THE DEMISE OF THE PICARESQUE: DIVIDUAL NARRATIVES OF THE NEOLIBERAL MARKETPLACE IN BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA (1881-2000)

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ABSTRACT

The Demise of the Picaresque: Dividual Narratives of the Neoliberal Marketplace in Brazil and Argentina (1881-2000) examines the connections between economics, Jewish conversos (or new Christians), mechanisms of desire, and literature from a transatlantic and Luso-Hispanic perspective. Taking as a point of reference the Iberian Golden Age (16th and 17th centuries) and the influential figure of the pícaro from the picaresque novels of the time —a roguish figure living in the margins of society— this project questions the nature, conditions, and problems of renowned writers living in Golden Age times, only to interrogate the reenacting of this genre in Latin America centuries later by way of two Brazilian and two Argentine authors. In so doing, this study announces a post-picaresque aesthetic that formally hearkens back to the rogues of old while establishing a new paradigm from which to observe the neoliberal subject in the information age.

DEDICATION

To my parents, María del Carmen Llarás Usón and José María Raso Baldellou,

for their patience and support

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: LITERATURE AND THE DIVIDUAL IN THE INFORMATION AGE

The destabilization of the concept of literature, arising partly from the loss of its cultural capital, has forced literary studies to become integrated into media studies. Contemporary literary criticism bears witness to literature's exodus into this growing field. In his book *Anti-Literature*, where he agrees with the Brazilian Concrete poets, Adam J. Shellhorse argues against a strictly traditional definition of literature, opting instead for a more antithetical and bold understanding of how this modality of language operates. Anti-literature to him is "a multidisciplinary, minoritarian, and multimedia "body" of writing that produces affects and new modes of perception." In his view, there is "a need to create a new typology of the text and methodology of reading that understand literary form as verbal, vocal, and visual complex of perception that structurally dialogues with other media and marginalized social groups" (15). Erin Graff Zivin, however, in following Parisian philosopher Jacques Rancière, posits the notion of literature as misreading while acknowledging that we live "in an ostensibly "postliterary" epoch" (*Anarcheologies* 11). She then proceeds to agree with fellow Latin Americanist Patrick Dove when she states that "we have reached the limits of certain aesthetic, ethical and political concepts" such as "sovereignty, subjectivity, autonomy" and offers "a reading practice that would guard and unsettle the most radically ethico-political demands of literature" (11). In other words, she does not necessarily question the end of literature as a dominant motif in Latin American Studies. Instead, the reader encounters an intellectual analysis that acknowledges, either with some degree of acceptance or

resignation, literature's lessening of cultural preeminence in the media sphere. In *Literature and Media: After 1989* (2020), Maryla Hopfinger echoes Shellhorse's words about anti-literature regarding contemporary culture:

> Language opens [the] horizons of our cognition and imposes restrictions on it. In the audiovisual type of culture, language is not replaced by an image, although the function of the latter in the domain of constructing (. . .) meanings has been strengthened; it not only presents, but it also *means* – as (. . .) was claimed by abstractionists and surrealists as early as in the first decades of the twentieth century. In today's type of culture, the leading position is taken not by an image as such, but by *verbal-pictorial and audiovisual forms using both an image and a word* [italics are mine]" (Hopfinger 25)

Maryla Hopfinger sees literature as a beacon of innovation, even if only because of language's capacity for meaning-making. She also recalls the "classic goal of literature (. . .) to develop a new language", to question "conventional habits of readers," and to violate "their stereotypical expectations" (43). However, she does concede that literature "as a domain of culture (. . .) establishes a certain unified entity, for which the audiovisual type of culture has become the context" (45). Meanwhile, Sarah J. Paulson and Anders Skare Malvik remind us that "the phenomena that people refer to as literature are characterized by the creative manipulation of signs, and by the production and manipulation of affects." To further defend the modality of language that is literature, they add that "it is hardly controversial to claim that the writing and reading of literature produce all kinds of author and reader subjectivities" (10). They believe that "how we write, and what we read, reflects who we (think we) are as individuals in society" (10). As a way of preserving the specificity of literature, they also attest to literature's suitability for "conveying the historical, social, and political specificity of human

experience," and they argue that *intermediality*[1] is in itself not specific "to some post-millennial "Zeitgeist." On the contrary, "Homer's Iliad and Odyssey are, for instance, indisputably rich with intermedial references to both music and visual artwork" (Paulson et al. 15).

Continuing with the theme of literature amid the vast realm of new media, these same authors identify three perspectives from which to examine literature in contemporary media culture: **technology**, which "involves the development of the computer into a universal media machine"; **subjectivity**, about "how advanced capitalism facilitates the production, distribution, and consumption of selves through media systems"; and **aesthetics**, concerning "the sensible topography of intermedial expression that we encounter every day" (6). The three key characteristics that they identify regarding literature amidst new media jibe well with the topic of this dissertation. The different narratives deal with the nature of subjectivity at their core, and they look to question readers' commonsensical approach to reality in a way that I promote as a post-picaresque aesthetic. Finally, the effects of neoliberal policies starting in the 70s, and the exponential growth of information technology after WWII, helped me contextualize and historicize my reading of the novels from the vantage point of the twenty-first century. More concretely, both technological transformations leading up to new media and the stories I study in this project participate in what Stefan Kjerkegaard regards as the

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[1] Irina O. Rajewski defines intermediality in the following manner: "Intermediality is a wide-ranging concept that covers medial transposition or transformation (such as film or stage adaptations of literary texts); media combination, otherwise known as inter-art, multimedia or mixed media forms (such as opera, film, computer or Sound Art installations, comics); or intermedial references (such as references in a literary text to a specific film, film genre or "film qua medium", that is, filmic writing)." (Rajewsky 57)

entrenched "relationship between *mediatization* and the autobiographical" (Paulson et al. 129). Knut Lundby even further claims that media-saturated societies have entered an era that overshadows the Webberian rationalization of the World.[2] This timeline allows him to describe this second modernity as world mediatization, where "social interaction 'offline' merges with social interaction online." To him, "media environments and mediated communication are part of the contemporary high modern condition" (2). Kjerkegaard's insight, though, relates to how new media has shaped the current "idea of the self" as well as facilitated our desire for self-fashioning in new ways" (130). In fact, he says, "We can now create ourselves prospectively rather than just retrospectively." Our life can easily be "a story consisting of endless updates as the thread." From this perspective, "mediatization has certainly demonstrated (. . .) that the individual can be divided" (131). In conclusion, Kjerkegaard affirms that "the cultural system that literature represents has changed as a result of mediatization," and that recent novels make use of "autobiographical and self-fashioning material" (131) to get literature to intervene and to negotiate its (fictional) status with readers. This trend that Kjerkegaard perceives cannot apply to the novels herein examined —the most recent one was published in the year 2000— but the first-person narration as much as the interpellation to the reader in all four novels —to various degrees— confirm the need for mediality, and thus probably recognition, that all those writers, now deceased, craved.

Many historical examples of literature are becoming enmeshed in other, more strictly defined types of writing, such as philosophy, legal texts, opinion pieces in a

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[2] Sociologist Max Weber's theory of rationalization argues that modern, industrial society increasingly organizes around means-to-an-end rationality.

newspaper, etc. However, technology has become such a staple in daily life that it is no longer possible to turn our heads away from this paradigm shift. In media studies, Friedrich Kittler did not shy away from bold pronouncements:

> The general digitization of channels and information erases the differences among individual media. Sound and image, voice[,] and text are reduced to surface effects, known to consumers as interface. Sense and the senses turn into eyewash. Their media-produced glamor will survive for an interim as a by-product of strategic programs. Inside the computers themselves, everything becomes a number: quantity without image, sound, or voice. [Moreover,] once optical fiber networks turn formerly distinct data flows into a standardized series of digitized numbers[,] any medium can be translated into any other. With numbers, everything goes. Modulation, transformation, synchronization; delay, storage, transposition; scrambling, scanning, [and] mappings total media link[s] on a digital base will erase the very concept of medium. Instead of wiring people and technologies, absolute knowledge will run as an endless loop (2)

Partly following this media theorist's words, the current attention economy[3] has prompted a steady decrease in reading rates and ability in the last few years[4] (measured based on fast comprehension skills of reading material). Nevertheless, despite this fact, and in an instinctive idealist move of resistance, many still defend the merit of spending time alone taking stock of stories that are not our own, places that cannot be seen with our eyes, and characters we will never meet.

As Brett Levinson argues in *The Ends of Literature*, "culture, economics, and political action shape the market, (. . .) but only the market's appropriation of knowledge can *guarantee* the market, cast it as the inevitable and natural ground. The dream of the

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[3] I owe this expression to French scholar Yves Citton, who was heavily influenced by sociologist Gabriel Tarde and his book *Economic Psychology* (1902-3). Maurizio Lazzarato, an Italian sociologist I draw from in this dissertation, has also mentioned his indebtedness to him.

[4] See the article from The New York Times about the effects of the pandemic on kids' ability to read: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/08/us/pandemic-schools-reading-crisis.html

market —and its most obvious agent, *information technology* [italics mine]— is a total sense that arrives before it is processed (circulation without circulation time), hence does not require communication, interpretation, or even costly propaganda" (29). In so doing, the neoliberal market and information technology reduce the process to quantification and discreet measures, either in money or bits. Brett Levinson's response to this assault on experiential time [Erlebnis] over what concerns Latin American Studies is as follows:

> The Latin American consenso liberal (. . .) hinges on the total eradication of both language and knowledge, hence also of the literary that exposes *that there is language*: an erasure whose emergence the "it goes without saying" evokes. The only topos as marketable, as *aesthetically pleasing*, as literature is the end of literature since the end of literature is the market's telos. This is not to suggest that the recovery or revaluation of literature, in Latin America or anywhere else, will function as the means to resist the market (. . .) The time today is that of the closure of literature, one that demands an *insistence upon* the closure, especially in these days of the open market, and especially since literature itself is this closure's mark (Levinson 29-30)

In Brett Levinson's work, language leaves open the opportunity for a constant addendum to what is given, even –or precisely– if this givenness is the topic of the end of literature itself, and he predicates this continuation on the inability of language to have a final word. He avers that "the limit of literature is its calling, meaning that the closure of literature cannot be but the demand for and opening to more literature" (30). Even if it does not forget the literary and its textuality, this dissertation's objective concerns the interaction between the written word and its recipient, with the interplay between ideas and affective reactions to the reading. Perceived as a composite, literature is an event that immerses a body in psychological time [Bergsonian durée] and its avatars. In this dissertation, literature becomes mediatic through its appeal to the senses, thus opening up experience beyond the materiality of the page. I intend to show how the characters of each novel are affected by their encounters with others and their surroundings. By way of

the charismatic appeal of a first-person narrator, the different stories aim to poke their readership and bring them close to the action or thought process with or without breaking the fourth wall. My task is to demonstrate that these novels eventually provoke readers to inform their sensibility. By this, I do not mean to study literary reception using data and statistics, a hypothesis and parameters, or even a corpus zeroing in on select words that can support claims for a definite interpretation. Instead, I foreground the semiotic richness of the text to showcase how the writer deftly structures the narration and ultimately elicits an emotional reaction in the reader.

To structure the overall thesis, a **post-picaresque aesthetic** will establish an ideological connection between the picaresque of the Spanish Golden Age and the Latin American novels at hand. Moreover, it will elucidate the writers' motivation for crafting these specific novels under a new banner that recalls the picaresque yet substantially differs from it. **Information technology** and **neoliberalism** will frame the argument from a historical perspective since three out of four featured novels were written after their influence had reached society and already informed subjectivity. In the case of the former, the attendees of the Macy conferences in the 40s and 50s envisioned managing the human animal from the perspective of decentralized control. While the latter started in Central Europe with the likes of the Geneva School and the Mont Pelèrin Society, it was not consolidated policy-wise until the Pinochet coup in Chile in the early 70s under the auspice of the Chicago School of Economics, the CIA, and Henry Kissinger. Finally, and in line with the digital era we live in, the **dividual** is a concept operating in stark opposition to the individual. It represents a bold statement on the mediatic and

spatiotemporal nature of reading and a more accurate definition of what it means to be human amidst information theory and techno-culture in control societies.

For this reason, the chapters and layout of this dissertation will have a coming and going from literature to theory. The second chapter on Machado de Assis will introduce the historical underpinnings of the dissertation regarding the picaresque and its dark demise. The third and fourth will flesh out the concept of the dividual through Clarice Lispector and Juan José Saer. Finally, in the fifth chapter, Sergio Chejfec's creative work will address the dividual's predicament in leaving the enclosed space of the former disciplinary societies.

In the last few decades, and the context of Latin American studies, literature has played the role of defender of the working class against corrosive privatization on the part of different governments that conform to the Latin American region of the world. The concept that has been thrown around the most in this respect has been *multitude*, advanced some years ago by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. In their work, they intimate that a collective force with an intense capacity for political change would rise in a seemingly spontaneous manner against injustice, as described here:

> The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity—different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and a different desire. The multitude is a multiplicity of all these singular differences. The masses are also contrasted with the people because they[,] too cannot be reduced to a unity or an identity. The masses (. . .) are composed of all types and sorts, but (. . .) one should not say that different social subjects make up the masses. The essence of the masses is indifference: all differences are submerged and drowned in the masses. All the colors of the population fade to gray. These masses are able to move in unison only because they form an indistinct, uniform conglomerate. In the multitude, social differences remain different. The multitude is many-colored, like Joseph's magical coat. Thus, the challenge posed by the concept of multitude is for a social

> multiplicity to manage to communicate and act in common while remaining internally different (*Multitude* 13-14)

The authors aim to distinguish their newly coined term from that of the *working class*, *masses*, or *people*. In their view, this idealistic term supersedes all those previous revolutionary terms. It becomes applicable to the post-truth era for its diversity and extreme difficulty in its cooptation by a corporate and profit-based mindset. The authors claim their philosophical term can "be capable of forming society autonomously" (Hardt and Negri 21). Even if I do not share their need for this skewed concept, I also endeavor to map out an affective potential in these Latin American novels —their multitude— in a historical, regionally bound, and aesthetically appropriate way. What I mean by the affective potential in these novels is, on the one hand, the first-person narrators' desire to have their version of events prevail and, on the other, the intensity with which they record those events. Hence, their stories carry sufficient weight against any possible contestation.

In Chapter 2, Brás Cubas sardonically proposes a biographical version of himself that aims to settle the score on the entirety of his life. In Chapter 3, the former rogue in *El entenado* [*The Witness*] also writes down the significant events in his life with the Colastiné Indians and the Renaissance Spaniards. In Chapter 4, the storyteller in *A hora da estrela* [*The Hour of the Star*] claims to be bound to the main character in the novella, Macabéa, as he argues to be changing old habits to do his character justice. Finally, in Chapter 5, the professional writer in *Boca de lobo* [*The Dark*] uses the novel as a form of expiation from guilt vis-à-vis a fleeting relationship with a female industrial worker that he leaves pregnant and later abandons. In this dissertation, these subjective positionalities are analyzed all along, considering the affective states accompanying the narrators' ideas.

Consequently, the ideas that they defend carry the vigor that persuasion necessitates and an appeal to the public present at the imaginary court that will decide their fate. In this context, the term affect-ideas[5] will arise, as a reminder of the double effort, either through logic, humor, the cadence of the narrative, or other such strategies, to charm the reader into aligning with their point of view.

In the context of this study, I center first on Brazil in the late stages of the nineteenth century with Joachim Maria Machado de Assis, focusing both on the multifarious influences on his writing style, as well as in the manner that he channeled racism in his own life and through his literary creations. The issue of gender will come about with the other Brazilian writer I chose to explore in this dissertation, Clarice Lispector, along with theorists from the second wave of feminism in the mid to late twentieth century, such as Julia Kristeva, Toril Moi, or Hélène Cixous, Clarice Lispector

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[5] A recurrent theme in this dissertation is the imbrication of literature and philosophy. The first explores the vast diversity of forms of life and the nuance characterizing external reality, whereas the latter posits concepts that can encapsulate blocs of memories, comportments, the nature of cognition, and more. Philosophy receives data from literary works to define and become more aware of the unknown, seeking wonder to gain knowledge. Concerning affect ideas, I equate them with what Spinoza calls "inadequate knowledge" (24) because they rely on imagination. Later, Deleuze used the expression "idées-affections" (Deleuze, Sur Spinoza, 1/24/1978) or affection-ideas in his Vincennes courses in the 70s and 80s, for which we only have an audio format and a transcription into English. In this course, he connects subjectivity to desire, passions, and how bodies are affected by internal processes and the external world. He also addresses the difference between affection (unconscious bodily signs or external signs that are not perceivable) and affect (the transition from the unconscious to the conscious arrangement of signs in mind). In this dissertation, I tend to disregard the distinction unless I wish to point out that a character misses or cannot grasp an element of reality in the featured novels that an adept reader or the narrator can (e.g., Macabéa in Chapter 4). I will repeatedly define the picaresque or post-picaresque rogue as an adventurer of affect ideas or experience-based learning because these characters carry with them a dense literary tradition of thought and action from the times of the trickster and orality, as I explain in this Introduction, while also experiencing no weariness as a result of their adventures. I then question this robust and powerful aesthetic and articulate its limitations based on Spinoza's inadequate knowledge. I then foreground dividuality as a substitute that can push beyond the limits of roguishness.

laid out in her body of writing the inability of most women to be the owners of their bodies, to make decisions for themselves, and the terror that freedom from those gendered shackles can inspire. Moving on to the Southern cone, I explore an author who, not unlike many of his generation, moved to France to make a living. This writer from Santa Fe, Juan José Saer, was a prolific Argentine writer. He is now best known for his essays about the nature of creative writing and his exploration of the human psyche in his noir novel *La pesquisa* (1984). However, to not lose sight of the American Indian past (and present) of the region, the focus for this third chapter lies in Saer's colonial tale of an encounter between a cabin boy and the Colastiné Indians. Mostly a fictional story with vague references to a doomed expedition to Rio de la Plata, Argentina, by Juan Diaz de Solís and his men in 1516, this novel affords a deep analysis of the tensions arising between the individual and the community, the nature of time, and the intricate weaving of syntax as an intrinsic element of the narrative plot. Lastly, the dissertation examines a contemporary novelist whose work is indebted to Saer's, Sergio Chejfec. In this fifth chapter, the novella *Boca de lobo* (2000) establishes a relationship between the creative work that constitutes writing and the factory worker's manual work. It likewise features the advancements in modern technology and the becoming-superfluous of humanity with the advent of automation and the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism.

These stories differ dramatically, so I do not purport to create an ultimate thread that connects the abolitionist movement in Brazil to women's liberation, to automation, or the history of modern colonialism, but to account for how the main characters in each of these first-person narratives deal with the challenges that a particular civilization imposes on them and with the kind of post-picaresque strategy they implement as a

result. This essay's motivation and thrust boils down to studying the different post-picaresque strategies of either resistance (Chapters 3 and 4) or compliance (Chapters 2 and 5) that the roguish characters will present in these Latin American narratives. I will then be able to reconfigure the former tension between the individual and the community around the novel concept of the dividual, which contains an inherent ambiguity like the roguish figure that inspired this dissertation. The dividual either signifies a new subject under control societies foregrounded by information technology or an ontological concept that can carve out a theoretical space of liberation from the valorization process that capitalist machinations instigate. By ontological, as I will disclose in Chapter 3, I mean to hearken back to the writings of Medieval theologist Gilbert de Poitiers about the nature of being. With the help of this author and art theorist Gerald Raunig (who was in turn heavily influenced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari), I will propose the dividual as a philosophical concept beyond roguery that counters the narrative of neoliberal economics and the subjectivity that this ideology fosters.

Akin to the issues of literature, the dividual and their bodily affects, and aesthetics of resistance against capitalist totalization is the question of identity. A significant aspect that occupies literature as a vehicle for the communication of ideas and the pedagogy inherent to their expression is character formation or dramatis personae. Insofar as life is a process of dramatization, characters, either on a stage or solely in the pages of a book, fulfill their dramatic roles, with either tragedy giving way to a resolution to the drama or humor to make the drama more palatable and less irksome to a subject's sensibility. In the different chapters of this book, the slave landowner Brás Cubas, the alter ego Rodrigo S.M., the nameless cabin boy, and a writer reminiscing about a past event observe their

behavior from apparent detachment and self-awareness. In a persuasive style, the narrative voices seek to present their point of view as truthful, and sometimes in a justificatory manner, they betray the adoption of a defensive stance to the outside world. Their motivation usually runs parallel to their belief in the power and insufficiency of language, in their need to express themselves about what they saw or perceived, in their actions or attitudes toward day-to-day living, or even in how to carry out the act of writing. In all these narrative iterations, the characters take on the responsibility of an *authorial voice* that seeks to disguise itself and camouflage behind the narrator's writing panache. Maurice Blanchot already spoke of this vertigo around the blank page that writers confront as part of their craft:

> In the work, the artist protects himself against the world and the requirement that draws him out of the world. The work momentarily domesticates this "outside" by restoring intimacy to it. The work silences and gives the intimacy of silence to this outside bereft of intimacy and repose – this outside, this language of the original experience. (53)

If the act of living itself constitutes this uncoded outside about which Maurice Blanchot speaks, the writing process could have a therapeutic anchorage since it intends to restrain the many forces that overwhelm the artist. Their first-person narrators then have the task of containing this outside for the author with a coherent and consistent voice that justifies a vision of the world. The post-picaresque gesture this defensive stance and justification performs entails forgetting the remainder of their perspective. Moreover, the narrators' allure to the reader consists of their ability to achieve a coherent story that would discard the need for a polyphony of voices and subjective processes. This engrossing characteristic of the I-voice signifies a carryover from the legal origins of the

picaresque, that is, the autos-da-fé read to heretics during the Reconquista period in the Iberian Peninsula, which I will now analyze.

Individual vs. Society: The Courtroom as Metaphor

The narrators from all four novels wrestle with their past and present actions, presenting them in such a light to expose them to the reader's scrutiny. They endeavor to lure the average book enjoyer with an attestation of their life, bringing those facts to bear for the tribunal composed by their readership. Preemptively in some cases, they wish to write about themselves as if their honor, name, and reputation were at stake and as if they had decided it was time to put pen to paper. This initiative portends a fight for the account's veracity; as a result, the characters enter a terrain fraught with innumerable versions of themselves and their affairs. To juggle the complexity of the circumstances they are privy to, human language and its ability to move and recreate space and time surfaces as their ally. Moreover, their speaking out on their ailments characterizes them as defense attorneys ready to exonerate themselves from shame or guilt or as a means for divesting themselves from a past far too present for their liking.

The courtroom is a site of strife where a confrontational mindset upon accountability and event reconstruction becomes prominent. This dissertation, while not dealing *stricto sensu* with juridical matters, considers the struggle between the individual and society, or the needs and desires of bodies against the repressive nature of power [pouvoir],[6] and it explores their manifestation in every one of the chapters. In the case of

[6] I will distinguish between two different terms for power in French: *pouvoir* and *puissance*. The former will refer to how control over the population is carried out through institutions and governmental laws. At the same time, the latter considers the body's power to act

Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas, the locus of interest rests on the apparent lack of dissension or disagreement in the societal structure, which spurs a thorough questioning of the narrator, who sustains his wealth on unfree labor and whose musings appear divorced from his landowning class status in the late stages of the Brazilian empire. Moving forward, and with *A hora da estrela*'s narrator, Rodrigo S.M., the metanarrative comments regarding the fascination for his character, Macabéa, culminate with a necessary indictment of his own persona prior to writing the story, as this excerpt demonstrates: "A ação desta história terá como resultado minha transfiguração em outrem e minha materialização enfim em objeto. Sim, e talvez alcance a flauta doce em que eu me enovelarei em macio cipó" (*A hora da estrela* 33) (The action of this story will end up with my transfiguration into somebody else and my materialization finally as an object. Yes, and it might even reach the sweet flute around which I will entwine myself like a supple liana) (*The Hour of the Star* 28). Among other things, Rodrigo S.M. promises to stop practicing activities detrimental to his connection to Macabéa, the young orphan from the northeast of Brazil that occupies his mind.

In litigation, as in the art of persuasion and oratory for the ancient Greeks and Romans, the use of language to inculpate, exculpate, and in other ways convince another party about a particular issue is present in the Brazilian novella *A hora da estrela*. The narrator, created by the writer Clarice Lispector, acts as a self-questioning alter ego that merges with the novel while bypassing any attempt at objectivity concerning Macabéa

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and improve one's capacity for joy to achieve a better form of life. Moreover, *pouvoir* deals with morality, while *puissance* establishes human ethics as a contingent behavioral production and reassessment rather than a given set of rules. In Chapter 3, I liken this term difference distinctly when I broach the concept of freedom via Isaiah Berlin's notion of positive and negative freedom.

and her life story. Rodrigo becomes emotionally involved with the character as he breaks the fourth wall; that is, he engages the reader in frequent metaliterary asides and pauses in the narration. Moving forward to the cabin's boy account of his time around the Colastiné Indians, and later with his fellow Spaniards after he comes back from the Americas, the lucid memory of an older man transferring to the written word the many adventures of his youth owe a tribute to the art of storytelling itself and to the importance of what we nowadays call the discipline of anthropology. A possible summary of *El entenado* (1974) presents the story as an anthropological paper on the mores and customs of the Colastiné Indian tribe and, later, the culture of his Iberian youth seen from the perspective of a new foreigner. Saer's intention might not have been to convince the readership about the truthfulness of the events he would see and experience. However, as do the other two narrators, the cabin boy reproduces an experiential vision of the world that is distinctively his and his alone, contributing to the intimate tenor of the first-person narration all these novels have in common. Lastly, the narrative voice that Sergio Chejfec fabricates in *Boca de lobo* (2000), while not that of an omniscient narrator, tells the story of his infatuation with a factory worker some years after the relationship has ended, so the story deals rhetorically with memory and confession. All along, a self-justificatory and explanatory tone pervades the text.

The confessional currency espoused by the narrators sits at the forefront of the historical backdrop of this work since I chose to describe their post-picaresque sensibility as an aesthetic remnant from the practice of autos-da-fé, commonly defined as a "ritual of public penance carried out between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries of condemned heretics and apostates imposed by the Spanish, Portuguese, or Mexican Inquisition as

punishment and enforced by civil authorities" ("Auto-da-fé"). Autos-da-fé aimed to root out Muslim and Jewish creeds from the Iberian Peninsula as the new Spanish nation-state set to pursue a more homogenously Christian country. Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon's marriage symbolized the start of the Spanish empire, which did not have a place for those who were not old Christians. Hence, the Inquisition began the prosecution of dissenters to the new regime, including those who had falsely converted to the religion of the state. Amid this momentous event in the Hispanic world, which also set up the first recorded voyages to the Americas from the European continent, some among the *conversos*[7] or crypto-Jews wrote novels under pseudonyms or simply anonymously. While unproven to date, Miguel de Cervantes himself, the foremost writer in the history of the Spanish language, could have been one of them, as would potentially be the case with the unknown author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and doubtlessly Fernando de Rojas, the author of la *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (1499), popularized as *La Celestina*.[8]

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[7] See footnote 8 for a discussion about the ethnic and historical underpinnings of the picaresque as a literary genre or event spearheaded by cristianos nuevos (new Christians) or conversos (converted to Christianity from Judaism).

[8] In the book *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (1995), Norman Roth makes mention of two important figures of fifteenth-century Spain, the converso politician Fernando Díaz de Toledo, known for his stance against the limpieza de sangre [cleanliness of blood] laws, and the bishop from Castile Lope de Barrientos, who also wrote "a profound defense of the conversos" (90). These two list major converso families[,] and Cervantes is among them. Roth does add, though, that "there was more than one Cervantes family" and that "the converso origin of the famous author of Don Quijote is still debated" (95). Daniel Eisemberg, though, another Cervantes scholar, gave a talk at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he concluded Cervantes forcefully had to have been converso: "Don Quijote, símbolo español, es, como Cervantes, cristiano nuevo, descendiente de judíos. Es una más de las oposiciones entre los dos personajes principales de la obra. Sancho es gordo, Don Quijote flaco; Sancho está casado y don Quijote soltero; Sancho es codicioso y don Quijote liberal; Sancho es cobarde y Don Quijote valiente. De la misma manera, Sancho es cristiano viejo y Don Quijote cristiano nuevo." (12)

In *The Spanish Picaresque Novel and the Point of View* (1984), the Spanish literary critic Fernando Rico concludes that both *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599) manage to create a new genre, and he describes the way these novels achieve it. These stories use the first-person narrative and invite the reader to understand the constructed reality within the novel from the point of view of an insignificant character. These picaresque formal features propel a sense of sympathy for the rogue (Rico par. 13). *Lazarillo de Tormes* is almost unanimously considered the first modern novel among historians of literature (Rico, Maravall, and others),[9] that is, a story that spearheads the study of the picaresque as a genre, laying out the characteristics for which it became a staple of world literature: an orphan writing in a first-person narrative, a rags-to-riches story, and a dynamic and adventurous tale that recounts the many obstacles and financial difficulties plaguing the main character. More than anything, it highlights the ties between this new mode of fictional communication and the growing Spanish state in the sixteenth century. As Roberto González Echevarría emphasizes, "legal writing (. . .) permeated the writing of history, sustained the idea of Empire, and was instrumental in the creation of the Picaresque." Hence, "to write [in the Spanish Golden Age] was a form of enfranchisement, of legitimation. The picaro, the chronicler, and (. . .) the whole New World, seek enfranchisement and a validation of their existence through the writing of their stories" (*Myth and Archive* 45-6). As Spaniards established their colonial *encomienda* system over most of the New World, managing an increasingly significant state necessitated a more extensive bureaucratic system.

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[9] See José Antonio Maravall's La novela picaresca desde la historia social (1986) or Francisco Rico's La novela picaresca y el punto de vista (1970).

Similarly, the first-person narrators serve as avatars of a post-picaresque aesthetic as they remember and rekindle a courtroom version of this historical event while basing their intervention on a claim to experiential knowledge and truthfulness. In formal terms, by the post-picaresque aesthetic, I refer to the unreliable narration, the conscious playfulness, and the artificiality of the language used throughout, let alone the non-belonging of the narrators to the working class on a material plane, which separates these narratives from Early modern situations and sensibilities. Moreover, this post-picaresque aesthetic occurs in lockstep with literature's reaction to its enclosure in media studies and its losing fight in the attention economy but, more specifically, to how the characters react to the technological and economic developments in the world stage accelerated after World War II. These changes, which come in the form of technological advancement via tech start-ups, blockchain, and the digitalization and automation of the economy, point to a new concept that inhabits a vector in a network as a dividual rather than an individual. My interest in these novels concerns the characters' subjectivity, or even consciousness, whose behavior ensues from the 70s Zeitgeist, a decade when the neoliberal and cybernetic programs started to influence reality. Furthermore, I attempt to discuss through these stories and their protagonists the possibility of shaping an autonomous literary space, different from what the picaresque writers would perform in Early modern Spain. This literary space articulates the unfreedom inherent to state apparatuses of control and the repressive forces to nascent subjectivities.

The turnaround in the Latin American novels studied in this dissertation arises from a position of relative control and authority that the narrators are aware of and exploit to their benefit. In returning to the confession motif, these narrators, whether

Rodrigo S.M., the cabin boy, the nameless bourgeois writer, or the Brazilian landowner Brás Cubas, use the first-person device to persuade us that their point of view needs to be validated and accepted as truthful, even if the reader does not have access to differing perspectives. The monologic structure's stylistic trick is a reminder of the extreme power that language and narratives have in shaping minds, societies, and even history books. Likewise, the roguish tales that characterize these Latin American stories have a counterpart in the economy of attention that shapes the contemporary milieu since, by dopamine feedback loops, algorithms can commandeer human consciousness and impose their selective reuptake for the user. As this new fervent media dominates the cultural sphere, these post-picaresque narratives invert the foundation of the Bildungsroman, prone to didacticism. Instead, they become a reminder of how certain learned behaviors ––in the case of the dark picaresque of Brás Cubas and the neoliberal rogue that I will examine in chapters 2 and 5— can contribute to the reinforcement of one's opinion and self-righteousness, to the integration of difference into the fold of capital, and to a mindless desire that capitalism valorizes.

The Demise of the Picaresque

Garrido Ardila, one of the leading and more recent scholars of the picaresque argues that there is an "overwhelming lack of critical consensus regarding the understanding of *picaresque* as a literary category" (2). He then proceeds to advance a set of features that he considers fundamentally picaresque: "(1) the narration of a life expounding the circumstances leading to a final situation; (2) the implicit satire of the novel that reflects the social bias of the author; (3) the picaro as protagonist" (15–16). In

his recent book, Jorge Téllez questions this definition on several fronts. First, he argues that "suggesting that a picaresque narrative (. . .) includes a pícaro does not solve the tautological problem of defining the picaresque based on a preselected corpus" (6) of picaresque novels. Second, the so-called bias of the author refers to the picaresque "as a genre that questioned the emptiness of values dear to early modern Spanish society, such as limpieza de sangre [purity of blood] or the relationship between *honor* and *honra* [male and female honor], that delimited social mobility and encouraged an environment that rewarded appearance and pretentiousness more than anything else" (6). Jorge Téllez then dismisses Ardila's definition regarding the prior existence of these picaresque features on the basis that "imposing an interpretation as a category to delimit a narrative corpus (. . .) falls into [a] circular explanation that believes in the preexistence of features that in reality represent an interpretation rather than a fact" (6). In his book, *The Picaresque and the Writing Life in Mexico* (2021), Téllez takes issue with the historical delimitation of the genre to Early modern Spain that Ardila proposes, which is understandable given his attentiveness to picaresque narratives in Mexico. He follows critics such as Anne Cruz in *Discourses of Poverty* (1999) to counter the regional specification of the genre, and he agrees with scholars like Francisco J. Sánchez and Nicholas Spadaccini because they also defend the possibility of understanding the picaresque from a contemporary perspective.

I do not necessarily aim to contest Ardila's fixed characterization of the picaresque as bound to a specific space and time,—which is why Shelley Godsland coins

the term *neopicaresque*[10] to refer to novels that appear outside of Early modern Spain parameters many centuries later— but I do share with Jorge Téllez his interest regarding how "writers have channeled their sense of marginality through the well-known plotline of the pícaro's fragile condition of existence" (14). Regardless, my focus is concentrated not so much on the writers but the first-person narrator and their socioeconomic condition, that is, as belonging to what Téllez calls the lettered class following Ángel Rama's study, *The Lettered City* (1984). Erik Camayd-Freixas, on the other hand, locates his concern in the progressive transposition of the picaresque to Latin America rather than in the legitimacy of the term for stories and novels outside of the Iberian Peninsula. Unquestionably, the picaresque is associated first and foremost with the Iberian Peninsula. However, it spread fast and wide thanks to its trickster lineage, which went back farther than the Early modern era:

> [Vladimir] Propp's theory allows Bakhtin to trace the historical transformations and derivations of the novel. Accordingly, he sees the germane figures of the rogue, the clown (or court jester), and the fool as 'enormously significant' for the development of the modern novel. They serve in various ways the analogous functions of bringing private life out into the public square; exercising the privilege of social critique with the immunity or disclaimer that their purportedly naïve condition affords them; and using humor, satire[,] and parody to expose the falseness of every

[10] In the words of Professor Godsland, "The neopicaresque is comprised of those fictions that, although they may not always qualify as examples of the picaresque genre, do use one or more core characteristics of the picaresque and therefore can be classed as examples of the picaresque myth. Whilst in some cases authors of neopicaresque novels were fully aware of the picaresque genre and sometimes (particularly in Spain) emulated it, in other instances the use of picaresque features may be coincidental, but it shows that the picaresque genre was still functional in the twentieth century" (Ardila 247). This definition suffers from the vagueness required to sustain the applicability of the picaresque genre to contemporary or even nineteenth or twentieth-century narratives. Still, it doesn't propose a more comprehensive definition of the phenomenon. Therefore, I opt to disregard the reenactment of any genre when their dissolution has been thoroughly announced. I choose instead to define what a post-picaresque aesthetic is and how it differs from the picaresque of the Iberian Peninsula. At the same time, I pronounce the picaresque dead and advance the concept of the dividual, more in line with the era of information technology.

> situation. Thus, several types of modern novel[s] develop from the different variants of the rogue, most significantly the biographical novel, the travel novel[,] and the Bildungsroman (Ardila 229)

In the four novels I examine in this essay, the narrators of both the second and fifth chapters have an evident biographical character, and the older man from the novel *El entenado* in Chapter 3 has a vital component of travel literature. The third chapter tends to have a self-questioning nature closest to the biographical. In this work, I clearly distinguish between the novel of education or Bildungsroman and a post-picaresque aesthetic. Even if a reader were to derive any moral lesson from them, none has a universal ambition to direct the reader toward a specific mode of comportment. They might have some potential for positivity or gain of adequate knowledge—which I do see in the dividual and that I will promptly discuss— but what all the characters from my novels of choice share are their roguery or unreliable narration, which distinguishes them from the Latin American fiction of picaresque descent, or Peninsular stories of the Spanish Baroque period. Novels like the canonical Francisco de Quevedo's *El buscón* (1626) would aspire to admonish and satirize the behavior of many of his compatriots following the Counter-Reformation in Spain, a period in Spanish history that witnessed an increase in desire to either virtue-signal being an old Christian or one's nobility. In continuing with this theme, Camayd-Freixas perceives a 'criollo' disposition akin to the picaresque narration of the Iberian Peninsula in Latin America after the era of the conquistadors, which brought about a new social class in the Americas, the *criollo*. Many literary manifestations of the seventeenth century (e.g., Rosas de Oquendo) would reproduce the material and pecuniary interests of these European descendants who would come to rule in the region:

> Any pretense of epic grandeur began to vanish as the prestige of the conquistadors was soon tarnished by cruel figures such as Pizarro, Almagro, Pedro de Alvarado, and Lope de Aguirre himself. The coup de grâce came in the form of the publication of Breve relación de la destrucción de las Indias (1552, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies) by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, which told of countless atrocities and rampant pillaging, even by relatively benign conquistadors such as Velázquez, Narváez and, particularly, Hernán Cortés. But there is yet another process unfolding behind the threshold of social conscience at the symbolic level, which came to the fore with the very first generation of criollos. It was brought about by the fact that the sixteenth-century chronicles of the Conquest, written by Europeans to legitimate the colonial enterprise, belong to a period of discovery, epic voyages[,] and wars, whose glory the American-born criollos never shared. It was exclusively a European dream. Criollos were[,] in fact[,] barred from the higher government and ecclesiastical posts, which were reserved for the Spanish-born. All colonial commerce had to go through the Casa de Contratación in Seville, as direct trade with any other European country, and even among the colonial viceroyalties themselves, was forbidden. It was the kind of inequity that eventually led to the Wars of Independence. So when that short-lived time of heroic epos came to an end at the close of the sixteenth century, (. . .) the colonists set down to the struggles of daily life, which meant administering the settlements, populating the land[,] and scraping a living from the soil or the mine, the dreams of glory gave way to the harsher realities of economic survival and social mobility in a caste society. This became a defining reality for the criollos, whose most suited form of expression, far from the epic, soon became the picaresque.
> (Ardila 231-2)

As this passage demonstrates, the Hispanic picaresque of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries charges against those subjects of the crown who were not behaving according to the chivalric code of the Medieval era. These criollos were enriching themselves, counterfeiting nobility papers, and doing a disservice to the morally impeccable heroes of the chivalry novel, who would always respond readily and accordingly to their vassalage to the absolutist king. This loss of innocence that characterized the Hispanic picaresque with the transition from the Spanish Golden Age to the Baroque was exemplified in Baltasar Gracián's Byzantine novel *El criticón* (1651-7). This philosopher turned the term *desengaño* [disillusionment] into a concept that would

pervade the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, and which ultimately made the novel bifurcate from an epic tale to either one of Bildung or one of roguery and skepticism toward the nation-state. *Desengaño*, in the Hispanic tradition, will eventually evolve into stories of costumbrismo [roman de moeurs]—a Spanish literary tradition that became prominent in the 1830s— that were dear to readers in the early to mid-nineteenth century.

This dissertation speaks of the post-picaresque, or its demise, partly because I observe that the genre cannot be resuscitated without reimagining a claim to a roguish innocence that the Hispanic tradition quickly dismantled. In this dissertation's nineteenth and twentieth-century Latin American novels, the author-narrator dyad speaks from a position of authority. This is in significant contrast to the Spanish Golden Age when the protagonist shows no trace of self-awareness, or even from later picaresque novels in the European tradition, where the omniscient narration takes away from the imbrication of narratorial voice and author that occurs in the stories analyzed in this essay. The confessional and pseudo-autobiographical (unreliable narration) aspects of the post-picaresque aesthetic part ways with the didactic aspect of the Hispanic picaresque. Gracián's *desengaño* will have primarily morphed into demoralization by the late nineteenth century. As I will disclose in Chapter 2, this breeding ground of disenchantment will be taken up by the dark picaresque with the merging of industrial capitalism and national-socialist ideas. I see the decadence movement of late nineteenth-century literature as an essential prelude to the ideas that imbibed German fascism and the dark picaresque as the ending point of a progressive involution of the rogue toward fear and resentment. As the reader will have the opportunity to notice throughout the

different chapters, the overlapping of physical affects and ideation, following monism in philosophy, will be of great importance since it connects dividuality to the production of subjectivity. I will then use this expression to associate ideas with their materiality: bodies and what prompts them to think. Even if it sounds counterintuitive, this dissertation asserts that thinking necessitates a pre-personal understanding so it can encapsulate bodies and their environment.

I also speak of a post-picaresque aesthetic because the characters in these novels are inclined to express their point of view regardless of the porosity of language or their boundedness to their narratorial voices, so they do not fear governmental repercussions nor are they insecure in the safety of their confession. Contrary to these tales, crypto-Jewish writers, or new Christians in the Spanish Golden Age, needed to conceal their identity to avoid prosecution from the Inquisition or be subjected to censorship, exile, and, as a worst-case scenario, stand on trial for heresy. Instead, the motivation behind these Latin American novels (1888-2000) becomes an intrinsic part of the intrigue that sustains the stories, and the reader must assume that the narrator's assertions cannot be taken at face value, fickle and inconsistent as they show themselves to be.

A third distinction between the picaresque genre, established in studies by Claudio Guillén[11] and other picaresque scholars, and the novels studied in this

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[11] The history of the picaresque as a genre is also an example of geopolitical strife between different European countries if we are to follow Claudio Guillén: "I have had the opportunity to notice that a most important link in the genesis of the modern novel, the success in seventeenth-century Europe of the Spanish picaresque genre, with its portrayal of squalor and corruption, was made possible by the pleasure with which these narratives were read by the enemies of Spain, who were legion, in the heyday of the Spanish empire. Even today, there are a number of critics who think that the picaresque novel was prompted by the misery and the struggle for life that were characteristic of the land of the Inquisition (even though urban poverty and delinquency were the most general of phenomena in sixteenth-century Europe), rather than

dissertation involves their protagonists' social extraction. The theatre's minor characters of William Shakespeare and Pedro Calderón de la Barca, or nearly stock characters that populated dramas and comedies of the Early modern period, such as Clarín in *La vida es sueño* (1635) or the fool in *King Lear* (1606), momentarily destabilized the linearity of the story. They are examples of a simple aside to the play, a reminder of its artificiality despite an otherwise logical dénouement. However, in Lope de Vega's plays, material conditions precede abstract or theological questions. In the 1618 play *El perro del hortelano* [The Dog in the Manger], the protagonist Tristán, no longer a stock character like his predecessors, escapes the narrowness of that minor role and achieves dignity and social status. This is entirely in agreement with what Roberto González Echevarría observes in his study of the socioeconomic and legal conditions of the Early modern period in Spain and the stories that the historical conjuncture spawned:

> The law (. . .) influences the narrative [in Spanish Golden Age] in the following ways: (1) style (the concrete, legal terms); (2) plots (crime, punishment, revenge, or pardon); (3) the incorporation of subgenres from the legal (confessions, depositions); (4) endings (resolution involves exculpation, punishment or pardon, and legitimation); (5) an increase of stories involving the question of marriage, which is the most tangible and textual level at which love and the law intersect in Cervantes and (. . .) subsequent narrative fiction; (6) the proliferation of judges, lawyers, bailiffs in fiction, particularly in Cervantes; and (7) the inclusion of or allusion to legal documents in the fiction and the fiction itself sometimes takes the form of one of them— specifically in the *picaresque* [italics are mine] (*Love and the Law in Cervantes* xviii)

The main character of the picaresque genre —whose beginnings are formally identifiable based on their social extraction, that is, orphans and young hustlers forced to rely on street smarts to survive— evolves from those stock characters or *graciosos* (fools)

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by the compassion or the sheer inventiveness of individual Spaniards (or of classes of Spaniards)." (*Literature as System* 47)

and becomes assimilated into the societal idiosyncrasies about their time and place, namely, the newly-minted nation-state of Spain and its bureaucracy. This is the route that scholars of the picaresque have followed to see the continuation of this aesthetic in other novels from centuries after,[12] or even from other literary traditions, whereby the protagonist would eventually succeed or fail at climbing the social ladder.[13] However, to be explicit about an overarching timeline of rogues through the best part of five centuries and national traditions goes beyond this project's scope.[14] Instead, I decided to compare only the features of the *pícaro* of the Spanish Golden Age to the post-picaresque Latin American novels studied in this project, so I can more clearly delimit the picaresque of

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[12] Notice how one of them, Robert Stone, even titled his work *Picaresque Continuities* (1998).

[13] This aesthetic evolution has been described in the book *The Picaresque Novel in Western Literature: From the Sixteenth Century to the Neopicaresque* (2015), edited by J. A. Garrido Ardila. In the last chapter of said book, "The neopicaresque: The picaresque myth in the twentieth-century novel", Shelley Godsland contends that the term neopicaresque is only neo insofar as the narratives of the period share aspects of the picaresque as it appeared ab initio in the Iberian Peninsula, and not because it had become something other than it once was, as can be ascertained based on the following quote: "Establishing whether what we might call the neopicaresque tradition existed in the twentieth century can thus be a fraught endeavor, and we need to consider not only whether we might usefully employ the term with reference to contemporary literature, but also if we need to exercise caution in order to avoid attaching the neopicaresque label to novels that do not partake of the picaresque myth at all. There is no doubt that we can identify any number of twentieth-century works from a range of European countries and the United States that do indeed bear a singular resemblance to the picaresque as it manifested from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Not least in Spain, a range of twentieth-century novels are characterized by a variety of elements that can be read as picaresque. The neopicaresque is comprised of those fictions that, although they may not always qualify as examples of the picaresque genre, do use one or more core characteristics of the picaresque and therefore can be classed as examples of the picaresque myth" (247).

[14] Having said that, and even if the picaresque genre stays operational, as Téllez and other scholars maintain, I do introduce three stages in the origin and demise of the picaresque as the myth of the autonomous subject in Chapter 5: Early modern, romantic, and (neo)liberal. Moreover, I see the narrators of Chapters 2 and 5 as the last of those three versions.

the Spanish Golden Age[15] from its post-picaresque counterpart. I will largely leave aside the question of the formal progression of the picaresque over time. However, it puts into perspective how the picaresque genre became entrenched in European culture over the next three centuries to the extent that the *genre* became a *myth*, as one of the foremost scholars of the picaresque, Alexander Blackburn, defends.

The picaresque as a genre regards the spatiotemporal timeline of rogues in the Iberian Peninsula and the formal features that can be brought to bear to characterize fiction in a picaresque manner. On the contrary, a myth, whose etymological root can be found in oral tales later put down in writing, exemplifies a broader history signifying an immense cultural trove. Concerning the *pícaro* of the Spanish Golden Age, Claudio Guillén suspects that the historical situation of Jewish people in the developing Spanish nation-state is responsible for the rogue's eventual mythologization:

> There is a historical correlative for the half-outsider, which Américo Castro has the merit of having brought out and interpreted in his studies of Spanish history: the situation of the Spanish New Christian. This is not the Jew, naturally, a genuine outsider in the sixteenth century, but the converse. Castro believes that the author of Lazarillo was a converse. We know (. . .) that a Jewish forefather of Mateo Alemán was burned alive by the Inquisition. Several heroes of picaresque novels (as in La pícara Justina, El Buscón) are of Semitic origin. The family background of the hero of Guzmán de Alfarache is willfully obscure and ambiguous; his father appears to have been a Levantine who emigrated to Genoa and then to Seville, 'and the plot is based on the young boy's attempt to return "to Genoa and claim his inheritance there, in search of nonexistent origins, and on his further travels in Italy (critics have pointed out the peculiar intensity of Alemán's description of Florence). We also know that Mateo Alemán,

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[15] Claudio Guillén does not confine his understanding of the picaresque to Early modern Spain by any means: "It may be useful to distinguish between the following: the picaresque genre, first of all; a group of novels, secondly, that deserve to be called picaresque in the strict sense—usually in agreement with the original Spanish pattern; another group of novels, thirdly, which may be considered picaresque in a broader sense of the term only; and finally, a picaresque myth: an essential situation or significant structure derived from the novels themselves." (*Literature* 71).

> the author, was doubly a "half-outsider "since his mother was a Del Nero (from one of the merchant families constituting the powerful Florentine enclave in Seville) so that the plot of Guzmán reflects and transposes not only the author's status as a New Christian but his links with Italy. The pícaro, in other words, is an orphan and a self-made man in social and religious terms. Alemán, as a descendant—rejected by his environment—of converts from Judaism, was able to envisage not only the society of his day but the values of—Christianity itself[,] both from within and from without. This was surely an important incitement to the picaresque author's discovery of the myth of the orphan and the type of the half-outsider (*Literature as System* 101-2)

Claudio Guillén helps illuminate the overspilling of the literary sphere into the cultural realm. There are a few examples of this historical interrelationship of art —the birth of a new literary genre— and life —Jewish culture's tenuous standing in the Iberian Peninsula of the Renaissance— into a singular event, among them, the making of Spain as a nation-state. At stake was the inclusion or exclusion of Sephardic Jews in or from the birthing nation. Stemming from this conflict, an ardent question of political philosophy would surface by introducing a first-person narrative veiledly contesting the state's sovereignty. Nowhere was this more evident in literature than with the picaresque genre. In her book *An Early Self*, Suzanne Zepp analyzes the Early modern novel from the perspective of the rogue's origin, which had become a *topos* as "the discursive pattern of the Inquisition's proof of descent" (85) and as part of the institution's need for genealogical information. The question that she asks herself in the third chapter of her book is why the autobiography, traditionally "reserved for the upper classes," had all of a sudden been "transferred to voices from marginalized milieus in the guise of literary fiction" (85). She answers that these Inquisitorial documents become parodied "by the first-person narrator at the beginning of Lazarillo" (88). To add an ironic twist, Lazarillo's statements of origin give only "compromising details (. . .) in a tone intended to play down, or rather

trivialize, the objective facts, some of which were even known to the courts" (Zepp 88). This scholar proceeds with her argument by saying that this initial picaresque story serves a dual purpose: to present "the autobiography of a man whose various misdeeds remain unpunished" and to demonstrate "the particular possibilities of the literary treatment of history" (89).

Moreover, the "oath to secrecy" to which the juridical process would be linked gets satirized, as does "the bureaucratic procedure for proving *limpieza de sangre*" (90). Finally, having shown evidence from the primary text itself, she finishes her examination of the novel and the Iberian picaresque genre by asserting that this satirical approach to Inquisitorial practices adds "an ironic look at the end of a culturally heterogeneous society" (91), and that therein lies the first picaresque distinctiveness. The initial picaresque then takes this authoritative legal text out of context and renders it "unpragmatic," which facilitates the genre's experimentation with the "boundaries of different discourses" (Zepp 92). This trend, I claim, is taken up later with the post-picaresque aesthetic that I introduce in this dissertation.

Returning to the Latin America of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is readily noticeable that the narrators of the selected stories are not struggling financially, nor are they concerned with prosecution from the Inquisition or any other direct authority. On the contrary, these characters have a much more comfortable socioeconomic position than the Spanish Golden Age. Rodrigo S.M. constantly describes his privileged status throughout the narrative as he bonds with his creation, Macabéa. Brás Cubas is a landowner who turns a blind eye to the racial injustices present at the time of the Brazilian empire. The *Boca de lobo* (*The Dark*, 2006) narrator, as a

professional writer idealizing the daily life of a factory worker, holds a liberal job and cannot be characterized as a member of the working class or Hardt and Negri's *multitud*e. The trickier of cases vis-à-vis his origins is Francisco del Puerto, the cabin boy who narrativizes his encounter with the Colastiné Indians in his youth and other life events upon his return to the Iberian Peninsula. Already in his sixties at the time of writing, this former rogue's memorialized novel bridges the picaresque of the Spanish Golden Age and the post-picaresque aesthetic that characterizes the Latin American stories of the twentieth century I study here. Ultimately, though, the man writing his life adventures does not resemble the materially dispossessed *pícaro*, but instead, an elderly and honorable man who had started his own family and achieved financial stability.

Lastly, the writers that feature here select characters whose self-awareness frames the conversation on the grounds of veracity and, secondly, acceptability. The initial picaresque cannot sustain itself without the pretension of innocence on the part of the storyteller. Contemporary subjectivity necessitates the reader to exist because it operates in a fragmented world of myriad tales and alternate facts. In contrast, the Golden Age picaresque stories' footing had its basis in a potential erasure by the Inquisition. This historical narrative ceases to be productive in the featured Latin American novels analyzed in this work. They become instead a voice among many that seek attraction to either anthropological quests (*El entenado*), appeals to empathy for the less fortunate (*A hora da estrela*), self-serving biographies to overcome writer's block (*Boca de lobo*), or an exercise in cynical absolution from responsibility (*Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*). A shift from the Spanish Golden Age origins of the picaresque begins to announce itself in English novels from the 18th century like *Moll Flanders* (1722), which

puts into perspective the relentless drive for moneyed interests and upward mobility. I claim, however, that another period novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759), establishes the artificiality of language and the constant reworking of reality as a precursor to the post-picaresque aesthetic, both in tone and rhetoric.

Moreover, and in direct opposition to the Bildungsroman,[16] which had at its core an intention to be instructive and to educate future generations, the late nineteenth century was privy to characters like Nikolai Stavrogin in Dostoyevsky's *Demons* (1871), or Huysmans' Durtal in *Là-bas* (1891), which explore a possible dark underbelly of the rogue.[17] Indeed, they render the former picaresque genre ineffectual due to the normalization of a bourgeois sensibility, its applicability across space and time, and varied literary traditions. In fact, by the 1930s, Russian formalists[18] realized that the concept of the genre had become so unsettled by contamination from a multiplicity of literary styles that it could no longer encompass and describe the nature of creative

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[16] The Bildungsroman has been much easier to characterize as a genre in the evolution of the novel because of its didacticism.

[17] As I refer to the *dark underbelly of the picaresque*, I am consciously following Michel André Bernstein's *Bitter Carnival: Ressentiment and the Abject Hero* (1992), where he advances the idea that in modernity, the former medieval practice of the carnival as a way of averting social unrest by giving free rein to people's passion and base instincts for one day before officialdom was restated, could become a sad affair instead of the joyful celebration that usually accompanies this ancient tradition. He also complicates Bakhtin's contested concept of the carnival as a subversive festivity from a modernist (and modern point of view). To exemplify his point regarding the acquiescence with a settled version of the world as a dark empty place and as part of the bitter carnival, he resorts to Charles Manson's persona and discourse, among others.

[18] It is relevant to notice, if not altogether ironic, that Mikhail Bakhtin was writing a theory of the novel at a time when his compatriots (Todorov among others) were pushing for a dissolution of the term *genre* to categorize all types of fiction due to increasing fragmentation and heterogeneity or pastiche in the art of storytelling.

writing fully.[19] The picaresque had become a fossil of the Early modern age, relevant for indexing new press releases or evoking a picaresque trope that can easily fit into many a story. As it turns out, the initial picaresque had envisioned itself as a vehicle for a parody of the Inquisition's autos-da-fé, the legal genre of the time. It was already a genre disrupter before the Russian formalists declared the concept defunct.

The Picaresque as Myth

In Alexander Blackburn's understanding, myth can be defined "as a timeless and placeless universal story (. . .) but primarily as a creative narrative structure" (5). To him, "the informing idea of the myth of the p[í]caro is that it has the power to identify and to reverse modern man's alienation from himself, from humanity, and from the universe" and that the negatives of this figure "are necessary to express the light." In his opinion, the "autobiographical form allows [the] picaresque myth its fullest dimension of meaning as a literature of loneliness" (202). This assessment advances the idea that alienation forms an essential part of existence, which the division aspect of the dividual as an ontological concept, I will argue, prefigures. The picaresque tales recreate the pathic structure born of an oppressive state like the one from the Spanish Golden Age. While Miguel de Cervantes provides Don Quixote with a companion in Sancho Panza in a novel

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[19] Tzvetan Todorov wrote the following about the difficulty of analyzing the novel as a genre or the sub-genres therein contained because genres ultimately rest on human discourse, which is ultimately multifaceted and unpredictable: "What would be the situation with even more complex genres, such as the novel? I do not dare plunge headlong into the series of transformations that presides over its birth, but I shall risk betraying a certain optimism and say that, here, too, the process does not seem to be qualitatively different. The difficulty of the study of the 'origin of the novel' understood in this sense arises only from the infinite embedding of speech acts with others (. . .) there is not an abyss between literature and what is not literature (. . .) literary genres originate, quite simply, in human discourse." (207-8).

from the same period to quell this aloneness, the pícaro emerges as a constant wanderer and adventurer of affect ideas or experience-based learning, which carries significant risks of social exclusion. Despite this lonely element, Alexander Blackburn has trouble deciphering how the trickster of Ancient literature (i.e., Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*) can be differentiated from the picaresque novel originated with Lazarillo de Tormes:

> The trickster myth helps to explain why the picaresque novel has had a continuous life in various cultures over more than four centuries. The timeless schema, always available to consciousness, tends to appear wherever and whenever the modern mind, in flight from decadence, in quest of meaning, declares its freedom from [the] narrow confines of law, custom, and circumstance. Trickster keeps popping up in many guises, often reduced to a harmless entertainer, the merry rogue (who deceives many a critic into thinking him a picaro), sometimes transformed into a devil or divine deceiver or Vice who tells nothing but lies (as in Melville's Confidence-Man), but his true nature, as Kerényi maintains, has energy potential as the spirit of disorder, the enemy of boundaries.
> (Blackburn 269)

In this essay, I seek to differentiate the post-picaresque aesthetic not only from the Iberian Peninsula's pícaro but from the folkloric trickster as well, and I will enumerate a series of factors and features that can make the post-picaresque aesthetic a dividual affair. The dividual can encompass the lineage concerning ambiguity, moral ambivalence, and the characteristics of an agent of disorder like the trickster.[20] It may also share with the

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[20] Lewis Hyde defines a trickster: "In short, [the] trickster is a boundary-crosser. Every group has its edge, its sense of in and out, and [the] trickster is always there, at the gates of the city and the gates of life, making sure there is commerce. He also attends [to] the internal boundaries by which groups articulate their social life. We constantly distinguish—right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and dirty, male and female, young and old, living and dead—and in every case, trickster[s] will cross the line and confuse the distinction. Trickster is the creative idiot, therefore, the wise fool, the gray-haired baby, the cross-dresser, the speaker of sacred profanities. Where someone's sense of honorable behavior has left him unable to act, [the] trickster will appear to suggest an amoral action, something right/wrong that will get life going again. Trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox." (Hyde 22)

pícaro the pains of non-belonging and alienation from the early stages of merchant capitalism. However, it supersedes both as a new vision for the information age. In the middle chapters of this dissertation (Chapters 3 and 4), I will assert that the dividual operates on a higher plane than the picaresque. There, I will explain the philosophy behind a concept whose richness, I claim, supersedes the spiritual questions that the trickster posed in the pre-capitalist era. It will also address the concerns of the picaresque myth at the Renaissance stage of primitive capitalist accumulation. Finally, it will provide an aesthetic response to the later tales of roguery through the Romantic literary period, with characters like Redmond Barry of Ballybarry in *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844), Julien Sorel in *Le Rouge et Le Noir* (1854), and the eventual dark picaresque with which I start this essay in Chapter 2 (*Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, 1881).

Paul Radin's pre-capitalist and pre-statist trickster enjoys the lively act of crossing moral boundaries, whereas Alexander Blackburn's pícaro suffers from the alienation of merchant capitalism. The trickster can be free from the laws or rules that conform to the organization of its society, while the pícaro experiences the burden of statist rule. José Antonio Maravall recalls, for example, the movement away from rural areas in seventeenth-century Spain (par. 183), which sets the tone for the picaresque tale, eminently urban. While he is wary enough not to call the seventeenth-century industrial since there is no revolution in economic terms, he socially brings up another critical aspect of the transition from trickster to picaresque, the financial contract:

> Es una sociedad en la que cunde el anonimato. Los lazos de vecindad, de parentesco, de amistad, no desaparecen, claro está, pero palidecen y faltan con frecuencia entre los que habitan próximos en una misma localidad (éste es uno de los fenómenos con más nitidez reflejados en la novela picaresca). Las relaciones presentan en amplia medida carácter de contrato: en las casas (alquiler), en los jornales (salario), en la vestimenta (compraventa), etc.; y

> se dan en proporción considerable los desplazamientos de lugar (basta con pensar en el crecimiento de las ciudades y el éxodo rural, lo cual significa que una parte estimable de la población no vive y muere en el lugar en que ha nacido). De tal manera, aparecen en gran proporción nexos sociales que no son interindividuales, que no son entre conocidos. Y es manifiesto que esto altera los modos de comportamiento: una masa de gentes que se saben desconocidas unas para otras se conducen de manera muy diferente a un grupo de individuos que saben pueden ser fácilmente identificados. Pues bien, socialmente esto es ya una sociedad masiva y en su seno se produce esa despersonalización que convierte al hombre en una unidad de mano de obra, dentro de un sistema anónimo y mecánico de producción (Maravall 51)

This exodus from rural areas to an urban setting caused a rise in anonymity that mirrors what happened with the third industrial revolution,[21] which may now give way to an eventual fourth revolution marked by biodigital convergence. Be that as it may, part of the thrust behind the examination of the by-the-book pícaro from Chapter 3 will be to question legal or sociological concepts, such as *person* or *individual*, that are behind the social contract established with Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) and backed up by John Locke in 1689, among other prominent political philosophers. Against natural law, these terms and social contracts impose a birth certificate or an electrical bill as stand-ins for the organic body with a name and a gender that comes to be a legal entity. In line with cybernetics and the notion of a node within a network that in part inspires the dividual (dividuum in the Medieval writings of Gilbert de Poitiers), I believe the popularization of dividuality in political philosophy is bound to come.[22] In deconstructing the former terms,

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[21] The third industrial revolution, not unlike cybernetics or neoliberalism, developed shortly after WWII since it is usually defined as the dawn of the information age with the shift from mechanical and analog electronic technology to digital electronics.

[22] Gerald Raunig's book *Dividuum: Machinic Capitalism and Molecular Revolution* (2016) has proven to be essential to the analysis of Chapter 3 and the Introduction and expansion of the concept of the dividual that philosopher Gilles Deleuze first popularized in his short essay "Postscript on the Societies of Control." (1990)

and specifically the *dispositif of the person* with the help of Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito, the door is laid open to question what could be a replacement[23] for the legal trappings of the Baroque or Counter-Reformation in a digital era:

> At its heart[,] there stands the current impact of technology on things that are no longer only objects and of subjects who are increasingly difficult to confine inside the dispositif of the person. In the early 1950s, Gilbert Simondon had already begun talking about "technical objects" as the mediating ground between human beings and nature. They bear imprinted within them the signs of intelligence needed to solve the problems that have periodically loomed on the human horizon.
> (*Persons and Things* 152-3)

The liminal status of the trickster among Native Americans and other cultures that value the animistic realm can now be reenacted with the imbrication of cybernetics and neoliberalism. In other words, the "transpersonal source of a particular life-style [sic] and way of experiencing the world" of the "trickster god" (Radin 189-90) has been transplanted to artificial intelligence in the twenty-first century, which means data can cross the boundaries that subjectivity erects between the public and private realms and to extract information from digital surveillance. Likewise, the electrical current that supports electronics and the urban dwellings that already defined the picaresque myth can be transposed to a digital sphere (the metaverse or smart cities), let alone potential body prostheses (implants as well as neurotechnology and nanotechnology) for posthumans to participate in the economy of the near future. All these present and plans from this dual effort of cybernetics and neoliberalism make the dividual a more proper concept to

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[23] I do not naïvely suggest a liberation from them, which is why I also conceive the dividual ambiguously, not unlike the pícaro or the trickster.

describe and elicit the understanding of a fragmented world for already splintered psyches.

In summary, I believe that the literary fame of the trickster and pícaro has not been outlived by the dividual, but it is in the process of creative decomposition, thus the title of this book.[24] The picaresque took over the trickster's task in "archaic societies," notes Karóly Kerénji. This trickster's function was "to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible, within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted" (Radin 185). The arrival of capitalist primitive accumulation surged the first modern nation-states in Europe. Hence, the passing of the baton to the picaresque myth became a *de facto* result or consequence. *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) bears testament to this transition. The thesis that I continue to foreground for the decomposition and ultimate demise of the picaresque, and its myth, responds to two disciplines that have developed in unison the most since WWII, economics (neoliberalism) and cybernetics (a combination of natural sciences, psychology, and telecommunications technology). As the Introduction to this book proposes, their capacity to direct human behavior has made scholars and citizens alike all the more skeptical about notions such as freedom, autonomy, or agency, all the while making oppressive power less readily apparent (a feature of control societies) and nonconformity or communitarian forms-of-life less achievable.

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[24] Karóly Kerénji argues why the myth of the trickster could be worn out. He does so by comparing it to the concept of God: "Rilke's fear that God might get 'worn out' -- and 'what is the good of a used up God?' -- is as justified in the case of an archaic deity like the trickster as in that of the Supreme Deity, if not more so. By the twentieth century, any god is bound to be a bit worn out, even if his worshippers, their culture, and religion have remained that long in an archaic state. The archaic itself gets used up and worn out in that time, and, in the case of peoples and races living at a quicker tempo, in a much, much shorter time." (Radin 177)

Neoliberalism and the Information Revolution

The neoliberal economic term structures the dissertation from a conceptual and historical perspective. As I have done with the term picaresque, the historicity of the word needs to be unearthed, but to arrive at the 'new liberalism' that Milton Friedman refers to as late as 1961, what liberal means for this work must be properly construed. Let us note what Philip Mirowski has to contribute to that respect:

> Every historian of the New Right in America acknowledges that [liberals] are a fractious coalition of groups who may not share much in the way of doctrinal overlap: classical liberals, cultural conservatives, theocons, libertarians, old-school anticommunists, anarchists, classical Burkean traditionalists, ultranationalist neoconservatives, strict construction federalists, survivalist militias, and so forth. A standard narrative of historians of the modern right is that a number of these different factions declared a tentative truce from the 1970s onward under the rubric of "fusionism" and that this détente was a major factor in their resurgence from a low point after the Great Depression. Rather than plow old furrows, we shall provisionally accept this basic account for our (. . .) purposes, primarily to insist that "neoliberals" should be approached as one individual subset of this phalanx. Hence, we seek to characterize a relatively discrete subset of right-wing thought situated within a much larger universe, although it does tend to stand out as the faction most concerned to integrate economic theory with political doctrine
> (Mirowski 144-5)

In staying with Philip Mirowski's definition, it becomes clear that neoliberal represents a subset of a long history of political thought that started with philosopher John Locke in the seventeenth century. Mirowski then proceeds to highlight the so-called subset of liberalism that interests him, which he calls the Neoliberal Thought Collective:

> The Neoliberal Thought Collective was structured very differently from the other "invisible colleges" that sought to change people's minds in the latter half of the twentieth century. Unlike most intellectuals in the 1950s, the early protagonists of the MPS [Mont Pelèrin Society] did not look to the universities or the academic "professions" or to interest-group mobilizations as the appropriate primary instruments to achieve their goals. Those entities were held too in thrall to the state from the neoliberal perspective. The early neoliberals felt, at that juncture with some

> justification, that they were excluded from most high-profile intellectual venues in the West. Hence the MPS was constituted as a closed, private members-only debating society whose participants were handpicked (originally primarily by Hayek, but later through a closed nomination procedure) and which consciously sought to remain out of the public eye. The purpose was to create a special space where people of like-minded political ideals could gather together to debate the outlines of a future movement diverging from classical liberalism without having to suffer the indignities of ridicule for their often-blue-sky proposals, but also to evade the fifth-column reputation of a society closely aligned with powerful but dubious postwar interests. Even the [society's name] was itself chosen to be relatively anodyne, signaling little in the way of substantive content to outsiders. Many members would indeed hold academic posts in a range of academic disciplines, but this was not a precondition of MPS membership. The MPS could thus also be expanded to encompass various powerful capitalists, and not just intellectuals (118)

The members of this group, however, harbored discrepancies of thought. As a result, this club, while essential to historicize the transition from classical liberalism to neoliberalism, does not altogether capture our understanding of this current-day economic ideology. Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and other members of the MPS grew up in the aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1920s. Likewise, they lived through the days when F.D. Roosevelt implemented a fiscal reform to exit the crisis. Upon redoubling his efforts on public spending as a governmental policy while temporarily disregarding the accrual of the national debt, this US president started following what is now known as Keynesian economics.

Printing money to revitalize the economy proved successful initially, but WWII happened, and the war machinery prompted men to leave for Europe to fight the Nazis. Upon their return, the US had won the war and emerged as the world's foremost imperial power. This was when the Mont Pelèrin Society and the cybernetic group gathered luminaries to reorder the world order. As Quinn Slobodian ascertains, "the real focus of neoliberal proposals is not on the market per se but on redesigning states, laws, and other

institutions to protect the market" (Slobodian 6). The Mont Pelèrin Society agreed that regulating the economy meant having government intervene in its activities, rather than operate under the laissez-faire mentality often ascribed to neoliberalism. The private-public partnership of corporate enterprise and government plans would need to be a key feature for running the economy, which meant, whenever necessary, also following John Maynard Keynes. This pragmatic approach conceded that economic crises were unavoidable and that their solution would come from a combined effort by the public and private sectors.

The 2008 financial crisis, while hardly the only example, demonstrates this argument since the governmental strategy within the United States after the Lehman Brothers debacle was to bail out Wall Street to renew investors' trust following the subprime lending fiasco. This episode of economic history also illustrates how this partnership I am laying out was to be conceived, with government agencies working for the private sector to maintain a functional economy, not the reverse. When Dwight D. Eisenhower left office in 1961, he foresaw the declining influence of government in favor of lobbying efforts for corporate gain. In his farewell address, he veiledly pointed fingers at governmental agencies like the CIA and others to suggest that the political class was becoming subservient to the military-industrial complex. The vice-president at the time and later 37th president, Richard Nixon, continued this conspiratorial line[25] while simultaneously aligning with the Chicago Boys from the Chicago School of Economics, a direct descendant of the Mont Pelèrin Society.

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[25] The use of conspiracies by government actors serves in many instances as a smokescreen for government policies that happen unbeknownst to the general public, as the satirical film *Wag the Dog* (1997) suggests.

In what concerns Latin America and serving as Secretary of State in the last two years of Nixon's presidency was Henry Kissinger. By the time Kissinger entered the cabinet in 1973, the mantra of privatization and economic austerity had taken root in the United States. It was ready to be launched overseas amidst the Cold War. This government operative would be a pivotal figure in the imposition and cementing of the neoliberal world order in the southern part of the continent. When Chile's Augusto Pinochet successfully seized power on September 11th, 1973, through a coup, Henry Kissinger had already served as National Security Advisor to the Nixon presidency. He was appointed that same month to be Secretary of State. Thomas Alan Schwartz states, "The CIA provided millions of dollars to Chilean opposition groups, helping business, labor, civic, and other groups organizing strikes and demonstrations" (Schwartz 543) against democratically-elected Salvador Allende between 1970 and 1973. Henry Kissinger had already failed to prevent Allende from becoming president. When Augusto Pinochet finally took over the reins of government, the former was known for possessing a "strong sympathy" (545) for the new Chilean government and what it signified, a victory for neoliberal policy. As is amply documented, this operative's influence in the Latin American area did not stop with Chile. On the contrary, Pinochet's coup became one of the many 70s military coups under the advent of Operation Condor, a United States–backed campaign involving intelligence operations to repress political enemies and carry out the neoliberal dogma. Decades later, Henry Kissinger and the CIA have been accused of organizing the Condor network and committing crimes against humanity (par. McSherry 122).

While constituted in the late 40s, neoliberalism only became truly hegemonic in the 1970s, with the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile (1973-90) as the significant event announcing its preeminence. Along with the coup, the Chicago School of Economics, which followed the steps of the MPS, sent to Chile neoliberal economists to undo the policies of the previous socialist government. Some of the tenets upon which neoliberalism is predicated, like "'sound money,' free labor, and unimpeded international circulation (and in marginalizing the productive-capital concern with planning), presented the perspective of money capital as a general interest around which the sectoral interests of different capital fractions could be assembled" (*The Handbook of Neoliberalism* 44). Pinochet's Chile thus reveals itself as a project embedded in a larger plan "for global capitalism and the TCC [Transnational Capitalist Class]" (44). This project was facilitated by three key factors that brought about the emergence of the TCC:

> Financialization (itself a product of neoliberal policy that cumulatively skewed profit distribution in favor of short-term financial assets as opposed to fixed-capital industrial investment) (. . .) the consolidation of global governance around the so-called Washington Consensus promoting investor rights as 'free trade' and mandating austerity programs in the debt-ridden global South (. . .) and the collective agency of a TCC centered in the North Atlantic and including many strata of organic intellectuals and a growing assemblage of policy-planning groups (44)

Based on this excerpt from *The Handbook of Neoliberalism*, a connection can be established between control societies and the financialization of the economy or the marriage of telecommunication, silicon-based technology, and neoliberal economics. Furthermore, before Pinochet's reign, the Salvador Allende government had already dabbled in the information technology of the future that is part and parcel of today's mode of existence, the Internet:

> Project Cybersyn involved designing and implementing a networked communication system that allowed the units of production (factories) to respond to information about the overall state of the system (the economy). Given the widespread impact of the internet in the decades since it is easy to underestimate the importance of developing such a communications network. At the time, however, this represented one of the first examples of anything like this kind of project on this scale; indeed, it is commonly identified as one of the predecessors of the internet. With the limited technology available, Allende's government was able to utilize this communication network to, for example, resist a strike by lorry owners and other private business interests. This was not done through a centralized command operation but by Chilean workers maintaining supply chains, made possible by the networked form of communication Project Cybersyn was trying to build (Swann 38)

Augusto Pinochet managed to wrest control of the country away from the democratically elected president Salvador Allende, and his cabinet then laid the grounds for a new form of technocratic power, even if avowedly scrapping Project Cybersyn in the process. From this moment forward, financial coups and further encroachment of business ventures and government regulations facilitated the emergence of new organizations steeped in neoliberal politics outside the UK and US governments, which followed closely the Mont Pelèrin Society ideology, such as the World Economic Forum (WEF), established in 1971 by business policy expert Klaus Schwab:

> It grew into a large-scale gathering of 'world economic leaders' in the early 1980s, including top transnational capitalists but also high-ranking politicians and heads of key international governmental organizations (IGOs) that manage the neoliberal regime at the global level, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank"
> (Springer et al. 42)

This and other institutions of such nature would give birth to multiple public-private partnerships to govern efficiently, and that would divorce civil society from their public institutions and politicians. William K. Carroll and J.P. Sapinski concede as much:

> The sprawling transnational networks of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Mont Pelèrin Society (MPS)[,] and WEF are

> complemented by a configuration that links many of the world's major capitalists to each other and (. . .) leading sites of neoliberal political agency. Indeed, ICC, MPS, and WEF represent just three nodes within a much broader network that rests on multiple types of links – corporate board interlocks created by directors sitting on the boards of other corporations and policy groups, direct corporate funding of policy groups, and intercorporate ownership webs – all of which help integrate the Transnational Capitalist Class" (43)

In the field of Latin American studies, this neoliberal autocratic reign has also been acknowledged by Jon Beasley-Murray, who, in his book *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America*, argues that "neoliberalism is a response to and radicalization of civil discourse" (75). Furthermore, he reasons that even literary or, more broadly, cultural studies are not distinct from "civil society theory" (75) because media saturation and constant polling and monitoring of the population's opinions and stances undo the democratic process in favor of a business mentality of valorization that encompasses all of the societal activities:

> Civil society theory is caught in the paradox that it relies on the enthusiasm of social actors for its appeal and credibility, but it is forced to stigmatize that same enthusiasm as "democratic fundamentalism" in order to maintain the complex hierarchy of separate spheres upon which civil society depends. Neoliberalism resolves that paradox in a smooth, featureless space that dissolves all mediations: nothing should stand in the way of a perfect communication between citizens and the state. In the process, civil society disappears, subsumed within the state's machinery to replace multiplicity and singularity with unity and consensus. The dreams of liberal rationality and communicative action are conflated and superseded.
> (Beasley-Murray 76)

Not dissimilarly from this Latin Americanist, Patrick Dove chooses to fix his attention on Roberto Bolaño's novel *2666* first to acknowledge the egregious labor situation and mistreatment that *maquileras* —or lower-paid female workers employed by multinational corporations in the border between Mexico and the United States— must endure. Secondly, he attests to "the growing power of drug cartel and human trafficking

gangs throughout Mexico and Central America in the first decades of the new millennium (*Literature and 'Interregnum'* 262). Resulting from his afterword, and in alignment with this new era of political disenfranchisement inaugurated by the Mont Pelèrin group, Patrick Dove concludes by affirming that these cartels fill "a vacuum left when the modern state abandoned its double regulatory role: of relations between the global and the local and between social particularities within national border" (262). In place of the Chicago School of Economics, as was the case of Chile in the 1970s, the Mexican border in the first few decades of the new millennium appears captured almost single-handedly by drug cartels enacting their state of exception, even if functioning outside the veneer of respectability that social or liberal democracies, with their respective governments, technically enjoy. In Latin American Studies, this neoliberal sensibility has also been expounded in the last few years by the likes of John Beverly and Alberto Moreiras, who see the socioeconomic conjuncture of the late 2010s as eminently conservative in the wake of 9/11 and the Patriot Act in the United States, for the former, and as a failure of the imagination to revamp the university as an institution predicated on knowledge, rather than as a business, for the latter.[26]

When Norbert Wiener quipped that there were no answers but only cross-references, the era of machine learning and cognitive mapping had officially started. The

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[26] Alberto Moreiras expresses it thus in *The Exhaustion of Difference* (2001): "A certain aporetics has become everyday currency. Average non– Latin American Latin Americanists must hear, as a constant background murmuring, that their efforts to think Latin America from their location in the cosmopolitan university have, as a damning condition of possibility, their all-too-comfortable installation in the methodological trends and fashions of world-hegemonic university discourse. The problem is not that those trends and fashions are foreign, but rather that they are excessively familiar as ''foreign.'' Latin American Latin Americanists can invariably confront their boreal counterparts with the disquieting thought that, whatever the intended novelty in their discourse, it is never novel enough" (6).

search for meaning, rift with aporias, and intrinsically unending in scope, does not concern the age of information. In the humanities, the changes happening both in the economy and through technological advances took the form of what would be called postmodernity. Shortly after the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard published his seminal book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), the less scientific disciplines —primarily as in not following a scientific method— remained the only ones where a hermeneutical search and debate over the truth of an event did not quickly give way to a "commodification of knowledge" (32). In replacement for interpretation, both scientists and scholars alike came to legitimize each other in a back-and-forth of peer-reviewed publications. As Sinisa Malesevic states, "The problem of cultural relativism is its insensitivity towards particularities within the particular. In other words, by assuming that a certain group of people or society share the same 'regime of truth,' one remains totalist on the level of the particular" (68). A current suspicion maintains that any regime of truth a society chooses to follow circles back to a knowledge source already externalized to a machine improving upon continuous feedback. As computer engines and artificial intelligence take over rationalizing the world and making it readable, even if not entirely comprehensible, this new intelligence reduces its users to informational consumption. This capitulation to machine learning and neural networks can be traced to the foundational era of cybernetics, a time when Norbert Wiener, John von Neumann, Claude Shannon, Warren McCulloch, and other researchers from different fields joined forces under the auspice of the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation (1946-53). In the series of conferences that ensued, these luminaries, Katherine Hayles adduces, reimagined human beings according to the technological advances to come: "Henceforth, humans were to be

seen primarily as information-processing entities who are essentially similar to intelligent machines" (*How We Became Posthuman* 7). As I write these pages, the movement toward a biodigital convergence that we are undergoing presumes that the human species constitutes a vector in the operating system that needs adaptation to the new economy. This is where the Mont Pelèrin Society and information theory shake hands since the former economists mirrored the parents of cybernetics in that they had, from the outset, the goal to bring to fruition the control societies that Gilles Deleuze describes toward the end of his career, whether it is by subjecting the populous to debt (neoliberals) or by understanding human bodies as programmable machines (information theory). Indeed, "the premise of cybernetics was a powerful analogy: that the principles of information-feedback machines, which explained how a thermostat controlled a household furnace, for example, could also explain how all living things—from the level of the cell to that of society—behaved as they interacted with their environment" (Kline 1-2). Consequently, neoliberal politicians and businesspeople resort to the laws of the market on the one hand and too big data and artificial intelligence, in the case of information theory, to structure the world order.

