivity that howls to the moon: “Levantamos nuestros rostros hasta el último, último, el último cielo que está en llamas, y nos quedamos fíjos, hipnóticos, inmóviles, como perros AAUUUU AAAAAAA AAAAAAAAA aullando hacia la luna” (LV 139). They achieve their celestial canopy and contemplate the starry night: “Juntos llegaremos, más tarde o más temprano, a habitar para siempre en el centro móvil de la belleza” (LV 120).

*Los vigilantes* puts into play different strategies for inscribing an ethics of writing. Literature’s ethical potential is divided in two components in Eltit’s narrative. First, the narrative provides alternative discourses to the one imposed by the power elite in order to evidence the mechanisms of interpellation and designation that subjugate individuals. Furthermore, it denounces the despotic determination of the socius: the regime’s manipulation of subjectification to justify and perpetuate social injustices. In respond to the extreme repression that leads to psychosis, *Los vigilantes* proposes to rebel against the regime’s interpellation, flee from the demands imposed by any designation, for example what a mother in Pinochet’s regime was suppose to be, and seek new alternatives of life, not as an individual but as one with a collectivity. Eltit’s narrative is defined by resistance but also by empowerment, the type that allowed the characters in this novel to endure the freezing temperatures and starvation, and create their own subjective transformation as a collectivity that escapes the hand of the despot.

Second, an ethics of writing that makes present what cannot be articulated. For the narrator it is quite and ordeal, because it requires abandoning the constant search for the

---

271 “We lift up our faces to the last, last sky which is in flames, and we remain fixed, hypnotized, motionless, like dogs HOOOW, HOOOW, HOOOW, howling at the moon” (LV 104).

272 “Together we shall come, sooner or later, to dwell forever in the moving center of beauty” (LV 86).
validation of one’s discourse. An ethics of writing, then, includes resisting the market’s demand for referentiality and legibility. At the metafictional level, literature has the potential to attest to the existence of an excess that resists signification. The artist is in constant vigil awaiting the irruption of an intense libidinal flow. This encounter, however, demands stripping oneself of the ego in order to submit to the other. In *Los vigilantes* this experience presupposes overcoming abjection and entering into the pre-symbolic realm. It is this immersion that allows the narrative voice to experience the intense thrust of a flow that is trying to irrupt in the written word. The narrative creates a vault within the starry firmament where it holds evidence of the virtuality of this flow in the image of a pack of dogs howling to the moon. The ethics of writing supposes the acceptance of symbolic language to represent this flow and the demand to maintain its concealment.
5. Giving Room to Desire and Diving into Delirium: Subjective Transformations in Juan José Saer’s *Las nubes*.

In the first seven pages of *Las nubes* an omniscient narrator describes a day in the life of Pichon Garay. The description of Pichon’s activities during the course of the day anticipates a reflection on the uneventful character of everyday life. This monotony creates the conditions for a specific state of mind; the combination of certain elements, the quite night, and the comfortable temperature provided by the shower and the night air contribute to a state of quietness and relaxation that stimulates reflection and sensitivity. More importantly, this external narrative creates blocs of sensations, for example the sweet and sour flavor of cold cherries, which stand by themselves outside of the diegesis, and that will be reiterated along the entire novel as the motif of a metatextual reflection. In the description of Pichon’s reading of the manuscript *Las nubes* illustrates one of those events that break with the flatness of ordinary life. The narrative uses this introduction to point to the reader that the experience of reading the manuscript is in itself the text’s event. The reader then is invited to participate with Pichon in the same experience.

In addition, the description of the different conditions that precede Pichon’s reading of the manuscript points to the definition of a specific location where *Las nubes* inserts itself within Saer’s fictional ensemble. The summer evening when Pichón sits down to read the manuscript takes place more than a year after his two month visit to Santa Fe, a trip narrated in *La Pesquisa*. This progression is established through different fictional referents: in the first pages Pichón awaits the visit of Tomatis whom he has not seen since his return to Argentina the year before. Furthermore, he has received a package from Soldi, a name already familiar to an informed

---

273 A flat surface where nothing seems to be happening serves as foundation for setting in motion blocs of sensations and extraordinary events that constitute the narration’s object of desire.
reader of *La pesquisa*, which contains an untitled manuscript. These and other characters have been mentioned in several of Saer’s novels either as absent friends that are called to mind or actual protagonists of the stories, they constitute Saer’s fictional universe. The manuscript then is located on a second level as a fiction within the fiction, which allows for the discussion of different meta-textual concerns such as the novel’s imperative of realism, the narrator’s subjective position, and the pertinence of the term historical novel.

The manuscript Soldi has sent Pichon is framed within the archetypal structure of the adventure novel. The narrative is told in retrospect as the narrator is in the present of the narration living and working in Paris. The manuscript follows the circular structure of the travel novel as the narrator returns to Europe a changed man. He introduces his adventure by explaining he had returned to Argentina with his professor Dr. Weiss in order to create a clinic in the outskirts of the capital to treat the mentally ill. Since the doctors start receiving requests to admit patients from different regions within the southern cone they decide that instead of traveling to each one of these regions they have the patients’ families send them to Santa Fé. Subsequently, Weiss entrusts Real with the task of taking the new patients from Santa Fe to Buenos Aires. The caravan eventually makes it to the clinic but due to the persecution of a captain from the emancipatory army the clinic is eventually destroyed and both Weiss and Real return to Europe.

In this chapter I will concentrate on the role of desire and delirium as the fundamental elements that motivate and inform the diegesis as well as the act of writing. This reading approach is inspired by the imperative posed by the novel’s epigraph ‘da espacio a tu deseo’ and by the content of the madmen’s deliriums, which I will discuss throughout the chapter. The process of subjective transformation takes place both at the diegetic level, as Real relates to the
patients, and at the metatextual level, as the manuscript’s narration shows evidence of the narrator’s changes of subjective position. In *Las nubes* there is a direct correspondence between the epigraph “allow desire to flow” and the narrative strategies used within the manuscript to follow this imperative. If writing is a productive liberation of libidinal flows my enquiry focuses on how it produces and what it produces, in other words the product of desire’s investment. The main objective of this reading endeavor, then, is to explore these narrative strategies and analyze their role in processes of subjective transformation.  

Within the first level of the narration Pichón is in a different state of mind thanks to the non-ordinary conditions of the city now that everyone has left for the summer. Pichón’s emotional state is described in terms of a transition between opposite zones within a cartography of intensities. On the one side, there is a zone of levity and well-being that generates a state of euphoria, and on the other, a sudden crash on to a flat, impure state that fills him up with a feeling of anguish. This is the leitmotif of the threat of the dark waters that the characters seek constantly to escape from. What others consider his temperament is a revolutionary assertiveness which constantly seeks to escape to a zone of levity, refuge from its opposite, despite being constantly brought back to the zone others call reality. *Las nubes* introduces with Pichón a complementary possibility to the pole of being immobilized, sinking in the dark, fetid waters, what he defines as a zone of levity. Pichón introduces an alternative mode of existence

---

274 This characterization of desire as a productive flow is informed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s definition of desire as a libidinal flow that permeates the entire body of the social milieu.

275 Water is a fundamental trope/figure in Saer’s narrative because it is a substance capable of permeating the field of earth, the same way libidinal investments permeate the entire body of the *socius*. Fascist libidinal flows that seek to repress desire are presented as putrefied waters in opposition to revolutionary libidinal investments that are clear and absolutely forceful in their flow.

276 The metaphors in Saer are evident of this difference between stagnant waters and fluid elements like snow falling, white papers, semen, rain, and moving clouds.
that does not eliminate the threat but finds a way of dealing with its harmful effects.\textsuperscript{277} The difference between a psychotic decline and a delirious consistency depends on the amount of repression that keeps the individual from swimming in his/her own delirium.\textsuperscript{xliii}

It is my contention that \textit{Las nubes} outlines delirium as a subjective mechanism individuals use to counteract the stagnant waters of the fascist determination, and thus, avoid an ultimate subjective decline.\textsuperscript{278} The manuscript’s narrator defines delirium as the element that makes madness evident. It deviates from the norm and it resists any type of control by reason or law.\textsuperscript{279} As the narrative progresses this definition is elaborated. A fundamental transformation takes place in Real’s understanding of delirium. He eventually realizes that delirious individuals give into their revolutionary libidinal investment to create new alternatives to life and subjectivity. In this chapter I describe how \textit{Las nubes} illustrates the determinant role of delirium as a diegetic component and a subjective alternative.

\textit{Las nubes} uses the physical space of Argentina’s desert to display the caravan’s journey along a surface where the territories stand as zones of repression and fluidity, evidencing both the liberation of desire and its consequent process of subjective transformation. The external narrative introduces a series of elements, the sun, the sky, the clouds, the rain, and the wind as

\textsuperscript{277} This metaphor of the persistent threat to the psyche is comparable to Jung’s statement on Joyce and his daughter, “like two people going to the bottom of a river, one falling and the other diving;” when submerged in the waters some drown while others swim. Artists, among the few who give into desire and allow delirium to come to light, dive in dark waters. Swimming in the unconscious: After a session with Lucia, Jung told Joyce that both farther and daughter had the remarkable ability to plunge into the depths of the mind and discover all sorts of fantastic things and mythical creatures. However, it seemed that only the father could bring his treasures back to reality.

\textsuperscript{278} Unfortunately for Leto and Tomatis, their investments in creative and revolutionary projects are not enough to protect them. They happen to live in a time where the \textit{socius} is more drastically invested with a fascist libidinal investment to repress and contain all flows of desire.

\textsuperscript{279} “Si la locura podría definirse por el delirio mismo que la pone en evidencia, y si el sufrimiento puede estar ausente de los enfermos en muchos casos, es evidente que su otro rasgo constante es la ingobernabilidad: la razón, que es capaz de imponer su disciplina hasta a los rayos que caen del cielo, es sin embargo inadecuada para domesticar el delirio.” (LN 36)
the isotopy of the literal and subjective transformations that will take place within the narrative it contains. In the first part of this essay I will concentrate on how the manuscript adds to this isotopy topographical elements, such as water bodies, urban areas, the desert, in order to map zones of stratification, interstitial spaces of transformation, zones of fluidity and lines of flight towards states of complete deterritorialization.

In this chapter I explain four deterritorializations taking place within the diegesis of the manuscript: first, from the stratified territory of the city, the site of order and culture, to the non-stratified space of the desert, the site of nature and nomadism; second, from the fluid edge of the river’s course to a motionless dry landscape; third, from the homogeneous territory to a vibrant zone of fluidity; and fourth, escaping from “the mouth of the volcano” and diving into the lagoon. By using this cartographic approach this chapter seeks to identify the protocols the narrative machine sets in motion to display the struggle of forces between two groups: On the hand a group of individuals who find themselves in anomalous subjective positions, as they undertake lines of flight from zones of subjectification; and on the other the socius’ relentless repressive and stratifying tendency. At the metafictional level this cartographic approach aims to follow Real’s process of subjective transformation as he follows the imperative of liberating desire in his narrative. Mapping the trajectories characters navigate through milieus, including spaces of possibility.

Real relates many details about his upbringing such as family and education. His narration is framed as an autobiography or a memoir. Furthermore, it is full of patient’s

---

280 As Mila Cañon observes in her essay “Juan José Saer: La construcción de una poética propia,” the topos of the travel works in Saer as a process of rupture and transformation. “el viaje plantea desde el inicio la escisión de dos espacios que problematizan subversivamente las historias: España- América; el viaje como modo de configurar otra realidad en/por el lenguaje y de establecer diferencias; el viaje como brecha, ruptura, como pasaje también” (Cañon 6)

281 In Deleuze’s cartographic approach “mapping is not a matter of searching for an origin, but of evaluating displacements. Every map is a redistribution of impasses and breakthroughs, of thresholds and enclosures” (A Thousand 61).
diagnoses that include descriptions about their upbringing, education, and behavioral symptoms. Dr. Real struggles between the two poles of libidinal investment, as he occupies a position of power over a group of people anomalously driven by their delirium. He is completely driven by the desire to territorialize the delirious flow of the patients, the subaltern and even his surroundings. Comparing himself to Virgilio’s Eneas, Dr Real positions himself as the master who has to overcome all possible obstacles and control all deviations in order to reach his destination. Real thinks the patients want to confide in him the contents of their delirium as they identify him as the puzzle solver who will provide them with sense. He occupies the archetypal position of power of the psychoanalyst who thinks that his patients, through transference, have given him the position of the Other. It is this trust which gives him confidence in his power to control them but soon his journey dispossesses him of this belief.

Dr. Real’s discourse on his patients’ condition shows that subjectification entails assuming individuality according to the definition of a rejected other. He reveals his self-definition as a rational man is granted by the distance he takes from those he considers the other: the madmen. Real describes his patients in terms reminiscent of those used by Michel Foucault in “the birth of the asylum.” Foucault theorizes the changes brought about by the birth of the clinic. Along with Foucault, Real’s considerations reside on the brutality of confinement and the need to treat patients humanely in a space where patients might be accepted within a group with

---

282 Real’s present conditions as he undertakes the writing task seem to coincide with those of the nameless narrator of El entenado, they are both older men, who have returned to Europe after having a singular experience in Argentina, their writing in a way pays tribute to the knowledge they inherited from a father figure and they both have the pretention that only they can give an accurate account as protagonists of the narration.

283 “No demoré en comprender que sor Teresita trataba de establecer conmigo algún vínculo privado, no sólo al margen de la madre superiora sino quizás también del convento e incluso del mundo entero, tal vez con el fin de probarles, y también de probarse a sí misma, que su persona y su manera de actuar podían ser de una vez por todas interpretadas en su justo sentido” (LN 48).
similar characteristics.\textsuperscript{284} Furthermore, Real renders problematic all the discourses of exclusion such as society’s expulsion of those they believe dangerous or simply embarrassing and madness as a source of fear because of its resemblance to death. In sum, Dr. Real has a high pride on the humanity of his medical practices in comparison to the general apprehension and discrimination applied by society to mental illnesses.

However, Real is not aware of the fact that behind his good intentions to assist his patients hides his desire to control and manipulate the other according to one’s truth. This is made evident in his reiteration of three facts: he is in an external position in regards to the alienated, he has the ability to determine the boundary between rationality and irrationality, and he is the one in charge of any decisions. Since they have been trusted to his custody by their families Real insists they owe him obedience. As Foucault explains, in the clinic the madman must assume his guilt and accept this new form of confinement, which gives the doctor the power to intervene and control the patient’s existence.\textsuperscript{285}

Foucault’s method in \textit{Madness and Civilization} is to make a historical analysis from the Middle Ages to the birth of the asylum in order to observe the transformation of the discourses surrounding the madman, reason, and insanity. Foucault observes that these discourses identify an evil, dangerous, and immoral definition that serve to saturate the ever open space for the excluded. \textit{Las nubes} takes a different route, it takes a character like Dr. Real who has inherited the discourses of the Enlightenment and places him in the ship of fools of the Middle Ages. This is not an anachronistic narrative device that supports a return to a prior age, locus, or subjective state. On the contrary, the experience of this journey with a group of madman entails for Real a

\textsuperscript{284} “The patient might enjoy the society of those who are of similar habits and opinions” (Foucault, Madness 232).

\textsuperscript{285} The guilt for deviation is organized for “the madman as the consciousness of himself” and for “the man of reason as an awareness of the other, a therapeutic intervention in the madman’s existence” (Foucault, Madness 235).
process of subjective transformation that is made evident in the language he uses to describe the patients and to talk about the experience. As Real’s descriptions of his patients reevaluate normative definitions on rationality and delirium, his writing acquires an affective quality that deviates from a representational function.

The journey departs from a territory: the clinic, Prudencio Parra’s house, rational thinking, representational writing and literary tradition; and undertakes a first movement of deterritorialization. From the stratified territory of the city of Santa Fe to the non-stratified space of the desert the patients find the ideal space to unfurl their delirium and for those previously considered among the sane it is an opportunity to reevaluate their certainties about reality and rationality. As soon as the caravan starts the journey Real identifies a transformation in the delirious symptoms of his patients. What characterizes their delirium, Sor Teresita’s sexual proclivity, Parra’s holding of the universe in his fist, Troncoso’s despotism, and The Verde brother’s ‘perversion’ of language, becomes intensified and their whole expression and mood change from dispiritedness to animation.\(^{286}\)

In *Las nubes* the overflown river illustrates the intensity and determination of delirium to burst the restraining limits of its banks.\(^{xlv}\) Since the inundation has destroyed all markers of stratification and orientation the travelers can only follow the undefined and unpredictable path drawn by the waters. The doctor and his caravan of patients ride on the flat surface of the desert along the waters of a river that is nothing but delirium. Fluidity will relate to different

\(^{286}\) “En los ojos de sor Teresita las chispas de una alegría maliciosa se iban haciendo más intensas y más frecuentes a medida que se acercaba la hora de la partida, y el joven Parra, postrado y todo como seguía, parecía haber perdido un poco la rigidez obstinada con la que se encerraba en sí mismo, e incluso a las pocas horas de haber iniciado nuestro viaje, tuvo lugar un fenómeno de lo más curioso, que referiré en detalle un poco más adelante. En los hermanos Verde, los rasgos habituales de su conducta se intensificaron: al mayor podía oírselo vociferar sus inevitables Mañana, tarde y noche en toda circunstancia, subrayándolos con una infinidad de gesticulaciones grotescas. Pero era Troncoso el que estaba sin ninguna duda más alterado por la situación. Tenía la pretensión de dirigir él mismo las operaciones” (LN 137).
geographical markers throughout the manuscript as the caravan moves from one zone to another. Different bodies of water, the river, the pond and the lagoon, will mark the space where delirium deviates from a specific path taking the caravan to new zones of subjective fluidity. It is my contention that the narrative function of these delirious spaces is to outline the subjective mechanism individuals use to regulate the eruption of burning desire; the fascist determination that seeks to destroy any revolutionary flow and capture all bodies, and all individuals into one single psychotic machine. At the metatextual level these spaces are the locus where writing allows desire to flow and produce bloc of sensations.

In his narration Real emphasizes on delirium’s ability to change the course of events according to its own whim, “el delirio, les guste o no a los filósofos, es tan o más apto que la voluntad para orientar según su capricho la sucesión del acaecer” (LN 85), unrepressed flow that drives individuals and generates complete chaotic situations. Delirium is as fluid as the flood that rips through the region washing away animals, houses, plants, posts, and destroying any geographical demarcation and leaving a flat undistinguished surface. Its intensity has the potential to permeate its milieu and all individuals within it to the point that there are no sane people within the caravan.

