

Fictional Timing: Neoliberalism and Time in the Contemporary Latin American Novel

by

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Elvira Vilches

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the Department of  
Romance Studies in the Graduate School  
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2020

ABSTRACT

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## **Abstract**

My dissertation, "Fictional Timing: Neoliberalism and Time in the Contemporary Latin American Novel", studies recent developments in the Latin American novel to better understand the relation between economics and time in contemporary Latin America. I analyze Alberto Fuguet's *Las películas de mi vida* (2002) Jorge Volpi's *No sera la Tierra* (2006), Pedro Mairal's *El año del desierto* (2005), Diamela Eltit's *Los trabajadores de la muerte* (1998) and *Mano de obra* (2002), as well as *Barataria* (volume 1 published in 2012, volume 2 published in 2013) by Juan López Bauzá, to argue that at the heart of the Latin American novel's examination of the shifting signifier that is "neoliberalism" (Brown 20), we find a return to matters of time and temporality. Since the early 1970s, Latin America has provided a site for political experiments in reshaping the dynamics between the social and economic spheres, thus between citizens and the market. The region became the third great stage for the neoliberal model, as well as the first systematic experiment of neoliberal reforms during Pinochet's dictatorship (Valencia 478). It has become all but commonplace to credit changes in technology, debt reforms, privatization, austerity, and global markets for a distinctively contemporary experience of time as the acceleration and compression of lived experience that ensures a predictable future (Harvey 1989; Lazzarato 2012). While taking this now commonplace view into account, I conclude that contemporary Latin American novels insist on the heterogeneity of temporal experiences. Each chapter explores these diverse times at work within neoliberal rationality, discourses, practices, and subjectivities.

## Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	iv
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1: Seismologists and Cartographers: Chronotopes for a Latin American Novelization of the Global in the Neoliberal Epoch</b> .....	24
<b>Chapter 2: I've Read this Before: Narrating the Temporal Tensions of Neoliberalism in Pedro Mairal's <i>El Año del desierto</i></b> .....	65
<b>Chapter 3: The Domestic Dispositif in Diamela Eltit's <i>Los trabajadores de la muerte</i> and <i>Mano de obra</i></b> .....	104
<b>Chapter 4: Digging for Pasts: Archeology, Anachronisms, and Debt in Juan López Bauzá <i>Barataria</i></b> .....	143
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	179
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	182

## Introduction

In the second part of Juan López Bauzá's *El Resplandor de Luzbella* (2018) the reader discovers that the island of Luzbella explored in the first part of the novel might be a fiction within the fiction itself, in the form of an online journal developed by a group of professionals from a wide range of disciplines. "Luzbella," one of the founders, in a speech reminiscent of Borges' short story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," states "is nothing more than a virtual space created by a multidisciplinary workshop of artists, scientists, technicians, programmers, etcetera; involving all of forms of creative skills: literature, visual arts, design, animation, photography, cinematography, architecture, economics and urban planning, among an infinity of other disciplines" (309). Prior to that, the reader knows Luzbella as an island in the Caribbean where a group of Puerto Ricans, from all walks of life, settled in the early 1970s with the mindset that in order to save Puerto Rico, they first had to leave Puerto Rico. In the second part of the novel, the same idea is present but "leaving the island" is no longer a physical reality, but rather a virtual one: "hemos determinado que la única manera de intervenir en nuestra realidad para intentar transformarla es yéndonos de ella, salirnos de sus garras mediante la ficción (309) [We have determined that the only way to invest in our reality in order to transform it, is to leave it behind, escape its claws through fiction]. Luzbella is no longer an island in the Caribbean, but rather a simulation of reality (309) which explores

another possible Puerto Rico where Puerto Ricans are not colonial subjects of the United States, where debt and austerity were not part of the citizens' daily experience, where the island was not a hub for financial experiments. By providing alternatives to the status quo of the island, the online journal (*El Resplandor*) begins transforming the way citizens react to the constant abuses of the state and the financial district, until the journalists are forced to escape the island. In another Borgesian move, the fiction with the novel ultimately becomes the reality with which the novel concludes, blurring the lines between reality and fiction with some of the members of the journal joining in a Luzbella ritual mentioned in the novel's first chapters.

Along with *Barataria* (2012) (analyzed in Chapter 3), *El Resplandor de Luzbella* is part of what López Bauzá has called his theory of the novel, following José-Carlos Mainer's observation that the best way to comment on a novel, is to write another novel (Bauzá 2013b). At the heart of his project he places the question of how novels articulate political crises, economic debacles, and the dismantlement of the welfare state (Bauzá 2013b). López Bauzá follows in a tradition that suggest the history of capitalism and the novel has been intrinsically intertwined (Osteen and Woodmansee 1999; Shell 1978; Heizelan 1980). For contemporary authors like López Bauzá, and others studied here, the question becomes what do novels do after Latin America and world has been transformed by political and economic changes commonly referred to as neoliberalism?

Across the region, an exploration of this relationship between the novel and the latest phase of capitalist history can be found in the writers of *McOndo* in the mid 90s, Cuba's Special Period writers, Puerto Rico's *Isla del (des)encanto*, and Mexico's *generación del Crack*, as well Latin American literary criticism (Avelar 1999; Cárcamo-Huechante 2007; Fornazzari 2013; Masiello 2001; Serra 2015; Williams 2002).