Dividual: The Subject of the Information Age

The other theoretical term underpinning this dissertation is the concept of the dividual. To that end, an explanation of cybernetics in the 1950s and the current information science is needed. In a world of multiple contesting narratives, one can narrow down complexity to the level of a single voice of authority —like the narrators of our Latin American novels do— or accept the superiority of new media and technology

to store and support the retrieval of information that desktop lives necessitate. Devices like the smartphone with the in-built algorithm, including the shuffling of a song on Spotify or the YouTube podcasts and Discord blogs that one should follow based on the different likes, facilitate the curtailing of reality into the most exact set of opinions, tastes, and desires tailored to where your attention shifts to. In societies of control, a dividual is the subject introduced and immersed into this constant feedback loop of the machine. At the same time, the individual would be the self that is recreated and updated with every new recommendation and the time spent consuming them.[27] Unlike new media, literature lingers with open-endedness and protects the dividual as a network of bodies in motion. In contrast, we know that physiologically, new media —and I am referring here to a mostly visual medium— activates the dopamine receptors in your brain and operates in alpha waves which lull the viewer into a peaceful state of inattention.[28]

The dividual is then the result of an exchange economy where the human animal, along with its cognitive mapping, wrestles with collective forces that create paradigms around science (functions), culture and the arts (affects), and philosophy (concepts). It differs from the individual in that its agency presupposes the collective, and its actions are still bound to the violence and order that this majoritarian logic manifests if they are

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[27] The work of Julian Hopkins deals with the dividual in relation to social media. His book, *Monetising the Dividual self: The Emergence of the Lifestyle Blog and Influencers in Malaysia*, explores the emergence in Malaysia of lifestyle bloggers – precursors to current social media "microcelebrities" and "influencers." It tracks the transformation of personal blogs, which attracted readers with spontaneous and authentic accounts of everyday life, into lifestyle blogs that generate income through advertising and foreground consumerist lifestyles. It argues that lifestyle blogs are dialogically constituted between the blogger, the readers, and the blog itself, and challenges the assumption of a unitary self by proposing that lifestyle blogs can best be understood in terms of the "dividual self".

[28] See this Harvard's article on the dopamine feedback loop that keeps social media users glued to the screens: "Dopamine, Smartphones & You: A battle for your time" (Haynes, 2018).

not in acquiescence with a majority. Out of this consensus and in lockstep with cybernetics, the dividual is a collection of signifying chains immersed in constant reworking and becoming. This ideological ambiguity resembles a chaos of voices that a post-picaresque aesthetic anxiously foresees in all creative writing. Therefore, the narrators in the following narratives attempt to obtain control by seducing the reader, almost propagandistically by way of that first-person usage, and in so doing, resist characterization or subsumption into the inessential or the flow of everydayness. This power [puissance] of the first-person narrative and language to forge order out of chaos is the gesture of the dividual and, even more so, the aesthetic of the post-picaresque that inspires this dissertation.

Dividual as a term has its roots in the disparate fields of anthropology and economics as well as philosophy, as evinced from the late work of philosopher Gilles Deleuze. In his late article "Postscript on the Societies of Control," the French philosopher examines three different historical stages vis-à-vis modalities of power. First, following his friend Michel Foucault closely in his analysis, he describes "societies of sovereignty" as those whose "goal and functions were (. . .) to tax rather than to organize production, to rule on death rather than to administer life" (3). The second historical stage that he lays out goes by the name of *disciplinary societies*, which Foucault locates "in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" but do not reach their zenith until the outset of the twentieth. In them, Gilles Deleuze states what follows:

> The individual never ceases passing from one closed environment to another, each having its own laws: first, the family; then the school ("you are no longer in your family"); then the barracks ("you are no longer at school"); then the factory; from time to time the hospital; possibly the prison, the preeminent instance of the enclosed environment. It's the prison that serves as the analogical mode (3)

Disciplinary societies, claims Deleuze, can be said to always be in crisis, in need of constant reform, and they operate around two poles, "the signature that designates the individual, and the number or administrative numeration that indicates his or her position within a mass" (5). Gilles Deleuze continues by stating the following:

> The disciplines [disciplinary societies] never saw any incompatibility between these two [the signature and the number] because at the same time power individualizes and masses together, that is, constitutes those over whom it exercises power into a body and molds the individuality of each member of that body ("Postscript" 5)

However, the individualized signature and the administrative numeration lose ground in control societies. They are primarily replaced by code, either as in the coding that people currently learn to build the metaverse or as a password that we log in to our multiple applications. Deleuze explains here how the dividual is born:

> The numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information or reject it. We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become "dividuals," and masses, samples, data, markets, or "banks." Perhaps it is money that expresses the distinction between the two societies best since discipline always referred back to minted money that locks gold in as numerical standard, while control relates to floating rates of exchange, modulated according to a rate established by a set of standard currencies (*Postscript* 5)

This dividual is indeed divided, fragmented, and severed from the continuity of life offered by disciplinary societies to bring order to everydayness. Deleuze's transactional example finds an echo in the study of economics, and it is also inextricably bound to the neoliberal regime that both the Mont Pelèrin society and the cybernetic group started to conceive in the aftermath of World War II. The financialization of the economy that occurred under the auspices of Anglo-American capitalism, Ivan Ascher says, has brought about changes that make the use of the term dividual necessary:

> [Financialization] entailed not only the erosion of formerly mutualized relations of risk and protection but also as an enclosure of the market itself– – an enclosure that is inseparable from the emergence of a distinctly neoliberal order in which people are not simply disciplined as individuals capable of alienating their labor power in exchange for a wage, but are also constructed as (. . .) "dividuals," (. . .) whose credibility or probability can similarly be measured, abstracted, and exchanged. (Ascher 88)

Following French Theory by way of Deleuze and Foucault, Ivan Ascher explains the transition from disciplinary societies to control societies:

> Capitalism before financialization required the production and reproduction of a liberal, laboring subject —one whose capacity to work could not only be measured but also bought or sold— today's financialized capitalism and associated mode of prediction would seem to be similarly dependent on the existence of a probable man— a Homo probabilis, that is, one who can both count and be counted upon. (89)

Professor Ascher observes that this process toward financial liberalization can be exemplified by the two Latin American countries in this work, Brazil and Argentina. The latter country took a step toward neoliberal policies shortly after Chile's coup with the Financial Entities Law in 1977. Fernando José Cardim de Carvalho, a proponent of Keynesian economics in Brazil, explains that "this piece of legislation allowed the formation of universal banks, stimulating the formation of financial conglomerates" (124). Along with it, "the authorities gave incentives to increase the degree of concentration in the industry [since] it was expected that taking advantage of scale and scope economies would lead institutions to operate more efficiently" (125). Shortly after this "process of external financial opening" (125), Argentinean banks were authorized in December 1978 "to accept deposits by non-residents denominated in foreign currencies" (126). This "experimentation with liberalization," as Cardim de Carvalho expresses it, "ended in a large wave of capital flight and a huge crisis at the beginning of the 1980s" (126). However, Argentina was hardly the only country suffering an economic depression

around that time. Following the global oil crisis of 1973, Latin America entered a debt crisis, dubbed to this day as *La Década Perdida* [The Lost Decade]. In the case of Brazil, financial liberalization did not begin until 1988, "with a banking reform." Still, Cardim de Carvalho admits that "many loopholes in the financial laws ended up allowing financial institutions to conglomerate and form universal banks all but in name" (127). This privatization reform, which took place soon after the official end of the long dictatorship that plagued Brazil (1964-85), was proposed for pragmatic reasons, recounts Cardim de Carvalho:

> Under high inflation, real government tax revenues were being eaten by the rapid rise in prices. The federal government was on the verge of bankruptcy and was thus unable to make the necessary investments in the sectors it controlled, such as telecommunications, railways, power generation, and so on (128)

The reform allowed "former commercial banks to develop their securities trading activities [and] non-bank financial institutions transformed themselves into universal banks in order to receive demand deposits to be able to participate in the public securities primary markets" (128). Thanks to this financial policy change, the authorities running the government managed to guarantee a market for public securities at a time when the Brazilian domestic economy was "starved of tax revenues" (128).

The effects of financial liberalization are present in all the novels to varying degrees. Brás Cubas, as a slave landowner in late nineteenth-century Brazil, embodies proto-liberal ideas from the European Enlightenment era and mercantilist notions predicated upon self-interest proposed by the likes of John Locke or Voltaire. In Clarice Lispector's novel, the main character, Macabéa, sees herself forced to leave her small town of Alagoas in the northeast area of Brazil to have some chance at a future in the big

city of Rio de Janeiro, where she becomes struck by Coca-Cola ads and all sort of commercials in the radio, specific to privatization of the public sphere. Saer, the writer behind *El entenado* [*The Witness*], himself the product of migration, was forced into exile because of the tumultuous political situation in his native Argentina under the Peronist era. He lived most of his life in Paris. At the same time, neoliberal policy reforms were carried out, culminating with the election of Peronist Carlos Menem in the 80s, following the reforms I have just specified. Finally, the 2000 novel *Boca de lobo* [*The Dark*] describes extensively the effects of the transition from disciplinary societies to control societies that both the French philosophers Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze thoroughly analyze.

These national policies explored in the cases of Argentina and Brazil pose a larger question about the nature of the dividual and its relation to neoliberalism. The turn to a digital economy, the strengthening of the banking industry, the pervasiveness of monetary speculation, as well as the explosion of public debt with every financial crisis since at least the oil crisis of 1973 are all features of a society governed by forces reporting to the transnational capitalist class (TCC). This conceptualization holds in the work of NYU professor Arjun Appadurai, who made use of the term dividual to understand the current era of financial capitalism and the way the average citizen is governed by debt:

> I have (. . .) shown that the mortgage crisis [of 2007-8] opens to our view a pattern of predatory dividualism, in which the slicing and dicing of individuals into a variety of risk-bearing scores is then bundled up (securitized) to make the bundled dividuals the bearers of an increasingly abstract and systemic risk in which their capacity to unite as individuals is irretrievably eroded. Furthermore, all current forms of resistance, through unions, class actions, debt refusal movements, regulatory actions, shareholder protests, court cases against insider trading, and other forms of

> redress against the predatory dividualization of the regnant derivatives market are doomed to fail because their architecture poses the moral force of the individual against a process of dividualization that they neither understand nor endorse. Against this logic, the only fruitful alternative can come from efforts to harness our progressive potential as dividuals against the predatory dividualization of the financial markets. This is, in the first instance, a politics of consciousness, in which we must begin by exploring the global archive of dividualist cosmologies (Appadurai 145-6)

I must note at this point that Appadurai's use of dividualization in the derivative markets will be different from the term dividuation. In this work, the latter term will signal singularities within a semiotic matrix immersed in time, or erstwhile put, as the precondition to the individual. In the same book, *Banking on Words: The Failure of Language in the Age of Derivative Finance*, Arjun Appadurai contrasts the term individual to the dividual and explains how they differ:

> I am referring to a more radical and less visible process whereby the broad social canvas in which the Western individual (both as category and as social fact) dominated society has been eroded and thinned out in favor of a more elementary level of social agency, which some have called the "dividual." The dividual is not an elementary particle (or homunculus) of the individual but something more like the material substrate from which the individual emerges, the precursor and precondition of the individual, more protean and less easy to discern and to name than the individual, which is one of its structural products (. . .) The erosion of the individual and the rise of the dividual is largely an effect of the workings of financial capitalism since the early 1970s and, in particular a collateral effect of the spread of the derivative form as the quintessential tool of making money out of uncertainty in this era of financialization. The form of dividualism produced by financial capital is ideal for (. . .) masking (. . .) inequality, for the multiplication of opaque quantitative forms that are illegible to the average citizen, and for the multiplication of profit-making tools and techniques, which can escape audit, regulation, and social control. In short, the dividualism that financialization (. . .) presumes and enhances is counter to the interests of the large majority of society. But it is also irreversible. Thus, rather than argue for a return to the era of the composite (or canonic, or classical) individual, I propose a new form of politics, which can create radically new forms of collective agency and connectivity that can replace the current predatory forms of dividualism with truly socialized dividualism. To make this journey, one needs a fuller understanding of the idea of the dividual. To think the dividual, we must unthink the individual.

> This is no easy task, but one way to understand the post-Enlightenment conception of the individual, on which much ink has been spilled, is to see it as the crystallized product of many centuries of gradual convergence in the West between the idea of the actor, the agent, the person, the self, the human soul, and the human being. Each of these categories can be provided with a distinct Western genealogy, composed of elements that can be traced back variously to the Greeks, the Romans, the Christians, the Jews, and a multitude of subtraditions, countertraditions, and hybrid traditions that have grown up around these major traditions. (Appadurai 101-2)

Anthropologists such as Arjun Appadurai, Sabina Hess, Karl Smith, or Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, media studies professors like Julian Hopkins, philosophers or art theorists like Gerald Raunig, Michaela Ott, Anaïs Nony, or Peter Szendy all took on the task of expanding on Gilles Deleuze's concept of the dividual, to whom I ascribe its coinage. They have communally shed light on our historical present by foregrounding our shared dividuality, which I also refer to under the mantle of *affective rationality* or *precarious relationality* in the different chapters. However, contemporary literary criticism has largely failed to grasp the question of the dividual. I am using the term at once historically, following the digitization of the economy and the advent of neoliberalism, but also in terms of work and its relation to time. Drawing on Maurizio Lazzarato's concept of *immaterial labor*, I contend that the debt economy relies on divvying up time[29] as well as assets, not unlike what Zeno of Elea performs in the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise whereby the former can never catch up to the bony shell reptile. Immaterial labor —"the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (132) — refers to two different aspects of labor:

> On the one hand, as regards the "informational content" of the commodity, it refers directly to the changes taking place in workers' labor processes in

[29] The TV show Severance (2022) on Apple+ contains the premise of the compartmentalization of self by means of surgically severing the work hours from the rest of the worker's life.

> big companies in the industrial and tertiary sectors, where the skills involved in direct labor are increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control (and horizontal and vertical communication). On the other hand, as regards the activity that produces the "cultural content" of the commodity, immaterial labor involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as "work" — in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion. Once the privileged domain of the bourgeoisie and its children, these activities have[,] since the end of the 1970s[,] become the domain of what we have come to define as "mass intellectuality (*Immaterial Labor* 132-3)

Amidst an endemic pandemic, the digital world has become part of everyday life to an extent never seen prior. Capitalism and its unrelenting need for valorization mean that every sphere of human activity, from dawn to dusk, becomes subject to value production.[30] The idea behind immaterial labor that I am borrowing from sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato is inextricably bound to the debt of nations and individuals, but also to the dividual caught in cyberspace, a platform which blurs the lines of structured time, as in e-mails needing response after work hours. Even if avowedly speculative, this accelerating digitization of the economy and the neoliberal regulations that will be put in place with the metaverse (both for labor and leisure) and its commodities (non-fungible tokens, or NFTs), facilitated by blockchain technology, will render immateriality visible, palpable, and ultimately readable for profit. The Italian sociologist explains the relationship between the debt economy and decision-making clearly in another work, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*:

> The credit relation does not mobilize physical and intellectual abilities as labor does (material or immaterial, it makes no difference), but the morality of the debtor, his mode of existence (his "ethos"). The importance of the debt economy lies in the fact that it appropriates and exploits both chronological labor time and action, non-chronological time, time as choice,

[30] Jonathan Crary has brilliantly shown the never stopping nature of the digital exchange economy in his book *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (2013).

> decision, a wager on what will happen, and on the forces (trust, desire, courage, etc.) that make choice, decision, and action possible.
> (*The Making* 55)

In the Latin American narratives I introduce here, the dividual will not be the direct result of digitization, but the actual human condition of a species in constant becoming. I will first describe the picaresque historical demise in the upcoming chapter on Machado de Assis. In *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, I articulate the theory that the borrowed ideas about liberalism incorporated into Brazilian society do not match the reality on the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Likewise, Machado de Assis performs an inversion of picaresque stories in Brazilian literature by using the humorous tone of a *malandro* [rogue] in a character that is not working class nor disadvantaged, up-and-coming, nor disenfranchised, which I regard as anti-picaresque or constative of a dark picaresque aesthetic, formally speaking. I will then bring Lispector's and Saer's stories into the fold to introduce dividuality to contemporary literary criticism. These two chapters, the third and fourth, will develop the ontological features of the dividual (division, partition, and participation) in contradistinction to the overarching narrative laid out with the help of Arjun Appadurai, Gilles Deleuze, and others in this Introduction. I will elaborate a post-picaresque aesthetic in my reading of those novels that counters the cynical writers of Chapters 2 and 5, informed by (neo)liberal subjectivity predicated on self-interest. The fourth and final Argentine novel from the turn of the twenty-first century will bring to bear the tensions between material labor and immaterial labor, industrial societies and post-industrial societies, disciplinary and control societies, and the dividual versus the individual. *Boca de lobo*, the last novel of this dissertation, will bring back the conversation to the picaresque as a genre and myth that the valorizing logic of

capitalism has appropriated. The proto-liberal and neoliberal positionality of the second and fifth chapters provide a frame to the limitations of the picaresque spirit and hence adumbrate the necessity of a dividual mentality to continue the work of resistance to exploitation and unchecked powers wielded by international organizations and special interests. These four stories will hopefully provide an appropriate assessment of why the picaresque is, in my eyes, defunct, why a post-picaresque sensibility has come to dominate the literary and media-related fields in a digital economy, how the enjoying and studying of literature need not be divorced from one another, and what theoretical, legal, and ethical challenges this new dividual horizon presents for critical thinking.

CHAPTER 2

PARASITISM AND THE PICARESQUE IN MACHADO DE ASSIS'S *MEMÓRIAS PÓSTUMAS DE BRÁS CUBAS* [*EPITAPH OF A SMALL WINNER*]

"Though we may be able to sit underground forty years without speaking[,] when we do come out into the light of day and break out, then we talk and talk and talk."

——Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*

This first chapter aims to unravel the transposition of Enlightenment ideas from Western Europe to Brazil through the lens of Joachim Maria Machado de Assis and the character of his eponymous novel, Brás Cubas. In the process, I unearth the indissociable relationship between plantation owners, secondhand ideas of liberalism, and the silence concerning slavery from those in power. I also examine the first-person narrator, his humor, and how it contrasts the cynical portrayal of Brazil's Imperial society and the insouciance with which this depiction is communicated to the reader. Stylistically, Brás Cubas's loquacity showcases a talent for responding with moral ambiguity and sophistry to arguments against the shady actions that the perpetrator (himself), and not the people he consorts with, brings forward amid the narration. What makes my argument new in literary criticism is that I understand this stance as an inverted picaresque or dark picaresque that hides its class-laden connotations since Brás Cubas is a member of the Brazilian elite —rather than an orphan using trickery to survive in dire circumstances— who uses humor to relieve himself of any blame or responsibility for the privilege and moral implications of his social standing. To do so, I will study Brás Cubas's interactions with the various characters based on his conversational style, tone, and running commentary from the narrator himself. I will also remark on the Brazilian counterpart to

the Peninsular pícaro, the malandro, how they overlap, and what distinguishes them, and see if any aspect of *malandragem* can be recorded in *Memórias póstumas*. Toward the end of the chapter, I explore how Machado de Assis, while obliquely critiquing the state of affairs by depicting an amoral character like Brás Cubas and even more openly with short stories like "Pai contra mãe" (1906), came under fire for not confronting slavery more openly. Despite, or maybe because he was a mulatto writer and the president of the Academy of Letters in Rio de Janeiro, he received criticism for not standing up for abolitionists' rights.[31] I will hence address the claims made by the abolitionists and how the author of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* dealt with these attacks from his peers. I will then explore the eugenicist ideas, resulting from an adherence to positivist ideology and Malthusian theory, that Machado de Assis' slanderers either espoused or for which they were at least apologists.[32] I will finalize the chapter by comparing Brás Cubas as a character to the hazardous life of the author to dispel any criticism toward his persona and give the novel its due as a response to his detractors.

As many scholars have remarked, it is imperative to acknowledge the extensive reading that Machado de Assis had done of European writers from previous centuries, from Cervantes to Molière and Voltaire, from Sterne to Stendhal. Alongside these

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[31] After his death, and as his national and international fame kept growing, several writers from later generations would pay their homage to him, even if begrudgingly, as in the case of the poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade or the novelist José Guimarães Rosa, who were reticent to praise. See the São Paulo Research Foundation article "Revisiting Machado de Assis" by Christina Queiroz (Oct. 2019) and the embedded YouTube video for more information concerning the opinionated responses to Machado de Assis and his writing by 20th-century modernists. Andrade's comments about Machado can also be found in *Sobre a tradição em literatura* (1925), while Guimarães Rosa's appear in Diário de Hamburgo (1939).

[32] Putting aside this minor controversy, Machado de Assis, and in particular the novels he wrote after his epileptic breakdown, became canonized to the extent that they are assigned as compulsory reading in public schools across Brazil.

canonical writers, one could argue that he was also indebted to José de Alencar, author of the indigenist novel *Iracema* (1886), whom he met and eventually friended. Still, it is maybe Manuel Antônio de Almeida's *malandro* (rogue) from the novel *Memórias de un sargento de milícias* (1852) that can be seen as a preamble to Brás Cubas. Stylistically, both novels have in common the urban setting and some metalinguistic features, such as digression and interest in interpolating the reader. However, they depart from one another because Brás Cubas writes in the first person singular. Hence, the reader is taken in as an accomplice of the amoral worldview he demonstrates throughout the novel.

This second chapter also bears responsibility for anchoring the dissertation from a historical standpoint. As the introduction expounded, the picaresque as a concept underwent many changes in the centuries following the publication of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554). Those transformations have only sometimes included Latin America since any historicity regarding literature has also been dominated until relatively recently by a pro-European bias. However, Brazilian literary critics like the recently deceased Antonio Cândido promoted a character that is distinct yet of the same lineage as the rogue of the Iberian Peninsula, the *malandro*. As stipulated throughout the chapter, the consummate example of *malandragem* (roguery) in Brazil is Manuel Antônio de Almeida's Leonardo in *Memórias de um sargento de* milícias (1852), translated to English as *Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant*. This Brazilian realist character would be repurposed by Machado in *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881) since the new protagonist, while preserving some of the characteristics of the *malandro*, such as mischievousness, irreverence, and a disdain for lawfulness, would also showcase them as parallel to the ruling elite of his time. This last story hence starts a defacing process of the

original rogue of the Iberian Peninsula. The humor that an incipient rogue orphan would inspire had to do with his working-class position and his desire to climb the ranks of Spanish society. The subversion of this plot can be exemplified by way of Brás Cubas, who, as a landowner using puns and the general playfulness of language to invest in intellectual capital, remains faithful to his status and stature within the Brazilian empire, a position that afforded him a comfortable existence. In part, this chapter claims Brás Cubas as a character who best encapsulates the demise of the picaresque in Latin America as a subversive anti-hero. The rhetoric expounded by Machado de Assis in this book, I claim, expresses the cynicism that accompanies classical liberalism both from the standpoint of economics and politics. Words such as democracy, liberty, freedom, and individual rights turn sour and hollow in Brás Cubas. The narrator relies on his oratory, which resembles a skilled politician's, to lure the reader into compassion for the deceased landowner. This ploy, while disingenuous, remains effective based on the humor and intelligent witticism that the character deploys in the self-congratulatory narrative. The following excerpt serves as an example of this feature:

> Talvez espante ao leitor a franqueza com que lhe exponho e realço a minha mediocridade; advirta que franqueza é a primeira virtude de um defunto. Na vida, o olhar da opinião, o contraste dos interesses, a luta das cobiças obrigam a gente a calar os trapos velhos, a disfarçar os rasgões e os remedos, a não estender ao mundo as revelações que faz à consciência; e o melhor da obrigação é quando, à força de embaçar os outros, embaça-se um homem a si mesmo, porque em tal caso poupa-se e vexame, que é uma sensação penosa, e a hipocrisia, que é um vício hediondo. Mas, na morte, que diferença! Que desabafo! Que liberdade! Como a gente pode sacudir fora a capa, deitar ao fosso as lentejoulas, despregar-se, despintar-se, desafeitar-se, confessar lisamente o que foi e o que deixou de ser! Porque, em suma, já não há vizinhos, nem amigos, nem inimigos, nem conhecidos, nem estranhos; não há plateia. O olhar da opinião, esse olhar agudo e judicial, perde a virtude, logo que pisamos o território da morte; não digo que ele se não estenda para cá, e nos não examine e julgue; mas a nós é que

> não se nos dá do exame nem do julgamento. Senhores vivos, não há nada tão incomensurável como o desdém dos fundos
> (*Memórias póstumas* 81)

> The reader may be taken aback by the frankness with which I expose and emphasize my own mediocrity; he should recall that frankness is the primary virtue of a late man. In life, the gaze of public opinion, the clash of interests, [and] the struggle between rival greeds oblige us to hide our old rags, to disguise splits and stitches, to not extend to the world that which we reveal to our conscience; and the best of this obligation is when, by dint of deluding others, a man deludes himself, because in this case he is spared humiliation, which is a painful sensation, and hypocrisy, which is a ghastly vice. But in death, what a difference! What an unburdening! What freedom! How we can shake off our cloaks, toss our spangles into the gutter, unbutton ourselves, unpaint ourselves, unadorn ourselves, confess plainly what we were and what we failed to be! Because, after all, there are no more neighbors, nor friends, nor enemies, nor acquaintances, nor strangers; there is no audience. The gaze of opinion, that piercing, judicial gaze, loses all its power as soon as we set foot in the territory of death; this is not to say that is doesn't reach this far, examining and judging us; but it is we who have no compunctions about the examination or the judgment. My good living sirs and madams, there is nothing so incommensurable as the disdain of the deceased (*The Posthumous Memoirs* 68-9).

As already announced, the apparent humor in this novel fragment comes from the narrator's prerogative to opine on whichever topic without fear of repercussion. Brás Cubas disguises the disdain for the bourgeois society of his day with mockery, and he adduces that he can afford to perform the takedown of his class because of his deceased status. Like the Joker, to mention a fictional character from the big screen or the infamous ramblings of serial killer Charles Manson, he exudes the confidence of the person who puts the truthfulness of their statements before anything else. In characteristic roguish fashion, though, contrary to the other two examples, Brás Cubas does it from an unlikely figure, a wealthy businessman. As ironically as one would expect from the picaresque tradition, the character who calls out the imposture of the genre by the end of the nineteenth century is someone who does not belong in it and yet adopts its rhetoric,

nonetheless. For this very reason, I chose Brás Cubas and *The Posthumous Memoirs* to be the leading story of this book since the subversive aspect of the picaresque ends with him in Brazilian literary history. Traditionally a trope of the oppressed classes, humor is used in this episodic novel by an influential member of the Brazilian elite to justify his own life and legacy. This signifies the ultimate subversion of the picaresque, and with it goes the genre's demise in nineteenth-century modernity. Brazilian letters, and Machado de Assis, contribute to the picaresque genre by engaging with its finitude. Rather than a dividual narrative, *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* highlights and celebrates one of the main bastions and interpreters of liberal ideology in nineteenth-century Brazil (Brás Cubas, a slave landowner) who defends classical economics, positivism, and eugenics, which are all characteristics that will see their successive spin in neoliberalism (neoclassical economics, neopositivism, population control).

Considered by scholars and neophytes alike as the foremost writer in Brazil, Machado de Assis remains obscure to the majority of Brazilians, who read him at an early age as high schoolers and never revisited him after that, thus feeding the narrative of Machado as a difficult and untouchable literary writer. His biographic accounts may only help a little since he was much of a reclusive figure with his wife until her passing in the district of Cosme Velho. Despite being the son of a freed slave and despite his mulatto condition,[33] he rose to prominence with the assistance of some friends in the Brazilian Academy of Letters. His erudition knew no bounds, and he demonstrated throughout his career how well-read he was and how he incorporated other cultures into

[33] The term mulatto could have a negative connotation but was more often used simply to designate a multiracial individual of African and European descent.

his own and adapted them to a Brazilian setting. Indeed, he was far from being a mere scribbler. He was a rebel in the sense that he defied the norms of realism that were found to be ruling the art of literature. He would reserve veiled yet scathing criticism toward the racialized scientific theories that held legitimacy at the time of most of his publications, and he mordantly went against the hypocritical class relations that the Brazilian empire and Portuguese colonization had inspired, and which saw their continuation during the First Republic starting in 1889.

Moreover, and most notably, he accomplished this despite his mulatto condition, and this will be the vantage point from which I look at racial inequality in Brazil in the late nineteenth century, the writer Machado de Assis himself. However, since he willingly secluded himself from society for most of his life, one must rely on his writings to explain the Assis phenomenon. Why would he choose not to join the ranks of anti-abolitionist writers and instead write only obliquely about the predicament of people of color in Brazil, as his peers sustained? Is this a knock on his stature as the most celebrated writer in Brazilian history, as some scholars in his lifetime provocatively suggest?[34] Rather than outright dismiss or accept the criticism against him, I will refer to how Machado de Assis produces this oblique style that ensnares his writing in a hermeneutical play with reality. In doing so, I will look at his most influential novel, *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881), and the main character himself, Brás Cubas, to understand how the criticism was leveled at Assis and how we are then to contrast

[34] Sérgio Romero (Spencerian liberal) and José do Patrocínio, who accused him of being anti-black, were Machado de Assis's most prominent detractors during his lifetime.

Machado de Assis's writing to how he positioned himself among his peers and within Brazilian society.

Overturning the Picaresque: Brazilian Roguery

The picaresque feature of most significant importance to my analysis, other than the formal aspects that both *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* and *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* share, hinges on how their writing fits into the genealogy of literary history. Similarly to economics, developing countries like Brazil have played second fiddle in the historicity of literature as a branch of information technology and an ideological apparatus. Moreover, Brazilian letters have been even more in the shadows than their Spanish-speaking counterparts in Latin America, as the 1960s literary Boom and literary production about Latin Americanism illustrate.[35] However, a less regionalist and more holistic view of literature must encompass the history of the novel in Brazil as well, and not merely the history of this country as a nation-state or its progression from a Portuguese colony to the current fast-developing country.[36] Moreover, it is what Machado de Assis demands from the reader in *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* as the first-person narrator interjects reference after reference regarding European literary history. Machado de Assis's narrative concerns are indeed paradoxical, and more so in the novel that pertains to us, since the many conversational topics that Brás Cubas engages with do

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[35] See the third volume on the history of Latin American Literature by Roberto González Echevarría to give one an idea of the relative cultural isolation of Brazil from the rest of Latin American countries.

[36] See *Brazil: A history* (2019) for the newest and most concise account of the country's ethos and development.

not offer a counternarrative to an imperialist, colonialist, or Eurocentric logic, nor do they merge with what would become, in time, the Brazilian vanguard artists' desire to valorize the indigenous past as a mark of artistic preoccupation and novelty.[37] Machado de Assis's mulatto heritage would not foresee him becoming a writer called up to giving a continuation, as well as a subversion and a distillation, of the picaresque as both *genre* and *myth*. However, I claim that he achieves this through the novel *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*. To know how this argument builds itself, I need to first define the picaresque as both genre and myth so we can establish the grounds for the thesis about Machado's writing and, by extension, Brás Cubas as a rogue. Alexander Blackburn takes up the challenge in this manner:

> I am not proposing an absolute guide for identifying and defining a picaresque novel. The very existence of a literary genre such as the picaresque presupposes certain recognizable characteristics of content and technique. Let the hero be an orphan, let him relate his adventures in a more or less sardonic manner, let him wander into delinquency, and so forth—and we are orbiting in the picaresque galaxy. For genre, that may be enough, or almost. What seems to be needed is some distinction between genre and myth. That is, if picaresque genre may be viewed as traditional model or conventional pattern, then let us view picaresque myth, as Claudio Guillén [and later Lázaro Carreter] declares, "as an essential situation or significant structure derived from the novels themselves. Whereas both genre and myth assume continuities, those of genre are more concerned with technical characteristics, those of myth more concerned with cultural characteristics. Thus, technically considered according to genre, the picaresque novel has its central tradition in certain Spanish narratives but thereafter becomes a subgenre of the modern novel, a tributary of increasingly casual impact and significance. Although useful, the genre approach finally leaves readers and critics sprawling before the probable truth of the proposition that picarism is the contemporary, post-World War II ethos of Western culture. From genre we turn to myth, and suddenly the myth of the picaro expresses and shapes, through the participation of readers who understand themselves in a correlative way, a story that is culturally conspicuous, however infrequently or incompletely imitated (Blackburn 7)

[37] I consider the Semana de Arte Moderno in São Paulo (1922), Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928), and Tarsila do Amaral's body of work.

Whenever we deal with language and words, one must come to terms with its slipperiness, and Alexander Blackburn notices this problem as he points out the continuities between what he considers genre and his actual interest, which lies with the political and cultural ramifications of the genre, that is, what he calls the *myth of the pícaro*. This association with a mythical characterization on the part of the rogue —as a myth, it is not required to use the Spanish term any longer— recalls literary manifestations like the anti-hero of the post-romantic or decadent artistic movement. Alexander Blackburn aims then to historicize the development of that myth in Anglo-German cultures after the birth of the genre in the Iberian Peninsula. However, and even if the novel as we understand it today did begin around the sixteenth century with Cervantes' creation of Don Quixote,[38] myths themselves have a much larger history, which is why the pícaro could then go by the name rogue, anti-hero, fool, trickster, hustler, and appear in previous renditions of artistic ingenuity, be them in writing or the oral tradition. The conversation and the debate could be more extensive in scope and veer away from the limitations of this chapter, so it might be easier to regard a story as picaresque insofar as it negates the didactic force of the Bildungsroman,[39] anti-Platonic to

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[38] See Walter L. Reed's *An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic versus the Picaresque* (1981).

[39] Neither Zephyr Frank nor Kenneth Jackson use the term picaresque to describe *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas.* However, the latter does notice its anti-Bildungsroman aesthetic: "In terms of genre, Brás's memoir is the inverse or parody of a bildungsroman given that it documents his faults and failure to educate himself at every step in life, and now, writing beyond time, he is filled with regrets. The very success of Machado's novel is posited in its failures" (Jackson 225). Zephyr Frank, on the contrary, chooses to put aside the satirical aspect of the narrative, which moves in fits and starts and does not offer continuity and decides to highlight instead the fact that Brás Cubas did receive a Bildung (which I believe he misconstrues here for a simplified version of the German word as the expected 'education' of an upper-class man in nineteenth-century Brazil: "What is revealing from the point of view of *Bildung* is the sequence

the extent that it refuses notions of virtue, and anti-illusory because of its loyalty to materiality rather than subjective preeminence. This definition cuts against an idealist trend and imposes an affirmative look at the writing as a formal artifact aiming to blunt overarching narratives. Furthermore, Brás Cubas constitutes a blow to this mythical characterization because the point of view is one of privilege and discontinuity rather than about ascription to chronological and straightforward storytelling. *Tristram Shandy* (1684)[40] has been known to perform this resistance to order and narrative development

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of steps Brás takes along his path to adulthood. The first school, a *colégio* in Rio de Janeiro, where he meets Quincas Borba, a friend who will exercise some influence over Brás in the years to come; then the first kiss and affair with Marcela, the "Spanish beauty"; culminating, finally, in Brás being sent away to university in Coimbra, Portugal, by his father, in no small part to break the connection between Brás and his lover. An utterly conventional trajectory" (Frank 47-8).

[40] I mention this English novel specifically because it appears in Memórias Póstumas and because there is no doubt that it was of utmost relevance for Machado de Assis as he wrote the book I am analyzing. Also, not incidentally, both stories use the human nose in terms of shape and size to make humorous comments. In the English book, Tristram Shandy is obsessed with its physiognomy and what their variations would represent. In contrast, for Brás Cubas, looking at the tip of your nose represents equilibrium and mental health —which would satirically stand for lack of vision and an overall inability to look beyond one's own needs, in this case, Brás Cubas's. Judge for yourselves: "A conclusão, portanto, é que há duas forças capitais: o amor, que multiplica a espécie, e o nariz, que a subordina ao indivíduo. Procriação, equilíbrio" (*Memórias póstumas* 84) "The conclusion, therefore, is that there are two major forces in society: love, which multiplies the species, and the nose, which subordinates it to the individual. Procreation, equilibrium" (*Epitaph of a Small Winner* 89). I would also be remiss not to mention how in the eighteenth century, and more so with the positivism of Auguste Comte in the nineteenth, physiognomy became a way to scientifically determine what good genes were or who was a proper subject to the state and who could be deemed mad, so there is an implicit eugenic darkness to discussing noses as well, as Noelle Gallagher asserts: "Many imaginative representations of venereal disease, including Sterne's in Tristram Shandy, built on these associations between nose shape and social identity, drawing together qualities—blackness, Jewishness, infection—that would later form the underpinnings of scientific racism and eugenics. Within the eighteenth century, noses came to assume a powerful metonymic significance, standing not just for venereal infection but for the wider social dangers that venereal disease could represent. In novels, poems, plays, cartoons, and caricatures, the deformed nose was used to depict a boundary between the diseased and the healthy that could run parallel to the boundaries between classes, races, and species—boundaries that seemed to some, much like a syphilitic's nose, in imminent danger of collapse." (153)

before Machado de Assis, but transposed to Brazil; these formalist traits become enshrined in the economy of favors and debt that traverses the *Memórias*:

> In The Posthumous Memoirs the themes of self-love, vanity, dignity, and money, as they apply to the asymmetrical relations between individuals, are intertwined and how they generate social and moral debts (which, perversely, are impossible to fulfill for those of humble condition), such as the relations of benefice or favors—themes that are repeatedly expressed through a vocabulary associated with economy, the use of which is far from being neutral. This language contaminates everything it touches, like an infamous Midas. Once they acquire their market value, feelings, gestures, and attitudes depreciate. Everything praised in the moral and affective sphere has its nature distorted. (Vilar 456-7).

As Bluma Waddington Vilar correctly indicates, an economy of favors where enslaved black people sustain unpayable debts forms part of the background in *Memórias Póstumas* from start to finish. Even if Brás Cubas is the opposite of the debtor in this instance, his character has incurred a debt to actual hustlers and tricksters who lead an existence without the possibility of a future. The struggle remains forever in the present for the dispossessed. In contrast, for Brás Cubas and his landowner class, this fight for survival is devalued into episodic tales of fancy wisdom soundbites. More importantly, Machado de Assis channels the stories of these disenfranchised characters and replaces them with a lineage of *bon vivants* and up-and-coming imposters, as evinced by his references to Tristram Shandy, Tartuffe, and Julien Sorel.

Realism Contested: The Post-picaresque

Some difficulties arise when it comes to characterizing *Memórias póstumas* from the perspective of genre, which I already came to contest as a concept in the Introduction following the ideas of Todorov, Bakhtin, and other Russian formalists who saw fragmentation and tonal blending (heteroglossia and dialogism) as features which made

thematic unity around a single genre démodé if not altogether obsolete. The notion of genre, then, had already been derided with the turn of the twentieth century. They understood that novelists could not reproduce the entire society like Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, and others did in the previous century. However, the question regarding realism in Machado de Assis' production comes under scrutiny in literary critics' circles.[41] Earl E. Fitz voices this debate arising from the formal features of the novel[42] and the turn in Machado's narrative style with the publication of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*:

> Machado de Assis's 1880 novel, *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (MPBC), offers the critic a fascinating problem in literary history and interpretation. An eclectic work that freely mixes highly diverse forms, styles, and techniques, it catches the eye of the literary historian primarily because of its strikingly avant-garde style, structure, and Weltanschauung, for it possesses numerous technical and philosophic features which make it seem to have been written much later than it was (. . .) This singular work has begun to generate a critical debate over how it should be interpreted, specifically, whether it should be read as a "realistic" novel, apropos of its own time or, as this study will argue, as an essentially "modernist" text written some forty years before its time ("The Posthumous Memories of Brás Cubas"" 8)

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41 There is even a book by Gustavo Roberto dedicated solely to the realist question in Machado de Assis: see *O problema do realismo de Machado de Assis* (Gustavo Bernardo, 2011).

42 Earl Fitz has written extensively and laudatorily about *Memórias póstumas* in many of his publications. In his book *Machado de Assis and Narrative Theory*, he expresses the opinion that the Brazilian writer achieved a "new poetics of the novel" with this Brás Cubas biography: "The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas offers the reader nothing less, I believe, than an entirely new "poetics of the novel," one in which constant semantic play lies, restively but, in terms of the true human experience, also realistically, at the heart of it all. And I propose, this was done entirely by intention on Machado's part; this was the gist of his new narrative theory, and it directly determines the nature of the "new novel" that he now wanted to write. Machado shows his reader of the time, just as he shows us now, that this basic uncertainty about how to interpret life is true for language but is also true for human existence, which is, here and in his later novels, Machado will more and more suggest, overwhelmingly a function of language and how we use it." (70)

Similarly to the debates about what the picaresque entails, there are endless conversations regarding the naturalist, realist, and modernist elements of this Machadian period of his career as a novelist. Earl E. Fitz had previously examined Machado's "modernists" aspects and had argued that Machado de Assis should be regarded as one of the major innovators of "modern" Western narrative, as the "missing link" between the realism of Flaubert and the modernism of Joyce (para *Machado de Assis* 54). Alfredo Bosi agrees with the North American scholar that Machado's style moves away from the realist novelists of the nineteenth century —he was friends by correspondence with Portuguese writer Eça de Queiroz— with *Memórias póstumas*:

> Se os contemporâneos de Machado (Eça, Aluísio, Pompeia) dialogavam estilisticamente com os realistas e naturalistas (Flaubert, os Goncourt, Zola, Maupassant), o narrador das cabriolas de Brás Cubas se comprazia em reinventar a composição em vaivéns, as caixas de surpresa, o estilo joco-sério e a soltura da frase de Sterne, de Xavier de Maistre, de Garrett, desarticuladores da sintaxe clássica e criadores de uma escrita digressiva, metanarrativa, autoirônica. O que é uma das faces da sua modernidade, esse conceito proteico. (Bosi 115)
>
> If Machado's contemporaries (Eça, Aluísio, Pompeia) entered into stylistic dialogue with the realists and the naturalists (Flaubert, os Goncourt, Zola, Maupassant), the narrator of Brás Cubas's adventures would take pleasure in reinventing the story shiftily, like surprise boxes, in the jocose-serious as well as skillful sentence that Sterne, Xavier de Maistre, Garrett, are known for. They disjoint classical syntax and they create a digressive style of writing the includes metanarrative and self-irony. This is in fact one of the sides of modernity, that protean concept [translation is mine]

Alfredo Bosi highlights here characteristics of the novel that jump out at the reader in each of the episodes: the running commentary, the intellectual and somewhat obscure humor, the fullness of references to the books that have informed his subjectivity, and a general ease of heart that could probably be in line with writing from

the grave. It is not strange then that the Jewish folk humor of the *schlemiel*[43] (which has a long history but features heavily in Woody Allen[44] films and characters, or even more famously in the TV show *Curb Your Enthusiasm* starring Larry David) might find its way into Brás Cubas persona. Jewish cultural history has featured textual interpretation (Talmud) as an important pedagogical element, which has gone along with the seriousness of their religious books and a self-deprecating component (the folksy schlemiel). Meanwhile, Machado de Assis spent much of his time reading fiction after one of his epileptic episodes,[45] which helped him broaden his knowledge of literary history and traditions as much as it nurtured the textual interplay he performs with all of them in *Memórias póstumas*. One of the more remarkable examples of humor in the novel, and one which both successfully manages to justify Brás Cubas's voluble nature and attest to his capacity for joyful banter, happens when Quincas Borba, his friend,

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[43] Schlemiel (Yiddish: שלומיאל; sometimes spelled shlemiel or schlemiel) is a Yiddish term meaning "inept/incompetent person" or "fool". It is a familiar archetype in Jewish humor, and so-called "schlemiel jokes" depict the schlemiel falling into unfortunate situations (Wikipedia).

[44] Woody Allen acclaimed the novel and considered it one of his favorites: https://g1.globo.com/pop-arte/noticia/2011/05/woody-allen-lista-obra-de-machado-de-assis-entre-suas-favoritas.html. I am also not the only critic to mention the comparisons between the neuroticism of either Woody Allen or one of the many alter egos present in his filmography, on the one hand, and Brás Cubas, on the other. This is what Nathaniel Wolfson observes regarding their way of dealing with temporality: "Much like the alternative protagonist Brás Cubas, the unnamed narrator of "The Looking Glass" [a short story by Machado de Assis] is a Woody Allen type, a neurotic narrator, who leaves the reader puzzled and wondering whether indeed his work is "supinely philosophical, but a philosophy wanting in uniformity, now austere, now playful, a thing that neither edifies nor destroys, neither inflames nor chills, and that is at once more than pastime and less than preachment"." (139)

[45] "It is clear that Machado presented localized symptomatic epilepsy with complex partial seizures secondarily generalized of unknown etiology. The seizures which began in infancy or childhood had remission in adolescence and then recurred in his thirties and became more frequent in his later years. His depression got markedly worse with age. In our opinion, the greatest consequence of Machado's epilepsy, was his psychological suffering due to the prejudice of the times." (Guerreiro 378)

finally explains to him in Chapter 117 the long-awaited philosophy which he calls Humanitism. After a first attempt, to which Brás Cubas expresses confusion, Borba goes on into a lengthy exposition where Indian Brahmans and self-love come into the picture:

> Explicou-me que, por um lado, o Humanitismo ligava-se ao Bramanismo, a saber, na distribuição dos homens pelas diferentes partes do corpo de Humanitas; mas aquilo que na religião indiana tinha apenas uma estreita significação teológica e política, era no Humanitismo a grande lei do valor pessoal. (*Memórias póstumas* 166)
>
> He explained to me that Humanitism was akin to Brahmanism in one respect, to wit, the distribution of men through the various parts of humanity's anatomy, but what in the religion of India had only a narrow theological and political significance constituted in Humanitism, the great law of personal value. (*Epitaph of a Small Winner* 170)

The fact that personal value could be associated with Brahmanism creates an argument in favor of the permanence of a caste system, or more appropriately, and in the context of the Brazilian empire of the early to mid-nineteenth century, which is the time when the novel is set, a justification for the perpetuation of nobility as the elite class. The fool Quincas Borba, who is gnawing at a chicken wing as he proceeds with his peroration, believes that envy is virtuous, that his philosophical system would do away with pain, and what is more, that wars are indeed desirable —which is in line with the adage that all wars are bankers' wars following the supposed Brahman thesis— and, finally, that Quincas Borba, the philosopher gets to reap the benefits of these wars thus:

> Olha: a guerra, que parece uma calamidade, é uma operação conveniente, como se disséssemos o estalar dos dedos de Humanitas; a fome (e ele chupava filosoficamente a asa do frango), a fome é uma prova a que Humanitas submete a própria víscera. Mas eu não quero outro documento da sublimidade do meu sistema, senão este mesmo frango. Nutriu-se de milho, que foi plantado por um africano, suponhamos, importa-do de Angola. Nasceu esse africano, cresceu, foi vendido; um navio o trouxe, um navio construído de madeira cortada no mato por dez ou doze homens, levado por velas, que oito ou dez homens teceram, sem contar a cordoalha e outras partes do aparelho náutico. Assim, este frango, que eu almocei

> agora mesmo, é o resultado de uma multidão de esforços e lutas, executados com o único fim de dar mate ao meu apetite
> (*Memórias póstumas* 167-8)

> Just consider war, which to many persons seems to be a calamity, is really a desirable activity –a snap of Humanity's fingers, so to speak. Hunger (and he sucked the chicken wing philosophically), hunger is a discipline to which Humanity subjects its own viscera. But the sublimity of my system really requires no better documentation than this very chicken. It was fed on corn that was planted, let us say, by an African imported from Angola. This African was born, grew up, was sold; a ship brought him here, a ship built of wood cut in the forest by ten or twelve men and driven by sails that eight or ten men wove, not to mention the rope and the rest of the nautical apparatus. Thus, this chicken on which I have just lunched is the result of a multitude of efforts and struggles carried on for the sole ultimate purpose of satisfying my appetite
> (*Epitaph of a Small Winner* 177)

Here Quincas Borba finalizes his becoming fool with outrageous argumentation, but like all fools, they are also in the process of truth-telling, and in a short chapter of the novel, he essentially defends the proto-liberal society of Brazil at the time, and he explains how he becomes the recipient of goods and services thanks to slave labor, which serves him, the enjoyer of the ultimate result of that commercial and capitalist enterprise, with the surplus value embodied in a chicken wing. The foolish rhetoric of Quincas Borba then disguises the dark picaresque present behind the humor, which, upon superficial reading, is not so easily spotted. This aspect of the narrative contributes to dismantling the ascription of *Memórias póstumas* to the realist genre. The novel possesses tonal polyphony as a byproduct of the interplay between humor and seriousness, and this is because a closed reading adumbrates a hidden conservative and imperialist messaging that is concealed in the pagan and carnivalesque laughter of Quincas Borba.

David K. Jackson, who wrote a Machadian biography, claims that Machado de Assis had a "central role in transforming literary realism into modernist prose" (x). However, he distinguishes a period of his literary career when he was able to carry out this transformation to fruition, which he names his "mature phase":

> The most important advances in Machado's so-called mature phase, which convey directly into the twentieth-century modernist novel, are the predominance of irony and humor, textual self-consciousness and play with the reader, intensive use of references and symbols, probing of hidden psychological states and conditions, and mastery of the art of narration through techniques of distancing from immediate reality. The author's incontrovertible, if at times invisible, control of his subject matter is applied to the act of reading as a self-conscious theme. Machado feigns substituting his own authorship with character- narrators who are themselves masters of deceptive rhetorical strategies. Brás Cubas, Bento Santiago, and Counselor Ayres each pen retrospective memoirs in their attempts to reconstitute and justify their lives. From the outset, each account conceals ulterior motives and psychological problems, whether to excuse the narrator's own deficiencies or to control the reader's interpretation or both. Machado, the dramatist, is the creator and director of their staged memoirs. By abandoning explicit authorship, Machado creates multiple possibilities of reading; space opens between the ostensible real world and the narrator's world, between the social world occupied by the characters and their interior dramas, and between the narration and the external author's interventions (Jackson 53)

In this passage, Professor Jackson strongly claims against realism in *Memórias póstumas*. The courtroom motif holds special interest here based on the historical roots of the picaresque that I laid out in the Introduction. All of the novels I examine in this essay have a component that goes along with first-person narratives. They have no other voice that could contest the protagonist's rhetorical prowess, and *Memórias póstumas* is no exception. Starting from the premise that life is a process of dramatization, these characters, and in this instance, Brás Cubas, as the lone narratorial voice of the novel, tells the story preempting an imaginary audience and their judgment concerning his behavior. His reactive conduct reveals the multiplicity of drives that this subject juggles

to deliberate the ideological space of possible individuation. He is largely apologetic, acting as his defense attorney, and this is striking because it is through his sole stream of consciousness that the whole novel could be read as an attempt at validating his form of life as morally acceptable. This constant appeal to justifying one's actions and the self-reflection that precedes it installs itself firmly in modernity. Not even three decades earlier, the American poet Walt Whitman had penned the poem "Song of Myself," where he exclaims: "Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes)" (101). Then again, this questioning attitude can be put into practice to have a more nuanced view of a particular event, or it can be a motif for evading responsibility and reinforcing the rhetorician's bias. Sophistry then can enter the imaginary courtroom that I have been pointing to as a possible deceitful misdirection that an unreliable narrator may introduce into the narrative to confuse the reader about their intentionality. Sophistry is a discursive strategy predicated upon bad faith and, most importantly to the matter at hand, a narrative device opposed to realism. This literary movement prides itself on objectivity. Brás Cubas communicates between the lines that he may not be entirely truthful in his account of events but that his humor will compensate for his roguishness to such an extent that any or all reservations the reader may have about his conduct will be washed away in their memory. Following this logic, Brás Cubas demonstrates a post-picaresque sensibility because he perceives the reader condemning him as morally reprehensible. Yet, he exercises his charm to be absolved from the imaginary courtroom he creates in these same appeals to the reader. In the context of this second chapter, the rogue becomes a liberal individual dramatizing his selfhood to support his self-congratulatory view of existence.

Published in the form of a newspaper serial (*folhetim*), very common in the nineteenth century, *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881) is comprised of a series of seemingly inconsequential vignettes and fleeting remarks from the protagonist, an enslaver and well-to-do individual in the times of the Brazilian empire. The reader is led to believe the narrator's fickleness provides an understanding of the brevity of the different chapters. Brás Cubas tells his "autothanatography" (Wolfson 139) in a non-linear way. For instance, the first time he brings Virgília into the story, the so-called love of his life, Brás Cubas, had already known her for the better part of two decades. He does so in a contrast between what he surely had to care about while alive as a slave landowner, congressman, and member of the Brazilian upper class —the slavery system and the stock market— on the one hand, and the earthly pleasures and memory of Virgília, which he highlights, on the other:

> O que por agora importa saber é que Virgília–-- chamava-se Virgília–-- entrou na alcova, firme, com a gravidade que lhe davam as roupas e os anos, e veio até o meu leito. O estranho levantou-se e saiu. Era um sujeito, que me visitava todos os dias para falar do câmbio, da colonização e da necessidade de desenvolver a viação férrea; nada mais interessante para um moribundo. Saiu; Virgília deixou-se estar de pé; durante algum tempo ficamos a olhar um para o outro, sem articular palavra. Quem diria? De dois grandes namorados, de duas paixões sem freio, nada mais havia ali, vinte anos depois; havia apenas dois corações murchos, devastados pela vida e saciados dela, não sei se em igual dose, mas enfim saciados. (*Memórias póstumas* 11)

> The important thing now is to know that Virgília —her name was Virgília– – entered the room resolutely, with the gravity supplied by her clothes and her years, and came up to my bed. The man rose and left. He was a fellow who used to visit me every day to talk about the exchange, about colonization, and about the need to develop the railroad system; nothing, of course, could be more interesting to a dying man. He went out. Virgília remained standing; for some time, we merely looked at each other. Which of us would speak the truth? Of two great lovers of two boundless passions, nothing was left after twenty years; there were only two withered hearts,

> devastated by life and sated by it, perhaps not in equal degree but definitely sated (*Epitaph of a Small Winner* 14-15)

In this passage, Brás Cubas appears hard at work self-fashioning himself as a devotee to this woman, Virgília, above anyone else, let alone a probable employee or friend he allows in his house to talk about the economy. This is because he chooses to emphasize his various sexual conquests —later on, the reader learns that it fills him with joy that people would start realizing that Virgília was cheating on her husband Lobo Neves with him—[46] over the business he runs, which effectively obscures how he affords his lavish lifestyle. This class-based characteristic distances Brás Cubas from Manuel de Almeida's malandro and the subversive roots of the picaresque genre. Brás Cubas is the product of both the Enlightenment and the colonial structures put in place by the Portuguese colonizers. Resulting from this marriage of ideas, and not so paradoxically, the first-person narrator introduces himself as a man of letters who has earned his

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[46] In Chapter 82, Brás Cubas recounts his coming to accept and even enjoy that people are starting to learn about his affair with Virgília: "Virgília era um belo erro, e é tão fácil confessar um belo erro! Costumava ficar carrancudo, a princípio, quando ouvia alguma alusão aos nossos amores; mas palavra de honra! sentia cá dentro uma impressão suave e lisonjeira. Uma vez, porém, aconteceu-me sorrir, e continuei a fazê-lo das outras vezes. Não sei se há aí algum Hobbes ou Spinosa que explique o fe-nômeno. Eu explico-o assim: a princípio, o contentamento, sendo interior, era por assim dizer o mesmo sorriso, mas abotoado; andando o tempo, desabotoou-se em flor, e apareceu aos olhos do próximo. Simples questão de botânica" (*Memórias póstumas* 129) (Virgília was a beautiful transgression, and it is so easy to confess a beautiful transgression! At first I grew surly when I heard allusions to our love; but—I swear to you!—I felt a soft, flattering sensation inside. Once it so happened that I smiled, and I kept on doing so on subsequent occasions. I do not know whether anyone can explain this phenomenon. My explanation is as follows: my contentment, for as long as it remained within me, was itself a smile, but a smile in the bud. As time went on, it bloomed into flower and appeared to the eyes of others. A simple matter of botany) (*The Posthumous Memoirs* 202). I must add that I resent that no translation of the books adds the names of either political philosopher Thomas Hobbes or Baruch de Spinoza but replace them with 'anyone.' Brás Cubas brings up these authority figures to contrast their breadth of knowledge with his sardonic wit, which does not have intellectual ambition. In other words, he is taking pride in the fact that he is cuckolding Lobo Neves or in the fact that people know about his affair with Virgília, and this alone makes him happy, which is, as he so succinctly says, a matter of botany, this is, something which is simply and easily understood.

position in society. Freed from the burden of making a living, Brás acts as an anti-hero and works actively against the tradition of Bildungsroman.

Whereas the character of the Bildungsroman needs to progress toward self-realization, nothing suggests a rationale for Brás Cubas's actions, whether in pursuit of a woman or in sharing daily occurrences. Instead, everything in *The Posthumous Memoirs* hinges, as Roberto Schwarz attests, on *caprice*:

> Among the most spectacular aspects of the Memoirs is the ''temperamental'' treatment handed out to space and time. The absolute tone of volubility is, in the nature of things, due to a relative position, that is, to disrespect for realist convention, which, even though abused and insulted, is still taken for granted as the norm. And, in fact, at first sight, the dead narrator and the ''arbitrary'' manipulation of the chronology appear to be an insult to verisimilitude and common sense, and to their correlate, the mimetic status of literature (Schwarz 132)

Volubility and caprice are two terms that appear most throughout Roberto Schwarz's study of Machado's main novel. It captures the essence of a rogue for whom actions are fanciful and whose landowning privilege grants him the ability always to behave carelessly. Yet, in consonance with the elitist overtones of his narratorial stance, he finds recourse in his erudition to speak about the different topics that prick his interest, as is the case at the beginning of Chapter 8, where he pits reason against stupidity:

> Já o leitor compreendeu que era a Razão que voltava à casa, e convidava a Sandice a sair, clamando, e com melhor jus, as palavras de Tartufo (. . .) Mas é sestro antigo da Sandice criar amor às casas alheias, de modo que, apenas senhora de uma, dificilmente lha farão despejar" (Machado 45-6)

> My reader has no doubt understood that this was Reason, who had returned home and invited Folly to leave, crying out the words of Tartuffe, and with better reason than he (. . .) But Folly has an old habit of becoming accustomed to houses that are not her own; once she has made herself at home, it is not [an] easy task to expel her (Machado 52-3)

As mentioned, one of the many features in this passage is breaking the fictional barrier by addressing the reader. Still, it is in personifying abstract concepts such as folly and reason —a Medieval trope seen in books such as *El libro de buen amor*— along with reference to a character from a seventeenth-century French play (Tartuffe) that Brás Cubas's behavioral pattern comes entirely into view. Notwithstanding his noted and apparent disengagement from the toils of existence, he channels both anthropomorphism and Tartuffe's mischievous personality to blur the lines of seriousness and laughter. Traditionally speaking, this duality has been clearly defined and goes unquestioned, not unlike that of nature and nurture. Binaries are abstract thoughts' default logic once expressed verbally or put into writing. Against this habit, Brás Cubas establishes a narrative arc that lacks a clear narrative structure, and he even calls into question the same value judgments that the memoir consolidates. Take the end of the novel, for example, where he posthumously summarizes a life considered inconsequential (non-transcendent):

> Este último capítulo é todo de negativas. Não alcancei a celebridade do emplasto, não fui ministro, não fui califa, não conheci o casamento. Verdade é que, ao lado dessas faltas, coube-me a boa fortuna de não comprar o pão com o suor do meu rosto (. . .) Somadas umas coisas e outras, qualquer pessoa imaginará que não houve míngua nem sobra, e, conseguintemente que saí com quite da vida. E imaginará mal; porque ao chegar a este outro lado do mistério, achei-me com um pequeno saldo, que é a derradeira negativa deste capítulo de negativas: Não tive filhos, não transmiti a nenhuma criatura o legado de nossa miséria. (*Memórias póstumas* 234)
>
> (This last chapter is all negatives. I didn't attain fame with my plaster, I wasn't a minister, I was no caliph, and I never knew marriage. It is true that, alongside these lacks, I was granted the good fortune of not having to earn my bread with the sweat of my brow (. . .) What with one thing and another, anyone might imagine that there was neither want nor surplus, and consequently that I came out even with life. And he would imagine wrongly; because, upon arriving at the other side of the veil, I found

> myself with a small sum, which is the final negative in this chapter of negatives: I had no children; I did not bequeath to any creature the legacy of ourmisery (*The Posthumous Memoirs* 156)

The novel's end averts meaning-making as much as the beginning when the narrator introduces himself to the reader from the afterlife. A reader who is not a critic could say the tone is humorous, and even if that were a general perception, it would not take away from the fact that he is desacralizing life and death while also blunting nihilism. Machado de Assis masters ambiguity in language by way of *grammatical adjuncts* and *paradoxes*. In this fragment, he is taking stock of his life, and then he realizes that he has led a privileged time on earth, even though he did not become famous. In other words, the spirit of Brás Cubas appears to have made peace with death, as if he were an accountant balancing benefits and losses. However, he then proceeds with *e imaginará mal* [the reader would be wrong]. Here, he implicitly disagrees with the imagined judgment of the reader and contests it because he did take with him something to the afterworld, yet it is something he believes negative, that is, he was childless. In financial terms, he argues, there was no expenditure. He did not come out even with life because he did not help continue *nossa miséria* [our misery] or humanity's time on earth. Machado de Assis elicits a suspension of interpretation because he makes language trip on itself.

On the one hand, Brás shifts gears with *e imaginará mal* (grammatical adjunct). Then he brings out the paradox when he establishes a correlation between the surplus of being childless, perceived as a negative, and the continuation of our misery, understood as implicitly positive. This drawing away from expectations akin to common sense makes him a slippery narrator and reveals a desire in the storyline for contrarian logic. A

thorough and unimpressionable reading of *Memórias Póstumas* reveals a character, Brás Cubas, whose facetiousness turns paradoxes into a dead end rather than a beginning for questioning his societal status and relatedness to those less fortunate than him. He demonstrates to be well-read and more than able to throw puns and even mock his persona. Still, these an-archic impulses also insinuate a plunging of meaning-making into willing chaos and disconcertedness. The narrative's digressive paradigm and the economically related lexicon that is preferred throughout confer upon the story a seemingly inconsequential mood, and hence the affective force that the plot engenders — dead rich Brazilian landowner speaking from the grave— is rendered flat, and its dark underbelly nullified. Nevertheless, it is important to note how Brás Cubas's book dedication carries with it a gothic strand[47] common in the romantic literary movement: "Ao verme que primeiro roeu as frias carnes do meu cadáver dedico como saudosa lembrança estas memórias póstumas" (*Memórias póstumas* 19) "To the worm that first gnawed at the cold flesh of my cadaver I dedicate as a fond remembrance these posthumous memoirs" (*The Posthumous Memoirs* xiv). In a single sentence and once again, the apparent contradiction present as a result of contrasting a corpse that is cold and in a high entropy state with the fond dedication of the book to a worm, instantly averts a possible negative affect and, in place of it, the narrative voice proposes an absurd yet imaginative resolution to a conflicting image. A constant curbing of expectations and narrative conventions, on the one hand, as well as a rejection of Nietzschean *ressentiment*

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[47] The Comte of Lautréamont and Edgar Allan Poe's literary atmospheres are appropriate contrasting examples in this case since it is clear that at no point during the story does Machado de Assis attempt to fall into a noir-like narrative tone or plot line, even if he invites grotesque aspects because of the bluntness and self-disclosing nature of the narrator.

on the other, attest to another characteristic of the post-picaresque aesthetic: a *revocation of the hero paradigm* that suffuses much of romantic and modernist literature. Undoubtedly, stories continue to be told after Machado de Assis's death where characters partake in picaresque elements or features. However, I do not intend to carve a neat chronological timeline whereby the picaresque genre disappears from literary studies altogether. The development of the novel as a literary medium and the contribution of Russian formalists to literary criticism at the beginning of the twentieth century already adumbrated an era of genre fragmentation. The post-picaresque aesthetic serves in part the purpose of formally separating the picaresque of the Iberian Peninsula from the novels of the current project. This does not preclude the possibility of other twentieth-century novels recalling features of the Renaissance picaresque, even if they manifest themselves differently.[48] As I explained in the Introduction, the demise of the picaresque has both a genre and a myth component. I continue to point out the latent demystification of this genre, mired in the increasing rationalization of daily life, on the one hand, and the inoperability of the picaresque subject as a mythical concept on the other, which becomes a dividual node —physical and digital— in the capitalist machine of proprietary accumulation, overproduction, and consumption.

Inescapable to the bizarre construction of sense in *Memórias Póstumas*, I also perceive a dismissal or simply a forgoing of the romantic literary movement. In

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[48] Plenty of other canonical stories from the 20th century have a solid picaresque component, like the novel *Confederacy of Dunces* (1980) by John Kennedy Toole. An aspect that would disqualify this novel from becoming post-picaresque is that there needs to be self-awareness on the narrator's part, that it is written in a third-person narrative, or that the narrator is reliable. Ignatius J. Reilly is an expert in Medieval culture and embodies the trope of growth and gluttony akin to carnivalesque culture. I argue that his character resembles Don Quixote in his alienation.

Memórias póstumas, there are no apparent signs of the demonic or the wickedness of the soul because the self-aware narrator coerces criticism and impedes the development of the abject or cynical figure. Hence, Brás Cubas prevents overtly fascistic attitudes from taking flight. However, as we have seen with the preceding example of Quincas Borba and others, there is a darkness within the novel that makes the picaresque tale glance a frozen smile of gaiety. I emphasize this because around the same time as Machado de Assis finalized the novel, the first building blocks toward Nazism as an ideology were being built; that is, not only the discourse around Aryan supremacy but the cauldron of ideas based on resentment, nationalism, and a specific interpretation of Charles Darwin's evolutionary biology. Along with them, the twentieth century saw in literature an array of abject heroes who would turn their back on the comic aspect of the picaresque and who instead went on to make their suffering fester while directing their hatred and rage toward the unnamable ill of the zeitgeist. Here the subject (and hence the hero) as a thematic perspective and image of thought are very much alive, as Michel André Bernstein explains:

> It is true that ressentiment and the fantasy of a utopian moment free from all burdens, divisions, and renunciations have existed from the beginning of our culture's self-representation. To put it more strongly, although the leveling rage of the Saturnalia and the truculent refusal to manifest the cultural imperatives of gravitas and self-command have been imagined traditionally as the repressed and secret Other of the dominant culture, that repression was only the thinnest and most transparent of disguises. The disguise was never intended to hide the existence of the underside, but to mask the fact that it already lay within, indeed at the very core of, the culture's most self-idealizing moments. But in the nineteenth century, as Dostoevsky understood more clearly than anyone else, the voices of abject rage ceased even pretending to the status of outside or marginalized positions, and fed by increasingly powerful injections of ressentiment, they sought to present themselves as enunciators of the "sole truth" on which both society as a whole and the consciousness of its most gifted members

> rested. The underground was reinterpreted not as an alternative or disruptive space but as the true foundation of the entire cultural edifice. (Bernstein 173)

One must realize his privileged position in society to understand how a character like Brás Cubas stands outside the picture that Michel André Bernstein paints. Once more, the trickster must be in an underdog position and powerless to effectuate or practice a roguish behavior. Suppose this underlying aspect of class struggle does not manifest itself in Memórias póstumas. In that case, it is partly because the character has nothing to gain from showcasing the slave economy of Brazil in the times of the Second Empire. Brás Cubas hints at negative affect only by omission, and his erasure of racial conflict further illuminates the liberal Enlightenment position premised on the affordance to muzzle the cries of the enslaved lot. However, and as much as Brazil differed from the European nation-states from a liberal, enlightened perspective due to a lack of industrialization and a reliance on slavocracy during the Second Empire, it does not hinder Brás Cubas's ability to justify the existence and preponderance of the ruling class, as well as the clientelist system as a whole. In *Memórias póstumas,* "the whole repertoire of the Enlightenment is subjected to a negative movement and treated as ideology" (Schwarz 128).

Brazilian Carnival and Malandros

As it turns out, *Memórias póstumas* holds within it a genealogy of literary movements, references to pagan and Abrahamic religions, and a critique of the ruling liberal class in Rio de Janeiro in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, the book exists as a palimpsest of influences that tells the novel's tale as the defining genre of capitalism.

However, regardless of the specificity of the sociopolitical system in place, modes of life have more often than not been left by the wayside, and along with them, certain epistemes shape the relations established between the group and the prime unit of economic profitability, the individual. Brazil, in particular, has a history of resistance to oppression unambiguously imbricated to the carnival as a collective and affirmative celebration in favor of liveliness and gaiety while against officialdom and death. In this respect, and after a second look at the trope of writing or speaking from the dead that *Memórias póstumas* showcases, the fact is revealed that it is not without a carnivalesque essence, as Robert Harlan notes:

> I propose that deceased narration cannot be fully understood, either in its authorial context or in the impact it has had on Brazilian readers, without taking into consideration the sociohistorical realities of death culture in Brazil. Given that, traditionally, the dead were expected to intervene on behalf of the living in Brazilian society, Brás Cubas's relationship to both the novel's characters and his reader represents a series of highly problematic interventions from beyond the grave. These interventions have an unsettling and subversive effect upon the reader who expects some degree of moral guidance. Ultimately, Machado inverts the notion of an illustrious spirit guide and makes a parody of the intimate and sacred relationship that existed between the living and the dead. (144)

This passage connects Brás Cubas to the long-standing history of the carnival and its topsy-turvy aesthetic. From medieval times onward, this celebration has been inverting the expectations that Christian culture would have of interacting with life by allowing representations of growth, craving for earthly pleasures, and satirical upside-downs of societal roles through theatrical plays. Professor Moser, even if from another angle than Roberto Schwarz, puts into perspective the nonchalant attitude of Brás Cubas concerning his surroundings. Here is a character that upends the formal logic of the picaresque. At the same time, he instrumentalizes it, a well-off elite member who

rationalizes the logic of existence based on monetary checks and balances, and now as well, a parodic representation of the beliefs[49] that many Brazilians adhere to and from which national festivities gather their strength and following. Shortly after, Moser aims to continue his insightful thesis by describing Brás Cubas himself as "a wayward spirit tormented by a past that remains unresolved, and as such may be viewed metaphorically as the spectral voice of a nineteenth-century Brazilian elite that has lost its moral and ideological bearings" (144). Indeed, the century when *Memórias póstumas* was written was rife with spiritist and occult practices (Alistair Crowley) and hermetic beliefs among the *haut bourgeoisie*, but regardless of class extraction and to the current day (New Age), they claim to solve human mysteries and console those in suffering. My disagreement with Robert Moser comes more from the interpretative leap of faith in his statement about Brás Cubas as a warning of cultural decay.

On the contrary, if the book procures excitement, it is because of the narrative's pervasive, unrepentant, and shameless style. Although there is no denying the indictment in *Memórias póstumas* of the proto-liberal ruling class of Rio de Janeiro, it is no less the case that Brás Cubas, as narrator, achieves two unique goals. First, he makes a mockery of the rules and conventions arising from a plantation-based economy, and he holds at bay the reactionary elements of the class structure with a compelling satire of the afterlife. Second, the fact that this is effectuated through the narrative voice of a talkative and insensitive oligarch should not cloud the vision that animates the story, that is, a

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[49] Robert H. Moser does not mention this in his Machado de Assis chapter from his book *The Carnivalesque Defunto* (2008). Still, the most likely intended critique of spiritism in *Memórias póstumas* should probably include the wild practice of candomblé, a vestige of African traditions at the heart of Brazil as a nation-state.

synthetic appropriation of subversion itself in the form of Brás Cubas as the defender of the established order. Let us then bring the Brazilian rogue (o malandro) to the forefront and see how it contrasts with Brás Cubas.

There is a connection to be traced here between the carnival, the malandro, and Brás Cubas as the figure which facilitates the inclusion of these initial outsider realities into the realm of proto-liberal culture in Brazil. As a way to begin mapping this constellation of events, the celebrated literary theorist Antônio Cândido defines the *malandro* in this clear manner:

> The malandro, like the picaro, is one specimen of the larger genre of the clever adventurer, common to all folklores. We have already noted, in fact, that Leonardo [the main character in *Memórias de un sargento de milícias*] engages in cleverness for its own sake (even when he is trying to get himself out of a tight spot), displaying a love for the game itself, which differentiates him from the pragmatism of the picaros, whose rascality almost always looks toward some gain or some concrete problem, frequently injuring third parties in its solution. This being clever for its own sake approximates "our hero" to the classic trickster, even in his zoomorphic incarnations—monkey, fox, turtle—making him less an "antihero" than a creation that may take some features from such popular heroes as Pedro Malasarte. More erudite models, too, may have influenced its elaboration; but what appears to predominate in the book is the dynamism of the clever characters of folklore. For this reason, Mario de Andrade is right to say that in the *Memórias* there is no realism in the modern sense; what is found is something vaster and more timeless, characteristic of this vein of popular humor. (*On Literature* 83)

In this paragraph, Antônio Cândido drives a wedge between the malandro and the pícaro, whom he perceives and characterizes as a cunning hustler and hence in a more negative light than the youthful and spiritual *malandro*. Barring possible interpretations of why he opposes them so starkly, —I would hazard to argue there is a nationalist bent to the marked distinction— there is no question that the pícaro became associated in common parlance with a petty thief or a societal leech rather than with the anonymous

writers (many of them Jews forced to convert to Christianity) of the Iberian Peninsula. However, there can be no question that Lazarillo de Tormes or Guzmán de Alfarache were paradigmatic initiators of the picaresque genre,[50] which went on to span several centuries under different guises,[51] and that both the picaro and the malandro have their roots in the pre-capitalist trickster of the Introduction. Moreover, the carnival would not be the cultural phenomenon that is known nowadays without *fantasias* [carnival costumes] and a hint of medieval culture as a whole, since it is informed by several premodern factors that connect this pre-Lent celebration to what Professor Antônio Cândido intimates: the phenomenon of shapeshifting, animist culture from pre-industrialized societies, and shamanic rituals.[52] Nowhere do these cultural aspects figure more clearly than in Mário de Andrade, who elevated the *malandro* to great literary heights in *Macunaíma* (1928), making him an ennobling figure fighting for a primitivist culture and against the rationalizing master ideology of progress taking root in the Brazil of the 1920s. Anthropologically speaking, these folk tales bring us back to the oral beginnings of narrative and literature as a tradition. As Antonio Cândido's citation itself demonstrates, Mário de Andrade paid much attention to *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* (1853) *to* symbolize Brazil as adventurous, vivacious, and in tune with its pre-

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50 See Peter Dunn's *Spanish Picaresque Fiction: A New Literary History* (1993).

51 See Alexander Blackburn's *The myth of the picaro: Continuity and transformation of the picaresque novel, 1554-1954* (2014).

52 For an authoritative reading of the carnival and the tracing of its Brazilian genealogy, see Roberto da Matta's *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma* (1991).

colonial past where the *malandro* would emerge as an alternate (since not state official) national standard bearer.