This definition of desire as an abundant flow that seeks to break all enclosures is indicated both by the intertextual referent to La Celestina and Sor Teresita’s delirium as it refers

287 “La habitual crecida de invierno de esos ríos que bajan hacia el sur, en general muy grande, vino ese año insidiosa, bárbara y desmesurada. Insidiosa porque de hora en hora, de minuto en minuto, durante meses, sus aguas iban subiendo de nivel y cubriendo poco a poco, de un modo imperceptible, cada vez más lejos de las orillas habituales, las tierras costeras; bárbara porque, a pesar de su crecimiento subrepticio, alguna subida brusca, desbordando los límites de las tierras anegadas, sumergía de golpe, arrasando todo a su paso, un vasto territorio, y también porque, modificando la vida originaria de las tierras generalmente secas, y desplazando hasta la exageración las orillas, trastocaba las costumbres, el arraigo y el vivir entero de hombres, animales y plantas, arrancándolos con violencia de su lugar habitual y dispersándolos hasta depositarlos, con anacronismo salvaje, en los rincones más inesperados de la región; y desmesurada porque, en razón de ese crecimiento largo y constante, el agua enturbiala por los nuevos suelos que irrigaba a su paso, adquiriendo un color incierto que según los lugares podía ser amarillo sulfuroso, marrón rojizo o negruzco a través de hilos verdes, fue ganando las tierras en dirección oeste hasta cubrir la llanura” (LN 57).
directly to its transgressive nature and the *socius*’ continuous attempt to repress it. As Dr. Real expresses, almost with admiration, Sor Teresita’s extreme mysticism reveals both her intense and sincere devotion to Christ, “la única persona verdaderamente religiosa que conocí en la vida fue Sor Teresita,” (LN 111) as well as her complete determination to accomplish delirium’s imperative, “creían con fervor en la legitimidad de su delirio y, queriendo a toda costa imponérsele al mundo, militaban por su locura” (LN 84). In order to persuade the troop, the military personal in charge of security, of the imperative of giving into sexual desire the nun explains it was Christ’s out of proportion member the reason why he was crucified, “*si a Cristo lo habían crucificado, era porque la tenía así de grande*” (LN 85). In other words, Christ was a transgressor whose abundant flow of sexual desire, his erection, represented a threat to society. It was the *socius*’ stratifying proclivity which caused Christ’s demise. Consequently, Sor Teresita must continue Christ’s revolutionary task for humanity’s sake and allow sexual desire to flow without any type of restrain.

Sor Teresita crosses the limits imposed by the religious institution. She rejects her passive role as humble server of the church and undertakes the task forbidden to her: the studying of the scripture, fundamental cornerstone of its authority. She rejects the imposition of the law and as she questions the dogmas of the church she overrides the institution’s law with Christ’s imperative for love. In this process of rejection of society’s rules Sor Teresita begins to relate with those who are subject to discrimination and punishment and acquires the body language of prostitutes and slaves, “me recordaron ciertas danzas colectivas que había visto algunas veces

---

289 “Si la locura podría definirse por el delirio mismo que la pone en evidencia, y si el sufrimiento puede estar ausente de los enfermos en muchos casos, es evidente que su otro rasgo constante es la ingobernabilidad... a menudo nuestros locos seguían no las normas que dicta lo exterior, sino las que les imponía su propio delirio, a veces con la previsible consecuencia de que lo exterior, hasta entonces supuestamente inapelable, terminaba plegándose a ellas.” (LN 25)
bailar a los esclavos en el puerto de Buenos Aires” (LN 49). Las nubes illustrates in Sor Teresita’s delirium desire’s revolutionary investment to free individuals from the stratification of institutions, the church and the colonial regime, that seek to capture every individual’s desire.

From this first deterritorialization it is evident that the delirious individuals have undertaken an alternative line of flight from normative subjectification. Las nubes illustrates in the contrast among three of its characters, Siriri, Sor Teresita and Josesito, the multiple lines of flight one can undertake from an anomalous position in relation to the law of an institution, in this case the Catholic Church. What separates Sor Teresita from Siriri and Josesito is the fact that she affirms having received the message directly from God in hallucinatory episodes. In her case there is no recoiling of the subject of enunciation into the subject of the statement, a fundamental requirement for subjectification, they remain separate as she identifies the voice that commands her as coming from the outside. Siriri, Sor Teresita and Josesito stand in opposite positions in relation to the Catholic Church but all form a triangle around it and place themselves in a different subjective position in relation to its law. Siriri is the histeric that wants to keep

---

290 Dr. Weiss’ sexual behavior deviates little from Sor Teresita’s intentions, since what drives him is the desire to transgress society’s prejudices. “[l]as razas oscuras merecían su predilección. Los lupanares no lo amedrentaban, más aún, ejercían sobre él una fascinación desmedida, de las mujeres casadas parecían emanar para su sensualidad incomprehensibles atractivos suplementarios” (LN 19). Both cases, married women and prostitutes, share the fact that their relations are frowned upon by society as immoral and even degrading, but he hides in no way his activities which generate the socius’ reaction “¡í a el doctor rubio a buscar putas!” (LN 13), and the reterritorialization that precipitates the house’s destruction at the end.

291 Sor Teresita locates every individual that is victimized in the metonymical position of Christ and emphasizes society’s tendency to repress desire’s flow. The statement “a Agustín lo habían metido preso y lo querían fusilar porque la tenía así de grande” (LN 84) is exactly the same she uses when she explains Christ’s crucifixion to the soldiers.

292 “The point of subjectification is the origin of the passional line of the postsignifying regime. The point of subjectification can be anything. It must only display the following characteristic traits of the subjective semiotic: the double turning away, betrayal, and existence under reprieve” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 128).

293 “The subject of enunciation recoils into the subject of the statement, to the point that the subject of the statement resupplies subject of enunciation for another proceeding. The subject of the statement has become the "respondent" or guarantor subject of enunciation, through a kind of reductive echolalia, in a biunivocal relation. This relation, this recoiling, is also that of mental reality into the dominant reality” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand 129)
everyone from achieving the object of desire, “sólo unos pocos rencores quedaban: Sirirí desaprobaba con amargura nuestro alejamiento cada día más evidente de las normas que le habían inculcado y que eran su única referencia en cualquier mundo posible” (LN 97). Josesito is the neurotic who rejects completely the law of Catholic Church and seeks to place himself in complete opposition to it. Finally, Sor Teresita is the psychotic who assumes the Other’s object of desire as her own and undertakes its pursuit. This position in relation to the law is the one that gives consistency to their reality and validity to their own personal project and what they consider their truth.

More importantly Sor Teresita’s delirium is the exhibition of a theological theory based on the concept of multiplicity: Christ is both divinity and humanity consequently every individual belongs to one half of Christ, “cada ser humano que practicaba el amor, espiritual y físico, era durante el acto una reencarnación de Cristo” (LN 54). Therefore, individuals must fuse with one another and form the consistent half that is the human element of Christ. In order to achieve this consistency Sor Teresita is instructed to consummate the carnal union with every human creature. Within this logic, Sor Teresita considers the men she has a sexual encounter with just as a fellow individuals. Furthermore, since her goal is the union of a multiplicity, she forms groups around her with as many individuals as possible, “había tenido comercio carnal con

---

294 Reati considers the violin is only a remainder Josesito carries to keep his connection with the Christian world he has rejected and abandoned, “igual que los enfermos mentales, Josesito ha recorrido lo que va de un espacio de la realidad a otro, y conserva en la música aprendida de niño un hilo comunicante con mundo dejado atrás” (Reati 286). He has left the world of Catholic indoctrination but the music is not simply a remnant of his former life but part of the ritual he uses to address the question of existence. Consequently, he uses the violin as he contemplates the ideal object of abjection: the corpse. Josesito is the traitor, the assassin, the mythical outlaw that Julia Kristeva describes in The Powers of Horror. Josesito does not respect any rule and makes evident the fragility of the law in the desert, “what causes abjection is that which “disturbs identity, system, order…The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience” (Kristeva 4). Abjection is not simply the transgression of the law but the identification in the criminal’s actions of a sinister, scheming desire to destroy life, he displays this underlying economy of abjection by playing Christian songs with the violin around the corpses. This is what causes abjection, the knowledge that he does it with absolute consciousness of his actions; he acts with hatred against those who taught him how to play.
todos los hombres que habían quedado en el campamento” (LN 102). Sor Teresita has betrayed the catholic institution but only to search for a higher goal. Christ “is no longer the body of the signifier but has become the point of departure for a deterritorialization that puts everything else to flight” (Deleuze and Guattari ATP 129). Her writing then goes from describing her communication with God to a flow of obscene words, a flow that deterritorializes language from its syntactic and referential stratification and liberates units of intensity that give us a glimpse of what lies in the realm of Sor Teresita’s desire.295

Real is simply an observant of this phenomenon of desire’s liberation in his patients and he maintains his standing as interpreter of the signs of their delirium. This movement however marks a substantial change in his self-knowledge as an analytical self-reliant individual. He feels slightly threatened in a foreign environment where he cannot rely on any logic of causality. As a consequence he needs to renounce to his position as sole interpreter of the external signs and rely on Osuna, ‘el baqueano,’ to navigate through this absolutely stratified physical terrain.

In the second movement of deterritorialization, from the fluid edge of the river’s course to a motionless dry landscape inland, Las Nubes presents the desert as a flat, smooth space where all the striae of territorial stratification have been completely flattened out. I want to briefly comment on the recurrence of the desert in Saer’s narrative; the desert as a literary topos in Argentinian literature appears in Saer’s narrative in his first novels as the border that outlines

---

295 Acording to Real in Sor Teresita’s case love becomes hate. This is the sign Sor Teresita is free of all subjectification from any religious institution, “su pasión por Cristo se fue transformando poco a poco en un odio desmedido, y no podía ver un crucifijo o una efigie representándolo, sin entrar en un acceso de furor que la inducía a cubrirlos de injurias y a pisotearlos hasta hacerlos pedazos” (LN 55). Once she has intensely given room to her desire for that object, she does not return to her old self, she takes a new line of flight as she identifies a new object of desire. Once she completes the cycle of fixation with the body of Christ, she gives room to desire in a different way, but always with voracity as the common denominator: “Al mismo tiempo, su inclinación frenética por la obscenidad, la fornicación, etcétera, se fue transformando en un rechazo violento, y su energía jovial, que tanto me había llamado la atención la primera vez que la vi, se transformó en una especie de pasividad bovina, aumentada por el hecho de que una voracidad enfermiza se apoderó de ella.” (LN 55)
what he defines as ‘La zona,’ but in La ocasión and Las nubes the desert becomes a fundamental element as part of Saer’s Lugar. In La ocasión Garay and Bianco have decided to import wire from Europe to sell to landowners and put an end to the disputes of territory. The wiring of the land also seeks to give the desert a geographical stratification that would put a stop to the movement of nomadic elements. This attitude seems to completely contradict Bianco’s intellectual interests, he values the immaterial character of the dessert as it brings specific sensations but he is not aware that this fluidity will be jeopardized by his own enterprise of wire. Bianco is not aware of his own desire to control movement and appropriate for himself all desire, including that of the wild horses in addition to Gina’s desire.

In the same way, in Las nubes the geographic descriptions have not representational intention but seek to oppose two different spaces that relate to desire’s libidinal investments. There is an opposition between the desert and the city, the later appears as the stratified territory where all desire is repressed and channeled, while the desert is the milieu where desire proliferates freely, deviating from stratification, along its surface. The description of the patients before the journey demonstrates that the more desire is repressed the deeper individual subjectivities fall into inactivity; subjects simply withdraw from their body and the world; accordingly, the more individuals give into their desire the more they act and speak.

---

296 On "Writer on the Rivers of Time," Caleb Back writes that “Saer cannot be accused of superficiality when it comes to rural verisimilitude,” while I agree with Back that Saer’s descriptions are full of substantial details, I disagree with his statement that the landscape in Saer is “defined by tedium and banality, ignorance, poverty and decay.” (Bach 48).

297 While stratification in the city is determined according to the position of each individual, the desert eliminates every binary category, sane and rational, civil and military, master and subaltern, which determines the obliteration of individual investments of interest. The continuous repetition of the same fixed landscape dispossesses individuals of their superiority and degrades them to the vulnerable position of helpless objects, one and the same with the others and their surroundings.
Before the journey from Santa Fe to Buenos Aires, Dr. Real’s patients have been held under their families’ supervision when not under confinement in cells. As explained by Real, in his reflections on the need to create a clinic in the ‘new world,’ families maintain the madmen confined either in their own homes or cells in religious institutions because they are frightened or embarrassed of their illness. The transition from the stratified space of the family, the city and society, to the fluid space of the desert generates evident changes in each individual’s behavior. Prudencio Parra, a patient who seems to have withdrawn completely from the world and who keeps his hand closed as if he feared something would escape from it, finally relaxes his fist and is able to sit and release the contained energy.\footnote{Las nubes illustrates in Parra’s movements that in a non-repressive environment delirium can create the conditions for subjective consistency. In the city he was unable to open his fist for fear his world might collapse. Once in the desert all that energy he has been saving, as if it were his last breath, is released and set in motion in different actions. He maintains his hands open when asleep and once he wakes up he starts creating his own ritual of exposition, setting, capture, and concealment of that energy.}

Real, in his role of interpreter, identifies in this change the resurgence of a traumatic experience. Dr Real considers Parra’s project of acquiring some knowledge on the universe an unreachable goal and identifies his city as the place where the first failed attempt took place.\footnote{“Cuando empezamos a volver hacia atrás, aproximándonos, antes de girar hacia el oeste para internarnos en el desierto, al punto de partida, los movimientos de las manos se detuvieron y el puño, con fuerza al parecer renovada, se cerró otra vez. Mientras, a causa del itinerario que habíamos trazado, nos mantuvimos en las cercanías de su ciudad natal, el puño se apretaba con obstinación, pero apenas empezamos a alejarnos hacia el oeste, buscando tierras secas antes de enfilar hacia el sur, el puño se distendió, el cuerpo se incorporó un poco en el camastro y los movimientos de las manos, que dos mil años antes, bajo el pórtico de Atenas, habían sido tan familiares para los discípulos de Zenón, volviendo a lo visible por un camino inesperado, puntuales, recomenzaron.” (LN 77) }

\footnote{“Una sola explicación me parece posible: cada lugar fragmentario pero único del mundo lo encarna en su totalidad, de modo que para el joven Parra su ciudad natal era la síntesis del universo cuya enigmática complejidad él había tratado de desentrañar con la ayuda de lecturas frenéticas y desordenadas, hasta perder un día la razón, así que, al alejarnos del escenario donde había tenido lugar la experiencia destructora, el terror disminuía, pero cuando nos acercábamos de nuevo, la proximidad de la ciudad cargada de ese pasado tan penoso, lo hacía recrudecer.” (LN 77) }
Dr. Real’s diagnosis remains in the perspective of an unreachable object of desire that was lost in a primal scene, a trauma the patient recreates over and over again. At this point, Real narrates from a normative subjective position as the rational interpreter of reality. This analysis of Prudencio’s delirium demonstrates that in this territory Real still conceives delirium as the automatic reiteration of a past experience. Since the diegetic and the metafictional are two series that run parallel throughout the narration Dr. Real’s diagnoses is analogous to his objective of narrating his memories of an episode that took place in the past. The process of deterritorialization implies the realization that writing does not concern the past but the present of its enunciation.

Real believes the patients live in alternative worlds foreign to the reality of the rational world; he still does not comprehend the universe is the one that comes to life in delirium and not simply a delusional fabrication of alternative worlds where he repeats the trauma. Real has been educated with positivist ideas about causality, therefore his analyses fail to realize the difference between an ontological and aesthetic definition of the universe, and the geographical/historical space of a traumatic experience. The demarcation of a geographical space like the town where Parra was born and the time he spent exploring the philosophical texts belongs to a chronological conception of time and space. On the contrary, the ontological and aesthetic definition of the

---

300 Fernando Reati in his essay “Las Nubes De Juan José Saer: Un viaje por la Pampa hacia otra metafísica de lo Real” observes that Real identifies an epistemological phenomenon in Parra’s delirium, “de este modo, los gestos del enfermo se le revelan como la representación visual de un método epistemológico, y el doctor Real comprende que el joven Parra recurre a ellos para tratar infructuosamente de comunicar el mundo interior de su demencia… al joven ahora solo le queda intentar comunicarse desde el más allá con los restos de unas lectura filosóficas que lo acompañaron en su viaje hacia la locura” (Reati 285). I agree with Reati in relation to Dr. Real’s method of observation but I disagree with his metaphysical statement about Parra’s internal world.
universe the narrative displays in Parra’s delirium refers to its becoming always in development in the present.  

Parra loosens up not because he is far away from the father, as Soldi might suggest, but because he has entered the smooth and fluid surface of the desert. He requires an open space where he can dwell on the image that unfolds in front of his eyes. His is not a familiar drama but an ontological and aesthetic delirium. Once he gets to the desert his desire is given the space to open up without any repression, he achieves his epistemological goal of acquiring knowledge of the universe as he contemplates the image, not of a false world, but of a heightened reality, a privilege granted by his delirium.

Even though Real resists leaving his position as interpreter of the content of his patients’ delirium, this deterritorialization entails for him the reevaluation of his rational an empirical definitions of reality. Furthermore, the description of this second territory demonstrates he is writing from a new subjective position. This is made evident in the language he uses to describe his surroundings, the objective and scientific discourse is replaced by a detailed description of the sensations produced by this new territory. As Gramuglio explains, instead of supporting a representational function the narrative strategy of describing a substantial number of details seeks to bring attention to the narrator’s distrust of realism. Within its metatextual component the

301 Soldi’s conclusion does not deviate substantially from Real’s, but his is more akin to the psychoanalytical definition of his time, which identifies every possible cause in the family. “(A esta explicación filosófica del doctor Real le podemos oponer hoy en día una más simple y sobre todo más probable: lo que se alejaba y se acercaba con las vicisitudes del viaje, y que había vuelto loco a ese pobre muchacho, no era el universo enigmático ni nada por el estilo sino, como salta a la vista, su propia familia. Nota de M. Soldi.)” (LN 77)

302 The change of behavior as the convoy approaches the city does not imply the reenactment of a traumatic experience but the exhibition of desire’s reterritorialization within that space. The difference in Parra’s behavior between the city and the desert has nothing to do with movement or with specific occurrences that take place in a determined time or area. The fact that in the stratified territory individuals’ subjectivity find themselves constantly under attack by territorializing forces keeps them from exploring that unknown territory they have been granted a sight. Parra remains in a state of confusion and frustration as his desire to immerse himself in that territory is repressed. What the desert gives him is the repose from stratification’s attack and a space for subjectivity’s process of transformation to evolve.
narrative seeks to problematize realist representations of a place or a specific historical event outside of the present of the fictional space. Saer’s narrators are “condemned to carry the cross of realism,” the demand to create a coincidence between the text and its referent. Their challenge is therefore to rebel against this demand and transgress the laws of referentiality, precision, clarity and stratification within a specific genre.

The deterritorialization is procured thanks to the monotone quality of the desert that produces the effect of obstructing time and creating an infinite unchangeable landscape, “[c]omo si la cinta incolora del tiempo, atascada en la muesca de la rueda o quién sabe qué que la desplaza, titilara en un punto inmóvil por no poder, a causa de su esencia hecha de puro cambio, interrumpiéndose, descansar” (LN 79). Compared to the stratified quality of the city the desert is an area of plain uniformity, an infinite monochrome. Its homogeneous quality produces a canvas for the creation of percepts that make visible “the imperceptible forces that populate the world and affect us and makes us become” (WIP 182).