I argue in this dissertation is that at the heart of the Latin American novel's examination of the shifting signifier that is "neoliberalism" (Brown 20), we find a return to matters of time and temporality. Since the early 1970s, Latin America has provided a site for political experiments in reshaping the dynamics between the social and economic spheres, thus between citizens and the market. The region became the third great stage for the neoliberal model—first the United States and right-wing European nations, then Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union after the fall of communism—as well as the first systematic experiment of neoliberal reforms during Pinochet's dictatorship (Valencia 478). It has become all but commonplace to credit changes in technology, debt reforms, privatization, austerity, and global markets for a distinctively contemporary experience of time as the acceleration and compression of lived experience that ensures a predictable future (Harvey 1989; Lazzarato 2012). While taking this now commonplace view into account, my argument is that contemporary Latin American novels insist on the heterogeneity of temporal experiences.

López Bauzá's *El Resplandor de Luzbella* serves as an exemplary case of the contemporary novel's emphasis on heterogeneity of time. The distinction the novel creates between Puerto Rico and Luzbella illustrates what Henri Bergson described as the split between virtual and actual which occurs at every instance. In one of Bergson's major theses on time, he proposes that time at each moment splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past which is preserved (Deleuze Time-Image 82). The past, according to Bergson and Deleuze, "is," it never ceases to be, as we generally understand it. It differs from the present in that it is no longer active, it has ceased to act or be useful, but has not ceased to be (Deleuze Bergsonism 55). In this sense, they are different in kind. The past, in its eternal being, coexists with the present as the *virtual*. "The characteristic of virtuality" Deleuze claims, "is to exist in such a way that it is actualized by being differentiated and is forced to differentiate itself, to create its lines of differentiation in order to be actualized" (Deleuze Bergsonism 97). The virtual creates the condition for the actual, but as diversion rather than reproduction, it creates multiplicities, it introduces chance as a key element in the process of actualization. Luzbella in López Bauzá's novel, I would argue, functions as the virtual to Puerto Rico's actuality. Rather than being a separate space, physical or virtual, Luzbella is the coexisting pasts that introduce the possibility for a different Puerto Rican present without colonialism or massive indebtedness. Additionally, using Borges, Bauzá invokes

a literary tradition that is itself invented in questioning the naturalization of particular modes of time. It is my belief that this relationship between time and economics seen in López Bauzá's work is central to the contemporary Latin America's novelistic production. My objective is not to replace time as the acceleration and compression with a Deleuzian or Bergsonian version of time, but rather to highlight how these novels by Alberto Fuguet, Jorge Volpi, Pedro Mairal, Diamela Eltit, and Juan López Bauzá reveal the necessity of a heterogeneous understanding and resistance to the temporalizing strategies of neoliberalism.

### **Neoliberalism, the Novel, and Time**

The first challenge confronting any study involving neoliberalism, regardless of the geographical scope, is defining what is meant by "neoliberalism." Neoliberalism, as Wendy Brown has shown, has been a loose and shifting signifier (Brown 20). The ambiguity or confusion produced by the term stems primarily from the difference between the two major schools of thought for defining the term: a Marxist tradition best exemplified by David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005) on the one hand, which describes neoliberalism as an economic project, grounded in the free-market principles of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, initially designed to "restore the power of economic elites" after 1970s stagflation signaled the demise of post-war embedded liberalism (Huehls 2); And on the other hand a Foucauldian tradition based

off Foucault's, which focuses at times on his notion of governmentality, and other times on neoliberalism as a new rationality that emerges in the 1970s through a set of knowledges, technologies, and practices. As opposed to Harvey's use of Hayek and Friedman, Foucault prioritizes the production of a neoliberal subject, the *homo oeconomicus* as an "entrepreneur of the self," based on Gary Becker's notion of human capital. The tension between these two approaches also takes the form of a clash between materialism and idealism, neoliberalism "from above" versus neoliberalism "from below," or studies of institutional changes versus studies of subjectivising strategies. My interest in the novel and time in this project emanates from the idea that what novels tell us about time helps us avoid an endless back and forth between the different schools of neoliberal thought by focusing on what frames neoliberalism rather than the specific definition of the terms. My argument here follows four crucial steps: (1) In order to avoid the back and forth between the traditional schools of neoliberal criticism, we require a study that underscores what Elizabeth Grosz call the incorporeals: void, space, time, and letka, as the subsistence of the ideal *in* the material or corporeal, in other words the subsisting conditions for, that which frames, corporeality (Grosz 2017: 5); (2) as Martijn Konings has argued, neoliberalism is characterized by a concern with temporality that remains absent or suppressed in classical economic liberalism and in neoclassical economics (Konings 23); (3) all novels

tell us something about time, even those that don't appear to be about time reveal key aspects of how we naturalize certain notions of time (Currie 3); (4) The contemporary novel registers a shift away from the dominance of space towards a dominance of time which coincides with what Robert Hasson has called the "temporal turn" of the late-1990s and 2000s.

This project aims at demonstrating how Latin America, as an experimental ground for neoliberal reforms, is a fundamental case for understanding of the heterogeneous times and temporalities articulated in the contemporary novel. Carlos Fuentes, in a sentiment similar to that of Mark Currie, considered the exploration of time one the defining qualities of Western literature:

Yet another paradox, if you please: if on the economic and political plane the West has been incapable of recognizing the variety of time, in its literary heritage, from Homer to Faulkner, in the writings of Sterne, Coleridge, and Henry James, From Cervantes's critique of reading to Joyce's critique of writing, at the heart of Proust's bedchamber, Kafka's castle, or Virginia Woolf's lighthouse, it does nothing but offer us a dazzling ars combinatorial of the possibilities of time (71).