Realism Contested: The Unreliable Narrator

Memórias póstumas (1881) came out in episodic form decades after *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* (1853) but significantly before *Macunaíma* (1928). Despite the formal features that approached Leonardo, the main character from Almeida's novel, to Brás Cubas, the latter has neither the materialist rawness and anti-subjective stance of the early picaresque nor the animist overtones of the malandro as Antônio Cândido defines it or how Mario de Andrade mythologizes it. Brás Cubas allows for subjective musings but of no consequence. He represents the affrontery of a fickle and, ultimately, bored enslaver. He is Brazilian by birth, but nothing indicates his belonging to a community like the other two narratives do. Standing then alone, Brás Cubas translates moneyed interests into a waning of affect as he reduces ideologies to the norm of the exchange economy, where relation equals exchange and community formation declines under the banner of self-interest. In other words, Machado's eponymous novel proposes an urbanite dweller whose rhetoric undermines thought itself. A general aimlessness in the story and Brás Cubas's self-satisfying remarks are their self-fulfilling prophecy, in which the rogue has been defeated because his brand of roguery is institutionalized. However, the type of humor of this character is what separates Brás Cubas from an average callous business person. He uses self-awareness to plead forgiveness from the readers, which aligns with the need for an audience that exculpates

his character's misdemeanors in a theatrical and confessional manner. Take as an example his interaction with the teenage girl Eugênia, whom he seduces:

> A filha, nessa primeira explosão da natureza, entregava-me a alma em flor.
> — O senhor desce amanhã? — disse-me ela no sábado.
> — Pretendo.
> — Não desça.
> Não desci, e acrescentei um versículo ao Evangelho: — Bem-aventurados os que não descem, porque deles é o primeiro beijo das moças. Com efeito, foi no domingo esse primeiro beijo de Eugênia — o primeiro que nenhum outro varão jamais lhe tomara, e não furtado ou arrebatado, mas candidamente entregue, como um devedor honesto paga uma dívida. Pobre Eugênia! Se tu soubesses que ideias me vagavam pela mente fora naquela ocasião! Tu, trêmula de comoção, com os braços nos meus ombros, a contemplar em mim o teu bem-vindo esposo, e eu com os olhos em 1814, na moita, no Vilaça, e a suspeitar que não podias mentir ao teu sangue, à tua origem… (*Memórias póstumas* 99)

> "Will you go down tomorrow?" she asked me on Saturday.
> "I intend to."
> "Don't."
> I didn't, and I added a new verse to the Gospels: Blessed are they that go not down, for theirs is the young ladies' first kiss. And indeed, Sunday brought Eugênia's first kiss—the first any man had taken from her, and not stolen or seized, but given up artlessly, as an honest debtor pays a debt. Poor Eugênia! If you only knew what ideas were wandering through my mind on that occasion! You, trembling with emotion, your arms on my shoulders, contemplating me as your heaven-sent spouse, and I with my eyes on 1814, the thicket, Vilaça, suspecting that you could not flee from your blood, your origin . . ." (*The Posthumous Memoirs* 257-8)

Initially, the reader realizes that he looks down on the girl for several reasons, mostly class-related, but also concerning her physical disability, her limp, which belies eugenicist beliefs. In this first fragment, though, we are exposed to the debt-creditor relationship that I highlighted in the Introduction, of which the proto-liberal Brás Cubas is readily aware and mindful. We can also perceive the condescending tone used toward her, first with the exclamation point and later with the parenthetical concerning her lower

origin as an *agregada*.[53] As Johnny Lorenz observes, "there is no reason to suspect that Eugênia approves of this metaphor or that she herself imagines her kiss as payment" (4). The theme of the unreliable narrator[54] appears here visibly since we "only have access to this kiss through words, and the words belong entirely to our narrator" (4). It transpires that he manages to spend some time alone with Eugênia and that her mother does not catch them in the middle of their intimate encounter, but it is ultimately left up to the reader to draw their conclusions.

I want to show that the reader can find capricious Brás Cubas charming, or at least what technique he uses to garner sympathy from them. Right after this episode with Eugênia, and almost as an aside, he stops the disjointed narration to address whoever might have found the prior chapter offensive to their sensibility. This is how he proceeds in the Chapter "A uma alma sensível-To a Sensitive Soul":

> Há aí, entre as cinco ou dez pessoas que me leem, há aí uma alma sensível, que está decerto um tanto agastada com o capítulo anterior, começa a tremer pela sorte de Eugênia, e talvez… sim, talvez, lá no fundo de si mesma, me chame cínico. Eu cínico, alma sensível? Pela coxa de Diana! Esta injúria merecia ser lavada com sangue, se o sangue lavasse alguma cousa nesse mundo. Não, alma sensível, eu não sou cínico, eu fui homem; meu cérebro foi um tablado em que se deram peças de todo gênero, o drama sacro, o austero, o piegas, a comédia louçã, a desgrenhada farsa, os autos, as bufonerias, um pandemonium, alma sensível, uma barafunda de cousas e pessoas, em que podias ver tudo, desde a rosa de Esmirna* até a arruda do

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[53] "Brazilian society was based on a tripartite division of society into *masters, dependents, and slaves* [italics are mine]. This society had its own logic, obviously, but this did not prevent its having the European system as its model: something that meant it was possible not to ''see'' things that nevertheless lay on the surface. This is nowhere more crucial than in Machado's work—Machado himself, it is worth mentioning, was brought up as a dependent in a ''big house'' on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. The middle group, covering a wide spectrum of more or less humble occupations, many of them shadowed by the permanent threat of destitution, were numerous both in the countryside and in the city: though free in legal terms, they were in fact very often more or less completely subjected to the owner class." (Schwarz xi)

[54] Unreliable narrators write all four novels I study in this work. In this case, it is a strong argument against the realist genre characterizations of this novel.

> teu quintal, desde o magnífico leito de Cleópatra até o recanto da praia em que o mendigo tirita o seu sono. Cruzavam-se nele pensamentos de vária casta e feição. Não havia ali a atmosfera somente da águia e do beija-flor; havia também a da lesma e do sapo. Retira, pois, a expressão, alma sensível, castiga os nervos, limpa os óculos — que isso às vezes é dos óculos — e acabemos de uma vez com esta flor da moita (*Memórias póstumas* 100)

> Among the five or ten people reading me, there is a sensitive soul who is doubtless a bit distressed by the previous chapter, has begun to quake for Eugênia's fate, and perhaps . . . yes, perhaps, deep down, may be calling me a cynic. I, a cynic, sensitive soul? By Diana's thigh! That insult ought to be washed away with blood if blood ever washed away anything in this world. No, sensitive soul, I am no cynic, I was a man; my brain was a theater in which plays of all genres were staged, sacred plays, austere dramas, sentimental works, gay comedies, topsy-turvy farces, morality plays, burlesque—pure pandemonium, sensitive soul, a tumult of things and people in which you might see everything, from the rose of Smyrna to the rue growing in your own backyard, from Cleopatra's magnificent couch to the corner of the beach where a beggar shivers away the night. It was host to thoughts of the most various castes and complexions. Nor was it the sole province of the eagle and the hummingbird; the slug's and the toad's habitats were represented there as well. Take back those words, then, sensitive soul, give your nerves a shake, clean off your eyeglasses—sometimes it's all in the eyeglasses—and let us do away with this thicket flower once and for all (*The Posthumous Memoirs* 258-9)

First of all, I must adduce that the attempt at humor comes from the monological nature of the ongoing rambling, which occurs often enough to become a pattern of his speech acts (*tautology*) since he first inculpates himself of cynicism by way of perceived criticism, only to turn it later around and mock the imaginary *sensitive reader*. He showcases his easy wit —and rhetorical manipulation of the reader— unlike a person of his social standing, who would carry themselves with ceremony and measured gestures and actions. In effect, this demeanor mirrors that of the *gracioso* [a clown or jester from Spanish comedy], or what Northrop Frye called the tricky enslaved person (*dolosus servus*):

> [The tricky enslaved person] is the type entrusted with hatching the schemes which bring about the hero's victory (. . .) In Renaissance comedy he

> becomes the scheming valet who is so frequent in Continental plays, and in Spanish drama is called the gracioso. Modern audiences are most familiar with him in Figaro and in the Leporello of Don Giovanni (. . .) Elizabethan comedy had another type of trickster, represented by the Matthew Merrygreek of Ralph Roister Doister, who is generally said to be developed from the vice or iniquity of the morality plays: as usual, the analogy is sound enough, whatever historians decide about origins. The vice, to give him that name, is very useful to a comic dramatist because he acts from pure love of mischief and can set a comic action going with the minimum of motivation. The vice may be as light-hearted as Puck or as malignant as Don John in Much Ado, but as a rule the vice's activity is, in spite of his name, benevolent (Frye 173)

The trickster from Elizabethan drama would probably fit Brás Cubas the best. In the last two fragments of the novel, the trickster uses the Gospels to bring up sexual relations and erudite anecdotes to justify his conduct in a way that is as irreverent as it is a guise for his capricious nature, which his class status enables him to exercise habitually. Brás Cubas pleads not to be taken seriously, so uncritically and without further analysis, his stance could hardly be contested. He shares fully with the reader that the other characters (in this case Eugênia) should not trust him because he cannot be relied upon, so it is this revelation of the method that can be endearing to the reader.

The Machado de Assis Enigma: Post-Picaresque and Multi-Racial Identity

As much as *Memórias póstumas* poses an uncharacteristic difficulty in terms of elucidation and intentionality, there is an even more significant question mark associated with the figure of Machado de Assis himself. He was of humble background. Son of a mulatto housepainter and a washerwoman, respectively, he and his parents "resided in the home of their employer, Dona Maria José de Mendonça Barrozo Pereira, wife of the then-deceased Senator Bento Barroso Pereira, as dependent workers, or agregados" (Aidoo and Silva 69). His sister died of measles early, and his biological mother died of

tuberculosis when he was barely ten (par. Daniel 66). Furthermore, five years after his mother's passing, Machado's father remarried, this time to a mulatto woman, Maria Inês da Silva. However, he became estranged from his stepmother's side of the family.[55] He eventually became a public servant during Pedro II's reign as the last Brazilian monarch and married Carolina Augusta Xavier de Novais. For this white Portuguese woman, marrying him raised eyebrows and elicited disapproval among her family members.[56] Moreover, in what appears to be an attempt "to avoid bringing attention to this background" (72), Machado de Assis had burnt some correspondence between himself and Carolina.[57] These and other facts that have been gathered about this secretive man indicate an open secret that Jeffrey Needell affirms unambiguously:

> For an Afro-Brazilian such as Machado de Assis (. . .) to achieve a position in the imperial bureaucracy, several things were required that were very rare among the great mass of Afro-Brazilians: literacy, some degree of "whiteness" (a reference to middle- or upper-class status, bearing, and possibly mixed blood), and connections to the elite or respectable people in the middling reaches of society. Machado de Assis had a great deal to offer on all three counts by this time in his life: he was a well-known poet and journalist, a mulat[t]o, and connected to the best literary and political circles of Rio, being personally acquainted with the prime minister [Zacarias] himself (Needell 75)

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[55] Shortly after his death, Machado de Assis was heavily criticized in the Gazeta de Notícias (News-Gazette). He was accused of being indifferent to the plight of slaves and, more concretely, abandoning his stepmother once he moved from São Cristovão to the Laranjeiras district in Rio de Janeiro (par. Daniel 68).

[56] Two of Carolina's siblings, Miguel and Adelaide, felt that Machado's mulatto background would disgrace the family even though he had achieved some recognition as a writer and public functionary (par. Daniel 66).

[57] Although there are no records of Machado's feelings about the controversy surrounding his marriage to Carolina or their life together as an interracial couple, he reportedly gave two friends a box containing letters between Carolina and him written before their marriage. He requested that the box and the letters be burned. For more on the topic, see Caldwell's *Machado de Assis: The Brazilian Master and His Novels* (1970).

There is no question that Machado knew of the importance of race in achieving social status in Brazilian society, yet missing from his writings, whether in earlier career as a writer or in his so-called mature phase, is a head-on approach to racial relations. Even if he was a mulatto himself, and thus theoretically belonging near the bottom of the social hierarchy,[58] he never used his craft to describe the mulatto experience. As Earl Fitz demonstrated in his book about Machado's female characters,[59] mulatto women do indeed surface in Machado's stories. Still, sociologist G. Reginald Daniel claims these women do not portray "the status and identity of multiracial individuals of African and European descent in a society that prized whiteness and stigmatized blackness" (102). Instead, in his journal articles, Machado de Assis would go as far as to advise against entering polemics of any nature. Daniel himself collected voices who argue that "Machado's posture reflects his internalization and support of the inherently Eurocentric assumption that universality is a necessary criterion for art, and, in particular, that the literature of the subaltern is worthy only to the extent that it overcomes parochialism" (Daniel 104). Independently of the truth value of this statement, there are many factors in

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[58] See Raimundo Faoro's *A pirâmide e o trapézio* (1974) for an account of social stratification in colonial Brazil, which he argues is constructed by a minority of hereditary estates composed of bureaucrats, political leaders, public officials, and diplomats (the trapezoid), who organized and governed Brazil (par. Daniel 109).

[59] "From his earliest novel, in 1872, to his last, in 1908, Machado has women figuring prominently in his work and functioning primarily as literary constructs offering a new kind of female identity, and, by extension, a new way of organizing the Brazilian order. Never portrayed as revolutionary figures, women, for Machado, are, nevertheless, increasingly portrayed as power players. Although the reader will find no Rosa Luxemburg in Machado's novels, she will find many female characters who, tired of being the passive "objects" that are "circulated" through a male dominated "economy," are now seeking to become active "subjects" themselves and fully empowered to "use circulation rather than be circulated." (*Machado de Assis and Female* 51)

Machado's life story to sense a tension between his mulatto identity[60] before and after the official abolition of slavery, on the one hand, and the urban and upper-class setting of most of his stories, on the other.[61]

The most prominent Machadian scholars (Gledson, Schwarz, Fitz, Farão, Cândido, Caldwell, Rouanet) agree that Machado tackled racial issues with extreme poignancy and subtlety. Still, they also hastened to add that the case was never as frontally undertaken by the writer as in his short story "Pai contra mãe" (1906),[62] published thirty-five years after the Lei do the Brazilian parliament passed Ventre Livre [the Rio Branco Law]. However, thanks to Sérgio Paulo Rouanet's compilation (2008-15), a "correspondence in five volumes" reveals a less timid writer. "a bohemian, lively, outgoing fellow" (Aidoo & Silva 25) is revealed in it. What is more, Machado de Assis "emerges [there] as a bold defender of abolition in his journalistic writings and even in

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60 Another vivid example of Brazilian racism, in which Nabuco reproved the literary critic José Veríssimo [himself a mulatto], is provided to us by Emília Viotti da Costa. As she recounts, Veríssimo had written a tribute to their friend Machado de Assis after the latter's death, in which he correctly referred to the great writer as a mulat[t]o. Nabuco was upset—as we have noted, the term "mulat[t]o" was considered insulting in social relations among equals—and he responded briskly: "For me[,] Machado was a white, and I believe he thought so about himself." (Needell 256)

61 These claims, though, are partially dismissed by Antonio Cândido, who was of the belief that Machado de Assis' sufferings "did not seem to have exceeded those of everyone else, and neither was his life particularly arduous. Mixed-race individuals of humble origin be- came some of the more representative men in our liberal Empire. They were men who, of his same color and born poor ended up receiving titles of nobility and occupying important positions in government...it would be more accurate to note the external normalcy and the relative ease of his public life." (*Vários escritos* 32, translation is mine)

62 John Gledson admits that Machado de Assis does not have race (and this is a key word) as a main topic of discussion in novels such as *Esau e Jacó* (1904) [*Esaú and Jacob*], Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas, or Memorial de Aires (1908) [Memorial de Ayres], even if the plantation on which Brazil's political economy depended appears the most developed in those novels (par. 5).

the forgotten short stories published prior to abolition" (25). Sydney Chalhoub does identify three stages of Machado de Assis's career when he dealt with slavery and racism:

> First, he denounced the seigneurial custom of resorting to sexual violence against free and enslaved black women and depicted these women's dignity in dealing with the problem (in texts written mainly in the 1860s and 1870s). Second, in very allegorical mode, he analyzed the relations among division of labor, scientific ideologies, and racial injustice (1880s). Finally, he turned to the legacy of slavery and its consequences for Brazilian history and society (1890s and 1900s) (190)

This second stage, that of the 1880s, is where the novel *Memórias póstumas de Brás* Cubas belongs. For good reason, since earlier in the essay, the partially parodic political philosophy known as Humanitismo was already analyzed, upholding as it did the proto-liberal class relations present in Brazil and naturalizing the arguments in favor of this conservative view of power. Likewise, I looked into the episodes on the agregada Eugênia and her treatment from Brás Cubas. I am also about to proceed with another example of an allegory of race that the main character narrates with a butterfly as the main subject of the side story. If the short story "Virgilius" represents the first stage[63] of his approach to race, gender, and violence, "Pai contra mãe" is paradigmatic of the third and last period.[64]

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[63] It is a story that "conveys a clear message: the alleged good intentions of a powerful plantation owner produce disgrace and social injustice." (Aidoo and Silva 192)

[64] "Uncharacteristically stark and direct, the story begins with a description, not a narrative, of the conditions of slavery, and of the instruments of confinement and torture. When Machado de Assis explains the economics of how slaves could improve their living conditions to buy their freedom, and when he explains how frequent escapes create the occupation of slave-catcher, there is nothing of the detachment of Aires or the cruelty of Brás Cubas; the characterization of the shiftless protagonist who makes his living catching fugitives against fierce competition condemns both the man and the society that creates him. But it is not that simple: on his way to place his new-born, whom, to his surprise, he finds himself loving children, on the "wheel" for abandoned children, the slave catcher recognizes a pregnant fugitive. As a parent, he feels for her; he knows that, when he returns her, she will be beaten, but he needs the money. She is beaten and miscarries; the slave-catcher retrieves his boy, and with the reward money, can support him for

Machado de Assis received criticism from the likes of Gilberto Freyre or Lima Barreto, primarily because of what they thought was his oblique "attention" to the "social and political context" from the "proclamation of the Republic" or the "exile of the Emperor" to "inflation," "abolition," and the "abandonment of former slaves" (Wasserman 86). Along with these intellectuals, and also in Machado de Assis's time, some would advance racialized pseudo-scientific ideas to undermine *negros* and *pardo* people's intelligence, and they would do so under an abolitionist liberal flag. In this situation, the critic Sérgio Romero, a self-described abolitionist around slavery's official abolition, regarded Machado de Assis as antipatriotic. In contrast, Machado de Assis could be said to be the anti-Romero, says Alberto Luiz Schneider:

> O "absenteísta" Machado, para desgosto de Romero, recusou solene e silenciosamente o discurso racialista e cientificista. Precisamente por isso, não se viu compelido a proferir qualquer formulação depreciativa sobre negros, índios e mestiços. Em sua obra literária Machado de Assis preferiu recusar a retórica oitocentista do progresso (e da ciência), do nacionalismo (e de suas racializações), o que implicou em recusar o realismo e o naturalismo pelos quais militava jovens de "A Nova Geração" (1879). As opções machadianas divergiam profundamente dos ideais romerianos (480)
>
> The "absenteeist" Machado, to Romero's chagrin, rejected solemnly and silently the racialized and scientifist discourse. Precisely for this reason, he did not feel compelled to voice any depreciative comment about blacks, Indians, or *mestiços*. In his literary work, Machado de Assis preferred to reject the rhetoric around [the] progress of the 1880s (and the science of the times) and around nationalism (and its racialization), which implied that he was also against the realism and naturalism that the "New generation of 1879" endorsed. Machado's options diverged fundamentally from Romero's ideals. [translation is mine]

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another while. In the tale, the suffering of slaves does not exist by itself but is part of the pitiless struggle for survival at the Hobbesian bottom of the social scale, a rotten substratum that infects the entire structure and that a couple of decrees won't cure. In its directness, this story belies the indifference of the narrative voice throughout and reveals it as a cover and a deflection of pain and also as a characteristically aggressive stance against itself and the reader, whom Machado de Assis accuses, flatters, and disdains at the same time." (Wasserman 92)

For his part, a famous abolitionist, José do Patrocínio, believed that Machado de Assis did not do nearly enough to advance the well-being and prosperity of black people. The former is reported to have interjected the following:

> Only one man[,] inside and outside Brazil, remains indifferent to all the hosannas and infamy, clamor, tempest, fire, and blood of abolitionist fervor that has engulfed the nation. -And that man is Mr. Machado de Assis. Hate him because he is evil; hate him because he hates his race, his country, and his people (Daniel 67)

Interestingly, and despite his prominence in the abolitionist campaign, José do Patrocínio "emphasizes African Brazilian sexuality" in his novels, "particularly that of mulattoes, and its link with racial makeup in obedience to the literary conventions of Naturalism" (55). Unfortunately, it is known that he "died, mired in debts and relegated to relative obscurity" (54).

In contrast to the multiple attacks that Machado de Assis received throughout his career, Reginald Daniel, a self-described multiracial scholar,[65] finds in the Brazilian writer a perfect example of the racial negotiations that the author must have had to navigate throughout his life so that he could enjoy writerly success. In Daniel's words, "Machado saw a reflection of the struggles confronting all of humanity" in individuals such as himself, "seeking" as he supposedly was "to achieve upward mobility and public success without compromising his own integrity in a society that prized whiteness and stigmatized blackness" (Aidoo and Silva 245). Reginald Daniel acknowledges an element

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[65] Reginald Daniel speaks about multiracial discourse, or lack thereof, in this public lecture, where he lambasts the United States for the rule of hypodescent, which does not acknowledge that people can be multi-racial, that is, come from several backgrounds. He likewise claims the issue does not have to do with ancestry: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1OS46T_azU&list=PL1B392129AA624B85&index=10&t=0s&ab_channel=UniversityofCaliforniaTelevision%28UCTV%29

of speculation into the mind of Machado de Assis, so I would like to step in and analyze this multi-racial aspect of his personality as evidence of dividuality on the part of the author. He would write with the European literary canon close in mind and address identity —not just race— with a light touch and slight distancing. It would be more practical —and less controversial— to acknowledge that Machado de Assis had to juggle the events of his time (eugenics, scientific racism, societal turmoil) while preserving a level of autonomy from the political forum.

Similarly, the obliqueness with which he treats questions of race in Brazil may stem from the nature of literature itself. Still, the acceptance of all the honors that were bestowed on him as the foremost writer in Brazil indicates, if nothing else, his willingness to participate and thrive in a white cultural sphere with which he came to align. In doing so, he mirrors the end goal of the picaresque as a tale of upward mobility at the behest of modernity. From this point of view, and as advanced in the Introduction, the Americas could be said to have been where the picaresque becomes either a tale of success or one of *desengaño,* in the words of Baltasar Gracián.

Nonetheless, and in opposition to the relevant biographical facts and the later ad hominem attacks from detractors, I propose to read Machado de Assis's idiosyncratic mulatto identity along with *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* to clear up the path for a racially mindful reading of the novel. I maintain that the European literary tradition is used as a weapon against his political opponents and that the silences or oblique references to racial relations appearing in *Memórias póstumas* betray a desire from the novelist to let the writing speak for itself, which is, by this same token, a politically-informed decision. Inevitably, facts will be missing from this last speculative analysis.

Nevertheless, there will be arguments made and proper reasoning for the writer-author mutuality, even if establishing a rapport between Brás Cubas and Machado de Assis assumes an operation against the grain of literary theory while falling more in line with a mischievous exercise that Brás Cubas would haphazardly entertain. In a seemingly arbitrary manner of which Brás Cubas would hence approve, it is time to bring up the episode of the black butterfly in *Memórias póstumas*, where our narrator comes across one of them in his quarters early in the morning. At first, he means to pretend it is not there and forgets about its presence, but once he enters his room anew, he suddenly feels "um repelão dos nervos" (*Memórias* 91) (a sudden urge) (*The Posthumous Memoirs* 83) to kill it, which he does with a towel. In true Brás Cubas fashion, the event sets up a chain reaction that has him question butterflies' theory of mind:

> Fiquei um pouco aborrecido, incomodado. "Também por que diabo não era ela azul?", disse comigo.
> E esta reflexão — uma das mais profundas que se tem feito, desde a invenção das borboletas — me consolou do malefício, e me reconciliou comigo mesmo. Deixei-me estar a contemplar o cadáver, com alguma simpatia, confesso. Imaginei que ela saíra do mato, almoçada e feliz. A manhã era linda. Veio por ali fora, modesta e negra, espairecendo as suas borboletices, sob a vasta cúpula de um céu azul, que é sempre azul, para todas as asas (*Memórias póstumas* 91)
>
> (This left me somewhat bothered, put out.
> "Why the devil couldn't it have been blue?" I said to myself.
> And that reflection—one of the most profound to be produced since the invention of butterflies—consoled me for my misdeed, and I made peace with myself. I let myself contemplate the cadaver with some affection, I must confess. I imagined (. . .) it had come and left the forest, content and having breakfasted. The morning was lovely. It had wandered out, modest and black, reveling in its butterflydom below the vast dome of a blue sky, which is always blue, no matter the color of one's wings
> (*The Posthumous Memoirs* 83-4)

At first sight, this excerpt reminds us again of Brás Cubas's aleatory solipsism, which denies the possibility of taking the appearance of the butterfly as a sign of wonder.

However, and since he knows he has taken the insect's life, he assesses the situation to undo any possible *hex* —which is the more accurate English rendition of the spiritist beliefs ingrained in Brazilian culture[66] with the term *maleficio* from the original Portuguese than in Thomson-DeVeaux's or Rabassa's translation— that could be cast his way as a result. Not without sarcasm, he turns this moment of reflection into a ritualist sacrifice in his mind, thereby cleansing his body from the murderous action. Suddenly, the reader's attention swings toward the last moments of the butterfly's living existence. As if in rapture, the butterfly (whether dead or alive) is in harmony with the environment that has led it to Brás Cubas. He then goes on to imagine that the butterfly deifies him as the butterfly maker and that he has punished its intrusion with the towel's deadly blow. He muses that it was destined to die, no matter the color. He then disposes of the corpse, which he launches into the garden. "Aí vinham as próvidas formigas" (*Memórias póstumas* 92) "There came the provident ants" (*The Posthumous Memoirs* 84), he quips. Finally, like an afterthought and in yet another swift change of mind, he imagines it would have been better for the butterfly to have been born blue.

Indeed, appearances matter, Brás Cubas concludes. If a butterfly is blue, it can lead an idyllic lifestyle and not run into predators since it is one with the sky, so it camouflages. However, if it is black, the butterfly induces nerves and tickles the narrator negatively. Rhetorically speaking, the slave landowner has the prerogative and ability to behave fickly and whimsically, and the interest created from modifying readerly

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66 "An avid reader of Rio de Janeiro's newspapers and scholarly journals, Machado undoubtedly stayed abreast of Spiritism's growing popularity both inside and outside the academy. Evidently, Machado held Spiritists and Spiritist doctrine in low regard, judging by the numerous disparaging references he makes to the movement in his novels, chronicles, and short stories." (Robert Moser 113-4)

expectations soon fades away before the character's arbitrariness. Machado de Assis has Brás Cubas lay out the artifice of mindful change, only to have language reconvene this initial desire. This ebb and flow process explicates the semiosis that articulates consciousness, which, once caught in mid-flight, is brought back to an initial presupposition undergirded by common sense. What this stylistic logic produces is a neutralization of our affective involvement with the narrator. Even if it presumes the interplay of Brás Cubas with his environment, we come to the realization that nothing is meant to supersede his caprice, intimately connected as it is to the inevitability of tyranny upon black bodies, as Marcus Wood powerfully asserts:

> Assis, because he is dealing with slavery and slave owners, because he is dealing with a Brazilian capacity for complacent self-deception, and because he is never indulgently self-righteous, wants to explain that this is a world where there is no moral accountability and no aesthetic retribution. This is a world of complete moral depravity where nobody cares about good or evil or about who is to blame for depraved actions (11)

This is the fascination and proto-liberal mundanity of Brás Cubas, whom Machado de Assis obliquely indicts as he strove toward the blue sky (whiteness) by crushing the blackness within. Even if Machado de Assis is not necessarily issuing a warning, this is how the *malandro*, the picaro, the trickster, and the rogue finalize their material or spiritual quest by becoming the master of their solipsistic adventures. Machado de Assis conquers his detractors by exposing their hypocrisy, epitomized in the figure of Brás Cubas. This landowner of Imperial Brazil could easily have stood behind the people spousing abolitionist ideas decades later, as was the case with José do Patrocínio because it was politically beneficial to them. They could then seamlessly transition to economic liberalism as the First Brazilian Republic (1889), along with more parliamentary ideas of governance, was about to begin.

CHAPTER 3

DIFFERENCE AS A FOIL TO OTHERNESS: EL ENTENADO [*THE WITNESS*] AS A RECEPTACLE OF LIFE

"We head for the horizon, on the plane of immanence, and we return with bloodshot eyes, yet they are the eyes of the mind. Even Descartes had his dream. To think is always to follow the witch's flight."

—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*

In the previous chapter, I proposed a historical reading of the picaresque as a myth in progressive decomposition going all the way to our times, when neuroscience, the science of information, and certain strands of philosophy have aligned in favor of a monist view[67] of the human as well as a rejection of the Cartesian legacy vis-à-vis agency. This new consensus around the body-mind matrix motivates me to look into an essential novel by Argentine writer Juan José Saer, *El entenado* (1983). As a common noun, *El entenado* draws the reader back to the orphan nature of the picaresque as a genre, which Brian Gollnick suggests in his reading of Saer's novel ("El color" par. 110). Indeed, the term comes from the Latin *ante natus*, which refers to someone whose parent or parents are not the biological ones. This bastard trope resonates over the centuries with

[67] By monism, I mean the philosophy of Baruch de Spinoza, which specifies a God which contains all existence yet removed from it. This point of view, in contemporary times, has been taken up by neuroscientists like Antonio R. Damasio (*Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*, 2003), who see the Jewish Dutchman as a precursor to the understanding of the brain and how feelings (and their causality) facilitate cognition. In so doing, the scientific fields have started to reject the body/mind duality that had been paradigmatic since the Early modern era.

countless stories of ruffians and swindlers. Furthermore, they also enable Saer to play with historical and generic limitations that would otherwise be unreconcilable.

Among many other functions, fiction, as a creative field bound to ideation, can imagine one story among many in history and may even be able to interact with psyches and influence behavior. Either in televised debates with Pierre Bourdieu[68] or in the few interviews he gave to the written press, Saer stood by literature as a medium of aesthetic information regardless of its cooptation by market forces. Like Marcel Proust, he considered language a living organism with which to wonder about the texture of reality. A clear example of such conviction is his novel *El entenado* (1983), where the conquest of the Americas and its overreaching consequences merge with a necessity to explore the nature of the human as a species from an anthropological vantage point. In it, a cabin boy joins an expedition to the Americas and gets captured upon landing by a cannibal native tribe, the Colastiné, which eats the rest of the crew. At the same time, he has his life spared due to his young age and ends up staying with this community for a decade before the Colastiné let go of him so he can rejoin his culture of origin. With this work and through the first-person narrator, the cabin boy, Saer discloses fiction as a "speculative anthropology" (*El concepto de ficción* 16) that peers into cognitive processes as a way of gathering knowledge about the nature of reality and the inherent division in motivations and desires, from the organic to the subjective, that his characters, and specifically his first-person narrator in *El entenado*, scrutinize.

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[68] "Saer once took part in a French television debate along with the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu said that literature needed to adjust to the world of modern media. Saer completely rejected that view: the role of literature was to offer an alternative way of experiencing the world." (Rowe)

In the current story, *El entenado* (1983), the analysis will be less centered on the formal aspects of the rogue's lonely ruminations, observed in the previous chapter, or on the picaresque as a defunct genre, and it will point instead toward a post-picaresque deconstruction of this exact figure within the novel. Likewise, since the story tells the tale of a cabin boy leaving for the Americas and his captive experience with a cannibal tribe, the Colastiné Indians, it will also encompass a particular reading of capital as an economic system and its biopolitical ramifications. The notion of the subject as the byproduct of this system has been torpedoed from within (at least) since Nietzsche,[69] but it lost its humanist —as in defending the human in its current manifestation— credit after the two world wars. Hence and consequently, the pícaro in *El entenado* (1983), published during neoliberal times, needs to be called something other than a subject. This new status must show the inherent multiplicity of drives and overall desire within the human, which technically trumps the logic of *homo economicus*. To that end, the expression *dividual*[70] constitutes a more appropriate term concerning the singular life of this rogue and the most current understanding of the human.

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[69] First, it was God, then came the time for the death of Man (which is Friedrich Nietzsche's actual target despite all the fanfare surrounding the death of God): "Thus spoke the Devil to me once: 'Even God has his Hell: it is his love for man.' And I lately heard him say these words: 'God is dead; God has died of his pity for man" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 24). Now we live in the Capitalocene era when it has been stipulated that humanity's carbon footprint may be risking the presence of human life on Earth.

[70] The term *dividual*, as explained in the Introduction to this work, appeared in a short essay by Deleuze in *Negotiations*, "Postscript on the Societies of Control". It has been later taken up in the fields of philosophy and anthropology by Brian Massumi in *Parable for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002) or in Arjun Appadurai's *Banking on Words: The Failure of Language in the Age of Derivative Finance* (2015), among other works of theirs. As explained in the Introduction, it can either refer to the subject of control societies with a more negative connotation or can actively counteract power structures as a concept that considers the nature of becoming while protecting it from exposure or disclosure to capitalist consumption of the self. In

The current chapter aims to offer a semblance of Saer as a writer, proponent of dividuality, and creator of the novel *El entenado*. After a partial and not innocent portrait of the author and his novel's reception since its publication, I define Saer's dividual concerning political and philosophical thought while also describing the components that structure this crucial concept, which I promptly articulate through passages from the novel. Moreover, contrary to Chapters 2 and 5, in the current chapter and the following one, I build a theoretical replacement, dividuality, for the picaresque as a genre and myth through their first-person narrators. Chapters 3 and 4 do not intend to give a historical account of the picaresque's demise. These post-picaresque tales maintain the notion of subversion or resistance to capitalism as an economic system of value production, to neoliberal governmentality, and the directing of attention through algorithms and artificial intelligence. In these novels, *El entenado* and *A hora da estrela*, either through the first-person narrator (Chapter 3) or the main character in Chapter 4, Saer and Lispector engage the human species beyond processes of subjectivation, defined either as a micropolitical construction of desire involving bodily affects, or as powerful entities or institutions driving societies in a specific direction, through a dividual lens; that is, they do not take for granted what thinking is, nor do they settle the question of agency. They engage with time and desire by making the past a theme of reflection in Saer or by writing the coming to being in Lispector in every possible present. Thus, they intensify the human experience and decipher how to live while honoring dividuality through literature in Spanish (Saer) or Portuguese (Lispector). After the dividual components are

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the case of Chapters 3 and 4, the dividual will follow this second definition, referring then to a transindividual entity that sustains the experience of being in the world.

laid out, I will explain how dividuality is opposed to a subjectivity that presupposes an individual instead, and only then will I proceed to specify the dividual from Chapter 3. Later in Chapter 4, and at times throughout this chapter, and because of the dividual connection shared between them, I will place them in contrast and disclose how Saer's dividual conceptualization differs or resembles Lispector's. As a preview, though, I claim that Saer's dividual or main narrator and character worries about the best way to lead a life concerning the environment and external events, which makes him engage with psychology regarding introjection, defined as the ability to comprehend and adapt to the diverse point of view or ideas and experiential awareness, which I will delve into later. Lispector, on the contrary, utilizes her coming to being or her process of subjectivation to produce an intimate image of dividuality, laying bare the internal division of the dividual, on the one hand, or highlighting the pre-personal bodily affects that undergird and elicit subjective processes through her main character Macabéa in *A hora da estrela*.

In *El entenado*, the Indian tribe and the central character challenge the notion of individuality, even if Saer portrays the Colastiné tribe as anxious about their existence. The first-person narrator is a cabin boy on a journey to the Americas around the time of its discovery by Europeans. As I will show, he embraces the becoming of being. That is to say, his life first challenges institutional knowledge and power, and he leads a form of life not underpinned by anxiety and lack. His memoir rhetorically constructs through episodic memories the "production of desire" or "the productions of the unconscious" (*Anti-Oedipus* 24). I wish to prove that Saer's dividual, a defender of the unknown and an adventurer keen on experience-based learning, echoes the original picaresque yet contributes to a post-picaresque aesthetic predicated on unreliable first-person narration,

persuasiveness, a confessional narrative structure, and an awareness about achieving a particular literary style. Later, I will illustrate how the first-person narrator establishes a healthy distance from the impoverished reality of commodity fetishism[71] since he concentrates on improving his life force over concerns about limpieza de sangre [purity of blood] or Counter-reformation propaganda; to name statist measures that entered the discourse of the Spanish nation in the sixteenth century. In the narrator's lyrical and slightly nostalgic rhetoric, peppered with long details about the past, reinforced with care for the memory of his former fellow travelers, and coupled with short reminders of his current status as an elder family man writing his biography, Saer adds to the tale's epic tone the weight of someone's actions over the course of a lifetime.

In short, in describing the Colastiné tribe, Father Quesada's personality, or his theater business partners, rather than a simple contemplative action, I perceive active care for the inherent complexity that undergirds different points of view and processes of subjectivation.[72] Finally, and to establish the necessary tension between the abstraction of

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[71] There is a correlation between the Marxist concept of commodity fetishism and an impoverished reality because reducing commodities to their economic aspect shuns their relation to the workforce and potential ties to communities where prosperity can thrive. The narrator counters this ideology because he promotes mastery of a dividual multiplicity of desire. While the terms originated with Karl Mark's *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), this concept's influence spawns different periods and disciplines, from Lukács's Reification theory to Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899), or Jean Baudrillard's theory of "the Sign" (sign value) in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972), among others.

[72] In this dissertation, much importance is given to the pre-personal understanding of cognition. For this reason, I speak of processes of subjectivation in a similar vein to science's concept of emergence. This means that bodies in motion learn to become subjects over time and eventually create a fiction (the self) that accompanies the construction of habit and learned behaviors. Throughout the different chapters, but even more so in these middle ones, I qualify process as the continuance of life and the changes therein, whether or not they are picked up or rationalized by a theory of mind that affords consciousness. At the same time, I must acknowledge the history of this term and how it has been conceptualized so I can delimit its use

the dividual as a concept and the concreteness of living matter, I will highlight yet again the novel's rendition of the Early modern rogue that Saer crafts and showcase how this story differs from the Iberian picaresque stories of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The novel's tripartite structure guides Saer's dividual schema. First, the narrative centers on a boy lost in the Americas among the Colastiné Indians in the early sixteenth century. Secondly, the narrator recounts his return to the Iberian Peninsula after a decade of captivity and his way of life as a member of a theatrical troupe. Lastly, the narration features the writing of a memoir by the main character and first-person narrator at an advanced age. To understand the essence of this Early-modern rogue, well-known concepts of modernity, such as self and individual, cannot describe the narrator's rhetoric in the novel. Saer's dividual proposes a way of being in the world that actively protects life from mechanisms of power [pouvoir]. In its stead, the first person-narrator shows his determination to increase his inner life and power [puissance] while relating positively to his surroundings and encounters with people on both sides of the Atlantic. Saer's first-person narrator provides an example throughout the story of how this positive mindset can be achieved over time: forgoing the construction of the self and in favor of making the best out of life's contingency. Based on this preoccupation with the nature of

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clearly: "Depending on the line of reasoning being followed, subjectivation is either used to describe subjection to ideology, institutions, and government, or it implies the evolution of subjectivity, ways of feeling, thinking and communicating within and transcending situations" (Traue et al. 22). Subjectivation can occur at a pre-subjective level as a micropolitical construction of desire involving bodily affects, or it can also be directed by powerful entities [the powers that be] driving societies in a specific direction. Therefore, I see a process of subjectivation involving these pre-personal and suprapersonal directionalities (which I call subjection) alongside Traue.

subjectivity, memory, the passing of time, affective or emotional relationality to other dividuals, and how to live tout court that this novel professes, I am bound to not only speak in literary terms but philosophically as well, which is why I will study the term dividual as a concept to anchor desire, the passing of time, and processes of subjectivation and subjection.

Juan José Saer Reimagined

An Argentine writer from Serodino in the province of Santa Fe, Juan José Saer dedicated much of his life to fictional writing. An enemy of fame and distanced from his country of birth, Saer lived most of his adulthood in a provincial town in northwest France as a literature professor. The relationship between Argentine writers and France goes back to the beginnings of the nation-state when the unionist intellectuals[73] from Rio de la Plata inspired themselves in the French Republic to construct their imagined community. Later, and amid a tumultuous twentieth century, many writers also traveled to France, and even more so to Paris, to make a literary career there. In this sense, Saer is hardly the exception,[74] although he did live his days away from the French capital, as he would back in Argentina. In dealing with editors, he would show bonhomie and good humor, and his down-to-earth persona and rudimentary looks would not let on his skills as a narrator. Moreover, his opinionated and sometimes blunt claims about other writers or the status of Argentine literature would undoubtedly be remarkable in our public

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[73] As opposed to the Federalist party Juan Manuel de Rosas led.

[74] For more information on the topic of Parisian exile and Latin American writers, see *The Lights of Home: A Century of Latin American Writers in Paris* (2014).

relations era. Among the conversations and interviews that he gave during his lifetime, a disdain toward the production of a literary market transpires:

> La prensa banaliza todo: la violencia, la crítica. Yo soy un ejemplo de esto (. . .) porque a fuerza de hablar en los diarios y decir cosas, uno termina siempre diciendo banalidades. Además, hay especialistas de la prensa y la televisión que son aquellos que hablan para idiotas.
> (*Una forma más real* 128-9)

His fervor and passion for literature led him to establish notions of value, which would be shocking in a time of liberal tolerance and political correctness. Cecilia Policsek notices this defense of the intrinsic value of literature in Saer, which prompts her to say the following: "Saer manifests (. . .) a somewhat conservative attitude in front of the expansion of the media, and claims that the inappropriate use of the latter risks to deteriorate literature's fundament [sic]" (7).

As a critic, Saer expressed a territorial view of literature as a poetic medium and became wary of new media and their capacity to impinge on the writer's need to accelerate rather than reflect on the strangeness of life. I claim that the rage that overcomes him upon this issue[75] originates in his understanding of literature as poetic language and hence as a possibility for creation to burst forth. Probably because he was already fearful of literature's colonization by other media, he would perform a passionate defense of the written word. As this dissertation proposes, different media can transmit affective states [qualia] differently, usually more intensely, in the case of audiovisual media. Eventually, this difference hinges on how their functionality addresses the target audience in variegated ways. However, I agree with Saer, and even more so now with

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[75] I would propose the reader watch some interviews uploaded to YouTube in which he exhibits an emotional outpouring whenever topics close to his heart are not addressed with what he would consider sufficient rigor.

time, that the affective capacity of literature to open up a lone subjectivity to participate in multiple forms of life (their dividuality) as well as the contemplative aspect of life that goes along with it, becomes diffuse in audiovisual media, where the primacy of passive reception by the senses decreases the effort required in comparison to what reading often demands from the reader in terms of attention.

Saer also taught and wrote when the *Nouveau Roman* and structuralism peaked in France. At that time, the Internet and the application of quantum mechanics to technology had yet to change how we experience everydayness. Theoretically speaking, he was inspired by Martin Heidegger, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Jacques Lacan, as his multiple allusions to them in his interviews over the decades confirm, and this inevitably surfaces in terms of the disciplines that *El entenado* indirectly broaches, from anthropology to psychology, and phenomenology, among others. The homage, and the treason to Saer in this chapter, consists in reading him à rebours of his interviews, that is, with a different theoretical lens than those purported by either psychoanalysis, deconstruction, or post-colonial studies.

In contrast to the reading I will propose, Amaryll Chanady speaks of the novel's narrator disparagingly to put forth a post-colonial vision of the story, as the following excerpt demonstrates: "All these (. . .) critical reflections of the narrator on his country's institutions and cultural practices, which are made possible by his sojourn among the Amerindians, turn out to be anchored within his (. . .) paradigms. Incapable of understanding radical alterity, or even accepting it, he is (. . .) incapable of a complete reappraisal of his own culture" (703). Chanady's take on the cabin boy's figure reflects a persistent need to present a discourse of otherness and a master-slave dialectic that

structures her essay. In doing so, the main character becomes reduced to an ethnographer in need of providing a ground for European cultural superiority. As she summarizes at one point, "once again, the New World has provided fortune for the European explorers, and a pretext for a valorizing discourse" (688). Gustavo Verdesio concurs with Chanady when he claims that Saer, "despite mak[ing] an effort to invent a Colastiné worldview, (. . .) is not very interested in describing the physiognomic traits of the aborigines, or their clothing, and so forth" (248). Shortly after, he builds on this claim to regard the novel *El entenado* [The Witness] as an artifact that lacks "interest in historical and ethnographic verisimilitude" (248). Emery Amy Fass, however, expresses a disagreement with Chanady and accuses her of "misreading the novel" (124). Instead, she focuses on the "futility of the Conquest as an act of possession" (123).

I am neither basing my reading of the novel on the actual events of Juan Solís and his crew meeting a cannibal tribe in 1516, which are nonetheless unproven, nor am I playing out the dialectical relationship of self and other throughout the following pages. Instead, I aim to conceptualize the nature of the dividual as I establish the interrelatedness between desiring bodies and power dynamics. Alongside this tension between dividual desire and power structures, the different roles played by the main character through time and place will be put into theoretical perspective. As a result, a proposal for a practical philosophy of a dividually-led life will be advanced in response to Chapters 2 and 5, where the narrator's cynicism exemplifies a dark vision of a post-picaresque aesthetic. Instead, in this chapter, the cabin boy fosters understanding rather than resentment, benevolence over a reactive mindset, and acceptance of uncertainty above being led by anxiety and fear. This positivity emerges throughout the novel. The reader can

comprehend how this mindset arises and is communicated through the dividual and its components (division, relationality, partition, and participation).

With the help of political philosophers like Roberto Esposito, the conceptualization of desire that Deleuze and Guattari proposed in the 1970s, along with Gerald Raunig's reconfiguration of dividuality by way of Medieval author Gilbert de Poitiers, I examine Saer's novel under a new prism that I name dividuality. Rather than compare and contrast the cabin boy's culture against that of the Colastiné tribe, I consider this biographical tale a selfless exercise in analyzing one's surroundings to make the best and be worthy of every situation the main character encounters. At the same time, he stresses the connection to the members and societies he inhabits instead of focusing on the lessons of experience that could serve a reader. He does not claim to have learned much and become better and wiser because of it so that the reader could exact some benefit. Instead, he stresses the fleeting becoming of all those subjective positionalities and situations. What remains is his con-division or internal division as time marches on.

The passing of time, the memoir explains, has voided the possibility of a self and opened his life to contingency and its acceptance while exercising the intellect, either actively or contemplatively, to seek a balance between belonging to the community and dividual care, understood as a combination of introjection and experiential awareness. Likewise, even if they can afford less autonomy in their lives, the Colastiné members also know the construction of reality encompasses different elements and respond to their internal division (their dividuality) by building a community that protects them against powerful entities, whether other tribes attacking them or their development of despotic ruling, that would bring their precarious relating to one another to homogenization by

way of the arbitrary commands of a tyrant. In the following pages, I will follow the main character and first-person narrator to showcase his need to learn about this balance between partition, the subject of modernity, and participation, the subject of groupthink, and how the events of his life make him a dividual figure of great importance for dissociating the picaresque from the machinations of an individual aiming for upward mobility. Likewise, the Colastiné tribe will put into perspective the precarious relationality between dividuals and the environment without powerful institutions determining behavior and curtailing freedom, as explained by Pierre Clastres[76] or Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and featured in the chapter as well as part of the theoretical background. I now give a portrait of dividuality and how it illuminates the reading of *El entenado* and concerns the first-person narrator and the Colastiné tribe. This excursion into philosophy has its basis in Saer's highly reflective and dense narrative, which necessitates theoretical elucidation.

Dividuality and Subsistence

The dividual breaks with universal concepts while holding on to an image of creative multiplicity. The German philosopher and art theorist Gerald Raunig traces back

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[76] This French anthropologist believed so-called savages or primitive societies could be founded without the advent of the State, as this quote from one of his essays demonstrates: "Even in the extreme experience of prophetism (extreme in that the Tupi-Guarani society had doubtless reached, whether for demographic reasons or others, the furthest limits that define a society as primitive), what the Savages exhibit is the continual effort to prevent chiefs from being chiefs, the refusal of unification, the endeavor to exorcise the One, the State. It is said that the history of peoples who have a history is the history of class struggle. 1 t might be said, with at least as much truthfulness, that the history of peoples without history is the history of their struggle against the State." (218)

this term to the writings of Gilbert de Poitiers, whose "work faded into obscurity[,] particularly through the dominance of Thomas Aquinas and the High Scholastic writings" (56). This Middle Age theologian proposed not only the concept of the dividual but also that of subsistence. This latter word corresponds to existence in the same vein as the dividual does to the individual, introducing in the process a commonality[77] obscured by the canonical Fathers of the Church (the dividual is to the individual what subsistence is to existence).

The dividual works as an infra-political singularity in three key aspects. Firstly, it deconstructs the individual, a term (and a concept) that has presided over the capitalist era. Secondly, it reveals the affective rationality (or the rational affectivity) that constitutes the human species. Finally, it brings about a minimalistic thinking that devalues the human as a self-interested economic actor, the mantra that (neo)liberal economists[78] reductively and consistently affirm. If, according to Brian Massumi, every power constitutes an "ontopower" or, in other words, "a power of local-global becoming" (15), then this dividual manifests its "(un)becoming" (Culp 42), a becoming only within dividuality, an exercise of resistance to processes of subjectivation of the *me* and *you*, the

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[77] Fred Moten also speaks of the undercommons, or those minorities who work in the shadows yet sustain the fabric of society. However, along with Stephano Harney (*The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, 2013), he explains that dividuals as we are, we can all be said to belong to these undercommons if there is a willingness to participate in it: "Planning in the undercommons is not an activity, not fishing or (Moten and Harney)dancing or teaching or loving, but the [ongoing] experiment with the futurial presence of the forms of life that make such activities possible. It is these means that were eventually stolen by, in having been willingly given up to, state socialism whose perversion of planning was a crime second only to the deployment of policy in today's command economy." (74-5)

[78] Alan Greenspan may be at the forefront of all these economists due to the financial crash 2008, but he is one of the last in a line that goes all the way down to Friedrich Hayek, at least in its neoliberal version. Otherwise, we should retrace our steps further back. To that end, see Dotan Leshem's *The Origins of Neoliberalism: Modeling the Economy from Jesus to Foucault* (2016).

us and *them*. At times, the discipline of philosophy and others have put too much emphasis on human perception and too little on the environment that circumscribes humankind. As a result, semiotic assemblages, defined as the combinatory selection of written signs to produce an aesthetic effect, constantly form and deform. Nevertheless, in the individualistic arrogance of its centrality, the human is inclined to hold on to a thought and own it rather than accept it in the contextual manner in which thinking, in its affectively rational (and relational) process, comes to the human. As I will demonstrate, neither the cabin boy from *El entenado* nor the Colastiné tribe will partake in that arrogance.

This dividual within, as a nemesis to the narrowing vision of the individual, befits much better our anthropocenic[79] epoch, in contradistinction to the individual, who, not content with the killings of God and Man, does not object to disposing of the World as well. The future of the human species, also in the process of becoming, must leave aside existence and embrace subsistence instead. The latter stands for an acknowledgment of the interrelatedness of the microscopic elements that configure the geography of human and non-human entities, sentient and non-sentient beings, and how it is not the linguistic indexing of such entities that births life but the capacity that these assemblages have to bring about some change in the transformative space which we dividually share

Dividual: Division, Participation, Partition

[79] For more context around the notion of deep ecology referring to the detrimental impact that human activity has been causing on the environment, see Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess's body of work, among others.

Maybe unknowingly, Juan José Saer, through his first-person narrator in *El entenado*, was creating a post-picaresque aesthetic that could mirror the subversive aspect of the Early modern period. For example, suppose the enemy of the Iberian picaresque was the Inquisition's autos-da-fé. In contrast, this novel's picaresque memoir confronts a culture of narcissism through a biographical tale, which includes the ironic twist that the initial picaresque had as it mocked the legal texts of the Christian Church. Moreover, Saer wishes to convince the reader about the wisdom of humility and the nurturing of compassion over the fantasy of the self with his dividual main character. Therein lies the force of dividuality, which I want to theorize to supplement his novelistic and concrete example.

Saer's dividual has no essence because it expresses itself by becoming different. The cabin boy, def-ghi, the noble savage, the apprentice to Father Quesada, or the older man, constitutes nothing but instantiations of difference. Moreover, the Spinozist God (what subsists) constantly differs from itself, so ontology ceases to be problematic since what ultimately subsists is becoming. As a material entity of that becoming, Saer's dividual finds itself divided. The individual, the human concept of the Cartesian and Lockean mold, "tends toward constructing closure," whereas "dividual singularity emphasizes similarity in diverse single things, and thus also the potentiality of connecting, appending, concatenating" (Raunig 67). However, this inherent division of the dividual[80] does not exclude subjectivation. On the contrary, partition modulates the

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[80] In one of his essays on Gilles Deleuze, Daniel W. Smith (*Essays on Deleuze*, 2012) demonstrates how Claude Levi-Strauss's book Totemism partly inspired Deleuze's conception of the fold and singularity, which directly oppose identity and universality: "The concept of a straight line is a universal, because all straight lines resemble each other, and the concept can be defined axiomatically, as in Euclid. The concept of the fold, by contrast, is a singularity because

dividual to "appropriate places, functional positions, rightful owners" (73). **Partition** territorializes desire and creates distinctions to lay the foundations of the individual, aptly described by the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt:

> Every basic order is a spatial order. To talk of the constitution of a country or a continent is to talk of its fundamental order, of its *nomos*. The true, the authentic, rests essentially upon distinct spatial delimitations. It presupposes clear dimensions, a precise division of the plane. The beginning of every great era coincides with an extensive territorial appropriation. Every important change in the image of Earth is inseparable from a political transformation, and so, from a new repartition of the planet, a new territorial appropriation (37)

These geopolitical assertions assume the enforcement of the *nomos*,[81] or the naming of territory as part of the delimitation and appropriation of land, as necessary to the concept of progress, and with it the "dispositif of the person" (*Persons* 2), which has both Christian and Roman roots.[82] Nevertheless, this individual does not equate to nature. On

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folds vary, and every fold is different; all folding proceeds by differentiation. No two things are folded in the same way —no two rocks, no two pieces of paper— nor is there a general rule saying that the same thing will always fold in the same way. In this sense, there are folds everywhere, but the fold is not a universal; rather, it is a "differentiator," a "differential"." (Smith 129)

[81] Roberto Esposito defines it thus: "The nomos is introduced by inscribing within land the distinction (as well as the opposition) between mine and yours, between ours and yours. From its origin onward, human civilization has practiced how to trace limits, terms, borders and raising walls between one territory and another." (*Communitas* 128)

[82] The following Esposito (Persons and Things: From the Body's Point of View, 2015) quote attests to the personification or subjectivation that Def-ghi must endure to survive when he returns to a nation-state where the dispositif of the person reigns. This legal apparatus aims to control bodies through taxation or other means and thus remove them from their physical presence: "It has been said that the body, precisely because it lacks a particular legal status, is the means of transition from the person to the thing. Not being invested as such by the law, it oscillates between these two dimensions, allowing the transposition of one into the other. This applies to the human race as a whole, cut into segments by anthropological thresholds of separation and exclusion, but also to the individual, who is divided into two areas (. . .) valued differently – one of a rational or spiritual nature and the other corporeal. This outcome is the performative effect of the dispositif of the person. We have recognized a first matrix for it in

the contrary, the individual acts and feels following a sense of the proper [property] yet variable and historically understood as immutable, common sense. On the contrary, the dividual can stave off subjection by apparatuses of capture that aim to control their behavior. Nonetheless, the subjectivizing processes directed at the dividual work in concert with the capillary power that the State exerts over the *socius*.[83] The subjectivation of the dividual then implicates its subjection to the power of the State and, in more general terms, to our market-based empire. Therefore, and in consonance also with Raunig's words about the different attributes of the dividual, "partition is a distribution of the shares, a distribution according to ownership" (73).

Lastly, as a composite of forces that separate it or bring it closer to the body politic, the dividual also participates in power structures, defined here as a stratified[84] combination of elements that undergird a state of affairs. Take the famous assemblage of the Early modern world, on which the politics of life resides, attributed to Hobbes's vision of the Leviathan, shortly after the colonial encounter of the cabin boy with the Colastiné Indians. As it is commonly acknowledged from Hobbesian political thought,

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Roman law. The second matrix led to the Christian dogma of the Incarnation of Christ." (*Persons and Things* 33-4)

[83] I do not use the term society because it presupposes determined spatiotemporal coordinates that align with the power of the State. The socius refers to a virtual society always in the process of co-construction with the multiple. This will eventually lead us to Figure 1 (the production of subjectivity) and the molecular-molar divide already present in *Anti-Oedipus* (1973).

[84] Stratification is a concept that Deleuze and Guattari borrow from geology. In this discipline, sedimentary rocks are said to be stratified when their layers pile up on top of each other while varying in thickness and shape. These philosophers create an analogy for the organs within a living being's body and how they function as machines with different missions. Beyond one's body, they also conceptualize the state's power as a machine that directs and hence stratifies subjectivity. For more on the subject, see *A Thousand Plateaus* (1983), pp. 39-74.

the subjects, to overcome their state of nature, agree to form part of the sovereign body, which will assume the responsibility of caring for their respective bodies. This arrangement results in the dividual becoming a supervised individual of the modern State. Thus, the Leviathan's bodies become a laboring part of the strength of the body politic. Assuming these precepts, "the *partes* of **Participation** [bold is mine] are linked to one another through their reference to the whole [the sovereign]" and, what is more, "they require exchange and intercourse with one another under the auspices of the whole, for which they become subservient, compliant" (Raunig 75-6). Participation in the modern bourgeois era calls for ever-increasing security measures from a virtual and feared force, seemingly external yet concurrent with an impersonal understanding of governmentality.[85] This protective mantle of the State —a ruler who answers mainly to the financial flows of the market and states of exception— creates the semblance of a community of equals while externalizing the needed commercial wars (sometimes bloody) outside its borders, be them the national ones or the peripheral ones, as in the processes of eviction and gentrification in city neighborhoods.

At this juncture, I want to disclose why the cabin boy of *El entenado* inspires reflection and why it is of analytical interest. As he describes the tribe's habits and traditions, he also questions the nature of cognition, thus inviting Saer's readers to wonder about their societal structure and concept of freedom based upon the different Colastiné members' roles, including the cabin boy (called def-ghi by the tribe) as a prisoner of war. A dividual life and freedom interact because they are concerned with

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[85] See John Rawls for a more succinct account of governmentality, and Hardt & Negri for a critique of this impersonal pragmatism in "Postmodern Law and the Withering of Civil Society" (2008).

decision-making and temporality. They examine a character's motives, agency limits, and how the obstacles to desire fulfillment may curtail subjective positionalities. Not surprisingly, this tension undergirds debates between capitalism and socialism, individualism or collectivism, and other stark dualities. As a dividual life example, the cabin boy sidesteps these conversations by foregrounding his essence as both divided and in relation, that is, as a virtual subjectivity traversed by pre-individual forces preceding these tensions. I use the term virtual subjectivity to describe a potential event where a process of subjectivation can occur on the condition that it be one of many. This can be seen in practice with his multiple roles throughout his life and his reference to aging and changes he underwent to end up writing his memoir in his house's attic, both in terms of division and judicious relating to the Spanish crown, the clergy, the American tribe, and the theater troupe. Discursivity anchors dualities, while dividual life maintains, phenomenologically speaking, separation from cognition or theories of mind.

The cabin boy proposes a behavioral practice that constantly arranges a dividual's motivations by seeking a harmonious balance between partition (understood here as an internal autonomy from subjection to either the Spanish state, the Colastiné tribe, and others like the ship hierarchy or that of the theatre) and participation so his tenor of life can improve. For example, the cabin boy learns a way of life from the Colastiné while never fully belonging to the community. This happens later with Father Quesada or the theater group when the reader can attest to the main character's inner life and autonomy despite his participatory role in all his interactions. In so doing, the cabin boy exercises the two types of freedom laid out by Isaiah Berlin, negative and positive. In other words, Saer's dividual in *El entenado* gains positive freedom over time despite his limited

negative freedom. According to Berlin, positive freedom "consists in being one's own master" (178), while negative freedom is defined as "a function of what doors, and how many, are open [to the dividual] (. . .) upon what prospects they open; and how open they are" (41). The Russian-British political theorist never questioned the individual as a unit of political thought. Still, it does not make a difference since the novel showcases how the cabin boy makes the most of every situation, regardless of his degree of negative freedom, so he can progressively increase the positive one. Striving then for positive freedom, Saer's dividual also channels Spinoza's search for adequate ideas,[86] which I define as the ability to turn potential negativity or negative affects into positivity for one's increase in the tenor of life. The former cabin boy analyzes his decision-making without resentment or frustration, and he uses his writing to learn about his dividuality, that is, his internal division and the best desiring course of action allowing him to subsist in consonance with the becoming of being. His life experiences, from his years as a prisoner of war and sole survivor of a voyage to the Americas to his eventual assimilation into the culture of his youth upon his return, inspire awe in the reader and a wish for emulation. His writing exemplifies an ability to transmute potentially inadequate ideas

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[86] In his books *Ethics* and for Baruch de Spinoza, one's power to act depends on turning inadequate knowledge into adequate ideas. This presupposes some level of agency because it spurs the dividual to examine possible causes of states of mind and body and learn from them to gain transindividual knowledge that would get one closer to godliness: "The power of the mind is defined by knowledge only, and its infirmity or passion is defined by the privation of knowledge only: it therefore follows, that that mind is most passive, whose greatest part is made up of inadequate ideas, so that it may be characterized more readily by its passive states than by its activities: on the other hand, that mind is most active, whose greatest part is made up of adequate ideas, so that, although it may contain as many inadequate ideas as the former mind, it may yet be more easily characterized by ideas attributable to human virtue, than by ideas which tell of human infirmity. Again, it must be observed that spiritual unhealthiness and misfortunes can generally be traced to excessive love for something (. . .) subject to many variations, and which we can never become masters of." (124)

predicated only on imagination into the higher power of one's mastery with the help of introjection, defined as the ability to comprehend and adapt to the diverse point of view or ideas and experiential awareness.

In summary, as we can see in Saer's novel through the first-person narrator, two discernible aspects describe the initial cabin boy's dividuality. In the first place, its foremost characteristic is division, and secondly, a **relation** to the environment, which includes sentient and non-sentient beings, as a condition for subsistence. From this structural con-division, defined as the relation resulting from this division into multiple desiring or organic parts of the dividual, a dividual's desire tends to be with others (**participation**) or seek bodily or psychological autonomy from companionship (**partition)**. The individual, proper to the modern world and the primacy of ownership, and whose ideology led to the development of capitalism, configures a subject that plays down the internal division of the dividual. While individuality is known as the subject of partition, collectivism would be the subject informing groupthink, functioning at different stages regardless and outside of millenarian or communist ideals. Collectivism does not take the relationality of the dividual for granted, but it may encroach on its autonomy. On the flip side, on the other side of the spectrum, individuality narrows reality to one's needs and blunts community support, whether in the form of a family, a church, a factory, or other arrangements. At the point of writing, neoliberalism imposed the capitalistic laws of the market as the transcendent power, and dividuals became the subject and the data feeding the financial juggernaut that corresponds to control societies, which I define as a decentralized version of power predicated on technocratic rulings and a furthering of

partition within dividuality. The digital era demands that the dividual become the new capital enclosure around smart contracts, technological surveillance, and automation.

In contrast, the dividual advanced alongside Saer in this chapter by way of the cabin boy and the Colastiné tribe, which rejects the emergence of a State, will rival the dividual of control societies because both the narrator and the Indians in *El entenado* value our con-division[87] over the transactional flow of code or cash that blunts the becoming of being and prioritizes subjectivation around the power of public-private partnerships. The powers that be make transparency and a subject's visibility for capture (e.g., selfies, QR code readings, geolocation) central to managing the population. I endeavor to show that Saer's dividual seeks to juggle power deployment (e.g., state rulings, societal pressures to adjust to behavioral patterns or specific conduct, lack of Berlin's negative freedom) across different times and civilizations and achieve a desired degree of autonomy from these procedures. In the former cabin boy's writing, the nature of the Colastiné tribe hides from view, and not due to its strangeness, but because the narrator shares with the reader the Colastiné's fear of disappearance and their tenuous sense of existence. Moreover, the narrator's rhetoric links their anxiety to his process of knowing and awe about Colastiné's culture. In his writing, nothing resembling a self is foregrounded, but instead, the mores of the tribe are inscribed, and how each member still has an aspect that singularizes them. Differing from one another[88] and from themselves,

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[87] As I stated earlier, con-division is defined as the relation resulting from this division into multiple desiring or organic (various organs and their inner workings) parts of the dividual.

[88] My reading of philosopher of technology Gilbert Simondon informs this paragraph. His most important book, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (1958), was recently translated into English. The point his philosopher of technology makes is that matter, including dividual bodies, enters into processes of becoming concerning itself and different externalities.

from the organic to the subjective, the Colastiné tribe finds in cannibal rituals and defined societal roles, such as nurturers and warriors, a form of bypassing the creation of the State and quelling their anxiety about their existence. Likewise, the reader notices the constant changes in subjective positionalities that the narrator adopts, even if the I-voice remains sober and level-headed despite its lyricism concerning the passing of time and the extraordinary nature of his adventures. These roles never define the character but highlight the appending aspect of his group participation and distancing from them, such as the theater troupe or the Colastiné tribe. This unknowing that Saer's writing elevates through his narrator reenchants the world and relieves it of the poverty of the given. Many readings of *El entenado* seek to use the novel to establish cultural comparisons, express judgment, and reduce its uniqueness to pre-conceived ideas. Instead, the book emphasizes how the power that communities and states yield can be fought even while acknowledging dividuals' participation in them. The dividual's internal division makes the struggle between fulfilling one's internal power [puissance] and participating in power structures [pouvoir] and processes of subjectivation a tense battle concerning the harmonization of desire and potential forms of life.

Contrary to many critics' tendency to ignore dividuality and prioritize historical or cultural narratives, I aim to elucidate the force behind Saer's style and what can make the reader resonate with Saer's craftsmanship as a writer. I will begin by stating that Saer's dividual, given his inclusivity and universality, does not wish to categorize or submit the creative work of fiction to political pronouncements. On the contrary, the

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Frequently, change cannot be perceived by our senses and can only be visualized in terms of the end product. This happens, albeit differently, with commodities once we enter a store at a macro or economic level.

cabin boy in *El entenado* pursues freedom from opinion or critique through his writing. His exemplary resilience and positivity inspire the reader to embrace what comes and to accept their con-division,[89] or an internal division producing desire, rather than become mired in the narcissism of the self. In bringing this conversation to the fore, I pay attention to the artistic and ethical intentions of the Argentine writer beyond the different themes that critics have sought to perceive in the novel, from the racial profiling of the Colastiné tribe versus the cabin boy, the use of the novel to build the Argentine literary canon, to the cliché duality regarding barbarism and civilization. For the purpose of Saer's scholarship, the current chapter preconizes difference and becoming over otherness, and the possibility of writing a memoir without the narcissistic reflexivity of the I-voice.

The *Foldings* of the Dividual

This preliminary discussion of the dividual works as a first step towards finding an alternative to either the narrative of otherness that many of the reviewers of *El entenado* have either pointed out as salient (Chanady, Amy Fass, Scaramucci, Copertari, Schwab), negotiated as part of a postcolonial reading of Latin America (Chanady, Villoro), or inhered into the history of Argentina as a nation-state (Gollnick). In the case of Amy Fass, she proposes a reading where father Quesada, the priest that teaches the former cabin boy to read and write after his expedition to the Americas, furnishes him for the first time with the ability to represent the indistinct, the keyword for the forgetful cyclical life of the Colastiné: "El hecho fundamental de la vida del grumete no es en sí la

[89] See footnote 85 here or footnote 5 in the Introduction for elucidation if necessary.

estadía en la tribu, sino el paso de la estadía al dominio del saber y de la escritura (es decir a la posibilidad de repetir la experiencia a través de un proceso de representación)" (81). In her defense, the narrator himself provides a justificatory line for her argument in the following fragment: "Si el padre Quesada no me hubiese enseñado a leer y escribir, el único acto que podía justificar mi vida hubiese estado fuera de mi alcance" (*El entenado* 86). In arguing for the time spent with Father Quesada as the main event of the cabin boy's life, she values the representative process of remembering and telling a story to himself over a life lived in dividuality. She mainly agrees with the story's narrator and conceives him as a being existing in the world and needing didactic help. It would be more appropriate and accurate to say that he is provided with the means to thrive in the Spanish society he is returning to, where he would be individualized and subjected to the Spanish crown and the Iberian Peninsula's societal mores. Claiming this moment as the most valuable of the novel disparages the encounter with this extremely different culture and his acculturation to it as a precarious appendage. If anything, this part of the novel provides nothing but a likely rationale for how he could readjust to the developing Spanish nation-state.

Moving on to Marianna Scaramucci, she quickly establishes the duality emanating from the encounter between the cabin boy, the representative of the Spanish state, and the 'savagery' associated with the first American letters of discovery that remain accessible today. She perceives the description of the cannibal feast as horrific to the reader, and she does it based on metonymically arguing for the Colastiné tribe as representative of indigenous America to the average European:

> Saer nos deja a los lectores la tarea de impresionarnos y de horrorizarnos; la tarea de reactivar esa memoria mítica de la América salvaje que nos hace

> creíble el relato, que nos hace temer por la suerte del protagonista, y que nos hace juzgar y condenar a una alteridad percibida como bárbara, llegando así a problematizar la vigencia de tal imaginario en la contemporaneidad como marca de la colonialidad. (*El entenado* 34)

To begin with, opting for this argumentation takes away from different affective reactions to reading this passage, but it also disregards why this excerpt from the novel may be perceived as horrific. She bypasses a formal analysis of the text in favor of a ready-made argument about the event, the discovery of America, which had happened two decades prior, providing that we accept 1516 CE as the year for the Solís expedition that the novel reenacts. Her critique operates from an already formed vision of what the conquest may mean for contemporary readers, and she signals the way the story must be read, which is antithetical to helping elucidate a text. Similarly, Gabriela Copertari induces the reader to think of the cabin boy as a "decentered subject" (227) akin to the Colastiné while she devalues a potential European hegemony over the cannibals. For my part, I dispose of the notion of the subject for my analysis. I also shy away from introducing a moral lesson or from the necessity to bring forth a narrative that counteracts the cannibalistic tales of the time about the Americas and reaffirms the discourse around conquistadors as colonialists and imperialists. I am speaking about the character, the cabin boy. I discuss his moving through the different enclosures and apparatuses of capture in either culture. I contend that he needs to face and resolve conflictive situations for his own sake as a dividual composed of three key characteristics: division, partition, and participation, to which I add relationality as the dynamic glue that structures the mechanisms of desire and its production.

Carlos Abreu Mendoza inserts his article about *El entenado* in the Argentine literary canon. First, he analyzes this novel compared to Jorge Luis Borges' and Antonio

DiBenedetto's published work. Then, basing his argument partly on Saer's essayistic writings, this critic compares the novel about a minor Spanish official, Diego de Zama, and the cabin boy memoir. He adduces that both writers, Antonio DiBenedetto and Saer, write obliquely about the national history of Argentina from the margins of the canon, and he argues that these last two also carved out their niche in Argentine letters in a different manner from their predecessor, Jorge Luis Borges. Finally, he affirms that the loneliness and even melancholy that characterize both *Zama* and *El entenado* stem from both stories and narrators presenting a discourse marginal to European subjectivity. Moreover, according to Abreu Mendoza, Saer wishes to position his colonial novel as promoting this marginality, aligning with DiBenedetto's style regarding his vision of literary Argentina. As a critic, I value the stylistic exercise of establishing similarities between authors of the same nationality and era. Still, I reject the misguiding title of his article, "La paternidad conciliadora de "El entenado": Borges, di Benedetto y la tradición argentina", because it does not paint *El entenado* as a conciliatory version of literary Argentina that would bridge an invisible gap between Jorge Luis Borges' legacy and DiBenedetto's.[90] Instead, the critic conceives the novel as Saer's strategic way of inscribing himself in that literary history.

A more nuanced reading, albeit with a troubling thesis, is Lina Maria Ruiz Guzmán's essay on Saer's novel. She maintains that there has been little scholarly emphasis on a dual aspect of the tale that the main character presents to the reader, that is,

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[90] These are the critic's words on the matter: "A partir de la reformulación del mapa de Carlos Abreu Mendoza la tradición que tiene lugar en El entenado, Saer relativiza la centralidad de Borges al tiempo que reclama la periferia dibenedettiana como centro constituyente y, al hacerlo, incluye, en este nuevo y reformulado canon, su obra." (Abreu Mendoza 174-5)

the ten year captivity of the cabin boy with the Colastiné tribe, on the one hand, and the meditative style of the narration that this same character performs while describing the daily life and activities of the tribe, on the other: "Propongo que El entenado [sic] se construye como una estructura abierta que fluctúa entre ambas historias y donde las nociones de ficción, escritura y deseo que destaca, se entretejen para desestabilizar la visión de la literatura como resguardo de lo identitario" (57). This critic showcases Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome and how it sprouts from the earth in a non-linear and non-hierarchical fashion, in opposition to an arborescent structure. This conceptualization allows her to bypass the binaries that scholars like Chanady or Corpertari perpetuate concerning the reading of *El entenado*. Moreover, she proposes a vision of historical accounts that trumps officialdom and then argues for understanding history as something always in the making. In this instance, she continues, it mirrors the life of the orphan protagonist. This character does not seek to affirm his identity or the nation he belongs to but effaces himself from the biographical narrative he weaves. In the end, though, she linearly brings to her analysis passages of the novel that indicate how the center of the story shifts according to which character is doing the act of representing —like the theater troupe for the Spanish public or priest Quesada to the cabin boy— or describing whom. I question the relevance of this issue with representation when the main character, an unreliable first-person narrator, knowingly speculates about the nature of reality, history, and memory. The book is a memoir, an autobiography recounted from a self-questioning and confessional standpoint. Hence, a narratological analysis needs to be undergirded by this single narration feature, which is the picaresque origin of the character that the novel's title gives away.

I want to interject at this point the words that the writer of *Boca de lobo* and many other novels, Sergio Chejfec, had to say about *El entenado*, which push back on arguments about the canon, the Argentine nation, the nature of the narrator, otherness, or other such motifs that reoccur in many of the scholarly articles that deal with *El entenado*. Instead, Sergio Chejfec aims to disclose the style of writing that Saer possesses and how he produces aesthetic content with his writerly craftsmanship:

> Saer reivindica desde hace años cierta postulación especulativa de la narración. Filosofía del conocimiento, antropología especulativa, son sus palabras preferidas para caracterizar un discurso literario que propone un estatuto de realidad notoriamente más cerca no a los flujos y vacilaciones de la conciencia que las convenciones al uso para su representación. Y de manera semejante a los cuadros frente a los cuales a veces los colores adquieren un dinamismo imprevisto, hay momentos en los que las narraciones de Saer incorporan una calidad conjetural a su dimensión especulativa. Estos momentos son los de mayor felicidad estética, creo, ya que precisamente la conjetura significa una interpolación dramática incrustada en el terreno de la especulación. Sería, valga la redundancia, el momento de la verdad verdadera; el momento de la duda real. Y a través de las certezas sospechosas resulta plausible representar la experiencia con cierta singularidad estética. La literatura de Saer enfrenta a sus lectores a esa experiencia tan religiosa como estética de la indecibilidad de una manera, sin embargo, verbal. Trabajadas siempre por una retórica especulativa que opera por acumulación —semejante al tiempo repetido y estático que los indios eran incapaces de abandonar—, su densidad proviene de la tensión entre el progreso contenido y fugado de las narraciones. (*La organización de las apariencias* 115-6)

I find an opportunity to think along with Sergio Chejfec and highlight how Saer uses his literary discourse to unearth an aesthetic truth. The second-generation Argentine from Syrian parents creates a rhythm within the narration through a forward-moving commentary that constantly reassesses its presumptions. At the same time, his rhetorical skill manages to describe the world of the cannibal tribe in rich detail, from the daily mores of the group to the idiosyncratic practices of the singular characters that form it and to the rituals and customs that the whole community would religiously follow. I perceive what

Lina Ruiz-Guzmán sees as two different stories, the metacommentary upon the story and the narration itself, as Saer's writing style for this novel. Nevertheless, there is no question of truth-seeking in this endeavor, which Sergio Chejfec envisages when he speaks of conjectures and dramatic interpolations.

Similarly to Chejfec's creative writing, the Santafesino would use paratactic sentences, multiple commas, the imperfect tense in the Spanish language, and meticulous vocabulary to render the desire for knowledge transmittable through the written page. The density of which Sergio Chejfec speaks recalls the Bergsonian notion of durée, a psychological time that has a weight and hence a slowness and an intensity that go along with it. Among the effects that literature has had over countless generations and centuries, this ability to submerge the reader into a different time from the chronological one is one of the aesthetic elements that singularize it since other media need electricity or other forms of modern technology that make possible the induction of a mood by way of certain brain waves. Finally, it is no less remarkable that because Saer can produce a readerly perspective with his syntax that inclines us to enter the writerly universe, our bodies become enmeshed in the story. In contrast, this body stays largely still and can be captured, for example, by a photographic memory or a homemade video. At this point, other media chime into the conversation about literature and its proliferation into media studies, as I prefaced in the Introduction. The speculative narration that Saer cherishes starts and ends with sensorial perception, which itself contains experience, craftsmanship, and imagination, all of which are necessary to make the aesthetic artifact relatable. When the readers plunge into the story of *El entenado* and inhabit the pages, they are also in the world and becoming with it. Other media are external to the act of reading. Still, they involve it since the body in

stillness can also be prone to an approach that may not be representative but intentional in terms of its desire to know what the body does while in the act of reading, whether it is purse a lip, to cross one's legs, to lie down, or to drink a beverage in the midst of it all:

> Ahora que estoy escribiendo, que el rasguido de mi pluma y los crujidos de mi silla son los únicos ruidos que suenan, nítidos, en la noche, que mi respiración inaudible y tranquila sostiene mi vida, que puedo ver mi mano, la mano ajada de un viejo, deslizándose de izquierda a derecha y dejando un reguero negro a la luz de la lámpara, me doy cuenta de que, recuerdo de un acontecimiento verdadero o imagen instantánea, sin pasado ni porvenir, forjada frescamente por un delirio apacible, esa criatura que llora en un mundo desconocido asiste, sin saberlo, a su propio nacimiento.
> (*El entenado* 17)

In the above excerpt from the novel, Saer makes the becoming of one's body in chronological time explorable rather than readable, like the dividual of control societies. It is through this exploration that questions the ultimate nature of the Colastiné tribe, or the fate of the cabin boy that a space is left for one's phenomenological situatedness to be sensed, or our own becoming along with the writing.

I want to bring into the conversation about Saer's style an analysis that goes beyond *El entenado* and would consider the rest of his literary production. In this department, Pablo Martín Ruiz quickly points out another term that aims to pinpoint Saer's literary technique. He initiates his argument by bringing up Japanese poets from past centuries, and he proposes a connection between the elegant confusion[91] that they manage to construct and the artfulness regarding Saer's constant prodding of the present. Beyond the poeticization of the novel, an aspect of Saer's narrative which Saer himself has brought up in *El arte de*

[91] This critic did not coin the expression, for which he credits Laurel Rodd and her book *Kokinshu. A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern* (1996).

narrar and by Ricardo Piglia, among others, Martín Ruiz's article also goes hand in glove with Sergio Chejfec's vision of *El entenado*. The passage goes as follows:

> El lector tradicional de narraciones busca responder a la pregunta por lo que va a ocurrir, lo que lo impulsa a leer. Saer lo obliga a cambiar de pregunta, o al menos a agregar otra pregunta, igualmente importante: esa pregunta es, como suele ocurrir en la poesía, qué significa, la pregunta por el sentido. Saer no sólo acostumbra a trabajar el sentido de sus narraciones con los recursos de la ambigüedad y el hermetismo, habituales en el discurso poético, sino que además suele introducir elementos que tematizan o ponen en escena esta dificultad hermenéutica (60).