In the obscurity of the night the monotonous quality of the desert creates a dark void that generates three different consecutive effects in this territory: First, it gives the narrator a different sight of his surroundings that facilitates an ontological reflection on the materiality of objects, “igual que si los átomos que las componen, hubiesen perdido cohesión, delatando el carácter contingente no únicamente de sus propiedades, sino sobre todo de mis nociones sobre ellas y quizás de todo mi ser;” (LN 34) second, as a result of this vision the desert becomes momentarily an object of abjection, “me pareció, durante unos instantes, que éramos la única cosa viva...” (LN 34)

---

303 Saer declares his attempt to generate new forms that deviate from Realism, “sí, a través de la exploración de ciertos procedimientos. *El limonero real* es una novela que empecé escribiendo en versos, como si fuera poesía. Yo siempre intenté utilizar en cada novela una forma distinta, siempre he tratado de no repetirme. Creo que a la forma novelística hay que renovarla para que siga existiendo. No es posible seguir utilizando los mismos cánones realistas del siglo XIX, no se puede mantener esa visión obsoleta del espacio, del tiempo, de los personajes. Creo que hay que aspirar a una visión más compleja de la realidad. (Abbate 2)
retorciéndose bajo ese sol extranjero, aplastante y desdeñoso... fue el hálito inhumano del paisaje lo que me hizo estremecer” (LN 78); and third, it heightens the narrator’s ability to identify certain forces in his surroundings that will have passed unperceived in ordinary circumstances,

agitados por un hormigueo blancuzco que parecía poner en evidencia la fuerza irresistible que inducía a la materia a dispersarse para irse a mezclar, reducida a su más mínima expresión, con ese flujo impalpable y grisáceo en el que se confundian la tierra y el cielo. (LN 34)

Real’s description of the landscape creates a bloc of sensations to capture a process of mutation to an intense state of power. First, the narrator creates the percept of an intense imperceptible movement “un hormigueo,” of the molecules that make up the object’s materiality; and second and affect of becoming-night as these molecular forces blend in with the void that contains them. The quite night is the element that dialogues with the isotopy introduced in the external narrative of Pichon’s act of reading and intertextually with other characters. Dr. Real finds himself in an analogous subjective position that Pichon defines as levity and that is shared by many of Saer’s character including Tomatis and Bianco; and which liberates the flow of

---

304 The expedition for Dr. Real implies at the beginning a change in perspective. It is not an instantaneous transformation but the transition from a feeling to an actual experience. The first one is defined by a dispossession of the sense of individuality and the second a transition from individuality to singularity. The main symptom of the first stage is the feeling of solitude as the individual is decentered from the world and placed in the position of outsider and intruder. What Dr. Real defines as “hálito inhumano del paisaje” is the fear individuals confront when exposed to an environment foreign to their ordinary world. It is the transition from an anthropocentrism to a non-organic leveling with every element that has an existence within the surrounding universe. “Sobre la tierra chata que pronto escamotearía la noche, Interrogué con la mirada el círculo entero del horizonte, sin percibir otro movimiento aparte de la inclinación temblorosa del pasto hostigado por el viento, ni otro sonido que no fuese el sibilo de ese soplo helado que venía del sur. Y aunque yo sabía que en ese desierto pululaba no únicamente la vida animal, sino también la vida humana, nómade y solitaria, fue el hálito inhumano del paisaje lo que me hizo estremecer” (LN 78).

305 The narrative creates a bloc of sensations (percepts and affects) instead of fixating on an object of abjection that gets eaten up like a decomposing corpse leaving the bare bones. Narration does not dwell on the bones, it creates in the present a new molecular movement. It moves beyond the symbol.
delirium in their writing producing blocs of sensations that the characters relate with a heightened perception of the vitality of their surroundings,

Nunca, ni antes ni después de ese viaje, llegué a tener, como las que mandaban la tierra vacía, el enorme sol rojo y, unas horas más tarde, las estrellas abrumadoras, noticias tan claras sobre la condición real de todo lo que crecía, reptaba, aleteaba, latía y sangraba, agitándose en contorsiones grotescas, en medio del mecanismo ígneo que el azar había puesto, porque sí, en movimiento. (LN 78)

In the third movement of deterritorialization the desert is a favorable environment where the narrator not only experiences new sensations but also witnesses fleeting traces sent from the outside, from the realm of the Real. 306 Dr. Real feels there are certain phenomena external to his senses and to the rational mind, which he can only perceive as images exclusively conceived by his imagination. However, there is a part of him that wonders if these sensations are actually signals coming from an external place,

De noche, el ruido de la lluvia, goteando espesa y continua, o irregular y entrecortada cuando amainaba un poco, podía oírse no únicamente en el espacio cercano que el oído alcanzaba, sino también en la vasta noche imaginaria, que parecía abarcar el universo entero, tan negra y fría que daba la impresión de provenir, más allá de los sentidos y del pensamiento, de un lugar improbable, exterior al espacio mismo que ocupaba. (LN 61)

Perkowska observes how Las nubes relates polar connotations to the term “real” in his character Dr. Real. As a professional he presents himself as inheritor of the Enlightenment,

306 Barco’s Project stated in “Algo se aproxima” to write about a city, a province or a region is not a geographical concern but the determination of a particular type of space defined in Las nubes in relation to the specific qualities of the desert: fluid and in constant transformation, a space suitable for “el desarrollo de una conciencia.” “Por eso me gusta América: una ciudad en medio del desierto es mucho más real que una sólida tradición en el espacio...Yo escribiría la historia de una ciudad. No de un país, ni de una provincia: de una región a lo sumo” (Saer, Cuentos 517).
faithful to rationality and alien to superstition and excess; his prudence and preoccupation with objectivity is quite evident in the patients’ descriptions and in his obsession with determining the specific date for each one of the events. On the other side of this polarity the term real refers to the episodes when the doctor witnesses hallucinatory images, traces of the Real. Real is not only the name of the diegetic protagonist-narrator of the manuscript sent by Soldi but also the novel’s subject of interest, the narration’s object of desire: a multiplicity composed of the ontological real, and the Lacanian real.

The narrative adheres to the Lacanian definition of the Real as “the domain of whatever subsists outside symbolization” (E 388). The novel focuses on the Real’s resistance to symbolization, reduction and dialectization and concentrates more on the actual experience of witnessing its trace. The narrative, then, concentrates on those specific events where the Real seems to erupt as something that appears as a hallucination. Writing does not represent or actualize the Real but preserves the sensations generated by the experience of an encounter with the Real.

Afraid of a possible encounter with Josesito, a renegade Indian chief who is believed to be a Christians’ assassin, Osuna and Real decide to separate themselves from the group and explore the territory ahead. Dr. Real decides to remain close to a pond in the middle of the desert while Osuna goes a little further. In this scene there is once again a line of demarcation that defines physical and subjective territorialities, in this case the line is marked by the edge of the shore of a pond that separates the land from the waters, the consistent land from the fluid and deep territory. In this environment, Real feels as if he were taken to a zone where the differences

---

307 “El apellido del doctor - producto del Siglo de las Luces en Europa - parece reflejar esta filosofía postulando su racionalidad subjetiva como centro del universo: lo real y lo verdadero equivale a la percepción, el recuerdo y la palabra de Real” (Perkowska 121).
between him as a rational, cultured and ‘civilized’ man, and nature have been completely eliminated,

Me encontré, de golpe, en un mundo diferente, más extraño que el habitual y en el que, no solamente lo exterior, sino también yo mismo éramos desconocidos. Todo había cambiado un segundo y mi caballo, con su calma impenetrable, me había sacado del centro del mundo y me había expelido, sin violencia, a la periferia. (LN 82)

Suddenly from the border of the pond’s mouth something propagates fluidly into the entire natural territory pushing Real outside into a different external sphere from where he witnesses a vision as an outsider. He can only refer to this something’s movement as indeterminate sounds, like the wriggle of small creatures. As he finds himself in this peripheral perspective he realizes there is an excess in this scenario that he is unable to comprehend or even gain some knowledge of since his senses are useless to apprehend what is presented in front of him: “me di cuenta de que, en ese mundo nuevo que estaba naciendo ante mis ojos, eran mis ojos lo superfluo, y que el paisaje extraño que se extendía alrededor, hecho de agua, pastos, horizonte, cielo azul, sol llameante, no les estaba destinado” (LN 82). That which is not destined for his senses is the Real that erupts in the doctor’s consciousness leaving a trace of its passing that he is unable to capture and apprehend.

This territory implies for the narrator an ontological reflection on the Real and on his own definition of being. The territory generates a vision where the narrator feels he is losing his ability to rationally seize what is provided by the senses and every material disintegrates into a non-distinguishable mass. First, there is a realization that the world exists because one acknowledges its existence; but if for a second one could not rationally apprehend that world, everything the whole universe would disappear. This deterritorialization from the
rational/empiricist world is experienced in a first moment as abjection, as the beginning of a nightmare. In *Powers of Horror an essay on Abjection* Julia Kristeva explains the abject "draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (2) and it is this foreclosure of meaning what generates Dr. Real’s terror, “el único modo de evitar el terror consistía en desaparecer yo mismo y que, si me concentraba lo suficiente, mi propio ser se borraría arrastrando consigo a la inexistencia ese mundo en el que empezaba a entreverse la pesadilla” (LN 82).

Subjectification is transformed by a line of flight from the Cogito, in this new world objects have no materiality as they cannot be apprehended, consequently since he has no possibility to think about this world, he wonders if he himself could potentially disappear. In this experience Real is taken to the limit of rationality, he does not go mad but he has a sight of that intense limit, “mi conciencia, rebelde, persistía, susurrándome: si este lugar extraño no le hace perder a un hombre la razón, o no es un hombre, o ya está loco, porque es la razón lo que engendra la locura” (LN 82). Real has undertaken a line of flight outside the structure of rationality, his subjectivity has left the rigid territory of the cogito as subjectification and is now a subjectivity in process, a fact he acknowledges, and a concern that motivates his writing, “el mundo y yo éramos otros y, en mi fuero interno, nunca volvimos a ser totalmente los mismos a partir de ese día” (LN 18).

In the process of becoming-horse, Real cannot distinguish himself from the animal, his heart beats in accord with the horse’s breath. Becoming-horse is not a fusion with the animal, it is an experience that allows Real to be affected and acquire the instinctual power to have an alternative vision to the one provided by the senses. Real narrates this experience with a bloc of sensations that stands on its own in writing and that exceeds the lives of both the narrator and the horse. Writing does not seek to describe the landscape Real perceives, when becoming-horse
Real has become part of the compound of affects, consequently his narration aims to give expression to the sensations.

There is a direct connection between becoming-horse and the ability to experience the Real. Dr. Real gets a glimpse of this experience at the pond and realizes this ability is one Osuna has mastered. Different becoming-horse examples will be provided throughout the novel, especially in relation to Troncoso, but it is Osuna’s image what will acquire a perpetual status in narration. Osuna who has guided the doctor through the desert, reappears in his visions as a ghostly figure, as the Sybile for Virgilio or Virgilio for Dante, he is the herald that announces the transition from the ordinary world to the depths of a pre-symbolic experience.

Osuna galopando paralelo al sol naciente que, al subir desde el lado del río, nimbaba de rojo el costado derecho del jinete y del caballo mientras el perfil izquierdo permanecía todavía borroneado en la sombra. Esa imagen es más y menos que un recuerdo ya que, independiente de mi voluntad, vuelve con su nitidez primera en las situaciones más diferentes y en los momentos más inesperados del día…” (LN 29)

How to conceive of what is beyond the spam of life as it is perceived by rationality is an ontological preoccupation that makes Real question his own being. More than dreading his own disappearance, he wonders with desolation on the scenario of the void, of the abyss of

---

308 What gives Osuna a different status among the rest of humanity is his ability to receive the messages sent from the Real. Osuna finds himself in a particular subjective position which allows him to recognize the signals coming from the outside. “Osuna se había formado un carácter especial, que lo hacía sentirse oscuramente distinto de los demás, induciéndolo a separarse de ellos y a concentrarse, como si fuera un ideal ascético, en los mil detalles de lo exterior…como no sea la voluntad de retomar el camino, avanzando gracias a los mil mensajes, únicamente legibles para él, que le mandaba a cada paso lo real.” (LN 44)

309 “[c]omo el guía de este nuevo viaje a los infiernos, el baqueano Osuna, equivalente a la Sibila de Virgilio, o a Virgilio para Dante” (Gallo 173).
nothingness that surrounds the whole universe. The phantasmagoric image of Osuna riding on the horizon marks an interstitial space between what is perceived rationally by the senses and what appears in the dark mouth of the void. Dr. Real begins then intuiting that the void is not external to us, everything, including himself is inside a dark mouth that is ready to swallow the contingent materiality. As materiality disappears the witness can only observe blurry images cutting the darkness, ephemeral, they are unique to every individual’s existence and make up the image of their being, “the universe is a void infected by obscure formations or shadows (stains, phosphorescence, clouds and spirals of smoke), and the text reaches the point of formulating the equation ‘all is one’” (Riera 45). Osuna’s image is the grey zone where being makes itself visible and from that day on it is what defines Real’s sense of existence. In other words, Real is dispossessed of his reliance on materiality but this does not imply he is being left in a barren space where even his own reality is contested, on the contrary, the dispossession of materiality supposes the experience of existence outside of the realm of rationality, empiricism and symbolic determination. The image of Osuna is not a memory that the doctor recalls from the past but a trace of the Real that reemerges every time anew. This image is a remnant that reiterates the realization that his being exists not contingent to the materiality of objects or the succession of everyday activities.

The narrative then presents both the ontological Real and the Lacanian Real in a parallel relation as they both stand in complete opposition to the uneventful succession of occurrences we

---

311 “La situación me parecía más bien desalentadora, menos por la nada infinita que acechaba a mi propio ser, que a causa del despilfarro increíble que suponia la existencia de un universo tan inmenso, variado y colorido, que había irrumpido un buen día porque sí, para, en cualquier momento, fletado generosamente como estaba, brusco, derrumbarse y desaparecer” (LN 14).

312 The void is an interval between shadows, a "penumbra," which is also the name of being. The "half light" contains a series of inscribed terms. One can only account for what is inscribed in being, however, and since the horizon of the imperative of saying is that of the absence of direction, meaning, message, evidence, or certainty, what is inscribed in being is open to constant rectification. (Riera 46)
define as our everyday experience. In the case of Dr. Real this image, this trace from the Real is what allows him to maintain the consistency of his existence. If there is a truth beyond the uneventful passing of time and the trauma experienced throughout historical becoming, if one may glimpse a line of flight towards a new life, the creation of a new fictional universe acquires a new meaning as the spaces where that truth makes itself visible even if it is only to attest its fleeting passing. It is the beginning of a trip without return towards a zone where the sense of being in relation to the material world disappears so as to allow a different experience of existence.\textsuperscript{313} This borderline confrontation with the abyss marks the beginning of a gradual process of dispossession of his, until now, stratified, rational, atrophied being.\textsuperscript{314} The doctor’s name marks his fate, he can only be real by becoming-animal, becoming-mad, in sum becoming-other.\textsuperscript{315}

In his analysis of \textit{Glosa} Gabriel Riera explains that the fictional and the historical do not exclude each other in the narrative; on the contrary they are two series that run parallel throughout the narration and continuously intersect each other evidencing they are linked

\textsuperscript{313} “La "noche solitaria" virgiliana se despliega en múltiples replicas en el texto de Las Nubes, Como Eneas y la Sibila, los viajeros de esta memoria se encuentran durante todo el trayecto en un tiempo suspendido, en un espacio que es o parece “otro”, ajeno. Los personajes de la Eneida, como los de esta Memoria, inmersos en la noche a la entrada del Hades, encarnan, aunque de manera diferente como se verá, el abismal desamparo de la condición humana frente a un mas allá mitico” (Gallo 172).

\textsuperscript{314} This episode in the pond is a first passage within his adventure towards understanding the patients’ experience. This is a process of becoming his delirious patients have already undertaken. The first sign of this process is the separation from their physical body, “las porciones de sí mismos que se iban desprendiendo, cabellos, dientes, piel, a veces un ojo que parecía volatilizado detrás de un párpado incapaz de abrirse, algunos dedos seccionados en algún accidente, una pierna que se ponía rígida y se negaba a caminar obligándolos a arrastrarla todo el tiempo como a un mueble viejo, parecían las partes de un envoltorio que, a causa de los trajines de un viaje, se desgarran sin que sin embargo el objeto que protegen sufra el menor daño” (LN 22). There is no evidence of their bodies movement while they remain confined in their rooms, as if they were separate form their weight and materiality, recalling Pichon’s words as they have entered a state of levity. This would explain why after the destruction of the house such sudden and radical disappearance takes place, as if somehow the patients had completed the journey and had crossed to the other side of the limit of existence, “el doctor y yo seguimos especulando en nuestra correspondencia sobre las explicaciones posibles de esa desaparición total y repentina” (LN 21).

\textsuperscript{315} “En ella el doctor habla el cuerdlo lenguaje de la locura, es decir, reconoce que su recuerdo es el reflejo de su delirio, que el, Real, jamás llegara a lo real, porque lo real siempre lo exceden” (Perkowska-Álvarez 127).
together by the same element that constitutes the enigma of the narration. History does not have a higher epistemological value of intelligibility than fiction. *Glosa* signals coordinates that point to the identification of the real, the drive, and trauma as what links the fictional with the historical and uses the poem Tomatis gives to the mathematician as the key to address the enigma underlying the act of glossing the episode of Washington’s Birthday party, “The poem is a link that binds two series: the meeting of friends and that of history (the moment of dispersion, exile) and it does so in terms of the death drive and of trauma, the modalities in which history is ciphered” (Riera108). The preoccupation of delirium I have been analyzing takes place, in *Las nubes*, in a similar space, as the narrator resists the repressive flow of the *socius’* fascist libidinal investment by giving into his own desire in writing.

Despite the fact that Real frames his whole experience in a perfectly defined time span from August 1st to the 30th 1804 and refers to both the English invasions and the May revolution as the main historical events that marked the period, *Las nubes* is not the reconstruction of a memory on Argentina’s independence. *Las nubes* is a speculation on desire that uses 1804 in Argentina as fictional space. *Las nubes* illustrates the *socius* is permeated by a fascist libidinal flow that determines the repressive and violent tendency of the historical becoming by outlining characters who act as psychotic despots repressing any revolutionary flow. Among these characters I concentrate on the character of Troncoso since he openly displays the prevalence of the fascist flow.

Troncoso is an example of the struggle of forces between the two different poles of the libido, in his case the deterritorializing force of the revolutionary flow, that seeks to create a new

---

316 *Las nubes* as the story of a caravan of patients trying to get from Santa Fe to Buenos Aires runs parallel to the war for independence. In *Las nubes* what causes the house’s destruction and the disappearance of the patients is the same element that characterizes the struggle within the historical context: that underlying tendency of the *socius* to capture and repress all flows of desire.
form of life that revolts against the oppression of monarchical ruling, is soon defeated by the fascist libidinal investment, revealing that his despotic aspirations are stronger than his intentions to liberate individuals from oppression. Troncoso explained his political project in messages he wrote and sent to Real. He stated that once the Spanish authorities were overthrown he would assume the legitimate position of universal ruler. As Real explains, in his psychotic fixation Troncoso’s intention is to appropriate every individuals’ desire under his despotic ruling.