Fuentes proposes in 1981 that the 1980s were destined to be a decade of time: "By the decade of time I mean a time in which the critique of time becomes paramount as the explicit or implicit reality behind many, perhaps most, of the problems we shall be facing. The critique of time proposes a critique of history as exclusive future orientation;

a critique of the idea of progress" (62). However, as Fredric Jameson has famously stated, it was space which dominated time during postmodernism. Time, which had been at the forefront of modernism, became subdued under the rule of space. For Jameson the spatial imagination was of principal utility as a way of understanding late-modern capitalism (Hassan 86). Thus for Jameson, the "system" of postmodernism culminates in the experience of the space of the city itself (696). Jameson would suggest in a later essay that the word postmodernism designated an artistic style, and would refer instead to postmodernity with important implications: "The word [postmodernity], along with its new reality, was globalization; and I began to realize that it was globalization that formed, as it were, the substructure of postmodernity, and constituted the economic base of which, in the largest sense, postmodernity was the superstructure" (Jameson 2015: 104). He recognizes however that a new kind of production is emerging, whose ultimate possibilities we do not yet fully understand (105). Literary Critic Mathias Nilges has argued that postmodernism is no longer a vehicle for current literature, because the fictions of postmodernism have become the dominant language of the neoliberal present (112). For Nilges, the end of postmodernism also marked the successful completion of one of its constitutive projects, a shift into the status of omnipresence (113). In other words, Nilges understands the end of postmodern literature not as an end to Jameson's postmodernity, but as the moment the fictions of

postmodern literature become the reality of neoliberalism. He suggests that the shift towards the “neoliberal novel” registers the transition from fiction to reality by turning to realism and to matters of matters of time and temporality (111). He writes: “The reappearance of the attention to time in the contemporary novel, which, together with realism, aims to examine our present as a matter of actually existing postmodernism, accordingly articulates itself in opposition to these characteristics of postmodernism” (111).

Fuentes’ call for a decade of time did not take place in the 1980s as he had predicted, but instead it was the 1990s and the turn of the century, as Robert Hassan has indicated, which saw an emphasis on the nature of temporality in the social sciences and humanities. The anthology *Time: A Vocabulary of the Present* (2016), edited by Joel Burges and Amy J Elias concur with Hassan that the shift towards time studies or a temporal turn took place in response to the “global turn”. Some of the now-classics of the era are texts like Jay Griffiths’ *Pip Pip: A Sideways Look at Time* (1999), James Gleick’s *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything*, Elizabeth Grosz’s *The Nick of Time: Politics, Time, and the Untimely* (2004) and *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (2005), Rita Felki’s *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (2000), and Peter Osbourne’s *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant-Garde* (1995), among others. In the world of literary criticism, some exemplary works have been Wai Chee Dimock’s *Through Other*

*Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2006), Dana Luciano's *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth Century America* (2007), Gil Harris's *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (2009), and Idelber Avelar's *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning* (1999), along with recent studies in narratology and time such as Gary Saul Morson's *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (1995) as well as Mark Currie's *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* and *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise* (2013). For the purposes of this study, other notable publications have been in the study of film and time, such as the Bliss Cua Lim's *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (2009), and the work of Vivian Sobshack, studies on the relationship between sexuality and time in Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010) and *Beside You in Time: Sense Methods and Queer Sociabilities in the American Nineteenth Century* (2019), and anthropological approaches to time studies like Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (1983).

Alongside the temporal turn of the 1990s and 21<sup>st</sup> century, the corpus which I have selected starts in 1996, with the emergence of the groups *McOndo* in Chile, the *Crack* in Mexico. Diamela Eltit, who I study in chapter 3, is the only writer in my selection who also published during the 1980s, but the novels I study are part of second phase in her work that began near the turn of the century. By focusing on a corpus from

the 1990s to the present, I am interested in the use of time after the emergence of a body of Latin American novels that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the global dominance of capitalism. As Mark Fisher argues in *Capitalist Realism* (2009), following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the problem for capitalism was no longer how to absorb and contain energies from the outside, but in fact the opposite: “having all-too successfully incorporated externality, how can it [Capitalism] function without a fully integrated externality, how can it function without an outside it can fully colonize and appropriate”? (8). The fall of the Berlin Wall is therefore the precise moment at which there are no spaces outside the hegemony of global capital. I believe this to be a significant event in the shift from the spatial dominance of postmodernity, to the temporal turn in the 1990s across disciplines, including the novel: with no more space left to conquer, what has been capitalism’s expansion in relation to time? For the novelists of this period, globalization is no longer a process or a contested possible future, but the reality of their present. Then, how do these novels challenge the all too common assumptions that the temporal experience of global capital is that a homogenized compression and acceleration?

The emergence of new canon of Latin American literature cannot be discussed without recognizing the legacy and the shadow cast by the Boom. The authors I analyze here, Alberto Fuguet, Jorge Volpi, Pedro Mairal, Diamela Eltit, and Juan López Bauzá