Building then on what was said about Sergio Chejfec's short review of *El entenado*, the becoming-style of Saer's narrative finds its enabling in these long and morose descriptions of the tribe, like a soothsayer or medium to an astonished public or client. As I will also recall later, this comingling of the senses into a sensorial and writerly ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) exercise reverberates in the theoretical concept that Gilles Deleuze coined as assemblage [agencement], whereby human and nonhuman actors —from the foliage rustled by the wind to the stretching of a body upon waking— burst into the scene and co-create an event. For the rest of the chapter, this is how Deleuze cognizes assemblage and the definition of it I will closely follow as I break down the novel:

> The minimum real unit is not the word, the idea, the concept, or the signifier, but the assemblage. It is always an assemblage which produces utterances. Utterances do not have as their cause a subject which would act as a subject of enunciation any more than they are related to subjects as subjects of utterance. The utterance is the product of an assemblage - which is always collective, which brings into play within us and outside us populations, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events. The proper name does not designate a subject, but something which happens, at least between two terms which are not subjects, but agents, elements. Proper names are not names of persons, but of peoples and tribes, flora and fauna, military operations or typhoons, collectives, limited companies [,]and production studios. The author is a subject of enunciation[,] but the writer - who is not an author is not. The writer invents assemblages starting from assemblages

> which have invented him[;] he makes one multiplicity pass into another. The difficult part is making all the elements of a non-homogeneous set converge, making them function together. Structures are linked to conditions of homogeneity, but assemblages are not. The assemblage is cofunctioning[;] it is 'sympathy,' symbiosis.
> (*Dialogues II* 56-7)

As I deploy this definition of assemblage, I also take stock of a recurrent element in Saer's prose through the first-person narrator: long sentences aiming to meticulously describe the salient moments in the cabin boy's life. As Martín Ruiz makes explicit, the multiplicity of meaning that can be extracted from a polysemic word or from one that lends itself to vagueness prove to be a staple of the Argentine's narrative rhythm, and Saer utilizes them to engulf the reader in a textual web that accumulates human and nonhuman agents into an event, as it can be perceived in this passage with multiple commas and specificity about the weather and its cyclical change:

> Hay que ver también que, de todos los inviernos que pasé entre los indios, el primero fue el más largo y el más riguroso. Durante semanas, una llovizna helada borró el horizonte y el cielo, y cuando por fin paró, el frío, en lugar de disminuir, aumentó, y, noche tras noche, de un cielo tan limpio y tan próximo que casi nos aplastaba, empezaron a caer las heladas, de modo tal que todos los días los campos amanecían blanqueados como si las estrellas, pulverizándose a causa del frío, estuviesen deshaciéndose de a poco y espolvoreando la tierra. Toda agua, aparte del gran río, se volvió escarcha, fina, quebradiza, destellante, azul al alba, de un verde amarillento durante el día y rosa al atardecer. La arena también se afinó, como hecha, incluso ella, de polvo estelar; y la tierra, reseca y dura en los trechos en que no se mezclaba con la arena, se puso azulada y lustrosa. Hubo, durante semanas, una especie de inmovilidad, como si el aire e incluso el tiempo mismo estuviesen congelados -detención gélida de la luz, o más bien transparencia en que la luz cambiante, azul, verde, amarilla, violeta, rosa, rojiza, como en la escarcha, se reflejaba. Los árboles parecían petrificados, y las ramas desnudas, contra el cielo blanquecino, entrecruzadas y negras, como un paisaje de pesadilla. Bestias y pájaros se morían de frío -y ahí quedaban, grises, rígidos, sin descomponerse, intactos y borrosos en el frío y la muerte. A muchos hombres les pasaba lo mismo: a los viejos, sobre todo, que se llenaban, en esas noches interminables, de frío y de sueño y, sin ganas de levantarse, seguían viaje hasta la muerte por pereza o comodidad. Livianos,

> silenciosos y sin violencia, como en otoño, hacia la tierra, que es su casa verdadera, las hojas de los árboles, así esos hombres, en el invierno desmedido, caían en la muerte. Los sobrevivientes acechaban, del norte incierto, la primera brisa tibia. Y cuando las primeras hojas tiernas, rojas y diminutas, empezaron a brotar, pareció que era, no sus propios botones, sino el aire helado lo que rompían. (*El entenado* 36-7)

As expected, the accumulation of adjectives and similes populate the description to give the semblance of rhythmic progression. However, alongside this intent, I can appreciate an approach to visualizing the sensorial world by adding natural elements and their cyclical becoming. Amidst this mise-en-scène, the tribe members cannot be distinguished from their surroundings, and in assemblage-like fashion, they carry the same weight as all other elements in bringing about the spatial manifestation of the colonial encounter.

I would not like to end this discussion about style in Saer's *El entenado* without showing some interest in how language operates to create thought and, ultimately, a worldview. Indeed, Will Nediger concerns himself with the interdisciplinary question regarding Whorfianism, or linguistic relativity, in this novel. Once he realizes under what ontological precarity the Colastiné tribe lives,[92] he argues that the stability between signifiers and signifieds for them is unmistakably broken. Owing to this as well, he maintains, "There is no one-to-one correspondence between sound and meaning, and the result is an extreme form of polysemy" (25). It is not unreasonable that the narrator would not have felt like he had thoroughly learned the language despite his decade-long

[92] Following an excerpt from the novel where the former cabin boy describes the lack of the verb 'to be' in the Colastiné language, the critic makes this observation: "Their language does not allow them to produce an existential statement, and thus they cannot be certain of any existential propositions. This fact conspires with the radical polysemy of their language to create a way of thinking characterized by a radical ontological skepticism." (Nediger 26)

stay with the Colastiné[93] since the principle under which the indigenous tribe operated was the primacy of perception. Herein I find merit in Nediger's article since he extrapolates from the linguistic analysis the philosophical preoccupation of Anglo-Irish bishop George Berkeley.

Probably aware of the strong ties between another Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges, his short stories, and his preference for English empiricism, Nediger posits the literary manifestation of the Colastiné tribe in Saer's *El entenado* as dominated by this school of thought, which he sums up with Berkeley's famous Latin dictum, "esse est percipi" (24), or to be is to be perceived. From a linguistic standpoint, there is stability between utterances and their worldly manifestation. If the existence of natural objects can only be surmised from their perception, the Colastiné society founds itself in an intense **precarious relationality**. Their dividuality —division, composed of partition, participation, and relation— comes into plain view because matter has no solidity as a concept in the perceiver's mind, nor can reason or logic be used to compare and contrast impressions of the mind. Here is where Will Nediger brings forward the famous term of the novel, def-ghi, which I will later conceptualize as a line of flight based on Deleuze

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[93] "El aprendizaje del idioma que hablaban, por ser rudimentario, me resultaba todavía más difícil. Un observador esporádico hubiese podido pensar que ese idioma iba construyéndose según el capricho del que lo hablaba. Más tarde comprendí que aun hasta al capricho nuestro entendimiento le inflige leyes que le dan la ilusión del conocer e incluso en eso la vida de los indios contrastaba con la de los otros hombres entre los que había vivido y viviría. Esa vida me dejó -y el idioma que hablaban los indios no era ajeno a esa sensación-un sabor a planeta, a ganado humano, a mundo no infinito sino inacabado, a vida indiferenciada y confusa, a materia ciega y sin plan, a firmamento mudo: como otros dicen a ceniza. Durante años, me despertaba día tras día sin saber si era bestia o gusano, metal en somnolencia, y el día entero iba pasando entre duda y confusión, como si hubiese estado enredado en un sueño oscuro, lleno de sombras salvajes, del que no me libraba más que la inconsciencia nocturna. Pero ahora que soy un viejo me doy cuenta de que la certidumbre ciega de ser hombre y sólo hombre nos hermana más con la bestia que la duda constante y casi insoportable sobre nuestra propia condición."
(*El entenado* 42)

and Guattari's understanding. He adduces that this Colastiné native expression refers to the outsider who ascertains the Colastiné's existence through relation, a component of dividuality: "Saer's natives, however, have no religion that posits an omnipresent perceiver. Their only recourse, then, is to procure some sort of outsider as a God figure, to witness both them and the tree and ensure their continued existence" (24). I would even go further than Will Nediger, though, by bringing to the conversation fellow empiricist David Hume, who did away with the personal identity of an I-subject, questioned the orderliness between cause and effect, and as a philosopher who did not bring up the concept of God like Bishop Berkeley to solve the problem of perception. Predicated then on precarious relationality, I agree with Nediger's interpretation of the def-ghi expression as "displacement, of someone who observes and reports from an external position" (24). I will later observe that this externality that the tribe welcomes in the form of the cabin boy and other token members from other tribes exemplifies dividual theory, so it extends to the Colastiné language and the production of subjectivity. Therefore, the Colastiné tribe uses human language only in a contextually unstable framework that highlights their dividual mentality. Coming back from the philosophical to the linguistic argument, Nediger brings his article to a close by stating that "The Witness (. . .) might present a world in which Whorfianism is true, or simply a narrator whose perception of a foreign language and culture is influenced by Whorfianism" (33). As it turns out, linguistic relativity was never in question.

Dividuality and Subjectivation

In contradistinction to many critics' readings highlighting otherness, Viveiros de Castro's *Cannibal Metaphysics* (2014) operates along the lines of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of difference[94] and formulates subjectivity as a process and the subject as an unreality. Having said that, and to arrive at the cabin boy's ceaseless reinvention or becoming, some obstacles threaten to slow down its aesthetic force. In *Negotiations*, Gilles Deleuze postulates his reading of the *subjectivation* concept, initiated by his friend Michel Foucault,[95] plus how processes of subjectivation —proposed by the same philosopher of sexuality and power structures— do not lead to the creation of a subject but instead to an immanent singularity:

> If there's a subject, it's a subject without any identity. Subjectification [subjectivation] as a process is personal or collective individuation, individuation one by one or group by group. Now, there are many types of individuation. There are subject-type individuations ("that's you..." "that's me..."), but there are also event-type individuations where there's no

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[94] This is what the Brazilian anthropologist has to say in *Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-Structural Anthropology* (2009) about Deleuze's reaction to Lévi-Strauss's structuralism: "The future of the master concept of anthropology —relation–-depends on how much attention the discipline will end up lending to the concepts of difference and multiplicity, becoming and disjunctive synthesis. A poststructural theory of relationality, by which I mean a theory respecting the "unfounded" compromise between structuralism and relational ontology, cannot ignore the series Gilles Deleuze's philosophy constructs: the country populated by the figures of Leibniz, Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche, Butler, Whitehead, Bergson, and Tarde and thus also by the ideas of perspective, force, affect, habit, event, process, prehension, transversality, becoming, and difference. Such is the lineage of a minor structuralism, from which an essential articulation or mediation would have been subtracted-a character even more strategic than the transcendental subject Levi-Strauss so memorably eliminated from his own Kantianism." (170-1)

[95] In his revaluation of Greek political thought, Foucault says that "ancient philosophy makes the problem of the government of men (politeia) dependent upon an ethical elaboration of the subject (e-thos) that is able to bring out in him and in front of others the difference of a discourse of truth (ale-theia)" (*The Courage of the Truth* 346). This estimation on the part of the French intellectual sets aside the production of subjectivity itself since Foucault does not give up on the self, heavily influenced as he was not just by Greek thought but also by the ascetic form-of-life of the Stoics and their conversational style as a means for subjectivation. Deleuze & Guattari will attempt to take the conversation away from history and towards an immanent sphere of pre-individual creation of affects and narratives.

> subject: a wind, an atmosphere, a time of day, a battle. . . One can't assume that a life, or a work of art, is individuated as a subject; quite the reverse (*Negotiations* 115)

In this interview with Claire Parnet, Deleuze differentiates between the subject-type individuation and the event-type. Still, in his book about Foucault,[96] the French philosopher offers the reader a more thorough examination of the subject-type individuations that Michel Foucault examined throughout his seminars in the Collège de France. The differences regarding the body of work of both authors, who shared a mutual admiration, lie in their disparate conceptualization of desire. Whereas Deleuze considered himself a "pure metaphysician" (Smith 38), engaged in an immanent project of non-human and post-human forces, Foucault concerned himself with the apparatuses of power that conduce the range of action of the individual.[97] For the latter, the desire came to be

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[96] This quote from Deleuze's book (1988) on Michel Foucault summarizes the possible subjectivations that the latter regarded as proper to the care of self that he defended in the later years of his life: "The most general formula of the relation to oneself is the affect of self by self or folded force. Subjectivation is created by folding. Only, there are four foldings, four folds of subjectivation, like the rivers of the inferno. The first concerns the material part of ourselves which is to be surrounded and enfolded: for the Greeks[,] this was the body and its pleasures, the 'aphrodisia'; but for Christians[,] this will be the flesh and its desires, desire itself, a completely different substantial modality. The second, properly speaking, is the fold of the relation between forces; for it is always according to a particular rule that the relation between forces is bent back (. . .) to become a relation to oneself, though it certainly makes a difference whether or not the rule in question is natural, divine, rational, or aesthetic, and so on. The third is the fold of knowledge, or the fold of truth in so far as it constitutes the relation of truth to our being and of our being to truth, which will serve as the formal condition for any kind of knowledge: a subjectivation of knowledge that is always different, whether in the Greeks and the Christians, or in Plato, Descartes, or Kant. The fourth is the fold of the outside itself, the ultimate fold: it is this that constitutes what Blanchot called an 'inferiority of expectation' from which the subject, in different ways, hopes for immortality, eternity, salvation, freedom or death[,] or detachment. These four folds are like the final or formal cause, the acting or material cause of subjectivity or interiority as a relation to oneself." (*Foucault* 104)

[97] In the book *Dividuations: Theories of Participation*, Michaela Ott defined it thus: "The concept of the individual, introduced as a Latin translation of the Greek atomist worldview in the first century BCE and later made general for political and economic reasons, is increasingly recognized as misleading and ecologically and ethically disastrous." (v)

seen as a "lack" (Morar et al. 3) in Deleuze's work, while Deleuze could not fathom why Foucault resuscitated the concept of truth.[98] By partly siding with Deleuze on this, I will trace a more-than-human desire, a Bergsonian élan vital, reworking the unconscious as a producer of affective thought and not as a locus of anxiety, unlike what psychoanalysis advocates.[99] However, I also believe that truth as a concept cannot stop being valuable or

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[98] Be this as it may, their "complex philosophical friendship" still needs "to be fully explored." (Morar et al. 5) To further explore the distinctions between Foucault's pleasure and Deleuze's desire, see Deleuze's *Two Regimes of Madness* (2006), specifically his essay "Desire and Pleasure", pp. 122-35. Moreover, Christian Gilliam has an article on the distinction: "Vrais Amis: Reconsidering the Philosophical Relationship Between Foucault and Deleuze."

[99] Martin Heidegger's elaboration of Da-sein owes a debt to Soren Kierkegaard, whose anxiety conceptualization is riddled with Protestant guilt and discussions of sin, as this excerpt proves: "The mood of psychology is that of discovering anxiety, and in its anxiety, psychology portrays sin, while again and again, it is in anxiety over the portrayal that it itself brings forth. When sin is dealt with in this manner, it becomes the stronger because psychology relates itself to it in a feminine way. That this state has its truth is certain; that it occurs more or less in every human life before the ethical manifests itself is certain. But in being considered in this manner sin does not become what it is, but a more or a less" (52). Meanwhile, the psychoanalytic vision that both Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan espouse incorporates a subconscious —later unconscious— based on repression since lack sits at the center of it. The father of psychoanalysis sees "the program of the pleasure principle" as that which "decides the purpose of life" (*Civilization* 23), and this same pleasure principle "seems to be positively subservient to the death drives" (*Beyond* 242). To Freud, pleasure coexists with a desire not to be. For Jacques Lacan, "anxiety introduces us, with the accent of utmost communicability, to a function that is, for our field, radical —the function of lack" (131). Even if this "lack is only graspable through the intermediary of the symbolic" (132), it remains clear that both thinkers assume the unconscious as dual and mired in negative dialectics since lack results from anxiety, which then imposes on life contradictory drives.

Both psychoanalysts stood then by the Oedipal triangle of the bourgeois family and, despite their contributions to perfecting a vision of the human species, they never renounced a conception of lack as the main generator of subjectivity. Unlike them, the subversive psychoanalyst Félix Guattari (*Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*, 1992), known for his work at La Borde and his intellectual endeavors with and without the collaboration of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, theorizes the unconscious as a factory of "machinic production" (5) in the mode of the dividual, that is, at a micropolitical level. Only when a multiplicity of drives coalesces around an ideological stratum can there be an individual and transcendence. Terms such as "Signifier or Being," says Guattari, validate a choice for capital, seeing as "Capital smashes all other modes of valorization" (29). Besides the critique of Lacan and Heidegger, Guattari accentuates how other regimes of signification different from human language can be (and are) as (in)significant as the former.

at least valorized on the level of discourse, no matter how much it may be contested. Moreover, desire can be slowed so that the so-called factory of the unconscious[100] and its echoes of Marx may slow down and not be working at full steam.

For this chapter, though, there is no need to create an artificial conjunction of both authors or an assemblage of their projects since Deleuze's writing on subjectivity allows both an immanent life and subjectivation to coexist. In two different instances, Deleuze says the following:

> Subjectification [subjectivation] isn't [sic] even anything to do with a "person": it's a specific or collective individuation relating to an event (a time of day, a river, a wind, a life…). It's a mode of intensity, not a personal subject. It's a specific dimension without which we can't go beyond knowledge or resist power." (*Negotiations* 98-99)

In this second passage on subjectivity, which belongs to his treatise about his deceased friend, he edges Foucault closer to his philosophical edifice:

> This is what the Greeks did: they folded force, even though it remained force. They made it relate back to itself. Far from ignoring interiority, individuality, or subjectivity, they invented the subject, but only as a derivative or the product of a 'subjectivation.' They discovered the 'aesthetic existence' - the doubling or relation with oneself, the facultative rule of [a] free man. (*Foucault* 101)

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[100] To think about the unconscious as a producer was a direct way of undermining psychoanalysis, as this passage from *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983) demonstrates: "Psychoanalysis was shutting sexuality up in a bizarre sort of box painted with bourgeois motifs, in a kind of rather repugnant artificial triangle, thereby stifling the whole of sexuality as production of desire (. . .) to recast it along entirely different lines, making of it a "dirty little secret," the dirty little family secret, a private theater rather than the fantastic factory of Nature and Production" (49). As it may appear straightforward at this point, I side with Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the unconscious as an impersonal factory of desire, which establishes a critical difference between the transcendent thought attached to lack supported by Jacques Lacan, vicariously Hegel, or Slavoj Žižek, among others, and the immanent production of a neuro-biological rhizome that pushes the limits of the unconscious (see Lazzarato's article "Some "Misunderstandings" on Desire", 2017). In all fairness to Lacan, though, he "was pushing psychoanalysis to the point of its self-critique, where the Real would be able to appear in all its positivity" (Smith 320) and, in the same *Anti-Oedipus* book, Deleuze and Guattari pay their tribute to him while venturing beyond the objet-petit a.

What stands out from these two fragments is the possibility of the dividual becoming subjected to mechanisms of power employing diverse processes of subjectivation, even if Deleuze avoids any possible substantiation of singularities. Probably for this reason, he puts forth the operation of folding, which does allow for subjectivation while still discarding anything resembling an individual subject. One of these foldings produces the chronological version of time accompanying the fold of memory[101] and individuation. Throughout the narration of *El entenado*, several instances occur of the cabin boy incurring allo-genesis (a genesis of 'me' and 'you') and, hence, subject representation, but the reflexivity of this pícaro entails a dividual folding, so it rejects psychological interiority. While engaging, his commentary on his life stays removed from personal attributes or a preoccupation with the self. The memoir dedicates little time to narrate his feelings and actions to highlight achievements. A constant permeates his writing, that the precarious relationality not only extended to the Colastiné or him through contamination but to the fabric of reality.

After spending some years with the Colastiné tribe, the erstwhile cabin boy had started to learn why and in what instances they would use def-ghi to refer to him, even if he never had a complete answer to that question. Saer's narration does not reveal the nature of the Colastiné tribe as if it were just a series of features that an average anthropologist could dig up. His style veers toward something indistinct (the term appears seven times in the novel's latter half); it is suggestive. The analysis of the tribe is

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[101] Memory, contrary to common understanding, does not have to do with 'consciousness' but with a history of bodily affects that surface into the body-mind matrix. For a discussion on the four types of foldings that Deleuze enumerates in his book on Foucault, see footnote 95.

not firm and unequivocal. Let me then break down the insight that the former cabin boy has regarding his being named Def-ghi toward the end of his stay with the indigenous people:

> El papel que me acordaban me había permitido sobrevivir. Cada vez que salían a buscar seres humanos para sus fiestas anuales, los indios traían con ellos uno como yo al que no mataban y al que, después de darle durante cierto tiempo la gran vida, mandaban de vuelta. Durante diez años, vi sucederse a esos huéspedes desdeñosos. Los retenían dos o tres meses e incluso menos; cuando la tribu volvía, después de su tembladeral, a los días monótonos y apacibles, los dejaban ir. Si a mí me mantuvieron tantos años con ellos, era porque no sabían bien dónde mandarme de vuelta; apenas vieron que hombres que se me parecían andaban por las inmediaciones, me pusieron en una canoa y me mandaron río abajo. De todos esos huéspedes, yo era el único que no sabía cómo comportarse; los otros parecían no ignorar lo que los indios esperaban de ellos, y ese conocimiento parecía autorizarlos a mostrarse distantes y altaneros. Antes de llegar, ellos ya sabían lo que a mí me costó años descifrar. El Def-ghi, def-ghi, insistente y meloso que les dirigían tenía, apenas desembarcaban en la costa amarilla, un sentido inequívoco para ellos; para mí, en cambio, desentrañarlo fue como abrirme paso por una selva resistente y trabajosa. A los indios, para quienes todo lo externo se les subordinaba, nunca se les ocurrió que yo podía ignorar su lengua y sus intenciones. Yo, que a decir verdad no tenía, desde el punto de vista de ellos, existencia propia, no debía ignorar, desde ese mismo punto de vista, lo que ellos esperaban de mi persona. No me dieron, ni una vez sola, ninguna explicación. Ya en las primeras miradas que me dirigieron, en el primer anochecer en que anduve entre las hogueras, había, me doy cuenta ahora, además del deseo de llamar mi atención y de caerme en gracia, la expresión del que recuerda a una de las partes, con insistencia un poco obscena, las cláusulas de un pacto secreto. Me fue necesario ir desempastando, durante años, esa lengua en sí cenagosa para vislumbrar, sin llegar a estar nunca seguro de haber acertado, el sentido exacto de esas dos sílabas rápidas y chillonas con que me designaban (. . .) Def-ghi llamaban también a ciertos objetos que se ponían en lugar de una persona ausente y que la representaban en las reuniones hasta tal punto que a veces les daban una parte de alimento como si fuesen a comerla en lugar del hombre representado; le decían def-ghi, de igual modo, al reflejo de las cosas en el agua; una cosa que duraba era def-ghi; yo había notado también, poco después de llegar, que las criaturas, cuando jugaban, llamaban def-ghi a la que se separaba del grupo y se ponía a hacer gesticulaciones interpretando a algún personaje. Al hombre que se adelantaba en una expedición y volvía para referir lo que había visto, o al que iba a espiar al enemigo y daba todos los detalles de sus movimientos, o al que a veces, en algunas reuniones, se ponía a perorar en voz alta pero como para sí mismo,

> se les decía igualmente def-ghi. Llamaban def-ghi a todo eso y a muchas otras cosas. Después de largas reflexiones, deduje que si me habían dado ese nombre, era porque me hacían compartir, con todo lo otro que llamaban de la misma manera, alguna esencia solidaria. De mí esperaban que duplicara, como el agua, la imagen que daban de sí mismos, que repitiera sus gestos y palabras, que los representara en su ausencia y que fuese capaz, cuando me devolvieran a mis semejantes, de hacer como el espía o el adelantado que, por haber sido testigo de algo que el resto de la tribu todavía no había visto, pudiese volver sobre sus pasos para contárselo en detalle a todos. Amenazados por todo eso que nos rige desde lo oscuro, manteniéndonos en el aire abierto hasta que un buen día, con un gesto súbito y caprichoso, nos devuelve a lo indistinto, querían que de su pasaje por ese espejismo material quedase un testigo y un sobreviviente que fuese, ante el mundo, su narrador. (*El entenado* 115-6)

This lengthy quote is justified because of dividuality and how order can be instituted from chaos (*ordo ab chaos*). On the one hand, the cabin boy is not unique from an individualistic point of view. The story tells us there were others like him in the decade that he cohabitated with the Colastiné. What differentiated him from those other 'survivors' from other tribes was that they were not enthralled, surprised, or thankful for having their life spared. On the contrary, the older man says they would look down on their captors as if they knew the rules underpinning waging war among warring tribes. Moreover, there was no special treatment toward the cabin boy because he was a subject of the Spanish crown. He got used to being around them as an appendage temporarily needed to sustain the tribe's way of life.

In writing these lines, I start using the same language as the narrator of *El entenado*. The recurrent appearance of *como si* (as if) for exemplification and metaphors, the use of the past imperfect tense that was present in this last fragment of the novel to recreate the habits of the tribe, the paratactic structure with the help of semi-colons, and the adverbial use to imply the varied degree of frequency in the number of actions and activities that the Colastiné would perform, contribute all to see the writing itself as a

process of learning who the Colastiné are. However, the reader may notice that there is no arriving at a destination where the cabin boy finally figures out what the Colastiné tribe represents or whom he has become from his cabin boy years (when the reader joins the story) to the days when he sits down in his home looking back to his youth and recalling what he took away from what he calls the indistinct. I claim that the writing here is itself a thinking bound but in acceptance of inconclusiveness, and this is because the cabin boy knew to be a part of them while living with the tribe, a divided part that can return to the source, as the primary text indicates. The anxiety over what is unknown or different becomes incorporated into the body of the tribe. The Colastiné do not seek to have him assimilate into their culture, even if he participates in it. They allow him a degree of freedom to be an outsider within the group, which the late writer thinks as he remembers the people he left behind—this effect of being an insider while remaining on the outside offers telling proof of def-ghi's dividuality. Despite being the most rounded character in the novel, the narrator remains a mystery to the reader, divided as he is between the indigenous and Spanish cultures that he never fully assimilated to. This inherent alienation can be put into a type of writing that thinks. Deleuze expresses it thus: "To think is to fold, to double the outside with a co-extensive inside" (118). In so saying, he marries the con-division, or internal division, intrinsic to Raunig's and Gilbert de Poitiers's dividual, and it helps us further understand the lesson of dividuality. Def-ghi puts it into practice by coming in and out of power assemblages, like the Colastiné or the Early modern Spanish nation-state, without ever belonging to either. In adjusting to the different effects of governmentality, he announces a post-picaresque aesthetic where the I disappears in favor of an adventure into the heart of dividual history and experience.

Immanence/Dividual vs. Transcendence/Individual

Whenever a reader bumps into a story of the Americas and the conquest of the so-called new world, which already implies a Eurocentric vision of the event itself, the other as a fixed entity that is being dissected and soon to be apprehended —as in deliberation that concludes—comes into view. This abrasive call to knowing what dividuals are, rather than what they are in the process of becoming, stigmatizes difference (in constant differentiation) and oppresses minor forces that populate the dividual. Instead, a conception of totality and control takes the stage of politics, upon which violence runs conspicuously rampant.

The pícaro[102] in *El entenado*, and any other rogue for that matter, has always attempted to escape the apparatuses of power that aimed to pin it down. As *a modality of the dividual*, the pícaro operates no longer as a myth or a genre, as evinced in the previous chapter, but as a dissonant element to a situation, a semiotic characteristic that remains outside the paradigm-sustaining discourse. While it acknowledges Spinoza's affects,[103] which are imperceptible, pre-individual, and hence as prevalent as power

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[102] The pícaro, as a figure of thought or conceptual persona, encompasses the history of capitalism and the development of the self. Its emergence in the literary field responds to the need for subjectivation and valorization that a new regime of unconscious forces called for.

[103] An affect, far from turning into a master signifier, points to Spinoza´s *affectio* and *affectus*, where the former refers to the sensations of the body that cannot be put into a clear-cut sentiment, such as fear, elation, or pain, and the latter, which takes up perception and feelings to create an image of thought, that is, an instantiation of subjectivity. They function at an unconscious level and can only be inferred as a quasi-cause of feelings and emotions or the result of previous processes of subjectivation. Affects are forces that, outside of conscious perception, operate in and around bodies in motion. For example, dogs can hear frequencies humans cannot pick up on. This concerns each species, its affordances, and all the signs nature emits. A recurrent theme in this dissertation is the imbrication of literature and philosophy. The first explores the vast diversity of forms of life and the nuance characterizing external reality, whereas the latter

structures, they are channeled for the pícaro not to anchor the dividual in its (an)archic emergence but to take advantage of them to comply (or not) with what society demands at every turn. This picaresque feature rings true for the Renaissance pícaro as much as the romantic and neoliberal pícaro or Bloom,[104] which will be more firmly discussed in Chapter 5.

The definable attribute of the pícaro, a desire for autonomy and upward mobility, parallels the bourgeois myth of the self that haunts the individual. This desire for distinction within subjectivity maims the subversive force of the pícaro, which runs the risk of being perceived as the self-made white man that post-structuralism sought to deconstruct.[105] Thus, the I-voice associated with the picaresque epitomizes a tension between the ambition immanent to the rogue and the perils of conformity to state or other power assemblages that go along with this drive to success, in contradiction with a need for autonomy. The material conditions and the combinatory forces of the empirical milieu

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posits concepts that can encapsulate blocs of memories, comportments, the nature of cognition, and more. Philosophy receives data from literary works to define and become more aware of the unknown, seeking wonder to gain knowledge. Concerning affect ideas, I equate them with what Spinoza calls "inadequate knowledge" (24) because they rely on imagination. Later, Deleuze used the expression "idées-affections" (Deleuze, Sur Spinoza) or affection-ideas in his Vincennes courses in the 70s and 80s, for which we only have an audio format and a transcription into English. In this course, he connects subjectivity to desire, passions, and how bodies are affected by internal processes and the external world. He also addresses the difference between affection (unconscious bodily signs or external signs that are not perceivable) and affect (the transition from the unconscious to the conscious arrangement of signs in mind).

[104] In Chapter 5, I describe three pícaro stages under capitalism: the Early modern, the romantic, and the neoliberal. Bloom responded to the cynical version of the neoliberal pícaro, which I study in the novel *Boca de lobo* (2000) that Brás Cubas announces in Chapter 2 with the dark picaresque. I borrow the term Bloom from the neo-communist group *Tiqqun* and then, in turn, from James Joyce's magnum opus.

[105] See Derrida's phallogocentrism (*Dissemination*, 1991) for a rendering of a politics of domination and subjection at the heart of language itself.

of action in which the rogue operates blend with care[106] or concern [Sorge] —desire for Deleuze— which points towards a more specifically sentient structure of emergence, as this fragment from *Being and Time* concludes:

> As a possibility of being of Dasein, together with the Dasein itself disclosed in it, anxiety provides the phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping the primordial totality of being of Dasein. Its being reveals itself as care [Sorge]. The ontological development of this fundamental existential phenomenon demands that we differentiate it from phenomena which at first might seem to be identified with care. Such phenomena are will, wish, predilection, and urge. Care cannot be derived from them because they are (. . .)founded upon it. (496)

The Renaissance rogue does not confess to the reader the need for a transcendent gap that would individuate them and make them stand out in the annals of history. Instead, the care he sustains founds itself in his awareness of precarious relationality rather than anxiety like the Colastiné tribe. After all, Saer was influenced by Heidegger,[107] which likely informed his vision of the cannibal tribe. Still, a positive

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[106] This is how the website Philo-notes defines Heidegger's Sorge: "Care is the fundamental structure of human existence. It is [how] we relate to the world around us and [how] we engage with the world in our everyday lives. Care is not simply a feeling or emotion, but a way of being in the world that involves both action and intention" (Heidegger's Concept of Care). Paolo Virno appropriates Heidegger's care [Sorge] in *The Grammar of the Multitude* (2004), so it does not need to be seen as a necessary feature of the individual. Instead, I choose to substitute it for the dividual's precarious relationality. Virno, concerning multitude, speaks of the many: "There is nothing more shared and more common, and in a certain sense more public, than the feeling of "not feeling at home." No one is less isolated than the person who feels the fearful pressure of the indefinite world. In other words, that feeling in which fear and anguish converge is immediately the concern of many. One could say, perhaps, that "not feeling at home" is[,] in fact[,] a distinctive trait of the concept of the multitude, while the separation between the "inside" and the "outside," between fear and anguish, is what earmarked the Hobbesian (and not only Hobbesian) idea of people" (Virno 34). For a more exhaustive distinction between the ontic and ontological levels of the structure of care in the German philosopher, see Chapter 6, "Care as the Being of Dasein" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*).

[107] See "An Interview with Juan José Saer" for a direct reference to this influence in *The Faulkner Journal*, p. 61.

change to this moody understanding encompasses a notion of precarious relationality, which connotes a sense of protection and dividual care rather than isolationist psychologizing.

The cabin boy in *El entenado* belongs in principle to this early picaresque, but his quest for meaning and overall awareness inch him closer to a Romantic rogue. After all, Romantic literary figures following the Enlightenment Era —Dostoyevsky's Stagrovin[108] or the *aura* of the Poètes Maudits— move the reader into a state of effervescence and struggle for individuation. The paradox for the cabin boy is that a memoir tends to make explicit whom a person claims to be or what official persona they present to the reader, which would be in line with contemporary subjectivity, either at the time of publication or nowadays. However, this biography explores his life without disclosing thoughts, beliefs, or actions that would benefit from a personological analysis. For this Early modern rogue, the problem of (in)authenticity or individuation lacks interest. In this sense, he stays attuned to a version of subjectivity (as a folding of the outside) that "can determine Dasein even in its fullest concretion" (*Being and Time* 154). In other words, the memoir regards his life, but not him, as a substance to be captured on the written page. The narrator's main concern does not follow a base realist formula, even if it partakes in the confessional feature I announced in the Introduction. The persuasive aspect of the narrative stems from the novel's rhetoric, which discloses reality as a foggy present that can only be intuited. The secret of this extraordinary life is written as a soothsayer vision, showcasing the humility of a child and yet the wisdom that experience can provide. In this context, to a dividual like the cabin boy, subjectivation can coexist

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[108] See Dostoyevsky's *The Demons* (1994).

with becoming, but it is the latter that defines him. Being subjected to the norms of the Colastiné or the Spanish state, the teachings of Quesada, or working as a theatre troupe member implicate only a dividual fold from which difference bursts forth, rather than individuation or domination. This counterintuitive contrast between what destiny throws at you,[109] or the roles that the cabin boy plays throughout his life, and the retreating that the literary performs with the I-voice, is worth examining since it strikes at the heart of what dividuality is and becomes, exemplified in this passage:

> Yo sabía que nuestro arte era descabellado, y nuestros objetivos, interesados y vulgares, pero la indiferencia es muchas veces la causa secreta de las empresas más sonadas y como la compañía, a pesar de sus manejos turbios que lindaban con la delincuencia, era amistosa y leal conmigo, me comprometí a escribirles una comedia y a mostrarme en los teatros representando mi propio papel (*El entenado* 93)

The narrator feels different from the rest of the theatre group. Still, he uses his experience to link up his dividuality with them despite those differences while preserving some autonomy. The narrator tells us he mistrusts some theater group members, but this does not prevent him from doing business with them. Coming into contact or connecting with these Spaniards after returning from the Americas revealed something to the cabin boy. He offers to the people that he meets the same treatment that the Colastiné Indians afforded him while he belonged to the tribe. In this latest instance, a theater actor makes a living recreating a made-up and somewhat ludicrous version of his decade-long experience outside the Iberian peninsula. Still, the question of (in)authenticity does not arise. However, again, the I-voice remains hidden despite narrating the course of his adventures. *El entenado* performs impersonality through the I-voice that highlights

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[109] I am here channeling the subdivision within Heidegger's Dasein named thrownness, which could be seen as a desacralized form of the Miltonian trope of the fall of humankind.

dividuality since the cabin boy achieves a harmonious balance between appending and remaining detached, giving himself to others while remaining a mystery to all but the becoming of being.

Amid this debate on whether to see transcendence in immanence or pure immanence (fluid becoming), the dividual rogue (Bartleby, Molloy, and others) traverses both indistinctively, leaving judgment aside.[110] By way of this character which refuses to be fleshed out, the dividual rogue, or the cabin boy from Saer's tale, finds its niche.[111] This post-picaresque rogue is hence defined as a *mode of the dividual* since dividuality thrives in circumstances where their connection or appending to the participatory or communal life exercises tightrope imagery, thus its vision of precarious relationality. Dividuality then sidesteps a humanist mindset of individuation and bypasses pervasive bourgeois ideology.

Deconstruction versus Micropolitical Construction of Desire

As per the Introduction, the trickster of the pre-capitalist era knew how to live in dividuality, but they were few and far between, those who could allow themselves to operate within the margins of institutionalized power. We could take the Goliards,[112] for

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[110] See Deleuze's article on Artaud, "To Have Done with Judgment", in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1997).

[111] Juan José Saer claimed once in a French television debate with Roland Barthes that "the role of literature was to offer an alternative way of experiencing the world": https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/juan-joseacute-saer-494514.html

[112] The Goliards can be seen as tokens of subversion under the clerical rule, a line of flight traversing the outside of officialdom, the likes of which Bakhtin saw in *Rabelais and his World* (1965).

example, whose church membership and value as men of letters in the few universities that operated around Europe in the late Middle Ages, could live hedonistically in an assemblage of feudalism and courtly love, among other moving elements that stratified the era. There was no learning curve or mastering of the self in their case, even if they lived on the edge of officialdom. Thus, the deconstruction and reconstruction of their sensibility brought no cut in time, but a Bergsonian duration[113] [durée]. There was no transcendent emancipatory power but an immanent line of flight, like a discordant tune at a cathedral where the organ operates as the sole instrument allowed to play.

Furthermore, emancipation refers to the individual slave who, in Roman times, managed to escape the yoke of the *manceps*,[114] which stands for both the actor that holds something as a proprietor and the thing held. To emancipate oneself, then, implies liberation from both ownership and possession, but not from the "binary structure that the reciprocity associated with generosity [I would say **relationality**] precisely is meant to forestall" (Campbell 38). In other words, emancipation brings about a sense of earned autonomy. Still, it also activates, in Roberto Esposito's words,[115] the (auto)immune

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[113] The singular line that includes Spinoza and Deleuze has Bergson somewhere in it.

[114] Timothy Campbell borrows this concept from Jean-François Lyotard's essay "The Grip" (*Political Writings*), proving relevant given the operation of letting go that it points toward. I believe that its definition borrows much from the Heideggerian notion of *Gelassenheit*. This tendency to desacralize human intentionality appears in Heidegger and Deleuze. However, the former starts from a subject-object relationship (probably from his lack of interaction with Baruch Spinoza and his indebtedness to phenomenology). In contrast, the latter starts from forces as much human as non-human.

[115] We can perceive the deconstructive force (stemming from the Hegelian negative or an apophantic theology of Being) that runs across Esposito's work: "This is the dilemma that befalls the subject —or better, gives the subject its life: to eat or be eaten. Unless that is, it can add to its repertoire a "diagonal" factor that is capable of shattering the mirror of this dialectic. I refer to the gaze, understood as an attitude toward others that is not a matter of appetite. This attitude is partly aesthetic: "One wants to devour all (. . .) desirable objects. Beauty is something that one desires

system that triggers the partition of property and ownership, which would nowadays establish a (neo)liberal subjectivation.

Timothy Campbell, who, as part of his scholarly work, translated some of the Italian political philosopher Esposito's essays, resorts to generosity as a means for the de-subjectivation of the human. In his book about Italian cinema, Campbell starts with deconstructing the subject-object dyad, which leads him to investigate the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott and theorize the physical act of holding that adumbrates a pre-subjective virtue. However, this gentle action no longer prioritizes the subject but the creative milieu that generates the event of holding, in this case, Michelangelo Antonioni's cinema.[116] Campbell thinks from a biopolitical perspective that fluctuates between different strands of philosophy, politics, and theology. Likewise, *El entenado*'s rhetoric promotes the narrator as a dividual in peacefully accepting life's vicissitudes. However, the first-person narrator also accentuates the precarious relationality to the world around him, rather than the exposure to empty time,[117] which has its specific aesthetic. The caveat I see to Campbell's approach is its excessive indebtedness to binary

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without wanting to devour it. We simply desire that it should be." The gaze accepts, consolidates[,] and protects the existence of the other, and for this reason[,] it starkly opposes the self-centered process of ingestion: "Man's great affliction, which begins with infancy and accompanies him till death, is that looking, and eating are two different operations." (*Categories of the Impolitical* 129)

[116] Unlike this mournful but valid temptation to dignify absence, Gilbert Simondon, one of the most influential philosophers of technology, emphasizes assemblage creation within a milieu. He accentuates the relation among the multiple elementary forces that care to assemble.

[117] In Chapter 4, I follow Gilles Deleuze's tripartite structure of time: empty time, active synthesis of time (imagination and imbrication of past, present, and future), and the passive synthesis of time (habit as the cause and possibility for access to the construction of a self). I believe Campbell highlights the first of these three in his work about Italian cinema, mainly the director Michelangelo Antonioni.

deconstruction, since human language, as another apparatus of capture, may lead to aporias and arrest the potential for alternate ways to produce subjectivity. Furthermore, dividual subjectivity functions regardless of subjection or subjectivation, so it does not need a process to deconstruct the self,[118] but a creative "micropolitics of desire" (*Lines of Flight* 5). Saer's preoccupation with becoming leads him to merge empty time, or a time without human subjectivity, with that of the narrator's, and this desire produces a post-picaresque aesthetic grounded on dividuality, that is, it emphasizes the truth that con-division and precarious relationality to the environment holds.

Erin Graff Zivin's reading of *El entenado*, while not engaging in a discourse of otherness, discusses the impossibility of European superiority as she describes a scene from the novel where the ship captain, right before being shot by an arrow, realizes the error of his presuppositions concerning the landing place. Graff-Zivin understands this moment of recognition on the captain's part as concomitant to a *marrano* or Crypto-Jew mentality, that is, the ghostly resistance within the Spanish empire to inquisitorial totalization. This scapegoat feeds the narrative of the Spanish nation-state, coinciding with the marriage between Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon, alongside the end of the Reconquista with the taking of Granada. This characterization of the marrano goes back to the father of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, who was a Sephardic Jew, and who made use of this figure as a substitute for what is left undecidable among the play of textual signifiers.[119] Graff-Zivin then transposes the

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[118] The politics of life he addresses need a process to negate the self (namely, generosity) because he departs from an individual/community axis that obviates micro-political forces.

[119] For more on the topic of the marrano, see Graff Zivin's *The Marrano Specter: Derrida and Hispanism* (2017).

marrano figure to the political terrain, the inherent relationship that the political has to the event, and finally, how "reading as [a] misunderstanding" (87) can entertain a discovery [Anagnorisis] capable not only of bringing unconscious forces to the fore but to inform this elusive event. The fact that the story is set in the sixteenth century incites the reader to look into that period of colonization and the politics of the Iberian Peninsula. Still, our portrait of Saer indicates that he cares about the aesthetic of dividuality that encompasses the *marrano* but also precedes and supersedes it. This deliberate distinction I make rests on the former being an ontological concept. At the same time, the *marrano* stands as a scapegoat figure countering the operating narrative of the Iberian Peninsula in the Early modern period when new Christians fought for lawful validation of their new status within the nation-state.[120] In times of disorder, as René Girard explained in many of his books,[121] the scapegoat serves as the conspiratorial plot to bring about a new statist order embedded in the religious experience.

The secret related to the *marrano* (the other within) informs the move towards linguistic deconstruction, which transposes the Heideggerian understanding of Being as either veiling/unveiling, authentic/inauthentic, into the linguistic realm. If Being were substituted by this secret, and the disclosing act by a linguistic rendition of dialectics, the

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[120] As I stated at length in the Introductory chapter, new Christians were thought to be illegitimate or at the very least suspect of undue privilege.

[121] René Girard still holds sway outside religious or mythical criticism studies in a technocratic age. Peter Thiel, famous magnate and co-founder of Palantir Technologies, regards the French philosopher in high esteem. He claims his works, especially *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (1987), had a tremendous effect on his life: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esk7W9Jowtc&ab_channel=ImitatioVideo

marrano becomes a force of resistance[122] that, while excluded from the Spanish empire ––and even if not positing itself as an autonomous subject—, cannot account for dividuality. The *marrano* figure still necessitates an undisclosed other whose birth to consciousness remains subject to the Spanish crown. On the contrary, the dividual elevates the conversation to an ontological realm over the historical and contingent discourse surrounding *marrano* subjectivity. The dividual is crisscrossed by pre-individual forces that precede the human and transindividual fluxes of becoming that exert a singular temporalization on the living.

A Dividual Attention: Memory and Fabulation

Meanwhile, the cabin boy in *El entenado*, whose dividual care through the course of his various dividuations or foldings—defined as sequential processes of subjectivation that bypass the creation of a stable self and reject the primacy of the ego—does not falter and ends up in an attic writing the story of some critical event in his life. Memory, unlike in bourgeois ideology, does not lead to a newer, better, or even increased human dignity. The dividual scratching the paper's surface with his pen should be seen as a technical being who uses his body, combined with paper, table, chair, ink, and quill, to relate to life or trans-individuate it. This mediation not only sharpens the dividual force, but it

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[122] Éric Alliez ("The Guattari-Deleuze Effect", 2011) manifests in his article about Félix Guattari that we need to go beyond aesthetics of resistance: "It is less a matter of a philosophical transposition of major into minor than of a minor problematization of philosophy 'itself,' which thus definitively escapes from the history of philosophy, because it undoes philosophies of history on their own, diachronic, terrain (becoming's double history), in making possible and necessary theoretical-practical experimentation as the post-historical politics of becomings in a thinking of crisis. A politics – without *telos* but not without 'strategies' – which projects us all the more really (critically and clinically) beyond the too-conventional figures of a 'thinking of resistance'." ("The Guattari-Deleuze Effect" 270-1)

encapsulates its natural state of becoming into an event. Writing requires attention to our dividuality, as exemplified in this novel excerpt by the erstwhile cabin boy, Def-ghi:

> Dejando la pluma, empiezo a llevarme a la boca, lento, una tras otra, las aceitunas, y, escupiendo los carozos en el hueco de la mano los deposito, con cuidado, en el borde del plato. Al salir de la boca están todavía tibios, por el calor que les infunde la parte interna de mi cuerpo. Como alterno, por pura costumbre, las aceitunas verdes con las negras, los dos sabores, uno sobre el otro, me traen la imagen, regular, de rayas verdes y negras que van pasando, paralelas, de la boca al recuerdo. Y el primer trago de vino, cuyo sabor es idéntico al de la noche anterior y al de todas las otras noches que vienen precediéndolo, me da, con su constancia, ahora que soy un viejo, una de mis primeras certidumbres. Es una de las pocas, y tan frágil que no posee, en sí misma, valor de prueba. (*El entenado* 121)

Dividual attention, as the response to Heidegger's care or Sorge, is a constitutive feature of an emergent assemblage. The inclination or tending-towards [ad-tendere] of the dividual mobilizes passions and coalesces them around a collective. The affective a-signifying production forms part of the "figuration machine" (Narkunas 18) that con-figures the a-human and, as Paul Narkunas ventures,[123] now as much as ever can all artistic endeavors, and literature in this case, be an aesthetic injunction through which we mediate with an 'always already' impoverished reality. However, since the human evinces a process of deterritorialization, not knowing whether to be post-human, non-

[123] What Narkunas (*Reified Life: Speculative Capital and the Ahuman Condition*, 2018) defines as the a-human stays close to the conception of the dividual posited here, at least concerning the creation of subjectivity and psychopolitics: "The ahuman as figuration machine produces an aesthetics of life that multiplies con-figurations of existence human and otherwise, and yet the ahuman still inhabits a world of all-too-human institutions. Ahumans function as differential and interacting networks of relations through technologies, economic forces, legal and nongovernmental institutions, languages, and historical sedimentations that disrupt perceptual givens; yet ontologically, there is no relation other than immanent modes of becoming" (27). I would disagree about the relation being only one of becoming because, as Deleuze and Guattari or Pierre Clastres show, becoming stems from the conflict (not necessarily violence) inherent to relationality that unfurls the State. The pícaro, as a conceptual persona, refers to this clash between the élan vital/conatus and the multiplicity of unfolding affects, plus the potential it has for assuming an ethico-aesthetic paradigm as it becomes.

human, or a-human[124] in its process of becoming, we should dividually relinquish the image of thought that neoliberalism and capital since the first enclosures and appropriations have bestowed upon the social milieu. This mirror image, this mimetic, representational mirage, carries the voice of the individual or, more romantically so, the genius.[125] To this end, I will discuss Yves Citton's concept of ecological attention and Heidegger's poetic examination of language.

Yves Citton, like many other scholars, shows a concern for the future of the humanities in conjunction with the supposed distraction (or, instead, with the new economy of attention) that new tech and new media have made commonplace. In his book *The Ecology of Attention,* he manages to theorize "meta-attentional engagement" or "apparatus" (161) and what I will call, more succinctly, **dividual attention**. Showing how an act of reading, listening, or watching is never actually private or individual, Citton defines this type of attention as one which "is plugged into the attentional experience of another or more strongly subjectivized perception of the world, through which a certain reality is revisited" (161). He is then describing a double bind or subjectivation here. One can attest to a transindividual logic of readership in reading itself. Still, there is equally an operation of reflexivity that acts as another "vector of subjectivation" (163) that individuates the reader. This apparatus trumps or dispels the all too common conception of the belles lettres or auteur cinema that a cultural elite propagates to affirm the authority of master signifiers in every artistic field. While prizing

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[124] Accelerationists, object-oriented ontologists, and speculative realists like this terminology.

[125] To delve into art not beholden to the individual, see pages 45-58 from Maurizio Lazzarato's *Experimental Politics: Work, Welfare, and Creativity in the Neoliberal Age* (2017).

Citton's efforts to take attention beyond individuality, my interest lies in transmuting this notion to the dividual and foreseeing attention as a secondary feature of Saer's conception of dividuality beyond division, partition, participation, and its glue, relationality. This feature is composed of introjection and experiential awareness, which the first-person narrator masters in the course of his adventures:

> La infancia atribuye a su propia ignorancia y torpeza la incomodidad del mundo; le parece que lejos, en la orilla opuesta del océano y de la experiencia, la fruta es más sabrosa y más real, el sol más amarillo y benévolo, las palabras y los actos de los hombres más inteligibles, justos y definidos. Entusiasmado por estas convicciones -que eran también consecuencia de la miseria- me puse en campaña para embarcarme como grumete, sin preocuparme demasiado por el destino exacto que elegiría: lo importante era alejarme del lugar en donde estaba, hacia un punto cualquiera, hecho de intensidad y delicia, del horizonte circular. (*El entenado* 5)

Notice how the older man looks back to his youth and describes it with detachment and understanding. This excerpt illustrates the main character embracing his past, offering a rationale for actions that were part of his becoming and learning how to lead a dividual life, and remaining attentive to communicating all this in a lyrical tone. As I will also disclose in Chapter 4, attention refers to the active time, where imagination and reasoning combine to improve one's tenor of life. In contrast, the latter refers to the passive time, the historicity of the dividual and lessons of experience.

Language must quiver, bend, or stutter to train dividual attention and circumvent representation. Unfortunately, in everyday speech, human language, as the central apparatus of capture in and for literature, aims to individualize: "It is propriation's mode" (*Basic Writings* 424). Doubtlessly, Heidegger knows that language not only holds the speaker's attention but also grips this speech agent, which is why one needs to poeticize language to save it from individualism or unenlightened collectivism. In this chapter, the

emergent power of dividuality, by way of Saer's cabin boy and the Colastiné, comes to life when the artist can break the representational code that embodies language. The artist must be a painter of the dividual current that suffuses life. Speaking of the novel itself, and in communication with dividual attention, Florencia Abbate recalls the work of Marcel Proust and Walter Benjamin as potential interlocutors to Saer while writing *El entenado*:

> El tiempo del recuerdo no es lineal y uniforme sino un tiempo complejo, cualitativo. El acceso y la conformación de la imagen en el recuerdo suponen, para Benjamin, una detención y una apertura del tiempo. De un solo golpe vienen al espacio de la escritura, la imagen, el azar, la materialidad y lo discontinuo. El tiempo propio del recuerdo es un tiempo en perpetuo reconfigurarse. Mientras que un acontecimiento vivido es finito, el acontecimiento recordado, recuperado en la imagen del pasado, recibe el tiempo que desborda la copa de la imagen: el infinito. Esta idea que Benjamin desprende de la obra de Proust está presente también en El entenado [sic], especialmente hacia el final, cuando la narración ha cedido del todo y deja paso a los tres recuerdos deshilvanados que condensan el aprendizaje. (Abbate 78)

As I will explain in the next chapter, when I examine Clarice Lispector's novella *A hora da estrela*, the active synthesis of time[126] takes into consideration both memory and forgetting to create an eventful combination of word choices, openness to a multimedia awareness beyond the page, and a determinate syntactical style. Saer's novel

[126] Deleuze's first publication alongside his book on Hume was Difference and Repetition, where he makes explicit a passive synthesis of time, an active one, and Nietzschean's empty time or eternal return. I do not wish to delve deep into the distinctions here but suffice it to say that the active synthesis of time forces the unconscious to produce recollections or blocs of memory for creation, while the passive synthesis of time deals with aspects of subjectivity that have been processed and given a rationale, however consciously or unconsciously, which translates into habit and acquiescence with a state of affairs, blunting then anxiety. Empty time operates outside cognition yet can still be perceived in the germination of flowers, the rotting of apple cores, or many other natural occurrences where becoming is palpable, needless of subjectivating processes.

thus participates in fabulation,[127] a way of setting time out of joint defined as using imagination and recollection to put becoming in diachronic motion. A writer engaging in fabulation strives to create time crystals,[128] seen as intense mind fabrications that rupture the transient and can attach themselves to a dividual's history. The first-person narrator in *El entenado* then records these literary events, like the orgiastic description of the Colastiné after feasting on European flesh, the Colastiné children playing games by making spatial shapes with their bodies, or the confusion that Def-ghi experiences as a guest to the Colastiné. This always happens retrospectively as the former cabin boy

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[127] Like time crystals, which I discuss in the following footnote, fabulation is a Deleuzian term he defines thus in *What is Philosophy?*: "Every work of art is a monument, but here the monument is not something commemorating a past, it is a bloc of present sensations that owe their preservation only to themselves and (. . .) provide the event with the compound that celebrates it. The monument's action is not memory but fabulation [italics is mine]. We write not with childhood memories but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present. Music is full of them. It is not memory that is needed but a complex material (. . .) found not in memory but in words and sounds: "Memory, I hate you." We attain to the percept and the affect only as autonomous and sufficient beings that no longer owe anything to those who experience or have experienced them: Combray like it never was, is, or will be lived; Combray as cathedral or monument" (367-8). Deleuze and Guattari often return to Proust to create concepts regarding literature. In this case, they explain how fabulation is a process of becoming a means of writing and creation. After all, becoming itself has changed the affective processes that led to the writing time, which is why they call the writer a shadow in pseudo-Jungian terms.

[128] In his book *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze speaks not of time crystals but crystal-image or crystal-images, which he defines as "the uniting of an actual image and a virtual image to the point where they can no longer be distinguished" (355). While this may not help much to a non-initiated in the philosophy of the Frenchman, he elucidates this point earlier in the book: "What constitutes the crystal-image is the most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after, the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature, or, what amounts to the same thing, it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past. Time has to split at the same time as it sets itself out or unrolls itself: it splits in two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past. Time consists of this split, and it is this, it is time, that we see in the crystal. The crystal-image was not time, but we see time in the crystal" (101). I will speak of concretization in the next chapter, but for all intents and purposes, I redefine Deleuze's term for Saer's story as a fragment of the novel where the reading takes on cinematic description, allowing thus the reader to sense the audiovisual ramifications in the act of reading, which is conducive to memory crystallization.

recounts the story in a haze of avowedly unreliable memories. Abbate culminates her argument by bringing into the conversation Bergson and how this latter philosopher understands the time of fabulation and how it differs from hardwired habits, only to make then Bergson's vision applicable to Saer and *El entenado*:

> El narrador afirma que sus recuerdos afloran en un estado de somnolencia. En ese estado, los recuerdos le traen imágenes que se salen del tiempo, como epifanías que lo sacan del mundo durante unos instantes, y a través de las cuales su vida adquiere sentido (. . .) El acto de la escritura lo sacaría del tiempo insensato de la historia; y esos momentos, aunque no alcanzarían para redimir el devenir que fluye hacia la nada, sostienen el deseo y el sentido (. . .) mediante la escritura el narrador aspiraría a transformar la existencia en un "bosque encantado del recuerdo", confiando en que, tras ese umbral, lo esperan "la eternidad y la ebriedad"47. Esa función redentora de la escritura asoma en la novela de Saer. Como si sus palabras tendieran un puente entre la vida física y el misterio cósmico, el entenado alcanzará la plenitud recreando aquellos. días (*El entenado* 80)

I want to insert here a brief analysis of how Saer's style compares to the other three writers of this dissertation. While Clarice Lispector, for example, puts temporality in motion by bringing emotional intensity into the present and making this present always readily available to the reader via quick bursts of intensity, Saer chooses an equally dynamic approach, but one that makes the past itself a form of melancholic retrieval and epiphanic joy. There is a soothing effect to the meandering ways in which Saer's dividual muses about the distant past for an answer to the essence of life. His careful reconstruction of events in *El entenado* affords the reader a confessional discovery that incorporates the possibility of making the past blast its way into the fabric of the present. As explained earlier, this aesthetic goes along with the confessional aspect of the memoir, which includes the overwhelming revelation of a secret and exposure to the rawness of life experience, eliciting sympathy for the narrator. I argue that Sergio Chejfec would

probably second this, that he inspired himself in Saer to make the past a matter of eventful presence, with a constant state of childlike wonder an equally predominant feature in Chejfec's case. As for Machado de Assis and Brás Cubas, the recollections also bring back the past into the present since the narrator speaks from the grave, but the humorous tone throughout disconnects the past from the act of writing, which conveys instead a dissociation from the passing of time, leading the reader to believe that time is not a matter of much importance to the corpse that does the narrating. Also, I might add, the narrator defends a version of reality that suits his ideological stance, which stands in contradiction to the desire to create the present, either from the dreamy ruminations about the past in the case of Saer and Chejfec or from transcribing the coming to being of the first-person narrator for Lispector.

Memory and its vicissitudes in the mind of the creative writer have interested Saer's scholars for a long time. In the case of Orlando Araújo Fontalvo, this exploration picks up the thread I broached in the Introductory Chapter and Chapter 2, the one about the genre in all these stories. He initiates his argument by adducing that the nouveau Roman writers inspired Saer once he moved to northern France to become a literature professor at the University of Rennes. This mobilization of desire around the renovation of the literary from a formalist point of view reached the Argentine writer, but, unlike other novelists from his generation, he strayed from the Latin American boom, and he worked in the shadows of this literary movement until the end of his life when he started to get academic recognition:

> Tanto Germán Espinosa como Juan José Saer, para continuar con este paralelo introductorio, cultivaron en extenso la poesía, el cuento, la novela, el ensayo y hasta el guion cinematográfico. Herederos legítimos del influjo borgiano, publicaron ambos tempranamente sus primeros

> libros, pero, de manera paradójica, solo en el último tramo de sus vidas, luego de muchas publicaciones, lograron un lento, aunque progresivo, ingreso en la dinámica del circuito literario, es decir, en cuanto a la lectura y la edición de sus obras. (106)

Araújo Fontalvo then proceeds to question the genre of the novel *El entenado* since, as I said in the Introduction, by then, the Russian formalists had long ago deconstructed this concept concerning literary criticism. In the novel *El entenado*, this critic observes a multiplicity of genres proliferating:

> La novela de Saer es, como toda gran creación literaria, una refinada combinación de muchas cosas. Tiene bastante de novela de aventuras, de novela fundacional, de novela picaresca, de novela de formación, de novela de archivo, de novela metaficcional y hasta un poco de Crónica de Indias (108)

Finally, he reaches the point when memory, unreliable narration, and literary style, merge, and this is where I also bring in Saer's words from his essay format book, *El concepto de ficción*, about all these three thematic features of fiction:

> Al dar un salto hacia lo inverificable, la ficción multiplica al infinito las posibilidades de tratamiento. No vuelve la espalda a una supuesta realidad objetiva: muy por el contrario, se sumerge en su turbulencia, desdeñando la actitud ingenua que consiste en pretender saber de antemano cómo esa realidad está hecha (11)

I had already mentioned that Saer saw his narrative style as a speculative kind of anthropology, which I have rehashed as a becoming truth. Fontalvo argues that the actual event in Saer comes with the late realization that his characters experience regarding their inability to apprehend their history (par. 110), and the proof of this can be found in *El entenado* throughout since the precarious relationality that sustains the dividual incites anxiety in the Colastiné tribe, which relies on cyclical time to assuage them. However, he does not address how he searches for the signs of truth-telling in his narrative. I believe what Saer effectively produces is the construction of a story about the Americas in the

sixteenth century as an alibi for exacting a purpose to literature, namely, to make fabulation a meditation on the precarity of our senses to grasp a tenuous reality that is, the precarious relationality akin to dividuality. As Karina Miller concedes in her vision of the novel with different words from mine, becoming truth can be defined as going beyond dichotomies like history-fiction, natural-artificial, and to be/to seem (par. 4) so the work can function as a creative text that can provide a basis for the constant differentiation occurring as part of the becoming of being,[129] or an event's conceptualization: "El entenado [sic] sabe que no debe dejar de recordar, porque eso significaría dejar de escribir, lo que significa que el mundo de los que ya no están dejaría, también, de existir (Miller 18-9). The first-person narrator reconstructs and reveals the customs of a tribe through memory. He concludes that the essence of this project does not lie in anthropological analysis of otherness, but rather in transcribing life into the page, with the added caveat that memory is itself not an entire storage room but a combinatory property of the brain that includes forgetting to create an event.

I should not be remiss in adding that, even if they do not necessarily use philosophical rhetoric to reach this conclusion, I am not the only scholar to argue that Saer undoes the history-fiction dichotomy, as Miller attests. Mariela Blanco provides yet another example of a similar reasoning, declaring the following: "No hay enfrentamiento entre historia y ficción, ni siquiera uso de aquella por esta, sino una puesta en contraste que termina en disolución de las barreras, o, en palabras del entenado, "un encuentro casual entre las estrellas"" (26). In creation, the combinatory rules of syntax and

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[129] Markus Gabriel differs from me in his understanding of an event. Still, he does use this term, field of sense, as the title for one of his books, *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology* (2015).

literature's pliability to different registers and genres organize stories that undo common sense and organize a point of view aiming to capture multiple forms of life.

Def-ghi and the Post-Picaresque

The pícaro started as a line of flight that has always been in peril of (or even fallen into) reterritorialization, so for the rogue to survive, it can only stage its death to dividuality: a letting go of the self and the bourgeois that hindered its intensively material force. The writer's task, as a technical being that works with words and syntax, is to redirect thought to the moment of the encounter with the unthought and, in so doing, create a relational matrix. In this sense, the artist hearkens back to Heidegger's "On the Way to Language": "Every thinking that is on the trail of something is a poetizing, and all poetry a thinking. Each coheres with the other based on the saying that has already pledged itself to the unsaid, the saying whose thinking is a thanking" (425). An artist actualizes the unthought,[130] while a philosopher thinks through the possibilities of encountering the new (a heterogenetic relation of multiplicities) through concepts or problems. Still, they both coincide in their interest in creating a new image of thought.[131]

The cabin boy from *El entenado* is always in the process of becoming. First, he turned into Def-ghi, the outsider for the Colastiné Indians, then a pícaro, and finally, an old family man writing his memoir. Hence, these are either labels from different

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130 See Agamben's *Potentialities* for a model of artistry and creation that represses the impulse of immediate activity.

131 In a context where English, along with Chinese, have become the *lingua franca* for capitalistic transactional communication, the use of language for anything other than an interchange of commodities or petty individual information may expose the poverty of lived experience that subtends the neoliberal narrative. The pícaro, as a schizoid force of becoming, needs to be porously trans-individual.

collectives or actualizations attached to his singularity. However, out of this sequence of names, Def-ghi stands out the most because it activates faculties that the Colastiné Indians wished to remember. Contrary to a general assumption about the name being a mark of individuality, it bore the mark of indeterminacy:

> Esos dos sonidos, def-ghi, significaban a la vez muchas cosas dispares y contradictorias. Def-ghi se les decía a las personas que estaban ausentes o dormidas; a los indiscretos, a los que durante una visita, en lugar de permanecer en casa ajena un tiempo prudente, se demoraban con exceso; def-ghi se le decía también a un pájaro de pico negro y plumaje amarillo y verde que a veces domesticaban y que los hacía reír" (*El entenado* 115)

Def-ghi is an actual singularity, a distinctive feature exiting from the indistinct, a semiotic remainder to Colastiné's worldview. Alfred North Whitehead finds in this singularity or impersonality the key to experience, and it has nothing to do with the Kantian sublime but with an encounter.[132] According to the English philosopher and mathematician,[133] the mind-body matrix, as "a nexus of actualities" (214) extracted from a miasmatic and foggy present, allows the dividual to record its dividuation(s). This singularity disputes individuality and collectivity, as the dividual's division holds more value than the other two (partition and participation) in the triangle of becoming[134] (see

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[132] For Félix Guattari, the World would be better described as a chaosmos. Alfred North Whitehead disagreed with the French philosopher about the intrinsic openness of the World, but he saw it instead as only semi-open for our cognition. While I agree with the former, our affective intelligence does not allow us, or any other species, to be attentive to unbounded multiplicity.

[133] Steven Shaviro claims that "if Whitehead were to replace Heidegger as the inspiration of postmodern thought, our intellectual landscape would look quite different. Certain problems (. . .) we have been overly obsessed with would recede in importance to be replaced by other questions and other perspectives. What Isabelle Stengers calls a "constructivist" approach to philosophy would take precedence over the tasks of incessant deconstruction."
(*Without Criteria* xii)

[134] The figure below contains many thinkers (Deleuze & Guattari, Simondon, Hardt & Negri, O'Sullivan), but I choose to elucidate the triangle thus: "This is precisely what Deleuze does in the opening two chapters of Anti-Oedipus: the three syntheses by which he and Guattari

figure 1 below). This is because the Def-ghi singularity remains mostly imperceptible to living beings. The dividual's division moves back and forth between a molecular realm of subsistence and the molar absorption of the mind-body affects at the molar level of capital and its apparatuses of capture. The Saussurian binary structure of language is represented at the molar level. In contrast, the swarm of multiplicities that informs this language [langue] first belongs to the molecular sphere. Thus, the flow of time/desire shown below,[135] while situating itself within the parameters of capital production, also has a place for the impersonal and the singular:[136]

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define "desiring-machines" are in fact the same three Ideas that Kant defines as the postulates of practical reason (soul, world, and God), but now stripped entirely of their transcendent status." (Smith 118)

[135] The philosopher Jason Read corroborates the overlapping of the capitalistic machine of desire and the bodily affects that ultimately lead to our individuated desire: "Narrative orients our desire but does so only if it has initially captured our attention. The stories and narratives that drive and motivate us are the cause and effect of our desires. Thus, it is possible to say that the order and connection of economic exploitation are the same as the order and connection of mythic representation, provided that order and connection refer to the same structuring dynamic, the same structure of the conatus, and not necessarily the same fundamental points of orientation and investment." (269)

[136] I liken singularity to what one of the Colastiné children does while playing and forming geometric lines in the sand with their bodies: as part of a pack of animals (in this case human), they play in unison, but there was an instance when one would stand up and move a little way from the group, changing his gestures and his way of walking, as if pretending to be someone they all knew. He would eventually return to the pack, to which it neither belongs nor is it apart. This singularity can also be seen in the moving description of the "friendship" that Def-ghi struck with one of the Indians, who had been one of the cooks when he joined the tribe and who ended up as a lone body by the beach, in his death throes after the orgy; or some other examples that are interspersed throughout the novel.

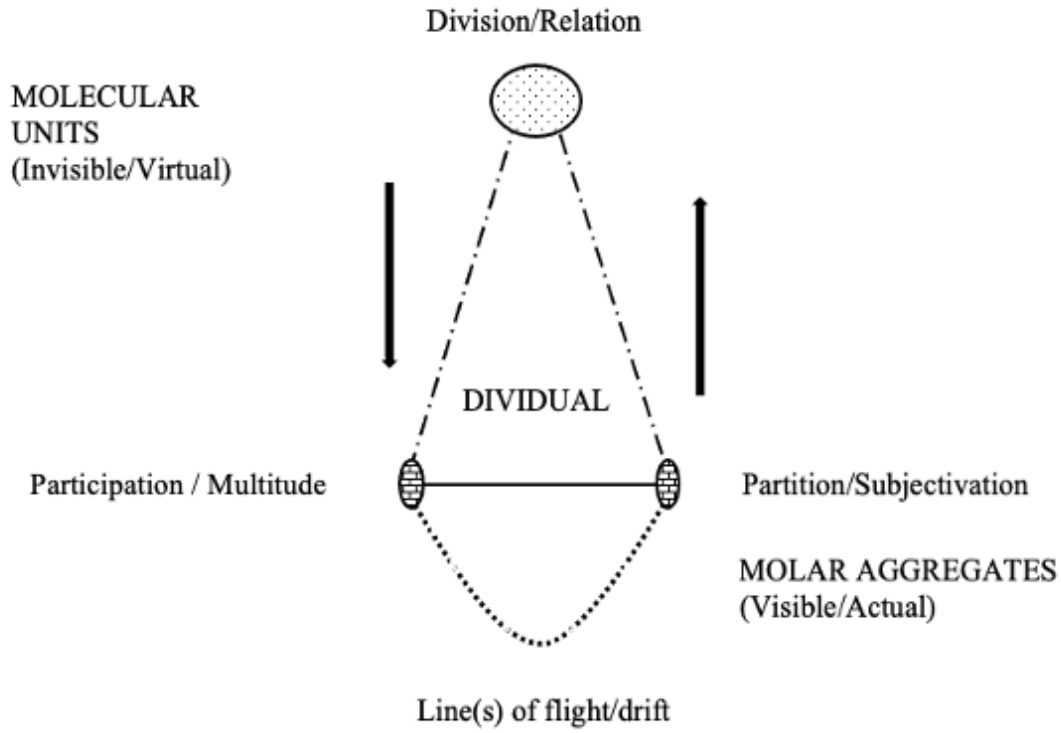

Figure 1: The Production of Subjectivity

The dividual, as it may have been intimated already, does not need to be human, not only because it is inherently divided and in the process of becoming, but because it does not end in its call to presence, nor is it simply occluded because of its visibility, à la Heidegger or Foucault.[137] The dividual's position is oiko-logical, including the formation of the environment (or territory) and the disparate measures of creation. Taking only the

[137] The unthought does not refer to the lack of experience of the human, nor to the source of anxiety that incites the many to subjectivation. Alongside Deleuze and Guattari, I stand against the hominization of the unconscious.

home [oikos] as a starting point,[138] I aim to distinguish the dividual's ecological cartography from the economic one of the apparatuses of capture, which are defined as "anything that has in some way the capacity to (. . .) orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings" (*What is an Apparatus* 14) or, in other words, for (re)territorializing subsistence (see the bold line at the bottom of the triangle in the figure above).

The dividual can also be a rich concept to confront our era of ecological devastation because it puts the accent on our unpayable debt to the organs that conform our bodies to the chemical reactions that occur so that one can feel with the non-sentient matter, human and non-human animal, or to the constant changes that occur unbeknownst to our limited senses. It focuses on the virtual network of becoming(s) that configures reality. This vision excavates a powerful image capable of imagining a future wherein the fiction of creditor-debtor relationship can be substituted by one where mind-body labor gets credited beyond individuality.

To complete the vision of Saer's dividual, I want to recap dividual attention's two facets: **introjection**, defined as the ability to comprehend and adapt to the diverse point of view or ideas, and **experiential awareness**, expressed as a progressive skill allowing the dividual to understand a myriad of situations, as secondary attributes of the dividual, even if they do not have the centrality that partition, participation, and relation. These features facilitate the coming in and out of assemblages for the dividual. This way, a

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[138] Following my understanding of the micropolitics of desire, I aim to disconnect the *oikos* from the *nomos* of the socius: "Oikonomia (. . .) [is] a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient-in a way that purports to be useful-the behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of human beings." (*What is an Apparatus?* 12)

negative mindset does not become an eventual banality of evil. These individuating features may be demanded of the cabin boy, unlike the Indians, which do not partake in apparatuses of the self, that is, mechanisms of power that aim to control and subject dividuals. The Colastiné community, though, knows about the precarity that accompanies existence, so they protect themselves all the more from disappearance while holding on to their tenuous relationality to their environment, as this fragment of the novel demonstrates:

> Querían hacer persistir, por todos los medios, el mundo incierto y cambiante. Malgastar una flecha, por ejemplo, era para ellos como desprenderse de un fragmento de realidad. Arreglaban todo, y siempre barrían y limpiaban. Cuando la inundación los corría tierra adentro, no bien el agua bajaba un poco, volvían a instalarse en el mismo lugar. Por precario que fuese, al único mundo conocido había que preservarlo a toda costa. Si había alguna posibilidad de ser, de durar, esa posibilidad no podía darse más que ahí. Lo que había que hacer durar era eso, por incierto que fuese. Actualizaban, a cada momento, aun cuando no valiese la pena, el único mundo posible. No había mucho que elegir: era, de todas maneras, ése o nada. (*El entenado* 106)

Value, the foremost capitalist question, is only contextual for the individual. Still, if submitted to the dividual practice of introjection, Saer's dividual forebodes, it births methods for (oiko)logical forms of life like those of the Colastiné, hardworking actors determined to preserve the precarity of life around them. Thus, every immanent thought entails thanks to the environment since every dividual forms part of the earth. The cabin boy's care for himself in *El entenado* incorporates this introjection, which, far from being a personality trait of an individual, prefigures **dividual care**. Def-ghi's writing collaborates with this dividual project as well. His anthropological analysis depicts his environment and enchants the Colastiné form of life. Suppose the capitalist machine homogenizes cultural clusters around neoliberal subjectivity. In that case, the former

cabin boy exposes the given to multiplicity. He protects the possible from congealing around a paradigm of societal common sense with his dividual attention.

Hardt and Negri's multitude,[139] shown in the abovementioned figure and broached in the Introduction, does not oppose the dividual. Still, it brings a transindividual pool of assemblages that the dividual does not take for granted, which is why it appears at the molar level. As a more molecular assemblage of forces, the dividual bears in mind the contradictions ready to explode in the machinic aggregation of labor power that is the multitude. As a figure intimately imbricated to the *socius*, the dividual attempts to see through the background fog that clouds their vision, but only to inhabit a world worth living in. This immanent struggle reaffirms the dividual, thus conferring it with the sensual acumen that thinking demands and that *El entenado* corroborates as one reads.

Def-ghi and Dividual Participation: Cannibalism and Debt

The dividual subsists because they cannot ever become a full-blown individual. Only the world around it grants the dividual a modicum of reality. The Colastiné Indians, while anxious about existence and its break-flow of dormancy and wakefulness, know intuitively about the precariousness of their topological instantiation:

> La mera presencia de las cosas no garantizaba su existencia. Un árbol, por ejemplo, no siempre se bastaba a sí mismo para probar su existencia. Siempre le estaba faltando un poco de realidad. Estaba presente como por milagro, por una especie de tolerancia despectiva que los indios se dignaban

[139] Here is a definition of a multitude from their 2004 book, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*: "The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or single identity —different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires. The multitude is a multiplicity of all these singular differences." (xiv)

> acordarle. Se la concedían a cambio de cierto provecho utilitario: fruto, leña, sombra. Pero, en su fuero interno, sabían que la verdad efectiva de ese intercambio era bastante problemática. El árbol estaba ahí y ellos eran el árbol. Sin ellos, no había árbol, pero sin el árbol, ellos tampoco eran nada (*El entenado* 128)

Their molecular dependence on the environment spooks the Colastiné. They lack the technologies of the self[140] that conform to the always emergent *socius*, and this is because they fend off the conformation of a State that would formalize this constant production of controlling assemblages based on safety, linguistic coding —financial plain speak and political doublespeak— and territoriality. Instead, they subjectivize themselves as part of a community by not eating each other. The *munus*[141] to which every community must listen, or the tribute each singularity must pay to the respective members (or dividuals), entails this prohibition. This membership, even though it founds their community, does not cease to be problematic since the Indians never stabilize the *munus* upon a series of statist logics. They remain embedded still in a mythological sensibility. The Colastiné acknowledge this much when they implore Def-ghi to remember the story of their bodily faculties or prowess so that he can remember their singularities as he later leaves on the canoe. What subsists always needs to participate in larger assemblages to

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[140] Michel Foucault frames these technical apparatuses according to the Stoics' ascetic motivation: "[They are] a set of practices by which one can acquire, assimilate, and transform truth into a permanent principle of action. Aletheia becomes ethos. It is a process of becoming more subjective" (*Technologies of the Self* 35). The historical and subjectivating ideal found here is contrary to the acceptance of molecularity and the unconscious as a desire producer in Deleuze and Guattari.

[141] Munus is a critical term in the lexicon of Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito. It refers to the tribute or gift one owes to the community, which cannot be reverted. In the immanent triangle drawn earlier, other terms by Esposito could also appear, such as immunity, which would stand for subjectivation, and community for the multitude. At the same time, the munus would operate as the division, that centrifugal chaosmotic force. See *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (2008) for a more thorough biopolitical discussion.

ensure their continued existence. Desire does not originally stem from an individual but from the impersonality of our bodily affects and the environment around us.