Troncoso’s insistence in commanding Josesito’s group to start a revolution that would grant him the position of king makes Real wonder about the existence of more dangerous individuals, who under the pretense of rationality and revolution pursue their tyrannical obsession, “la misma demencia de Troncoso en acción, medrando esta vez hasta alcanzar sus objetivos insensatos que no son otros que aplastar, por puro capricho y estima desmedida pero injustificada del propio ser, con un talón ensangrentado las esperanzas del mundo” (LN 80). His tyrannical inclination is congruent with his repulsion for Voltaire. The parody is evident; his confrontation with the statue, the resentful remark “bribón” and his pretension to address it in French shows his absolute rejection for a discourse on civil liberties.

Troncoso’s ideas on the imperative to remove the King from his power, to revolt against the jurisdiction of the virreynato, and reject any imposition from the Roman Catholic Church seem to correspond to the ideals of the May Revolution. This resemblance is by no means coincidental, it relates to Real’s reflections on the underlying fascist investments of interest that underline even the seemingly noblest enterprise; only a few individuals are truly believers of their cause, while most individuals are just followers who participate in the revolution only for

---

317 “La misma demencia de Troncoso en acción, medrando esta vez hasta alcanzar sus objetivos insensatos que no son otros que aplastar, por puro capricho y estima desmedida pero injustificada del propio ser, con un talón ensangrentado las esperanzas del mundo” (LN 80).

318 The novel emphasizes especially on the difference between the revolutionary delirium and the psychotic drive of the despot. The revolutionary fervor is a delirious desire to run free of any restraining system and allow the desire of a collectivity to create a new life. While, as Troncoso’s obsession revealed, its fascist psychotic individualistic tendency seeks to place himself as the despotic ruler to appropriate and control everyone’s desire.

319 “El plan demente de Troncoso es en realidad muy semejante al programa político de los sectores más radicales de la Revolución de mayo de 1810, y aún en lo más absurdo ("abolir de una vez por todas...los privilegios consuetudinarios del Sol y demás astros del cielo" (194)) es coherente con el espíritu de dicho programa” (Reati 286).
their own advantage without any care for ideals or common good.  

Dr. Real concludes the difference between different historical moments where there has been a prevalence of the fascist libidinal investment in the *socius* is only the means of extermination, “me han dicho que en la actualidad se degüella fácilmente por esas tierras; en mi época, era el fusilamiento lo que parecía estar de moda” (LN 4). The parallel between the historical and the fictional goes beyond each individual novel. This parallel is fundamental for generating structural and thematic connections among the different novels. Saer’s zone then is an intertextual space made up of independent fictional universes that intersect each other thanks to the recurrence of a group of characters and the commonality of world-historical movements like displacement and exile. As it is displayed in the first pages of *Las nubes*, Pichón’s exile and his return exactly twenty years after the dictatorship is used as the diegetic referent that defines the present of the first level of narration.  

The historical becoming’s fascist determination is as destructive as the fire spread across the land by the winds of the Santa Rosa storm. This fire forces the caravan, once again, to ‘deviate from the furrow’, to turn back in the opposite direction in search for a lagoon. The whole caravan finds itself in the ‘volcano’s mouth’ completely surrounded by desire’s fascist determination, a fire that burns and consumes everything in its path, but in the center there is delirium,

---

320 Lo que sucedía en realidad era lo que sucede en todas las revoluciones, entre los dirigentes un pequeño grupo, que termina siempre por perder, se compone de revolucionarios convencidos, mientras que el resto está formado por una parte de hombres influyentes del gobierno anterior que cambian sobre la marcha y por la otra de individuos que no están ni con unos ni con otros y que se limitan a aprovecharse de las circunstancias inesperadas que los han llevado al poder (LN 40).

321 “es el seis de julio. El año pasado, después de veinte de ausencia, con el pretexto de liquidar los últimos bienes familiares, Pichón ha visitado por algunas semanas su ciudad natal, de mediados de febrero a principios de abril A pesar de los años, de las decepciones” (LN 12).
Consumiéndonos, las llamas hubiesen consumido también nuestro delirio…. Y puesto que, indiferentes, así desdeñosas, habían pasado de largo sin siquiera detenerse para aniquilarnos, nuestro delirio, intacto, podía recomenzar a forjar el mundo a su imagen. (LN 105)

Up to this point the narrative has already established the relationship of water bodies with the free display of the patients’ deliriums, but Real has kept himself on the edge on the periphery as an observer. The fire literally drives him towards the lagoon and forces him to immerse in the water.

Julio Premat proposes Real’s immersion in the lagoon is the melancholic symptom of a fixation with a lost object in the past. Premat explains the doctor undertakes the task of writing in order to try to make a recollection of that event. The narrator is in a melancholic position in relation to an object that is not identified, which implies a negative sign “a whining passivity” on how the narrator relates to life and of his writing.322

Los relatos de orígenes mostrarían una constancia de duelo sin causa ni fin de nostalgia indecible, de queja inexplicable, de fobias de muerte, de temores de anulación regresiva, y dejarían entrever también pulsiones agresivas y destructoras. La puesta de relieve de las circunstancias de esos relatos, junto con un conjunto de atrás indicios, permitirían afirmar que la posición de Saer ante la realidad y ante la creación es una posición melancólica. (28)

The narrative exposes the narrator’s struggle with the concepts of reality, perception, materiality, and with the idea of death and finitude but I perceive a different tone in the narrative

322 With the exception of the patient from Chile, who is referred specifically within the novel as suffering from melancholy, the majority of the patients are infused with a fluctuating intensity of delirium. Once there is an outburst of incredible amount of energy such as the one exhibited by Troncoso with Josesito’s group as an audience, he falls into a cero level of intensity which might be the preamble for a new episode of intensity.
voice of *Las nubes*, than the lamenting tendency Premat suggests. While I agree with Premat’s identification of a return to the pre-symbolic realm I disagree with his statement that *Las nubes*’ narrator writes from a melancholic subject position. *Las nubes* outlines processes of subjective transformation and artistic creation by displaying different movements within the topos of travel. It is my contention that the outcome of this journey does not imply a reterritorialization in the realm of the symbolic but a line of flight from rational and symbolic subjectification. There are three reasons why *Las nubes* is not narrated from a melancholic position: First, within the diegesis of the manuscript of *Las nubes* melancholy is not the main symptom; second, Real does not seek to complete the father’s statement; third, there is no reentrance into the normative symbolic realm. In the following pages I will discuss these three arguments.

The novel, his characters, as well as the multiple acts of narration are motivated by desire not the identification with a lost object. Troncoso and Teresita are not concerned with the past, they are psychotics driven by an intense desire to achieve their delirious project. There is no difference between their individual object of desire and the one of the Other, their psychotic interlocutor. Their desire is to either redeem the world or be the center of power, and they pursue their desire’s object with all their passion. There is no confusion and no stagnation of desire. The Verde brothers do not have a struggle with the thing, on the contrary they are already immersed in the realm of pre-symbolization and their language does nothing but repeat it incessantly. Immersed in the lagoon Verdecito, for example, does not add words to his already defined set of “mañana, tarde, noche,” there is no extension but an accumulation of tones and inflexions. In sum, what the patients have in common is fidelity to their own desire.

As Lacan explains in his essay on “Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet,” Hamlet’s melancholia is the result of having lost the cause of his desire as he struggles to decide
between the desire of the Other, his mother, and his father’s lost object of desire. There is no name of the father redirecting individual’s desire in this caravan, it has been foreclosed and desire runs free. If there is something absolutely clear for all these patients is the cause and objective of their desire.

Despite Julio Premat’s attempt to locate *Las nubes* within ‘la Novela familiar’, the relationship between Dr. Real and Dr Weiss cannot be categorized as another stage on the evolution of Angel’s Oedipus complex. A nucleus Premat deems crucial for reducing Saer’s fiction to the repetition of a unique fantasy: the Oedipal. In *El entenado* the witness replaces the absent father with father Quezada and in *Las nubes* Dr. Real adopts Dr. Weiss as his intellectual father. Even though within the diegesis of *Las nubes* this adoption is literally stated, I contest Premat’s characterization of the father figure and the matrix that identifies the cause of desire in the father’s failed project. Dr. Weiss deviates completely from Premat’s description of Saer’s fathers as he is neither absent nor suicidal. Despite the fact that he shares with many paternal figures, Leto’s father and Tomatis, concerns in relation to the mechanisms of certain processes, the passing of time, the instability of the instant, the uncertainty about their own universe and the threat of death, he differentiates from the rest by, what we might call for lack of a better word, a sense of confidence as if he had finally discovered the way to escape the threat of death. His strategy is precisely to give into his desire. The instant and the uneventful passing of time only brings individuals closer to their death while giving into physical and intellectual desire preserves individuals from a death driven existence, “El sexo, el vino y la filosofía, arrancándonos del instante, nos preservan, provisorios, de la muerte” (LN 13).

323 “The first factor that I indicated to you in Hamlet's structure was his situation of dependence with respect to the desire of the Other, the desire of his mother. Here now is the second factor that I ask you to recognize: Hamlet is constantly suspended in the time of the Other, throughout the entire story until the very end” (Lacan 17).
Dr. Weiss cannot be equated with the fathers in other Saer’s novels described by Premat, as he never shows signs of exhaustion, resignation or lack of sexual appetite. Rather, his subjective position is another example of that indefinable grey area between madness and sanity. Considered among the sane he has the ability to maintain a balance by carrying a stratified lifestyle within the day and giving into his desire at night. He is not immune to the investment of the *socius* and violence and injustice drive him to delirium to the point of crossing to a frenetic irrational side. He has, however, learned from the alienated to swim in the dark waters. The definition of an absence, a void within being, a manque à être, is an important concern for most of Saer’s characters. However, Dr. Weiss has a peculiar perspective on the matter since the possibility of diving into the nothingness that will destroy him fills him with a feeling of euphoria.

His practice oscillates between the task of clearing out his patient’s supposed confusion and as a fanatic who admires their ability to hear news from that other unknown side opposite to rationality. As if they were the holders of a fascinating message that remains undisclosed to him but still intriguing. He is like those natives who even after the destruction of the house kept on bringing food to the patients hoping to be protected by their powers, “los indios los veneraban y...

324 “[t]res o cuatro días más tarde una determinación nueva, y tan intensa que me inspiraba un poco de pavor, apareció en su cara. Cuando estuvo convencido de que la pondría en práctica, una chispa de satisfacción grave, casi solemne, e instaló en su mirada insensata, que equivalía a un proyecto de suicidio, el doctor me la expuso con su claridad lógica acostumbrada, y tan satisfecho de su evidencia racional, que daba la impresión de haber olvidado sus numerosos años de práctica médica, durante los cuales su preocupación principal había sido la de desmantelar, con paciencia y penetración, las falacias alucinatorias de los enfermos de las que ellos, igual que el doctor ahora, eran incapaces de ver por sí mismos la concatenación descabellada” (LN 21).

325 “Su ateísmo me dejaba a veces perplejo: daba la impresión de considerar la inexistencia de Dios como una circunstancia euforizante. Aunque o compartía sus convicciones, debo confesar que no pocas veces, en la intimidad e mi pensamiento. Al doctor Weiss esa eventualidad no lo impresionaba sino que, por el contrario, parecía estimularlo, y creo que si hubiese estado en la boca de un volcán en erupción —aventura que por otra parte creo que vivió en Nápoles unos años antes de conocerme—, en vez de emprender la fuga se hubiese frotado las manos preparándose a estudiar la materia ígnea que estaría a punto de abrasarlo” (LN 29).
les traían de comer todos los días… practicaban una especie de culto hacia los dos locos, a los que trataban bien para que los preservaran de las fuerzas del mal” (LN 22).

Dr. Real has not developed melancholia due to a sense of guilt or loss. There is no debt to the father but gratitude for having given him the opportunity to undertake the journey; Real’s reflections are neither the repetition of a paternal figure’s melancholic tendency nor the residue that completes the father’s unfinished statement, 326

El deseaba que, llevando a bien la tarea riesgosa y difícil que me encomendaba, yo fuese capaz de volar con mis propias alas… el verdadero maestro no es el que quiere ser imitado y obedecido, sino aquél que es capaz de encomendar a su discípulo, que la ignoraba hasta ese momento, la tarea justa que el discípulo necesita. (LN 59)

The immersion in the lagoon is also a regression back into the origins of his being. This return to the metaphorical womb where his being would be reborn again is emphasized by Real’s statement that in order to go forward one must return, “[e]l que se acerca recula” (LN 100). 327

Contrary to a representational reading of a nostalgic return to the motherland, this descent into the maternal womb works in Las nubes as the consequence of its imperative, giving into desire implies a return to the presymbolic realm of the mother, not the biological mother or the motherland but the vital non-organic universe from where everything comes into existence. 328

326 “El que no ha visto como yo en un anochecer lluvioso de invierno una de esas ciudades perdidas de la llanura, cuando las primeras luces vacilantes comienzan a encenderse, y todo lo visible se iguala enterrado bajo la doble capa de la noche y de la intemperie, quizás cree haberla experimentado alguna vez, pero no conoce de verdad la tristeza.” (LN 59)

“Ese sentimiento de soledad se hacía más fuerte todavía cuando en las mañanas claras podía distinguir, más allá de las leguas de islas y agua que me separaban de ellas, las colinas de Entre Ríos, en las que había jugado toda mi infancia.” (LN 59)

327 El encuentro de Real con la llanura, como el de otros con la locura, es un episodio Epifanio que rescribe la relación entre el sujeto y el mundo: ya no la identificación metafísica en la cual el sujeto define el mundo desde su racionalidad, sino un contrapunto dialéctico en el que ambas entidades se modifican sin cesar. (Perkowska-Álvarez 121)
The return to the womb does not imply for Real a second separation from the mother, “una muerte regresiva, una muerte maternal” that would allow the individual to reenter the symbolic as Premat suggests,

Lo informe en Saer, tan temido, se refiere más a una inexistencia del yo en el pasado que a una muerte futura; terminar de nacer es el objetivo y al hacerlo afirmar la presencia de las cosas en un universo amenazado por la descomposición de la materia (Premat 99).

Writing does not imply returning to the pre-symbolic realm in order to “be reborn” in the symbolic. Writing is not a regressive treatment, as Premat suggests, in which the narrator goes back to the womb to fix the foreclosure in the thetic stage and achieve a normative subjectivity by reentering the symbolic realm. On the contrary, there is no regression but immersion in order to renew the experience. There is no reentrance in the symbolic just the dwelling in the pre-symbolic as the line of flight for new poetic forms, new delirious ways to see and be in the world.

The narration’s object of desire is related to three different elements: the trace of the real, the awareness of being, and the poetic matter. The narration’s object of desire is not a missing object but that which produces the text. The imperative of writing, what motivates the narration, is to give room to desire, to follow the command of the libidinal drives, “podemos desde ya estar seguros de que más fascinante e imperecedera será una obra cuanto más grande haya sido el abandono del artista a sus pulsiones” (CF107). The object of desire does not belong to the past, its virtual and libidinal quality implies it is always irrupting. There is no loss of the cause of desire, consequently, the manuscript’s main concern is not the representation of a past that will
never be grasped or an experience that will not be faithfully represented but the creation of blocs of sensations where it can give testimony of its trace.\textsuperscript{328}

After observing the parallel between the change in Real’s definition of his patients’ delirium and the transformation of his writing along these deterritorializations I conclude \textit{Las nubes} demonstrates delirium, and writing as delirious task, is a mechanism of regulation, not repression, of desire’s fascist determination used by the narrator to maintain his subjective consistency. In other words, without delirium the narrator would fall into the same state of depression, and eventual suicide, experienced by many of Saer’s characters. Furthermore, Real follows the imperative of the epigraph and as a consequence he creates in his narration blocs of sensation that acquire a perpetual quality, which allows them to stand on their own outside of the story of his journey. These blocs of sensations come to life as Pichón reads them and as other readers share the experience.

\textsuperscript{328} “\textit{Lo indecible} es aquello que no ha sido ni pensado ni dicho antes del advenimiento del poema y que no es producto tampoco de un descubrimiento intelectual suscitado lógicamente” (\textit{La narración-objeto}, 59).


Vásquez Mejías, Ainhoa. “Ritual del bello crimen. Violencia femicida en *Estrella distante*.”


CV
Luz Bibiana Fuentes
Colby College
4678 Mayflower Hill
Waterville, ME 04901
(715) 864-8209
Email: lfuentes@colby.edu

EDUCATION
University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, IL
Ph.D. Hispanic Literary and Cultural Studies April 2013
Areas of specialization:
Contemporary Latin American Literature and Culture
Critical Literary Theory
Gender and Women Studies

Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI
M.A. Spanish and Latin American Literature May 2007
Carthage College, Kenosha, WI
M.A. Education Specialized in Second Language Teaching May 2002
Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia
Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and English Education December 1996

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Colby College Fall 2012 - Present
University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, IL Fall 2007 – Summer 2012.
Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI Fall 2005-Spring 2007
University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI Fall 2002-Spring 2005
Carthage College, Kenosha, WI Fall 2000-Spring 2002

Held full responsibility for the design, preparation, instruction, and grading of courses.
Basic Language program Spanish levels I, II and III
Spanish for Bilingual/heritage students levels I and II
Cultural and Literary Studies in Spain and Latin America
Spanish Composition through Literature
Spanish for Composition
Spanish for Conversation

Co-taught Topics in Spanish Language and Culture: travel literature as locus for observing
issues on subjectivity, performance, agency, collective identity and aesthetics.
SCHOLARLY CONFERENCES

“Delirium, a historical, social and political flow in Saer’s Las Nubes.” Paper presented at the panel organized by Professor Graciela Montaldo for the 126th MLA Annual Convention; Los Angeles, CA, January 2011

“El delirio induce el vuelo hacia “el último cielo que está en llamas” en Los Vigilantes de Diamela Eltit” Paper presented at the XXXVIII Congreso Internacional del Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana; Georgetown University, June 2010.