respond not only to the Boom, but also to the Post-Boom, and postmodernism. Brett Levinson claims that “nowhere more than in Latin America has the literature of the second half of the twentieth century, specially Boom narratives, played a more important role both in state formation and in the globalization processes that go hand in hand with the state’s fall into the private sphere, that is, with neoliberalism” (3). As Donald L. Shaw says in the opening of *The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction* (1998), one the biggest challenges of defining the Post-Boom period, is that the Boom itself has always been an elusive and complex phenomenon. For Shaw nevertheless, the period of the Post-Boom begins in the mid-to-late-1970s with writers like Isabel Allende, Antonio Skármeta, Rosario Ferré, and Gustavo Sainz. In the Post-Boom, he identifies a return to a more realistic, representational form of fiction, with clearer emphasis on history and sociopolitical commitment (25). Shaw’s use of the term Post-Boom is purposely applied in contrast to studies of Latin American postmodernism like *Postmodernity in Latin America: The Argentine Paradigm* (1994) by Santiago Colás, Raymond Williams’ *The Postmodern Novel in Latin America* (1995), and the work of Nelly Richards. One of the primary differences of these two trends that followed the Boom, for Shaw, are the more “radically experimental” novels of the postmodern writers like Ricardo Piglia, Reina Roffé, José Balza, and Diamela Eltit (170). The Latin American postmodern novel according to Williams differs to the North American postmodern novel, as it was, like

the Post-Boom, a response to the writers of the Boom. Williams also stresses that Latin America had multiple postmodern discourses. Writers like Eltit, Piglia, Sarduy, Roffé, Emilio Pacheco, and Moreno Durán all offer radically different kinds of postmodernisms (15). In contrast to the Post-Boom of Shaw, the authors of Williams' Latin American postmodern novel have been enormously influenced by Deleuze, Derrida, and Foucault (14), and distance themselves from Boom writers like Cortázar, Vargas Llosa, Fuentes, and García Márquez by opposing "grand narratives" (19).

For Levinson, Latin American literature, especially that of the Boom, both as a vehicle for conservatism and as an agent for subversion, is bound from its inception to the rise of the state. The question of the authors in this project becomes what happens to the literary tradition of the Boom, and to the novel, once the region goes through a transition from state to market, as Avelar understands the "transition." Following Kojin Karatani's argument that today's capitalist nations are characterized by the triplex system of the Capital-Nation-State, we must also mention the nation in relation to the novel. In *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange* (2014) Karatani describes the relationship between capital, nation, and state, all different and unique in their own way, as a Borromean knot, in which they supplement each other, and therefore the entire system would collapse if one were missing. He describes the Capital-Nation-State system as follows:

In its structure, there is first of all a capitalist market economy. If left to its own devices, however, this will inevitably result in economic disparities and class conflict. To counter this, the nation, which is characterized by an intention toward communality and equality, seeks to resolve the various contradictions brought about by the capitalist economy. The state then fulfills this task through such measures as taxation and redistribution or regulations. (1)

Supplementary and antagonistic at times, Karatani's Capital-Nation-State system positions the nation as directed towards an intention of communality and equality, which seeks to resolve the various contradictions brought about by the capitalist economy. The echoes of Benedict Anderson in Karatani are deliberate, as Karatani believes the nation is the imagined restoration of the community that was undermined by the commodity-exchange economy. Under neoliberalism, the novel, which has always been bound to Karatani's Capital-Nation-State system, undergoes a recalibration towards capital and markets, but never entirely lets go of neither the nation nor the state. For authors like Alberto Fuguet, this is precisely what sets them apart from the writers of the Boom, as he says in one of his most controversial statements: "Before, Latin intellectuals had to choose between the pen and the sword, now it's PC or Macintosh." However, it is crucial not to mistake the recalibration towards an interest in the market as a full embrace of market values by all of these authors. These are not the novel of Ian Baucom's *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005) which helped produce confidence in

credit systems, but in the same way they reject the nation and the state, they also show a disenchantment towards credit and financialization.

Although the period of transition of *McOndo* and the *Crack* did look towards ideas of marketing, branding, and the global trade reforms as alternatives to the nation-state, the novels of Eltit, Mairal, and López Bauzá are all critical of every element of the Capital-Nation-State system, and the emphasis towards the market is not as a viable alternative to the nation-state, but as yet another dangerous fiction. That being said, they insist on the history of the novel, and of literary history. These novels are critical of nostalgia towards the nation-state, and disenchanted with the present produced by neoliberalism, but Eltit summons Euripides' *Medea*, López Bauzá rewrites *Don Quixote*, and Mairal revisits the entire history of Argentina's literary history, as well as writers like Joyce, Plath, and Hawthorne among others. In doing so, I would argue that these authors propose the novel, as the fiction bound to the Capital-Nation-State from its inception, also has the capacity to activate a virtuality that produces new actualities we have not yet imagined.

In accordance with Karatani's suggestion of a shift towards markets over the nation-state, the analyzed in this dissertation come from different countries—Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Puerto Rico—rather than a specific national tradition. My work however is indebted to scholars who have preceded in depth studies of national literary

traditions in Latin America in relation to neoliberalism, or late capital, such as Alessandro Fornazzari's *Speculative Fictions* (2013), Alejandra Laera's *Ficciones del dinero* (2013), Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado's *Strategic Occidentalism* (2018), and Luis E. Cárcamo-Huechante's *Tramas del Mercado* (2007). Caracamo-Huechante analyzes Chilean literature, including a chapter about Alberto Fuguet, from the premise that the free market is constituted by a cultural discourse, from which a series of rhetorical and imaginary interventions hegemonically spread through society (Cárcamo-Huechante 17). Carcamo-Huechante avoids the shifting definitions of "neoliberalism" by instead focusing solely on free markets and culture, although in later projects he does use the term neoliberalism. Fornazzari has also studied the relationship between cultural production and Chilean neoliberalism where, following the work of Brett Levinson, he understands neoliberalism as "a kind of thinking" and "a way of comprehending the world" (6). Fornazzari identifies a similar transition towards realism in Chilean novelist Jorge Donoso under neoliberalism than Nilges saw in the American and British case. Fornazzari's focus on the transition from the dictatorship to democracy is an approach that has also been used by some of the most significant contributions to studies of neoliberalism and cultural production in the region, rather than nation-centered projects, most significantly Avelar's *The Untimely Present* (1999) and Francine Masiello's *The Art of Transition*. Avelar takes a different approach to Fornazzari and Masiello

however by considering “the transition” not in terms of dictatorship to democracy, but state to market transition ushered by the dictatorships (11). A key difference between the work of Avelar and Masiello to my own is that novels I work with are not part of a transition period, but rather novels that are already breath within the effects of the neoliberal transformation. My dissertation is undeniably informed by these critics but I would argue that given the multiple ways that neoliberalism emerged across the region—dictatorships, neocolonialism, trade deals—a nation-centered approach is too limited of an approach for the questions driving this project.