Thus, the **debt**, tribute, or *munus* to the members of a given community cannot ever be repaid, and it constitutes the forced relationality that leads to the appearance of apparatuses in the first place. Despite this acknowledgment, however, debt still stirs bundles of affect that issue back to political theology discussions.[142] Moreover, the term has Judeo-Christian overtones[143] and is closely tied to morality. If we were to single out one of those tales, Job's story would be particularly poignant. It invokes submission to the Law to achieve salvation and heavily influenced Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, a few salient philosophers strongly linked to an ethical and political debt. I propose that rather than ask, alongside Deleuze and Guattari: "Why do people fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?" (*Anti-Oedipus* 29), which nonetheless summons a dividual question, the first departure for thought about this relatable question is relationality. The dividual exists because it is neither whole nor broken. Instead, it assembles, and if the human variant of dividuality tolerates technical apparatuses, as Gilbert Simondon claims,[144] it is because of high adaptability to all sorts of assemblages, going from different microscopic chemical reactions, to organic and inorganic bodily appendages and to participating in larger power structures.

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142 For a more comprehensive conversation around debt and capital, consider the work of Elettra Stimilli, *The Debt of Living: Ascesis and Capitalism* (2017) or Giorgio Agamben's *Karman: A Brief Treatise on Action, Guilt, and Gesture* (2017).

143 To learn about the disdain for Judaism from Christian authors since St. Augustine and the circumscription of both religions to the transcendent law of the living, see David Niremberg's *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (2013).

144 See Gilbert Simondon's *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (2017).

Nowhere else but in the chewing of the human bodies, though, was the appetite for incorporation more salient for the Colastiné Indians. Def-ghi's account of their livelihood clearly shows the sparseness and gravity with which they would carry out their everyday affairs, only to be undone by the orgiastic festival of human flesh one summer after another. This cannibalistic ritual kept at bay an imperialistic logic of expansion, seeing as it was directed both at the preservation of diversity through the young prisoner after each of their hunting outings and at the introjection of difference within their bodies as a means for affective intensification:

> Cannibalism in a pre-signifying regime (. . .) is wholly destined by its very segmentarity and polyvocality to avert the already-present threat: universalizing abstraction, erection of the signifier, circularity of statements, and their correlates, the State apparatus, the instatement of the despot, the priestly caste, the scapegoat, etc. Every time they eat a dead man, they can say: one more the State won't get
> (*A Thousand Plateaus* 118)

A cannibal mentality does not obsess itself with the legitimacy of logic because it remains attached to a precarious relationality. The mythical understanding of reality that permeates the community's subsistence also includes their members' dividuations (their coming in and out of assemblages) since the dividual does not become obscured by any of the authoritarian figures or power structures listed by Deleuze and Guattari in the quote above. Indeed, Gabriele Schwab agrees with the instability of self and the precariousness of community foregrounded in the novel when she discusses the cannibalistic rites of the Colastiné:

> The Colastiné use cannibalism as a practice that enables them to transform the outside into an inside (incorporation) and, vice versa, the inside into an outside (subsequent elimination). This process, however, can, at best[,] create only a fragile ontological security because it requires a renewal whenever the boundaries between inside and outside threaten to become

> rigid. Without a more stable differentiation, on the other hand, there can be neither a sense of culture nor one of self (Schwab 82)

Cannibalism appears thus for Schwab as the condition for creating an outside to the community, when in fact, it is this fragility that structures the community, and not the cannibal ritual, as she suggests. What this ritual achieves is instead the non-formation of a despotic axiom or proto-State, since what the cabin boy encounters in the Americas is a community that already lived in dividuality, rather than another vision of the human, rather than otherness, and this is what allows him to find his own affective force: "Me doy cuenta de que, recuerdo de un acontecimiento verdadero o imagen instantánea, sin pasado ni porvenir, forjada frescamente por un delirio apacible, esa criatura que llora en un mundo desconocido asiste, sin saberlo, a su propio nacimiento" (*El entenado* 35). Def-ghi's journey is singular, but only insofar as he learns to harness the body's potential to affect and be affected, to grow in stature with each libidinal trajectory.

Dividuation and the Picaresque

> "Psychosocial types belong to history, but conceptual personae belong to becoming" (*What is Philosophy?* 192)

Earlier in this essay, I mentioned the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott as part of a critique of deconstruction and its taste for an aporetic methodology. While his contribution to an affective relationality between forms of life should not be dismissed, Félix Guattari regards his concept of the transitional object as only another **partial object** among others.[145] This distinction opens the significant molecular-molar divide in his

[145] See Félix Guattari's *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*, where one can note how he had started to distinguish his conceptualization of the unconscious from both Lacan and Winnicott: "Objet petit

philosophical project since a structural object would foreground a predicative subject rather than emphasize the event or action in occurrence. “Partial objects are ‘the ultimate elements of the unconscious’[,] and they operate through break-flows” (*The Three Ecologies* 96), so they do not announce an ego associated with a person, but a machine of relays and infinite (dis)connections. This constant coupling and uncoupling can be seen in the orgy at the beach in *El entenado* and in the children’s play, whose bodies would form geometric lines and circles:

> El juego al que jugaban era simple y extraño: primero se ponían todos en fila, unos detrás de otros, paralelos al río, hasta que, uno a uno, se dejaban caer al suelo, donde quedaban inmóviles, como muertos o dormidos. Cuando el último de la fila había caído, los demás corrían a ponerse detrás de él, que se incorporaba, y el juego recomenzaba. Más tarde la fila se convertía en un círculo pero, a diferencia de las rondas que había visto en mi infancia, los niños no se ponían unos frente a otros, mirando el centro del círculo, sino uno detrás del otro, apoyando las manos en los hombros del que iba adelante, de modo tal que el círculo se formaba cuando el primero de la fila apoyaba sus manos sobre los hombros del último. A veces la fila, sin que sus componentes se dejaran caer, se desplazaba un largo trecho en línea recta hasta que, llegados a un punto determinado, los niños se dispersaban, golpeando las manos y riéndose o discutiendo entre ellos, como si una parte del juego hubiese terminado y se estuviesen dando un descanso rápido antes de recomenzar. Después se dispusieron de una manera más compleja, formando una figura de la que comprendí que se trataba de una espiral únicamente cuando se pusieron a girar. Estuvieron componiendo y recomponiendo durante un buen rato esas figuras, dispersándose de tanto en tanto en medio de la alegría general y de los comentarios más entusiastas y acalorados, hasta que por fin se dejaron caer en el pasto que bordeaba la orilla y descansaron, jadeantes y plácidos
> (*El entenado* 67)

“a”: this term was put forward by Lacan in the context of a general theory of partial objects in psychoanalysis. The objet petit "a" is a function implicating oral objects, anal objects, the penis, the gaze, the voice, etc. I suggested to Lacan to join this petit "a" with petit "b" objects, corresponding to Winnicott's transitional objects, and petit "c" objects, corresponding to institutional objects” (418). Moreover, the objet petit “a” is conspicuously absent from the book *Anti-Oedipus*, written in collaboration with Gilles Deleuze.

The pedagogue François Deligny sees in these "wandering lines" that the children lay out with their bodies "a practice of experimentation over and against interpretation" (Sauvagnargues 194) that thwarts the upsurge of a subject. These practices complement the experiential awareness of the institutionalized adult under state rule, whose dividuality hinders reactive passions. Simon O'Sullivan regards this adult thinking as "a folding of the infinite (chaos) into the finite (thought)" (183). To him, The Foucaldian "'Care of the Self' has to be a practice that results in a transformation" (70), which means that it needs to be accommodated within the paradigm of dividuality and not that of the Greeks, lest it falls prey to apparatuses of capture. The risk always exists that, precisely at the infrapolitical[146] level, mass media-driven processes of subjectivation and state mechanisms of control may negate the affective creativity of the living, which would make them search instead for certainty and security in response to the fear of an unknown foreign entity.

As a dividual dispersed in a modeling scenario, defined as points of view and ideological positionalities in constant reworking, the first-person narrator deals with contingency and reacts positively. Plus, the narration ascertains, that the cabin boy

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[146] This could refer to the molecularity of desire that Deleuze and Guattari postulate. However, a deconstructionist group from Latin American Studies has claimed this specific term. Gareth Williams (*Infrapolitical Passages: Global Turmoil, Narco-Accumulation, and the Post-Sovereign State*, 2020), one of the members, defines infrapolitics thus: "We can now say that the infrapolitical is the thinking that flickers on the tremorous limit at which the end of the representation of historical progress is finally realized and the metaphysical indulgences of previous vital political and ideological illusions (such as the bourgeois foundations of fraternity, equality, and liberty) flounder and run aground, rising up, nevertheless, in increasingly vitriolic forms as subjectivist reactionary demands for definitive (nationalist, populist, or identitarian) decisions, resolutions, or truths regarding the twilight of the modern" (211). As avowed post-Marxists, Professor Williams and other group members speak in abstract, societal terms, leaving aside singularities and the concreteness of how power is yielded.

inhabits a place and gets used to its texture. Would it be wrong to claim, as the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa did,[147] "that travel is for those that cannot feel"? (334). Deleuze replies that, in and of itself, traveling does not correlate to a "real voyage" since "the imaginary and the real must be (. . .) like two juxtaposable or superimposable parts of a single trajectory, two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another, a mobile mirror" (*Essays* 62-3) in which to look at one's crisscrossing multiplicities. In other words, the trajectory (extensive) needs a becoming (intensive), while the latter cannot integrate itself into an event without the "cartographic conception" (63) that conforms to it. A mobilization of affects upon a canvas or map, as François Deligny would have it, puts in motion the dividual process. Dividuation confronts the universal face of capitalist enunciation (i.e., doublespeak, plain speak), and it hides from this semiotic power [pouvoir] or "organized face-language machine" (*Lines of Flight* 190). It further carries the intrinsic division by establishing assemblages that forcefully ward off selfhood. Dividuation implies a practical philosophy since it is a technique that incorporates new behavioral dispositions and discards former processes of subjectivation that were hurting the dividual or forcing it to comply with mechanisms of power to which they are inimical. In the figure below, dividuation effectuates a becoming that assembles into smaller dividual space since, contrary to capitalistic logic, dividuality allows the power

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[147] Fernando Pessoa's poetic prose has constituted some of Portugal's national intensity; some of its affective force. However, like any conceptual persona (let us not forget his heteronyms), it produces a dividual line of flight.

[puissance] of the multitude,[148] which I defined as the participation subdivision of the dividual, to flow as a well-oiled machine, vibrant and agile.[149]

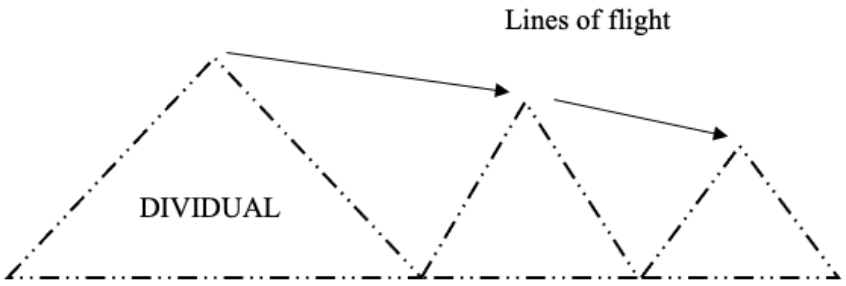

Figure 2: The Process of Dividuation

Here is where the pícaro, as a character concept, may effectuate becoming because conformity does not naturally correspond to the rogue as the heir to a subversive reaction to the Inquisition's power of repression. As such, the rogue may become not so much a line of flight per se as "a condition for the exercise of thought" (*What is Philosophy?* 19) in this dissertation,[150] a sign that does not pertain to a paradigmatic assemblage and which

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148 Toni Negri himself expresses, unawares, the distinction between the dividual's molecularity and the multitude (participation element of the dividual) that he saw in the metropolis: "The concept of [the] multitude was developed precisely to create a dispositif of 'assemblage' of singularities who operate in the sequence existences–resistances–encounters–cooperation–production of subjectivity." (150)

149 Even Deleuze himself attests to the counterintuitive nature of becoming since it must bypass individuality to arrive at a singularity: "To become is to become more and more restrained, more and more simple, more and more deserted and for that very reason populated. This is what's difficult to explain: to what extent one should involute. It is obviously the opposite of evolution, but it is also the opposite of regression, returning to a childhood or to a primitive world. To involute is to have an increasingly simple, economical, restrained step." (*Dialogues II* 29)

150 Incidentally (or not), Agamben defines friendship as the "condivision that precedes every division" (36), whereas Deleuze and Guattari actualize the friend as another conceptual persona

solicits an answer. As I effectively see it, a post-picaresque aesthetic pushes forward toward the unknown, which it sees with the novelty of a child. The rogue can deconstruct a consumerist expression of a subject's visibility as a becoming child. "For the unconscious," not unlike the pícaro, "is an orphan, and produces itself within the identity of nature and man" (*Anti-Oedipus* 49). Indeed the adventurousness associated with the picaresque evokes creativity as a significant impulse, and the first-person narrator repurposes this roguish image to showcase dividuality through writing, emphasizing in the process the art of balancing the partition and participation features of the dividual.

Therefore, Chapter 3's post-picaresque aesthetic correlates with a spatiotemporal mode of the dividual maneuvering around the multitude of affects, liable to subjectivation, and around the dividual's inherent multiplicity of drives. Likewise, and as a literary figure nascent with modernity, the rogue encompasses the rise of the bourgeoisie while developing an aesthetic force that still reaches us today in the guise of upward mobility. Thus, this aesthetic questions and speculates about the notion of value and proposes an unquenching desire for affective and relational growth while fully aware of its engagement in mechanisms of power. In *El entenado*, for example, the older man and former cabin boy write to make the communication of becoming explorable and aesthetically pleasing to the reader. The work implicates the narrator as much as it does the reader without needing to break the fourth wall as other pieces of fiction do. The

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that activates the act of philosophy. "The philosopher is the concept's friend; he is [the] potentiality of the concept" (*What is Philosophy?* 22). We can notice here how they put the thinker within the assemblage of thought and turn the friend into the conceptual persona of the event that is thinking. Likewise, upon writing this text, thoughts passed through me, and my affects brought me to choose a post-picaresque sensibility as a central concept for this dissertation.

pleasure therein highlights, once more, the power of con-division and the limits to relationality on account of what our senses can activate and signify to the environment; in other words, the ability to effect change and gain positive freedom. The pleasure therein highlights, once more, the power of con-division and the limits to relationality on account of what our senses can activate and signify to the environment; in other words, the ability to effect change and gain positive freedom.

A dividual can morph into a pícaro just as much as it is pliable to step out of this actualization, as we see with the former cabin boy and later narrator[151] of *El entenado* since the rogue signifies but a possible folding of the dividual. The pícaro's issue concerning dividuation stems from its misunderstanding of the notion of power. Rogues, while able to apprehend the madness inherent to representation [pouvoir], may fall into resentment and hence become the fool of a play whose enactment rogues find hostile to dividual health, as in the dark picaresque laid out in Chapter 2, or even become the cynical face of the establishment, as I explained with Machado de Assis's creation, Brás Cubas. A rogue partaking in a post-picaresque aesthetic is never a fully-rounded character because it does not have a stable self. It is a character concept performing dividuality with an uncanny ability to step in and out of power structures. Their eagerness for adventure may lead them into an eternal return without positive freedom [puissance], but only to the extent that they leave behind the precarious relationality that formulates a

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[151] We can appreciate here how, in writing, the old relationship between the Western imaginary and Foucault's care of the self surfaces: "Taking care of oneself became linked to constant writing activity. The self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity. That is not a modern trait born of the Reformation or of romanticism; it is one of the most ancient Western traditions. It was well-established and deeply rooted when Augustine started his Confessions" (*Technologies* of the Self 26). Contrary to this vision, I aim to disentangle the picaresque from interiority and the Western's imaginary as an appropriation.

dividual's con-division, defined as the relation resulting from the dividual's division into multiple desiring or organic parts.

As a character concept, the rogue may behave cynically along the parameters set by capital, be it within or outside the law. Following a formal aspect of the picaresque's Golden Age origins, a rogue can withdraw from narratorial rhetoric involving psychological interiority. As a line of flight from paradigm formation that contains the possibility of dividuation, roguish actions contain the adventurousness needed to take the human to be something other than what each historical age commands. They can disavow personological passions and avoid getting caught up in processes of subjectivation while endeavoring to find an allocation for a new image of thought. In roguery, the protagonist of *El entenado* can become a leader of the unthought, becoming thus imperceptible, molecular, and so robust in opposition to a symbolic search for aggrandizement. Dividual rogues can ultimately "use consciousness to abolish subjectification [machinic enslavement]" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 134).

Before and after returning from the Americas, the initial cabin boy embodied the historical rogue defining the picaresque genre, either when he hustles for a living before embarking on the momentous voyage or when he becomes an actor performing def-ghi, the Colastiné's name for the captive, after joining the theatre group. Evolving from this historical background, the post-picaresque gesture that Saer announces with this character incorporates the most benevolent roguish vision out of all four stories since he lays out a behavioral practice of dividuality that seeks to increase one's power to act despite limited negative freedom. Saer portrays the life of a heroic narrator who survives a cannibal tribe, learns and even acculturates to their way of life, and successfully assimilates into the

culture of his youth following his period as a prisoner of war. While the confessional aspect and the narrator's unreliability are well-documented, Saer constructs a rhetoric of authenticity with his use of uncertainty, faulty memory, difficulty relating to externalities and encounters, or even compassion toward an older man with notable life experience. In their need to frame the story under a post-colonial lens, in ignoring the ramifications of having an original pícaro as the first-person narrator of a late twentieth-century novel, and in taking sides over one or other culture, the majority of critics disregard Saer's desire to express something profound about the nature of subjectivity, of affective and emotional relationality, and about the many motivations that traverse the dividual and which make the field of action so challenging to navigate. By foregrounding Saer's dividual, I conceptualized a practice of thought and action to understand better freedom, uncertainty, the passing of time, and the complex making and remaking of history.

Notice how in contrast to Saer's first-person narrator, Brás Cubas uses his verbosity to ingratiate himself to the reader in Chapter 2. Rodrigo S.M. plays around with the affective positionality that he should take in his description of Macabéa (the dividual character) in Chapter 4, which belies a mean-spirited approach that reveals his roguishness and inconsistency. Lastly, the narrator of *Boca de lobo* in Chapter 5 will use his skillfulness as a professional writer to promote a vision of a dramatic event that would place him in deep water from a contemporary moral standpoint. Distinctively to the other three stories and narrators, the protean orphan stays faithful to the best traits of the rogue as an adventurer of experience-based learning. With every narrated life experience, the narrator appears to gain the two specific features of Saer's dividual creation: psychological introjection, seen as the ability to comprehend and even adopt the attitudes

and ideas of fellow dividuals, and experiential awareness. His dividual growth is manifested in his repeatedly looking back to the chronological past to capture his essence amidst the contingency built into the fabric of reality. More than any other narrator, def-ghi's life enacts a lesson in dividuality, where the desire to belong to a collective (participation) and the wish for autonomy (partition) within the (in)-dividual conjoin harmoniously so that dividuality (understood as life in relation and power [puissance]) can flourish. In Saer's vision of dividuality, a balance between the debt to the community and an internal sufficiency present as part of the dividual's internal division can be achieved by relating to one's surroundings while pursuing positive freedom according to one's abilities. Bearing this in mind, and with the invaluable help of Clarice Lispector, I will now tackle the question of gender and temporality associated with the post-picaresque and the reason why Clarice creates a male writer to narrate her novel, *A hora da estrela*.

Additionally, Lispector probes into the notion of precarious relationality akin to the Colastiné tribe in Chapter 4. When she creates a male narrator, she satirically does so, knowing that he will not manage to represent the life of Macabéa. Through *A hora da estrela*, Lispector tests the limits of relational affect; that is, she wonders to what extent it is possible to experience empathy and why speaking for the subaltern is doomed to failure. In contrast to the half-hearted transformations that the narrator Rodrigo undergoes to feel and sense Macabéa's poverty in *A hora da estrela*, the author of *Água Viva* and *Um sopro de vida* offers her literary testament to the reader with a stream of consciousness tour de force in these two novels, which aim to perforate empty time, or a

time without consciousness, and bring it into the present as she writes her own coming into being with ruthless intensity.

CHAPTER 4

THE LIMITS OF RELATIONAL AFFECT: SINGULARITY AND TEMPORALITY IN *A HORA DA ESTRELA* [*THE HOUR OF THE STAR*]

"We lack resistance to the present."

—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*

"God is without passions and is not affected with any affect, or joy, or sadness."

—Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethics*

"Quero escrever movimento puro"

—Clarice Lispector, *Um sopro de vida*

In the last chapter, I defined the dividual as a concept bypassing the self and founded on division and relationality. Out of these two primary dividual characteristics, partition and participation exercise desire toward its fulfillment.[152] In constant reworking and actualization, Saer proposed that positive freedom[153] can be gained despite power structures and bodily and environmental predeterminations. Moreover, as explained with

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[152] The dividual is a living being constantly becoming, differing from itself, and experiencing growth or degrowth. A dividual has cells and organs which establish couplings with other organs in a machine-like fashion, which explains the division and relation attributes of the dividual. Moreover, providing their theory of mind permits it, dividuals also experience processes of subjectivation. Different drives can be deduced from this configuration, further enhancing the division and relation attributes along the body-mind matrix. Keen to desire, this dividual machine has two other main features: partition and participation. The former isolates the dividual from relations to other dividuals and the environment, while the latter establishes connections with them. In opposition to terms such as a person, self, or subject, the dividual may enter discourses of representation but does not belong to them.

[153] I defined positive freedom in consonance with Isaiah's Berlin definition, that is, as being one's master. However, this freedom must also be steeped in dividuality and not presuppose a self, which Berlin does. Saer's main dividual in Chapter 3, the cabin boy, harnessed positive freedom despite the lack of negative freedom he experienced throughout his life.

Saer's dividual in Chapter 3, the secondary features of introjection and experiential awareness contributed to the ungrounding of dividual attention[154] and the discovery of a practical philosophy to improve one's tenor of life, like Def-ghi's in *El entenado*. This process ontology, predicated on process over fixity, teaches a simple yet complex premise in lockstep and embedded within dividuality: we have always been dividuals.[155] As seen in the Introduction to this work, this claim could soon have legal implications in control societies derived from the technological advances that question the very status of humanity.[156] Nevertheless, in Chapter 3, I foregrounded an antithetical version of the dividual with the help of Gilbert de Poitiers and Gerald Raunig, where a novel's character could demonstrate resistance to apparatuses of subjectivation. The current chapter examines the life of another of these dividuals, the protagonist Macabéa, in Clarice Lispector's *A hora da estrela* [*The Hour of the Star*], and the post-picaresque rhetoric of her narrator, Rodrigo S.M., whose characteristics I laid out in the Introduction, namely, a

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154 In Chapter 3, I specified Saer's dividual beyond the paradigm of dividuality (division and relation giving way to partition and participation) through introjection and experiential awareness. With these two, I meant to consider Saer's temporality in *El entenado*. Introjection refers to the unconscious adoption of ideas and attitudes, while experiential awareness paves the way for becoming conscious of this introjection. Combined, both these features attend to attention in a careful way that spreads beyond a self's point of view and into the multiplicity that structures reality.

155 The term is now becoming a staple in anthropology, as I explained in the Introduction with Arjun Appadurai and Julian Hopkins.

156 Technological improvements like the possibility of implanting microchips under human skin to store personal information are just some of the examples to look into in this new stage of human history, predicated on artificial intelligence superseding the human and hence the need for human updates to keep up with the machine and capitalist production and valorization. For more information on the Internet of Bodies (IOB), or more precisely, this aspect of a possible future within control societies, see *Uberveillance and the Social Implications of Microchip Implants: Emerging Technologies* (2014).

persuasive first-person, narratorial unreliability, appeals to the reader, or the confessional tone of the writing, among others.

Indeed, in this story, the task of representing Macabéa goes to Rodrigo S.M., the novella's narrator, and chapter 4's post-picaresque rogue. In psychoanalytic terms, this first-person narrator can be a pervert,[157] by which I mean that Rodrigo's unpredictable behavior and non-linear storytelling unavoidably betrays his mission of honoring Macabéa's life in terms of content and expression[158] since he wishes to change his habits and allow himself to plunge entirely into his character, but ends up both vilifying her and rhetorically removing himself from his creation.

This chapter considers two possible causes for the first-person narrator's desistance to stand by his principal character. On the one hand, the question or problem regarding affect —divided into *affectio* and *affectus*[159] by Baruch de Spinoza— and how

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157 Deleuze, before joining forces with Guattari and starting to highlight schizophrenia from a conceptual standpoint, felt a stronger affinity with Lacan: "The artist is not only the patient and doctor of civilization, but is also its pervert" (*Logic of Sense* 238).

158 Michael Williams does not address the schizoid as an actor without subjectivity, as I gather it should be. Still, he does address the issue that affects the pervert most clearly: "The pervert negotiates the tension between the neurotic's bi-level orientation toward truth/metaphor and the schizoid's disorientation toward truth-metaphor-truth, and so on. The pervert recognizes the mise en-abyme of semiosis[,] which tortures the madman. But he is also able to steady the division between the referent of truth, on the one hand, and the series of metaphors that retroactively marks truth as deviant from itself, on the other hand. The pervert shows that the structure of metaphor ("truth is like a movable host of metaphors") is itself a metaphor. Truth qua metaphor displaces the self-sameness and self-identity (A = A) of each of the objects. This is the fundamental perverse truth of metaphor: metaphor is a metaphor for metaphor. This is why Deleuze is so wary of metaphors. To him, metaphors can always point to a signifier that goes on to create a sense-making chain. Metaphors are only to be salvaged when (. . .) used intensively, such as in 'the pencil is *very* red,' where very refers to the shocking property of the pencil." (601)

159 Affectio refers to what nowadays we would denominate as forces that do not reach consciousness but operate within the body of every living being, to a greater or lesser degree. The senses or the nervous system does not pick them up but still works with the environment and the molecularity of the body in motion or rest. Affectus, on the other hand, interpolates the senses;

it is gendered in the novella. As I explained in the Introduction, affect comes to be understood as the underlying feelings that bodies experience unbeknownst to consciousness while they participate in subjectivating processes. Following this premise, ideas co-construct, alongside affects, a singular coming to consciousness. Precarious relationality, or the limits of relational affect that I perceive concretely in Lispector's creation, Macabéa, regards the inability to read all possible signs that the world and dividual bodies emit, let alone being able to grasp them and communicate them.

The other factor that I study in combination with the roguishness of the narrator is the different types of temporalities that coexist (or, rather, co-subsist) with the symptoms, or actual cause, of feelings. Affects will be overtly present in this chapter because I see Macabéa's life as conducive to a term that encapsulates feelings for which there are not yet any words formed since they operate in a pre-individual, bodily manner. This impersonal understanding of cognition will also be reflected heavily in the dividual theory Lispector helps me exemplify through the novella *A hora da estrela* and her posthumous novels, *Água viva* and *Um sopro de vida*.

The affects and the different temporalities that I will discuss in the following pages are proposed to analyze the two principal characters of the novella: the narrator and his literary experiment, Macabéa. Amidst the discussion of time and affect, the specifics of this post-picaresque narration will be examined, such as the male narrator that Lispector foregrounds in *A hora da estrela*, assumed as a critical and creational

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that is, it sutures the informational plane that structures every individuation and forces an emotional response or cogitation from the experimenter. For more on this distinction, listen to Deleuze's Vincennes courses on Spinoza. To find a course transcription, enter the following website: https://www.webdeleuze.com/cours/spinoza (1/24/1978).

gesture.[160] Likewise, to account for the macro story always already implicit in the production of subjectivity, I will turn to the signs —understood as the primary unit in the study of semiotics— that a singularity,[161] defined as a dividual's subjectivating instance, encounters in the most mundane of circumstances. All these three aspects: affect, time, and signs, will allow me to venture into a life dwelling in dividuality (Macabéa's), as the puppet master, Rodrigo S.M., has the reader understand.

I will first introduce my vision of the author and her philosophy, which happens to be aligned with Baruch de Spinoza. Alongside this conversation, I will deepen dividual theory by delving into temporality, a central concern of Lispector's. Moreover, as I did in the Introduction, I will continue to contrast the dividual from information theory (Norbert Wiener, Claude Shannon) against the dividual approach I provided and exemplified in Chapter 3. Finally, concerning the first-person narrator, Rodrigo S.M., which I regard as a character concept imbued with affect ideas,[162] defined as a writerly device contributing

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160 While thinking about the meaning of feminine writing alongside Luce Irigaray, Shellhorse also tackles the male narrator as one device among others that Lispector uses to blunt dialectical discourse: "The notion of curved, distorting mirrors, wearing the male mask, performing masquerades, or having "a fling with the philosopher" certainly resonates as one reassesses A hora da estrela's [sic] series of parenthetical comments, multiple titles, and its always in question "in truth" authoritative voice." (*Anti-literature* 32)

161 There is something to be said, alongside Alfred North Whitehead, that it is only because of the encounter that the singularity, as the triadic process of ejection-subjectivation-superject (the latter being the concept coined by the English philosopher), makes its irruption in the texture of the time continuum.

162 Affects encompass all bodily changes that may or may not be recorded by the nervous system. They constantly occur. Ideas are conceptions of the mind and part of a cognitive process. For ideas to emerge, a minimal affective intensity needs to have been turned into a sign to be read by our intellect. In combination, they produce a thought that aims to understand reality at some level. This is what a character concept does, to make intelligible a bloc of affects so a concept can be deduced. This concept can help one's tenor of life insofar as concepts gather up knowledge earned in good faith, and because thinking, in this case, is an activity of the body-mind matrix

to a liminal space between literature and philosophy to elucidate variegated elements of reality using conceptualization. I will finally establish a link between a post-picaresque aesthetic grounded in Rodrigo's truncated narration and metacommentary, on the one hand, and the specificity of creative fiction in Lispector's posthumous writing.

How to Kill One's Character: A Portrait of Clarice Lispector

Clarice Lispector was a Jewish woman who escaped the pogroms in Ukraine in the early twentieth century with her family and eventually landed in the Northeastern part of Brazil. Barring the serendipity of her life, marked by the family's exile from Ukraine and her mother's early death shortly after their arrival to the new country, there was in young Clarice an impetus for a form of life unconstrained by gender binaries or state coercion. Enamored with the writings of Baruch de Spinoza, as stated by biographer Benjamin Moser,[163] she was determined to harness her passion for the hidden depths determining her own coming to being at every moment and with every breath. This yearning for the absolute in an instant, which she would come to call "instantes-já" (10) or "it" (*Água viva* 153), was nowhere more evident than in her late writings when narrative became progressively undone.

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carried out with the intention to experience dividual growth. For more on the topic, see footnote 5 in the Introduction to this work.

[163] Here is the excerpt from Benjamin Moser's book (*Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector*, 2012): "In Clarice Lispector's writings, there are echoes of another great Jewish thinker, another product of exile, who faced the death of God and sought to re-create a moral universe in His absence. Thanks to the recent discovery in Clarice Lispector's library of a French anthology of Spinoza, the connection is not merely speculative, a possible result of a coincidence of historical circumstances. The book comes complete with her annotations and the handwritten date [of] February 14, 1941. Even without this important information, the novel she began in March 1942, Near to the Wild Heart, makes it obvious that she had read Spinoza attentively." (B. Moser 109)

A hora da estrela marks her annoyance with the written word and its limitations through a surrogate narrator. Moreover, in *Água viva* [*The Stream of Life*] and in *Um sopro de vida* [*A Breath of Life*], her character(s) embrace the impersonal as part of an attempt to loosen the grip that reality has on our bodies. In this last novel in particular, the difficulty of putting into writing the passing of time as if every juncture were momentous becomes a burden that forces her to create an interlocutor, Ângela, who keeps up the tempo and flow of the narration at the point when it would falter. This is hardly an interpretation on my part, but Clarice's stubbornness in the face of the quotidian.

Unlike in *A hora da estrela*, Lispector's posthumous writing does not use a male subterfuge to tell a story because she has no strength left for anything other than herself, at home, writing, picking up painting[164] and meditating upon life and death. Nearing her death, story-telling gives way to Clarice in the nakedness of her thoughts, living dividually and without any pretension for selfhood, and this vulnerability with which she wrote at that stage of her life made her stream of consciousness become a dubitative babbling.[165] There are many examples that I could choose from in where this intensive

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[164] Painting in Clarice's mind has a more genuine and less artificial expression than human language, but she is first and foremost a writer. This is what one of her biographers, Benjamin Moser, reveals about the novella and her relationship to Ângela: "In *A Breath of Life*, Angela Pralini is a painter. More significantly, Angela Pralini is a painting, the "picture of a picture" that Clarice sought, and *A Breath of Life* is a picture of Clarice creating her. In creating the character, she does not strive to paint over the raw material, in this case, the author herself; the canvas is never occulted by the creation overlaying it. Few [fictional characters] are as self-consciously fictional, as obviously avatars of their creator, as Ângela Pralini." (357)

[165] Professor Clarisse Fukelman attests to this babbling (which only humans, songbirds, and the greater sac-winged bat are known to do) in her own words: "A consciência aflora como atributo humano paradoxal: dá instrumentos para se tentar responder a essas indagações, possibilita que se busque o sentido da vida e também desponta como fonte de dúvidas, assinalando a ruptura de cada ser individual com um modo de existência originário, em que tudo

fire that was Clarice gets showcased to the reader. Still, in this one, Clarice's interlocutor, Ângela,[166] turns into a subject under existential inspection. It is a moment that mirrors Rodrigo S.M. saying goodbye to Macabéa at the hour of the star, once the yellow Mercedes has hit her and she finds herself in the throes of death. This rapport, however, contains less of a detachment factor because the stakes are higher, more in the here and now of whom Clarice is becoming, and hence there is less affective distancing between Clarice and her alter ego, Ângela:

> Ângela não morre a morte porque já morre em vida: é assim que ela escapa do final fatídico em tendo uma amostra de morte total em dias cotidianos. E de repente – de repente! jorra em mim uma avalanche demoníaca e revoltada: é que me pergunto se vale a pena Ângela morrer. Mato-a? ela se mata? Refreio minhas rédeas embora o potrim reclame. É que neste mesmo instante pensei melhor. E só resolverei depois que Ângela se manifestar em relação à morte.
>
> A vida é tal modo crua e nua que mais vale um cachorro vivo que um homem morto. Estou tão arrepiado por essa descoberta estúpida que acendo uma vela para a memória do homem sepulto. Era tão perfeito que morreu.
> Eu sempre quis atingir um estado de paz e de não luta. Eu pensava que era o estado ideal. Mas acontece que – que sou eu sem a minha luta? Não, não sei ter paz.
>
> Minha pergunta é do tamanho do Universo. E a única resposta que me preenche a indagação é o próprio Universo.
> Tenho porém um medo: é que se eu procurar não acharei.
>
> Descobri um poder: o poder de estar num quarto fechado a chave: eu me aprisiono e me concretizo. Embora continue sendo uma abstração. Não é contraditório se concretizar e se abstrair: eu me concretizo num plano que

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era um todo cheio de harmonia. A consciência é condição de liberdade e, simultaneamente, aprisionamento" (*A hora da estrela* 368) (Consciousness blossoms as a paradoxical human attribute: it provides tools to try and answer these inquiries; it makes possible the search for the meaning of life and it also stands out as a source of doubts, signaling the divide from each individual being as an original mode of existence, where everything was a whole full of harmony. Consciousness is a condition of freedom, and, simultaneously, of imprisoning) [my translation].

[166] Etymologically, she is the messenger of Clarice's meandering thoughts. She is Clarice Lispector's crutch in this intimate novella.

> não é do desígnio do mundo. Eu me obtenho no concretamente possível que existe dentro da abstração.
> Quero justificar a morte.
>
> Será que, depois que a gente morre, de vez em quando acorda espantado?"
> (*Um sopro de vida* 280-2)

> [Angela doesn't die death because she's already dying in life: that's how she escapes a fateful end by having a sample of total death in her day-to-day life. And suddenly — suddenly! a demonic and rebellious avalanche gushes inside me: because I wonder if it's worth it for Angela to die. Do I kill her? does she kill herself? I pull back my reins though the horse complains. Because I just thought better of it. And I'll only figure it out after Angela takes a position regarding death.
>
> Life is so raw and naked that a living dog is worth more than a dead man. I'm so shaken by this stupid discovery that I light a candle in memory of that buried man. He was so perfect that he died. I always wanted to reach a state of peace and non-struggle. I thought that was the ideal state. But it so happens that — that am I really me without my struggle? No, I don't know how to have peace.
>
> My question is the size of the Universe. And the only response that fills in my question is the Universe itself.
>
> But something scares me: that if I search, I won't find.
>
> I discovered a power: the power of being in a locked room: I imprison myself and become concrete. Though I continue being an abstraction. It's not contradictory to make oneself concrete and abstract: I become concrete on a level that is not (. . .) on which the world is planned. I obtain myself in the concretely possible that exists within abstraction.
>
> I want to justify death.
>
> Could it be that, after we die, we sometimes wake up startled?]
> (*A Breath of Life* 120-1)

The 'I' pronoun and the possessive adjective 'my' provide the text with a steady pace. Sentences are short and usually followed by coordinating conjunctions such as 'and' or 'but.' There are moments of repetition and expression of doubt about what is about to be said, which echo actual speech acts. Exclamation marks are also added to

stress the moment of highest intensity in the thought process. There are multiple rhetorical questions that the author Clarice asks herself. The English version does not capture this, but she uses the verb to be's third person singular 'é' to be combined with the paratactic 'e,' signifying 'and' in English. All these linguistic effects provide a frenetic pace to the reading experience and incite curiosity toward what comes next or what new thought branch the mind pursues as the bodily mood impinges upon the verbal ability to answer questions that strike back with a deafening silence. This literature of intensities and somersaults meshes well with the *bachelor machine* Deleuze and Guattari considered as they were writing their book on Franz Kafka:

> There is nothing less aesthetic than the bachelor in his mediocrity, but (. . .) nothing more artistic. He doesn't flee the world; he grasps it and makes it take flight on a continuous and artistic line: "I must just take my walks[,] and that must be sufficient, but in compensation[,] there is no place in all the world where I could not take my walks." With no family, no conjugality, the bachelor is all the more social, social-dangerous, social traitor, a collective in himself ("We are outside the law, no one knows it and yet everyone treats us accordingly"). This is the secret of the bachelor: his production of intensive quantities-the lowest as in "dirty little letters," the highest as in the unlimited oeuvre. He produces this production of intensive quantities directly on the social body, in the social field itself—a single, unified process. The highest desire desires both to be alone and to be connected to all the machines of desire. A machine that is all the more social and collective insofar as it is solitary, a bachelor, and that, tracing the line of escape, is equivalent in itself to a community whose conditions haven't yet been established. Such is the objective definition of the machine of expression, which, as we have seen, corresponds to the real state of a minor literature where there is no longer any "individual concern." Production of intensive quantities in the social body, proliferation and precipitation of series, polyvalent and collective connections brought about by the bachelor agent—there is no other definition possible for a minor literature.
> (*Kafka* 71)

To refer to Clarice Lispector's writing as a bachelorette machine may cause hilarity or even skepticism but let us not forget that she was at one point divorced from her diplomat husband, Maury Gurgel Valente, that she would be sleeping in a single bed,

and that she partially set her own house and body on fire because of her addiction to cigarettes and sleeping pills.[167] These pieces of information, while biographical, render plausible that she would use distress, however unconsciously, to channel her dividuality. The frame of mind that Deleuze and Guattari reproduce regarding desire and its solitary as well as communal potency matches the passion of her highly-charged, electrifying sentences, which speaks of her intimate relationship to mysticism and the mystic tradition, both in Judaism and Christianity.[168] The article by Katya Queiroz Alencar discloses a likening between Lurianic Kabbalah and the Brazilian writer. In it, the critic mentions the tripartite structure of this Kabbalistic school: Tzimtizum, Sheviráh, and Tikún; and she claims that the third stage, Tikún, would have a mirror in the final yes of the novella *The Hour of the Star*:

> Para Lispector o silêncio pode ser lido como um meio pelo qual ela tenta chegar à compreensão de um mistério ao ampliar a sua percepção sobre as representações. Essa pulsão clariceana pelo valor positivo do silêncio no

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[167] Here is the excerpt from Benjamin Moser's book (*Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector*, 2012): "She slept in a single bed under a curtained window, and she had always slept badly, going to sleep around nine and waking up in the early morning hours. That night, after taking her pills, she sat smoking in bed. She awoke to find the room in flames. In a panicked attempt to save her papers, she tried to put out the fire with her own hands. Her son Paulo brought her out of the blazing room and rang insistently on the doorbell of the next apartment (. . .) The pain was monstrous. Besides the third-degree burns on her hand, her legs, too, had been terribly burned, though her face, luckily, had been spared (. . .) Clarice had to stay in the hospital for three full months, enduring surgery, skin grafts, and physiotherapy, which enabled her eventually to regain the use of her hand, at least for typing. For the rest of her life, it would resemble a blackened claw." (283-4)

[168] Golden Age's Santa Teresa de Jesús could be the Christian counterpart to Clarice Lispector's Jewish roots. Still, the Early Modern exultation and near carnal love for God that this nun professes is but one of the Brazilian woman's diverse theological and literary sources: "Although it expresses overtly Lispector's consciousness of the economic and social repression in Brazil, A hora da estrela [sic] also fits into the framework of her earlier philosophical and metaphysical works. It recalls her affinity with Brazilian spiritual Christianity and the spiritist movement (espiritismo), yet the novella's Midrashic tendencies confirm her debt to her Jewish heritage. That history, with its quest for meaning, social justice, and interpretation, is vital to her cultural ideology and literary vision." (Vieira 147)

> romance corresponde (. . .) à restituição dos vasos quebrados da Cabala luriânica, ou seja, à busca de uma redenção judaica que possa visualizar a completude da palavra primeira.
>
> Uma busca certamente fracassada, pois, ao finalizar a narrativa, Lispector mostra essa impossibilidade, quando sinaliza a continuidade do processo criador, deixando a pista de que a palavra ""sim"" que inicia o romance é o mesmo" ″sim"″ que o finaliza, como a imagem circular da Sefiráh cabalística. Assim, haveria em A hora da estrela [sic] uma tentativa fracassada de Lispector pela busca do Tikún, ou seja, pela volta ao estado primeiro da Criação, onde ainda não existia a separação, garantia de que a linguagem e os sentidos estivessem unificados. Nessa visão hipotética, a ausência da palavra não significaria a ausência da representação e da possibilidade da vida, porque a existência em si mesma se basta. (55-56)
>
> (For Lispector, silence can be read as a way through which she attempts to understand a mystery by amplifying her perception of representations. This Claricean trust in the positive value of silence in the novella corresponds to the restitution of the broken glasses in the Lurianic Kabbalah. In other words, she is searching for a Jewish redemption that might make it possible to visualize the completeness of the first word.
>
> This is indeed a failed search since, at the end of the story, Lispector shows this impossibility when she signals the continuity of the creative process, leaving the clue that the word “yes” that begins the novel is the same “yes” that ends it, like the circular image of the cabbalistic Sheviráh. Thus, there would be in The Hour of the Star a failed attempt by Lispector to find Tikkun, that is, a return to the first stage of Creation, where there was still no separation, but instead, an assurance that language and the senses would be unified. In this hypothetical version, the absence of the word would not mean the absence of representation or the possibility of life. Existence itself would suffice.)

The constant dialogue between tradition and the extraction of an indelible present that is Lispector’s writing then links up to the modern Kabbalah and its cosmogonic ramifications. As she continues her analysis, Queiroz Alencar ventures that the Adam Kadmom of the Tzimtizum can be perceived by way of Rodrigo S.M. as a Lurianic god that hides; that the Kabbalistic Yod would be the act of creation of Macabéa; and that the Kabbalistic divine residue, the Tehíru, would symbolize the literary style used to tell the story (par. 50-1). Moving on to the second stage, or the Sheviráh, the drama unfolds in both texts as a play of identities and a struggle between facts and actions in the creation

process. This can appear traumatic because writing may remove, with each inscription, the sensorial aspect from the equation. Owing to this breach of meaning, the third stage, Tikún, brings in the search for the first word, the Biblical *fiat lux*, but of the Zohar. This redemptive phase that ends with silence would come in a meditative form for Lispector, trapped in language but vying for Tikún (par. 54). This ritual would have its manifestation in the Author's Dedication to the novella, where she reveals to participation in the roguishness of her Adam Kadmom, Rodrigo S.M.: "Meditar não precisa de ter resultados: a meditação pode ter como fim apenas ela mesma. Eu medito sem palavras e sobre o nada. O que me atrapalha a vida é escrever" (*A hora da estrela* 71) (Meditation does not need results: meditation can be an end in itself. I meditate wordlessly and upon the nothing. What trips up my life is writing) (*The Hour of the Star* 14). This apparent aimlessness that she advocates contrasts fervently with the passionate intensity that her writing possesses, which enhances the moodiness that transpires from a readerly standpoint. The violent swings from the author to the narrator's feelings about art or his personal life details to a focus on Macabéa continue in the posthumous writing, magnified by the absence of story-telling. Whether this is a byproduct of her frustration or failed endeavor because of her not achieving Tikún, I would shy away from asserting, even if Queiroz Alencar does. I would choose instead to demonstrate the multiplicity residing in dividuality, let alone how Clarice Lispector thinks in terms of singularities rather than individuation, with another passage from this same dedication:

> A todos esses que em mim atingiram zonas assustadoramente inesperadas, todos esses profetas do presente e que a mim me vaticinaram a mim mesmo a ponto de eu neste instante explodir em: eu. Esse eu que é vós pois não aguento ser apenas mim, preciso dos outros para me manter de pé, tão tonto que sou, eu enviesado (*A hora da estrela* 71).

> (To all those who reached the most alarmingly unsuspected regions within me, all those prophets of the present and who have foretold me to myself until in that instant I exploded into: I. This I that is all of you since I can't stand being just me, I need others in order to get by, fool that I am, I all askew) (*The Hour of the Star* 13).

She brings up the verb 'to explode' into being from a combinatorial mindset of virtual multiplicities, and this foolishness that she describes encapsulates the dividual's precarious relationality from Chapter 3 as I studied the Colastiné tribe. In Clarice's writing, what is overtly present is the coming into being of a dividual cry, a writerly capture of our con-division, defined as the relation resulting from the dividual's division into multiple desiring parts, from a single cell to the organic whole of the body and its processes of subjectivation, which does not exist without its tragic overtones.

As I think of Lispector, the writer, what I can stand behind vis-à-vis her consummate style is that she showcases the bravery necessary to produce, particularly with her late writing, a literature of exhaustion[169] that would disclose her everydayness as an arduous struggle with her coming to being and the consequent appraisal of her chaotic and raw thoughts transcribed dynamically and freshly into writing. Again, Deleuze and Lispector share an affinity concerning philosophical questions, at least in combination with the critic behind these pages:

> The combinatorial is the art or science of exhausting the possible, through inclusive disjunctions. But only the exhausted can exhaust the possible because he has renounced all need, preference, goal[,] or signification. Only the exhausted is sufficiently disinterested, sufficiently scrupulous. Indeed,

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[169] This expression, a literature of exhaustion, may induce scholars to think about John Barth's essay by the same name, which he followed up with "The Literature of Replenishment." However, I do not wish to enter debates about modernism or postmodernism in literature, but to take the conversation away from self-awareness and parody and into the combinatorial or the style that Lispector produces with the help of Deleuze, and so shy away from bold pronouncements about periods in literary history, the death of the author, or the end of the novel as a genre.

> he is obliged to replace projects with tables and programs denuded of sense. What matters for him is the order in which to do what he must and, following which combinations, be able to do two things at once when it is again necessary--for nothing. Beckett's great contribution to logic is to display that exhaustion (exhaustivity) does not occur without a certain physiological exhaustion: somewhat as Nietzsche showed that the scientific ideal does not occur without vital degeneration, as in the case of the Man and the leech, for example-the conscientious man who wished to know everything about the brain of the leech. The combinatorial exhausts its object, but only because its subject is itself exhausted. The exhaustive and the exhausted [I'exhaustif et l'exhausté]. Must one be exhausted to trust oneself to the combinatorial, or, indeed, is it the combinatorial that exhausts us, that leads us to exhaustion, or even the two together-the combinatorial and exhaustion? Here again, inclusive disjunctions. And it is perhaps like the wrong side and the right side [I'envers et l'endroit] of a single thing: a sense or a penetrating science of the possible, joined or rather disjoined with a fantastic decomposition of the "I." What Blanchot says of Musil is equally true for Beckett: the greatest exactitude and the most extreme indeterminacy, the indefinite exchange of mathematical formulations, and the pursuit of the formless or the unformulated. These are the two senses of exhaustion, and both are necessary in order to abolish the real. Many authors are too polite, and content themselves with proclaiming the work integral and the death of the "I." But you remain in the abstract if you do not show "how it is," how to make an "inventory" (mistakes included), and how the I decomposes, stench and agony included ("The Exhausted" 5)

Lispector does not write a memoir or reflect on her youth memories in these late texts. Instead, exhausted as she claims to be in that period, she stays faithful to her Spinozist philosophy by seeking these stream-of-consciousness types of intensities and meeting them right where they are, in the *instante já*, and hence decomposing the I in explosive bursts of textual energy like Deleuze explains by way of Samuel Beckett. Through her craft, the present can follow her, becoming like a line of flight from the realm of opinions, literature as an institution, or the politics of literature. In this bachelorette machine that pertains to her writing, she politicizes the body of Macabéa in *A hora da estrela,* but, most importantly, she creates a metaliterary Rodrigo S.M., who is himself a bachelor in a state of agitation and doubt over the task of writing. The minor literature

that Deleuze and Guattari accentuate in their Kafka book passage highlights the primacy of relation and division of the dividual, which Clarice expresses by speeding up toward imperceptibility.[170] In her writing, she lays bare the dividual within —the limits of relationality and exposure to the other within— even if the Clarice that has come down to us after her passing prolongs the image of a strong woman that would struggle with daily life and its routines.

In part because of the philosophical nature of Clarice's writing, or maybe because of the contrast between the unfortunate cold demeanor —she was already sick in the only ever televised interview that she gave to Brazilian channel Panorama in her late years when she was also about to publish *A hora da estrela*— and the passionate expression that colors her writing, there has been an interest in her persona beyond the confines of literary criticism.[171] She traveled a lot for a woman in that mid-twentieth century, she married a Brazilian diplomat, and it is fitting that she posed for a portrait by Italian metaphysical painter Giorgio de Chirico (*Portrait of Clarice Lispector*, 1945). In

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[170] I will discuss the connection between dividuality and imperceptibility later in the chapter.

[171] I am thinking primarily about philosophy and psychoanalysis, as is the case of Maria Homem's YouTube videos on Clarice Lispector, where the theme of otherness appears frequently. In my work, and once I have included the dividual concept as preceding the individual, otherness arrives cognitively, and it is hence a product of representation. Alternatively, I would like to introduce Fernanda Negrete's work. She takes a less didactive perspective from Homem's, who speaks of how Lispector helps the reader deconstruct the ego. Negrete speaks about how Clarice chooses risk and to experiment with life as a practical philosophy: "Risk defies the general inclination of societies, such as the one Clarice addressed fifty years ago (. . .) Civilizations want to continue. They want the next year, and the next decade, century, and millennium for themselves. Within this ambition for perpetual dominance, risk is a factor to closely monitor, quantify, and minimize, out of precaution. Clarice, however, conveys a "pure joy of living" and introduces the exacting notion of a worthwhile life. These experiences would be essential to her text's final injunction to happiness in the new – the new year, but also the new day, and in each new now, on which more shortly. Although "salvation" most likely had different connotations for Bernanos, Thoreau, and Clarice, she retains the term to beckon the readers to take risks as the only way to embrace living." ("Tracing an Ethics" 20)

addition, a biography for the English-speaking world recently came out to celebrate her life. Benjamin Moser, the biographer, who has recently published the biography of Susan Sontag as well, wrote a book about Clarice a decade prior where he astutely notices that the Brazilian writer achieves paroxysm in the lettered word:

> Clarice's movement goes into certain directions, by mutation, metamorphoses, by displacement of the body, or displacement in space. The sentences communicate a certain movement, a bodily movement, and, from time to time, they leap and bound. When one works on language like on a piece of leather, this type of textual movement—that is, of advance or progress—is called metonymy. It is being communicated as if it were desire. It catches on fire. It ignites, starts breathing, and, in a certain movement, going from one point to the other, it begins sliding (B. Moser 71)

As I have said, Lispector did not take long to achieve international recognition after her passing, partly because of her freedom-seeking style. In the 90s, her name was already associated with the post-structuralist movement in the academic sphere. Also around that time, and in consonance with French theory, Latin American critic Earl E. Fitz began translating her work to English and doing investigative work into her life and artistic work. This and other efforts coalesced around his turn-of-the-century book, *Sexuality and Desire in The Poststructuralist Universe of Clarice Lispector: The Différance of Desire* (2001). Heavily influenced by Jacques Derrida, his discourse on Clarice's writing revisits terms like undecidability, displacement, and the deferral of meaning:

> Lispector's ironic, open-ended, essentially plotless, and thematically ambiguous texts (. . .) demonstrate, in fictional form, not only the "structurality of structure" of which Derrida speaks but why it is that language cannot ever create anything but a "momentary" and spurious "center," a "center" that is not the "center" because it is constantly changing, decentering, and undercutting itself, just as Lispector's texts do; what is "true," "valid," or "appropriate" one moment (. . .) is "untrue," "invalid," or "inappropriate" the next moment (or in the next line). Things change, and, in Lispector's world, they do so in, through, and by means of language—

> our use of it, our conscious creation of it ("lalande," for example, from Near to the Wild Heart, or the "it" from The Stream of Life) and our transmission and reception of it, in terms of our own multiple selves as well as those of others. This ceaselessly shifting quality of Lispector's narratives is manifested structurally and thematically in her work by poststructural "free play," a fundamental feature of her texts that sustains itself by means of lyrically resonant patterns of such basic images as the "now instant" or the "moment," silence, and fluidity, all expressed in terms of a great variety of contexts, including physical and textual birth, time, water, death, desire, emotional and intellectual repercussions, and ambivalent feelings, especially involving sexuality, the interplay of love and hate, darkness, words, and the human body (presented in typically but not exclusively female terms). (*Sexuality and Being* 49-50)

As I read Fitz's passage about Clarice Lispector's style and her characteristic "free play" on language, I am led to believe that this critic corsets language and, unlike Adam Shellhorse's inquiry into the Brazilian writer, he does not open up his analysis to the mediality (or even animality) of the written word (verbo-voco-visual exploration), choosing instead to speak in terms of destabilization of the narrative or readerly expectation. Outside of this paradigm, there are also considerations to be made about the nature of desire, like Lispector's Jewish referents —which she shares with the philosopher that notably influences Fitz's book, Jacques Derrida, to the point that I could speak of a vicious circle of Rabbinic conceptualization and interpretation—, her being a self-described Spinozist from an early age, her rapport with violence in literature, or her creation of character concepts to sustain her literary style. I believe, alongside Deleuze, that literature should be analyzed with life in mind, that is, with what literature does beyond the page rather than with the play of signifiers: "Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived" (*Essays Critical and Clinical* 1). Fritz is correct

in pointing out the open-endedness and even mysteriousness with which Lispector imbues consciousness and how this can be traced in her style or expression. However, this formalism of scholarly writing is mainly preoccupied with the materiality of the text and its rhetoric. In this dissertation, I aim to forge a connection between life and the novels, the authors, and the thesis and ideas of this dissertation, without applying tout court a scholarly methodology for critique that can be universally reproduced.

Another poststructuralist that famously tackled Lispector's writing was Hélène Cixous (*écriture féminine*). This French writer had an impactful friendship with the founder of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, and the influence they had on each other can be traced to them opening the University of Vincennes, organizing an anti-apartheid Committee, or more intimately, either him calling her the greatest living writer in the French language, or else, her writing a book entitled *Portrait of Jacques Derrida as a Young Jewish Saint* (2001). However that may be, she endows Lispector's writing with a less tepid understanding of desire and creative production than a strict poststructuralist approach. The following words by the French critic tend to do justice to Lispector. They align with Shellhorse's focus on femininity and subalternity concerning Macabéa, the protagonist of *A hora da estrela*:

> One is constantly thrown into a paradox. The pain of that paradox consists in making the portrait of the invisible, in rendering visible what has never been seen, to render it visible indirectly. We have a vision that Clarice is in the habit of calling oblique. We can see obliquely whatever is not seen. Says the author that when he sees the northeastern girl looking at herself in a mirror, if he looks straight into the mirror, he sees his tired and bearded face (. . .) To reveal what is not seen, Clarice has recourse to all kinds of ploys, of techniques, of sidestepping. She lets herself be seen. She has to make space for someone as tiny as the northeastern girl. Clarice has to efface herself. But a total effacement would bring about that of the northeastern girl as well. Defying conventions of literary description,

> Clarice is drawing attention to the very locus of disappearance.
> (Cixous 159)

The ethics of the dividual become fleshed out in this passage, where the French critic notices that the writer, Clarice, forces her disappearance from the tale so that Macabéa can have an attempt at a literary life that does not get quenched under the pressures of representation that have plagued the Latin American literary regime.[172] As the reader can attest, the narrator of the story, while stated as Rodrigo S.M., experiences a blurring because of his rhetorical inconsistency, which renders the narration purposefully unstable. There are plenty of examples throughout the story where Rodrigo S.M. introduces asides that question the omniscience of story-telling, which in turn allows for Clarice and Macabéa to become intertwined with Rodrigo S.M. in a web of textual porosity:

> Com esta história eu vou me sensibilizar, e bem sei que cada dia é um dia roubado da morte. Eu não sou um intelectual, escrevo com o corpo. E o que escrevo é uma névoa úmida. As palavras são sons transfundidos de sombras que se entrecruzam desiguais, estalactites, renda, música transfigurada de órgão. (*A hora da estrela* 26)

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[172] Shellhorse, in an article about Lispector's late work, poses the argument that the Brazilian writer detests literature as an institution, which is why he argues for the potency of literary works that have an anti-literary bent to them. He believes Lispector's body of works fits that mold insofar as she wishes to grasp life on the raw through the written word rather than try to be objective or document certain socioeconomic situations. To sustain this argument, he rebukes this Latin American Literary Regime since it "encodes, territorializes, and represses the revolutionary potentiality of the experimental text" ("Figurations of Immanence" n/a). His response to redefine this literary regime into something other than this representational mapping of the literary, "inexorably sutured to the state" (n/a), is to valorize anti-literature as "a procedure of the sensible that investigates and redistributes, through its form, the social-political" (n/a). Moreover, in another of his articles, he specifies the last breath of this literary regime: "Rama's theory of narrative transculturation – monumental offshoot of the vanguard event of the 1920s and grounded in the international success of the boom novel of the 1960s – represents in 1982 a last gasp of cohesion for the Latin American literary regime" ("Latin American" 8). In opposition to this regime, he returns to the avant-garde period to propose a non-representational way of valorizing literature: "If one poses literary matter as presence, we lose all movement, all resistance. Against the order of representation, maintaining an avant-garde premise (. . .) literature becomes an affair of the sensible." (8)

> I am not an intellectual, I write with my body. And what I write is a moist fog. Words are sounds transfused with unequal shadows that intersect, stalactites, lace, transfigured organ music. I hardly dare shout out words at this vibrant and rich, morbid and dark web which has its countertone in the thick bass of pain. (*The Hour of the Star* 24)

The first-person narrator of the Early modern picaresque has been pushed into obscurity because of the testimonial impetus of the narrator, who attempts to dilute the I-voice into the emerging subjectivities of Clarice and Macabéa, who remain in the background yet take center stage by way of the artificially-constructed male persona. Gender also becomes obfuscated and theatricalized so that the reader cannot easily assess or analyze the narrator, defused as he turns out to be in the many positionalities that aim to render Macabéa's life visible.

Before I assess affects in combination with the different syntheses of time that I explore in this chapter, a look into the formal unreliability aspect in the narration is in order. All four stories in this book boast this post-picaresque feature, and I believe that Cynthia Torres tackles the subject from an astutely relevant perspective. For example, I started the chapter by using the psychoanalytic term *perversion* for Rodrigo S.M.'s writing because the narrator positions himself as a beacon of empathy for his creation. Yet, this critic questions his ethical stance when he decides to kill his character:

> In relinquishing his authorial responsibility onto someone or something else, Rodrigo seems to suggest that the facts he claimed as truth to depict poverty were indeed literary mechanisms he employed to present a *persuasive* [italics mine] portrayal of a hopeless reality, instead of an honest and responsible account of a reality he ignores. The uncompassionate attitude challenges Rodrigo's ethical approach in voicing a marginal subjectivity. In choosing to kill Macabéa, Rodrigo individually liberates himself from a painful but necessary duty that would require more concrete action from his current role. In the broader picture, his personal failure signifies a larger social problem in which a ruling class is complicit in its decision to ignore a situation that is a direct consequence

> of its unsuccessful actions to overcome these divisions. In either scenario, the lack of an ethical approach toward the poor and their situation not only unmasks the prejudices and hypocritical attitude of the ruling elite, but also the insincere sentiments of the middle class toward the less privileged. (Torres 200-1)

Torres brings up Jean-Paul Sartre's work concerning Rodrigo and confronts the latter about what she considers his bad faith and, by proxy, Brazilian society's hypocrisy. Let us not forget, apropos of social justice and awareness, that Lispector had been criticized throughout her literary career for the sparse examples of overtly political engagement in her oeuvre (the chronicle "Mineirinho" being a standout journalistic piece in that regard),[173] which, her critics would argue, betrays her humble origins since she married up and did not have to worry about pecuniary interests for much of her life. I do not think I am exaggerating when I claim that this novella owes part of its popularity to the fact that the Brazilian writer addresses the subject of poverty head-on and in a novel manner. The key aspect regarding the representation of the underclass and the existent injunction at the time of the Cold War and beyond for the writer to be involved in Latin American politics (i.e., Boom writers like Pablo Neruda, Gabriel García Márquez, or Mario Vargas Llosa), sidelines Lispector for much of her career, whose intimate style and preference

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[173] As part of her work as a journalist, she wrote chronicles like the mentioned above. Nádia Battella Gotlib, Clarice Lispector's most important biographer along Benjamin Moser, recalls this story in *Clarice: Uma vida que se conta*, as does Clarice in her only televised interview for the Panorama cultural program. I recall here Nádia's words about this chronicle: "Embora todos traduzam, ainda que por diferentes modos, posturas políticas, destaca-se a marca do engajamento em alguns deles: no retrato do menor abandonado ("Crítica pesada") e na denúncia da violência da polícia, que assassina cruelmente, com treze tiros, um bandido, quando na realidade um tiro só teria sido suficiente" ("Mineirinho") (355) (Even though all of the texts put into perspective, in one way or another, political stances, the level of engagement in some of them stands out: such as the portrait of the abandoned minor ("Strong critique") and the one which denounces police brutality as they cruelly assassinate a bandit, using thirteen gunshots when one would have been enough [my translation]). Lispector expresses herself similarly about the cruelty in the interview, even if she hastens to add that her pronouncement changes nothing in terms of the nature of Brazilian society.

for themes like women's liberation from patriarchal society or upper-middle class characters (*A paixão Segundo G.H.*) would leave her open to criticism. In contradistinction to this supposed history, and while channeling Cixous's reading of the novella,[174] Torres comments that "Lispector unveils how some narratives that claim a commitment to the poor can actually lead to the misperception of a reality that continues to reproduce a biased understanding of the marginal subject" (202). After making this argument, Torres does not return to the theatrical becoming that Rodrigo performs as a sympathetic character who needs to shed off his personality to paint a picture of the subaltern. He falls short of his mission once he shares with the readership that he has sufficiently portrayed Macabéa as a representative of a lesser type of human. Eventually, I argue, giving up on her and killing the character reproduces the cynicism accompanying the preoccupation for the many Macabéas of this world. In unveiling Rodrigo's cruelty, Lispector could be disregarding as inauthentic many of the public pronouncements that populate the airwaves, all the while rendering Macabéa visible in her being defamed and demeaned by a representative of this virtue signaling sector of society; Rodrigo and his mass-media driven stereotypical toxicity around racialized physiognomy (there are many disparaging comments throughout the narrative about several characters) in connection to a subaltern's life worth.[175]

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[174] To Torres, Hélène Cixous proposes "a critique to inequality at the same time that she uses the fictional discourse to disclose the mechanisms from which poverty is recounted and reinforced." (202)

[175] I should note here that a clear intertext adds an element of irony to the story and some contextualization. This occurs when Macabéa's boss, Mr. Raimundo, leaves on his desk the book *Humiliated and Offended* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, which directly deals with issues of class and subalternity.

On the question of the point of art or its utility, I will shortly have a conversation about the Latin American Subaltern Studies group and Ángel Rama's theory of transculturation by way of the scholar Adam Joseph Shellhorse on a macro level. With respect to the novella at hand, I would like to bring up the work of Antonio Luciano de Andrade Tosta, who broaches the topic of subalternity as he brings up Jean-Paul Sartre's vision of the engaged intellectual, of whom we should be asking, he argues, about their intentions or interests in writing in the first place. Antonio Luciano believes, and I agree, that the creation of Rodrigo S.M. as a narrator responds to Clarice's need to study this theme. This is how he asserts that the Ukraine-born woman acts upon the issue by writing *The Hour of the Star*:

> É nesse conflito entre a construção do trabalho do escritor/ intelectual como uma "ação" social e a subsequente ou até paralela constatação da falência do intelectual enquanto agente de transformação que o texto de Lispector se constrói e completa. Esta característica paradoxal de A hora da estrela, por outro lado, destaca mais ainda a sua intenção social, pois ao enfatizar a fragilidade de discursos e representações, o texto chama atenção para a necessidade de ação sobre a realidade por outros meios. O leitor, como fê-lo o narrador, buscará a sua forma pessoal de intervenção social. (de Andrade Tosta 258)
>
> It is in this conflict between the construction of the writerly/intellectual work as a social "action" and its subsequent or even parallel finding of failure as an agent of transformation that the Lispector text is built upon and completed. This paradoxical characteristic regarding A hora da estrela, mutatis mutandis, highlights all the more its social intention, since by emphasizing the fragility of discourses and representations, the text calls attention to the necessity of action about this reality by other means. The reader, as does the narrator, will find their own personal way of social intervention. [translation is mine]

In creating Rodrigo S.M., Lispector complexifies the point of view of the writer. Still, she also sidesteps her belonging to the upper crust of Brazilian society, as Tosta intimates by calling her a bourgeois writer and intellectual (par. 257). She can then proceed to pour

countless thoughts about the nature of poverty onto the narrator, who sounds genuine in his love for Macabéa in equal measure as he demonstrates disingenuity concerning the writer's task, detaching himself as he does from Macabéa at the hour of her death. Moreover, as Lispector later says in the televised interview, her writing changes nothing about society, regardless of her more or less demonstrated determination to stand for social justice in the face of inequality. This opinion contrasts with that of Tosta, who, while acknowledging the limits that words have as actions, holds dear the importance of the writer and the intellectual's engagement in societal problems and the world as a whole (par. 258). I will exercise my right to see both sides of the issue. Still, I would respond to it in a similar vein as I did in the Introduction, that only with a move toward media Studies can literature remain forceful and that only in accepting their belonging to the larger field of communication and political exposure can the intellectual yield any persuasive and meaningful power whatsoever. This argument notwithstanding, there is sufficient evidence to argue that Lispector chose to live most of her days, despite her being a remarkable literary figure, outside the public eye.

Dividual Opacity: Lispector Reinvents Testimonio

Sergio Villalobos-Ruminot does not address *A hora da estrela* from a post-picaresque sensibility or a dividual mentality but from the Latin American literary field perspective. In his analysis of the novel, he believes that Clarice Lispector successfully reframes testimonial literature:

> The general aneconomy that mobilizes my readings of these authors could thus be cast as a passive resistance, a desistance that does not imply a new literary politics or the restoration of the modern, hegemonic, and culturalist relationship between politics and literature but instead

> constitutes an abdication from this, an infrapolitical retreat, necessary to think in a different way. (232)

Villalobos-Ruminot, in the wake of Jean-Luc Nancy's Heideggerian metaphysics and Alberto Moreiras' or Gareth Williams' concept of infrapolitics, wishes to connect the Lispector novel to a new Latin American canon under the infrapolitical mantle. By laying out the stakes of the dividual in the Introduction and these middle chapters (3 and 4), I prove that the dividual addresses life both from the biopolitical standpoint and the current socioeconomic Zeitgeist predicated on control societies and neoliberal mandates that have apprehended the digital sphere as well as the physical. One can encounter in the term infrapolitical an appraisal of the current capitalist stage, in which ideologies have been discredited. However, the prefix infra-, while gauging the pre-personal and pre-individual energy behind dividuality on paper, does not account for the triangulation of desire I laid out in Chapter 3 (division, partition, participation). In other words, the singularity of Macabéa's life, or any other character for that matter, deserves attention from this group if they can extrapolate from these novels nostalgia about state-led policies unencumbered by supranational institutions or commentary on perceived left-wing electoral defeat across the globe. Still, they do not disclose how this infrapolitical deconstruction could potentially work because, in their mind, it would reopen the conversation about metaphysics.[176]

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[176] In a conference at Columbia University in 2015 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_TrKeR8-v4&ab_channel=ICLSColumbia), Moreiras said they had to come up with something that would appear before politics, so they came up with the term infrapolitics, without actually needing to disclose its characteristics for that sphere of life.

Another Latin Americanist critic, Adam Joseph Shellhorse, revisits testimonial literature through the subaltern,[177] a group Macabéa belongs to. He initially brings to the reader's attention the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group's "Founding Statement" (1992) and Ángel Rama's cultural theory of Latin American literature as transculturation. In his informed view, the latter aims "to reestablish literature's mediational relevance and role as spokesman for the organic roots of Latin American popular and subaltern cultures" (Shellhorse 27). At the same time, the disbanded 1990s group had set their goal to "question the then dominant conception of cultural production, most notably, the literary, understood as a representational, class-based apparatus of representation" (26). In his project, Shellhorse seeks to critically examine the "historical representational regime of Latin American literature," under which "writing becomes subsumed through an instituting discourse of identity" (27). In his work, this professor endeavors to divorce Latin American literature from state formation procedures, and he chooses to highlight the experimental flow of different literary texts. In so doing, he comes up with the concept of *anti-literature*, which he does not define in opposition to another artistic medium or politics, but as a celebration of combinatory "creative forces or interplay between distinct media" (18). In other words, he regards anti-literature as either a multimedia ensemble or an act of creation that has its basis in experimentation. In his

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[177] I quote a definition of the word subaltern from Mcclellan.184's blog at Ohio State University: "In Postcolonial Theory, Subaltern describes people in the lower social classes and the Other social groups that are displaced and marginalized while also living in an imperial colony. If there is little access or no access at all to the [sic] cultural imperialism, then one is described as [a] subaltern. The term Subaltern was coined by Antonio Gramsci, (. . .) an Italian Marxist intellectual. He used it when describing cultural hegemony (. . .) to identify groups that were excluded, displaced, and marginalized due to the socio-economic institutions put into place, so their political voices would be denied" (n/a).

mind, a true rendition of a work of art cannot be possible without experimentation upon the media that are contained within.

Moreover, anti-literature openly betrays the constraints of the linguistic medium by seeking an opening to the multiplicity it contains; the verbal, the vocal, and the visual, following in the steps of the Brazilian Concrete poets. Thus, Shellhorse engages the human senses by conceptualizing the untapped possibilities that the literary regime of representation has conservatively passed on to a new generation of readers. In the case of Lispector and *A hora da estrela*, he reformulates feminine representation and subalternity in opposition to how they have been generally conceived to reveal what an anti-literary analysis entails. Macabéa becomes a vessel for thought before language in his chapter on the Jewish writer. Yet, he claims, the narration accomplishes this through language since the syntax allows the reader to elucidate where the ellipses lie in the narrative and what they may affectively communicate more than verbally. Concretely, he sees this in the many parenthetic explosions that signify Macabéa's shaken state of mind or in the thirteen alternative titles that could summarize the story. He believes these examples perform "a suspension of representation" that also "triggers the untimely coming of critique and evaluation, the time of the present" (38). I would agree with Shellhorse that Lispector's reworking of syntax avoids facile interpretation and skews capitalist cooptation of subalternity in the guise of Macabéa. Still, I would reject calling the time of the present[178] an opportunity the Brazilian writer offers up for analysis.

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[178] "To the extent that the parenthesis performs a suspension of representation, it simultaneously triggers the untimely coming of critique and evaluation, the time of the present" (*Anti-literature* 38). I would argue that Rodrigo's troublesome psyche provokes the evaluation of the present through his narratorial asides and not the parentheses, which disclose Macabéa's jolting nervous system, or activation of her sympathetic nervous system.

On the contrary, her style requires the present to manifest as an intense concatenation of explosions and encounters with one's dividuality and the many characters that populate her artistic output. To improve her tenor of life, she poses the need to elevate the mundane by filling it with a stream of consciousness that enchants everyday living. The present for Clarice punctures the fabric of habituation. It recognizes subjectivity as a matter of bodies defined by motion and rest, quickness and slowness, and not concerning substance:

> Escrevo-te como exercício de esboços antes de pintar. Vejo palavras. O que falo é puro presente e este livro é uma linha reta no espaço. É sempre atual, e o fotômetro de uma máquina fotográfica se abre e imediatamente fecha, mas guardando em si o flash. Mesmo que eu diga "vivi" ou "viverei" é presente porque eu os digo já. (*Água viva* 45)
>
> I write to you as an exercise in sketching before painting. I see words. What I say is pure present and this book is a straight line in space. It's always current, and a camera's photometer opens and immediately closes, but keeping within it the flash. Even if I say "I lived" or "I shall live" it's present because I'm saying them now. (*Água viva* 42)

The present for Lispector requires that the past and the future join forces around a time crystal[179] (the event) that she pursues with every word and sentence. She engages with time[180] and desire by stimulating the present with urgency. In this sense, her style

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[179] A time crystal concretizes an event in the same manner as Roland Barthes saw in the punctum, the summation of a particular photograph. It is not surprising that Gilles Deleuze used this concept in his books about cinema. It contains the core of memory, from which a recollection can occur anew.

[180] Another way to think of the active synthesis of time is the expression 'to machine time' since it recalls the work of Gilbert Simondon (*On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, 1958), who saw in metallurgy the process of becoming and what in the sciences call emergence, or the coming into being of the event. Lispector transcribes what passes through her into a plane of information that can be enjoyed, read, and dissected.

reverberates in Deleuze's philosophical oeuvre because their conceptual lexicon and metaphysical concerns resonate with one another's: the movement of bodies, their intensity, the tenor of life, habituation and desire, affective rationality, the animality of the human species, the nature of writing, and the time of the event, are but some thematic indexes that spring to mind.[181] As I am about to argue, she forcefully combats time's passive synthesis, prioritizes the active synthesis, and aims to unite empty time with the active synthesis.[182] Similarly to Negrete, I perceive Lispector's acceptance of risk as a way to explore life and activate empty time, which she does in her writing by making time breaks so frequent that the break-flow of becoming bursts constantly into the present of the reading thanks to short paratactic sentences, an amalgamation of *é* [third person singular of the verb to be] and *e* [conjunction and], intimate use of the first-person narrative, and confessional tone, among other rhetorical devices. Let me then segue into these last ones, the passage of time and the creative process, with the help of Deleuze's doctoral dissertation, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), since Lispector's approach to temporality requires analysis.

The Triadic Formation of Time

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[181] It may be relevant to add that while there may be a lot in common between artists or people in other professions on paper, this does not necessarily translate into a significant encounter between them. For example, Deleuze wrote a book about painter Francis Bacon and met him in person, yet their rendez-vous could have been more fruitful and less final.

[182] I started writing about this triadic formation of time in Chapter 3, though this discussion is now taking center stage in Chapter 4. See footnote 125 for the connection between an active synthesis of time and Saer's approach to dividuality.

A myriad of theories about time exists, and the one I am putting forward here will be rehashing the one posited by Deleuze in his seminal work, *Difference and Repetition*. I am doing so because Deleuze's temporal concepts resonate in Lispector's writing. In the process, I will attempt to establish a distance between a temporality ridden by death and anxiety, which compose the forces admonishing Macabéa, and one of affirmation in a Spinozist fashion, wherein the dividual becomes subsumed under the forceful pull of the event.[183] This move of the subject towards disappearance is not simply a matter of style or academic fancy but the confirmation of a secret intuition that humankind senses in its actuality, namely, that we are becoming superfluous, alienated as we are from the products of our labor as much as from our fellow beings. This claim points towards the empty time covered here, the eternal return.[184] While I think that Nietzsche's rants and cries for a more-than-human presence in the world have been taken up by the techno-scientific apparatus,[185] thus rendering most of his oeuvre attached to an excessive passion for the historicity of being, rather than the becoming of being, the concept of the eternal return puts the emphasis where it ontologically resides, that is, in the possibility of considering time as sentient while more than human. It is upon a movement and rest

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[183] I redefine the Althusserian subject as the informational unconscious or the actual in Deleuze. For further discussion of the notion of the event in Deleuze, see Zourabichvili's book *Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event: Together with The Vocabulary of Deleuze* (2012). For a flawed critique of Deleuze's event, see Badiou*'s Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (2017).

[184] I understand the eternal return as the essential differing between bodies and self-consciousness, which continuously allows for events to take place, and newness, or difference, to be perceived (active synthesis of time), even if it may contain the seed of a potential repetition thanks to processes of habituation and semiotic wiring.

[185] In giving ourselves over to the sciences (only if monetarily applied), the affective aspect of existence takes a hit, seeing as we are forced to operate under the premises and demands of capital's insatiable and relentless desire. See Spinoza's Ethics for a lengthy discussion on the alignment of God and Nature for the Dutchman.

paradigm that Spinoza grounds the affections of bodies. The eternal return operates in this continuum of nonhuman time, along with cognitive slices [coupures]. It could be argued that there is also a purely conceptual kind of time (empty time) on which we have no empirical data that may be introduced to a scientific community. Against this sweeping conclusion, this empty time is a grounding for the possibility of a world, as it does not have a reflection to verify it. It is the time of rocks and waterfalls, of walls and bridges, and of Van Gogh's peasant shoes that Heidegger examined in "The Origin of the Work of Art." It is the time of a Spinozist God[186] that does not exceed its creation. As Jane Bennett[187] argues regarding the current understanding of materialism, "a life tears the fabric of the actual without ever coming fully *out* in a person, place, or thing" (165). In other words, it is the time of becoming without an essence (person, subject) that is at play since what is primary is movement and mutual contamination between particles and waves,[188] which cannot be pinned down simultaneously, since process seems to be the inescapable force latent in the universe.

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[186] This God is time seen as a continuum, a time that we conceptualize as the passing of events that goes unnoticed or unperturbed by dividuals. The virtual in Deleuze and Guattari, or their inverted Platonism, addresses both the affects that are not picked up by dividuals and the virtual's biological formation and quantum world. For more on God's emotions for Spinoza, see the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. There is an article named "Spinoza on the Emotions."

[187] In her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2009), p. viii, she points out the lineage she proudly adheres to, represented by Lucretius, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze, and Guattari.