“Agujero postizo, the gravitational void in Alan Paul’s The Past” Paper presented at the 29th Annual Cincinnati Conference on Romance Languages and Literatures; Cincinnati, OH May 2009

PUBLICATIONS

Fuentes, Luz. Review of “El viejo, el asesino, yo y otros cuentos” by Ena Lucia Portela Stockcero. 2009. Letras Femeninas Volume XXXVI Number 1 Summer 2010


Piloted the book during the spring semester of 2010
Created grammar and writing activities with an emphasis on audience, tone, structure, cohesion, and argumentation.
Designed activities on finding and evaluating sources of information
Contributed with introductory activities on approaching literary texts
Worked on translating and editing different readings
Collaborated with a team of contributors through Alfresco (online share interface)

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Assistant Review Editor August 2011 - present
Letras Femeninas (Asociación Internacional de Literatura y Cultura Femenina Hispánica)

Edit, proof read and pre-approve review essays written in Spanish and English.
Evaluate if submitted reviews meet editorial standards.
Manage changes in the reviews through to publication.
Handle all communication among the editor, author and subscribers.
Communicate with publishing companies in the United States, Spain and Latin America
Coordinate the delivery of books from publishing companies to reviewers.
Edited volume XXXVII Number 2 Fall 2011

University of Wisconsin Eau Claire
Member of the Midwest Conference on Latin American studies committee
Member of the foreign languages lab modernization committee
Member of the Spanish tenure track search committee
AWARDS AND HONORS

University of Illinois Chicago
Audrey Lumsdrey-Kouvel Fellowship for graduate research          May 2010
Excellence in Teaching in the Spanish Heritage Language Program Recognition.       May 2009
Ruth El Saffar Literary Essay Award.            May  2008
Target Language Expert Certification           May 2002

MEMBERSHIPS
Modern Language Association
Asociación Internacional de Literatura y Cultura Femenina Hispánica

LANGUAGES
Spanish: Native speaker
English: Near native
French and Portuguese: Reading Proficiency

REFERENCES

Dr. Gabriel Riera, Associate Professor
School of Literatures, Cultural Studies and Linguistics.
University of Illinois Chicago
(312) 996-3238 griera@uic.edu

Dr. Dianna Niebylski, Professor
School of Literatures, Cultural Studies and Linguistics.
University of Illinois Chicago
(312) 996-4582 dcn@uic.edu

Dr. Margarita Saona, Associate Professor and Interim Head
School of Literatures, Cultural Studies and Linguistics.
University of Illinois Chicago
(312) 996-5222 saona@uic.edu
NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

i Critical discourse on narratives of trauma observe the literary work’s potential for memory reconstruction underlining the subject’s discourse as site of meaning and representability. In National Trauma in Postdictatorship Latin American Literature: Chile and Argentina, Irene Wirshing presents what I consider an extremely optimistic perspective in relation to the possibilities of the literary text as a site for healing and reconciliation. In the introduction she mentions her use of theories of trauma in order to analyze the works of four different Latin American authors: Diamela Eltit’s The Fourth World and Sacred Cow, Ricardo Piglia’s The Absent City, Ariel Dorfman’s Death and the Maiden, and Griselda Gambaro’s Antigona Furiosa. She analyzes these texts under the assumption that confrontation with the traumatic event disrupts the cycle of its eternal repetition. She concludes these narratives exhibit characters that “personify the human soul and stimulate our consciousness with courage” (Wirshing 11). Through literature survivors face their own trauma, confront the past, free themselves from the painful reenactment and seek new possibilities for a better future.

In “Trauma and Performance: Lessons from Latin America” Diana Taylor discusses the importance of trauma driven performances for both the individual and the social body. Individually these performances help relieve personal pain. The performative nature of these manifestations allows individuals to deal with the loss. This ritual is a way of channeling the trauma instead of its repression and denial. There is also a restorative aim as the public action brings back from oblivion “los desaparecidos” and makes their absence visible. Collectively these performances achieve two major objectives: first as collective acts of condemnation they make visible the individual, collective, intergenerational, and even national repercussions of human rights violations over the long term. When individuals transgress the law that forbids protest and collective assemblage, this deviant behavior opens fissures in the logic of the authoritarian state. Second it addresses those who for fear or repression maintained a numbing, self-blinding response to the atrocities and forces them to confront their own denial. I have found Taylor’s approach very useful in considering anomalous subjective positions’ potential to generate micro-political movements of resistance, and war machines against authoritarian regimes’ control systems. I have also used Taylor’s concept of “percepticide” as it was proposed in Disappearing Acts to discuss Bolaño’s approach to the witness in chapter two.

ii In Representing the unrepresentable: literature of trauma under Pinochet in Chile Yvonne Unnold argues narration encounters an impasse as certain experiences such as fear and pain are indescribable. Yvonne Unnold, Representing the unrepresentable: literature of trauma under Pinochet in Chile. See also Gates, Nancy. Articulating the unspeakable: expressions of silence in post-authoritarian literature and culture of the southern cone. Therefore, confronted with the impossibility of a mimetic end these works aim to point to that hole left by the lack of representation. The literary works illustrate how the absence of a possible signifier, which will allow the experience to be apprehended, makes it impossible for these experiences to be narrated. Therefore, the delirious discourse with its fragmented quality and excessive repetition empties meaning and evidences this hole of signification. These studies observe delirium in Latin American literature as the writing of silence: the delirious discourse as the exhibition of a personal truth found not in the incoherent words but on that which the delirious subject refrains from saying. Fragmented language, pauses, repetitions emptied of meaning as the only possibility to push the reader to stare into a blank space where he/she will feel the horror of the tortured and persecuted.

iii There is an explicit emphasis on the narrator as a witness of the atrocities and consequently a definition of literature as a space for testimony. This perspective is also related to an analysis of historical reconstruction which challenges the official history in contrast with the delirious hidden truth behind accounts on trauma. Nance Kimberly observes testimonio as a poetics of solidarity and as space for denouncing individual traumatic experiences and promoting justice. Kimberly, Nance. Can literature promote justice? Vanderbilt University Press. 2006. Social exclusion, poverty, ethnic and gender discrimination are elements intrinsically connected to trauma. Critical works, like Gisela Norat Marginalities: Diamela Eltit and the Subversion of Mainstream Literature in Chile, observe in the literary text a space for the portrayal of Latin America’s social crisis. More importantly, Norat defines Eltit’s work as a literature of difference in the service of a political agenda for marginalized communities. Works such as Juan José Saer’s Las nubes and El entenado, or Antonio Di Benedetto’s Zama are analyzed within the context of the construction of the Latin American nation. See also Ainsa, Fernando, “La reescritura de la historia en la nueva narrativa latinoamericana” and Campanella, Hebe N. La novela histórica argentina e iberoamericana
perspective on historical reality from the point of view of those who were denied a voice within historical recording. 

blood, a pitiless and indignant condemnation of sexuality in any form as something repugnant; viewing people's sex

probably also loathing of her own sexuality… It's a kind of force more powerful than anything else, so mething in the

personal debe ser una característica ancestral de las familias de Bogotá, o quizá justamente ése sea el sello específico

protect their traditions from being absorbed by invasive colonialist practices. At the same time she warns the reader

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

v The concept of foreclusion was developed by Jacques Lacan as the triggering phenomenon in psychosis: “The

condition of the subject is dependent on what is being unfolded in the Other… For it is a truth of experience for

analysis that the subject is presented with the question of his existence, not in terms of the anxiety that it arouses at

the level of the ego, and which is only one element in the series, but as an articulated question: ‘What am I there?

…his existence as subject, a questioning which, beginning with himself, will extend to his in-the-world relation to

objects, and to the existence of the world, in so far as it, too, may ·be questioned beyond its order.” (Écrits 459) “Let

us now try to conceive of a circumstance of the subjective position in which, to the appeal of the Name-of-the-

Father responds, not the absence of the real father, for this absence is more than compatible with the  presence of the

signifier. To the point at which the Name-of-the-Father is called may correspond in the Other, then, a  mere hole,

of the Name-of-the-Father in the place of the Other, and in the failure of the paternal metaphor, that I designate the

signification” (Écrits  465). “It is in an accident in this register and in what takes place in it, na mely, the foreclusion

objects, and to the existence of the world, in so far as it, too, may ·be questioned beyond its order.” (Écrits 459) “Let

us now try to conceive of a circumstance of the subjective position in which, to the appeal of the Name-of-the-

Father responds, not the absence of the real father, for this absence is more than compatible with the  presence of the

signifier. To the point at which the Name-of-the-Father is called may correspond in the Other, then, a  mere hole,

which, by the inadequacy of the metaphoric effect will provoke a corresponding hole at the place of the phallic

signification” (Écrits 465). “It is in an accident in this register and in what takes place in it, namely, the foreclusion

of the Name-of-the-Father in the place of the Other, and in the failure of the paternal metaphor, that I designate the

defect that gives psychosis its essential condition, and the structure that separates it from neurosis” (Écrits  482).

vi “Esa especie de horror por la sexualidad de los demás que siempre ha marcado su vida, que a lo mejor también es

horror por la sexualidad propia, no sería de extrañar…interpretar la vida sexual de la gente como una arelta

personal debe ser una característica ancestral de las familias de Bogotá, o quizá justamente ése sea el sello especifico

de su distinción, no sabría decirte, Aguilar, pero lo que sí sé es que ahí anida el corazón del dolor, un dolor que se

hereda, se multiplica y se transmite, un dolor que los unos le infligen a los otros…” (217-218).

“It was the same horror Eugenia has always had of other people's sexuality surging up in her again, a horror that's

probably also loathing of her own sexuality… It's a kind of force more powerful than anything else, something in the

blood, a pitiless and indignant condemnation of sexuality in any form as something repugnant; viewing people's sex

lives as a personal affront must be a hereditary trait of the families of Bogota, or maybe it's the very quality that

gives them their stamp of distinction… it's there that the heart of the suffering lies, suffering that's inherited, that

spreads and is transmitted, suffering that people inflict on one another…” (225).

vii Delirio evidences its inheritance from Magic Realism by contrasting the hegemonic phallocentric world with an

idiosyncratic feminine ritualistic world. In his essay “Vestigios de realismo mágico, narco-narrativa y escritura de

mujer” Romero Quintana explains that Delirio demonstrates the persistence of certain representational interests

within Colombian literature. “De este mismo modo, el realismo mágico está presente a lo largo de la novela, mas

sólo como vestigios, rastros y huellas “macondistas” no carentes de cierta ironía, además del juego intertextual con

autores que han trabajado el género, y no como la única corriente que conforma la obra, sino más bien como esta

hacia fines del siglo XX. Seymour Menton’s work Latin America's New Historical Novel has been a fundamental

referent for any scholar interested in the definition of a new historical novel in contemporary Latin American

literature. This approach identifies the impossibility of generating a final discourse on the truth of history and

validates fiction as potentially presenting a deeper truth about the past than history in itself. Maria Cristina Pons

discusses the new Latin American historical novel as evidence of an empty memory of the historical past. Gabriela

Nouzeilles, on the other hand, observes the use of anomalous subjects and pathological genealogies as variants to

model for the imaginary community.iii These studies emphasize on the observation of how literary works enter into a
dialogue with other historical documents such as chronicles, and historical annals. Their conclusions point to a new

perspective on historical reality from the point of view of those who were denied a voice within historical recording.

iv Jean Franco explains how history has come “under suspicion insofar as it sutures events into an official narrative

that relies on what is deemed to constitute a fact” (235). She observes the importance of narratives that collect

memories from subjects who have been marginalized from the historical record, minorities such as the poor,

homeless, women, afro-descendants, and indigenous communities, since they reconstituted a collective subject and

protect their traditions from being absorbed by invasive colonialist practices. At the same time she warns the reader

about the dangers of current politics of amnesia. Quoting Nelly Richard she explains how within the aesthetics of

redemocratization cultural productions that reference the past are widely disseminated and recycled in the flux of the

market. She insists on the need to create new interpretative structures of the past to make it relevant and substantial
to the present.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2
marca que intenta reproducir un discurso que muchas veces se asumió como “identitario”. Esto tiene que ver, obviamente, con el peso de la tradición del realismo mágico de Gabriel García Márquez en la narrativa colombiana” (2).

The imperative of narrating a reality so incoherent it requires a new type of discourse. As Gabriel García Márquez states “Cuando la realidad supera la ficción” It would be necessary to analyze if the persistence of narrative strategies borrowed form Magic realism is a stylistic interest or if certain topics like identity still persist within the dialogue.

Keneth Suring makes a case for the definition of a Deleuzian geoliterature which would contain works where the sensous appears as the domain “embodied in percepts and affects and constituted by desire.” He also includes magic realism works as part of this group. “A similar hallucinatory quality pervades literary magical realism, with its well-known propensities for disjointed temporalities, the 'exchange of qualities' between the dead and the living, the haphazard merging of personas, as well as the by now hackneyed piquancy of musicians who can play their instruments simply by placing the mouthpieces against their necks and moving their throat-muscles, animals who can count and talk, and so on” (186).

viii “It is around this hole, in which the support of the signifying chain is lacking in the subject, and which has no need, one notes, of being ineffable in order to induce panic, that the whole struggle in which the subject reconstructed itself took place… It seems to me, then, that if the created I assumes in it the place in Father, left vacant by the Law, the place of the creator is designated in it by that liegen lassen, that fundamental let-lie, in which the absence that made it possible to construct oneself out of the primordial symbolization of the mother appears to be denuded, from the foreclosure of the Father” (Lacan, Écrits 470).

ix “The father's relation to this law must be considered in itself, for one will find in it the reason for that paradox, by which the ravaging effects of the paternal figure are to be observed with particular frequency in cases where the father really has the function of a legislator or, at least has the upper hand… all ideals that provide him with all too many opportunities of being in a posture of undeserving, inadequacy, even of fraud, and, in short, of excluding the Name-of-the-Father from its position in the signifier” (Lacan, Écrits 482).

x Frutos de mi tierra by Tomás Carrasquilla, and Siervo sin tierra by Eduardo caballero Calderón are among the most important works that inaugurated this literary tradition in Colombia; followed by La casa de las Palmas by Manuel Mejía Vallejo and culminating in Cien años de soledad by García Márquez where the neo-colonial appropriation of land by the United Fruit Company and the consequent violence has a prevalent role in the narrative.

xi During the nineteen century, most of the land was in the hands of European descendants who inherited large state from their colonial predecessors. Even when the nation achieved independence, there was neither a social reform for the ethnicities nor a fair distribution of the land. The beginning of the twentieth century in Colombia is marked by the industrial imperative which deterritorializes the remnant of the colonial regime, landlordism, and promotes a phenomenon of class mobility and displacement to the urban centers. Furthermore, the inequality of land distribution led to the emergence of guerrilla insurgencies who found support in the peasantry. They achieved control across large areas of the country due to weak state presence, particularly in areas of land colonization. The novel displays with sarcasm the phenomenon of power distribution in the countryside between the state army and guerrilla groups:

“That highway is under guerrilla control, protested Aunt Sofi, Yes, but only after three in the afternoon. I had been making inquiries, and apparently the guerrillas came down from the hills in the afternoon and then even the people at the checkpoints would close up and leave, but during the morning there was some truck traffic, if we leave and come back before three it will be fine.” (295)

Despite the different definitions given to present day guerrilla groups in Colombia (terrorist, narco- insurgency,etc.) there is no doubt about the political and socio-economical motivations that originated it. For an analysis of the connection between the agrarian problem and the guerrilla insurgency see the multiple studies on the topic by Alfredo Molano Bravo.

xii The landlord imaginary as a social and historical construct evokes images of wealthy European countryside living. Particularly for the Londoño family the state, including both houses in the countryside, and most importantly the horses and dogs constitute the defining elements of their upper class imaginary. An imaginary is according to Castoriadi’s definition the “creative potential immanent to human collectivities as well as to singular human
beings”. However, once created, both social imaginary significations and institutions solidify in an instituted social imaginary that instructs the individual in what he or she ought to do to obtain pleasure and a place in society. “The human species has the capacity to substitute representational pleasure for organ pleasure; representation is here the subjective side of the social imaginary significations conveyed by the institution.” “Pleasure has become not a sign indicating what is to be sought and what is to be avoided (pleasure principle) but has become an end in itself even when it is against the preservation of the individual and or the species.” (The imaginary institution of society 165)

By the second half of the century, the elite who used to rely on its state, either through farming or cattle, sees their stability challenged due to the imperative of industrialization, the entrance of foreign enterprises, socio-political instability, and the uprising of insurgent armies. Those with the capability for massive production and a strong system of security (hired armed personal) were able to keep their production. Others would eventually lose their economic power and rely on desperate measures to keep their status: sell their land to drug-traffickers or become money launderers. It is Joaco’s self-definition as rightful owner of a high social and economical status, his tendency to take always the easiest route and his total lack of scruples, what makes him an excellent candidate for the illegal machines who attach him as an investor. In “Impacto del narcotráfico en la vida nacional” Alonso Salazar states that “el control estatal al negocio del narcotráfico ha sido limitado por la complicidad, difusa pero efectiva, de propietarios de tierra, empresarios y banqueros que aprovechan el flujo de capital proveniente del negocio” (6). Francisco Thoumi explains that “gran parte del mantenimiento del negocio del narcotráfico tiene su base en la realización de alianzas coyunturales con las elites políticas, económicas y armadas. La relación de estos grupos selectos con el narcotráfico confirma una tesis ampliamente difundida según la cual la industria de las drogas ilegales ha penetrado la totalidad de la sociedad colombiana” (125).

In Blood and Capital Jasmin Hristov points to the fact that starting in the 1980s these armies were created in order to protect the economic interests of both the former elite and the new rich class “large-scale landowners, cattle ranchers, mining entrepreneurs and narco-lords” played a more direct role in setting up of para-military bodies” (63).

McAlister’s story displays some archetypal characteristics of the picaresque narrative. It is the autobiographical account of a humble individual who relies on crime to overcome economic scarcity. Born in the provinces, fatherless, living in a popular neighborhood, but with an open window into the elite world, McAlister finds his way up the crime ladder until he becomes a money launderer for Escobar’s organization. McAlister, as the archetypal picaro, has the ability to move easily along the socius surface. His knowledge of the city allows him to cross topographic and social territories. His narrative contains detailed descriptions in a satirical tone that illustrate a corrupted society of appearances. Through him the novel discusses moral, social and political issues that affect the entire socius. Despite all his knowledge of his environment McAlister is a parody of the ‘picaro’ since he is actually blinded to the reality of the socius. He is an anti-picaro whose story is the remorseful account of the various mistakes that marked his failure. There is a moralizing element in McAlister’s story as it proves the illegal path only leads to prison or death. Social determinism prevails and the picaro fails no matter his efforts to go against the socio-economical rigid structures. On the other hand, the noble man, Joaco, does not fulfill the role of the fallen hidalgo, who tries to keep the façade of his wealth while starving. Neither does he undertake the learning path of the beggar to realize the social injustices prevalent in his time. On the contrary, he maintains his economic power through delinquency and disregards completely the social and political consequences of his actions. Within the genre, he is an ‘anti-caballero’ who victimizes the picaro until the end. The picaresque narrative machine of the novel deterrioralizes the traditional genre portraying a society where neither repentance nor redemption can be expected.

Foucault, in The Archaeology of knowledge, refers to othering as the result of institutionalized definitions of oneself and the other that justify and encourage domination and subjugation. These definitions are based on a dominant episteme that legitimate the position of supremacy of one group and the subaltern status of the other. The persistence of the colonial hegemonic structure of knowledge perpetuates the superiority of European colonizers over indigenous and black communities. Consequently, it supports the axiomatic definition of land inheritors’ superiority over peasants and laborers. Furthermore, this superiority substantiates violence as the corresponding pedagogical tool to instruct the other on its role and position in society. In “Lo que le falta a Colombia” William Ospina declares that up to the present day Colombia’s society values only those who racially, economically and culturally have always been at the top of the social scale. “Desde muy temprano en nuestro país se dio esa tendencia a excluir y descalificar a los otros, que nos ha traído hasta la cima de la intolerancia y de hostilidad social que hoy padecemos. El desprecio señoril por los humildes tiene en este país uno de sus mayores reductos” (50) “Tal vez una reflexión más profunda nos permitirá establecer hasta qué punto este modo de ser nos viene de que seguimos siendo
The discourse of Homœconomicus’ potential for rational decision making and optimization of capital production goes hand in hand with its philanthropic justification of universal welfare. Homeconomicus is not only the enhancement of individual’s mastery of his or her trade but also the road to emancipation from the repression of former regimes. Everyone, not just the elite, can have access to economic growth.