In spite of the differences on the origins and applications of neoliberalism in the region, my dissertation follows in the claims of Maurizio Lazzarato that debt—both public and private— lies at the very core of the neoliberal project. Debt itself is not unique to neoliberalism as David Graeber’s 5,000-year history of debt reminds us, as well as Nietzsche’s analysis of debt in his famous *On the Genealogy of Morals*, nor is it a new topic for writers as we know from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* to the long history of works on debt identified by Margaret Atwood in *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth* (2008). However, following the 2007-2008 economic crisis, we have seen renewed interest in questions of debt and its particularities under neoliberalism, most notably in publications such as Maurizio Lazzarato’s *The Making of the Indebted Man* (2012 [2011]) and *Governing by Debt* (2015), David Graeber’s *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*

(2014), Miranda Joseph's *Debt to Society* (2014), Richard Deinst's *The Bonds of Debt* (2017), Elettra Stimili's *The Debt of the Living* (2017 [2011]) as well as *Debt and Guilt* (2018 [2015]), and Éric Toussaint's *The Debt System* (2019 [2017]). These scholars all seem to share a common interest in understanding how changes in financial capital, and the moral stances upon which debt operates not only lead to the 2008 debacle, but have worsened since the crisis. In addition to the financial crisis of 2008, this scholarship is often linked to the question of how debt has changed through its history, but particularly during the neoliberal period. Debt theorists have developed their own theories of indebted time based on a neutralization of the future and erasure of the past. Peter Fleming claims in his book *The Mythology of Work* (2015) that neoliberal debt works by erasing the past and reducing the relationship between creditors and debtors to a narrative of "if you took the money you have to pay," or "if you could not pay, why take the money?" Fleming mentions this dynamic, which I think is crucial, in passing, almost as a given, without developing what makes it possible or how it operates. Graeber suggests an interest in the past but concludes that our conception of the origins of debt and money functions retroactively, that is to say, the "origin" is generated to address or promote the concerns of the present. And finally, for Lazzarato debt produces a future-oriented sense of morality by anchoring the actions of the debtor to a moment of reimbursement, Lazzarato claims that this process "neutralizes time" as the creation of

new possibilities. Given the centrality of debt to the neoliberal project, I argue that we must question the notion of indebted time present in the work of Lazzarato and Fleming). Despite the number of scholars who focus on the relation of debt and credit to culture (Baucom 2005; Finn 2003; Lynch 1998; McClanahan 2017; Poovey 2008; Shell 1982) we do not have a concerted scholarly effort to illustrate how the history of debt has shaped the Latin American novel, much less how these fictional narratives might show how indebtedness has revised popular concepts of time.

### **Overview and Chapter Outlines**

To explore how contemporary Latin American novels insist on the heterogeneity of temporal experiences the chapters of my dissertation are organized in three stages: (1) the development of new chronotopes to articulate life under neoliberalism in a moment of relative confidence; (2) the temporal logic of neoliberalism during times of crisis; and (3) indebted temporality from household debt to public debt. The goal of each chapter is to expose the diverse times at work within neoliberal rationality, discourses, practices, and subjectivities.

My dissertation begins in 1996 with the emergence of the *McOndo* group in Chile and the *Crack* in Mexico, which critics have argued was a market-defining moment in the recent history of Latin American literature. In Chapter 1 I offer a new reading of these groups as the emergence of a transition chronotope in the Latin American novel,

from the Boom and its offspring, into a contemporary neoliberal novel. I analyze the manifestos written by both of these groups, along with Alberto Fuguet's *Las películas de mi vida* (2002) and Jorge Volpi's *No sera la Tierra* (2006), what I consider two of the novels that best represent the ideas of the manifestos, as works about the temporal logic of globalization under a neoliberal paradigm. I argue that although these novels are built around spatial metaphors, seismology and cartography, it is matters of time and temporality which dominate over space. The chronotope as Bakhtin defined it is always both temporal and spatial, but whereas Jameson famously argues that in postmodernity time succumbs to space, I want to propose that the opposite takes place in the neoliberal novel, where the balance shifts back towards time, as in modernism, but now under a new logic of global capital. Furthermore, I propose the chronotope of these novels provides an understanding of globalization as the spatial and temporal conditions upon which neoliberal market reforms operate. In short, globalization not as another synonym for neoliberalism, but as the incorporeal which frames these political and economic processes. For Fuguet and Volpi, returning to realism is the only possible way to properly narrate the conditions of neoliberalism.