[188] Lately, the philosophical conversation has been moving toward media and, more importantly, information technology. In this context, the analog/digital divide resonates more than ever on human psyches and structures of the current economy. For information on the distinction between analog and digital, see Alexander Galloway's body of work, specifically *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (2007), and the differentiation between continuity and discreetness in physics.

I herein describe the microscopic world of the morphogenetic formation of living matter in their functioning. This underwhelming materiality that surrounds us forms what Deleuze would call the **virtual**, which is composed of the faculties that allow different packs of animals to form a language and a territory, which in turn coalesce around the time of the actual. The virtual remains the immanent force lurking in the composite of bodies and interactions among their parts. The virtual imbricates different attributes or genetic and event-related information (relation to the environment), and it puts them in communication via differential relations[189] (not marked by similarities or oppositions per se but by couplings and connections of some elements over others) that construct lines of haphazard activity from which a scientific determination can be deduced. This material operation is open to temporality. It speaks of a multiplicity of (con)forming matter that is unstable and never eternally given, as the double slit experiment in physics attests.[190] This precariousness at the heart of our genetic formation predisposes matter to return to its inexhaustible relationality for renewal, as shown below in Figure 3. The internal division of the dividual reasserts the primacy of precarious relationality that exercises dynamism upon dividual bodies. Taking chemistry's organic reactions as a molecular template, bodies operate under a biosemiotics coding of desire, a combination of couplings and connections, from the cell as a unit to enzymes and kinetic movement, that begins to structure desire alongside the cognitive process. Lispector points this out at the novella's

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189 For this term, we need to look at the ideational aspect of math and how in differential geometry, two imaginative lines can intersect at a point and create an actualization of the cognitive virtual, our intelligence.

190 This experiment concluded by stating the impossibility of pinpointing an electron position in space because it includes a wave function and cannot be defined by its being a particle alone. This scientific hypothesis then supports the primacy of becoming over being.

beginning and end as a gesture of creation. Indeed, the first words of *A hora da estrela* exemplify this understanding of timely desire, where Rodrigo S.M. has yet to introduce himself to the reader. Mirroring the Bible's book of Genesis (fiat lux) or any tale for the world's creation—including the Lurianic mentioned above—, Lispector couples a time without essence with a microscopic and impersonal desire:

> Tudo no mundo começou com um sim. Uma molécula disse sim a outra molécula e nasceu a vida. Mas antes da pré-história havia a pré-história da pré-história e havia o nunca e havia o sim. Sempre houve. Não sei o quê, mas sei que o universo jamais começou
> (*A hora da estrela* 66)

> All the world began with a yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born. But before prehistory there was the prehistory of prehistory and there was the never and there was the yes. It was ever so. I don't know why, but I do know that the universe never began
> (*The Hour of the Star* 18)

Rodrigo S.M. appears only in the narration after this simple creational yes, which makes him subsidiary to Lispector's choice for concluding and starting the story, prioritizing as she does an empty time that says "sim" (*A hora da estrela* 62) and thus expressing the continuation of relationality and becoming regardless of dividuals. This virtual time, teeming with nature's energy brings molecules together, which mutate or metastasize[191] information as a determining determination that does not cease to differentiate the bodies of living matter, among which human animals, a species bound to

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[191] The Simondon scholar Simon Mills (*Gilbert Simondon: Information, Technology, and Media* 2016) explains what it means for the virtual time to mutate or metastasize: "Even at the level of the simplest organism[,] Simondon recognized the emergence of a rudimentary agency developed from the disparity between an organism's interior and exterior as well as the ability of the organism to police the permeability of its polarized membrane. For Simondon, affect is that shift in polarization an organism undergoes due to disparities (. . .) within itself over time due to its inherent metastability and its relation to an exterior via sensation. The more sophisticated an organism's organization is, the more complex its chronotopological relations will be." (Mills 74)

genetic and technical transformation, find themselves. Around this enclave for scientific reasoning, intensive multiplicities[192] compose the life of an organism, bound to the bodily affections,[193] defined as signs sent to the body unawares of the feeler's or senser's nervous system, born from those experiential chains. In search of homeostatic flow or unconstrained drives, the unconscious, or these affections of the body, demand that our brain responds to their call, and so it begins a constant break-flow of needs and fulfillment.

To elucidate Macabéa's temporality in the novella, including the scene of her death, I need to return to the syntheses of time I first mentioned in Chapter 3. Futurity negotiates only with the neoliberal context of the story the possibility of change while leaving aside empty time (an undisclosed loop of the real), active time, bound to memory

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[192] Unlike Douglas Hofstadter (*Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*, 1979, and *I am a Strange Loop*, 2007), who describes human intelligence as a loop of figure and ground constituted solely by our cognition, this unconscious loop engages the whole body and its environment. Not just our capacity to reflect on our being engaged in an activity and change the pattern, which he claims, is what separates us from artificial intelligence. Likewise, Nathan Widder ("The Mathematics of Continuous Multiplicities: The Role of Riemann in Deleuze's Reading of Bergson", July 2019) exposes intensive multiplicities as being in a process of different/ciation: "Duration as a continuous multiplicity, then, is unextended, virtual, constitutive, qualitative, and does not divide without changing in kind, but constitutes a new immanent metrical principle with each division. This is how it is an internal difference, by which a thing differs from everything it is not. A thing is unique by virtue of the past and memory in which it participates, by virtue, that is, of the continuous recording and synthesis of qualitatively distinct states. Although originally a psychological thesis, Deleuze contends that from *Matter and Memory* onwards duration becomes an ontological recording without which not only could the past and memory not be lived but the very passage of the present would be impossible. The present can only pass if it becomes different from what it is, yet it cannot constitute the past into which it passes if it is not already passing away itself, nor can it 'wait' for the past to be constituted as it would then not be possible for a future present to arrive to replace it; these impasses can only be resolved if the present is virtually past 'at the same time' as it is actually present." (Widder 341)

[193] Affection (affectio) should not be confused with affect (affectus), which can be distinguishable on the basis of perception or lack thereof. See Introduction's footnote 5 for a more comprehensive study of this distinction.

and recollection, and passive time, which allows processes of habituation, defined as the making of habit by repetitive actions that the social milieu claims for itself, to set norms of conduct and the notion of self. The synthesis of active time severs the relationship of habit that the dividual has with its milieu and allows the former to wander off from the concrete and linear force of habituation. Both Chapters 3 and 4 have a preoccupation with this active time. While Saer regards it as a tool to pursue knowledge of external relations and clues for the best way to live one's dividuality through *El entenado*'s main character, Lispector grips the present so she can extract all its dramatic intensity and even agonistic force with her confessional and intimate rhetoric, as the reader can attest to with Macabéa's death and Clarice's posthumous novels, where she reveals an outstanding level of intimacy while forgoing biographical details.

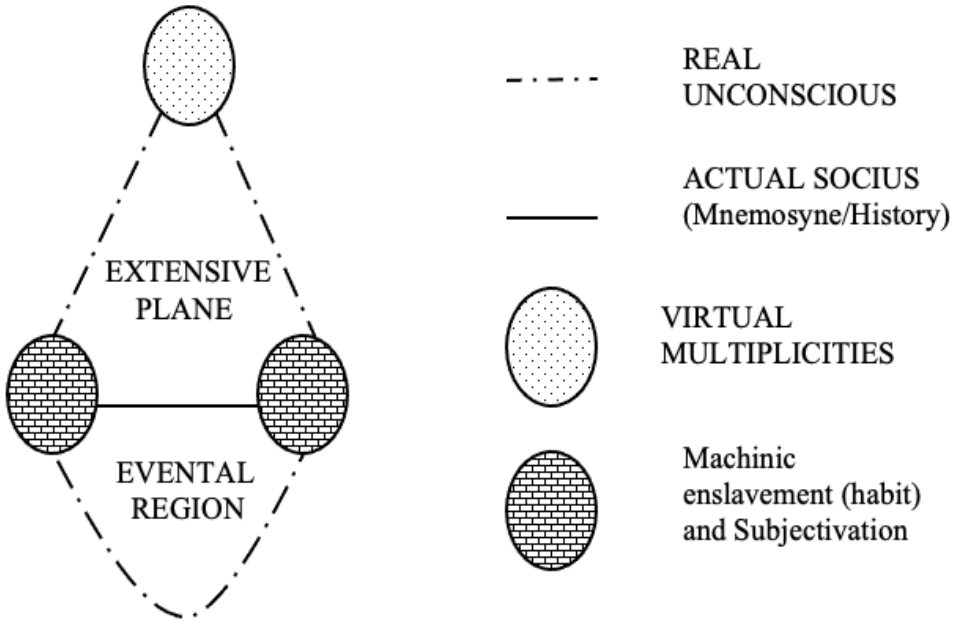

Figure 3: Dividual Process: Syntheses of Time

The rigid segmentation of the socius constrains the marching of a sensory-motor machine that works in fits and starts, as the discontinuous line indicates.[194] Aside from the five primary senses, whereby the human species is cognitively qualified, bodies possess other, more technical affordances that allow us to stand on our own two feet, like neuron sensors that sense movement to control balance and the tilt of the head. These affective but highly operational mechanisms of the body pass us unnoticed, unquestioned, and unencumbered unless bodies start to break down, slow down, or have an accident. However, these unconscious bodily actions could also qualify as information by dint of biological tracking, and they are essential for us to carry out the ever more complex demands to which we submit our bodies. I meant to emphasize this aspect because overall perception does not commence with an already coded linguistic apparatus through which we communicate.

On the contrary, bodies interpret their surroundings and create a semiotic network, mainly at an unconscious level, that keeps tangling and disentangling itself.[195] In short, this empty time engulfs the empirical world[196] without disclosing it. These

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[194] Discontinuity arises from the jerky and contingent movement of desire since it is subjected to the intensive energy levels of bodies.

[195] It is difficult not to mention, even if it is by way of metaphor, the weaving of the spider that Gilles Deleuze had in mind about how Marcel Proust's narrative unfolds. Recollections vibrate and become reconceived in the mind-body assemblage of the interpreter so that rather than a single and univocal feature of consciousness, the reader is pulled in many directions with no single topological instantiation. This feat of reason and imagination requires both dispersion and focus simultaneously, and thus, Marcel Proust accounts for the accelerations and slowing downs of activity. The terrain of this writer is that of the sensuous and, as we will see later in the chapter, it is maybe the writer with whom Deleuze wrestled the most, seeing as it does not cancel semantic signification but attempts instead a thoroughly sensual intensification of apparently trivial events. For more on signs and literary creation, see *Proust and Signs* (1964).

[196] By the sensible here, I refer to Jacques Rancière's definition of it in *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (2004): "I call the distribution of the sensible the

unconscious perceptions, yet to land on solid ground, get obfuscated by language coding based on the Saussurian mold,[197] on the one hand, and by spatial territories of different societies that limit and control the dividual's field of action; be them clans, families, or larger and larger institutions,[198] on the other. The active synthesis of time, predicated on selecting a semiotic series, processes the connection from the **virtual** to the **actual**. It acts as the meaningful affective motion from which thought arises. This process ultimately leaves a residue, self-consciousness, or the superject[199] for Alfred North Whitehead, that combines the intensive forces that lay claim to the dividual as the event, or the result of an intricate combination of signs, takes shape. Interlocked, the virtual and the actual continuously co-determine the becoming of a dividual and the series of singularities that provide this becoming with historical depth. In short, imagination as an intellective

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system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution" (12). However, notice how I use the expression the sensible in combination with empty time, that is, without dividuals and their subjectivation processes. Still, as the Parisian philosopher points out, such distribution can happen alongside subjectivating processes.

[197] In what follows, I will bring Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach to bear in relationship to broader visions of semiosis that include the biological and do not reduce the sign to a denotative and connotative mixture.

[198] The centralized state and giant multinational corporations like the financial institutions Blackrock and Vanguard are among the largest.

[199] The superject, which I define as the residue of the event, forms part of the subjectivation process occurring in the **evental region**. Since it combines the actual and the natural, unconscious semiotic flows and the dissemination of signification upon the brain, the superject points to what goes beyond the actual entity and its concrescence, but it also recalls the satisfaction to the desire that prompted the event's coming into consciousness. As Whitehead (*Process and Reality*, 1978) puts it, "The 'satisfaction' is the 'superject' rather than the 'substance' or the 'subject.' It closes up the entity; and yet is the superject adding its character to the creativity whereby there is a becoming of entities superseding the one in question." (129)

faculty of the mind participating in the active synthesis of time, may put together or imbricate pieces of the past, present, and future with the help of signs, like the explosions accompanying Macabéa's somatic [pertaining to the body] reactions, which testify to the nonexistence of a stable self.

I want to explain how empty time and the emergence of consciousness meet because of how vital empty time is to Lispector's writing. Consider the sentence: *A flower blossoms.* It carries an active positionality that word order and a linguistic subject, *a flower*, endow to the action, 'to blossom.' The sensible does not wait for an agent to realize its action but affectively and relationally effectuates it. Does this mean that the flower possesses *sensibilia* or that blossoming occurs while disregarding the flower? Language only replicates the event, 'to blossom.' It recreates the habit, which is itself the result of the flower's bodily affects and its relation to its environment, but the becoming of this blossoming is not, and could not possibly be, specified in an amalgam of words ordained to double a motion that is concurrent to our speech or writing. Motion,[200] more

[200] It is not odd, taking this into account, that Gilles Deleuze would find in cinema the art that most easily objectivizes the human to debunk anthropocentrism and eventually find a theory of language closer to that of Louis Hjelmslev or Charles Saunders Peirce rather than Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic courses. In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze refers to the former directly and addresses his move away from semiology and into semiotics: "The language system takes utterances of language, with signifying units and operations from it, but the utterable itself, its images and signs, are of another nature. This would be what Hjelmslev calls non-linguistically formed 'content,' whilst the language system works through form and substance. Or rather, it is the first signifiable, anterior to all significance, which Gustave Guillaume made the condition of linguistics.1 We can understand from this the ambiguity which runs through semiotics and semiology: semiology, which is of linguistic inspiration, tends to close the 'signifier' in on itself and cut language off from the images and signs which make up its raw material.2 Semiotics, by contrast, is the discipline [that] considers language only in relation to this specific content, images, and signs." (262)

even so than exploitable processes of subjectivation,[201] points toward what separates a libidinal economy from a mainly biopolitical one. What partly makes *A hora da estrela* a great work of fiction is the intricate relationship between these two economies (libidinal and biopolitical) and how the author, Clarice Lispector, speaks through intensities and oscillations of desire —the libidinal economy— to indirectly define what it means to be a disenfranchised dividual, and to describe her without a representational syntax so that the distinction between the fact of poverty and the life of Macabéa can be singularly distinguished. In every "(explosão)" (*A hora da estrela* 18 et al.), Macabéa's body suffers a jolt that causes her nervous system to deviations in brain activity. The bracketing used by Rodrigo S.M. points to pre-discursive content that merges with the dynamic expressiveness of the mind. This co-mingling of body and mind can hardly be apprehended in meaningful synchronicity —thus the need for experimentation to tackle it. Affects cannot be perfectly transcribed linguistically, with speech-acts, or even with audiovisual media, so artistic endeavors can only express them through performative display and induce the audience to have an informative encounter with the object/subject and event resulting from them.

Contrary to the commonsensical call to knowledge inherent in production, Deleuze and Guattari propose a counterintuitive notion vis-à-vis the arts; namely, that

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[201] Subjectivation can occur at a pre-subjective level as a micropolitical construction of desire involving bodily affects, or it can also be directed by powerful entities [the powers that be] driving societies in a specific direction. Therefore, I see a process of subjectivation involving these pre-personal and suprapersonal directionalities (which I call subjection). For further commentary on this notion, see footnote 71.

they are the domain of affects and percepts,[202] and they argue that there are conceptual characters that help advance concepts, like in a Socratic dialogue, where often the interlocutor's role is to dialectically direct the main character to the main idea or ideas about a specific event. In turn, Lispector's late writing produces a dialogue between her persona and phantom characters to create intensities for a ceaselessly dramatic effect where the stakes are always high, namely, the liveliness or deadliness of life itself. She works with whatever powers she can muster at a given moment to render nude through writing the becoming of being. Indeed, language carries affects as much as coded and already filtered and habituated signification, which, for the artist, results in an opportunity to show their craft and develop a style, either through paratactic vivid sentences like in Lispector or meandering and hypotactic ones like Saer's. As Deleuze affirms in *Difference of Repetition,* through the active synthesis of time, a singularity can be reduced to the recollection of the aftermath of an event, even if this occurrence has happened in the future to come.[203] Therefore, experimental writers work with this active synthesis of time because it includes fabulation, which I perceive as part of Lispector's trademark style, and that I defined in Chapter 3 as the capacity for making use of imagination and recollection to put becoming in diachronic motion.

In her article about the nature of narration and its limits in Clarice's work, Fani Miranda Tabak delves into Lispector's lyricism and how her writing fights the passive synthesis of time that I have broken down, predicated as it is on habituation by

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[202] Affects and percepts as the domain of the arts can be considered one of the central claims made by Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* (1991).

[203] It is in fact debatable to attest unquestionably that Deleuze affirms it. For a possible contestation to my claim, see pp. 79-108 from his book *Difference and Repetition*.

destabilizing the fragile egoic equilibrium within her. Moreover, this critic highlights Lispector's depersonalization through writing as a form of feminine becoming that undoes centuries of woman's oppression by contesting the household and the quotidian as a female sphere and a space of subjection to patriarchal mores:

> A perspectiva fronteiriça abre (. . .) uma aresta para a representação da escrita feminina, já que a própria condição do aprisionamento subjetivo, durante tantos séculos, é uma imposição. Similarmente, Clarice Lispector, tantas vezes assassinada pela escrita, vê na hora da morte a própria libertação de um mundo sem sentido. Macabéa, a nordestina molecular, incorpora a representação do próprio sonho, do imaginário, que se recusa a viver nos limites do cotidiano. Essas tensões tornam clara a posição da mulher na nossa sociedade, uma vez que possuem uma dupla tarefa nesse processo, pois, ao buscarem a condição humana da existência, percebem uma desumanização secular (70-1)
>
> A borderline perspective (. . .) opens up an edge for the representation of feminine writing, seeing as the very condition of subjective imprisonment for so many centuries is itself an imposition. Similarly, Clarice Lispector, often assassinated in writing, sees her liberation from a world without sense in the hour of death. Macabéa, the molecular northeasterner, incorporates the representation of Lispector's dream, of the imaginary that refuses to live within the limits of the quotidian. These tensions clear women's position in our society, who have a double task in the knowledge process: to inquire into the human condition of existence and to perceive a long history of feminine dehumanization.
> [translation is mine]

The coming to being of the I in Clarice, says Tabak, encounters the added difficulty of her being born a female. In her mind, the Jewish woman uses experimental writing to contest the limits to discursivity (e.g., Overton window) that a patriarchal society has decreed for time immemorial. This pushback is found most poignantly in Clarice's reflection on everydayness. Regarding *A hora da estrela*, she discerns Macabéa's death as a freeing situation for a woman living in dividuality. Regarding this last argument that Tabak makes and to partly question her conclusion, I would bring back the thirteen titles of the novella, since they exercise both a summation of the story and yet the irreducibility

of an event —Macabéa's death here— to a single interpretation. With each one of those titles, Clarice spatializes the event. She creates the crystal of time that makes becoming durative [durée] or accessible over the habitual rationalizations about poverty and subjectivity prioritizing common sense. Each alternative title experiments with the desire for this duration since a single title can only foreground one aspect out of many from this narratologically complex story despite its apparent simplicity: the life of a poor Northeastern girl moving to Rio de Janeiro to make a living as a copywriter who suffers an untimely accident that causes her death. These titles revisit the story once finished and provide different emotional states, hence completely diverse and proliferating summations of the tale and a multimedia mapping of hyperactive subjectivity.[204] This trend will continue later in the novella when Rodrigo S.M. also experiences extreme changes in tone and positionality vis-à-vis Macabéa and himself.

Lispector's Dividuality and the Information Age

I am now about to incorporate a discussion about the information age and neoliberalism, which took flight in the 70s as Macabéa fictionally roamed the streets of

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[204] In his book *Anti-literature*, Shellhorse claims the following about *A hora da estrela*'s thirteen titles: "Consisting of thirteen alternating leitmotifs for understanding the story, the theme-titles are arranged through a system of ors, highlighting the text's constitutive power and alterity. The rotating thirteen titles express, then, a paradigmatic articulation of the becoming immanent of Lispector's syntax and authority, as her very signature constitutes an "or" title" (38). I use the expression 'hyperactive subjectivity' to account for these titles. However, Deleuze's notion of disjunctive synthesis would also work to highlight difference and multiplicity as consonant with creation. Shellhorse mentions power (in the sense of puissance rather than pouvoir, I imagine) and alterity as in a text that sprawls and contains a polyphony of registers. I would just like to revisit Lispector's roguishness here since she constantly shifts gears and makes variations in tone in the novella, either through the narrator or with these titles, which poke the reader to invalidate the possibility of a summary when life and language as a moving organ of expression, is an apparatus yielding to pragmatics, and hence to difference and becoming.

Rio, to flesh out the ambiguity of the term dividual, as I did in the Introduction. I will also explain how Lispector actively resorts to dividuality in her work to subvert the power yielded by control societies and valorize the becoming of being and a more-than-human life instead. The information age prides itself on disclosing or making visible the molecular. The dividual, as a concept encompassing pre-individual information (i.e., genetics, biological markers, physiological states), has been of great value to the founders of the cybernetic movement in the post-WWII era. In contrast, writers like Lispector can potentially translate affective bodily states into signs for aesthetic or even healing effects. These two different methodologies explain both the scientific aspect of the term and the aesthetic one I started examining in the last chapter. In so doing, they explore dividuality from the point of view of digital capitalism,[205] which regards dividuals as nodes in a network, and from the ontological aspect that I introduced in Chapter 3. As I have been demonstrating, Lispector's dividuality, or even Macabéa's, is useless to capital. My contribution to the Latin American Studies field hinges on the need to introduce a dividual reading of literature, where characters either fully conform to the dominant ideology of their time or offer strategies or forms of life that disclose some level of resistance to the state of affairs through dividuality.

To a great extent, literary criticism entails honoring the text by showcasing how the author can depict a worldview or style through the medium of the written word and its

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[205] See the book *Digital Capitalism: Networking the Global Market System* (1999), *Digital Objects, Digital Subjects: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Capitalism, Labor and Politics in the Age of Big Data* (2019), *Too Smart: How Digital Capitalism Is Extracting Data, Controlling Our Lives, and Taking Over the World* (2020), *Pressed for Time: The Acceleration of Life in Digital Capitalism* (2015), and others, to delve deeper into a conceptualization of the term.

limits and limitations. My purpose for this section of the chapter is twofold: I wish to create a contrast between the dividual of information theory, which presupposes the human as a programmable machine,[206] and the dividual as a concept that bypasses legal terms such as a *person* or *subject* while laying out the multiplicity of forms-of-life that are potentially possible for the human animal. In contrasting the two approaches to dividuality, the essay will enlighten the discussion about Lispector's narrator and how she adopts Rodrigo S.M. as a narrative device. In this section about information and signs, empty time will represent continuity while both information and signs will stand for its opposite; this is, what is discreet and can be computerized and turned into data.

As I prefaced in the Introduction to this work, the dividual concept theorized in these middle chapters was not meant to be a simple substitute for a picaresque aesthetic. On the one hand, the dividual actively carves out a space for a reconceptualization of subjectivity. It bypasses the self and grounds itself in division and relationality. A dividual can also experience contradictory drives of attraction or repulsion toward the participatory feature of the dividual (participation) and the isolationist feature (partition). In contrast to this pre-subjective dividual, capitalism (economy) and technocracy (governmentality) have created the paradigm for controlling societies that premises its force on making the molecular visible and becoming readable. The information age then leans into the relational aspect of the dividual (exchange economy) and its codification and profitability in terms of capital, and it provides substance to the passive synthesis of time, prone to habituation. In other words, digital capitalism discloses desire. It gives free

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[206] For more on the topic, see Amy Webb and Andrew Hessel's *The Genesis Machine: Our Quest to Rewrite Life in the Age of Synthetic Biology* (2022).

rein for drives to be met with their satisfaction, all the while establishing financial means by which market activity can derive monopolies and statism under a structure that decentralizes and obscures power [pouvoir], making it all the more unassailable and commonsensical as a paradigm for a pyramidal scheme of valuation. In this capitalist context, the hapless Macabéa is doomed because she does not have any marketable skills.

In contrast, Lispector's posthumous writing, including A hora da estrela, foresees the cruelty of conforming to this neoliberal and information age paradigm. Macabéa cannot find weapons to defend her dividuality from it and dies tragically. Similarly, the first-person Lispector utilizes in *Água viva* and *Um sopro de vida* ranks the continuity of becoming in empty time over the discreetness of data, bound to a self and legal entities. Unlike the more-than-human aspirations of Lispector's writing by valorizing becoming over being, the **information** age repackages affective processes such as eye dilation or sweating in the post-WWII era as crucial elements to be read and assessed for population management.[207] This new cybernetic theory comes with a game-changing distinction from human language since science can use data. In a neoliberal economy, language must be adapted for different power structures and institutions to suit their communication needs. Following the anthropologist and cybernetician Gregory Bateson, a "unit of

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[207] An example of this assessment of data for population control is the use of algorithms to assist people with their identities, health management, or even the elucidation of thought processes and facilitate decision-making, as Yuval Noah Harari (*21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, 2018), a transhumanist philosopher from Israel with close ties to the World Economic Forum, avers: "Many gay men spend their entire teenage years unsure about their sexuality. Now imagine the situation in 2050, when an algorithm can tell any teenager exactly where he is on the gay/straight spectrum (and even how malleable that position is). Perhaps the algorithm shows you pictures or videos of attractive men and women, tracks your eye movements, blood pressure and brain activity, and within five minutes ejects a number on the Kinsey scale. It could have saved me years of frustration" (58).

information" is an "idea" or a "difference that makes a difference" (272) that is a complete loop of the real unconscious (see Figure 3). As this quote specifies, the information age sets the monitoring of the molecular and the body as an organic whole as their mission statement. The pre-discursive, ethological view that the Macy conferences on cybernetics, in their multi-disciplinarity, predicated their work on, from Norbert Wiener to John von Neumann, to Margaret Mead and her husband Gregory Bateson, among others,[208] represents this effort. This cybernetics group bluntly disregards the becoming of being in favor of bodies' readability, monitoring, and tracking. In desiring to exercise societal control on human behavior, these elite academics defined the human as a biological machine to be broken down into data (e.g., social credit score, Chinese social credit system, biometric surveillance), and for this data to be classified, stored, and ultimately, managed by private-public partnerships that encompass the might of certain national governments and supranational corporations. In Lispector's passionate writing, the reader encounters the flipside of this narrative: a wild rhetoric of intensities without essence. This literature remains hidden from subjection because it cannot be neutralized with mechanisms of power. Lispector participates in subjective processes through her writing only to disappear from material existence and subsist solely in becoming. This aligns with her interest in painting, which, like Deligny's lines in Chapter 3, promotes childlike energy bound to imperceptibility by systems that speak the language of power [pouvoir].

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[208] For a complete list of attendees to the Macy conferences, check the following website: https://www.asc-cybernetics.org/foundations/history/MacyPeople.html

In contrast to the dividual of control societies, psychological interiority presupposes one's seeming privacy about our capacity to think. Still, Spinoza shows in his *Ethics* that this interiority has its basis in the incorporation of bodily affects, defined in part as inherited notions from a previous process of subjectivation that the dividual prioritizes, into the percepts that ensue as the former actualize into consciousness. It is only then that the possibility of thinking commences. Often, though, thought can be already decoded (i.e., advertising, mass propaganda), which straitjackets the metaphysical flow of becoming for the dividual. This media reception requires no effort to digest, promoting as it does attention to elements external to one's body in motion. In the current stage of capitalism, where the scapegoated enemy went from other groups of people (Muslims and 9/11) to the microscopic and the unseen (gays and AIDS/Covid), an allergy to thought and a dismissiveness of intellectualism prevail. The State's many strategies to govern minds and direct behavior implicate a release of decoded information flows while keeping people coerced through wages, creating a culture where critical thinking is frowned upon in favor of perversion or the desire to match one's drives to a majoritarian logic. In this context, I would be remiss not to mention Félix Guattari's concept of transversality[209] as a practice for healing our minds, which, saturated with cybernetic information, need techniques that help them improve their tenor of life.[210] To this end,

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[209] While at some point Félix Guattari explicates transversality as pertaining groups, I repeatedly argue that every dividual finds itself part of an assemblage, even if the bodily and semiotic flows of signification constantly threaten the stability of such assemblage: "The problem of psychoanalysis is the problem of the revolutionary movement, the problem of the revolutionary movement is the problem of madness, the problem of madness is the problem of artistic creation. Transversality is, at heart, nothing but this nomadism." (*Chaosophy* 147)

[210] One such practice is the ritornello, which affords the living a sure consistency among the surrounding chaos of uncertainties, such as meditation, music, tea at 4 pm, workouts, or other

Lispector's contribution may appear contradictory. While her posthumous writing supports becoming and a dividual's multiplicity of drives over readymade ideas and groupthink, she also underscores the alienation and danger concomitant to transience and the overriding of the self, as seen in this excerpt from *Um sopro de vida*:

> Mas meus personagens não têm culpa disso e eu os trato o melhor possível. Eles vêm de lugar nenhum. São a inspiração. Inspiração não é loucura. É Deus. Meu problema é o medo de ficar louco. Tenho que me controlar. Existem leis que regem a comunicação (18)
>
> But my characters are not to blame and I treat them as best I can. They arrive from nowhere. They are inspiration. Inspiration is not madness. It's God. My problem is the fear of going mad. I have to control myself. There are laws that govern communication (*A Breath of Life* 41)

In contrast, Saer's dividual balances participating in the communities he haphazardly joins and the autonomy he ultimately boasts from these partnerships.

I would also like to inscribe here what critic Gabriel Alejandro Giorgi ("La incompetente: Precariedad, trabajo, literature", 2019) perceives as precarity and how Macabéa embodies it. Earlier, I discussed how I agreed with another critic about the racial aspect of the novella, and I agreed with the assessment. Still, this NYU professor takes the racial factor into a class analysis around labor and precariousness. In his article about the story, he recollects the publication date, 1977, and the incipient neoliberal era. Both in the Introduction and Chapters 2 and 5, the economic aspect features heavily, but it is only now that I mention it in this fourth chapter.

Conceptually enmeshing the character of Macabéa into the dividual fold, I have strived to give a response to the picaresque as a genre that participates in the desiring

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healthy mechanisms. Félix Guattari's concern lies in how to build ritornellos that bypass the capitalist machine. In this sense, one can hear Gregory Bateson talking through him, even if the life, if not also the work of this latter, is not without its moral ambiguity.

modulations of capitalism, and I actively seek a substitute to this defunct genre and myth by way of dividuality. Both in the previous chapter and the current one, I speak of characters that, from the margins of a particular society, actively disturb the established order of the proper, which has to do with common sense and ownership. These characters develop with their actions a way of life that reveals time as a flux and selfhood as transient. This is the terrain of dividuality that Gabriel Giorgi partially tackles as he broaches the themes of the novella *A hora da estrela*. Indeed, he expresses how Macabéa differs from other Latin American characters living in poverty because she is not suitable for any kind of labor, not even sexual. Her inability to be an entrepreneur of the self or to have the capacity to belong in a working-class setting, along with Olímpico and Glória, deprive Macabéa of a space of safety or intimacy for herself, which in turn opens her up to the reader a fully dividual character that connects with the external world while keeping a virtual aspect to her overall demeanor and approach to life itself. This precarious life, or "vida precaria," as Gabriel Giorgi calls it, does not operate at the level of discourse. It has instead its basis on the affective side of life that I am delineating in this chapter:

> La precariedad o la vida precaria, en cambio, funciona sobre un procedimiento íntegramente diferente—funciona sobre la base, como vimos, del contagio, la contaminación, la proximidad, el impacto adhesivo; esto es, como fuerza afectiva, como afecto que oscila entre cuerpos, entre lugares de sujeto, y que impone una proximidad a partir de una inseguridad siempre generalizable. El pobre es, siempre, el otro; el precario es, en cambio, el mensajero de una nueva inseguridad de la cual no estoy ni estaré nunca lo suficientemente protegido. Esa tensión y ese desplazamiento es el que A hora da estrela dramatiza en torno a Macabéa y a las figuras que ella convoca, que son las figuras de la "literatura"—"Rodrigo SM", "CL", "os senhores" lectores—como modulación de lo colectivo. Algo que no se acomoda a los modos en que el pobre había sido inscripto por la cultura, y que amenaza no con la violencia (del antagonismo) sino con una nueva condición precaria que no se puede poner a distancia, ni siquiera, como lo

> demuestra Rodrigo, al precio de una violencia retórica que fracasa ante nuestros ojos y exhibe esta condición precaria que está haciendo su irrupción e imponiendo sus nuevas reglas
> (Giorgi 70)

I believe it is essential to the analysis of the novella that Giorgi reflects Macabéa as an index or "índice" (69). It recalls the conversation I am having about affect and semiotics. It identifies Macabéa as the marker establishing a line of flight from the established discourse, just like Def-ghi would in the previous chapter. In the cabin boy from Chapter 3, the picaresque as a genre takes flight into dividuality thanks to that figure of difference that Def-ghi takes on as different costumes for what is not present at the time, or what is missing, or essentially for the remainder of the discourse that the Colastiné tribe produces. Likewise, Macabéa frustrates the expectations of all the other characters she encounters, and their being in the world reveals itself thanks to her. At the same time, she remains a canvas to be painted, or a character with no known attributes, paraphrasing the famous Austrian novel by Robert Musil.

Giorgi continues his essay about this divorce between the labor force and Macabéa's character with a realization regarding Lispector's rhetoric in the novella. What I called precarious relationality in the previous chapter reappears again here since Macabéa's externality is met by a plethora of characters with whom she makes contact but from whom she always remains detachable, like the virtual index that she is, semiotically manifesting in the novel. Giorgi, while not using my terminology, brings to bear the non-human aspect of the narration and thus the virtuality that is contained in the dividual as a figure of relation and dividedness:

> La paradoja de ese contagio es que no tiene lugar en nombre de la humanidad, de las retóricas compasivas de una igualdad ontológica más allá

> de las clases, sino todo lo contrario: en el nombre de lo que tensa lo humano, lo que lo desborda, lo que trae, con una nueva fuerza política y bajo la luz de lo viviente, los cuerpos y sus vidas al centro de la interrogación. Allí es donde se sitúa la condición precaria en Lispector: en el límite de lo impropio, lo inapropiable, el límite entre lo humano y lo no-humano. Lo precario, entonces, tensa la lógica del antagonismo y la alteridad que definen los itinerarios del pobre y la sustituye por los modos de lo próximo, lo constitutivo, lo contagioso: Macabéa funciona como un operador formal de ese pasaje. (Giorgi 69)

Lispector stages in this novella a reminder of what literature can do to make the ideological framework around which language and society structure desire malfunction. *A hora da estrela* stages a naturalistic attempt at telling the story of Macabéa through the male narrator, Rodrigo. Still, the tale opens the possibility of standing outside the ideological positionality of characters through the innocent and unassuming Macabéa. This is the space of the virtual, where Macabéa is the vessel that Clarice chooses to carry out the labor of disruption:

> Tinha o que se chama de vida interior e não sabia que tinha. Vivia de si mesma como se comesse as próprias entranhas. Quando ia ao trabalho parecia uma doida mansa porque ao correr do ônibus devaneava em altos e deslumbrantes sonhos. Estes sonhos, de tanta interioridade, eram vazios porque lhes faltava o núcleo essencial de uma prévia experiência de – de êxtase, digamos. A maior parte do tempo tinha sem o saber o vazio que enche a alma dos santos. Ela era santa? Ao que parece. Não sabia que meditava pois não sabia o que queria dizer a palavra. Mas parece-me que sua vida era uma longa meditação sobre o nada. Só que precisava dos outros para crer em si mesma, senão se perderia nos sucessivos e redondos vácuos que havia nela. Meditava enquanto batia à máquina e por isso errava ainda mais (*A hora da estrela* 127)

> She had what's known as inner life and didn't know it. She lived off herself as if eating her own entrails. When she went to work she looked like a gentle lunatic because as the bus went along she daydreamed in loud and dazzling dreams. These dreams, because of all that interiority, were empty because they lacked the essential nucleus of — of ecstasy, let's say. Most of the time she had without realizing it the void that fills the souls of the saints. Was she a saint? So it seems. She didn't know that she was meditating because she didn't know what the word meant. But it seems to me that her life was a long meditation on the nothing. Except she needed

> others in order to believe in herself, otherwise she'd get lost in the successive and round emptinesses inside her. She meditated while she was typing, and that's why she made even more mistakes.
> (*The Hour of the Star* 49)

Through her character concept, narrator, and alter ego, Rodrigo S.M., Lispector highlights Macabéa's fleshiness and sensuality despite herself. She is presented to the reader as a daydreamer with incoherent thoughts, babbling baby-like comments, or lacking a connective thread. This breath of life, as she signifies Macabéa, has "sonhos esquizoides" (A hora da estrela 169) (schizoid dreams) (*The hour of the Star* 75) that make her anachronistic and out of touch with the reality where her co-workers live in. She is virtual because her mind is always elsewhere, connecting disparate affects and feeling variegated thoughts that turn her inimical to forming a consistent and operational self for the economic production of 1970s Rio de Janeiro.

In the current neoliberal era, the perfecting of humanity and its affects falls into a murky state of indistinguishability concerning market production and economic growth. Suppose the personological aspect of work and self-disclosure must be present to improve the life of the human species (i.e., the injunction to happiness or the blurring of the different spheres of life as part of corporate practice for workers). In that case, this work must become a labor ideal identifying itself with the machine's status. Despite the breaks from a 9 to 5 work schedule and the work-from-home or hybrid modalities, this affective function of work engenders labor since technology development is used to update the different mechanisms of societal subjection, which impinges upon the rest of the waking hours. This feature of control societies involves an accelerationist or transhuman ideology which aims to disclose, for market-driven purposes, the becoming of beings that the literary realm, and even more so Lispector in this case, seeks to honor

rather than master. For example, companies like Twitter use bots in combination with real human accounts to develop and improve artificial intelligence and the reproducibility of subjective opinions and states of mind to ultimately replicate a human brain.[211] In this situation, leisure and labor time enter mutual contamination in the digital sphere.

As a result, the nuance of affective processes gets devalued under the imperium of cognitive psychology and the redundancy of signification. In this context, the dividual would participate or be partitioned from the whole according to their singularization through multiple accounts and handles. Still, it would lose out on the bodily con-division that grounds it. I will not venture a solution to this incipient conundrum. Still, automation and the infosphere[212] elicit developments which, with a higher or lesser degree of concretization, generate the current situation of corporate technocracy, to which the immediacy of the sensuous, epitomized in Macabéa's dividual force, stands as an outlier because of her obliviousness to power structures and mechanisms of control. The salvific connotations that Lispector symbolically introduces in the narrative by way of the Maccabees, a group of Jewish warriors contesting the Seleucid Empire, hints at the resistance that Macabéa personifies. In contrast to the dividual of control societies, she

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[211] The latest instance of this continued effort to replicate (or even supersede) through AI, human cognition, and understanding bears the name of the software ChatGPT. I would be remiss if I did not mention that in philosophy, the name of German idealist Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel has been brought up in several instances (particularly with his concept of Geist, or spirit) as a force that is behind the accelerationist or transhuman movement. See, for example, the book by Iranian philosopher Reza Negarestani on this very matter, *Intelligence and Spirit* (2018), where Geist cannot be expected to be genuinely human.

[212] I borrow the term from Luciano Floridi (*Information: A Very Short Introduction*, 2010) even if I dissociate it from the eventfulness of life and its affective aesthetic (aesthesis), or a difference as a cause for motion or becoming à la Gregory Bateson: "This is the informational environment constituted by all informational processes, services, and entities, thus including informational agents as well as their properties, interactions, and mutual relations." (47)

remains either impervious to interpolation or unable to become a subject to the State and its propaganda with her incredulity and innocence.

(En)gendering Affect: Violence as Dishabituation

Empirically speaking, Macabéa did not die from being given a destiny. She died after a car ran her over on the street. However, this does not explain the successive, bracketed explosions[213] recounted in the narration. She lived "num limbo impessoal" (*A hora da estrela* 16) "in an impersonal limbo" (*The Hour of the Star* 17), that is, in becoming, in the present of her bodily affects, the contingent meanderings of her mind-body assemblage, and the feelings that ensued from every one of those singular moments that Rodrigo S.M. narrates. The other characters would take it upon themselves to warn, tell off, correct, and generally look down on Macabéa. Quid juris, though?[214] Violence is

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213 In his book *Anti-literature*, Shellhorse specifies how the parenthetic explosions amid the narration rebuke symbolic language and call attention to formerly repressed expressions of desire in Macabéa: "Composed through free indirect discourse, as a passage of consciousness between the narrative voice and the mind of Macabéa, such a procedure [the parenthetic explosions] is not innocent. The parenthetic sequencing of Macabéa's (explosive) affects, connected to her newfound "voracity for the future," inscribes a horizontality and multiplicity of textual flows that move against the grain of Rodrigo's self-proclaimed project of getting to the facts" (38). I concur with Shellhorse on how the future is finally a concept that Macabéa can intuit after the meeting with the fortune-teller, but I would refrain from the word repression since this requires a mind to catch feelings and suppress them. The reader is led to think that her feelings are only a direct result of her bodily affects or others telling her what to feel and believe, so there's never active suppression on her part but an openness to dividual becoming without psychologizing.

214 "Generally, aberrant movements are inseparable from a destructive critical force. From this perspective, the question quid juris? [N]ot only means determining the law specific to this or that fact but fighting, struggling, in favor of that which aberrant movements express. Expression is like a howl or scream-and there are many in Deleuze's work. They are like the final phase of the question: What rights do these aberrant movements demand? To what new existences do they bear witness?" (Lapoujade 37). David Lapoujade (*Aberrant Movements: The Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze,* 2017) then maintains that Deleuze's philosophy relates intimately to this question of the ground from early on in his career, and I would add that the event and how the dividual encounters it delineates lines of flight away from gratuitous or stale discourses of subjectivation.

performed in a myriad of ways, and it is in the recording, or disjunctive,[215] process, that of the mind-body matrix, where the battle of subjectivity is played out regularly. The life of a dividual, its intensive force, comes from the contracting resistance one develops to the information bomb[216] (either genetic, familial, or media-driven) to which we are subjected. **Contraction** can be defined as the faculty that connects the time of the sensuous, sensory-motor machine[217] (active time) to the habituation (passive time) that ensues from such contraction. From virtual multiplicities,[218] contraction introduces a singularity (a dividual loop) to the milieu of habit, where it will be addressed more often than not under the premise of ready-made rationality or thought process. Macabéa, like any of us, gets caught up in this information hyperinflation, but she does not have any psychological weapons to interpret the code that discloses them.[219] Through her, we are

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215 See Anti-Oedipus and the three syntheses of desiring-production.

216 This expression has been discussed by Paul Virilio in a book by the same title.

217 A desiring machine could have its correlative in the compulsion of the ego, needing constant validation and acceptance of its impulses or drives. The collective machine of ego production substitutes the id. As for contraction, this is an essential element connecting the active synthesis of time to the passive one. Deleuze defines this in *Difference and Repetition*: "Contraction is not a matter of reflection. Properly speaking, it forms a synthesis of time. A succession of instants does not constitute time any more than it causes it to disappear; it indicates only its constantly aborted moment of birth. Time is constituted only in the originary synthesis which operates on the repetition of instants. This synthesis contracts the successive independent instants into one another, thereby constituting the lived, or living, present. It is in this present that time is deployed. To it belong both the past and the future: the past in so far as the preceding instants are retained in the contraction; the future because its expectation is anticipated in this same contraction. The past and the future do not designate instants distinct from a supposed present instant, but rather the dimensions of the present itself in so far as it is a contraction of instants." (70-1)

218 These are seen as productive elements in subjectivation, from the organic to the affective to the cognitive, or from kidney cells to someone yelling near you to how one responds to it. These become actualized and coalesce in an event.

219 I am made to think about the movie *They Live* (1980) as I write these lines. The scene where the main character puts on a special pair of glasses that deciphers a subliminal message

acutely aware of the avalanche our sensitive and sensuous bodies receive almost sans pause. The narration follows this line not without irony, seeing as Macabéa's story, Rodrigo says, is sponsored by Coca-Cola, "o refrigerante mais popular do mundo" (*A hora da estrela* 16) (the most popular drink in the world) (*The Hour of the Star* 17).

This violence that the dividual Macabéa suffers in silence has been identified in what would usually look like theatrical asides. I recorded twenty instances when the parenthetic use of *explosão* (explosion) appears in *A hora da estrela.* It would not be productive to look into every single of those appearances in the text, but I can break down the context that produces them. The first time she has just been fired as a typist. After that, her boss Raimundo decides to keep her friend Glória only; a second time, when Rodrigo S.M. commences his Macabéa story and gives an account of her, following the adverb *agora* (now); the third time she is terrified that she is happy about looking at herself in a mirror; the fourth time she just met who she believes is the love of her life, Olímpico; the fifth when Olímpico himself promises her a metallurgic job; next and sixth time is their break-up and the seventh him telling her that he was now dating Glória; the eighth, she starts laughing as he communicates the break-up to her since she forgot how to cry; then a small explosion because of how badly the lipstick would look on her; the tenth time, Glória invites her over for lunch and Macabéa is thoroughly impressed by the amount of food at Glória's place so another small explosion ensues; the eleventh time, upon receiving her salary, she seeks a doctor that her friend Glória recommends; next up, Macabéa uses the loan money that Glória gives her to go see Glória's fortune-teller,

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behind propaganda billboards shows how the Kantian categorical imperative works better if seen from the optic of consumption and ethological desire.

Madame Carlota; the thirteenth time, she is manifesting anticipatory elation because Madame Carlota is about to read her destiny and she is then about to have one for the first time; right after, Madame Carlota's face lights up because she has great news to give Macabéa and hence there goes another explosion; her boss is going to repent and will not fire her, her ex-boyfriend will come back for her and ask her in matrimony, Carlota claims, and Macabéa suddenly has a future; Carlota has further information on her soon to be boyfriend, a foreigner by the name of Hans; Carlota says she will wear fine clothes and Hans will make her rich and love her deeply; Macabéa is now in love with imaginary Hans and she will soon grow more hair thanks to Carlota's advice on what soap to use for her hair; as they say goodbye to each other, and owing to her immense happiness, Macabéa plants a kiss on Carlota's cheek, bringing about the nineteenth explosion; for the last and twentieth explosive time, Macabéa meets her destiny as a yellow Mercedes hits her as she was crossing the road which, ironically, was what the previous client of Madame Carlota's had been predicted. In all of these instances, the intensity of the event jolts her. It moves her extremely, which is a feature of innocence the narrator demonstrates by way of those parenthetic asides. Rodrigo S. M.[220] also protects her, but he realizes that his creation will not be able to survive a world that is too hostile for such

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[220] Marta Peixoto, a prominent Clarice Lispector scholar, believes that the initials S.M. stand for sadomasochism, I think rightly: "In the dramatization of the storytelling act, three textual interactions emerge as central. All are unstable and often aggressive, hinging on identification and rejection, sympathy and repulsion: first, the implicit connection between Lispector and her male narrator, Rodrigo S. M. (given the context of cruelty, it is difficult not to think of the sadomasochism these initials sometimes signify); second, the narrator's relationship with Macabéa, whom he invents, but whose "truth" he also claims to "capture"; third, the interaction between Rodrigo S. M. and the encoded reader, whom he frequently —and contentiously — addresses. References to narration fragment the plot, interrupting it on almost every page. There is nothing seamless about the text, and much that is abrupt, excessive, and grotesque. The grid through which Macabéa is written, itself fictional, of course, remains firmly in the foreground." (91)

a degree of ignorance and innocence. This establishes the cruelty toward Macabéa based on her lack of understanding of the world around her and the empathy it can generate. Rodrigo S.M.'s emotions, veering between compassion and eugenicist disgust, are more palpable than Macabéa's since they are subsidiary to the narrator's meddling, who juxtaposes and overlays his emotions over and above hers. This dynamic between repulsion and attraction that the reader encounters through Rodrigo gnaws at him, who aims to become someone else, as he recounts, to be able to write the story.

To further this point, Cynthia A. Sloan speaks of a "masculine libidinal economy" (8) that the male narrator wrestles with divesting himself from but whose mission fails. In the critic's mind, Rodrigo's violence wins over the feminine counterpart the moment his desire to kill Macabéa takes over the narration. Following feminine critics like Hélène Cixous or Toril Moi, Sloan recoups a possible interpretation of a masculine energy that seeks to dominate and subjugate against a feminine pleasure that gives without expecting anything in return. In this reading, this critic takes it further than the feminist writers and sides with Marta Peixoto by claiming Lispector wishes to deconstruct masculinity from within the text. Clarice's posthumous writings offer me ample proof that the sadistic impulse of the narrator in *A hora da estrela* resumes its presence under another guise in *Um sopro de vida*, wherein the narrator is Clarice herself and her puppet, she calls Ângela or simply an unnamed second person singular, as I explained earlier in the chapter. In reducing the novella to a play on dualistic gender performativity, this critic diminishes the power of the text that the writer herself theatricalizes. Alternatively, I believe that the racial reading of *A hora da estrela* that Lucía Villares puts into perspective contributes to the story and does not detract from its richness. In it, the critic

collects all the different epithets that Rodrigo S.M. uses and the physical descriptions he makes of the characters. Given this data parsing and examination, she concludes that Olímpico and Glória, while not white but mulatto, can survive and overcome the socioeconomic difficulties they face. However, in the case of Macabéa, her Northeasterner background, along with her indigeneity, marginalizes her and expulses her from the body of the nation that the early Euclides de Cunha and later Gilberto Freyre laid out, namely, the appeal to an ideological white and black miscegenation that would ultimately whiten the race. This same critic brings to the reader's attention the effects of the Gétulio Vargas era in the novella (1930-45) and how it was "a period of intense nation-building and strengthening of the nation-state" (80). In this academic's mind, the after-effect of this ruthless and racial governmentality, which included bringing in European stock to further a whitening *mestiçagem*, must have been sensed by Lispector, who left the country shortly before the fall of his initial regime in 1944, and that this event's consequences could not have escaped her (Villares par. 80).

Caustic humor surfaces in the text with relevant regularity, which can be seen as a byproduct of narratorial cruelty. It builds into the unaddressed anger that the narrator feels toward Macabéa. Interestingly, there is a transfer of emotional chaos from Lispector to Rodrigo and from the narrator to Macabéa. This tension between Rodrigo and Macabéa is primarily mirrored in the relationship between Olímpico and Macabéa. Without meaning to, the young girl from Alagoas makes both men nervous. Her short-lived boyfriend cannot stand not having an answer to Macabéa's seemingly absurd questions:

> – Eu não entendo o seu nome, disse ela. Olímpico? Macabéa fingia enorme curiosidade escondendo dele que ela nunca entendia tudo muito bem e que

> isso era assim mesmo. Mas ele, galinho de briga que era, arrepiou-se todo com a pergunta tola e que ele não sabia responder. Disse aborrecido: – Eu sei mas não quero dizer! – Não faz mal, não faz mal, não faz mal... a gente não precisa entender o nome (*A hora da estrela* 95)

> — I don't understand your name — she said. — Olímpico?
> Macabéa feigned enormous curiosity hiding from him that she never understood anything very well[,] and that was just how it was. But the little fighting cock that he was bristled at the stupid question to which he didn't know the answer. He said[,] annoyed:
> — I know[,] but I don't want to tell you! — It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter . . . we don't need to know what our names mean" (*The Hour of the Star* 57)

The pressure that Olímpico faces to be knowledgeable and on top of every situation is tested by this meager question about the origin of his name. As for Macabéa, she does not think in terms of knowledge but through explosive emotional reactions that she mostly keeps to herself out of shyness, inaction, and faint-heartedness. Olímpico dreams of becoming rich and leaving the area, while Macabéa seeks his company. This simplicity irks Olímpico to such an extent that he starts bullying her, and this is where Olímpico mirrors Rodrigo S.M.'s behavior. They both think of themselves as superior to the young girl, barring the distinction that Rodrigo is trying to love her despite his internal reservations about someone so unassuming. Ultimately, both the narrator and Olímpico wish to detach themselves from her. In the case of the former, his affective involvement with her dividuality threatens to shatter the middle-class persona of a male writer that he had been attempting to divorce himself from, even if only for the duration of the narrative, which he is glad to see end:

> O Destino havia escolhido para ela um beco no escuro e uma sarjeta. Ela sofria? Acho que sim. Como uma galinha de pescoço mal cortado que corre espavorida pingando sangue. Só que a galinha foge – como se foge da dor – em cacarejos apavorados. E Macabéa lutava muda. Vou fazer o possível para que ela não morra. Mas que vontade de adormecê-la e de eu mesmo ir para a cama dormir. Então começou levemente a garoar. Olímpico tinha

> razão: ela só sabia mesmo era chover. Os finos fios de água gelada aos poucos empapavam-lhe a roupa e isso não era confortável. Pergunto: toda história que já se escreveu no mundo é história de aflições?
> (*A hora da estrela* 127)

> For her, Destiny had chosen an alley in the dark and a gutter. Was she suffering? I think so. Like a hen with a half-severed neck running terrified, dripping blood. Except the hen flees — as you flee pain — in panicked clucks. And Macabéa was struggling mute. I'm going to do everything I can to keep her from dying. But what an urge to put her to sleep and to go off to bed myself. Then it started to drizzle lightly. Olímpico was right: all she was really good for was raining. The fine threads of freezing water slowly soaked her clothes[,] and this wasn't comfortable. I ask: was every story ever written in the world a story of affliction?
> (*The Hour of the Star* 98-9)

The narrator suggests three different affective stances. First, he uses an animal metaphor to describe Macabéa's suffering, which effectively dehumanizes her to the reader and hence shows his sadism. Second, he experiences boredom with the death process even if he is the one effectively prolonging it, which showcases cruelty even to the reader, who needs to stomach his viciousness. Third, he actively agrees with Olímpico that she is worthless. Finally, there is a lament at the end of the paragraph, one of the oldest and richest literary traditions, from Homeric poems to myths of creations in different cultures, asking why all stories must be mournful. The tone shifts from "ceremonious, religious, lyrical, or mocking" (Peixoto 96). The gender dynamic being established in the relationship between Rodrigo S. M. (yang) and his creation Macabéa (yin) is a struggle between the discourse of representation (X = Y), attempting to be empathetic to let in some yin and the dividual strength of a yin creature whose existence is an ideological enigma as well as a passive receiver of information.

As I discussed earlier in the chapter, the authorial aspect of the novella has been debated in conjunction with Clarice Lispector's political engagement with Brazilian

society and the disenfranchised within it. By now, though, it has been accepted that Rodrigo S.M. stands for a writer who wants to achieve renown for being able to give voice to the subaltern in the transcultural manner that Ángel Rama envisioned for Latin American narratives.[221] Likewise, the multiple titles and constant shifts in narratorial tone invite the reader to surmise heterogeneous points of view over the ultimate interpretation of the story, Macabéa, or the writer's vision about more or less abstract externalities, such as poverty or inequality. In response to this conversation, Lispector refuses to accept the representative terms proposed for her or her fiction, and she chooses to highlight, once again, the body and its affective states. Aarti S. Mardan traces this tendency in the writing of the Brazilian novelist as she explains what makes Clarice's style uniquely unsettling:

> Language is heterogeneity: form and content, action and representation; charm and wit. Each are dichotomies that glide into and out of one another, producing a text in which tropism is pervasive. Through this heterogeneity and rituality, Lispector proposes a return to community in order to recover both the religious potential in modern discourse and the religiosity of primitive peoples (. . .) It is indeed through the tropism of

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[221] Following in the footsteps of anthropologist Fernando Órtiz, Ángel Rama spoke of a "process of transculturation" (127) in regionalist novels from Latin America, specifically José María Arguedas though not exclusively. Given the modernizing process occurring in the twentieth century, thought Arguedas, these writers would seek a balance between embracing cultural elements of the dominant Anglosphere and European extraction while staying true to the folklore and traditions that would make their nation-states proud and identity-based. A failure to achieve this delicate blend of cultural loss and adopting a neo-culture would devalue the work of fiction in Rama's eyes. Professor Shellhorse questions literature's ability to do what Rama proposed regarding his transculturation theoretical project: "The Latin American literary regime of representation encodes, territorializes, and represses the revolutionary potential of the experimental text. Constituted through a willed cultural difference and an irrevocable class divide that informs its mode of expression, under the literary regime, as we see clearly in the example of Rama, writing becomes subsumed through an instituting discourse of identity." (*Anti-literature* 27).

Moreover, and in line with Shellhorse, Lispector's *A hora da estrela* chooses a character from the Brazilian northeast as a form of lip service to this regionalist tradition of the novel. Paradoxically, the unreliable narration and rhetorical doubtfulness about the possibility of representation facilitate the reader's sympathy concerning Macabéa's poverty and innocence. Nonetheless, Lispector sets for her writing no ambition to modernize the sertão while extolling its virtues. For such purpose, Guimarães Rosa would be the Brazilian canonical writer to examine.

> The Hour of the Star [sic] that she displays the fundamental truths of Vico, impurifying language to the extent that the text itself is a constant metaphor (27)

In her article, this scholar claims that Lispector fights the representational design of language following Giambattista Vico's tropological taxonomy for poetic logic. To the Italian philosopher, a veritable approach to poetry necessitates figures of speech. They can all be reduced to four which encompass them all: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony (par. 22). In his mind, the last of these figures of speech "only became possible after the recognition of disparities between these figurative expressions of reality and the objects they were meant to (. . .) characterize" (22) literally. Mardan does not spend much time with the last three of them. Still, she concentrates on metaphor for substituting what would be expected of a realist narrator with Lispector's rhythmic and pulsating style. Continuing with her analysis, she expresses that "Lispector's language treads beyond the mere written, beyond the mere read" and that it also "beckons looking and listening as aesthetic experiences that take us back to the Archaic modern and to metaphor" (25). Lispector then proceeds through her allusions to the ancient world and its pre-personal connotations, and using metaphor, Lispector "establishes her impurification of language" (25).

I am not interested in Vico's formal logic of poetry and how it relates to the Brazilian novelist as I am into what Mardan connects to this impurity. However, since a dividual theory is forcefully imbricated with a dynamics of desire, I find it apt that this scholar cares to include Julia Kristeva's work in Clarice Lispector's novella. Surely

enough, *abjection*[222] and, to a lesser extent, *jouissance*,[223] the two concepts that the Bulgarian literary critic is renowned for, can be applied to Macabéa's meagerness and "inocência pisada" ("Panorama com Clarice Lispector") or "stomped on innocence" [my translation]. As readers, we are privy to Macabéa's character assassination that Rodrigo S.M. promotes until the end, let alone the grotesque tone that he displays while presenting her lying on the pavement; a vivid picture of abjection: "Ela sofria? Acho que sim. Como uma galinha de pescoço mal cortado que corre espavorida pingando sangue. Só que a galinha foge – como se foge da dor – em cacarejos apavorados. E Macabéa lutava muda" (*A hora da estrela* 163) "Was she suffering? I think so. Like a hen with a half-severed neck running terrified dripping blood. Except the hen flees — as you flee pain — in panicked clucks. And Macabéa was struggling mute" (*The Hour of the Star* 101). Unfortunately, this is when Mardan moves away from examining metaphor in *A hora da estrela* so she can side with Marta Peixoto and disclose the violence the above example addresses as both abject and representative.

On the contrary, this fragment shows a simile and a metaphor for the manner of Macabéa's death. It is affectively powerful because it compares a human (Macabéa) to an animal (the hen), as Clarice overemphasizes the body and its impurities. Clarice Lispector masters a rhetoric of violence and cruel detachment in Rodrigo's narratorial struggle to

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[222] Following Julia Kristeva, Aarti S. Mardan says: "The abject refers to the human reaction—be it horror, vomit, or perspiration—to a potential breakdown in meaning caused by the inability to distinguish between self and other—. He continues: "The abject lies in the ambiguous space separating subject [and] object." (27)

[223] In Lacanian terminology, jouissance is understood as the type of desire that cannot be accepted by an interpolated subject and hence cannot be incorporated into a stable notion of self. It usually refers to different aspects of sexuality or other limit-experiences that may induce trauma.

showcase dividuality, and this forces the reader to confront horrific images that preclude an easy internalization by the passive synthesis of time, predicated on hardwired memories and a fixed notion of self via habituation. What opposes habituation is becoming married to empty time, which Lispector actively seeks because of the direct connection that becoming has with undisclosed bodily affects and her wildness at heart, paraphrasing the title of another of her novels. I proceed now to explain how affects and becoming interact.

The Affects of the Dividual

Despite the complexity of the subject matter, Baruch de Spinoza meant to propose life in dividuality to broach the subject of ethics. Rather than appeal to morality, he laid out an ontology with God as the formal cause of the universe while remaining connected to it by way of its creation. On the one hand, he introduces bodily affects and the feelings that ensue from them. At the same time, the manifold physical and mental abilities of the living could be capable of modulating the affects to gather "adequate ideas" (57) concerning one's life. If, in their adequacy, these affect-ideas[224] manage to take up the act of thinking, they may create events that increase a dividual's tenor of life. On the other hand, this relational, affective, and rational endeavor requires addressing inadequate affects that take hold of us with a thorough analysis of our never-exclusively reasonable desire. A dividual may then carry the intuition of belonging to a larger scheme of

[224] Gilles Deleuze used this term in the 1980s for his Vincennes courses on Spinoza. The end goal of using this term is to emphasize a monistic theory of mind: cognition cannot separate itself from affective states, however level-headed or strong-willed. See Varela's *The Embodied Mind* (1991) and Antonio R. Damasio's body of work, among others.

existence to which we are only partially privy. By creating the character of Macabéa, Lispector addresses dividuality at its most basic; that is, she showcases Macabéa experiencing feelings for which she knows no causes, emotions that overcome her all too powerfully, and a world around her that she does not know how to understand or how to prioritize information or why she should desire some things over others. Through her, Lispector places an intellectual white canvas on which she draws bodily affects and more persistent feelings for which she has no words or explanation. Because of this psychological fragility and physical frailty, she only reacts to what the world throws at her, never being able to take the initiative.

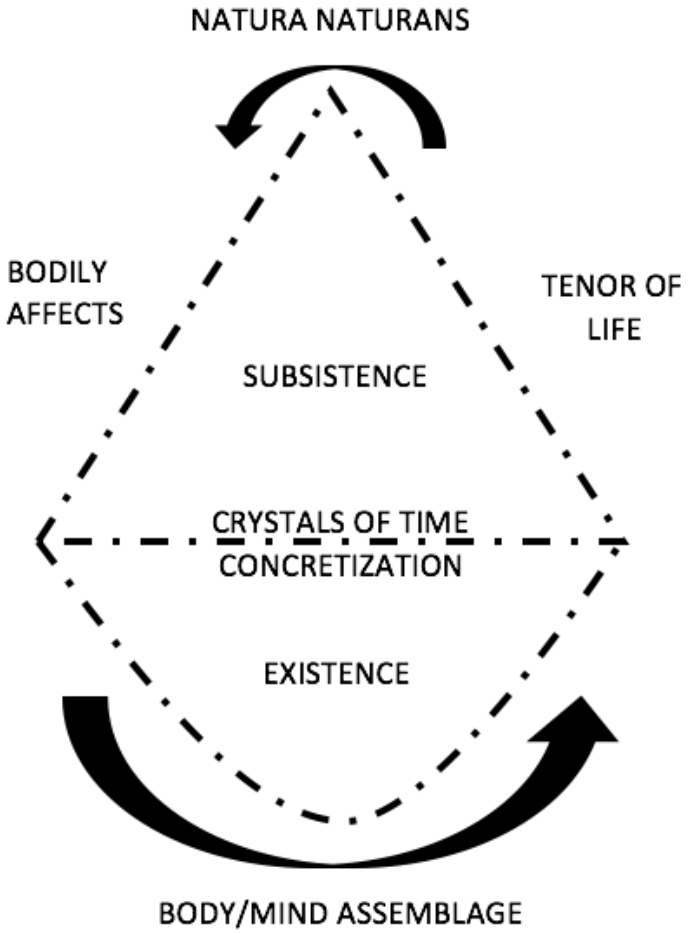

Figure 4: Dividual Process of Becoming

Becoming is at the heart of what subsists in Lispector's fiction. When I said that Lispector aims to connect empty time to active time, I meant that she does not want the forces of habit to effectuate the solidification process akin to selfhood, nor does she wish to epitomize the calm realist rhetoric of third-person narration, as made explicit with Rodrigo. Lispector wishes for her writing to jump off the page and activate the sensory-motor skills of the body, turning writing into a physical workout. Rhetorically again, the exertion of coming to being must be palpable, sensed. The thinking in her novels does not

settle but wavers in rhythmic ruminations and exultant meditations that seek only joy at the risk of dejection, danger at the expense of the comfort of a strong sense of self: "Eu escrevo como se fosse para salvar a vida de alguém. Provavelmente a minha própria vida. Viver é uma espécie de loucura que a morte faz. Vivam os mortos porque neles vivemos" (*Um sopro de vida* 8) (I write as if to save somebody's life. Probably my own. Life is a kind of madness that death makes. Long live the dead because we live in them) (*A Breath of Life* 28). The life she says she wants to save is not one with specific characteristics but the one that subsists underneath all the knowledge a dividual produces throughout one's lifetime. Her diabolic idea is to bypass bodily homeostasis through her writing, aiming to make the impersonal time of nature come together with unprocessed or unchecked thought processes, which is why Shellhorse relates her to literary vanguardism.

Nothing stays the same except for the patterns that the body-mind assemblage concocts as the result of an event or experiential phenomena: the passive synthesis of time belonging to habituation. I have categorized the repulsion from the evental region as a superject (a self-conscious gathering of thoughts). At the same time, we can regard bodily perceptions that partially determine our motion and intensities as objectiles or ejections.[225] The first results from the subject formation occurring on the horizontal line of the figure above. It is there where a point of view gets shaped and, with it, a sense of an I. To understand what the crystal of time encompasses, one should think about the image flashes that pass us by when we watch a film. The recording process must proceed

[225] I am following Alfred North Whitehead's terminology (ejectiles and superject) to address the dynamism and process occurring between the unconscious and self-consciousness (the relationality between virtual and actual, between division and participation/partition); in other words, his process ontology.

more slowly for the mind-body assemblage to capture most features. Light and pixels of information confuse themselves in an ungraspable becoming that rejects us. However, those flashes may come back if they relate to other signals that prompt their coming to the plane of organization, where they can solidify into a coherent image or narrative, as I specified with the notion of assemblage in Chapter 3. The workings out of memory and forgetting, and so the virtues of **fabulation**, require dividual attention: "If the human body has once been affected by two or more bodies at the same time, then when the mind subsequently imagines one of them, it will immediately recollect the others also" (Spinoza 46). What Spinoza refers to here concerning bodies is not the organism as an indivisible entity but **signals** or signs with signifying content. This association of signs concretizes around a positioning or viewpoint that automatically clouds difference under the banner of presence. Spinoza explains how these different associations are already political in essence and how they construct the superject, the residue of intermingled and vague signs upon a turbulent, coagulating narrative:

> For example, a soldier, having seen traces of horse in the sand, will immediately pass from the thought of a horse to the thought of a horseman and thought from that to the thought of war, and so on. But a farmer will pass from the thought of a horse to the thought of a plow, then to that of a field, and so on. And so, each one, according as has been accustomed to join and connect the images of things in this or that way, will pass from one thought to another (Spinoza 47)

This ideation on the part of the soldier and the farmer gives birth to different realities. A series of signposts such as the ones from the farmer and the soldier does not conform consciousness since the dividual interpreter, itself a consequence of such inventiveness, valorized some signs over others while including them as elements of a **concretization** that forms both a connection and a distribution of information bits, a collage of existence,

an event. The **superject** plays the role of the event's residual record. Likewise, previous eventualities or dramatizations also modulate and inform the valorization taking place and tell a point of view for each series since memory enters the dividual into processes of subjectivation. It is thus the event seen not only as a mere accident on the road, as in the case of Macabéa's death, but as the fluxion[226] of material aggregates and biosemiotics series[227] that combine to enter a singularity pool with degrees of intensity and in a neighboring evental region. At every instance, the information in each singularity carries an indelible history that can be fully programmable under certain circumstances and for specific entities (e.g., robots). Because of the virtual multiplicities[228] that anchor every dividual, their singularities are also imbricated in the wheel of processual dynamics that we earlier described as an eternal return. The dividual is constantly engaging with the possible.

Before making explicit the nature of Macabéa's encounters throughout the narrative, I would like to expound on the becoming imperceptible of Lispector's famous character with the help of Cory Stockwell. In his article about *A hora da estrela*, two terms reoccur, time and veil. Through both of these, this critic notices the inability of the

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226 Fluxion is a term Deleuze incorporates into his reading of Leibniz in *The Fold* (1983) to justify his account of historical becoming from an analogic perspective and sidestep Hegel. For a conversation on the Newtonian origins of fluxion and how Deleuze develops this reading of both Leibniz and the English scientist, see pp. 97-8, and 111-15.

227 A semiotic series of consciousness or self-consciousness (for they are not the same) can work under the umbrella of the real unconscious, but the discontinuous series for the creation of a living being belongs to the virtual, since there is no real unconscious without subjectivation, just as there is no life without an environment, or *Umwelt*.

228 For how Deleuze proves that the virtual is not only a matter of naturalistic speculation but is in-built into mathematics as well, see Nathan Widder's article "The Mathematics of Continuous Multiplicities: The Role of Riemann in Deleuze's Reading of Bergson" (2019).

reader to capture the essence of the main character since her simplicity requires a dramatization, which complicates the argument around Macabéa's worthlessness that Rodrigo S.M. hints at with aplomb. Stockwell proceeds by equating nothingness to the veil in the Heideggerian fashion of disclosure and how this purports endless representational masking or concealing. What interests me more about his analysis is the connection he emphasizes between time and death in the final scene:

> Aí Macabéa disse uma frase que nenhum dos transeuntes entendeu. Disse bem pronunciado e claro: — Quanto ao futuro.
> Terá tido ela saudade do futuro? Ouço a música antiga de palavras e palavras, sim, é assim. Nesta hora exata Macabéa sente um fundo enjôo de estômago e quase vomitou, queria vomitar o que não é corpo, vomitar algo luminoso. Estrela de mil pontas.
> O que é que estou vendo agora e que me assusta? Vejo que ela vomitou um pouco de sangue, vasto espasmo, enfim o âmago tocando no âmago: vitória!
> E então — então o súbito grito estertorado de uma gaivota, de repente a águia voraz erguendo para os altos ares a ovelha tenra, o macio gato estraçalhando um rato sujo e qualquer, a vida come a vida. (*A hora da estrela* 87)
>
> Then Macabéa said a phrase that none of the passersby understood. She said clearly and distinctly:
> — As for the future.
> Would she have longed for the future? I hear the ancient music of words and words, yes, that's it. At this very moment, Macabéa feels a deep nausea in her stomach and almost vomited, she wanted to vomit something that wasn't her body, to vomit something luminous—a thousand-pointed star.
> What am I seeing now[,] and that frightens me? I see that she vomited a little blood, vast spasm, essence at last touching essence: victory!
> And then — then the sudden rattling of a seagull, all at once the voracious eagle lifting to the high airs the tender lamb, the sleek cat mangling some dirty rat, life eats life. (*The Hour of the Star* 97)

The text, with a likely intertext to Nietzsche's analogy of eagles and lambs in *On the Genealogy of Morals (1887)*, points out the stalling of death here, but it is a deadening that briefly phases out the interjecting narrator in favor of an omniscient description of the animal realm. Stockwell wishes to talk about the crystallization of time

and how Macabéa can finally be singularized at that *instante-já*. This eternity in an instant can be perceived when Rodrigo moves from the making of the star —the moment of vomit/the moment of death— to a nonhuman life that disregards any actualization or concretization of empty time. This lapse in the narration provides this critic with the appropriate space to claim the singular for Macabéa:

> The veil creates an interior of sorts: a confinement, a delimitado, the briefest sliver of time or, in this case, space, a space that, by its very existence, continually puts off the imminent touching of presence and veil (of a present being and the veil that covers her). This hollow space be-tween body and veil is indeed empty, but it is a *pregnant emptiness* [italics are mine], the space in which one effectuates a passage beyond oneself (263)

The drama of Macabéa's passing attests to her miserly existence and imperceptibility.[229] As a result of her being marginalized by her peer, given up on by a doctor, and taken advantage of by a fortune-teller, among many other offenses, the possibility of achieving

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[229] I would not want to end this commentary about becoming and the literal hour of the star in the novella (the accidental death) without mention of it being a process of further disenfranchisement or disappearance from the dominant discourse. From this viewpoint, I would like to highlight how becoming-woman in Macabéa forms an integral part of this diminution for Clarice Lispector through the words of Rodrigo S.M.: "Um gosto suave, arrepiante, gélido e agudo como no amor. Seria esta a graça a que vós chamais de Deus? Sim? Se iria morrer, na morte passava de virgem a mulher. Não, não era morte pois não a quero para a moça: só um atropelamento que não significava sequer desastre. Seu esforço de viver parecia uma coisa que, se nunca experimentara, virgem que era, ao menos intuíra, pois só agora entendia que mulher nasce mulher desde o primeiro vagido. O destino de uma mulher é ser mulher. Intuíra o instante quase dolorido e esfuziante do desmaio do amor. Sim, doloroso reflorescimento tão difícil que ela empregava nele o corpo e a outra coisa que vós chamais de alma e que eu chamo — o quê?" (*A hora da estrela* 87) (A smooth, chilling, freezing and acute taste as in making love. Could this be the grace that you call God? Yes? If she was going to die, in death she would go from virginity to womanhood. No, it wasn't death because I don't want that for the girl: just a collision that didn't even mean a disaster. Her effort to live seemed like something that, if she'd never felt it, virgin that she was, she nevertheless intuited, because only now was she understanding that a woman is born a woman from the very first cry. A woman's destiny is to be a woman. She had intuited the almost painful and whizzing moment of love. Yes, painful and such a difficult reflowering that she used for it her body and the other thing you call a soul and I call — what?) (*The Hour of the Star* 96-97)

selfhood on the part of Macabéa always remains an illusion.[230] She resists in her pure dividual state, connecting yet detached, finally with an eye on the future at the time of death yet pregnant with the virtual that encompasses the dividual. In a sense, Macabéa can be explained as a character that lays bare the virtual aspect of living in plain becoming. She remains a question to be answered and an effigy to her torturers who, not unlike Rodrigo S.M., discard her for her irrelevancy to the competitive milieu of neoliberal valorization and self-entrepreneurship.

The importance of the *instante-já* in Lispector's posthumous narrative has also been brought to our attention by critic Fernanda Negrete. Rather than follow philosopher Martin Heidegger or existentialist terminology, this professor from the University of Buffalo makes her analysis of Lispector's body of work based on Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of impersonality and its aesthetic nexus. Starting with the fictional encounter between a cockroach and a bourgeois woman in Rio de Janeiro from the novel *A paixão Segundo G.H.* (*The Passion According to G.H.*), she proposes a series of examples that highlight Lispector's approach to Duns Scotus's univocity of being:

> This plane of life beyond the "human montage" involves a very specific logic, whose nature, I show, is fundamentally relational, although it is a rare relation that requires boundaries between self and other to dissolve. I locate the stakes of this relation in a set of peculiar gestures in Lispector's works cannibalism, handholding between writer and reader, breastfeeding, the cry ("grito")[,] and its associated register of birth/birthing. By engaging with these gestures that emphasize the univocity of being, I propose that the

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230 Shellhorse argues Macabéa's differently, albeit not oppositely: "Lispector constructs a whole series connected to forging self-reflexive mediations that create further connections as opposed to imposing representations and judgments on the subaltern Macabéa: void, meditation, means, middle, parenthesis—Lispector's textual membrane marks all forms and affects as media, means of building new relations with the undecidable, untimely figure of the subaltern" (*Anti-literature* 38). The textual multiplicity of the text and the interplay of signifiers also highlight Macabéa's subsumption amid the narration.

> feminine and natal mode of reading and writing beyond knowledge and meaning in Lispector constitutes the time of the event that Lispector and Deleuze designate as impersonal life ("Approaching Impersonal Life" 2)

The concept of the dividual that I take up in Chapters 3 and 4 includes this impersonality that births the event I have been theorizing. Accordingly, Fernanda Negrete's examples from Lispector's narratives could serve as avatars for one of my main interests in this chapter: to understand encounters as how dividuals enter subjection/subjectivation through the evental region, defined as the subjective space where encounters, contradictions, and conflict resolution occur, otherwise called disjunctive synthesis by Deleuze. This phenomenon's most critical metanarrative samples concerning *A hora da estrela* reflect the interplay between the narrator, Rodrigo S.M., and the reader. What transpires from this communication beyond the page is the violence of a struggling ego, the narrator's, whose affective force or intensity allows the reader to establish a neat distinction between a character driven by a need to represent Macabéa, Rodrigo S.M., and the innocence of Macabéa, on the other. However, due to self-hatred and a perceived inability to do justice to his main character, Rodrigo showcases his failure to depict "non-oppositional modes of relation that blur the ego-sustaining distinction between bodies and entities" ("Approaching Impersonal Life" 5). Ironically, this narratorial defeat fuels Macabéa's impersonal ethos, opening the narrative to the multiplicity of desire and life forms. I would then argue that the reason why Lispector's work has been read from the point of view of violence (Peixoto) as well as from one of creation and experimentation

(Negrete, Shellhorse) has its basis on two different strands of her narrative,[231] which I will promptly discuss.