Furthermore, the idea of a personal uninfluenced ability for choice would be naïve, as it is obvious the capitalist machine invests the receivers of capital only creates a resentment which justifies a distorted interpretation of Homeconomicus as the unscrupulous enterprise of achieving capital through illegal activities. In other words, the corruption of the elite and unscrupulous enterprise of achieving capital through illegal activities. Furthermore, from the point of view of the excluded, the legal system is only another control machine which supports the coding machine of the former regime. As a consequence, the unjustified position of the elite as the receivers of capital only creates a resentment which justifies a distorted interpretation of Homeconomicus as the unscrupulous enterprise of achieving capital through illegal activities. In other words, the corruption of the elite and
the legal system as well as the wide gap between the elite and the lowest classes justifies the appearance of illegal enterprises like the drug-trafficking machine. It is the violence and injustice of the historically dominating elite which has created a society of weak values, where the end justifies the means and survival is the only mandate, characteristics that fit perfectly with the capitalist imperative.

In “Construcción y deterioro del mito en la violencia plebeya” Samuel Jaramillo explains some of the factors that determine the economic success of this illegal entrepreneurs: Entre los múltiples impactos que tiene el narcotráfico en la sociedad existe uno que es el del trastrocamiento de la jerarquía social de las subculturas. Normalmente estos negocios ilegales son emprendidos por individuos y grupos que originalmente tienen una posición subalterna marginal en la sociedad, y que cuentan con una estructura cultural (en el sentido antropológico), que es acorde con su situación inicial. Precisamente algunos rasgos de este sistema de valores y de costumbres les permite eventualmente a estos grupos incursionar con éxito en estos procesos de acumulación ilegal: la solidaridad de grupo, de aprecio por el arrojo, una codificación del papel de la violencia diferente al de la cultura hegemónica, una particular relación con el Estado y con la Ley” (Jaramillo 128)

Capitalism is the only social machine that is constructed on the basis of decoded flows, substituting for intrinsic codes an axiomatic of abstract quantities in the form of money. Capitalism liberates the flows of desire, but under the social conditions that define its limit and the possibility of its own dissolution, so that it is constantly opposing with all its exasperated strength the movement that drives it towards the limit” (Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus 153).

McAlister is not the only individual whose interest investments are directed towards the pursuit of homoœconomicus. Joaco and the other members of the elite of L’Esplanade define themselves as entrepreneurs for themselves, and producers of their own satisfaction through consumption. The novel emphasizes on their inability to reflect on the fact that their own imaginaries make them excellent targets of both the marketing machine and the drug-trafficking machine. These characters are naïve, unskilled, distasteful and unintelligent beings, who believe they are rightful deservers of these objects. The market economy has invested in them the idea that their rational ability to accumulate capital ensures the immediate satisfaction of all their demands. With self-conceitedness comes greediness which in the case of the homoœconomicus translates in a tendency to individualist hypertrophy: the mandate to use egoistic mechanisms to pursue its own interest side-blinded to the well being of the socius. “The four of them smelling of Hermes and dressed in Armani, all wearing those Ferragamo ties with little equestrian prints imported straight from the Via Condotti, Spider's with little spurs, your brother Joaco's with riding crops, Jorge Luis's with saddles, and Silver's with something like tiny unicorns, as if the four had come to some kind of sissy agreement.” (16)

In the novel, Both Pablo Escobar and Midas McAlister feel the satisfaction of having the elite subjugated to their command. Their awareness of the elite’s hatred makes their subjugation even more virulent; by the same token, the elite see the drug lord and his intermediaries as vassals that make their money produce. In Cocaina & Co Ciro Krauthausen, Ciro and Luis Fernando Sarmiento explain drug lord’s use of the elite as investors is only a strategy of control and not an economic requirement. “Otra vía para acceder a capital para grandes operaciones de exportación parece ser la recolección de fondos entre varios inversionistas. La así llamada “puntada” consiste en que se aporta una suma mediana de capital, $100-000, por ejemplo, para la realización de una o varias transacciones conexas. Después de una semana y tras el éxito de la operación, el alto riesgo que corrió el inversionista es recompensado con la devolución del doble o del triple del capital inicial. En vista de las grandes ganancias que los oligopolistas pueden acumular en poco tiempo, es probable que la apuntada se utilice ante todo entre empresarios menores quienes así pueden hacerse al capital necesario para exportar grandes volúmenes de cocaína” (74).

Colombia’s conflict within the second half of the twentieth century and up to present day is idiosyncratic as it differs from other bipartisan conflicts in the large number of criminal, ideological, economic and political apparatuses involved. A variety of guerrilla organizations, each with its own ideological agenda, a group of advanced criminal organizations, which had oligopolized the drug-trafficking activity and defined well marked territorial limits, a whole army of paramilitary forces and highly corrupted state institutions among other elements; all developing their own system of production and their own strategies of preservation.

Laura Restrepo refers to the social context of the novel in an interview: “The eighties were precisely a moment of total chaos, as cocaine trafficking was at its pick in Medellin and Cali; each one with his corresponding cartels.
However, the one who suffered the most the violence of car bombs was Bogotá” (Azorca, 1). Every single citizen has some type of recollection of the violence of the eighties which was especially critical in the main cities, where car bombs were a daily concern for its inhabitants. This environment definitely created a sense of insecurity that is well described in the novel as a trigger for psychological paranoia.

There are three fundamental requirements for a function apparatus, efficiency, adaptability and organization. Krauthausen and Sarmiento’s study of the drug-trafficking machine, *Cocaína & Co*, following the foundational principles of the capitalist model, define three requirements for its rational functioning. First, there must be an effective movement of drugs and capital, within the market. Second, ruled by the offer and demand tension in the market, it is necessary that the drug-trafficking apparatus adjusts all its gears to adapt to its disposition; every decision and endeavor must follow the logic of the global market. And third, every individual within the machine should have a molar categorization and fit into the hierarchy of elements that ensure the rational functioning of the machine. “Las motivaciones que determinan la acción social de todos los actores son las expectativas de obtener los mayores beneficios. Tanto esas expectativas como las condiciones del medio conllevan una racionalización de la acción. Así, a diferencia de lo que usualmente se cree, ni los individuos ni las empresas que se mueven en el mercado ilegal son completamente irracional, por el contrario, continuamente deben racionalizar sus acciones. Los fines son los mismos de cualquier capitalista: acaparar los máximos beneficios. Con base en las condiciones existentes y en la disponibilidad de recursos se efectúa una ordenación de los medios, estructurando estrategias y tácticas” (23). This rational phase is effectively developed within the novel as it evidences the smoothness of its flows and its capacity to attach the whole *socius* to its logic. As all the elements adhere themselves to the same enterprise of producing the highest possible profit the drug-trafficking apparatus works efficiently and rationally. The flows of products and money circulate smoothly through each one of its components. Each element continuously receives and directs the flows to the next element generating in every stage a surplus of profit. The flow of capital seems absolutely effective and as long as the machine elements do their part the production of surplus flow will keep the system running in a rational manner.

All the power and repression seems to emanate from him but in reality he is just a device which directs the flows of forces imposed by the demands of capital and its requirements to evade the control of the state machine which seeks to dismantle it. Fundamental to the image of one single drug lord is the omission of other individuals in the top of the organization. Terrorist attacks, such as the bomb to L’Esplanade and the one to the DAS, and all violent actions are assigned to only one man without acknowledging the existence of a group called the “Extraditables” conformed by equally ranked drug lords. According to Barnes and Rincón the terrorist attack to the “Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad” was promoted by Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha and discussed in a session of the “extraditables”. The authors even affirm Pablo Escobar was against this motion as he was aware of the consequences such a violent action would have (144). Krauthausen and Sarmiento describe the distribution of power in the drug-trafficking machine according to the definition of an oligopoly where there is not one single center of power, monopoly, but a small number of organization heads that have to be aware of the actions of the other. “El oligopolio se define como una situación del mercado en la que los vendedores independientes son pocos. Lo anterior plantea el problema de que el oligopolio no solo tiene rivales, sino que tiene tan pocos que cada uno de ellos es lo bastante grande para afectar significativamente a los demás” (31).

The drug-trafficking machines in Delirium, as well as Leopard in the Sun, interestingly appear within the category of clans. Both novels emphasize on the importance of kinship-based bonds and retaliations for affronts committed to members of the family. This is relevant since it understands violence as the persistence of social conflicts from former regimes. From this perspective the drug trafficking machine of the novel has remained still attached to past struggles: family, race and territory worked hand in hand in the colonization of land prevalent within XIX century and likewise in the consolidation of an emergent class during the XX century. According to this the drug-trafficking machine of the novel would not reflect the rationality of the neoliberal capitalist machine of the eighties which used violence mainly for control purposes. “El "ojo por ojo" esgrimido por Escobar al legitimar la violencia contra otras familias con la sufrida por la propia, sin embargo, no debería ocultar que este tipo de atentados y secuestros sumamente crueles, más que a una mentalidad arcaica de venganza colectiva, parecieron obedecer a una estrategia bastante racional para conseguir la impunidad. Los clanes guajiros, que en los años setenta tuvieron un papel importante en el mercado de la marihuana, pueden ilustrar aun mas las diferencias cualitativas entre clanes y núcleos de empresas ilegales. A diferencia de lo que sucede con los narcotraficantes de la cocaína, las venganzas de sangre entre distintos clanes periódicamente sacuden a La Guajira y pueden llevar hasta el exterminio físico de todos
y cada uno de los miembros del clan contrario. En resumen, los vínculos afectivos en el núcleo de las empresas narcotraficantes, cumplen una función preponderantemente racional al aumentar la seguridad tanto personal como comercial y contribuyen a garantizar la impunidad. El sentido de estos vínculos es esencialmente diferente a aquellos que tienen la función de regular las relaciones sociales dentro y fuera de los clanes. (Krauthausen y Sarmiento 44)

xxv In Globalization and its Discontents Saskia Sassen observes these international agencies only serve to perpetuate the economic interests of certain groups and have no concern for the welfare of any specific nations. “There are two distinct issues here. One is the ascendance of this new legal regime that negotiates between national sovereignty and the transnational practices of corporate economic actors. The second issue concerns the particular content of this new regime, which strengthens the advantages of certain types of economic actors and weakens those of others. The hegemony of neoliberal concepts of economic relations with its strong emphasis on markets, deregulation, and free international trade has influenced policy in the 1980s in the United States and Great Britain and now increasingly also in continental Europe. This has contributed to the formation of transnational legal regimes that are centered in Western economic concepts of contract and property rights. It is a regime associated with increased levels of concentrated wealth, poverty, and inequality worldwide” (28).

xxvi “The social machine's limit is not attrition, but rather its misfirings; it can operate only by fits and starts, by grinding and breaking down, in spasms of minor explosions. The dysfunctions are an essential element of its very ability to function, which is not the least important aspect of the system of cruelty. The death of a social machine has never been heralded by a disharmony or a dysfunction; or, the contrary, social machines make a habit of feeding on the contradictions they give rise to, on the crises they provoke, on the anxieties they engender, and on the infernal operations they regenerate. Capitalism has learned this, and has ceased doubting itself, while even socialists have abandoned belief in the possibility of capitalism's natural death by attrition. No one has ever died from contradictions. And the more it breaks down, the more it schizoprenizes, the better it works, the American way” (Deleuze and Guattari, AntiOedipus 165).

xxvii Krauthausen’s socio-economic approach to the drug-trafficking machine emphasizes its rational diagnosis. He suggests rationality, as the pure logic of choice, is prevalent in every action within the machine. However, he does not take into account that rationality belongs to the logic of the market and not to the individuals’ judgment that presupposes their dependency to the rationality of a central higher power, capital. This dependence is even higher within the illegal machines, since the amount of profit, like a double edge sword, allows the effective movement of flows but creates automatons incapable of a rational reaction to the changes in the system.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

xxviii Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between two different types of investments: the preconscious investments of interest and the unconscious libidinal investments. The former refers to those motivations of which individuals are aware; they relate to causality as individuals derive their interests and aspirations from them. The latter refers to desire; the unconscious libidinal investments have no interests but intensities. Furthermore, these investments are also divided in two different types of motivations: revolutionary and fascist. Therefore, there are revolutionary investments of interest as well as revolutionary libidinal investments. In many cases an individual might display a preconscious revolutionary investment of interest in instigating a revolt but he or she is actually driven by a fascist libidinal investment to control all the individuals within the group (Deleuze and Guattari, Anti Oedipus 199). “Delirium is a system of politico-social investments, not just of any type: it is the libido that hooks itself onto political social determinations: the libido invests social formations, to the point that one must distinguish two types of social investments: social investments of interests that are of the preconscious type, that, if necessary, pass through classes, and below these, not exactly in harmony with them, unconscious investments, the libidinal investments of desire” (Deleuze, Lectures 2)

xxix In Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation Deleuze proposes that art creates figures of sensation. In its relation to language sensation is what agitates before the advent of the word. It has a virtual quality because it is not actualized in the present but it is in an interstitial moment of becoming-present. Sensation then is prior to cognition and articulation. In What is philosophy? Deleuze explains the process: words pass into sensation and this makes language evince its tone, “The writer uses words, but by creating a syntax that makes them pass into sensation that
makes the standard language stammer, tremble, cry, or even sing: this is the style, the ‘tone’ the language of sensation” (176). Therefore, sensation in itself does not signify, there is no dynamical connection with a specific object it represents, it is prior and beyond signification. “The writer twists language, makes it vibrate, seizes hold of it, and renders it in order to wrest the percepts from perceptions, the affect from affections, the sensations from opinions” (176).

xxx “Con voluntad enrevesada, peligrosamente misteriosa, con un lento pavor en crecimiento, tomando en cuenta que una de las emociones más antiguas e intensas del hombre es el miedo y que el más fuerte de los miedos es el miedo a lo desconocido, Roberto Bolaño trabaja cuidadosamente esta certeza a todo lo largo de su novela Estrella distante, dosificándola como pequeñas perlas de cianuro, lo que lo revela no solo como profundo conocedor del hombre y su psicología, sino también como el maestro del suspense que sabe que hasta el placer se difumina y pierde fuerza en la memoria, mientras que el dolor, la violencia y la amenaza de muerte permanecen en el hombre como recuerdo negativo de infinita duración” (Corona and Saavedra 290).

xxxiv “When Freud formulated the term unconscious thought, adding sit venia verbo in his Traumdeutung, he was saying nothing other than that thought means the thing articulated in language. At the level of the Traumdeutung there is no other interpretation of the term than this. Since we are looking for the functions of the ego as such, let me say that one of its tasks is precisely not to become poisoned by this sentence that always continues circulating and seeks only to re-emerge in a thousand more or less camouflaged and disturbing forms. In other words, the sentence of the Gospels, They have ears so as not to hear, is to be taken literally. It's a function of the ego that we do not have to perpetually listen to this articulation that organizes our actions like spoken actions” (Lacan 113). “It's too often ignored that in cases of psychosis we see this sentence, this monologue, this internal discourse I was speaking to you about, reveal itself in the most highly articulated manner. In short, it could be said that the psychotic is a martyr of the unconscious, giving this term martyr its meaning, which is to be a witness. It is an open testimony. The psychotic, in the sense in which he is in a first approximation an open witness, seems arrested, immobilized, in a position that leaves him incapable of authentically restoring the sense of what he witnesses and sharing it in the discourse of others” (Lacan The Psychoses 132).

Bataille explains this total negation: “The solitary man proceeds step by step towards total negation: denial of other people first, and then by some monstrous logic denial of himself. In his own ultimate negation the criminal, as he perishes a victim of the sea of crimes he has brought about, rejoices still in the triumph that crime, now somehow sacred, rejoices still in the triumph of that crime” (Bataille 199).

“The crime committed when the sensitive part has been hardened, that dark and secret crime is the most important of all because it is the act of a soul which having destroyed everything within itself has accumulated enough strength, and this can be completely identified with the acts of total destruction soon to come” (Bataille Erotism 173). “Denying others become in the end denying oneself. In the violence of this progression personal enjoyment ceases to count, the crime is the only thing that counts and whether one is the victim or not matter; all that matters is that the crime should reach the pinnacle of crime” (Bataille 175).

Vásquez Mejías explains how Wieder identifies in the Garmendia sisters a natural evil force which allows them to seduce and subjugate their male counterparts. They need to be sacrificed to regulate the socius’ sexual flow and reestablish the limits of the patriarchal order: “Carlos Wieder aprovecha la protección que se le brinda desde la derecha en el poder para ejercer la violencia y consumar el asesinato contra estas mujeres que han escapado de los canones impuestos: canones políticos, por cuanto pertenecen a la izquierda y canones patriarcales, por cuanto son mujeres activas, intelectuales, que no se han conformado con permanecer reducidas al ámbito privado. Así, el sujeto femenino en la novela de Roberto Bolaño, a raíz de su indefensión, se constituye en un chivo expiatorio; al asesinar a las gemelas se busca extirpar no solo células del "cáncer marxista", sino también ejemplificar lo que puede sucederle a quienes osen sublevarse o intenten subvertir una masculinidad tradicional” (Vásquez Mejías 321).

The Siamese twins in Estrella distante torture each other only to the limit of death; it is that restriction which keeps the cycle of pain going and its proximity what makes life more perceptible. “Sólo la muerte está penalizada en este mundo y sobre ella -sobre el no-ser, sobre la nada, sobre la vida después de la vida— discurren los hermanos a lo largo de la obra. Su tesis acaso peque de simple: sólo el dolor atá a la vida, sólo el dolor es capaz de revelarla” (ED 104). According to Bataille individuals have the need to experience their continuity. One way to achieve it is to go as far as possible to the limit of death like in some sadistic performances; Sade himself exceeds this limit as many
of his victims die. This distinction, between the Sadean character who can see the sense of that movement towards death and those who only see it as the horrible sign of its imminence, is akin to the two perspectives within the novel: while the narrator sees death as the expected outcome, Pacheco concludes it is the limit which reveals our attachment to life. The Siamese twins serve as a metaphor for the relationship among individuals within the socius. Individuals are constantly giving into their fascist libidinal investments to annihilate the other to achieve an impossible individuality. This duality does not describe exclusively the relationship among violent individuals, even characters like the Garmendias and the poetry club’s leaders display that fluctuation between love and hatred. “Verónica y Angélica Garmendia, tan iguales algunos días que era imposible distinguirlas y tan diferentes otros días (pero sobre todo otras noches) que parecían mutuamente dos desconocidas cuando no dos enemigas” (ED 15). The socius is like the parking lot in Pachecos’ story where Siamese twins meet to observe the scars of the other sets of twins as evidence of the never ending struggle, “Su acción transcurre en la casa de los siameses y en el aparcamiento de un supermercado en donde se cruzan con otros siameses que exhiben una gama variopinta de cicatrices y costurones” (ED 45).