In Chapter 2, I analyze Pedro Mairal's *El año del desierto* (2005) to showcase the contradictions at the center of neoliberal temporality, and their intensification in moments of crisis. Unlike Fuguet and Volpi's realism, the moment of crisis is for Mairal

best explored thought a science fiction that that goes forwards and backwards at the same time, a chronological year forward and all of Argentina's history in reverse. My goal for this chapter is to analyze how *El año del desierto* showcases the centrality of temporal contradictions under neoliberalism, and the way these are intensified during moments of crisis. The novel, which presents the social, political, economic, and cultural history of Argentina in reverse chronology, from the 2001 debt crisis to the Spanish invasion, highlights how sideshadowing conjures the ghostly presence of might-have-been or might-be (Morson 118) in the form of what Bakhtin considered the relationship between biographical time and historical time. I look at Mairal's use of sideshadowing and vortex time as the literary representation of Martijn Konings' claim that the temporality of neoliberal rationality is engendered by the affectively charged tension between the necessity of speculation and the anticipation of certainty (Konings 29). The tension Konings speaks of that of open time versus closed time, or time as a field of possibility versus a neutralized mode of time. The novel is chock-full of temporal paradoxes which close cycles of crises on the one hand, but also underscores the potential of open time, the ways the past had the potential to be different and therefore so do the present and the future.

In Chapter 3 I move towards indebtedness looking at Diamela Eltit's *Los trabajadores de la muerte* (1998) and *Mano de obra* (2002) to argue that central to the

experience of debt under neoliberalism is a transformation of time in the household, or domestic space. As opposed to Fuguet and Volpi, who focus on the macro changes in the subject's relationship to the globe, Eltit focuses on the house, the open market, and the supermarket. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: to place Diamela Eltit's *Los trabajadores de la muerte* ([1998], 2009) and *Mano de Obra* ([2002], 2004) within discussion of feminist economic criticism and to situate her novels within the networks of power that Michel Foucault defined as *dispositif*. This twofold argument shines light on the centrality of debt within what I will call the "domestic *dispositif*," the material, emotional, and imaginative possibilities and limits that make certain things likely to happen in the household, and happen in a certain way, and other things unlikely to happen. In conversation with Julia Kristeva's notion of "women's time, Eltit shows how within this domestic network of power women are not only reserve labor, but crucially they are also "reserve time" for the nation during and after the dictatorship. Both *Los trabajadores de la muerte* and *Mano de obra* feature characters whose indebtedness and precarious labor produce a sense of ahistoricity, characters, primarily female character, who do not own a time of their own, but from whom time and history are extracted.

The final chapter, Chapter 4, focuses on the novel *Barataria* (volume 1 published in 2012, volume 2 published in 2013) by Juan López Bauzá and Lazzarato's "indebted time." I am interested in the way debt intensifies time, particularly the past, rather than Lazzarato's

claim that is “neutralizes time” and focused solely in controlling the future through a hold on the responsibilities of the present. While debt theory has prioritized the relationship between and the future, I want to emphasize how the temporalization of indebtedness is also about an intensification of the way in which the past is made relevant to the present. I claim that López Bauzá uses Cervantes as way to articulate the past’s relevance to the present in Puerto Rico’s relation to the United States, not only as colonized and colonizer, but also as debtor and creditor. I suggest that López Bauzá reproduces the Nietzschean understanding of history as a mode of writing, and employs the use of *Don Quixote* as a strategic use of the anachronism that makes elements of the past live again, reenergized through their untimely recall in the present.

## Chapter 1: Seismologists and Cartographers: Chronotopes for a Latin American Novelization of the Global in the Neoliberal Epoch

Walking to his gate to catch a flight from Chile to Los Angeles, on his way to Tokyo, Beltrán Soler, the protagonist of Alberto Fuguet's *The Movies of my Life* (2003) reads a sign for the airline LanChile: "Welcome to LanChile, member of the One World Alliance. One world." and muses, "Once we really *were* one single world. One Continent: *Pangea*. And one ocean: *Panthalassa*" (Fuguet 2003: 27). Beltrán's reflection draws parallels between two distinct ways of understanding the globe in terms of a "single world": the past material existence of a one-world continent, and the capitalist endeavors to produce imaginaries of the globe as an alliance, the result of advertisement and new technologies. Yet the use of "really were" produces a difference between the which highlights the fiction of LanChile's slogan. According to Fuguet, the Latin American writer of the 1990s and 21<sup>st</sup> century is defined by a sensibility that is global-yet-rooted, a writer who understands the conditions and influences of a Latin America transformed by globalization and neoliberal reforms: "The market reforms all over Latin America had to reform us as well. How could they not? If the point of liberalization was to open the doors, a cultural and social flood had to pour in. And it did" (Fuguet 2001: 71). In *The Movies of my Life*, Beltran, a seismologist, serves the prime metaphor for the global-yet-rooted subject of Fuguet's essay "Magical Neoliberalism" (2001). Aside for the

obvious spatial implications of seismology, Beltrán describes his job as a temporal one that traces the memory of that once united continent as it changes materially through the passing of time: “Contrary to what the public thinks, seismologists work in memory. In this regard, we’re related to historians, and, in certain ways, to psychiatrists. Just like them, we cannot predict what will happen, but, rummaging around what’s already happened, we can at least help people to better understand and to be prepared” (Fuguet 2003: 27). Beltrán’s emphasis on memory and the comparison to historian underscores the temporal significance of a space-focused discipline: in order to understand how the space is moving and changing we must work in time. He resumes: “I don’t think it it’s a simple coincidence that forgetful communities, communities with bad memories, spring up in the most unsteady places. Earthquakes rock people, who, unconsciously, forget the terror over which they live” (30). Beltrán adds another element to the equation: the community, whose relationship to the space they inhabit is, again, defined by their communal memory, history, and time. Fuguet uses seismology throughout the novel as a metaphor for the Latin American novelist in the neoliberal era: as the region becomes global as a result of market reforms, the novelist explores the layers of time that accumulate in these spaces. In this chapter I argue that Fuguet, along with the other writers of the *McOndo* anthology, which he edited, and the writers of Mexico’s *Crack* generation, were not just a transition into a new market for the Latin American novel