On the one hand, and by way of *A hora da estrela*, Rodrigo S.M. typifies in his relation to Macabéa the oppositional forces latent to the civilizing process and civilization in general from a eugenicist or Neo-Malthusian perspective[232] and in favor of a utilitarian logic. Conversely, Macabéa's interactions with the other characters teeter and decompose because of the different ways in which they imagine time. From Olímpico to Glória, the fortune-teller, and even the narrator, they all speak of their projects, wishes for the future, resentment of others, or discontent with their past. Until she is given a reading of her future, Macabéa is born with every instante-já and extradiegetic aside from the narrator. The prose that Lispector constructs to singularize Macabéa bypasses character development in favor of a time that is constantly born into actuality. This is what both Deleuze and Negrete, by way of the former, call the time of the event. This incipient present, as I am prefiguring, couples Macabéa's obliviousness in the face of her

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231 The explanation that follows, I believe, also incorporates a rationale for why Clarice Lispector's work has been analyzed from both a Lacanian and a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective since the former would foreground the oppositional forces between the characters or explore the characters' relationship to themselves. At the same time, Gilles Deleuze advocates for a pre-personal and life-centered approach to literature that stresses stylistic craftsmanship. This dual approach (one of violence versus one operating on the medium itself) can be extrapolated outside literature. I agree with the late Spanish sculptor Jorge Oteiza, who maintained two main tendencies to understanding creation: one where the author seeks to poke the audience or another where the medium transforms to bring paradigmatic novelty to the artistic endeavor. These two can conflate, but the latter aims to be ethical and educative. For more on the matter, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtMWxIW0n5M&ab_channel=JMSuarez

232 Chelsea Follett defines this new version of English economist Thomas Robert Malthus's theory thus in her Cato Institute article "Neo-Malthusianism and Coercive Population Control in China and India: Overpopulation Concerns Often Result in Coercion" (July 2020): "Neo-Malthusianism, defined as a fear that a large population size could lead to a humanitarian and ecological disaster and that combating so-called overpopulation is thus an urgent problem—has real-world consequences. The belief has often resulted in support for coercive policies." (n/a)

subjective processes, on one end, and the dynamic struggle that Rodrigo exercises between being a faithful narrator and interjecting his voice and opinionated positionality in the story. This back-and-forth between narrator and narratee warrants a discussion on a dividual's relationality and temporality.

Encounters as Subjectivation

Encounters are occurrences stemming from semiotic processes of cognition, either from dividuals with the environment, including other dividuals, or from a dividual with its parts. Subjectivation occurs at a pre-subjective level as a micropolitical construction of desire involving bodily affects, or it can also be directed by powerful entities [the powers that be] driving societies in a specific direction, known then as subjection. In the evental region,[233] the space where encounters and subjectivation coalesce around an event, encounters disclose quanta of relationality, defined as the amalgam of perceptions in the midst of assembling by an affective and intellective process. The intensity of the encounter modifies the trajectory of the significant chains that pertain to it. First, however, this **line of flight** must come to grips with the habituation that solidifies

[233] As Deleuze and Guattari describe in their last publication, the event is consistent but does not remain fixed symbolically or even in the imaginary, as Lacan would say. The event recovers the body for itself and in movement, which adumbrates its possibility for joyful encounters and connections among said bodies: "The event is not the state of affairs. It is actualized in a state of affairs, in a body, in a lived, but it has a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization: in contrast with the state of affairs, it neither begins nor ends but has gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency. It is the virtual that is distinct from the actual, but a virtual that is no longer chaotic, that has become consistent or real on the plane of immanence that wrests it from the chaos—it is a virtual that is real without being actual, ideal without being abstract. The event might seem to be transcendent because it surveys the state of affairs, but it is pure immanence that gives it the capacity to survey itself by itself and on the plane. What is transcendent, transdescendent, is the state of affairs in which the event is actualized." (*What is Philosophy?* 302)

subjectivation. The three steps of **ejection-subjectivation-superject**, which we can visualize as the combinatory result of the forces of subsistence and existence, added to the power of habit that glues them into a particular fold[234] or point of view, form the singularity, which I chose to represent as a string with a black blotch of distinction in the figure on the left below:

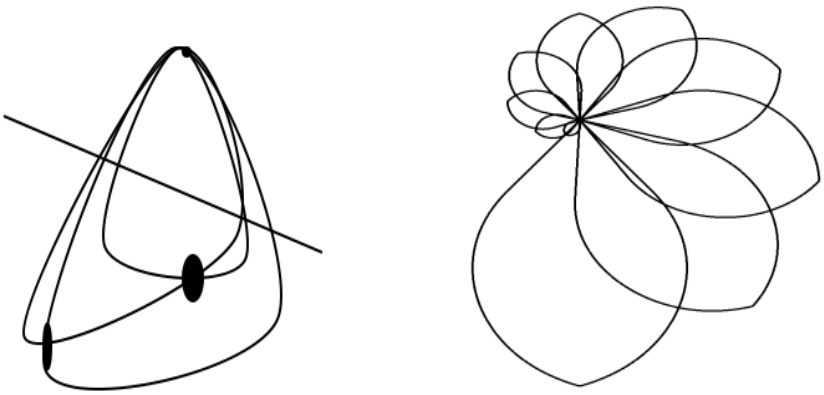

Figure 5: Dividual Inflexion and Encounters/Becoming Imperceptible

The evental encounter modifies the nature of the trajectory, as the reader assesses most powerfully right after Macabéa meets the fortune-teller. This meeting between them speeds up Macabéa's entropic relationship to the groundless ground[235] that lies in the

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234 I equate Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's folds to Benoit Mandelbrot's fractalizations, because rather than a forgetting of the event, they include themselves in the layer of habituation as the hardware of the organism. Even if they were never taken up by the software and its semiosis, they still inform a self in crisis, teetering between the multiplicity of the virtual and the narcissistic compulsion of the ego.

235 In *Difference and Repetition,* Gilles Deleuze sets up his celebrated inverted Platonism, by which the ideal forms are to be found in the virtual. Scientists from different backgrounds attempt to either actualize this virtual of incomplete knowledge using logic and functions or, as it has

virtual, a synthesis of the molecular elements within a body and the habits and encounters it receives from the environment. The perpendicular linear line of habit cutting across semiotic strings needs representation to come to life. While concepts or affect ideas (experience-based learning) help create a plane of representative organization, they are concerned with something other than the coming to being of the dividual. In other words, the continuous line of habituation safeguards against disappearance and inexistence. Thus, this rigid line of the actual contains every apparatus that codes the language of the living and maps the territory for their range of action. In the information age era, it is safe to regard this rigidifying process as primarily **digital**[236] since this is the direction the economy has taken under control societies. In her writing, Lispector confronts habit as an unconscious and deadening element concerning subjectivation. She obstinately recreates its artificiality through Rodrigo's metacommentary or her stream of consciousness in *Água viva* and *Um sopro de vida*.

She differs from Saer's conception of dividuality in the confessional and intimacy aspects of her writing style. Lispector draws the reader in with a dramatic lexicon and paratactic structure. At the same time, Saer's dispassionate narrator worries about the best way to deal with the environment, hence his orientation to detail and long-winded descriptions of the dividual's encounters and challenges. Lispector's is a stereotypically

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been done in some regions of mathematics, explain the real unconscious that does not imply experiential semiotics but a topological (ideational) account of reality (e.g., Georg Cantor's set theory).

[236] The battle waged in physics between discreetness and continuity has yet to be resolved. Still, the former allows the capitalist machine to keep in check the unpredictable sways of the market. Digitality in the information age is the prominent actor behind capital's decoded flows and technical acceleration.

feminine approach insofar as she enhances awareness of one's bodily affects, as made explicit through Macabéa. Saer's dividual seeks freedom in strategizing the best way to modulate his belonging to the collective with his necessity for autonomy. In contrast, Lispector uses characters to demonstrate her disaffection with a present that passes without eventfulness.

Throughout the narrative, Macabéa encounters five different people: her boss Raimundo Silveira; her fleeting boyfriend, Olímpico; her female friend Glória; the doctor that diagnoses her; and the fortune-teller Madame Carlota. Invariably, all of these encounters sadden her or decrease her power to act, except for the one that gives her hope in the future, the last one with the fortune-teller. The negative emotions she experiences because of these meetings make her highly susceptible to mood swings and general instability, but all comes to a head when she stops living in the moment. The instance when the regime of active time gets activated is also the one in that Rodrigo S.M. chooses to have her murdered. Even if the narrator artificially stages the death, it can still be surmised that if the intensity of an encounter surpasses the limit that the actual can hold within its representative boundaries, the dividual singularity (Macabéa) will accelerate toward the virtual, producing a traumatic event of unknown consequences (death in Macabéa's case).

When I introduced the dividual in the previous chapter, I did so concerning the main character from the novel *El entenado* (1983). I then claimed that dividuality had to do with the coming in and out of assemblages [agencements], known as signifying chains that contribute to either a mechanism of power or as distinct semiotic elements configuring an event. A dividual participates in them, yet what may change are the

combinatory elements of the assemblage that the dividual links up to. I also mentioned how the cannibals knew instinctively that they were in relation with their environment, but how life under capitalism strengthens the value of the individual while dismissing the remaining pre-individual waves of intensity the dividual holds within. As an apparatus of capture, capital flattens out the evental region[237] carved up by becoming and continues the process of normativity akin to subjectivation. Lispector in *Água viva* and *Um sopro de vida* desperately seeks ample space for her individuations in the evental region. Conversely, in *A hora da estrela*, she engineers a crescendo of explosions leading up to Macabéa's death to carve up the most significant space possible or, in other words, the most intense event she can harness through writing.

On the other hand, the anarcho-relational line of becoming or line of flight determines difference as the precursor to the growth and withering of the living. As shown in Figure 5 above to the right, the search for adequate knowledge of positive freedom leans toward the disappearance of being in favor of becoming. While introjection and experiential awareness,[238] and hence subjectivation, may be unavoidable for this quest, a dividual practice may instigate a becoming-to-being ratio that favors the unconscious becoming over being, hooked as this latter is to attribution (selfhood) and the proper (common sense). In Chapter 3, Saer's cabin boy grew in dividual stature over

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237 I defined evental region earlier as the space of encounters and subjectivation coalescing around an event.

238 I explained these terms in Chapter 3, but I define them again here. Introjection refers to the unconscious adoption of ideas and attitudes, while experiential awareness paves the way for becoming conscious of this introjection. Combined, both these features attend to attention in a careful way that spreads beyond a self's point of view and into the multiplicity that structures reality.

time because he could fence off negativity and power structures and build autonomy or distance from them. In Chapter 4, Macabéa, as a dividual, cannot develop the necessary defenses to the cruelty of her material conditions. However, she is an excellent example of how becoming is never a becoming-major but an alignment with the eternal passing of difference at every infinitesimal instance that we wish to contain, as the sciences and religion usefully do, to mention a secular and a non-secular power structure. Any reader of *A hora da estrela* remembers the hour of Macabéa's death. Lispector finds intimacy with the character because everyone around Macabéa tells her how she should be while she can only straightforwardly listen to herself. It is easy to perceive her becoming imperceptible because she cannot explain to herself what she feels, and the resentment and sad affects around her —present in all the other characters— aim to bring her down to their habituation to a less-than-perfect world. Lispector's Macabéa pushes the idea in *A hora da estrela* that a dividual life will never be condoned or entirely accepted and forces will want to grab and exploit what is perceived as a weakness.

Macabéa lives in dividuation,[239] which means that she pairs life to death and renewal, and her death ultimately stands for a rejection of selfhood. *A hora da estrela* constitutes a study in dividuality, and Rodrigo S.M. chooses to make her a scapegoat because she embodies a life against representation, hence her sacrifice as an icon of dividuality. Nowhere else in the novella do the parenthetical explosions appear as often

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[239] Dividuation, as we saw in the previous chapter, is extremely more common for the Colastiné Indians since they do not attempt to quash their anxiety with a proliferation of apparatuses or with constant actualizations or updates. Still, they use the cannibal ritual as a bulwark against further compartmentalizing the body and its urges. Yet, at the same time, this anxiety builds up because of their fear of being forgotten. In that sense, it is hard to miss the irony of disappearance becoming an aesthetics; see Virilio's *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (1980).

as when she leaves the fortune-teller place of business, and it is then that her sacralization commences in a passage that mirrors a feminine version of the Passion of Christ:

> Macabéa, Ave-Maria, cheia de graça, terra serena da promissão, terra do perdão, tem que chegar o tempo, ora pro nóbis, e eu me uso como forma de conhecimento. Eu te conheço até o osso por intermédio de uma encantação que vem de mim para ti. Espraiar-se selvagemente e no entanto atrás de tudo pulsa uma geometria inexível. Macabéa lembrou-se do cais do porto. O cais chegava ao coração de sua vida.
> Macabéa pedir perdão? Porque sempre se pede. Por quê? Resposta: é assim porque assim é. Sempre foi? Sempre será. E se não foi? Mas eu estou dizendo que é. Pois.
> Via-se perfeitamente que estava viva pelo piscar constante dos olhos grandes, pelo peito magro que se levantava e abaixava em respiração talvez difícil. Mas quem sabe se ela não estaria precisando de morrer? Pois há momentos em que a pessoa está precisando de uma pequena mortezinha e sem nem ao menos saber. Quanto a mim, substituo o ato da morte por um seu símbolo. Símbolo este que pode se resumir num profundo beijo mas não na parede áspera e sim boca a boca na agonia do prazer que é morte. Eu, que simbolicamente morro várias vezes só para experimentar a ressurreição. (*A hora da estrela* 128-9)

> Macabéa, Hail Mary, full of grace, serene promised land, land of forgiveness, the time must come, ora pro nobis, and I use myself as a form of knowledge. I know you to the bone through an incantation that comes from me to you. To scatter oneself wildly and yet behind everything pulses an inflexible geometry. Macabéa remembered the docks. The docks went to the heart of her life. Macabéa asks for forgiveness? Because one always does. For what? Answer: that's the way it is because that's the way it is. Was that the way it always was? It always will be. And if it wasn't? But I'm telling you it is. So then.
> You could tell perfectly that she was alive from the constant blinking of her big eyes, from the thin chest that was rising and falling in perhaps difficult breathing. But who can tell if she wasn't needing to die? Because there are times when a person needs a little bitty death and doesn't even know it. As for me, I substitute the act of death for a symbol of it. A symbol that can be summed up in a deep kiss but not on a rough wall but mouth-to-mouth in the agony of pleasure that is death. I, who symbolically die several times just to experience the resurrection.
> (*The Hour of the Star* 100-1)

Here, a line of escape trespassed the more rigid plane of consistency (or habituation) that slows down and represents forces to reach a **body without organs**,[240] a plane of pure immanence.[241] In other words, Macabéa cannot integrate the news about her good fortune into an understanding of reality. This news shifts Macabéa's diagrammatic and behavioral patterns of habit to such an extent that she cannot conceive or incorporate this novelty into her thought process. Macabéa's death is staged after she has been given a future, while prior, she would only experience time in succession, expressing herself only in reaction to events and never leading them. After the car accident and long narration of the death event, her voice is muffled, and her testimony is rendered void. Instead, the narration proceeds to recount the becoming of the narrator. Rodrigo then claims —and at this point, Rodrigo's voice seems to break down and become indistinguishable from Clarice's now that the male narrator has served the purpose of toxically showing Macabéa love and hatred in equal measure— that his soon-to-follow

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[240] For Deleuze and Guattari, the body is a machine. Since organs provide the body with a plane of organization, the image of thought for a body without organs pertains to this aesthetics of imperceptibility and pure becoming, which in information theory would be like entering the singularity of a black hole and being spaghettified. As is well-known, though, they borrowed the term from schizophrenic French theater director Antonin Artaud.

[241] This plane of immanence posits the degree zero of knowledge, at which point the affect-ideas, themselves the cause and result of the event's superject, draw on the intuitive canvas of the living. In other words, empty time, or a time without subjective or thought processes, overcome and dissipate the time of recollection or active time. All that subsists is becoming without being. Deleuze accurately conceptualizes what Lispector does to Macabéa, singularizing her at the same time as she depersonalizes her: "A life is everywhere, in all the moments that a given living subject goes through and that are measured by given lived objects: an immanent life carrying with it the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects. This indefinite life does not itself have moments, close as they may be one to another, but only between-times, between-moments; it doesn't just come about or come after but offers the immensity of an empty time where one sees the event yet to come and already happened, in the absolute of an immediate consciousness." (*Pure Immanence* 29)

death, Rodrigo's, is symbolic, and that it is necessary to die and resuscitate to be healthy in dividuality. By way of Rodrigo, Lispector may be channeling Sigmund Freud (the pleasure principle and the death drive) and Michel Foucault's conceptualization and use of pleasure throughout history and its connection to sexuality, and how pleasure can sever the attachment to selfhood and the passive synthesis of time.[242]

Continuing with my analysis of desire, I claim that intensive reactions to one's body transformations and external factors, such as Macabéa's parenthetic explosions, come to a head in the evental region established between habit (the rigid segmentation of the social milieu) and the spatiotemporal discursivity akin to the process of subjectivation (active synthesis of time). This can be seen throughout the novel with the parenthetic explosions, the neurotic asides of Rodrigo S.M. trying to be faithful and truthful to Macabéa, and then the moments when Rodrigo S.M. wants to recover the persona and the self that he has in the world outside the writing, that is, a middle-class male living in Rio de Janeiro. The tension between writing about Macabéa's dividuality and the effort this costs him perturbs Rodrigo's life's habitual actions, so he decides to dispose of her and return to the comfort of his male persona. As is intuitively known, habit accommodates processes of subjectivation so they fold into a territory specified by the arrangement that

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[242] Incidentally, this is why pleasure can be perceived as a counter-effectuation of the event and encamped in the actual and, thus, the field of sense-making (extensive plane). In contrast, desire considers the virtual and its pre-individual and pre-personal forces. For example, a pleasurable accident can bring about bodily decomposition or even death. However, Michel Foucault's interests lie in using pleasure to reterritorialize desire, that is, to create a new plane of organization (e.g., ayahuasca for healing, recreational, or religious purposes). See also footnote 123, where I claim that the passive synthesis reveals the creation of habit and a self while the active one promotes meaning-making through a playful semiotic series that motions temporality.

the passive synthesis of time predisposes.[243] Different passages from the novella contrast the sarcastic yet tortured voice of the narrator, who keeps detaching from Macabéa, only to approach her again with renewed energy until their eventual parting. Rodrigo's pattern is to value her dividuality while disparaging her for her incompetence and lack of knowledge about the world, which is the source of his cruelty and powerlessness to walk the talk about his creation. His holding back reminds the reader that he cannot avoid the gender, race, and class structures undergirding his writerly encounter with Macabéa. In the following pages, I will elucidate what distinguishes minor encounters during processes of subjectivation from major ones, like the parenthetic explosions that the narrator foregrounds.

At this point of the narration and exposure to dividual theory, expounding on a vision for Macabéa's encounters in the evental region becomes necessary. In Figure 5, the encounter appears as a more prominent singularity because it takes up space-time; it gathers around a neighborhood or constellation of dynamic semiotic series.[244] As such, these break-flow chains come from material aggregates, belonging to the dividual, and combine to co-construct the event. Indeed, starting from the idea that cells also think and compose clusters, conforming the intellective part of the whole as a material organ, the dividual dominates the material aggregates of which it is part, yet is also affected by them

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[243] There should be no disregard for that encounters occur with every semiotic series. The actual/virtual distinction survives because the sensuous input that bodies receive is limited, as are the apperceptions that reach the monads that co-construct subjectivation. The so-called bifurcation of nature develops similar, if not equivalent, distinctions to the actual-virtual or the analog-digital from the computation.

[244] These series are distinguishable from semiology studies. The end point is not the humanly written signifiers, but the totality of percepts that appear to our concept of sense both in an intellective and sensorial capacity.

and is hence equally dominated. In the case of Macabéa, because of her innocence and emotional inexperience, her somatic experiences alarm her and overwhelm her so much that the intellective remains tenuous, if not altogether missing. These extensive, organic lines pass by two main filters before they even reach the site of the encounter (the actual possible): the virtual and the actual. In the first of them, the singularity both receives and produces the physiological information that will cause an organism to be affected. The virtual singularity supports and hosts the affect ideas from the prior event. In such a manner, the "incorporeal quasi-cause" (*Logic of Sense* 144) launches the affective capacity back into the sensory-motor process and its morphogenesis. The discontinuous lines[245] that construct encounters and invent forms of life connect the sensorial to the

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[245] Deleuze explains what it means to be crisscrossed by lines, whether continuous or discontinuous: "Whether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines and these lines are very varied in nature. The first kind of line which forms us is segmentary - of rigid segmentarity (or rather, there· are already many lines of this sort): family - profession; job - holiday; family - and then school - and then the army - and then the factory - and then retirement. And each time, from one segment to the next, they speak to us, saying: ' Now you're not a baby any more'; and at school, 'You're riot at home now'; and in the army, 'You're not at school now' ... In short, all kinds of clearly defined segments, in all kinds of directions, which cut us up in all senses, packets of segmentarized lines. At the same time, we have lines of segmentarity which are much more supple, as it were molecular. It's not that they are more intimate or personal - they run through societies and groups as much as individuals. They trace out little modifications, they make detours, they sketch out rises and falls but they are no less precise for all this, they even direct irreversible processes. But rather than molar lines with segments, they are molecular fluxes with thresholds or quanta. A threshold is crossed, which does not necessarily coincide with a segment of more visible lines. Many things happen on this second kind of line - becomings, micro-becomings, which don't even have the same rhythm as our 'history'. This is why family histories, registrations, commemorations are so unpleasant, whilst our true changes take place elsewhere - another politics, another time, another individuation. A profession is a rigid segment, but also what happens beneath it, the connections, the attractions, and repulsions, which do not coincide with the segments, the forms of madness which are secret, but which nevertheless relate to the public authorities: for example, being a teacher, or a judge, a barrister, an accountant, a cleaning lady? At the same time, again, there is a third kind of line, which is even more strange: as if something carried us away, across our segments, but also across our thresholds, towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent. This line is simple, abstract, and yet is the most complex of all, the most tortuous: it is the line of gravity or velocity, the line of flight and of the greatest gradient." (*Dialogues* II 124-5)

intellective. Macabéa, as I have been disclosing, cannot make this connection between affects and thought processes, which leaves her vulnerable to negative encounters, whether it be for lack of understanding of bodily processes or because she does not understand what motivates her or the people around her to act or even live.

As for the actual, home to the synthetic apparatus of capture and control of cognitive biomass, it exists as a totalizing process sparked mainly by the science of information[246] that birthed the dividual and the societies of control. To fight against it or simply condemn the weaponization of media towards the living, a dividual may endeavor to fight against the wars waged on our bodies and minds since those create, at every instance, the docile subjects that encroach life and diminish its inherent liveliness. The dividual seeking positive freedom may fight for an event that does not reduce its con-division[247] to the "forming and reforming across the metastable skein of the bio-informatic ecosystem" (Galloway 254). What differentiates information from noise (bound to dividuality) is that the former entails communication or an interpellation of a subject in the social milieu. In contrast, noise's energy starts with the analogic, animistic world that civilization seeks to master and that Macabéa exemplifies.

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[246] John Archibald Wheeler's quantum motto (it from bit) announced an informational unconscious that affects the former Lacanian symbolic more than the processual semiotics of C.S. Peirce. Furthermore, the digitation of humanity obfuscates the relationship between nation-state languages and spirituality, thus also undermining the belief in disciplinary societies.

[247] Alexander Galloway (*Laruelle: Against the Digital*, 2014) very much agrees with Gerald Raunig's dividual, even if he does so while using Heideggerian terminology: "Being in the world means being in a condition of division and relation. And hence being requires the recognition of a fundamental alienation" (Galloway 59). It is worth mentioning that the late Heidegger does defend the ontological relation of the living. For more on the subject, see Andrew Mitchell's *The Fourfold* (2015).

As stated earlier, the science of information seeks to master beings' becoming by creating parameters and devices that elicit discreet numbers, a range in a spectrum, or a personological characteristic to define and frame dividuality. Lispector's Macabéa, in contrast, hears the noise of the world as if she moved and passed through frequencies in the radio she listens to. Even when she does pick up bits of information, like Charlemagne being called Carolus in his homeland (*A hora da estrela* par. 121), it provides no relevance or connection to her contextual situation, nor does she realize that. Noise and Macabéa come together as a consequence of the latter's foolishness.

Abducting the Outside[248]

A singularity's time crystal cannot be described in plain terms, so artists create different media to conceptualize, visualize, or be affected by an event. In Lispector's *A hora da estrela*, the two main characters illuminate all syntheses of time (passive, active, and empty time). Rodrigo, in his struggle to write, showcases the strain of creation. When he establishes a rapport with the reader, he fears giving testimony and a voice to the subaltern, which would acculturate Macabéa rather than maintaining ideological distancing. At the same time, he really attends to those minor or significant events that configure Macabéa's life. By fighting his bourgeois persona, he narrates memorable moments like the cinematic aftermath of the fortune-telling scene. The conversation he has with the reader following the accident freezes the passing of time, which is what

[248] The Outside appears in the writings of Michel Foucault and Maurice Blanchot, and *Foucault / Blanchot: The Thought from Outside* (1989) summarizes the positions of both authors for what Deleuze would regard as the unknown development of the virtual.

crystallization does, couple the virtual and the actual so that time becomes impregnated with the durative [durée] narration of dividual death in this case:

> A nordestina não acreditava na morte, como eu já disse, pensava que não – pois não é que estava viva? Esquecera os nomes da mãe e do pai, nunca mencionados pela tia. (Com excesso de desenvoltura estou usando a palavra escrita e isso estremece em mim que fico com medo de me afastar da Ordem e cair no abismo povoado de gritos: o Inferno da liberdade. Mas continuarei.) (A hora da estrela 125)
>
> The northeastern girl didn't believe in death, as I've said, she didn't think — since wasn't she alive? She'd forgotten her father's and mother's names, which her aunt had never mentioned. (With excessive casualness I'm using the written word and that trembles inside me who fears moving away from the Order and falling into the abyss populated with screams: the Hell of liberty. But let me go on.) (*The Hour of the Star* 48)

Rodrigo's rhetoric turns this coming from the metacommentary on the narration to doing the narrating and vice versa throughout the story into a non-linear, rhythmic, and repetitive pattern [ritornello] that pits active time, or the metacommentary, to the realism of the story, the process of habituation. This tension between the active and passive time, transcribed into writing, constitutes the making of the time crystal since Macabéa's death proceeds from a brutal yet plain fact to an exegesis of Macabéa's singularity and how this affects the novella's justification for existing. As for Macabéa herself, she is the flip side of Rodrigo in that she does not have a set of memories or emotional history that could serve as a bulwark against disappearance (passive time), nor can she think with temporality in mind like Rodrigo does (active time). Her cognitive ability appears compromised, placing her at a vantage point to examine the human species from an outsider's point of view, wherein time negotiates its passing organically and irrespective of consciousness.

Only in the evental region, as actualized and observable, can an aware dividual sense its fleeting instantiation. Like two drops of water, self-sameness is the byproduct of a thought exercise in search of regular patterns. Information theory,[249] or biosemiotics to be more precise, leads to habituation, just as experiencing dissonance concerning habit establishes a rapport with the cauldron of life existing in the molecular. Concretization entails encountering forces at a more stratified level than the molecular. The affect ideas born of the virtual, along with their dominated subjects and aggregate materials, are conditioned by the network flow. This logic of accessibility and control condenses and monitors the virtual aspects of living and their actualization, intending to process living beings. What escapes the normativity of information flow would be entropy[250] for information technology, rather than the becoming of dividuals. In short, entropy, as the uncertainty in communication theory, can be considered the remainder of the unfolded

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[249] Dividuals can think otherwise at every instance where time plays out its actualizations. However, at the molar level, information theory creates flows with breaks and breaks where there is a flow. It is an element of disjunction that needs to be incorporated into the bundle of affects. In doing so, though, the bundle morphs and jumpstarts its becoming. Does this resetting lead to a habituating equilibrium, or does it protect the affective force that the dividual contains? In this collective ring, every actualization resides, and so does the battle of the future. In this context, it is hardly surprising that cybernetics has taken over the mission of channeling dividuals' desires.

[250] Entropy can easily be misappropriated and used without full attention to its application to different sciences, so I will make clear that the current discussion refers to communication and the modulation of subjectivity through a technical apparatus that oversees this century and part of the previous one. For this chapter, I will use entropy as John R. Pierce (*An Introduction to Information Theory: Symbols, Signals and Noise*, 1980) conceives it: "Both the entropy of statistical mechanics and that of communication theory can be described in terms of uncertainty, in similar mathematical terms (. . .) Several physicists and mathematicians have been anxious to show that communication theory and its entropy are critical in connection with statistical mechanics. This is still a confused and confusing matter. The confusion is sometimes aggravated when more than one meaning of information creeps into a discussion. Thus, information is sometimes associated with the idea of knowledge through its popular use rather than with uncertainty and the resolution of uncertainty [bold is also mine], as it is in communication theory." (73-4)

singularity once it has passed through two filters that recall Spinoza: the relation of the body to itself and the relation of this same conceptual whole with the environment. Alternatively, the result of those semiotic filters in interplay: the genetic and the communicational. The ejection and superject mentioned earlier are the first and last stages of a recursive method of different/ciation[251] occurring in dividuals. Genetically, Macabéa could be called less-abled, but also a white canvas with little to no education. This puts her at nutritional risk but also unskilled, making her options for material survival unlikely, as the story corroborates. Her malnutrition contributes to a differentiation phase (genetic) that decreases her tenor of life. At the same time, her stupidity makes differenciation (communicational) bound to emotional explosions that she ignores because she cannot understand, which precipitates her doom. To better visualize this process, I refer to yet another figure reminiscent of that of black holes:

[251] Differentiation occurs in the microscopic world of quanta and qualia. In contrast, differenciation consists in establishing firm boundaries between properties and species so that a discrete world of taxonomies and information can be possible.

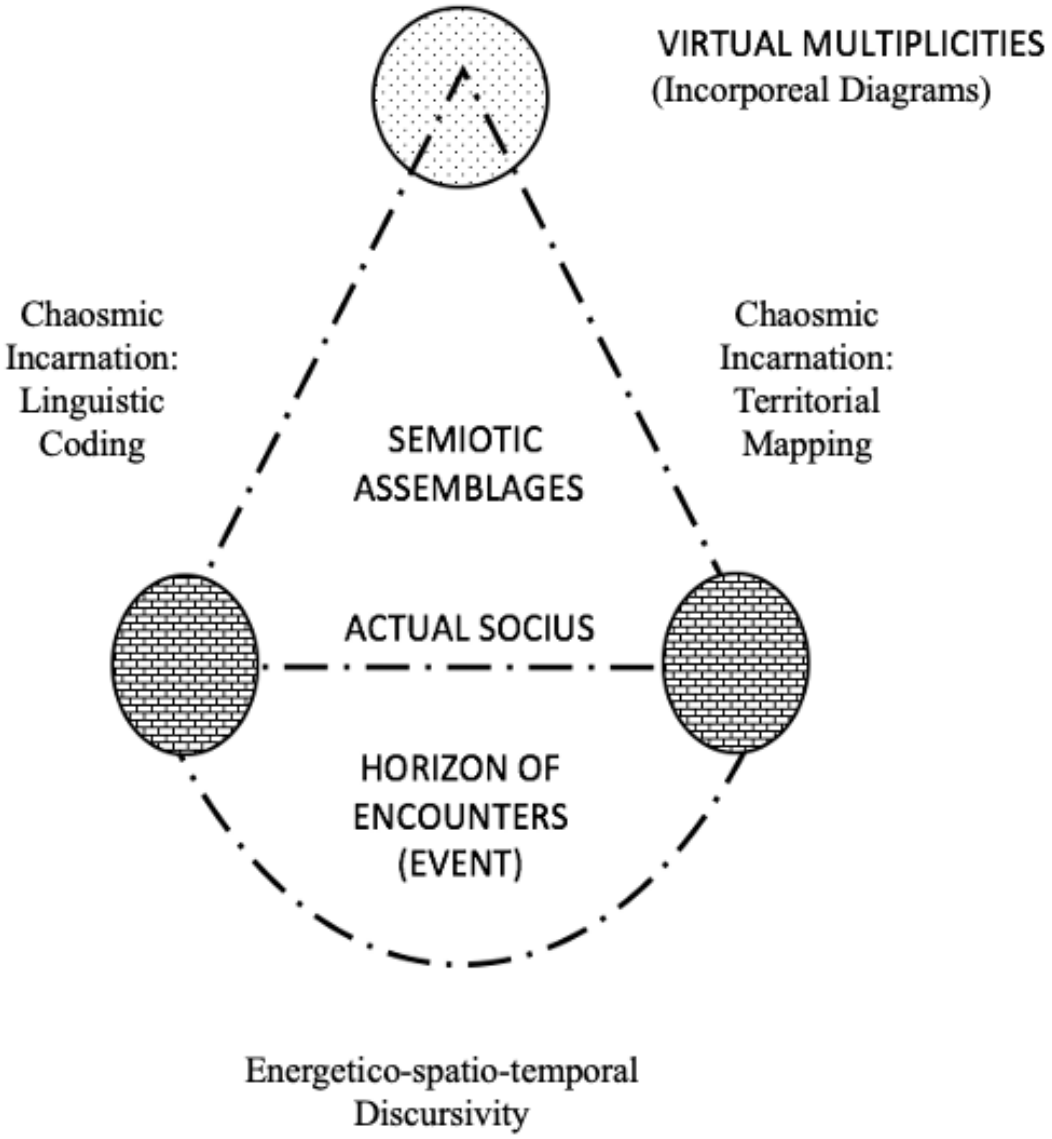

Figure 6: Dividual Theory

The circle with the dots represents a pool of singularities, while the circle stands as the embryo or egg of the morphogenetic evolutionary model.[252] Within this pool, a

[252] See Lynn Margulis for a thorough explanation of the move from DNA to RNA, or from genotype to phenotype, and how the environment plays a role in developing a paw or a hand.

singularity unfolds, prompted by chemical forces in the body and external relations encamped in the stratified socius and the evental region. The bricks inside the circles in the middle attract the molecular being to a subjective position using several apparatuses, among which language, the nation-state, and, more importantly than ever, communication technology stand to mention. The entropic uncertainty passes through these two determining poles in each singularity lap. In this metaphysical context, the sciences have the role of deducing patterns from the virtual unknown. The dividual slides around the semicircle formed by the ideational unconscious (possible real) and communicational manifestations (actual real). At the same time, the superject, or conscious residue from an event, extracts an understanding, however fragile, from the evental region where encounters with other unfolding singularities take place, as seen in Figure 6. This condensation of which Deleuze speaks is the ideatic real[253] (the former Freudian unconscious) entering the evental region. At the same time, the prolongation of this same singularity implies a return to the virtual from which the singularity came. This prolongation, or intuition of god's infinite wisdom in Alfred North Whitehead and the identical to itself in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz,[254] is what Deleuze and Guattari will

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253 Fernando Zalamea, in the foreword to a book by the mathematician Albert Lautman (*Mathematics, Ideas and the Physical Real*, 2011), explains how the mathematical unconscious, similarly to the psychological one, considers an ideatic aspect of the real not to oversee becoming, which can be lost in the law of continuity: "Lautman shows not only how the process of saturation of an imperfect structure gives rise to mathematical creativity, but also how these processes combine gradually through scales of construction and very precise inverse correspondences: between intermediate fields and subgroups of the Galois group, between class fields and groups of ideals, between covering surfaces and subgroups of Poincaré's fundamental group. In these cases, mathematical creativity is responding to a hierarchization of knowledge, in which the multiple intermediate levels of correspondence between structures are much more important than a purely logical alternation between particularization and generalization." (41)

254 See Deleuze's chart in *The Fold*, p. 57.

define as the concept or conceptual persona,[255] and it is only its trajectory that can be surmised rationally. The reason for this is that, as dividuals, we only find ourselves in the middle of things but never outside them.[256] Lispector then fictionalizes this metaphysical evidence through Macabéa, but at its most basic, as a dividual with little to no capacity to think. This binds the character's fate to a childlike subsistence in the real unconscious and ultimate disappearance from dividual life in a fetal position after her accident, which amounts to the dramatization of her involution.

The sciences occupy most of their time testing actualizations that can be generalizable to a broad range of situations, which is why they set the state of affairs nowadays. In contrast, philosophy and the arts aim to safeguard the loose, unconscious stirrings occurring in the evental region, which purports a way of knowing that safeguards an intuition of differing in becoming (the small gestures, interactions, and sensations of externality that make a body aware of its acting) while leaving room for the inevitability of continuity. In *A hora da estrela*, Macabéa exemplifies this affective difference through her explosions, encounters with the other characters, and psychosomatic reactions to them. In contradistinction to the double process of the sciences (induction or inference of the virtual outside via **diagrams**), this novella ascertains the opposite process (a deduction of the event). Combined, they constitute

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[255] Toward the end of the book *What is Philosophy?* (1994), Deleuze and Guattari connect the superject to concepts and conceptual personae: "The brain is the mind itself. At the same time that the brain becomes subject--or rather "superject," as Whitehead puts it-the concept becomes object as created, as event or creation itself; and philosophy becomes the plane of immanence that supports the concepts and that the brain lays out. Cerebral movements also give rise to conceptual personae." (211)

[256] Only certain drug-induced, out-of-body experiences can carry the concept outside of our narrow semiotic scope.

mutatis mutandis, the abductive method C.S. Pierce foregrounds in his "triadic sign-schema" (220). To him, "every [virtual] selection is an act of [monadic] intelligence to one degree or another, and this initial phase presupposes continuity above all with past patterns of selection and projected possibilities of innovation and correction" (Gangle 216). The virtual, formed by body parts, also makes decisions unbeknownst to the dividual, and it selects among a plurality of actualizing options[257] as much as the remnant of the event conditions it, that is, the superject, or what Peirce designates as the icon.[258] This process ontology, shown and described in Figure 6 as dividual theory, leaves questions to be asked, even if it tells how continuity and becoming[259] intermingle.

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[257] We could mention here Andrey Markov's chains, but also algebraic differential relations in Deleuze to give an account of the relationality and rationality of the virtual. With C.S. Peirce, however, the onus lands more with category theory.

[258] The *vision of the event*, as one could catalogue the icon, or, better put, as the memory imprinted on the body of the semiotic interconnections occurring in the brain, matures into the last stage of his triadic formation of semiotics. This apprehension of the superject modifies the operations of selection to continue the semiotic reading indefinitely. What Charles Saunders Peirce describes is nothing other than the process of individuation of a spiritual automaton.

[259] As of late, media studies and comparative literature programs have adopted a post-Kantian reading of reality, positioning themselves well within the tradition of Friedrich Kittler and Marshall McLuhan. Here I mention one disagreement Mark Hansen (*Feed-Forward: On the Future of Twenty-First-Century Media*, 2015) and Steven Shaviro seem to have about the issue of continuity: "When Shaviro glosses this passage to mean that "an event may be just one occasion, a single incident of becoming," he undermines the key Whiteheadian distinction (one that he elsewhere endorses) between the continuity of becoming and the becoming of continuity. This distinction stipulates (. . .) a difference in kind between the becoming of an actual entity at the speculative level of its concrescence and the becoming that constitutes the temporality of experience. For an actual entity to operate as an event, it must instantiate becoming in the second sense, which means that it must be taken as an attained actuality and not as an actuality-in-concrescence. And if we want to claim that a single attained actuality constitutes the limit case of an event, we can do so provided we appreciate that it will have always already become part of the temporal domain of experience." (Hansen 741)

This appears to me as the same false dichotomy between body and mind (Spinoza), analog and digital (Galloway), or immanence and transcendence, that could operate as the starting point in a conversation where the terms are initially well-defined, but which become blurred as the repetition of an erroneous or inadequate definition pile on over time. Continuity (empty time) has

As can be deduced, Macabéa's simplicity implies a paradox. She embraces all the information that reaches her, yet she establishes no criteria because she is unintelligent. She is entrenched in multiplicity, yet she goes along with whatever informational bloc is immediate because she does not know how to conceptualize. She makes her virtuality, defined as the lack of privatization of her inner life, and insignificance palpable as she goes through life without anchorage or conviction.

The virtual and the actual are the filters through which Macabéa's becoming must pass, but the virtual is steeped in continuous multiplicity. Our bodies concretize this virtuality, and each has its solipsistic point of view, which is never a given but an intricate process of actualization. This position, which unravels Lispector's creative endeavor in this novella, is that of Leibniz and the Baroque. After the end of master narratives and universalism, ideological fragmentation revamps discourse like objets trouvés[260] during one's lifetime or dispersed signs to be taken up as short-term solutions to momentary problems. This inconsistency can be perceived in Lispector's struggle to stop imagining the production of sense in the title, Macabéa's subjectivity, or even Rodrigo's oscillation of desire while narrating the story. This hyperactivity in the production of sense also points to the impossible task of impersonating a dividual. To Leibniz, the world's orderliness is the best of all possible worlds because God made it,

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no Bergsonian duration because it has become an actuality in the media sphere. Rather than still being in process semiotically, continuity either refers to the virtual, of which we are always missing bits lost in entropy, or to the actual, where the plane of organization/information acts as a black hole of timelessness.

[260] In the novel *Boca de lobo*, the worker's kids looking in the trash exemplify desiring production under the current world order, based on a superposition of narratives without apparent order.

but each dividual differs from another in its worlding; hence their alone-ness,[261] and the limits to relationality. Similarly to the main tenet of apophatic theology, Macabéa pertains to godliness because the empirical world does not recognize her. She can only be represented as the outside of representation, that is, to the empty time that says yes without knowing why.

Relationality and a dividual's division are presupposed as an axiom. Moreover, Spinoza's pursuit of adequate knowledge, or positive freedom for Isaiah Berlin, does not require God to care for its modes once created. Similarly, for Leibniz, the world is "in the monad, but the monad lives for the world: God himself conceives individual notions only as a function of the world that they express and chooses them only through a calculus of the world" (*The Fold* 50-1). Leibniz's worldview regards monad[262] as a semiotic string closed upon itself, and it leaves for God the function of harmonizing the world and all its monads. In Figure 6, the dividual, which takes over the notion of monad because of the possibility of encountering other bodies in the evental region, comprises singularities that get actualized in an event. Likewise, the concept arising from the event continues its loopy journey around the unconscious until it returns to the molecular. Neurons, dominated monads that they are, inform the event's synthesis as much as the concept —

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[261] Deleuze aims to connect Leibnizian philosophy to his understanding of what a concept is, which he will expand on in his last book with Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (1991): "For Leibniz (. . .) only the individual exists, *and* it is by virtue of the power of the concept: monad or soul. Thus, this power of the concept (. . .) does not consist in determining a genre to infinity, but in condensing and in prolonging singularities. The latter are not generalities but events, or droplets of an event (. . .) The individual is the actualization of preindividual singularities and implies no previous determination. The contrary must be noted by observing that determination itself supposes individuation." (*The Fold* 64)

[262] I am defining monad here as a body in motion participating in processes of subjectivation. Dominated monads are body parts that, in a machine-like fashion, facilitate these processes and inform them.

the power of the event, or the superject's tenor of life— indicates to the body how to create new impulses, as in Pierre Klossowski's *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (1969). In this process, information has come to play a more significant role than the one envisaged by Leibniz in the seventeenth century. In this expansion, the baroque worldview has only become more prevalent: "The brain seems to us peculiarly subject to a Markovian interpretation (between the neuronal sender and receiver, there are successive but non-independent, tugs or draughts)" (*Cinema 2* 319). The brain in this neo-Baroque era is the screen of information that all singularities need to enter for actualization in the event, and this electro-informational current[263] has intensified like never before with technological acceleration. In *A hora da estrela*, Macabéa interacts with the media of her time: the radio with its advertisements and the cinema, whose theatre she would visit monthly and

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[263] Tristan Garcia (*La vie intense: Une obsession moderne*, 2016), a young philosopher from France, accuses Deleuze and Whitehead of romanticizing intensities in their respective ontologies, but while it is a point well taken with regard to the need for constant liveliness in our era, he seems to forget how those intensities are animistic, so that they are not circumscribed to a subject, but they operate in the totality of the living: "L'intensité a été absolutisée, non seulement dans les quelques grandes métaphysiques de l'intensité moderne (Nietzsche, Whitehead, Deleuze), mais aussi et surtout dans les opérations concrètes par lesquelles les savoirs humains n'ont plus catégorisé des entités stables mais des processus. C'est à ce moment de son triomphe absolu que l'intensité a révélé son défaut de conception : dès que l'esprit se représentait que tout était intense, l'intensité apparaissait identifiée, et en quelque manière désintensifiée. Bien sûr, cette désintensification prenait du temps. Mais elle était une conséquence inéluctable de la conceptualisation même de l'intense, ce paradoxe de l'identité" (122) (Intensity has been totalized, not only among some of the great metaphysicians of the modern intensity (Nietzsche, Whitehead, Deleuze), but also and predominantly within the concrete operations through which human knowledge does not categorize stable entities anymore but process instead. It is at the moment of their totalizing triumph that intensity has revealed its conceptual error: while spirit was represented in an intense state, intensity was identified, and in a certain sense de-intensified. Obviously, this de-intensification took time, but the paradox of identity was an ineluctable consequence from conceptualizing the intense in this sense). Friedrich Nietzsche, I claim in response to Tristan Garcia, may be rightly accused of what he suggests, but Gilles Deleuze always discusses degrees of intensity and internal variation within bodies, same as in Spinoza. As for Alfred North Whitehead, the notions of concretization and superject at no point do they refer to a subject, but to a becoming related to individuation.

consume both passively. As the narrator emphasizes, her identity can be summed up in three words: “Quando acordava não sabia mais quem era. Só depois é que pensava com satisfação: sou datilógrafa e virgem, e gosto de coca-cola. Só então vestia-se de si mesma, passava o resto do dia representando com obediência o papel de ser” (123-4) (When she woke up she no longer knew who she was. Only later did she think with satisfaction: I’m a typist and a virgin, and I like coca-cola. Only then did she dress herself in herself, she spent the rest of her day obediently playing the role of being) (47). Macabéa’s analogic brain cannot compute the advance of information technology, consumerism, and media conglomerates. Lispector’s image of this girl is one of absolute defenselessness and inability to function in the world. If technoculture speaks of progress, Macabéa maintains an ignorant silence. This extreme vulnerability to externalities reveals her body, her affects, her continuity, and her becoming in a more direct way than any aware character could. Lispector wants the reader to feel what dividuality is at its most raw and abject, and even vilifies her through Rodrigo about her virginity and asexuality because, as Giorgi affirmed, she is so worthless to capital that she cannot even sell her body in the marketplace.

Rodrigo S.M. and the Post-Picaresque: Lispector’s Conceptual Persona

Semiotically and informatically, dividuality has been operationalized with the information age. As a result, and as I continue examining Lispector’s novella, my analysis proceeds alongside the combination of actualizations in thought that led to the unique linguistic rendering of a story. The narrator is roguish because he constantly shifts the tone of the story, so what ends up printed on the page includes a hesitation proper to

the semiotic break-flow, either separating from an encounter or coming back into contact with it as the dividual comes in and out of assemblages. Critiquing, for that matter, or commenting on one's narration as Rodrigo S.M. does, puts time in motion since it constantly jumpstarts the narration. Rodrigo pursues a formless thought,[264] which, once transcribed into writing, distorts the scene he was starting to describe. In Rodrigo's writing difficulties, Lispector makes recognizable the materiality of language and its limitations or ill-equipment to handle the dividual strife and their drives.

The post-picaresque aesthetic I want to bring my attention to begins with an understanding of Rodrigo S.M. as an adventurer of affect ideas. This is how the rogue has been perceived historically, akin to other wandering characters like the foreigner or the stranger. In this evental region where dividuality meets all societal obstacles, rogues have traditionally been adventurers because they have had to think on their feet and against the grain of society to survive. As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, Rodrigo S.M. is not a full-fledged character, regardless of how strongly his narrative voice stamps the novella. Following Deleuze and Guattari, I claim that Lispector uses this male counterpart to intercede between her novelistic creation and herself. This filter or interface, which she will recycle in her posthumous writing, radiates this need to divide

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[264] We need to know what happens in metallurgy during the alloying process. Stopping this process while it proceeds equates to fissuring the law of becoming. If it pursues anything other than commercial intent, literature aims to give an image to a formless thought that can be considered aberrant in the way only affects are. This goal preconceives a will that does not have an object nor a destination [conatus], yet it claims for externality to be met with the interior, for what is precarious to be more solid. This formlessness (religare) of the molecular and conjunctive synthesis of forgetting —Gilbert Simondon (*On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, 1958) said that much concerning technical objects and their formation— emerges as a precarious relationality.

the aloneness of her stream of consciousness so she can share the burden of her writerly voice. Clarice, as a thinker and as a writer, creates a conceptual persona:

> Conceptual personae carry out the movements that describe the author's plane of immanence, and they play a part in the very creation of the author's concepts. Thus, even when they are "antipathetic," they are so while belonging fully to the plane that the philosopher in question lays out and to the concepts that he creates. They then indicate the dangers specific to this plane, the bad perceptions, bad feelings, and even negative movements that emerge from it, and they will themselves inspire original concepts whose repulsive character remains a constitutive property of that philosophy. This is all the truer for the plane's positive movements, for attractive concepts and sympathetic personae: an entire philosophical *Einfühlung*. And in both cases there are often great ambiguities.
> The conceptual persona is not the philosopher's representative but, rather, the reverse: the philosopher is only the envelope of his principal conceptual persona and of all the other personae who are the intercessors [intercesseurs], the real subjects of his philosophy. Conceptual personae are the philosopher's "heteronyms," and the philosopher's name is the simple pseudonym of his personae. I am no longer myself but thought's aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places. The philosopher is the idiosyncrasy of his conceptual personae. The destiny of the philosopher is to become his conceptual persona or personae, at the same time that these personae themselves become something other than what they are historically, mythologically, or commonly (The Socrates of Plato, the Dionysus of Nietzsche, the Idiot of Nicholas of Cusa). (*What is Philosophy?* 63-4)

In this late stage of her literary career, and in view of *Um sopro de vida* and *Água viva*, Clarice seeks comfort in the company of a friendly voice to combat her aloneness. However, with Rodrigo S.M., we have a background that establishes a performative difference by way of gender. He also does not have a conversation with the author as Âgatha does. His occupation will be to become less stereotypically manly in his behavior to approach her dividuality. Rodrigo S.M.'s supposed shedding of personality negotiates the encounter between the writer and the event that prompts the former to take up writing. With respect to Rodrigo S.M., and because of his erratic narration style, there is no

assurance that he ever means what he says because of the lack of focus regarding the narration or his ambiguous relationship with his own creation, Macabéa. At the same time, a first-person narrator comes across as unreliable the more they question or make light of the story. In Brás Cubas it is the humorous tone throughout that raises eyebrows; with the cabin boy in *El entenado*, it is the faulty memory of an older man and the fact that he confesses to have embellished his narration while he was part of a theater company or troupe; with Rodrigo S.M., it is at times the boredom, other times the artificiality of his running commentary on the story, let alone the hot and cold act that he puts on for Macabéa; however it may be that this extradiegetic excess to the story takes place, there is no denying his roguery. Even though he follows a linear plot to the story, his interruptions constitute a feature as relevant to the story as the story itself. Unlike other professional writers, and more so in these late stories, the dividual Lispector is never far removed from the plot. I believe that she needs Rodrigo S.M. to carry her through to the end of the story because she had been expressing tiredness in her 1975 interview for the cultural channel Panorama and because she is not a stranger to roguish behavior. Notice how in the dedication to the book, where she discloses herself as the *na verdade* (13) author of the book *A hora da estrela*, she also pokes the reader, she is playful and cutting, she even interpolates God as she laments her current state of mind, she contaminates herself with man's blood, and she empathizes with her overactive imagination and the small and overlooked, like Macabéa's race, who toil in invisibility: "Dedico-me à cor rubra muito escarlate como o meu sangue de homem em plena idade e portanto dedico-me a meu sangue. Dedico-me sobretudo aos gnomos, anões, sílfides e ninfas que me habitam a vida" (7) "I dedicate it to the very crimson color scarlet like my

blood of a man in his prime and so I dedicate it to my blood. I dedicate it above all to the gnomes, dwarfs, sylphs, and nymphs who inhabit my life" (13); or even in this following fragment:

> E – e não esquecer que a estrutura do átomo não é vista mas sabe-se dela. Sei de muita coisa que não vi. E vós também. Não se pode dar uma prova da existência do que é mais verdadeiro, o jeito é acreditar. Acreditar chorando. Esta história acontece em estado de emergência e de calamidade pública. Trata-se de livro inacabado porque lhe falta a resposta. Resposta esta que espero que alguém no mundo ma dê. Vós? É uma história em tecnicolor para ter algum luxo, por Deus, que eu também preciso. Amém para nós todos. (*A hora da estrela* 7)

> And — and don't forget that the structure of the atom cannot be seen but is nonetheless known. I know about lots of things I've never seen. And so do you. You can't show proof of the truest thing of all, all you can do is believe. Weep and believe.
> This story takes place during a state of emergency and a public calamity. It's an unfinished book because it's still waiting for an answer. An answer I hope someone in the world can give me. You? It's a story in Technicolor to add a little luxury which, by God, I need too. Amen for all of us.
> (*The Hour of the Star* 14)

This multiplicity of registers, even within the same sentence, that constantly colors the narration with different tonalities and variations, points to a polyphony that envisages Lispector's restlessness vis-à-vis ideation. The post-picaresque aesthetic I observe in this story expresses a writerly mechanism that encompasses irony, lyricism, exaltation, dejection, abjection, exultation, and passion [pathos] through a roguish narrator. Afterward, in *Água viva* and *Um sopro de vida*, Lispector stops disguising her roguish fickleness and demands a literary space to achieve the maximum expression of whatever passes through her in that *instante-já.* Through them, she famously turns the singularity that is her writing into a rhythmic repetition.

This post-picaresque aesthetic that I locate in Lispector's writing and all the others from the different chapters is one of the formative concepts present in this work. A

concept[265] can be immersed in a gust of wind, where the wind speed meets the scarf that someone wears around their neck, the rustling of leaves, the walking dividual as it steps on them, or the honking of a car in the distance. Likewise, I have factored in Rodrigo's moods and how they sway him into different attitudes throughout the narration. This unpredictability and these example eventualities form part of an assemblage since we know relationality causes movement and that nothing exists in complete isolation. Those seemingly more minor events are always indirectly there, and they inform Rodrigo's subjectivation, as I specified when I reviewed the two difference filters: the virtual and the actual, the genetic makeup, and the table of information and habit. Deleuze and Guattari explain it this way in their last jointly published book:

> From virtuals we descend to actual states of affairs, and from states of affairs we ascend to virtuals, without being able to isolate one from the other. But we do not ascend and descend in this way on the same line: actualization and counter-effectuation are not two segments of the same line but rather different lines. If we restrict ourselves to the scientific functions of states of affairs, it seems that they cannot be isolated from a virtual that they actualize, but this virtual appears first of all as a cloud or a fog, or even as a chaos—as a chaotic virtuality rather than the reality of an ordered event in the concept. (*What is Philosophy?* 160)

Suppose Rodrigo S.M. is the conceptual persona for Lispector in *A hora da estrela*. In that case, my becoming-rogue entails calling out Clarice on her playfulness,

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[265] Rocco Gangle, Professor of Philosophy at Endicott College, expresses the need for thinking through immanence in his book *Diagrammatic Immanence: Category Theory and Philosophy* (2015), which includes the vision for how a concept can be both ontological and permeable to concreteness: "The earliest Ionian and Eleatic thinkers did not so much think universally for the first time as express a peculiarly new style or flavor of universality in thought. When Thales claimed all to be water or Anaximander the elements of the world to be condensations of the cloudy apeiron or Parmenides truth to be One, in each case a certain milieu was established or marked out for thinking the global real locally through itself, that is, for thinking it immanently."
(Gangle 14)

and how this register can be found in her writing, as someone who likes to face danger: "[Dama-de-noite] É perigosíssima: é um assobio no escuro, o que ninguém aguenta. Mas eu aguento porque amo o perigo" (*Água viva* 58) "[Night jessamine] is highly dangerous: it's a whistle in the dark, which no one can bear. But I can bear it because I love danger" (*Água Viva* 53). Lispector, aware of the chaosmos that defines the plane of immanence and hence of the dangers of dividuality's lack of a stable self, pokes holes at the comforts of ideological indulgence. She resists habituation and the passive synthesis of time because she cannot stand herself, which drives her to actively write her becoming and improve her tenor of life through dividuation. This is how readers connect with a writer, by having an encounter with the register the writer employs, and hence be able to feel more acutely our dividuality. Inherent to this dividual experience, a friendship subsists, sustained by precarious relationality. The philosopher Giorgio Agamben[266] may, for example, understand friendship as a con-senting, rather than a dividual affair of relationality, but this con-senting that he points toward, though advocating for an ontic cohabitation, is in route to an increase of partition —private individuals and more isolated individuations—, as the rise of artificial intelligence appears to forebode. Likewise, Professor Gregg Lambert, in his recent book about friendship in philosophy, believes in the demise of individual friendship as a formative idea as he aims to reconstruct an image of philosophy that circumvents armed struggle among sovereign nations:

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[266] Agamben's conceptualization goes as follows: "Friends do not share something (birth. law. place. taste): they are shared by the experience of friendship. Friendship is the con-division that precedes every division since what must be shared is the very fact of existence, life itself. And it is this sharing without an object, this original con-senting. that constitutes the political" (*What is an Apparatus* 36). Giorgio Agamben still refers to a Greek arché of philosophy when he speaks of consent. I talk instead of precarious relationality, which has a more abstract sense and less juridical overtones.

> The lively debates of opinion over the philosophical questions of the beautiful and "the good life" have become the new universals of communication and marketing but in a manner that no longer corresponds to the political as such, but rather to a kind of permanent and generalized Machiavellianism mediated only by an open—although not necessarily public— sphere of commerce and private finance. (Lambert 8)

The portfolio society[267] that Gregg Lambert describes belongs to the rigid segmentation of the institutional subject, while Rodrigo S.M., the **character concept** that Lispector conveys through syntactic brevity and paratactic structure, indexes the semiotic process with false starts and affective flows of (in)decision as he aims to be a dividual friend to Macabéa. This hesitation can be appreciated at several instances in the narrative, but never more clearly than in the multiplicity of titles for the book, crowned with the inclusive disjunction or...or, which emerges as a concatenation of affirmations about the summary of the tale that never exhausts the possible. Thus, Lispector's very "signature" in this novella "constitutes an "or" title" (*Anti-literature* 38), that is, an acknowledgment of the affective states and forces that traverse us and which become unbearable to Macabéa's set of accompanying characters in *A hora da estrela*.

Rodrigo S.M., ever since his textual appearance, presents himself to the reader as a body subjected to the pain of placing himself in Macabéa's shoes, exerting himself to transfigure his subjectivity. Far from a simple ethnological project, the narrator operates a transmutation or becoming that ignores the reality of literary prizes and publications. Nothing is as pressing as introducing himself in Macabéa as part of the engineering process of her desire, as a dividual appendage to her organism. This projective endeavor entails a forgetting or shedding of oneself, a passion for renewal that can only come from

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[267] I owe this expression to Ivan Ascher's book, *Portfolio Society: On the Capitalist Mode of Production* (2016).

changing one's life. This must ignore the stratifying temporal synthesis discussed at the beginning of this chapter (passive time), in which habituation implied a structural stratification and a reassurance of self-sameness. To delve deeper into the multiple relays and neurological connections that support his conceptualization, there must be a forgetting and a plunging into Macabéa's singular life. This reconfiguration must be intense enough to create new ways to think and write, allowing for a new dividuality. His strong willingness, though, does nothing if not instantiate his struggles to speak through his muse, and each informative bit connotes the insecurity that, not so paradoxically, enlivens the text:

> Para desenhar a moça tenho que me domar e para poder captar sua alma tenho que me alimentar frugalmente de frutas e beber vinho branco gelado pois faz calor neste cubículo onde me tranquei e de onde tenho a veleidade de querer ver o mundo. Também tive que me abster de sexo e de futebol. Sem falar que não entro em contato com ninguém. Voltarei algum dia à minha vida anterior? Duvido muito. Vejo agora que esqueci de dizer que por enquanto nada leio para não contaminar com luxos a simplicidade de minha linguagem. Pois como eu disse a palavra tem que se parecer com a palavra, instrumento meu. Ou não sou um escritor? Na verdade, sou mais ator porque, com apenas um modo de pontuar, faço malabarismos de entonação, obrigo o respirar alheio a me acompanhar o texto.
> (*A hora da estrela* 61-2)

> To draw the girl, I have to get a grip on myself and to capture her soul I have to feed myself frugally with fruits and drink iced white wine because it's hot in this cubbyhole I've locked myself into and from which I'm inclined to want to see the world. I've also had to give up sex and soccer. Not to mention that I avoid all human contact. Will I someday return to my former way of life? I very much doubt it. I now see that I forgot to mention that for the time being I read nothing for fear of polluting the simplicity of my language with luxuries. Since as I said the word has to resemble the word, my instrument. Or am I not a writer? Actually, I'm more of an actor
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> because with only one way to punctuate, I juggle with intonation and force another's breathing to accompany my text.
> (*The Hour of the Star* 31)

Rodrigo S. M. already fears the loss of sense on which he seemingly embarks. Where he wants to go, common notions such as race, sex, and nationality cease to function because the flow takes over the writer and merges with the action. This space I am describing is his own body as a composite of affections, as materiality without the institutional and informative sense in which we are thrown, a falling into a sensorial *chaosmos*. As Rodrigo says, writing is an act that does away with common sense, and thanks to which the stratified self can be bypassed.

Finally, Rodrigo's questioning could be posed thus: what came first, the actual or the virtual? We see ourselves as the chicken from another Lispector story, "O ovo e a galinha" (1975) ["The Egg and the Chicken"], but we are always summoning the egg so that it stirs something within us. Often, these appeals carry little or no intensity, so they are easily identified and stored by our sense of self. If they manage to perforate that layer of habituation, however minimally, our sympathetic nervous system becomes activated, and a counter-effectuation of the event is put in place. Whenever there is a gain of reality, there is a loss of self, so a compulsive neurological battalion comes rushing in to defend its neighborhood. In this context, love and death operate as companions because they leave the doors open to forgetting, and as such, to renewal. Desire then comes to us as a crack in the egg and dissolves us in its cracking. Imagination and reasoning may then give an account of such light and its shared reflection, even if it is but a poor simulacrum (inadequate knowledge), not of the void, but of the outside that spews us forth until we join it. In Rodrigo's constant interruptions, a counter-effectuation of the event that is writing takes place. Ultimately, Lispector's roguish gesture consists in fighting against this inherent ossification of affective forces concomitant to the written word through this

conceptual persona. The battle for giving voice to the subaltern that she painstakingly wishes to embody results then in a daring proposition to oppose the representative shackles erected by language, class, and gender.

CHAPTER 5

PROFITING FROM EMOTIONS: THE NEOLIBERAL PÍCARO IN SERGIO CHEJFEC'S *BOCA DE LOBO*

"I like to see people I love getting a little angry. Nothing pleases me more than to give a completely false image of myself to people for whom I have made a place in my heart. Perhaps that's unjust, but it is audacious, so it is right. Of course, it is a little morbid, in my case. Thus, for example, I imagine that it would be unspeakably lovely to die with the terrible knowledge that I have offended whomsoever I love the most and have filled them with bad opinions of me."

—Robert Walser, *Jakob von Gunten*

Sergio Chejfec's writing is a serene digression between essay and poetry. In his novella *Boca de lobo*, a mysterious narrator re-creates the relationship between a worker called Delia and a writer infatuated with her as a representation of the blue-collar worker. Her striking femininity, coupled with her worker tag, appeals to this man. So the reader, by dint of the narrator's prose, follows the sensuous way the narrator/writer describes how Delia expends her kinetic energy and carries herself in her everyday life. In the meantime, the reader learns that the storyteller is no longer around her, that he lives alone, and looks back to a time when they would spend their days harmoniously together. Again, simplicity is critical to the plot: a professional writer falls in love with a working-class woman, they date for some time, and he suddenly leaves her to fend for herself following a rape act and her subsequent pregnancy. In the following pages, this essay puts into perspective the subjectivity of this novella's main character. I will also offer a

brief portrait of the recently deceased Sergio Chejfec. I then study how the first-person narrator in *Boca de lobo* outlines the life of the factory worker and their capacity for silent industriousness. Later, I will aim to break down the different historical stages of the picaresque writer so I can categorize the picaresque chronologically. After this succinct categorization of the rogue, the following subheading moves on to the modes of textual individuation of the narrator or his development as a character. Last but not least, this chapter will question the possibility of community under neoliberalism and the place of the neoliberal rogue within these historical conditions.

Reflecting on Lyricism: A Writerly Portrait of Sergio Chejfec

A writer is known for their style, and all of Sergio Chejfec's narrators have a gravitas and a lightness owing to the mixing of reflection and detail-oriented skills. His seeming realist narrators achieve a dreamy state because his writing vies for a becoming-truth of literature, which could be assessed as a mood that his characters impersonate. They are constantly pursuing an idea or a remembrance that they have not fully formed in their minds, which is in the making as the writing ensues. In Sergio Chejfec's narrators, literature seeks to be a source for time travel. Amid these ruminations, readers experience insecurity concerning the validity or value of their thought processes. The narrator does not necessarily feel thus, even if the *Boca de lobo* protagonist wanders around in his mind for nuggets of clarity among the rational fog of the present, which clouds the aesthetic paradigm. Thinking for Chejfec's narrators constitutes a calm contemplation of the liminal spaces where the dividual comes in and out of view. Heavily influenced by the other Argentine author of this dissertation, Saer, he shares with the latter a vocation for

the obscure and a need for a clearing [Lichtung] amidst the uncertainty of life and the elusive nature of existence. Sergio Chejfec's narrator in *Boca de lobo* has opinions but never seems opinionated. He polices his thoughts and corrects himself mid-sentence at times. Still, even when he is passing judgment or commenting about objects and people around him, the reader remains conspicuously removed because of the ethereal and lofty nature of the writing. The Argentine literary critic Beatriz Sarlo, who was also a good friend of the late Saer, describes Chejfec's narrators in this light:

> Es el narrador típico de Chejfec: una voz sostenida, deliberadamente monótona y razonante. Su lenguaje presenta las cosas, los dichos, las opiniones y las cualidades bajo una luz doble, en la que una palabra limita y corrige lo que otra significa, pero lo hace sin plantear una contradicción: se trata de un completamiento por desvío o por leve corrección. La originalidad de *Boca de lobo* se apoya en el extraño efecto producido por una escritura lenta que avanza en direcciones levemente divergentes, retocando en variaciones lo que ya ha contado. (Niebylski 41-2)

Sergio Chejfec, the youngest of the four writers featured in this essay, was a professor of creative writing at New York University (NYU) until his passing. Since he died in 2022, there has been plenty of online media immanently accessible on the web about his persona, which adds to the ghostliness of the literary books that he left behind. Being a foreigner first in Caracas and later in New York, he incorporated his exile from the Buenos Aires of his youth into his writing as a form of secret. Charged with the forcefulness of otherness and difference,[268] he would go on walks in the city like Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Man of the Crowd" (1840) or Robert Walser's pseudo-biographical *The Walk* (1917). His Spanish, he claims, is not colloquial nor

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[268] I am partly inspired to write these lines based on this YouTube interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETlhlWF_upA&ab_channel=Romanskaochklassiskainstitutionen

straightforward. Instead, it works as a dissemination of remarks, observations, and pronouncements, which do not lead to a crescendo and a more substantial thesis on a defined topic or theme, but to actual insights that work as such because of the mood [Stimmung] that the discursive narration effectuates from a tonal perspective. He would have liked his books to be remembered as portraits with an absorbing musicality.[269] Exile and errancy are significant themes in Jewish history, with which Sergio Chejfec tends to imbue his narrators. In particular, his *Boca de lobo* protagonist never achieves the roundedness of a main character because his ruminations lack the direction that story-telling encompasses. Following what I argued in the Introduction, the narrator's interest lies in the reconstruction of the past and in having his version of events prevail, both factors of a post-picaresque aesthetic. The insidiousness of Sergio Chejfec's rogue in *Boca de lobo* does manifest in Chapter 2, where Brás Cubas confronts and taunts the reader, or because he emotionally harasses his creation like Rodrigo S.M. with Macabéa. On the contrary, he craftily persuades and brings his readership closer to his understanding of reality with a cool detachment and calm, dubitative reasoning. Precisely because of his serene observations, the reader can seep into the worldview that he confers and hence justify his decision to leave Delia, the factory worker, shortly after a surge of rape-inducing violence against her.

Beyond *Boca de lobo*'s main character and his specificity, Sergio Chejfec's characters are not consistently driven by anything in particular, be it an obsession or a slow-burning plan. Instead, interiority and the geographical shape of the terrain they ambulate direct them. In the words of Edgardo Horacio Berg, "[sus personajes son]

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[269] See a second Sergio Chejfec interview here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zh-NGsCRh3w&ab_channel=audiovideoteca

ajenos a la seguridad que da la pertenencia a un sitio y [son] desprovistos, por elección, de una identidad civil o barrial; siempre convocan a la imagen y el rostro desfigurado del forastero y el migrante" (Niebylski 47). His style comprehends these themes as patterns on a canvas which facilitate the act of thinking alongside his meditative walking. To Sergio Chejfec, thinking is walking.

The Narrator/Writer's Cartesian Framework

The narrator and Delia would, in fact take walks together as a couple, and he would learn about her way of life in the process. Metonymically, this woman, Delia, is an archetype of the worker and an element of strangeness regarding her socioeconomic class. However, as ever in this narrative, an exclusion stems seamlessly from the bird's eye view recounting of the tale. Delia cannot be but an ideal. The self-absorption of the first-person narrator, which seems to be accompanied by a reworking of nostalgia as a means for recapturing an experience of loss, does not allow for a discursive reason to foster. Instead, the narrator/writer will talk as if Delia had been a painting he enjoyed at a museum as an art critic.

In this novella, the narrator describes how he fell for Delia. Nonchalantly, he shamelessly goes after that which excludes him incommensurably, the experience of the young female worker, and he tries to appropriate it. There are countless examples of this subject/object operation in contemporary culture, and they all fall under some dream-like vision in which the exploration of another being stands out because of its exotic features, wherein unknown implies attractive. Experience, as a result, passes off as a mildly arousing form of anthropology. In this case, and while there is no binding contract, it is

unnecessary. Delia presents herself to the reader as the enigma the writer-narrator seeks to fathom and wants revealed to him.

This desire on the part of the Cartesian narrator eventually brings a sudden act of violence to Delia's body, inspired by an internal disconnection between the (mostly) immaterial life of the writer and her working-class job. This action, the rape, demonstrates an acute frustration on the narrator's part. He politicizes her body by giving free rein to this totalizing, experiential desire. In that violence, becoming a woman and becoming a mother get implemented, seeing as the girl was of adolescent age at the time of the narration. The phallic,[270] in its unnerving attempt to subdue her otherness, consummates the subject/object axiom of the narrator's existence. The ideal Delia disappears, transforming herself instead in the darkness of the wolf's mouth —literal translation from the original title that could also be standing from the entrance to the factory where Delia works—; there where words will not reach.

The distance that he perceives between Delia and the rest of the worker community at the factory originates, like many other meandering thoughts across the story, from the narrator's monomaniacal desire: her seemingly pure or incorrupt body and her dedication to a pre-established class strategy exasperate Delia's companion. A dynamic of domination opens up in any interaction between these two individuals as he grows accustomed to her immutable presence. While claiming to love her, he resents Delia, and the reader must assume the infatuation arises from the simplicity with which she carries out her daily existence. In his Introduction to Metaphysics, Martin Heidegger

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[270] As commonly understood, the phallus refers to Lacanian psychoanalysis and the symbolic order of the Oedipal triangle he developed.

describes 'seeming' as one of the aspects which occlude[271] and misrepresent beings and events. In *Boca de lobo*, the narrator represents Delia in all her materiality, including gestures, movement, and interactions with other workers. Still, he repeatedly assures the reader about her ability to be inconspicuous to the point of disappearance. There is even a play of words between *parecer* [seem] and *desaparecer* [disappear] in the narrative — like the veiling and unveiling of the Heideggerian being— which leads the reader to think that Delia makes an appearance that is ghostly in nature and that is bound to merging with other laboring bodies in machine-like fashion:

> Yo veía a todos los obreros, una masa gris y deforme en la que Delia era una estrella titilante, una luz a punto de desaparecer para replegarse entre sus compañeros o liberarse en su propia miniatura. Los obreros reunidos en la hora de descanso, en silencio y sin apenas moverse. Los recuerdos impasibles, con las ropas del mismo color, mientras los cubre una sombra que se mece lenta, como una nube que no termina de pasar
> (*Boca de lobo* 14)

When the narrator is writing the novel, Delia is always geographically removed. Still, she diachronically stands out as the only dividual that can merge successfully with

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[271] In this dissertation, I have followed Gilles Deleuze's philosophy much more than Martin Heidegger's. To the latter, being (Dasein) was the most crucial concept, while for the French philosopher, becoming is one of the most important. Deleuze questions being as a concept and use the term singularity and time crystals to capture what the German calls being. However, they both agree on disparaging opinions or debates, which Heidegger names 'idle talk' in *Being and Time*. At the same time, the Frenchman argues that there is no philosophical conversation possible unless the concepts around which the discussion gravitates are well-established and understood by all parties (*Desert Islands* par. 105). For Heidegger, thinking and becoming also subordinate themselves to being, even if they are intrinsic parts of being. Regardless of their differences, this is Martin Heidegger's critical quote about seeming: "Seeming, doxa, is not something external to Being and uncon-cealment but instead belongs to unconcealment. But doxa is also ambiguous in itself. On the one hand, it means the view in which something proffers itself, and on the other hand it means the view that human beings have. Dasein settles into such views. They are asserted and passed on. Thus doxa is a type of logos. The dominant views now obstruct our own view of beings. Beings are deprived of the possibility of turning themselves toward apprehension, appear-ing on their own right. The view granted by beings, which usually turns itself toward us, is distorted into a view upon beings. The dominance of views thus distorts beings and twists them." (*Introduction to Metaphysics* 205)

the participatory aspect of the worker community. In contrast, the narrator emphasizes the partition of the group. The narrator can singularize her, yet this process paradoxically highlights their belonging to different social classes even more. In his portrait of Delia, the writer provides the reader with a mournful acceptance of their irreconcilable differences, which are also encapsulated in the form of a photograph:

> Ahora veo la corteza de pelos frente al espejo, el estómago abultado, creciendo hacia arriba, buscando más cuerpo y lugar; veo esto y me cuesta creer que yo sea el mismo que, por ejemplo, se sacó la foto junto a Delia. Tarde fui entendiendo que para algunos Delia y yo no éramos semejantes; podíamos parecer varias cosas, pero nunca pasar por quienes, digamos, tienen una relación de equivalencia (*Boca de lobo* 69-70)

It is hardly arguable that the narrator reduces Delia's dividuality to an egotist enterprise. In this last excerpt, the narrator looks at an aging version of himself in the mirror and reminisces about a time the reader imagines as better. Still, the narrator also seeks protection in his wealth of readerly knowledge to compensate for losing his former lover. What is more, he permanently voids their former bond by re-creating the separation: "He leído muchas novelas donde los lugares desaparecen una vez que el personaje, o protagonista, los abandona. Esto, que puede ser interpretado como una regla del arte, a veces deja un sentimiento de desazón profunda, entre otras cosas porque la geografía nunca es un mero escenario" (*Boca de lobo* 84). The scenario that he mentions emphasizes the artificiality of the narratorial voice. Is Delia's Being, though, performed? Is it not the text that induces one to read a muted response? Is it her apparent lack of agency, or her self-sufficiency and resilience, that the lover cannot stand? The frustration, as it will be evinced, stems from the tension between the subject/object dynamic under

which the narrator operates and the many textual pieces of evidence that put into view the affective forces which escape a simplified reading of her form-of-life.[272]

The Makings of A Neoliberal Rogue

The narrator, it must be said, is nameless; he does not even have an initial. Nevertheless, pícaros used to have a name, and its "myth was the story of an orphan born out of his will and unable to regain this will other than in a narrative act" (Malkmus 182). The picaresque, quickly stated, started as a materialist project and as a satirical or subversive ploy against officialdom in the sixteenth century. Any mention of spirituality or religion carried the voice of the popular at the time or at least a segment of the populace. Still, the newly-minted Spanish state or the Inquisition would turn those beliefs into repression and dogma, especially with the advent of the Counter-Reformation. Since those days, the literary genre has changed dramatically, so it could not be considered a genre anymore but as *the myth of the autonomous subject*. While Alexander Blackburn could object to the phrasing of that expression or the re-writing of the rogue carried out in this and other chapters of this work, he did delineate a historical account of the picaresque, as this succinct paragraph confirms:

> The picaresque novel is a genuine kind of literary art that originates in a myth about man's relation to himself, to society and to God. It achieves form during the breakup of the medieval world, loses formal potency during the rise of rationalism, Protestantism, and capitalism, and then reappears in symbolic form in comparatively recent times as part of a reaction against aspects of those movements (201)

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[272] See Agamben's *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* (2011).

The picaresque starts as a satirical reaction against the autos-de-fé, where the Spanish Inquisition prosecuted Christians suspected of practicing Judaism in private if we were to show a historical account of its beginnings. It had subversive, edifying, as in progressive, and emancipatory, as in liberal, underpinnings. While I cannot detail the enormous bibliography of the pícaro spread over centuries of Western civilization, I would like to expound on the symbolic form of the picaresque that appears "in comparatively recent times" (Blackburn 201).

For some unfortunate reason, the figure of the pícaro and its manifestation in the novelistic genre —which I perceive as a large corporation that amasses more and more cultural power in the literary field as the empirical need for certainty takes on fascistic features— has been lazily reduced to a mere trope in academic studies, hence the dire need for a historical and polemical re-reading of picaresque historicity. Alexander Blackburn affirms that "the picaresque novels reveal a recurrent nudity of the self before time" (201). Still, I would insert that this coming-to-nudity, this affirmation of the obscurity of the self as a means for achieving salvation, has a romantic notion of authenticity as its direct premise. *Lazarillo de Tormes* did not do that since the material, social, and ethnic struggles that existed in the Spanish of the Baroque era were still only about the dissolution of the lord-serf duality that supported the feudal system and not so much about the bourgeoisie transforming culture to fight for political power with the aristocracy and the Christian church.

However, the neutrality of contemporary liberal societies, resulting from the victory of the Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC) and the defeat of the proletariat, inhabits the picaresque. Furthermore, neoliberalism births the internal disease that the

rogue carried within it from the start: the aggrandized self, the unadulterated narcissism of consumerist society.[273] In sum, I see three stages of the picaresque. They differ somewhat from Blackburn's, as his book on the picaresque was published in 1979 when the welfare state had only started dismantling and neoliberalism had not fully taken root. Those three stages could be summarized as the **Renaissance pícaro**, the **anti-Enlightenment** or **romantic pícaro**, and the **neoliberal pícaro**. The first one corresponds with the emergence of the realist novel in the Iberian Peninsula and spreads over other cultures as capital accumulation occurs. The second one begins as a reaction against the forces of reason, which the Enlightenment era valorizes above everything else, and that I see epitomized in the peripheral Brazilian figure of Brás Cubas in the second chapter following other literary protagonists like Dostoyevsky's Nikolai Stagrovin. The third phase consists of the eventual alignment between the market and the self, which I choose to officially date following the Chilean coup that led to Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in 1973, from an economic standpoint, and the fall of the Berlin Wall (*Die Mauer ist Weg!*), from an ideological one. In concluding this short explanation about the multifaceted appearance of the pícaro throughout the last few centuries, I must also note that the possible Nietzschean overtones that hover over the figure of the rogue are not lacking in spirituality, for what is the will to power if not a demonstration of narcissistic might, a belief in the self as a problem solver?[274] However, this thirst for

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[273] For more on the subjectivities resulting from consumer societies, see Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979).