 Jeremías Gamboa analyzes certain elements that make evident the influence of the European Avant-Garde in Wieder’s exhibition. He discusses three terms introduced by Peter Bürger on the materials and form of an Avant-Garde work of art: “obra inorgánica” “intención de obra” and “la idea de unidad” Gamboa identifies in Wieder’s exhibition an intention to display in multiple representations the pain of an individual while being tortured but he suggests the unity of the idea of pain is broken by the manipulation of the material: the separated members appear as inorganic parts completely alien to the body where they used to have a function and a meaning. (Gamboa Cárdenas 219). I agree with Gamboa in his argument that Wieder’s exhibition cannot be included within the parameters of the classic definition of an oeuvre as a unit. His display is composed of fragments, but they are not simply an array of different unrelated pieces brought together by chance in one installation; they are independent images that have no relation, no connection among them but they constitute a whole. They are flexible elements that have lost their singularity, they can be transformed, added or subtracted, to become part of an external whole which is the oeuvre. As Deleuze explains “relations are always external to their terms, and the Whole is never a principle but rather an effect that is derived from these external relations, and that constantly varies with them... The Whole is the open, because it is its nature to constantly produce or create the new” (Deleuze, Critique, xxiii). I differ with Gamboa in relation to the intention of oeuvre. There is something very intimate and at the same time customary about the space as if by entering the space of the artist’s chamber the audience were given the opportunity to look through an open window into the artists’ life project. Wieder’s exhibition does have a specific concern with the act of killing a person as an aesthetic process. He seeks to frame a specific occurrence. The repetition of the same moment when life encounters death in different subjects, on different poses emphasizes the multiple possibilities of the same occurrence. It is in the minor differences and not the common denominator of death where the affective elements can be discerned: the levity of a floating body, the inertness of a finger cut off, etc. Wieder’s exhibition has an experimental and demonstrative function that includes the display of different stages in a process, the audience’s reading included, and which seeks to test a specific theory, “the order in which they were exhibited was not haphazard: there was a progression, an argument, a story (literal and allegorical), a plan” (ED 88)

 Estrella distante observes the manipulation of this term within the discourse of the cultural elite group of literary critics and government officials, “after this triumphant journey to Antarctica and aerial displays over numerous Chilean cities, he was called upon to undertake something grand in the capital, something spectacular to show the world that the new regime and Avant-Garde art were not at odds, quite the contrary” (ED 77). “después de sus triunfos en la Antártida y en los cielos de tantas ciudades chilenas lo llamaron para que hiciera algo sonado en la capital, algo espectacular que demostrara al mundo que el nuevo régimen y el arte de vanguardia no estaban, ni mucho menos, reñidos” (ED 86) “...sus interlocutores de entonces eran periodistas adictos al nuevo régimen, incapaces de llevarle la contraria a un oficial de nuestra Fuerza Aérea” (ED 53). The term Avant-Garde is fashioned as the style in vogue that sets up the standards for the future, a connotation very akin to the regime’s discourse. Those who support it are trend-driven individuals who look into the future, while those who reject it are still living in the socialist past. The Avant-Garde is constructed as far as determining a new moral standard that justifies and even glorifies delinquency, murder and totalitarian regimes. The two poets present at Wieder’s exhibition hide behind their categorization and assure the military they will remain silent, “the surrealists hastened to agree, affirming that, as far as they were concerned, nothing had happened in the flat that night; they were men of the world, after all” (ED 91). “los surrealistas se apresuraron a darle la razón y a afirmar que allí, en el fondo, no había ocurrido nada, entre gente de
mundo, ya se sabe” (ED 100). They are open minded, *Avant-Garde* individuals who would not judge the exhibition of murders as anything but a work of art.

As Ainhoa Vásquez Mejías explains in her essay “Ritual del bello crimen. Violencia femicida en *Estrella distante*” “Permanece la homosociabilidad masculina, el compadrazgo que asegura que nadie denunciara al poeta por lo que ha hecho. “Alguien recordó un juramento, otro se puso a hablar de discreción y del honor de los caballeros” (ED 44) Ni militares ni civiles dirán nada, no porque este en juego el honor de la institución, sino el de todos los hombres, la solidaridad masculina debe primar ante todo. Para salvarlo, se concuerda en que ahí no ha pasado nada” (Vásquez Mejías 318)

The imaginary of the nation and the delimitation of the perimeter where the other is located, excluded from this ideal, is displayed in La Bás. The limit is marked by the membership to intellectual elite and combined with stereotypical cultural markers of Chilean identity: the food and tangos, “Chilean tomato salad, game birds with béarnaise sauce, baked conger eel brought in especially from the coast on farewell’s orders. Wine from the state” (NC 14). Those in the margins of the house, farmers and their families are described in completely opposite terms: ignorant, poor diction, ugly appearance, not Chilean but from outer space. They eat hard farmer’s bread which Urrutia defines as “very flavorful, a treat for the palate, veritable ambrosia, pride of our agriculture, hearty staple of our hardworking farm/folk” (NC 12). This condescending attitude contrasts with the shy, humble attitude he uses to venerate Farewell, Neruda and the other guests within the house. Urrutía’s imaginary of the nation is divided in two: a civilized, intellectual elite that will bring prosperity to the nation and a backward, patient, lethargic race that keeps the nation from following the progressive impulse of the elite. He resents the latter and identifies himself with the former. In sum, he supports the categorization of an elite group that might turn the country’s destiny in the direction of a civilized prosperous nation.

The practice of evil is concealed on discourses of the imaginary of the Latin American nation. Bolaño exposes the persistence, a hundred years later, of the dichotomy ‘civilización y barbarie’ as argumentative strategy to give authority to a privileged class and promote the extermination of those with backward, barbaric behavior. Doris Sommer in her book *Foundational fictions* explains the persistence of the land as part of the imaginary that supports the discourse on civilization: “Demanding to be admired shapeless as she is, the land lies ready for the man who dares to make her productive” (Sommer 60). The praising of the hardworking farm folk and the position of the landowner ‘dueño de fundo,’ evidences the persistence of this nineteen century imaginary in Urrutia’s political preferences.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

Eltit has recognized the influence of this character in the definition of the *Los Vigilantes* niño-larva: “Mitad niño, mitad perro. Animal pensante. Acezante. La novela *Patas de perro*, del narrador chileno Carlos Droguett, diseñó una figura que me parece lúcida y provocativa. Escribió la diferencia escurriendo por un cuerpo obligado a debatirse entre los signos irreverentes de la jauría y una solícita domesticación. Pero, claro, finalmente insumiso, hubo de desaparecer tras la leva. Su cuerpo, que fuera tachado de monstruoso, constituía un escándalo. Y, sin embargo, él lo sabía, le pertenecía enteramente. Ahí estaba. Bobby, transcurría. Se enfrentó, poseído por una forma de miedo no exento de serenidad, a la intransigencia dictaminada por los programas oficializados. Tempranamente supo que algo en él inspiraba sentimientos en los que se trenzaban la rabia y la culpa. Una rabia y una culpa insertas en el interior de las propias instituciones que lo expulsaban, porque, en verdad, él representaba un deseo agudo que la hegemonía no se atrevía a consignar de sí mismo… El extraordinario aporte de Carlos Droguett con su novela *Patas de perro* continúa con su creativa, misteriosa y desafiante carrera para indicarnos -a algunos de nosotros y a los otros- que sí, que sí, que sí existe un cuerpo que, tal vez, no quiere ni debe filiarse porque sí.” “los bordes de la letra” Diamela Eltit el 12 de Noviembre de 2002

In previous novels written by Eltit, sexuality appears as a life and death battle where the winner subjugates completely the other individual. This is evident in the procreation of *El cuarto mundo* but appears in extreme circumstances in *Vaca sagrada*. The story of the sexual initiation of a couple of adolescents, Francisca the protagonist and Sergio her lover, allows for an exploration of the relationship between sexuality and violence within the subjective construction of its characters. There is a pervasiveness of a psychotic libidinal investment in the pursuer who seeks to impose his will over his object with the power of his fixed scrutiny. This constant persecution seeks to devour the other stripping her of a potential existence away from his eyes. The consequence of this deviant
construction is the impossibility to disconnect sexuality from violence as the need for a brutal infliction of pain on
the body becomes compulsory.
This made up story, with all its holes and incongruities, goes beyond a sexual metaphor; it is an exploration on the
relationship between pleasure and power that makes evident the fascist libidinal investment to subjugate the other.
Francisca loses its determination and finds its subjective realization only in Sergio’s gaze. Every violent encounter
re-designates the positions of power but it also implies the master’s failure of appropriating the other completely and
the need to perpetuate the ritual.
These elements appear once again in the power dynamic of Los Vigilantes, where the violent imposition of the
phallocentric language takes place through interpellation and surveillance. Los vigilantes takes the same
underground line of flight used in Lumperica of fusing bodies to create a consistent collective mass that rejects the
imposition of phallocentric language. Los vigilantes, however, has focused all its efforts on resolving its struggle
with the epistolary language instead of the creation of a collectivity in the plaza. Iluminada has been replaced in the
center of the narration by an anomalous narrative voice filled with a pre-symbolic, instinctual, and intensively erotic
desire to fuse with the page and take a hold of writing.

xii “For, when narrative identity is unbearable, when the boundary between subject and object is shaken, and when
even the limit between inside and outside becomes uncertain, the narrative is what is challenged first. If it continues
nevertheless, its make up changes; its linearity is shattered, it proceeds by flashes, enigmas, short cuts, incompleteness,
tangles and cuts. At a later stage, the unbearable identity of the narrator and of the surroundings that are supposed
to sustain him can no longer be narrated but cries out or is described with maximal stylistic intensity (language of
violence, obscenity, or a rhetoric that relates the text to poetry). The narrative yields to a crying-out theme that, when
it tends to coincide to with incandescent states of a boundary-subjectivity that I have called abjection, is the crying
theme of suffering-horror. In other words, the theme of suffering-horror is the ultimate evidence of such states of
abjection within the narrative representation” (Kristeva, The Powers 141).

xiii “Literature, a blind vigilance which in its attempt to escape from itself plunges deeper and deeper into its own
obssession, is the only rendering of the obsession of existence, if this itself is the very impossibility of emerging from
existence, if it is being which is always flung back into being, that which in the bottomless depth is already at the
bottom of the abyss, a recourse against which there is no recourse.” (Blanchot 332)

In Littoral of the Letter Gabriel Riera states “In the works of Levinas and Blanchot it is possible to read another
experience of the other; a question comes from the "other shore ... ( Levinas) or outside ( Blanchot ) a call the
subject cannot anticipate, a murmur lurking behind language's propositional structure, or the constitutive duplicity of
the image. The "approach and the response" (Blanchot) are "experiences" that force thinking to undergo a radical
transformation and to "think otherwise than (it] thinks." These modalities can be grouped together under the term
encounter, which points to a relationship with what is absolutely exterior. In the encounter thinking enters into a
relationship with what no longer depends upon it and, in this sense, entails a "writing of the outside.”” (Riera 7)

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

xii In Lo imborrable Tomatis explains the experience of being in contact with those waters and their ability to draw
individuals into depression and eventual death, “con el agua negruzca y gélida ciñéndome los tobillos lista ya para
tragarme y para que los últimos restos maltrechos del propio ser se disgreguen en la masa chirle y viscosa” (LO 82).
Tomatis finds himself in an unmanageable repressive flow, emanating from the authoritarian control of the
dictatorship, and eventually gets carried away to its depth. Both Leto and el matemático are aware of its threat, “an
internal swamp that stands in sharp contrast to the bright exterior, they simultaneously think that the other would
never be trapped…He [Leto] slogs through a viscous and darkened zone, which he is seldom able to leave” (Glosa
12). Glosa translated to English with the title The sixty-Five Years if Washington by Steve Dolph. “La cienaga
externa que contrasta con el exterior luminoso, piensan a la vez que el otro nunca se empasta... [Leto] chapotea en
una zona viscosa y nocturna, de la que rara vez puede salir” (Glosa 18). The suicide of Leto’s father is the statement
of someone who got tired of the show and found a path to escape. An Insolent suicide is the adjective Cesar Rey
applies to his attitude as if he despised them and wanted to show them how pathetic their farce was. Leto starts to
feel the same way about everyone trying to live a normal life without doubts or contradictions, like his mother who,
“lives a plain life in a single dimension –the dimension of her desire, the desire for nothing, or rather for the
contradiction not to exist” (Glosa 38). “Vive una existencia plana, en una sola dimensión -la de su deseo, que es

xiii In Lo imborrable Tomatis explains the experience of being in contact with those waters and their ability to draw
individuals into depression and eventual death, “con el agua negruzca y gélida ciñéndome los tobillos lista ya para
tragarme y para que los últimos restos maltrechos del propio ser se disgreguen en la masa chirle y viscosa” (LO 82).
Tomatis finds himself in an unmanageable repressive flow, emanating from the authoritarian control of the
dictatorship, and eventually gets carried away to its depth. Both Leto and el matemático are aware of its threat, “an
internal swamp that stands in sharp contrast to the bright exterior, they simultaneously think that the other would
never be trapped…He [Leto] slogs through a viscous and darkened zone, which he is seldom able to leave” (Glosa
12). Glosa translated to English with the title The sixty-Five Years if Washington by Steve Dolph. “La cienaga
externa que contrasta con el exterior luminoso, piensan a la vez que el otro nunca se empasta... [Leto] chapotea en
una zona viscosa y nocturna, de la que rara vez puede salir” (Glosa 18). The suicide of Leto’s father is the statement
of someone who got tired of the show and found a path to escape. An Insolent suicide is the adjective Cesar Rey
applies to his attitude as if he despised them and wanted to show them how pathetic their farce was. Leto starts to
feel the same way about everyone trying to live a normal life without doubts or contradictions, like his mother who,
“lives a plain life in a single dimension –the dimension of her desire, the desire for nothing, or rather for the
contradiction not to exist” (Glosa 38). “Vive una existencia plana, en una sola dimensión -la de su deseo, que es
deseo de nada, o más bien deseo de que no exista la contradicción” (Glosa 39). He is aware of the vacuity of individual’s actions performed every single day to fill up the space of what is called a daily life. Those individuals desire nothing because the libidinal investments move forces in constant contradiction. Everything is a farce as individuals go around pretending they are sane and happy, he knows it is not the case and he can only wait until they finally decide to become real and show their true colors like his father when he finally decides to commit suicide: “okay, that’s enough, show is over it’s time to be our real selves” (Glosa 52). “Bueno, ya está, la representación termino; ahora empezamos a ser de verdad y nos volvemos reales” (Glosa 51). Leto is aware of the infection permeating the entire socius. He feels he is being cursed with the ability to perceive it. He has the feeling that he does not belong to the world that surrounds him and he is unable to conform to any type of stratification. His own being rejects physical and psychological stratifications. “El sentimiento, decía, de no pertenecer del todo a este propio delirio” (Glosa 50). As Leto explains his father found a way to deceive him before “sealing, hermetically, from the inside, the capsule, and launching it into the stellar space of his own delirium” (Glosa 51), “y decidió que yo era el último obstáculo que tenía que derribar para que su círculo mágico, por fin, se cerrara; el rezagado que había que hacer entrar antes de clausurar, hermética, desde adentro, la capsula, y propulsarla a los espacios interestelares del propio delirio” (Glosa 50) What Leto does not understand at this point is that those machinic assemblages were his father’s attempt to deal with the stratifying and repressive flow of the socius. Later he adheres to a revolutionary group but he finds himself living the same flat existence, playing the role assigned and following the same path towards suicide. The venom that poisons someone’s entire being is the knowledge that stratification is a fabrication designed to maintain individuals playing a role that has nothing to do with their reality.

Saer’s texts delineate a social milieu especially marked by the prevalence of a fascist libidinal determination where individuals suffer traumatic experiences and psychotic symptoms that eventually lead them into suicide. The delirious alternative of Leto’s father is to deviate from the quotidian life and immerse themselves in their own delirious machinic assemblages and wonder on the mechanisms of a circuit. “Deliraban ya que estaban sobre tres mosquitos, de manera tal que, puesto que se les había dado por delirar, deliraran en serio, no a costa de un pobre caballo sobrecargado desde el vamos de delirio insensato por la especie humana, sino, si eran capaces, y ya que tanto les gustaba delirar, de tres mosquitos, grises, diminutos y neutros, un modo elegante de sugerirles que, cuanto más irrisorio es el objeto, más claro resulta el tamaño del delirio” (Glosa 133). The delirium of Leto’s father is machinic in the sense that it seeks to generate alternative assemblages. He connects himself with the devices and tools in order to apprehend their mechanisms but also in order to experience new intensities and create multiple processes and inventions. His desire is absolutely invested in experimentation and continuous reassembling. “Así que había sido esto». Patente: «esto» -es decir, los días, las noches, el tiempo, el ser, el mundo, la vida palpitante y gruesa, el hombre, en su tallercito de radio electricista, los había desmontado, desarmado y separado en piezas sueltas, cablecitos de colores, alambres de cobre, tornillos dorados, dispersándolos sobre la mesa para examinarlos uno por uno, neutro y sin piedad, limitándose a realizar lo que él sin duda consideraba comprobaciones objetivas, y después, en horas lisas y minuciosas, había vuelto a armar el todo a su manera dándole la coherencia irrefutável de su delirio” (Glosa 79). As Leto explains his father found a way to deceive him before “sealing, hermetically, from the inside, the capsule, and launching it into the stellar space of his own delirium” (Glosa 51), “y decidió que yo era el último obstáculo que tenía que derribar para que su círculo mágico, por fin, se cerrara; el rezagado que había que hacer entrar antes de clausurar, hermética, desde adentro, la capsula, y propulsarla a los espaços interestelares del propio delirio” (Glosa 50) What Leto does not understand at this point is that those machinic assemblages were his father’s attempt to deal with the stratifying and repressive flow of the socius. Later he adheres to a revolutionary group but he finds himself living the same flat existence, playing the role assigned and following the same path towards suicide. The venom that poisons someone’s entire being is the knowledge that stratification is a fabrication designed to maintain individuals playing a role that has nothing to do with their reality.

Nicolás Cabral in his review entitled “Juan José Saer (1937-2005)” identifies the river as a recurrent landscape in Saer’s narrative and affirms that what typifies the river in Saer’s narrative is the consistency of its channel. “El río es un paisaje, pero también una lógica: la del elemento estable (el agua) que fluye tomando la forma de su continente (el cauce). La escritura de Saer opera del mismo modo: los aspectos relativamente invariables (los personajes, la región) funcionan en cada ejercicio de un modo distinto, desplegándose mediante estructuras y procedimientos siempre nuevos (la forma)” (Cabral 157). I agree with the fact that the river is a fundamental leitmotif but I disagree with the idea that it follows a channel; even in the novel that Cabral mentions El río sin orillas the title already points to the idea of a lack of border and in Las nubes the river has completely overflown its boundaries.

Real explains how besides believing blindly in their project, some delirious individuals seek to impose their truth to the rest of the world, and as a consequence they take a position of leadership. Their passion gives them the quality to captivate followers to the point of convincing them of the most outrageous statements, “daba la impresión de que la estimaban realmente, y no era ella la que les inculcaba la obediencia, sino ellos mismos los que, en forma espontánea, la practicaban, por un respeto grave que, no se sabia bien por qué, ella parecía inspirarles” (LN 102).
Delirious individuals justify the truth of their reality with arguments on logic and on the contents of the law itself. Sor Teresita, for example uses the gospels and mystical texts to prove the validity of her actions, “La monjita lo había convencido diciéndole que en ninguna parte del Evangelio o de las doctrinas de la Iglesia, el acto que iban a realizar y sobre todo el hecho de realizarlo donde se disponían a hacerlo, estaban condenados por algún texto, lo cual podía quizás ser cierto” (LN 53). Sor Teresita’s writing reveals its own specific logic, she has being instructed to have sexual intercourse in order to achieve the union between the spiritual and material world. “[c]omo sus tentativas de unión carnal con el Crucificado estaban imposibilitadas por la separación metafísica de los dos mundos, practicando el amor físico… se podía realizar la unidad” (LN 54).

Cristo le había ordenado varias veces consumar la unión carnal con la criatura humana, y la unión divina con el Espíritu Santo, para alcanzar de esa manera la perfecta unión con Dios, ya que después de la resurrección y la subida al reino de los cielos, el principio divino y el elemento humano de Cristo, que se habían reunido en la Reencarnación, estaban de nuevo separados, y mientras que el primero se había instalado a la diestra de Dios, el segundo se hallaba disperso entre los hombres. (LN 54)

xlii Saer’s texts take place in Santa Fe and the Argentinian littoral. In Literatura y subdesarrollo Adolfo Prieto places Saer’s narrative within the category of regionalism. Prieto, Adolfo. Literatura y subdesarrollo. Biblioteca, 1968 Subsequent critical works, however, have moved away from this definition.

The three terms zona, lugar y Lugar mark three different moments within Saer’s narrative. These three elements are evidence that Saer’s ensemble of texts has subjective transformations. Saer’s narrators find themselves in different subjective positions throughout his entire production.

In the first texts, starting with La zona (1960), Saer’s narrators are concerned with outlining fragments of reality as the context for the discussion of different themes, especially literature. In the second part of his production el lugar is the locus inside the individual from where the writer produces his texts. In Unidad de lugar (1967) this place is inside the narrator, it is a paradigm of the world that permeates the text. In the places of experience, the empirical, are constitutive of the models one imagines and produces in fiction. In that exceeds representation. As Gramuglio explains la zona in these texts does not outline geographic boundaries but more as a constellation of elements that constitute the experience in the world, “La experiencia de la “zona”, como punto de anclaje para una conciencia que funda el mundo, es, al mismo tiempo, el fundamento espacial de la escritura; la experiencia, la conciencia (o el recuerdo) de la experiencia, y, finalmente, la escritura misma con sus procedimientos, aparecen como una constelación en torno de la figura simbólica de la “zona”” (Gramuglio 340).

La mayor (1976) Liscano states there is no precise limit that defines what constitutes the coast, the city, the province; consequently it is impossible to define a region. Garay disagrees with his statement precisely because the zone has nothing to do with geographical determinations (Saer La mayor 137). This region that Garay will be missing when he finds himself in Europe is the place of experience, not a specific country where the narrator is born but a zone of perceptions and sensations that exceed representation. This non-geographical zone is well explained at the beginning of Las nubes in relation to the seasons, summer in particular has a set of characteristics that bring up sensations that transport the individual to a certain zone of experience.

The narrator writes always in relation to that zone of experience that has no reference to one specific event in the past but with the present encounter with that element that resists representation; this requires the narrator to experiment with language and narrative strategies. Narration then becomes the site where narration has an encounter with the real.

The third movement the narrator is neither concerned with a fragment of reality or experience, nor with the impossibility of making a recollection of the past. Lugar is the zone generated by writing, a fluid zone that produces movements, affects, becomings and subjective transformations. Riera explains Lugar is an inner image that occurs when literature is written in the regime called "without attributes." Without subject or object, the text is a block of sensations carved by the chisel of the letter; it is the effigy of the writer’s impersonal face and the sensible monument to his world. (Riera 25).

xlviii The biographical elements, for example, are like a solid foundation Saer’s narrators try to lay underground in order to establish a place of construction but this foundation has nothing to do with a structure the narration attempts to build. These biographical elements are the beginning of the narrator’s struggle with the page and the imperative of a realist account. Blanco discusses Saer’s narrative in relation to the representation of an elusive referent. She proposes Saer renders problematic the fragmentary and chaotic quality of perception and the complexity of constructing a narration based on a group of images recalled by an unreliable memory, “otra forma de connocicionar las certezas con respecto al referente consiste en exponer la precariedad del acto de recordar. Por un lado, toda
percepción es fragmentaria y caótica y sólo la subjetividad es capaz de inscribirle un orden, pero también puede ser al revés, ya que son inconceibibles las certezas sobre un proceso que implica una operación más compleja, la de conferirle a esas dudosas imágenes el orden del relato, arbitrario como toda cronología y configuración espacial” (Blanco 20). However, Las nubes has different concerns. The uneventful passing of time, the monotonous routine of daily life, and the past, are not irrelevant to narration. “El acontecer, que va desarrollándose en el tiempo, con la misma familiaridad extraña de las cosas que, en el instante mismo en que suceden, se esfumaron en ese lugar que nunca nadie visitó, y al que llamamos el pasado” (LN 99). Las nubes is concerned with a creative process that has no referent in the past. It uses the past as the stage for a process of subjective transformation in the present to take place. The moment the narrator undertakes the task of writing is when the story that concerns us begins, there is no referent before this moment. This is illustrated in the external layer, as mentioned before the event is the text and its beginning is located in that first page Pichón starts reading.

xlviii The objectivity and fidelity to verifiable facts is a semblance used by the narrator to authorize himself as the authorial voice, however, his own writing soon reveals it problematizes this assumed fidelity to the truth. The concept of truth in Saer goes beyond the pre-modern Thomas Aquina’s conception of “veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus” or homoiosis as the “likenessess” of things. Saer explains in El concepto de ficción that the concept of truth in both fictional and not fictional production has nothing to do with fictional elements, since the inclusion or rejection of fictional elements does not serve as criteria to define truth. “El rechazo escrupuloso de todo elemento ficticio no es un criterio de verdad… La exclusión de todo rastro ficticio no es de por sí garantía de veracidad… “Una proposición, por no ser ficticia, no es automáticamente verdadera” (Saer CF 10). This is an argument against Post-modern literature as it is represented by Eco’s El nombre de la Rosa. In Saer, post-freudian and post-heideggerian, truth is a heterogeneous excess and fiction is the privileged machine that can capture it. Furthermore, the presence of fabricated information serves in many cases to provide the text with a higher sense of verisimilitude. “La ficción no es, por lo tanto, una reivindicación de lo falso. Aun aquellas ficciones que incorporan lo falso de un modo deliberado ó fuentes falsas, atribuciones falsas, confusión de datos históricos con datos imaginarios, etcétera, lo hacen no para confundir al lector, sino para señalar el carácter doble de la ficción, que mezcla, de un modo inevitable, lo empírico y lo imaginario. La paradoja propia de la ficción reside en que, si recurre a lo falso, lo hace para aumentar su credibilidad. La masa fangosa de lo empírico y de lo imaginario, que otros tienen la ilusión de fraccionar a piacere en rebanadas de verdad y falsedad, no le deja, al autor de ficciones, más que una posibilidad: sumergirse en ella” (Saer CF 12). Writing evidences the fact that no matter how truth is approached, questioning its objective or subjective accuracy or appropriateness, is an uncertain and problematic concept and its definition presents heterogeneous elements. The writer must give up his pretense to know what constitutes reality and immerse himself in that grey area between veracity and falsehood and unassumingly offer his own personal treatment of the world. “En las grandes ficciones de nuestro tiempo, y quizás de todos los tiempos, está presente ese entrecruzamiento crítico entre verdad y falsedad, esa tensión íntima y decisiva, no exenta ni de comodidad ni de gravedad, como el orden central de todas ellas, a veces en tanto que tema explícito y a veces como fundamento implícito de su estructura. El fin de la ficción no es expedirse en ese conflicto sino hacer de él su materia, modelándola a su manera” (Saer CF 15).

xlix “La cruz del realismo: la coincidencia de texto y referente. La teoría de la prosa y la teoría de la novela se confunden: lo que se busca siempre cuando se la interroga es la coincidencia de texto y referente. En música, en artes plásticas, en poesía, la ausencia de referente es, por distintas razones, tolerada. La novela no goza de ese beneplácito: esta condenada a arrastrar La cruz del realismo. A decir verdad, nadie sabe de un modo claro que es el realismo, pero se exige de la novela que sea realista por la simple razón de que está escrita en prosa. Casi que me atrevería a definir el realismo como el procedimiento que encarna las funciones pragmáticas generalmente atribuidas a la prosa” (Saer La narración-objeto 58).

La tarea principal de todo narrador consiste, por lo tanto, en invalidarla con sus textos: La prosa no es el medio obligatorio para ello y, si la utiliza, el narrador debe tomarse la libertad de transgredir, cuando lo crea necesario, sus dictados. De la lucidez con que encare su tarea dependerá la persistencia y la renovación del problemático arte que practica” (Saer La narración-objeto 61).

1 Saer’s narrative literally explains it has no concern with the representation of the past by stating the irrelevance of dates, “suppose it’s October, October or November, let’s say in 1960 or 1961, October, maybe the fourteen or sixteenth, or the twenty-second or twenty-third maybe – the twenty-third of October in 1961 let’s say – what is the
Seasons, on the other hand, are fundamental in Saer’s narrative because they bring back certain sensations that momentarily cancel chronological definitions of time, “como decíamos, es siempre la misma, la única vez y, como dicen, de equinoccio en solsticio, en la misma, ¿no?, como decía, la llamamos una, porque nos parece que ha habido muchas, a causa de los cambios que nos parece, a los que damos nombres, percibir-, una mañana de primavera” (Glosa 14). “Pichón suele acodarse en la ventana del segundo piso que da a la calle callada y vacía, y mientras fuma cigarrillo tras cigarrillo, va auscultando, más que los detalles exteriores de la noche, las sensaciones que esos detalles despiertan en él, y que lo retrotraen al pasado, a su infancia sobre todo, por momentos de un modo tan intenso y claro que el tiempo parece abolido, a punto de inducirlo a pensar que muchas sensaciones que él ha creído siempre propias de un lugar, eran en realidad propias del verano” (LN 8)

Lacan explains this irruption of the Real in the case of judge Schreber: Here we have what appears to him at a high point in his existence, and not at all at a moment of deficit, in the form of an irruption in the Real of something that he has never known, a sudden emergence of a total strangeness that will progressively bring on a radical submersion of all his categories to the point of forcing him into a veritable reshaping of his world. (Lacan, The Psychoses 86).

Lacan also emphasized on the possibility of certain events evidencing the irruption of the Real even for non-psychotics and while one is awake. In Seminar III he relates it specifically to discourse that presents itself to us: The more foreign we are to what is at issue in this being, On the signifier in the real and the bellowing-miracle the more it has a tendency to present itself to us, accompanied by this pacifying expression that presents itself as indeterminate, lying on the border between the field of our motor autonomy and this something that is said to us from outside, this something through which the world borders on speaking to us. (Lacan, The Psychoses 138).

ii Las nubes is not a historical novel because it does not seek to represent any specific historical event in particular. Critical analyses on Juan José Saer’s production after 1980 frequently bring about the question of its relation to the historical novel. Following Seymour Menton’s definition of Latin America’s new historical novel, a substantial number of critics have aimed to define the determining and differentiating qualities of Saer’s fiction in relation to others within the genre. Seymour Menton includes El entenado and La ocasión in the chronology and briefly refers to them in his first chapter on the definition of the Latin American New Historical Novel.

Bermúdez Martínez, for example, includes Las nubes within the group of New Historical Novels: “Podemos decir que estructuras narrativas como la de El entenado, La ocasión a Las nubes se podrían sumar dentro de lo que se ha dado en llamar la «nueva novela histórica» que, privilegiando determinados instrumentos y mecanismos constructivos como la parodia y la intertextualidad, la ironía, el anacronismo o la multiplicidad de versiones y puntos de vista, pone el énfasis en el elemento ficcional y, consecuentemente, en las estrategias discursivas desplegadas en su configuración” (Bermúdez 12)

Bermúdez categorization of Las nubes as Nueva novela histórica ignores Saer’s discussion of the irrelevance of assigning definitions of truth to fiction. Saer explains in El concepto de ficción that the concept of truth in both fictional and not fictional production has nothing to do with fictional elements, since the inclusion or rejection of fictional elements does not serve as criteria to define truth, “el rechazo escrupuloso de todo elemento ficticio no es un criterio de verdad… La exclusión de todo rastro ficticio no es de por sí garantía de veracidad… Una proposición, por no ser ficcicia, no es automáticamente verdadera” (Saer CF 10). Saer’s narratives are not concerned with fictional mechanisms or an alternative representation of historical facts. Saer is against Post-modern literature as it is represented by Eco’s El nombre de la Rosa. Critical studies that locate Sear’s narrative within the category of “Historical Novel” find themselves confronted with the texts’ meta-discourse on the genre. The fictional texts, as well as the essays, state as a principle the epistemological impossibility of writing a historical novel. In El concepto de ficción Saer explained how what we refer as historical novels is in reality the reconstruction of a vision of the past and not the past itself “No hay, en rigor de verdad, novelas históricas, tal como se entiende la novela cuya acción transcurre en el pasado y que intenta reconstruir una época determinada… No se reconstruye el pasado sino que simplemente se construye una visión del pasado, cierta imagen o idea del pasado que es propia del observador y que no corresponde a ningún hecho histórico preciso” (CF 45).Las nubes is no exception to this meta-literary argument. The narrative machine uses an already
familiar device in Saer’s work, the retelling of a past conversation, in this case Tomatis and Soldi, in order to postulate the inaccessibility of the past and the futility of its recollection. Soldi refers to one of the most important premises of the text, the universal nature of every narration. This universality implies neither an organic structural component inherent to all humanity, nor the conception of a circular history that copies itself over and over again. This universality relates specifically to the narration’s challenge of creating a world that could take place in any place and at any time. This plausibility in different contexts does not entail a common denominator in all locations but the idea of an independent cosmos in every narration that could have occurred anywhere but that does not seek to represent any specific occurrence in the past. Tomatis includes any text that might be considered a historical document: “Tomatis afirma que no se trata de un documento auténtico sino de un texto de ficción. Pero yo digo, pensándolo bien, ¿qué otra cosa son los Anales, la Memoria sobre el calor de Lavoisier, el Código Napoléon, las muchedumbres, las ciudades, los soles, el universo?” (14)

Melancholy stands for the presence of the object itself deprived of the desire for it: “[t]he drama of Hamlet as the man who has lost the way of his desire…Ophelia's place in this constellation is on the level of the letter a as it appears in our representation of the fantasy” (Lacan Hamlet 13). “[w]hat is taking place here is the destruction and loss of the object. For the subject the object appears, if I may put it this way, on the outside. The subject is no longer the object: he rejects it with all the force of his being and will not find it again until he sacrifices himself. It is in this sense that the object is here the equivalent of, assumes the place of, indeed is-the phallus. This is the second stage in the relationship of the subject to the object. Ophelia is at this point the phallus, exteriorized and rejected by the subject as a symbol signifying life” (Lacan Hamlet 23). There is a level in the subject on which it can be said that his fate is expressed in terms of a pure signifier, a level at which he is merely the reverse side of a message that is not even his own. Well, Hamlet is the very image of this level of subjectivity, as we shall see even more clearly in what follows. Our first step in this direction was to express the extent to which the play is dominated by the Mother as Other [Autre], i.e., the primordial subject of the demand [la demande]… This desire, of the mother, is essentially manifested in the fact that, confronted on one hand with an eminent, idealized, exalted object- his father- and on the other with the degraded, despicable object Claudius, the criminal and adulterous brother, Hamlet does not choose. (Lacan Hamlet 12)

When Premat refers to Saer’s narrative structure according to the Novela familiar, “desde el punto de la novela familiar, que elimina al padre o a la pareja parental de las construcciones ficcionales a fin de darle cabida a deseos incompatibles con la realidad,” (Premat 55) he is referring to Freud’s term the neurotic’s ‘family romance” “[a]s intellectual growth increases, the child cannot help discovering by degrees the category to which his parents belong. He gets to know other parents and compares them with his own, and so acquires the right to doubt the incomparable and unique quality which he had attributed to them. Small events in the child’s life which make him feel dissatisfied afford him provocation for beginning to criticize his parents, and for using, in order to support his critical attitude, the knowledge which he has acquired that other parents are in some respects preferable to them. The psychology of the neuroses teaches us that, among other factors, the most intense impulses of sexual rivalry contribute to this result. A feeling of being slighted is obviously what constitutes the subject-matter of such provocations. There are only too many occasions on which a child is slighted, or at least feels he has been slighted, on which he feels he is not receiving the whole of his parents’ love, and, most of all, on which he feels regrets at having to share it with brothers…His sense that his own affection is not being fully reciprocated then finds a vent in the idea, often consciously recollected later from early childhood, of being a step-child or an adopted child…The later stage in the development of the neurotic's estrangement from his parents, begun in this manner, might be described as ‘the neurotic's family romance’… The child's imagination becomes engaged in the task of getting free from the parents of whom he now has a low opinion and of replacing them by others, who, as a rule, are of higher social standing”(Freud 236).

Kristeva theorizes an interrelationship among the concepts of the semiotic, abjection, poetic language, and jouissance that goes beyond universal definitions of Oedipal determinations into analysis of the relationship of language and social subjectification. The presymbolic is related to the mother in the sense that is a previous state before the symbolic definition of an identity that separates the subject from the object, this state is prior and outside stratification. The return to the presymbolic does not imply a regression but a line of flight from the ordinary process of normative subjectivity. The positive sign of this line of flight is precisely the possibility of alternative modes of existence. Kristeva observes in art and poetic language the evidence of an element of jouissance in abjection, “One does not know it, one does not desire it, one joys in it” (Powers 9). Immersion, diving into the presymbolic is the
subjective strategy to confront the abject. Kristeva calls this immersion an aesthetic experience, a poetic catharsis “an impure process that protects from the abject only by dint of being immersed in it” (Powers 29). Poetic language is “not a language of the desiring exchange of messages or objects that are transmitted in a social contract of communication and desire beyond want, but a language of want, of the fear that edges up to it and runs along its edges” (Powers 38). Poetic language evidences the immersion into the presymbolic implies more than a return to the mother and a rejection of the law but the immersion and enjoyment within the libido.