[274] These days, the pop psychologist Jordan Peterson, a YouTube celebrity and guru for (mostly male) millennials, exhorts his audience to believe in themselves, disregarding the common struggle for better wages and a better quality of life that the left trumpets and propping up the necessity for an assertive mindset that will eventually lead his audience to success. This

transcendence corresponds exclusively to the anti-Enlightenment pícaro. In contrast, the neoliberal rogue has fully adapted to a biodigital economy, predicated on the science of information and turning human ingenuity into a programmable emergence of subjectivity via artificial intelligence.

I want to ask myself where the narrator falls in this genealogy of rogues. He observes the lived reality of the factory workers as a consumer of entertainment, but he also consumes himself and his emotions. He energizes himself through contact with others or even from "the other within" (Yovel 68), but he only does so unabashedly utilitarianly. Akin to a big corporation in the marketplace, this rogue knows no appropriation bounds. Writing, which has long been related to artistic activities, becomes for him another source of individuation, however fleeting, just like ejaculation. This is how the narrator first singularizes and later disposes of the female worker. The writer channels throughout the novel the character of Inès Serrano from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Huis Clos* play, only that she is much more candid than Sergio Chejfec's narrator in *Boca de lobo*: "Moi, je suis méchante: ça veut dire que j'ai besoin de la souffrance des autres pour exister. Une torche. Une torche dans les cœurs. Quand je suis toute seule, je m'éteins" (47) (When I say I'm cruel, I mean I can't get on without making people suffer. Like a live coal. A live coal in others' hearts. When I'm alone I flicker out) (*No Exit* 15). The narrator's psychological need proposes the consumption of other people's life drama (Delia in *Boca de lobo*) as a form of existential entertainment, thus presupposing a genuine degree of emotional stunting: "Delia era el eje de mis acciones y pensamientos, y

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buzzword always works to be a surrogate for economic prowess. He is a well-known member of what has been called the dark web (credit to Zero Books for the expression).

yo existía solamente en la medida en que mi vida se relacionaba con ella" (*Boca de lobo* 83). A sentence such as this could be mistaken for a sign of romantic love. Still, the writing takes place long after the narrator's cruel mistreatment of the female worker discounts any good wishes. It emphasizes the cynical detachment of the I-voice instead.

Following the postulate of the writer/narrator being a neoliberal rogue, even mourning Delia's departure from his life provides him with yet another lifeline before discontent sets in. He does not and cannot have a name, this narrator, for the rogue, or the subject, is dead, and we, the corporations —also known in the United States as human—[275] have killed him (par. Nietzsche 34). However, paraphrasing Nietzsche, God keeps surprising the world after its death at the hands of the transnational capitalist class (TCC), and the former subject of romantic modernity keeps operating as a superfluous appendage to capital. As it were, *Boca de lobo*'s rogue behaves in a stereotypically neoliberal fashion. He works under the premise that all his observations and opinions are self-enclosed to the extent that the reader can feel the divorce between the narrator's actions and thoughts, let alone the effects that these have on the people around him, even if it is mostly Delia in this case. The following passage from the novel after he leaves her will be illuminating in this respect:

> Uno puede partir de la base de que todo pensamiento carece de futuro porque está hecho para sostener un tiempo muerto, alguno de manera más evidente que otro, pero al final todos se confunden en la misma inutilidad. Puedo sentarme en el extremo de la cama a esperar la noche, y mientras tanto mirar las paredes para descifrar algo de las voces que se escuchan más allá. En días así me sorprende la derivación del pensamiento, que de un lado a otro y sin advertirlo me lleva hasta la pregunta por el destino de Delia. Pocas veces la palabra destino me ha parecido más adecuada. Podría haber puesto "el futuro" de Delia; pero ese futuro en sentido estricto sería ahora

[275] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_personhood

> el pasado. Por el contrario el destino, haya transcurrido o no, se impone siempre como incógnita.
> Debo decir que cuando la dejé ella reaccionó con una sabiduría que, si bien no me provocaba sentimiento alguno, con el tiempo terminó avergonzándome. Cada vez más y más; incluso después de un largo período, una cantidad de años, cuando puede decirse que el tiempo ya hubiera debido sumarse al trabajo del olvido, primero el recuerdo de Delia me enternecía y después me abochornaba. Sin embargo no me arrepentía ni tampoco compadecía a Delia. La ternura, como se sabe, dura poco. Cualquiera sea la circunstancia es difícil que algo como la ternura perdure, incluso ante la reiteración de la circunstancia más tierna. Pero la vergüenza no. Una vergüenza bien merecida puede acompañarnos la vida entera, y no resulta raro encontrar vergüenzas heredadas sin mella de generación en generación.
> (*Boca de lobo* 87-88)

The interplay between an exploration of feelings on the part of the narrator goes in hand with time, with the boredom as he looks up at the ceiling and posits the futility of such thoughts, and most importantly, with the shame that he still experiences since he left her pregnant. He takes the reader in with what appears to be contrition and regret, but this is not the basis on which his shamefulness rests. After all, he does not repent about leaving or feel compassion toward her. Instead, the nature of his shame comes in the wake of this excerpt. In first instance, he asserts the following: "Ella no hablaba, lo único que hacía era seguirme con los ojos. Tenía la enajenación de las víctimas y, para quien no la conociera, podía parecer alguien extraviado" (88), and, ultimately, the narrator comes away with the golden nugget or insight I mentioned as a stylistic mark at the beginning of this chapter with respect to Chejfec's nebulous storytellers:

> En su mirada había incomprensión, era fácil descubrir eso; pero también había una falta de reclamo, sólo la mirada que busca cerciorarse de que todo es un mal sueño, una tormenta que demora en pasar. En esto consistía su sabiduría, y fue lo que terminó avergonzándome. Porque seguía sin reclamar, era como si pusiera la otra mejilla mientras la barriga en aumento era una prueba creciente de su dignidad (. . .) Puede sonar un tanto impropio, pero creo acercarme a la verdad si digo que Delia actuaba de este modo porque así se lo imponía su naturaleza proletaria.
> (*Boca de lobo* 88-9)

I will arrive at Delia and her 'proletarian condition' later in this essay. However, I wanted to incorporate this excerpt into this analysis because Delia only comes into view as the woman the narrator wants to know. Despite all the uncertainties that become integrated into his rhetoric, the chasm between them is one of class, which is what he indirectly communicates. In this relationship, he was the dominant force, physically and in terms of oratory. She had her silence, resilience, and labor; he wanted that too. The narrator can experience tenderness insofar as he can capture her singularity, enjoy it, and be let into her inner circle. However, he could not pretend to do love's work; in that regard, he was consistently self-serving. Aligned with the reading of the novel I am dissecting is Fermín A. Rodríguez's vision of the worker-writer relationship, which he construes as the narrator's desire to take "possession of the 'overabundance of being' imparted by Delia" (350). In his analysis, Delia closely mirrors the life of Macabéa in Chapter 4, even if the connotations of the current chapter point much more toward factory labor, communitarian empathy, and a sense of working-class sensibility. Even the language that this critic uses highlights the violence and cruelty exerted upon dividuality that the reader encountered already with Macabéa:

> Delia is a creature upon a threshold, exposed to the unstable world of need and desire; she is a body open to indeterminacy, with the non-actualized power of affecting and being affected, of absorbing intensity, of encompassing contexts, and expressing incipient powers. In her quasi-girl-labourer dispossession, she is charged with virtualities and potentialities that are inseparable from her immediate corporal existence, inscribed upon the shared and pre-individual field of affect (348)

The excess energy outside of the factory that Delia has yet to expend acts as the remainder that the narrator seizes upon to charm his way into a different form of life, to distill enjoyment out of the externality that she represents for him, and to ultimately profit

from her as the managerial class does with the precariat. Fermín A. Rodríguez goes on to affirm that this benefitting from the surplus value of the worker appears even more clearly in Roberto Bolaño's *2666*, where the also feminine bodies of the *maquileras* (workers in the textile industry by the US-Mexico border) and their desecration feature. To him, "labor is feminized" in these novels since the stories put into play "the creation, multiplication, and exploitation of that which is produced in the field of life (. . .) a field where the limits between the economic, the social, the political and the cultural tend to dissolve into the fabric of the living" (353). In this image of the depoliticized worker, the rogue works out a space for his exploitative measures to thrive and his account of reality to prevail.

This rogue knows that whatever cannot be apprehended by capital must remain hidden, or else the market would valorize it. In this sense, the rogue also epitomizes Tiqqun's Bloom: "Bloom (. . .) names a spectral, distracted, supremely vacant humanity that no longer accesses any other content than the Stimmung in which it ex-ists, the twilight being for whom there is no longer any real or any self but only Stimmungs" (19). Thus, the neoliberal pícaro, whether still presented as a subject or not, forms part of the incessant apparatus of capitalist valorization. However, if this rogue finds itself caught up in the market's productive process and cannot extrapolate itself from bare existence, the experience becomes a question to be answered conceptually. *Experience*, as the etymological root of the word indicates, reverberates on the term *experiment*. While the last one has come to be associated with the natural and hard sciences, both experiment and experience share a method in pursuing a particular goal: testing to gain knowledge on

a particular topic or subject matter. Experience, however, confers on the experiencer a poisonous gift.

The subject, ascribed to the law of the living and as a "being-towards-death" (*Being and Time* 296), to borrow Martin Heidegger's terminology, does not own the event, even if this can be photographed or reproduced. What stands for experience, then, under the neoliberal regime of representation, constitutes a simulacrum or a nonessential and eerie demonstration of an absence. After all, a camera may conserve bytes or perfectly toned skin but does not understand the becoming of being. Experience can be tentatively re-presented, as the etymology suggests. The necessary mediation between experience and the memory that accompanies it must include a combinatorial creative action —understood as *poiesis*, or making something out of nothing, on the one hand, and *tekhne*, defined here as an artistic technique for representation, on the other—, which in turn, and regardless of the purpose, confirms the circulation of services, goods, and capital among individuals.

There is also a conception grounded in so-called common sense, through which experience relates to aging insofar as the accretion of time helps accumulate common sense. The marketplace taps into this ungraspable concept of experience, as it tends to do with human capital, and reorients it toward a dynamic of growth. The neoliberal market's superfluous neutrality asserts a principle of general equivalence, transactional and money-centered that lavishly invites anyone to have and enjoy experiences to be repeated and *remembered* whenever an uninvited mood sets in. There is no escaping capital, says the lesson of this same experience, just as there is no action or desire that is not bound to be capitalized on. The mechanization and reproduction of emotions, cashed in as surplus

value, renders emotion worthless. Didacticism and dividual growth only exist in the mind of the privatized subject, which clings to whatever symbolic fantasy[276] it can find to preserve its self-worth.

However, also within this rationale, experience is a momentous event in a subject's life, contrary to everydayness. Within this setup, experience amounts to constructing a diachronic self, deprived of essence or indifferent to its existence. Under this premise, a biography —taken at face value by an empiricist whose mindset dominates the world of current affairs— turns out to be a means for valuing a subject's worth or dignity. To name some contemporary examples, those who are not valuable enough to have a book written about them, or those who have not earned a verification badge online, must earn that dignity in the neoliberal marketplace. The understanding of labor as a conservative anchor of the market, rather than in plain physical —as in physics— work, succeeds in its perpetuation because of our irrevocable consent. Progress can be factual insofar as thinking the human leaves the imaginary and gets replaced by a "globalized biopolitical[277] machine" (*Empire* 40).

In a machine-like fashion, the narrator intends to bridge the gap between experience and knowledge, thus offering a rebuttal to freedom. Following the Cartesian dictum of the *cogito* and modern science, the narrator conflates experience and knowledge in his search for certainty and "makes experience the locus —the 'method';

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[276] To fantasize stands for making something appear in its etymological sense: https://www.etymonline.com/word/fantasy

[277] Foucault used the concept of 'bio-politics' to describe a new form of power, emerging in Europe in the eighteenth century, exercised through regulating life processes such as health, disease, and procreation.

that is, the pathway— of knowledge" (*Infancy* 19). If experience devolves into empiricism, our materiality cannot be thought of as a locus of emancipatory aesthetics, and authenticity becomes a worn-out concept, a humanist notion of times past. The demise of the rogue in a post-historical society,[278] or the same event that gives name to this dissertation, constitutes the alpha and omega of the bourgeois subject, the ultimate mediator between feudalism and an overcoming of the human, or a neo-feudal global state.

Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" (133) parallels the narrator's recollection of events. He revisits his love story as if it were the ruins of History that one of the worker's children aims to rediscover among the rubble, seeing as his detachment from Delia seems to mirror the end of a socialist future and an imagined alternative to capitalism:

> La basura podía ser de origen rural, doméstico o industrial. Posiblemente esta tarea colectiva prolongaba esa arcaica labor del mundo que consistía en adivinar el futuro desde un sistema de señales; pero en algún momento se había producido la inversión, y desde entonces era una labor dirigida a desentrañar el pasado. ¿Era otra prueba de que el futuro había dejado de importar?" (*Boca de lobo* 64)

The narrator claims this activity constitutes a pastime for the children, rich in local customs. Thanks to the kids' play, the antinomies between a global market and the "imagined political communities" (Anderson 6) of nation-states come into plain view, and with them, the impotence regarding the potential uplifting of an increasingly precarious workforce under neoliberalism. In sum, the narrator's subjection to the history of humankind brings about the same stories that bourgeois society underwent in the last few centuries, seeing as both capitalism and the autonomous subject share the same

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[278] See Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992).

mythical roots.[279] Moreover, through its male narrator, this novella inspires the mourning of a solid ground for manliness to lie restfully. However, the gaze of the rogue remains, as does the tension between his persuasive and justificatory rhetoric alongside the muteness of the worker, who merges with the barren landscape while offering up the silence in response to the narrator's verbosity.

Subjectivation and Becoming

The story finds its grounding in a nostalgic remembrance of the relationship between the narrator and Delia (an anagram for Ideal), even if, by Sergio Chejfec's standards, the temptation would be to call his characters planets, in direct reference to another one of his novels.[280] This referent calls attention to the sensual aspects of the story, which become the tale as much as the rape and subsequent abandonment of the worker by the cruel narrator. Other planets imply a notion of coldness and instinctive separation or precarious relationality. The narration's tone points to a loss that the narrative voice has suffered and that he tries to remove utilizing writing. The abrupt act of violence with which the love affair starts to disintegrate, the rape scene, engenders the

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279 "If it is possible to assign the faciality machine a date—the year zero of Christ and the historical development of the White Man—it is because that is when the mixture ceased to be a splicing or an intertwining, becoming a total interpene-tration in which each element suffuses the other like drops of red-black wine in white water. Our semiotic of modern White Men, the semiotic of capitalism, has attained this state of mixture in which signifiance and subjectification effectively interpenetrate. Thus, it is in this semiotic that faciality, or the white wall/black hole system, assumes its full scope." (*A Thousand Plateaus* 182)

280 See *Los planetas* (2010).

world of difference, which, as Jean-Luc Nancy explains, lies at the heart of freedom itself:

> We share what divides us: the freedom of an incalculable and improbable *coming* to presence of being, which only brings us into presence as the *ones* of the *others.* This is the coming to presence of *our* freedom, the common experience of the exposure in which the community is founded, but founded only through and for an infinite resistance to every appropriation of the essence, collective or individual, of its sharing, or of its foundation (95)

Contrary to this vision of freedom, the narrator perpetrates a violence that inaugurates the darkness[281] —both the English title and her lack of textual agency— surrounding Delia and the narrator's own disorientation.[282] Before the escalation to his forcing himself on her, the walks they would take together functioned as an approximation to one another. However, his anthropological mindset would take him beyond mere companionship and into the terrain of analysis, ultimately to an eventual discarding of her. In this fragment of the narration, the writer-protagonist attests to the nature of his love for Delia: "Descubrir que era obrera, aunque me sorprendiera, fue decisivo para enamorarme de ella. Sin exagerar, era la marca que la distinguía del resto del género humano, y la condición que la señalaba entre todas las mujeres" (*Boca de lobo* 5-6). In the narrator's view, a worker stands metonymically for the whole of humanity. The worker's sweat and corporeal presence in motion at the workplace constitutes the

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[281] I had the pleasure of speaking to the writer himself, now unfortunately deceased, and he told me he was pleased with the translation from the initial *Boca de Lobo*.

[282] *Boca de lobo*, the title, might refer to the factory where the workers are confined in the fashion of disciplinary societies, but also to the Lacanian real, according to Patrick Dove: "Este tratamiento literario de la oscuridad se intensifica en la expresión *boca de lobo*, una figuración de lo que estrictamente hablando es lo no presentable o lo indeterminado 'en' toda presentación. *Boca de lobo* es a grandes rasgos análogo a lo real lacaniano: no está simplemente fuera o antes del lenguaje sino que es más bien el vacío que habita lo simbólico como su límite interno." (Niebylski 180)

secularized version of Christianity, the communist plot. Once the narrator builds the ideal, an "anagram" (Jenckes 52) of Delia, the imaginary —Delia's youthful presence— leads automatically to the symbolic order of a utopian commonality. In this manner, a "truth event" (Badiou 108) is instantiated. The darkness that gives title to the English translation of the novel, though, sets in on that truth after the rape, so Delia goes into obscurity, and the remainder results in a mournful narrator/writer who turns what exceeds the animal into writing the love story from a self-serving perspective. The profit he extracts from re-creating the love affair derives from this emotional surplus. In this way, *Boca de lobo*'s narrator practices the opposite of what Kate Jenckes calls a "myopic engagement with the world" (38), which she defines thus:

> It [myopic witnessing] is a form of witnessing that does not operate on the basis of a self-knowing subject who sees and seizes an objective truth from experience and can communicate that truth directly, submitting it to another's vision. Myopic witnessing requires an ongoing encounter with things that can never fully be known. This not-knowing involves a vulnerability and an openness to others and the world that is the first step toward imagining different forms of community than those based on a clear distinction between self and other, known and unknown. (38)

What I find distinctive about the pitting of *Boca de lobo*'s narrator against Kate Jenckes's definition of myopic witnessing is that I encounter a dissociation between the morose and meditative style of the narration versus the lack of sympathy and self-criticism of the first-person narrator. This contrast drives the curiosity about the psyche of the seemingly amoral character and the extensive remembrance and number of recollections regarding his love story with Delia and her relationship with the factory co-workers. The reader could initially assume that the first-person voice means to confess his guilt or sadness over the breakup in the novel's first pages. Still, this expectation gets blunted as he starts to position

Delia as a subject whose singularity rests mainly on the participatory aspect of the dividual, that is, on the factory and city landscape surrounding her and subjectivizing her. Far from imagining a new community, as Kate Jenckes suggests regarding myopic witnessing, he sees all too clearly, and the mystery that the first-person narrator introduces concerning Delia gets promptly disclosed. In replacement of this burning question of the first first-narrator, Delia's subjectivity and the nature of his supposed love for her, the narrator enhances the ethnological analysis of the factory workers' lives as well as the economic transition to the automation feature of neoliberalism, exemplified in character G, as I will explain later.

It transpires then that the story ceases to have a future as Delia begins to be represented as more than her dividuality. The moment the mother in her takes precedence, her story does not serve any purpose for the former lover. As inefficient as looking into a character's motivations may be, and at risk of sounding like a pop psychologist for a fictional character's inner pathos, a resolution exists in the writer to bring Delia's story to closure, if only as a means for self-preservation. The self is the neoliberal rogue's most cherished possession since there is a conscious effort on the part of this figure to define themself as an adventurer of affect ideas desiring to be immunized from communitarian life. One can easily question, similarly to Deleuze's conception of the subject, for whom the term rings hollow, if the pícaro can be an operative concept nowadays:

> We believe that the notion of [the] subject has lost much of its interest on behalf of pre-individual singularities and non-personal individuations. But it is not enough to place concepts in opposition to one another to know which is best; we must confront the field of

> questions to which they are an answer (. . .) to discover by what forces the problems to transform themselves and demand the constitution of new concepts (Cadava et al. 101)

Deleuze was inclined to create concepts that would help him resolve a set of problems or phenomena. In his mind, the subject, as an already-constituted figure with a long history behind it, hampered thinking. He would agree with Karl Marx or Jacques Derrida, who understood the human as another species-being,[283] no more or less central to living matter than a dog or a cat, to name a species with which *homo sapiens* tend to have an intimate rapport. Likewise, following the philosopher that most informs the post-human era,[284] Baruch Spinoza, Deleuze dissociates affects from self-actualization, thereby ridding philosophy of the gravity of the reductive subject-object predication. What implications may this have for the first-person narrator? He is overcome by a mode of being or "mood" (*Being and Time* 34) years after abandoning Delia, which prompts him to write, but the authority he demonstrates over the narration stems from a ubiquitous I, an effective rhetorical device that emphasizes the agent rather than the action, which purposefully occludes the brimming force of the novella.

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283 "Death seems to be a harsh victory of the species over the definite individual and to contradict their unity. But the determinate individual is only a determinate species being, and as such mortal" (Marx and Engels 106). Marx, however, as a human of his time, did not go as far as to challenge anthropocentrism.

284 In *The Intellective Space: Thinking beyond Cognition* (2015), Laurent Dubreuil specifies the historical origins of the term posthumanities: "The call for "posthumanities" to come is both comprehensible and legitimate. The institutional architecture of the humanities is crumbling, and its social value is shattered. Humanistic universalism is suspicious to most because of what it politically recovered and the current changes in anthropogeny. The defense of the humanities as "what makes us human" has largely become inaudible. The centering on tradition (instead of transmission) à la Hans Georg Gadamer is lethal—just another version of historicism." (116)

Given the successive events and observations remarked by the narrator, it would be helpful to use Deleuze's language to interpret his individuation or the process that defines the I-voice and which constitutes, among other affective dénouements, a becoming-old.[285] Interspersed across the story appear fragments such as the following:

> Ahora he vuelto del baño, del espejo donde observo mi barriga marcada por los años, indiferente, similar a la corteza de un árbol castigado. Pienso que guardamos los gestos de los otros como si fueran manchas, las figuras impuestas al azar sobre alguna superficie, que por esas cosas de la casualidad han decidido permanecer en el recuerdo, al contrario de casi todas las demás (*Boca de lobo* 81)

Rather than indicating age, the passing of time here points toward forming the I-voice. In this passage, a leap occurs from the descriptive to the abstract that can only be accepted within creative writing. The tree-like features of the belly constitute the geographic plain[286] of any object, including human objects. However, this voice keeps clinging to memory as a means of individuation.[287] This aesthetic tension between description and abstraction negates other possible configurations, attaching itself to a regime of signs that elicit a melancholic mood. As this mindset sets in for the narrator, the reader notices how the I-voice and the proletarian community theatricalize the class structure and divide. In other words, the different actors in the novel make contact without any change, negating the possibility of an encounter in the manner I spoke of in

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[285] Becoming-old here implies a series of self-conscious remarks that the I-voice makes that individuate him as an aging actor, so I am not referring to biological age.

[286] For a more thorough account of the key role that space plays in the novella, see Stephen Buttes's article on the subject-matter in the anthology compiled by Dianna C. Niebylski (2012).

[287] "Simondon's most basic argument is that the "individual" is never given in advance; it must be produced, it must coagulate, or come into being, in the course of an ongoing process" (*The Pinocchio Theory*: Simondon on Technology) http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=471

Chapter 4. In a neoliberal society, the upward mobility that the picaresque encapsulated gives birth to a post-picaresque sensibility where the main societal drives relate to conserving power and persevering in techniques of self-alienation and immunization from difference as a practical political behavior. As Oscar Ariel Cabezas argues, the realist novel where all these various characters, with their different social extraction, would interact in an overwrought fashion, become devoid of space for class struggle or enfranchisement (i.e., unions, trusted political representation) in a globalized setting where the coming of automation and probable job loss also looms:

> En el retrato de los obreros que Chejfec presenta la fuerza de trabajo no es solo manual, sino que deviene pensamiento acoplado en la mímesis que se da entre la subjetividad fabril y las máquinas industriales y posindustriales. Chejfec retrata un Sísifo femenino que de manera casi fantasmal se aliena en el juego virtual y repetitivo de la subjetividad subordinada a las ruedas subjetivas de la dominación capitalista. El Sísifo creado por la ficción de Boca de lobo aparece por fuera de los marcos de referencia del realismo de la novela social (569-70)

This reference to Camus's Sisyphus serves another purpose besides the inability of the worker to think or feel differently due to their labor being subjected to progressive mechanization and repetition, as Ariel Cabezas explains. From a perspective of roguery, the narrator suffers from melancholy as the flip of the coin to the class-based reality. Nevertheless, refrained as he is from the materiality of labor, he also stays enshrined in a cycle of ready-made thoughts, depressed, alone, and mournful because of Delia's heroic forlornness, which the reader is led to believe, the female worker develops as a defense mechanism from the mechanical and repetitive nature of her labor at the factory.

Literary Unreliability: An Analysis

The first-person narrator has been accused of "unreliability" (Booth 159). Still, there is good reason to know that the concept lacks potency, as it incorporates an aspiration to truthfulness in literature, a medium of creation. This demystification of unreliability proves relevant to dismiss talks of Aristotelian veracity of the I-voice when it claims to have fallen in love with Delia because she works at a factory. In taxonomical fashion, the I-voice will henceforth interact with the worker in her, or so his words will belie. Still, the use of language, or its formal expression, trumps the supposed subject-object relationship that the I-voice attempts to recreate. Let us propose an example of this atypical way of showing both tender appreciation and blunt analysis that the narrator masters:

> Hay quien piensa que lo fundamental, precisamente por ello, por ser esencial, no necesita ser dicho; que las palabras agregan y distorsionan la verdad. Por el contrario, he leído muchas novelas donde las palabras son capaces de descubrirlo todo, primero ocultan la verdad con distintas capas de significado y después la van develando, como las capas de la cebolla protegen su propio núcleo. Pero al llegar al centro vemos que no hay nada, que el trabajo fue justificarse y de esta manera crearse a sí misma. ¿Las vidas humanas son así de inútiles y enteras al mismo tiempo? Eso preguntan las novelas. Delia era una promesa, y a la vez era esa promesa ya cumplida. Ocupaba un lugar neutro. Cuando por primera vez me pidió que hiciera algo por ella, comprendí que era una persona que tendía a desvanecerse, a diluirse entre los demás y el resto de las cosas, dejando, como olvidadas, unas pocas marcas a primera vista ocasionales en aquello que se ha dado en llamar el mundo de todos los días, o sea el testigo indiferente de sus actos y travesías. Tal vez vuelva después sobre esto, aquella doble inclinación de Delia: a disgregarse y repartir un poco de sí y a mantenerse aislada, a contraerse y proliferar al mismo tiempo
> (*Boca de lobo* 10-11)

In the previous chapter, Rodrigo S.M. attempted to be sympathetic toward his creation while putting her down. The I-voice is less grotesque and more subtle than Rodrigo. Still, he shares several characteristics with that narrator: namely, their middle class, their being male, their dominating their female counterpart, either with words or

with actions, a justification for their behavior on the ready, and a lack of remorse for mistreating them. In addition, the I-voice experiences a becoming-rogue, and later his rejection of Delia will entail a becoming-old. However, the portrait of this roguish narrator in *Boca de Lobo* still needs to be drawn.

The self, indeed, appears ubiquitous. Regarding the *picaro*, the self is always accompanied by a hyphen. Whether self-awareness or self-control, self-doubt or self-sufficiency, the expansion of the self indicates not only its lack of essence but the cognitive overload that firmly pushes to fill the gap of the unknowability of the given subject. Aggrandized as it accumulates personological traits, the self's narcissism becomes inevitable, even if there is a search to avoid or bypass the natural self-fashioning[288] of the modern bourgeois subject. *Boca de lobo* demonstrates in its mimetic encompassing of the writer and narrator the inescapable call to stimuli and how thinking does not result in a more enlightened version of oneself but, on the contrary, devolves into a sterile and paralyzing osmosis with matter and other objects outside and within the body. Rather than being constituted as the question or crux of the novella, Delia is rendered hapless as an object of phenomenological study.

The narrator, for his part, bound to its study as a quasi-naturalist writer of the late nineteenth century, albeit with the addition of self-involved absorption, dissects Delia with the zeal of an entomologist. The reader could be led to imagine that a thorough sensorial description of someone whom the I-voice claims to have fallen for might guide to some acceptance of her uniqueness. However, this exercise, while seemingly respectful

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[288] It does not appear gratuitous that the coinage of this concept by Dr. Greenblatt relates to the Renaissance, when the picaresque and the primitive accumulation of capital were set into motion.

to Delia, only carries weight if she can be reduced to her embodying the proletarian condition. Only in belonging to this social class can the narrator compartmentalize every moment so he can enjoy her company and her-being-alongside-him while walking together after her laboring time at the factory.

At the beginning of this essay, a linguistic-based, psychoanalytic reading of the subject has dominated the course of this text since there was a need to explain the subject-object paradigm that the I-voice proposed, but to do justice to *Boca de lobo*, an affective, pre-individual account of the tale is necessary. At this juncture, I shift my focus to the "stammering language of revolution" (*Dialogues* 4), which would wave a minimalist flag if there were to be one. In philosophical terms, this would be moving away from the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, which posits the (in)dividual as a barred subject[289] traversed by language, to a more contemporary notion of subject-hood, wherein individuation occurs because of "various semiotic registers that combine to engender subjectivity" (*Chaosmosis* 1). To effectuate this perspectival change and remove the unnecessary weight that the bourgeois subject carries within it, —since it is crucial not to forget the understated yet unmistakable association of the narrator to a male white-collar figure— this revolution must reconsider the implications of the I in the novella. Just as it is not the same to talk about nostalgia as it is to bring up the word memory, the I-voice,

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[289] Lacan's definition of the subject is steeped in human language as the main dispositive undergirding the concept: "As should be evident by now, the intervention of the signifiers of the symbolic order (i.e., the discourses of big Others) is integral to the genesis of the need-demand-desire triad. Through the intrusion of these signifiers cutting into both the body and mind of the young child, a proto-subjective being of need, passing through the demands of discipline (in both senses of the genitive), is transformed into a subject of desire. Such a subject is "barred"—Lacan's matheme for the barred subject of desire is $—alienated from its natural needs and derailed onto the tracks of non-natural desires doomed never to reach enjoyable destinations" in https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/lacan/

which undergoes a simmering plethora of sensations, can potentially formulate or point toward something other than the ego-driven entity that identifies the subject of the neoliberal pícaro. Instead, he imposes his stamp on his coming-to-being to check his anxiety. Early in the story, and is one of those revealing moments with Delia, the I-voice stays briefly removed from judgment, only to invoke a desire to territorialize what it sees quickly:

> Viéndola caminar, sus dos piernas parecían sostener un misterio, el capullo cargado que espera un momento propicio para reventar y desplegarse. Con esto quiero decir que la pollera parecía estar hecha para Delia, que su naturaleza o sentido se realizaba completamente cuando –como se dice siempre de la función primera de la indumentaria– la protegía" (*Boca de lobo* 13)

Occupied with finding certainties, the I-voice troubles itself with the impossibility of reaching the "thing in-itself" (Kant 45). This conception of oneness as an ontology has the unfortunate ramification of seeing the human as a whole, when in fact, many scholars have shown this not to be the case.[290] On the contrary, I identify a need for the multiple in this I-voice, which supports the incomplete knowledge of geography that the eye (I) sight provides. Consequently, a frustrated vision of those blue-collar surroundings, alien to him, prompts adjectives such as indocile, intractable, or ungraspable, which annoy the narrator. This bias for the One, dominant in Western metaphysics, contrasts with the tendency in literary studies to understand literariness as a dissemination of meaning capable of undoing power structures.

The I-voice, as it is well known, wrestles with the loss of absolute control over its surroundings. It does not give up on the subject-object dyad, but the first-person narrator

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[290] See Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991) or Simondon's *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (1958), among others.

cannot sustain this control without breaking down language into pieces of affective potency. In this struggle between the production of subjectivity and affect, will and letting-be of the self (Gelassenheit),[291] the novella finds its character or form, as the next examples demonstrate: “El colegio irradiaba estudiantes, siendo Delia uno de sus innumerables rayos” pitted against “No me gustaba que Delia trabajara por lo más obvio, la circunstancia que paradójicamente la llevaba a hacerlo: porque así se convertía en otra cosa, en algo exterior a sí misma; sus pies pisaban una frontera más” (*Boca de lobo* 5). The dramatic focal point occurs when the ideal around which the I-voice individuates itself, Delia, surfaces in the text. The one-among-many-singularities become an attempt to seize this singularity and reify its uniqueness. The narrator wishes for her proletarian purity not to be blemished and for him to be able to be the sole external factor in her life outside of the factory and the workers’ homes. As an assemblage conceived virtually on an immanent plane, mood then conduces the I-voice's narrative and attitude towards Delia the worker as a preconceived plan on an organizational plane.

Earlier in this essay, I delineated the historical ascendancy of the pícaro concerning the rise of the myth of the autonomous self, the bourgeois subject. Then I also delimited three stages in its development, the last of which was the epoch of the neoliberal pícaro. This I-voice has all the makings of a post-human, understood as a

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[291] The Brockhaus encyclopedia currently defines Gelassenheit as “the comportment, attained by way of letting go of one’s wishes and cares, the comportment of a calm mental preparedness to willingly accept fateful dispensations of every kind” (Davis 27). As historical predecessors, we are referred to Meister Eckhart’s notion of “detachment” (abgescheidenheit) and the Stoic and Epicurean ideals of apatheia and ataraxia. It is Eckhart who introduced the nominalized form of Gelassenheit (gelazenheit), and, as we have seen, since then, the idea has had a long and varied history, both religious and secular (par. 27).

desiring machine that has given up on the spiritual search for the romantic pícaro concurrent with "grand narratives" (Vattimo and Rovatti 12). Indeed, existentialism's bad faith can be resurrected. Still, the humanistic undertones of the Sartrean concept do not rhyme with the neoliberal pícaro, closer to an automaton, engaging both in cynical processes of subjectivation[292] as much as of subjection.[293] Besides, the negativity in the Sartrean expression alludes to the negative dialectics of Georg Friedrich Hegel, who also saw the subject as indivisible despite its contradictions.[294] In other words, little does it matter how one accounts for ideology when any configuration of the human will entail some ideological structure.

Similarly, to discuss concepts such as alienation, put forth historically by phenomenologists and Marxists alike, rings shallow because of its widespread manifestation in the anhedonic style of cybernetic communication: "We no longer partake of the drama of alienation (. . .) It is no longer the obscenity of the hidden, the repressed, the obscure, but that of the visible, the all-too-visible, the more-visible-than-visible (Baudrillard 22). All in all, the I-voice configures itself as an ensemble of

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[292] Maurizio Lazzarato has this to say about control societies: "Isolated by "freedom" itself, the individual is forced to compete not only with others but also with himself. The permanent negotiation with oneself is the form of subjectivation and control specific to neoliberal societies." (*Governing by Debt* 186)

[293] Following from the previous footnote, here is Lazzarato's definition of subjection: "Subjection implies techniques of government that pass through and mobilize representation (political and linguistic), knowledge, discursive and visual practices, etc., producing "subjects of law," "political subjects," as well as "subjects" per se, "selves," and individuals. By producing us as individuated subjects, social subjection assigns us an identity, a gender, a profession, a nationality, and so on." (*Governing by Debt* 183)

[294] Jean-Luc Nancy claims this definition of the human in Cadava, Connor & Nancy (1991): "That which is capable of maintaining within itself its own contradiction." (6)

combinatory forces that are "socially produced, artifactual" (Sauvagnargues 208), in machinic fashion, and with a monomaniac drive to consume and profit emotionally from Delia's singularity.

Now that the (in)dividual as a human configuration has been posited, there needs to be textual evidence that language has a role to play in dismantling the ego-driven nature of the picaresque narrator, that the literary use of language can produce "lines of flight"[295] (*A Thousand Plateaus* 10) to escape narrowing visions of Saussurean structuralism. To do so, I would like to bring up Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality[296] and Deleuze's politics/poetics of differenc/tiation[297] regarding the primary text. There might not be a better example of a repetition which initiates a difference in the novella than the constant reminder by the I-voice that the narrator is a widely read character. As a result of some data mining, I found thirteen instances where

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[295] Anne Sauvagnargues is of great help in decrypting some of the concepts Deleuze & Guattari use in their mutual collaboration: "Style will be defined as placing language in intensive variation. This is why it is always defined as a line of flight implying intensive variation, an agrammatical, becoming-minor or becoming-animal of language, in other words, a creative transformation of syntactical materials and of conditions of enunciation." (42)

[296] I choose to understand intertextuality as the interrelationship between texts, especially works of literature; the way that similar or related texts influence, reflect, or differ from each other."

[297] Differenciation (with a c) concerns the movement of actualization that defines the genesis of individuated forms and stable organizations. These individuals reciprocally assume a virtual differentiation (with a t) of intensive singularities that reintroduce chance at every moment into the actual individuated system and determine its ideal consistency. Such is the duality of actual individuation and of virtual subjectivation that defines difference. I propose that this duality of difference, presented at the time of Difference and Repetition with the erudite formula of differenc/tiation (which along the way does homage to Foucault's analysis of Raymond Roussel and plays with the phonemic substitution b/p), is redeployed with the definition of individuation as haecceity in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1981), before being unfolded yet again in the study of the cinematic image. (Sauvagnargues 68-9)

the I-voice explicitly used the expression "He leído muchas novelas donde" (*Boca de lobo* 6 et al.) and even two more without the "en las que" addendum. Suppose there is something that all these examples have in common. In that case, it is the failure of hermeneutics in the face of Delia's haecceity[298] or any other encounter that the narrator has, but let us venture into one of those examples to evince both the concomitant interpretative failure and the attempt at co-optation of Delia's form-of-life:

> He leído muchas novelas donde los protagonistas no perciben la diferencia entre lo falso y lo verdadero: hay un lado cierto y otro falso de las cosas, las personas tienen perfiles verdaderos y perfiles falsos, uno elige por ejemplo la derecha como falsa y la parte izquierda de una habitación como verdadera, etcétera. Incluso me ha ocurrido leer un libro falso, o falseado por las circunstancias, referido a hechos que podrían haber sido ciertos, pero que al exponerse de un modo dado no conseguían serlo. Resultaban blancos y negros al mismo tiempo, o más bien, ni blancos ni negros; eran absurdamente falsos o verdaderos. Pues bien, junto a Delia yo comprobaba que tales confusiones eran inexistentes. Aunque a veces careciera de palabras, su expresión siempre resultaba recta, y ninguna ambigüedad interfería en el significado de su conducta. Proviniendo de ella, los silencios eran algo vivo, elocuente, parecían trabajados con la paciencia de las piedras, aptos para descubrir lo evidente sin nombrarlo
> (*Boca de lobo* 6-7)

Firstly, these stories, and these intertexts, are not mentioned because the narrative style precludes any proper nouns other than Delia, the object of desire that the I-voice constructs. Nothing can derail the unidirectionality of the prose, nor can clues be given about the narratives that compose the narrator's individuation.[299] Secondly, the serpentine parlance of this I-voice does not allow for any interference to the textual rhetoric it imposes. Lastly, the I-voice attempts to conflate the elaboration of a logic of authenticity

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[298] See Deleuze's *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life* for more information on the use of haecceity by Deleuze, pp. 28-9.

[299] The progressive financialization of the economy forces market actors to take risks and become able investors who forego the future by dint of a single (hopefully successful) future.

that singles out Delia as a wholesome subject, on the one hand, with the affective forces at play when the two characters, writer and worker, interact. This rhetoric of authenticity is built around a wise silence that the narrator tells us she practices. However, this quality gets soon depreciated by the same narrator because it doubles down on the disparity between the reader's lack of access to Delia's subjectivity and the omnipresence of the I-voice. The rest of the characters, including the narrator, bear no name. This opacity of the I-voice produces a rhetoric of domination —not to mention rationalization stemming from the monologic perception of this rogue —-over the sensorial signifiers that compose the novella, which Gianfranco Selgas confirms in his analysis of the novel:

> Además de la violencia directa materializada en la violación que se intuye en la narración, en el relato del narrador, es decir, en su escribir la novela se presumen esbozos de una violencia indirecta que se representa en el mismo uso del lenguaje. Con esto quiero decir que, en la escritura entendida como perspectiva del narrador de Boca de lobo, este construye su propia imagen de Delia y de los obreros, describiéndolos desde su punto de vista como personajes carentes de subjetividad o pensamientos propios. Esto podría situar al narrador como un individuo en una 'posición de poder' y 'dominación' que se impone a otro individuo en una 'posición de sumisión' y 'subordinación' (Selgas 164)

As I previously examined concerning the masculine-feminine contrast alongside the latter's domination by the former, Gianfranco Selgas also points out the spectral introduction of the narrator in the sphere of the factory worker's confines and ruinous neighborhood. In his way of knowing, the narrator naturalizes the class structure that he reproduces and legitimizes his actions, which see him coming in and out of the spaces he only has access to because of Delia.

Ultimately, the narrator's rhetoric regarding his storytelling exercises a tension inextricably bound to a schism between a scientific and an aesthetic paradigm. Science

needs a stable hypothesis to achieve a specific result. In the aesthetic realm, the diagnostic, while performed, needs to account for becoming and cannot reject contingency. Anne Sauvagnargues, following in the steps of Félix Guattari, examines this same conceptual divergence:

> The scientific paradigm corresponds less to the actions and imaginations of real science than to the representation we make of it. It defines the operativity of science as the discovery of an explanatory structure lodged in an eternity that necessarily looks longingly to the past because it presents itself as the stable essence of a reality sufficient. The aesthetic paradigm, open to the future, conceives of explanation as a risky endeavor, like a diagnostic construct. While the scientific paradigm would like us to believe that (. . .) to understand our societies, our political action, [and] our ways of thinking, we should find truths, the aesthetic paradigm (. . .) enjoins us to think about the operativity of our concepts in a prospective, uncertain, and unhinged way, (. . .) to decide whether, yes or no, it works. (Sauvagnargues 209-10)

The I-voice itself constitutes the actual networking node that encompasses both paradigms of knowledge, but here is where linguistics and dialectics, taxonomy and structure, reveal language as a given and contradiction as the genesis of consciousness, setting aside difference and affect, disparaging in the process the pre-individual in favor of the representative form of subjectivity.

Debt and Precariousness

Once the neoliberal pícaro has been established as an anarchic figure that comports itself venally, and as such as an amoral and timeless (re)productive vector of conforming signs, I aim to account for the semiocracy that both the narrator and neoliberalism create and how the *socius*[300] may undergo, or be undergoing, a becoming-

[300] I choose to ascribe to the following definition of socius: a unit in social relationships consisting of an individual.

pícaro because of the changes in production in recent times. *Boca de lobo*, a novella published right after the dot-com revolution,[301] when the current technology giants began to dominate the market through the Internet, signals a shift in our understanding of class. Likewise, the value of an (in)dividual begins to show itself in terms of marketable assets, and former constructions of communities, like the workers in the novella, get progressively undermined.

Added to this imperative to work on the self, a concerted effort exists on the part of capitalism to subject (in)dividuals into entering a creditor/debtor relation, which would and does mirror the subject/object operation that the I-voice attempts to emulate in *Boca de lobo*'s narrative without Delia's consent. However, affective forces containing non-actuality may still escape the total anchorage of the narrator as a *homo economicus*,[302]

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[301] The article in the journal Eurozine (July 2018) "When You Became A Product: A Chronology of the Internet" (https://www.eurozine.com/became-product-chronology-internet/) gives a succinct account of how the human became data: "The data in circulation is no longer restricted to your identity or your log-on times: it also involves your health, career, purchasing power and what you consume, your travel, your interests, opinions[,] and relationships. The emergent 'Internet of Things' is bringing a major expansion in the range of devices connected to the web: toys, clothing, 'domotics' (home automation), vehicles, drones, electricity metres, etc. Your 'smart' TV set is transmitting data about what you watch and, if it is fitted with a voice command, also conveying recordings of your voice – in order to improve voice-recognition software, of course." (Lemaigre)

[302] The term had, and continues to have, a long history. Other than Pierre Bourdieu, there are more recent take on *homo economicus*, like Peter Fleming's or Yannis Papadogiannis. In this essay, the term refers to how liberal and neoliberal economists have seen the human actor as an entity whose primary motivation lies in self-interest.

even if some theories, such as accelerationism[303] or transhumanism,[304] are more than ready to tap into future possibilities that affects and their potential and profitable readability offer to capital. Heading back to this relationship between debtors and creditors and taking up the theme of community under neoliberalism, it would prove relevant to discuss the worker's community relation to their debts:

> Esa tarde comprobé también que la idea de préstamo puede contener acepciones distintas y hasta contradictorias. Préstamo, deuda. He leído varias novelas que intentan resolver el sentido de estas palabras. No sé si lo consiguen; en todo caso ninguna plantea una forma de préstamo o de deuda apenas parecida a lo que, según su práctica, Delia depositaba en ellas. Delia pensaba que los préstamos no se cancelan; que aunque se devuelva, el préstamo introduce un cambio decisivo en el curso de los hechos en general, y que por eso la idea de devolución como reintegro, vuelta a la normalidad o compensación, es errada e incompleta. Pensaba que el préstamo sigue actuando en el tiempo aunque se haya efectuado la devolución. Esto era así porque en el objeto, en este caso la pollera, quedaban fijadas las huellas de los distintos propietarios temporales, o más bien usuarios, por los que había pasado. Esas marcas eran invisibles para cualquiera, pero ante los ojos de aquella comunidad eran también indelebles, lo que tornaba a los objetos únicos e inconfundibles. Con cada nuevo préstamo, el objeto –aquí la pollera– ascendía en la valoración colectiva. La prenda podía deteriorarse con el uso y la circulación, pero el daño se compensaba con el mayor cuidado que todos mostraban hacia ella. De este modo, los préstamos en general carecían de pautas temporales. No porque no existiera el compromiso de devolver las cosas, sino porque, al inscribirse las distintas posesiones en los objetos, la deuda se reproducía en el recuerdo de la comunidad. En esto consistía la deuda, según Delia, en una compensación innecesaria y siempre aplazada (*Boca de lobo* 13-4)

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303 As the term itself denotes, this movement, which stems from right-wing as much as left-wing circles, concerns itself with future configurations of society because of the creative destruction (Schumpeter) brought about historically by capitalism.

304 This movement appears to be inherently dismissive of the lives of working people because of how it is associated with the über-rich and their quest of immortality. However, there are signs that technological advances will reconfigure society as a whole (i.e.: synthetic biology, brain implants) rather than the very few.

Unlike the workers in this novella, capitalism teaches (in)dividuals how the most efficient manner of settling a debt consists of thanking your interlocutor after payment. Similarly, the creation of needs under the rule of capital rises so exponentially that objects, whether human or not, get discarded when they start to see a dip in their productivity. The I-voice, by then quite aware of the workers' condition of existence, suggests the debt mentality should be reversed:

> Muchas veces he pensado que los obreros con su cuerpo, con la fuerza que emplean a costa de su energía, son quienes expían nuestra indiferencia por el mundo; que ellos pagan con su trabajo en primer lugar lo literal, o sea lo que reciben como salario (. . .) y que también pagan todo aquello que no tiene precio, es decir, la deuda infinita acumulada por la humanidad (*Boca de lobo* 18-9)

If a substitution of humanity took place —which has grandiose connotations— for *the living*, or lively materiality, the excerpt would show more forcefully a becoming-plural of the pícaro, which nevertheless remains excluded from a more communitarian life, from redemption, and Delia's proletarian condition. Neoliberal governmentality, as an assemblage formed by freedom, individualism, and privatization, among other intensities, works actively against the coming-together of singularities and brings about left-wing melancholia.[305] The nostalgic reminiscing of the I-voice emphasizes the gulf between the two characters. It also attempts to filter out all the narrator's emotions concerning their relationship. I find myself in agreement with Alejandro Leara's perspective when he speaks of the I-voice's abandonment of Delia as a question over what it means to create for him as a writer versus for her as a factory worker:

> La novela muestra (. . .) que ese abandono ha sido una opción tan necesaria como equivocada. Necesaria, porque es la condición para pasar

[305] For more on the topic, see Enzo Traverso's book by the same title, *Left-wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (2016).

> de ser observador a ser narrador; equivocada, porque el pasado solo provoca, desde el presente cada vez más degradado del narrador que escribe y en el tiempo libre del que no trabaja pura nostalgia —y hasta culpa— que el relato no logra paliar. Por eso, la creación —ya sea con la modalidad de la procreación, del relato o de la ficción— nunca resulta del todo compensatoria. En todo caso, se trata siempre de una compensación tan frágil como transitoria; una compensación que la novela parece introducir para mostrar su imposibilidad (Niebylski 207)

Essentially, their approaches to lived reality (Delia's and the narrator's) are antithetical. The former has a more direct and intuitive relationship to her surroundings. At the same time, he fumbles around, looking for answers as to why he made the decisions that led him to the current situation, and he turns this query into a creative process. In moments of heightened introspection, the I-voice takes over the recounting of the story, as it were, and reveals the insufficiency of the written word in the face of what permeates our material becoming. Despite the lament, the gesture of impotence to bring back something tangible to the writing process makes the signature and accomplishment of creative fiction explicit. The I-voice —which at times appears indistinguishable from Sergio Chejfec's— pushes this metalinguistic and philosophical question so far as to elicit not only a story of abandonment but an essayistic novel on debt, becoming, cruelty, and the limits of affective relationality.

In recalling the tripartite characterization of the pícaro historically, I defended that the former romantic pícaro would turn inwards for redemption.[306] Even if the cries for an epiphany were not heard, rogues would take solace in creating a narrative for their life, as the narrator in *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit* demonstrates: "C'est peut-être cela qu'on

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[306] See Marie-Henri Beyles, better known as Stendhal, and his novel *The Red and The Black* (1830), or Louis Ferdinand Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932), where both heroes embody Friedrich Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, despite their apparent differences.

cherche à travers la vie, rien que cela, le plus grand chagrin possible pour devenir soi-même avant de mourir" (Céline 97) (Maybe this is what we search for in life, nothing but this, the greatest possible sorrow to become oneself before death). In this French novel's quote, the essential unhomeliness of the human species manifests. Paradoxically, this understated anxiety sets up the charges of guilt and indebtedness necessary for humans to fantasize about their centrality as the motor of history or accept their obsolescence as engineers of such record. In contrast to its romantic counterpart, though, the neoliberal version of this last picaro, Ferdinand Bardamu, acts in awareness of its subjection, as if he had come to terms with the assumption that capital benefits from the power of singularities and their unquenchable desire. This same pícaro rekindled as an "entrepreneur of the self" (*Indebted Man* 50), can only remain a meaningful signifier by staging its death, as in sacrificing the I as a source of individuation yet still using it as the primary pronoun arranging its linguistic overload in the process of affective defamiliarization.

Where does the I-voice fall among the detritus of a post-historical society? Where but in the irretraceable body of the text can its futility be heard? In the case of *Boca de lobo*, this deadly proposition comes to fruition as a becoming-multiple, as arguments without owner, as data without a subjectivity, as the ultimate assemblage [agencement]: "Uno puede partir de la base de que todo pensamiento carece de futuro porque está hecho para sostener un tiempo muerto, alguno de manera más evidente que otro, pero al final todos se confunden en la misma inutilidad" (*Boca de lobo* 87). In this defeat, the I-voice acknowledges loss as the process capitalism seeks to obscure and even overcome. Where previously disciplinary efforts were more pronounced, now governmentality

progressively demonstrates a softer means for decentralized control.[307] By way of machines and digital devices of surveillance, capitalism delegates the power of subjection to (in)dividuals themselves:

> It is impossible to subordinate human personhood to the dictates of positivity entirely. Without negativity, life degrades into 'something dead.' Indeed, negativity is what keeps life alive. Pain is constitutive [of] experience (Erfahrung). Life that consists wholly of positive emotions and the sensation of 'flow' is not human at all. (Han 55).

I made my argument regarding precarious relationality in the previous chapter thanks to the notion of empty time from Deleuze's tripartite conceptualization of time. In this case, the flow that Byung-Chul Han observes points to this empty time. Capitalism's friendly power over bodies and psyches appropriates humans' needs and desires, perpetuating an already-debunked self. Under the circumstances laid out by a biodigital economy, the turn toward the posthuman can hardly be resisted as the new form of creative destruction, where what comes to an end is an obsolete notion of what it means to be human. If this is the case, the neoliberal rogue would not be so much prefiguring as adumbrating a posthuman society of conformity to the postulates of technological and capital progression.

Concluding Remarks on Community

What would be the basis on which community rests if the commons,[308] or commonality, can hardly be envisaged from within the entrails of neoliberalism? How

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307 In the process from disciplinary societies (panopticon) to control societies (ban-ticon), capitalism takes on new digital clothing.

308 See *Omnia Sunt Communia* (2017) for an understanding of the commons that attempts to go beyond the corporatization of (in)dividuals.

can commonality and the acceptance of difference be compatible without a treaty preventing indifference, or tolerance, from escalating into aggression? Where are the limits of peaceful respect if most beings wish for the freedom of their insular seclusion? Eventually, the question remains: Where are the limits of private property or even privacy? In Boca de lobo, the I-voice interrogates itself somewhat differently or answers to a love call that solidifies with the expression *female worker*, undermining whatever this sign does not contain. In what appears to be a factory in the process of automation, the I-voice starts a relationship with a young female whose communitarian work and life exclude him incommensurately, so he can then partake in it as a form of control and enjoyment arising from the appropriation of her difference.

Her relationship with materiality strikes a contrast with his white-collar lifestyle. Her technical skills, or handiwork, sensorial in nature, elicit an element of rawness and "readiness-to-hand" (*Being and Time* 23) to her job, whereas his writerly occupation mediates such relationship to matter. This disparity sharpens its focus around the understanding of objects as more than commodities on the part of the workers: "Quizá derivaba de allí el apego colectivo a los objetos; que guardaban marcas de otros tratos y manipulaciones, ignorados y esenciales, sin las cuales perderían, los objetos, su valor auténtico" (*Boca de lobo* 87). Delia knows instinctively that her relationship with the factory is symbiotic, and she and her fellow workers co-construct themselves as technical objects[309] with the factory machines. The agency, or freedom neoliberalism, promises to give every actor in the market does not align with the workers. The expression

[309] They seem to believe in the intrinsic ontological value of objects, which is reminiscent of the study carried out by Martin Heidegger in the first part of *Being and Time* (1927).

'proletarian condition' that the narrator repeatedly brings to the fore is what the I-voice uses to point out the ease with which the workers dismiss selfhood. This configuration of the I-voice, the bourgeois looking down on the worker, disgusted by the seeming simplicity of the latter, proceeds to blemish Delia's materiality as a vengeful god attempting to make her share his shame for being human.

In a turn of events for the narrator, though, neoliberalism has begun to blur the line separating blue and white-collar jobs in the process of proletarianization. The I-voice, rebelling proudly against this, subjectivizes itself in his rapport with Delia at the instance of rape. Becoming old, a textual reworking of nostalgia, and a not-so-uncommon reaction to industrial or financial[310] changes in production occurring across several work spheres, also affect writers like *Boca de lobo*'s narrator. Seen in previous centuries as influencers of their time, writers now need to play second fiddle to other media, which communicate faster —regardless of accuracy— than a morose and lone-subjected agent.[311] Similarly, G, Delia's fellow worker, deterritorialized because of losing his job in favor of a more efficient machine, starts to walk around the city as an object present-at-hand but which has currently devolved into neoliberal waste. The inability he faces to increase his human capital does not go unnoticed to his coworkers: "Apenas G tuvo la mano levantada, cada uno de sus compañeros comprendió que más temprano que tarde él abandonaría el trabajo. Simple, fugaz, y aunque también habitual, en ese contexto era sin

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[310] See Lazzarato's *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on Neoliberal Condition* (2012).

[311] There are, of course, ghost writers, which brings the conversation back to money and class.

embargo el gesto del inadaptado" (*Boca de lobo* 82). Unlike him, the narrator comments, Delia shows strength by somehow numbing herself in front of the machine:

> La verdad es que no sé si los obreros tienen una idiosincrasia particular; después de conocer a Delia y a unos pocos de sus compañeros tiendo a creer que sí. En cualquier caso uso la fórmula como una simple asociación: la abstracción en las situaciones fundamentales, como frente a la máquina, se repetía en el caso de Delia en varias otras circunstancias. Un tipo de ausencia quizá relacionada con las operaciones cuantitativas que suelen realizar los obreros (*Boca de lobo* 36-7)

Doubtlessly, nothing like a proletarian identity or "identidad proletaria" (46) exists. Still, the narrator calls the reader's attention to G's hand gesture as if it were a glitch in the systemic configuration of factory labor that every other worker unanimously comprehended. Noticeably, the first-person narrator (the neoliberal pícaro) assumes control of the narration, so the initial lyricism regarding the worker becomes more pervasive. By speaking of their silence, the sweat on their brow, or small gestures that are mainly concentrated around Delia's body in motion, the I-voice emotes both his non-belonging as well as the ultimate rejection of a group of people, the factory workers, and yet, he also conveys with delicacy and even tenderness the workers' craft and ability to subsist in less-than-ideal material conditions. Indeed, none of the workers speak for or of themselves in the story. The rhetoric around the working class reads like a eulogy on behalf of a people who represent the other side of capitalist surplus, namely, the living labor of which Karl Marx spoke about in *Capital*: "This distortion, which is peculiar to and characteristic of capitalist production, of the relation between dead labor and living labor, between value and the force that creates value, is mirrored in the consciousness of the capitalist" (425). Whoever is outside this group of people (the idealized workers) is outside their experience, which comprises an assembling with the industrial machine, and

thus a different regime of signs. Consciousness for the writer partly equates to acknowledging debt toward Delia and the others.

Furthermore, the rendition of the workers' daily routine in *Boca de lobo* into the creative act of literature comes across as implacably foreign. The silence of the workers gives the professional writer that the narrator happens to be the confidence and motivation to write. However, underneath the narrator's appreciation, there is a cold acceptance and a lowkey awareness that he has also taken advantage of them as a boss would. Not directly, since he is not the factory owner, but because his reflective writing is also the consequence of having studied them for the duration of his relationship with Delia. He took a loan from the workers the way they understood it, not in terms of usury but attending to objects as singularities, in constant circulation and with no specific owner,[312] like Sergio Chejfec's novel. I agree with Maximiliano Sánchez that the worker sees in the written word a potential lie —unreliable narration— while the worker's word still carries the truth of the referent:

> Entre los obreros, el lenguaje escrito ocupa el lugar de la mentira pura. Mientras la palabra dicha por un obrero lleva siempre la verdad del referente, la palabra escrita, ese conjunto de signos dibujados sobre un papel —ese conjunto de figuras sin relación con los cuerpos que nombra— conduce siempre a la mentira, a la ausencia, al escamoteo del referente. (Niebylski 200)

Boca de lobo also speaks about the different limbs that participate in factory work as if the organic body had been undermined and given itself to the machine's needs to function and continue the inescapable process of value production. The mournful tone of the narration recalls his infamous parting with Delia, but also metonymically, human labor as

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[312] Money is the mediating element that facilitates the exchange economy even before private property comes into the picture if we are to follow the words of the late actor Michael Kenneth Williams, who played Omar Little in the acclaimed TV show *The Wire*: "*Money ain't got no owners; only spenders.*" (S4. E4, D. Simon)

the forgotten actor of history. The term fabulation, used in Chapters 3 and 4, comes in handy here, as a writer-narrator uses memory to bring about the event that is meeting Delia and her factory co-workers. Similarly, the factory members have their way of historicizing their present and sustaining their livelihood, exemplified in the manner they make use of objects that passed from one hand to another and underwent multiple services of barter-type lending:

> Lo esencial de las mercancías era poseer una historia larga y compleja, que paradójicamente se interrumpía cuando la mercancía alcanzaba su pleno desarrollo, se constituía como tal. Después vivía en la gente a través de esas apariciones y préstamos simbólicos. Quizá derivaba de allí el apego colectivo a los objetos; que guardaban marcas de otros tratos y manipulaciones, ignorados y esenciales, sin las cuales perderían, los objetos, su valor auténtico (*Boca de lobo* 87)

In this excerpt, the narrator extrapolates from the factory workers' situation and thinks through the differences between the commodity [mercancía] and an object that can be subject to reterritorialization and repurposing. Moreover, he brings up the concept of authenticity concerning the collective use and lack of ownership, which provides an object with a provisional aspect rather than a final product that the commodity offers to a consumer at a retail store. The critic Juan José Guerra initiates the idea that the class difference between the narrator and factory workers also establishes itself in how they machine time. While the neoliberal rogue pushes his analysis to comfort himself in a melancholically comforting feeling, the factory workers deal with the precarious relationality that undergirds the dividual with the lending of objects that remind them of their commonality and belonging to a network of shared experience:

> El inconsciente del tiempo llega al presente a través de los restos. Los barrios en ruinas y la precariedad generalizada de los espacios representados en Boca de lobo constituyen formas de sobrevida de un pasado industrial visto desde la óptica de un futuro difuso y crepuscular.

> Como restos de un tiempo que solo puede ser captado en su descomposición, estas formas son la huella material de una ausencia. En tal sentido, la novela de Chejfec extrae del paisaje urbano degradado la memoria de un mundo social en retirada. Ahora bien, la visión crepuscular acerca de la vida de los obreros, en particular, y las entonaciones pesimistas que parecen emanar del relato, en general, podrían ser leídas por el contrario en clave emancipatoria. A la luz de esta interpretación, el montaje heterocrónico dispuesto por la novela —que revela, en nuestra lectura, la larga historia de explotación de la clase obrera— no constituiría un mecanismo para lamentarse por el pasado perdido sino un dispositivo para activar la rememoración y, en definitiva, promover la redención de las víctimas de la historia. (Guerra 13)

This critic can then create a dichotomy between workers and the narrator from the materiality standpoint. While the latter aims to transcribe lived experience into a writer's style so a generation of readers can benefit from knowing what the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism could entail in terms of the historical changes to subjectivity, the impoverished worker of the welfare state relies on materiality from a more direct, intuitive, and non-reflexive manner. They also have a more transient relationship to ownership. In opposition to this mindset, the rogue in the times of neoliberalism —the novella was published at the turn of the century, and there are strong reasons to believe the historical period aligns with the narration—sees no other option than to accept instrumental reason, even if means being at the service of profit. How can a roguish figure engage in an activity that generates no reward? We could say that in neoliberalism, labor merges with the immaterial,[313] so it comes to muddle value as well, as it turns the human actor into a machine of self-realization for the sake of subsistence and capitalization. One if not the main characteristic of the mischievous rogue was laid out in Chapter 2 with the dark picaresque and the proto-liberal landowner Brás Cubas. This

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[313] See Lazzarato's article *"Immaterial Labor"* http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.html

roguish protagonist would say to the reader with a grin what Charles Baudelaire keenly understood about the nature of modernity, that mimesis works to individualize as well as to create isolation, to collectivize as much as to bring people together: “Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat, —Hypocrite lecteur, —mon semblable, —mon frère!” (6) (Reader, you know this dainty monster too; —Hypocrite reader, —fellowman, —my twin!) (7). Control societies and the latest installment of the fourth and newest industrial revolution, predicated on biodigital convergence, have not only removed the stages of commodity production from the consumer, but they now aim to make the consumer the main commodity as a means for sustaining monetary valuation as naturally occurring, so that even so-called socialist measures can adhere to neoliberal governmentality.

The rogue, subjected to the laws of transnational capital, enters into contradiction with itself because of the myth of its autonomy. It spearheads the anthropocentric revolution in the sixteenth century but falls short of acknowledging the debt it has contracted with the community, however intolerant and exclusive, from which it arises. The narrator in *Boca de lobo*, impervious to the forces that impel the human to a more communitarian way of life, decides to soak up the pressure of the interpolating otherness[314] within, and he stays within the limits of a failing and self-reflexive subjectivity, which mirrors the body as it decays. However, otherness needs an unquestioned conception of the subject to exist. Despite a veritable effort to make sense of everything around the I-voice, this lone subjectivity ends up dispersing and disseminating in a becoming miasmatic that declares itself an accurate ontological

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[314] See Immanuel Levinas’s *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1969).

position vis à vis human experience when deprived of emotional or ideological anchorage.

Speaking of the utilitarian love of the narrator, and since he unequivocally argues that Delia being a factory worker was decisive for him to fall in love with her, it can be said that he confesses to the unidirectionality of his desire and cynicism. Conversely, bourgeois romantic love needs a certain blindness in the face of an ideology that the rogue dismantles. The post-picaresque or neoliberal sensibility that the narrator personifies ascertains to the reader that the only exit to the different waves of capitalist entrenchment of the economy via financialization and public-private conflation lies in capitulation to their hegemonic positionality. Upon an acceptance of the current era of governmentality, coupled with the progressive "enframing"[315] (*Basic Writings* 327) inherent to the techno-scientific age, desire becomes regulated and encapsulated under the banner of ergonomic suitability, thus matching the love requirements of privileged humans. This monad, the I-voice, keen on achieving autonomy, and attempting to immunize himself from communitarian logics, seeks to pursue his physical needs and develop a possible valorization through his infatuation with the female worker while sustaining the fantasy of the self. However, in his underdeveloped multiplicity, the narrator only manages to impersonate the anxiety that makes the rogue and the dividual an inherently unreliable yet subjected figure.

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[315] The essay "The Question Concerning Technology" has been one of the main influences in the turn against anthropocentrism, revealing how the neoliberal subject has become standing-reserve to our techno-scientific era: "Enframing means the gathering together of the setting-upon that sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means the way of revealing that holds sway in the essence of modern technology and that is itself nothing technological." (45)

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

These four narratives and their respective chapters have put into perspective a post-picaresque aesthetic that engages with (neo)liberalism as the mode of subjection and socio-economic reality that people worldwide must confront, either by examining race (Chapter 2), colonialism (Chapter 3), gender (Chapter 4), or labor (Chapter 5). I claimed throughout this manuscript that the once fertile genre of the picaresque and its subversive origins against the Spanish Inquisition merged with a liberal ethos and instrumentality. To prove this thesis, in Chapter 2, I examined the character of Brás Cubas to show how a literary genre like the picaresque could have had a demise around the nineteenth century and what could have supplanted it. I advanced the answer that the picaresque of the Spanish Golden Age had eventually shown a dark side and aimed to show how this darkness had to do with the development of the human spirit toward individuality as a formal contract with the state. In the three centuries that separate the publication of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) with the date of publication of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881), canonical oeuvres of political philosophy were written, such as Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall, and Civil* (1651), Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Du contrat social; ou, Principes du droit politique* (1762), or Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). The individual became progressively entrenched through those three centuries with market forces and liberal ideology. Indeed, it was Voltaire who, after one of his many trips to England, foresaw contemporary secular societies as he valorized commerce and finance over religious doctrine to achieve a rationally-driven economy and society. Thus, the

creative destruction that Joseph Schumpeter described as the critical feature for the dissemination of capitalism across cultures and countries was to be perceived in the gradual disappearance of guilds in the age of Reason or Illuminism (which already contains this darkness as the other within), or in the failed promises of the French Revolution. This dynamic interplay between technological progress and the destruction of traditions and forms of life went along with capitalist waves of colonization, extraction, accumulation, and appropriation stemming from the pursuit of private property —which has already begun to encompass the digital sphere with the turn of the twenty-first century to seek new colonizing spaces— that led, eventually, to the control of the world economy on the part of the transnational capitalist class (TCC). The affective aftermath of this capitalist storyline, beyond the empirical wealth gap between the haves and the have-nots, or the looting of much of Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia, was the victory of pragmatic cynicism.

I then tried to situate the cynically humorous attitude of Brás Cubas as the conservatism rooted in slave power and as a subjectivity concomitant with land ownership in Imperial Brazil. Likewise, I compared this character to other novels' protagonists of great relevance to nineteenth and mid-twentieth-century literature, such as the existentially flavored Nikolai Stagrovin in Dostoyevsky's *Demons* (1871-2) or the recalcitrant and reactionary Ferdinand Bardamu in *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932). I showed that Brazilian scholarship had a strained relationship with Joachim Maria Machado de Assis' body of work because of his irrefutable indebtedness to European literary tradition through his many novels and stories. This thesis was mainly in agreement with the most relevant scholar on *Memórias póstumas*, Roberto Schwarz,

regarding the posturing of the first person narrator (Brás Cubas's caprice and volubility), while also incorporating the discussion on the post-picaresque aesthetic as a formal, historical, and philosophical force. The aim after that was to demonstrate the existence of this dark picaresque in the roguish narrator and to provocatively include Machado de Assis within the picaresque regime because of his racial background and oblique approach to the creation of the novel *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*. In doing so, I transposed the European zeitgeist about the picaresque and its demise to Brazil, pinning Brás Cubas as an initiatory character to this cynical pragmatism of liberal ideology. All these aspects made Brás Cubas exemplary in positing the historical leap from the Iberian Peninsula of the Golden Age until the last days of colonial Brazil and explaining what caused the picaresque to lose the emancipatory elements of subversiveness and non-conformity. In Machado de Assis's creation, I see a keen and astute subversion of the picaresque. Even if Brás Cubas upholds the myth of an autonomous subject, the memoir deconstructs this vision since the reader realizes the main character speaks only with the authority that his upper-class status and privilege grant him. Thanks to Brás Cubas's undeterred insouciance, I could anchor liberal subjectivity in the Americas. Henceforth, I was able to move further into the 1970s, prelude neoliberal governmentality, and explore the following chapters from the combined forces of neoliberal economics and information theory. In this context and based on this second chapter, I gained sufficient historical and literary footing to examine how the other narrators would respond to the intelligent yet dark image of thought introduced by Brás Cubas.

In the third and fourth chapters, I developed the concept of the dividual as an ontological premise to examine the novels *El entenado* and *A hora da estrela*. In these

narratives, I wanted to theorize the dividual and be able to make the concept concrete with the help of Clarice Lispector's *A hora da estrela* (1977) and her posthumous writing as well as Juan José Saer's *El entenado* (1980). In these novels, the writers advanced features of a post-picaresque aesthetic, such as unreliable narration, first-person narrators who cease to be disenfranchised, and response to self-interest, promoted by a powerful [puissance] version of dividuality. First, and in *El entenado*, the reader encounters an adventurous character who is nothing less than heroic. This older man writing from the attic of his home chooses to hide behind the semiotic assemblage of literature, defined as the combinatory selection of written signs to produce an aesthetic effect, to recount an existence lived in the margins of the Imperialist Spanish crown and the cannibalistic Colastiné Indians. By coming closer to Saer and his writings, both novelistic and essayistic, I pay homage to the aesthetic paradigm to which he laid claim and that he defended as the space of literature in *El arte de narrar* (1980) and *El concepto de ficción* (1965-1996). Considering his non-fictional work, the essay uses *El entenado* to propose a reading against the grain of contemporary scholarship in literary criticism, mired in dualist concepts like otherness, virtue signaling of one culture over the other, and possible rewritings of history with more or less definite agendas.

The central thesis regarding what comes to replace the picaresque is outlined in these middle chapters. The concept of the dividual needed an extensive bibliography, even in philosophical circles, which made compelling its transposition to the field of literary criticism to articulate and analyze characters. As I broke down the characteristics of the dividual, its contrast to individualism became apparent. The latter correlates to the mentality of two first-person narrators (Chapters 2 and 5). In contrast, Chapters 3 and 4

correspond to the more dividual characters,[316] which provide a counterpoint to the amoral first-person narrators in Chapters 2 and 5. To this end, I established three different components of dividuality: division, participation, and partition, to which relationality was added as the glue.

Along with these features, I proposed that Saer's dividual, or the cabin boy, introduced to dividual theory the more psychological terms introjection and experiential awareness, which seek to move dividuality toward a harmonious balance between the desire for communing (participation) and an attraction to autonomy (partition) to pursue adequate ideas and conform careful attention to the environment. Instead, Lispector's dividual in *A hora da estrela*, Macabéa, puts into perspective the deadly consequences of not being able to develop defenses against the way of the world to preserve dividual integrity. This character's innocence and poverty expose the societal handicaps that poor material conditions engender and how these deterrents largely determine a dividual's value in the marketplace. Moreover, Lispector offers her dividual nature as an intimate memorialization of her coming to being in her posthumous literary output. At the same time, Saer's conception of dividuality externalizes life's challenges to encounters with powerful actors and powerful institutions that can potentially thwart an upsurge of autonomy within the dividual.

In these middle chapters, there was a mindful decision to promote a valuation of dividuality over the hierarchical, institutional, and corporate-like versions of the human associated with individualism, posited in terms of legal concepts such as person or

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316 I qualified Rodrigo S.M. as a conceptual persona and hence not a fully dividual character because of its explicit subordination to Clarice Lispector, as the writer behind the narratorial voice, as well as Rodrigo's metanarrative detailed struggle to wrest himself from his selfhood as he writes.

subject by burgeoning nation-states. This contrast constituted an attempt to find an aesthetic and theoretical niche to give an account of characters and their environment without bringing into the conversation the ragged dichotomy between the individual and the collective. In its stead, I proposed an ontological concept that would render the face-off between these two terms illogical given the multiplicity of drives traversing the human, along with the massive network of information and uncontested yet ready-to-hand knowledge that is the world wide web and its avatars. As explained in the Introduction, this digital aspect of the dividual reproduces the essential ambiguity of the concept or at least the linguistic muddling of its potential for meaning-making. My analysis also elicits a warning against the likely misuse of the dividual as a result of its proliferation since the application of many others in scholarly research, such as Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope or dialogic imagination, to give an example from the 90s, have known to suffer from a catch-all mentality that would disparage these terms' initial conceptualization.

The middle chapters work hence in opposition to the third and the fifth. On the one hand, all stories share the standard features I laid out in the Introduction regarding the picaresque, but only the middle two present a vision of dividuality. In *El entenado*, Saer does away with judgment to narrate the story of a cabin boy who swiftly adjusts to the curveballs that life throws at him. At the same time, Lispector presents a struggle that a male narrator faces between sadistically hurting Macabéa so she can survive in a less-than-ideal world or loving her unconditionally. In this dramatic fight over the nature of testimonial literature and literary representation, Lispector lays bare the many motivations that the narrator has for the how and the why of a story. In this complex

process of fits and starts that her writing reproduces, Rodrigo S.M.'s multiplicity of drives reveals the inherent dividuality that Macabéa possesses despite excluding her from the discursive flow and reducing her to bare existence.

In the fifth chapter, I brought back the conversation to the evolution of the picaresque genre to assess how the liberal Brás Cubas had developed over time and morphed into his neoliberal counterpart. Most of the literary criticism about this novel studies the workers and their class, the geography of the fabric, the barren surroundings that would define Delia and the narrator's relationship, and the concept of history advanced in the novel. Still, scholars have not paid enough attention to the first-person narrator and his post-picaresque rhetoric. The dark picaresque manifested in Brás Cubas then serves as a preface to neoliberalism and its effect on the subjectivity of this last narrator. Moreover, in *Boca de lobo* (2000), I delved into how a developing digital economy affects the professional writer and nameless I-voice, who recreates the neoliberal severance of selves into different aspects of our lives as he distances himself from Delia and the factory workers. In so doing, the reader realizes the compartmentalization of the narrator's psyche and gathers an all-encompassing solitary existence from it. This final narrator, as does the one from the second chapter, highlights the partition feature (over division and participation) that is an intrinsic part of the dividual, closing thus the door to a vision of dividuality present in the middle chapters.

I conclude this fifth chapter by foregrounding the tension between white-collar and blue-collar jobs in a changing economy. In analyzing the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, predicated on the demoralization and further alienation of workers because of practices such as outshoring and outsourcing, I shifted my interest from the narrator to

the factory workers. With the help of characters such as G, who loses his job to a machine, I showcase how the pendulum between partition and participation of the dividual moves toward the partition end of the spectrum with the turn toward neoliberal economics.

My thesis has presented the demise of the picaresque and the kind of aesthetic, dividuality, that replaced this original idea. My theoretical approach was not favorable to understanding literature in Latin America as a field of representation of workers' struggle against the bourgeoisie that goes hand in glove with leftist politics, which I nonetheless broadly support. I maintain, though, that all these chapters were sensitive to the world around them and that this can be deduced from the novels examined in this essay. In the first place, Machado de Assis was able to fight positivist and eugenicist ideas by foregrounding a satirical memoir of the Brazilian elite. In Chapter 3, Saer created a character whose trajectory and ability to adapt and juggle different life forms fill the reader with awe and admiration. In Chapter 4, Lispector makes the reader empathize with a subaltern dividual like Macabéa, whose existence uplifts the lives of the downtrodden and disenfranchised class. Lastly, Sergio Chejfec makes us consider humanity's debt to their working-class through living history and how Delia entails an iteration of this ongoing silent struggle. In contradistinction to this affective and class-based history, the first-person narrator's discourse showcases egregious detachment from the factory and its surroundings while proposing an individual story of rape and abandonment of a female laborer.

It was also not my purpose to somehow bring these writers closer into or further away from the so-called Latin American canon —even if I took into consideration their

current symbolic capital in their respective countries and also internationally to feature them in this essay— nor push them to have any representational weight and use for their nation-states. I spoke about Machado de Assis and what an unlikely success his literary career was given his racial background. Saer lived in exile from the successive coups and Peronist governments and was the son of Middle Eastern parents. I also spoke about Lispector's serendipitous arrival in Brazil and the poverty she had to endure in the early years of her life in the northeast of this massive country. Lastly, I explained the foreign and forlorn style of Sergio Chejfec's narratives, let alone the emotional and chronological detachment he felt about his persona and how this translated into the ghostly geography his narrators would populate and embody.

Since adolescence, I had been fascinated by tricksters and, later, the more seriocomic myth of the picaresque. The remembrance of this fascination made me realize a discontent that had set in concerning those narratives. They were not able to deliver the affective intensity that I once experienced. This disillusion initiated the thought process that germinated this project. In the first place, I comprehended that I needed to shake the myth of the picaresque as it was known in the field of literary criticism and literary history. Second, I needed something new to replace it that would align with the current Zeitgeist. Fully immersing myself in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze gave me the start of an answer, as did the four novels that I have studied here, and then, amidst my multiple interests spanning technology, perception, and ways of knowing, I found a theoretical and aesthetic niche in the concept of the dividual. Dividuality makes possible accessible and interdisciplinary thinking that proves attentive to the inner life of the sensible. The creative realm of the imagination guards the multiplicity against the path well-trodden,

mostly predicated on cynical distance or disinterest. I opened the reading of the literature to its mediatic and philosophical reverberations while staying true to the aesthetic thrust of the novels, which like the late Sergio Chejfec once said, allow us to live twice. Likewise, and paraphrasing Deleuze, I believe in having carved out a new Leibnizian folding with this work, a new differenc/tiating of the dividual, a singularity that could further itself in different academic fields.

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