(Brescia and Estrada 2018; Fornet 2006; Palaversich 2005) but a transition into an interest in time in the contemporary Latin American novel. In the novel, as Bakhtin tells us, the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships are artistically expressed through the chronotope (Bakhtin 84). I want to propose in this paper that the key difference between *Crack* and *McOndo* writers stems from the use of different chronotopes to express special and temporal logic of neoliberalism. I am interested in how these two distinct chronotopes not only put into practice different paths for the Latin American novel, but also help us better understand the heterogeneous temporalizing strategies of neoliberalism. I specifically focus on Alberto Fuguet's *The Movies of my Life* (2003) and Jorge Volpi's *Season of Ash* (2006)<sup>1</sup> as two distinct proposals for how the contemporary Latin American under neoliberalism uses spatial metaphors, the seismologist and the cartographer to submit space to time.

According to Fredric Jameson, the transition from modernism to postmodernism was also a transition from an obsession with time, to an obsession with space (Jameson 2003: 697). This is in no way to suggest that either time to space disappear in different moments, but there are fundamental shifts in terms of which dominates their co-existence. In the context of the novel, there is therefore a change in the dominating chronotope from modernism to postmodernism, and I would argue another shift from

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<sup>1</sup> The original version of *Season of Ash* was published in 2006, we will use the translation from 2009 unless specified differently

postmodernism into the contemporary novel which explores the time and space of neoliberalism. For Jameson globalization formed the substructure of postmodernity, and constituted the economic base of which, in the largest sense, postmodernity was the superstructure" (Jameson 2015: 104). I claim that studying the chronotopes of Fuguet's *The Movies of my Life* and Jorge Volpi's *Season of Ash* reveals a better understanding of the dynamics between globalization, neoliberalism, and the novel, which treats globalization not in terms of an economic base, but as the spatial and temporal conditions upon which neoliberalism operates.

### **The enemy of my enemy is my friend: *McOndo* & *Crack* take on the Boom**

In 1996, two of the most widely read and polemical groups of Latin American writers made their debuts in the public sphere with manifestos on what the Latin American novel should be in the age of neoliberalism. The two groups were, on the one side the writers of *McOndo*, and on the other Mexico's *Crack* generation. Although in very different ways, both groups were looking for a way out of the shadow cast by the Latin American Boom and primarily against the way Latin American fiction had become almost synonymous with "magical realism." For both *Crack* and *McOndo* writers, the conditions of Latin America had been transformed by globalization and neoliberal reforms in such a way that magical realism as it was being written in the late 80s and early 90s was no longer sufficient, and therefore had to be replaced by something else. I

want to suggest that in their efforts to establish a market of their own, they produced new chronotopes which helped articulate the global condition of their novels.

To fully understand the work of the *Crack* group and the writers of *McOndo*, one must trace back their relation to the Boom and their outlook on magical realism as the most commonly associated genre with Latin American writers. The biggest similarity between the two groups is a resentment towards the marketization of Latin American literature as synonymous with “magical realism,” which resulted in both groups turning back to realism. Both groups resent the idea that to publish their work, Latin American authors seemingly must comply with a market that demands the register of magical thinking (Carbajal 130). Arguably the most significant contribution in the legacy of *Crack* and *McOndo* was diagnosing the state of Latin American literary markets, and helping produce a new market for contemporary novels with the help of emerging editorials and new global connections (Brescia and Estrada 2018). Alberto Fuguet and Sergio Gómez make their critique of the state of the market clear in introduction to the *McOndo* anthology, where the Chilean authors open with an anecdote of two young Latin American writers, their younger selves, in the International Writer’s Workshop at the University of Iowa. The two writers are the only Hispanic writers whose work gets rejected, and not because their work was inferior, but rather because their stories lacked any magical realism. The young writers are dumbfounded when they are told by the

editor that their work had been rejected for this reason (Fuguet and Gómez 12). Fuguet and Gómez present their anthology as a response to the events from Iowa, presenting a collection of writers who have no interest in writing magical realism, but who also set themselves to erase distinctions between first world and third world literature<sup>2</sup>. The editors of *McOndo* saw their refusal to produce any work that presented signs of magical realism as an act of revenge against the International Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa (Fuguet and Gómez 15). They do not deny the importance of the magical realism of the Boom writers in the history of Latin American literature, but wish to make that one option in a sophisticated literary milieu. They saw Latin America as Televisa, Miami, Borges, Subcomandante Marcos, the external debt, NAFTA, and Vargas Llosa, among so many other things (Fuguet and Gómez 18). The task for the editors of *McOndo* is not to deny the significance of Boom writers like Vargas Llosa, but rather to establish a new logic that responds to the changes that have taken place since. This task was easier said than done. In an titled "Magical Neoliberalism" (2001), Fuguet reflects on the release of, and backlash to, *McOndo* and states: "Of all the art forms, the one that was somewhat behind in capturing the region's zeitgeist was literature, because the shadow cast upon newer generations by authors such as Jorge Luis Borges, Julio

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<sup>2</sup> This debate has largely centered around Jameson's "Third-World Literature in an Era of Multinational Capitalism" (1986), and responses such as Aijaz Ahmad' "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'" (1987), and Robert J Tally's "Fredric Jameson and the Controversy over 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism'" (2017).

Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, and yes, Gabriel García Márquez, was far too powerful. Either you copied them (as was the case with legions of paint-by-numbers magical realists), or you just stood there staring, shaking, wondering” (Fuguet 2001: 72). Fuguet, therefore, recognizes the significance of a Latin American literary tradition. He expresses a discontent less towards the writers that produced the Latin American classics and more towards what the market had made Latin American literature out to be.

The writers of the *Crack* generation also address magical realism as part of their “Manifiesto del Crack” (1996). Unlike the introduction to *McOndo* who deny the idea that their essay is a type of manifesto, the “Manifiesto del Crack” is explicitly so, presented five independent sections, each one written by a different member of the group—. Magical realism is mentioned by Ignacio Padilla as part of the group’s feeling of exhaustion and weariness with the literary surroundings they found themselves in: “weariness,” as Padilla sates, “of having the great Latin American literature and the dubious magic realism converted, for our writing, into tragic magicism; weariness of the patriotic speeches which, for a long time, have made us believe that Rivapalacio wrote better than his contemporary Poe, as if proximity and quality were one and the same thing... From this weariness, there comes an act of general demise.” (Ángel Palou)

Padilla recognizes the greatness of a Latin American literary tradition but rejects what has become of this tradition. He questions not magical realism but what followed in its

wake, which was writers who wrote poorly based on the expectations of the market: “weariness of writing poorly in order to be read more (but not better)” (Ángel Palou). According to Padilla, the novels written by the Crack generation were an act against their exhaustion of Mexico’s literature of the early 90s. Like the authors featured in *McOndo*, Padilla expresses the resentment of the “Crack group” towards the state of Latin American literature in the 90s while recognizing the previous Latin American tradition.

The relation to the Boom is also evident in the names *McOndo* and *Crack*. The name of the *Crack* generation is intended to pay onomatopoeic homage to the Boom while also signaling their “break” with the literary trends of their time (Carbajal 127). Meanwhile, *McOndo* is a joke based on García Márquez’s famous “Macondo” from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Fuguet provides a few more details on the term on his essay “Magical Realism,” where he states that “*McOndo*” began as a joke, and in retrospect describes it as a “defensive and somewhat adolescent response to the user-friendly magical-realism software with which politically correct writers spun tales that gave world audiences exactly what they expected” (Fuguet 2001: 69). Fuguet and Gómez play with García Márquez’s “Macondo” to make the controversial statement that Latin America is a world of McDonalds, Mac computers, and condos. This line was one of the moments in the prologue to *McOndo* that produced the most backlash, but also a

moment that displays the inevitable link between one generation of writers and the other. In short, the two groups which made their debut in 1996 recognize the significance of writers like García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Vargas Llosa, Cortázar, and Borges in the Latin American tradition. Both groups have names that establish a connection to the tradition associated with these writers. Finally, both resent what they consider poor imitations of magical realism that do not address the actual conditions of Latin America in the 90s.

Despite the similarities of the groups, they choose to relate to the previous traditions of writers in quite different ways. It is important to clarify that within each group there are major tensions between individual members, so that it is really the common ideas put forth in the manifestoes and critical essays that I am presenting here, along with a novel by the most recognized figure of each group (Fuguet and Volpi), rather than a case by case study of every author associated with these groups. While both groups recognize the large shadow cast by earlier Latin American writers, they differ sharply on how to address this shadow. The writers of the *Crack* group call their approach a “rupture with continuity.” This meant a search for continuity with the likes of García Márquez, Rulfo, Cortázar, and Fuentes, but a rupture, or break, with the market trends that followed the Boom, particularly that of the Post-Boom (Shaw1995). Eloy Urroz describes the group’s relation to the great writers of the past: “So, there isn’t

a break, but continuity. And if there were some kind of rupture, it would be with the rubbish, with the pap-to-deceive-the-fool, with the cynically superficial and dishonest novel" (Ángel Palou). Ignacio Padilla echoes this sentiment stating: "It would be better to talk about excellent novels and names like Cervantes, Sterne, Rabelais, and Dante, together with those who followed them closely. They are organisms that, though gigantic, exist not to be frightening; though monstrous, we should not avoid them. More arrogant, to me, is the author who keeps his distance from these giants, having a doubtful reservation, than those of us who openly accept them. The literature that denies its tradition cannot and should not grow with it. No monster rejects its shadow. Novel or anti-novel, mirror against mirror, only in this way is it possible to have a rupture in continuity" (Ángel Palou). The bold statements did not go unnoticed and the group received its fair share of accusations of delusions of grandeur as one would expect (Carbajal 123). Controversy aside, what both writers make clear in their statement is the group's intent in joining the ranks of the most recognized literary traditions, both in Latin America and abroad. This insistence on continuity with previous generations of Latin American writers as they oppose the trends of their contemporaries is one of the elements that separates Crack writers from the *McOndo* writers who would prefer a clean break with Latin American tradition.

Fuguet and Gómez recognize the shadow cast by the likes of García Márquez, Cortázar, Fuentes, and Donoso, but rather than expressing a desire to establish continuity with them, Fuguet and Gómez are interested in creating a new tradition that addresses neoliberal reforms and globalization. This becomes even more explicit in Fuguet's "Magical Neoliberalism" which questions whether magical realism was ever capable of accurately portraying the reality of Latin America: "Latin America is quite literary, yes, almost a work of fiction, but it's not a folk tale. It is a volatile place where the 19th century mingles with the 21st. More than magical, this place is weird. Magical realism reduces a much too complex situation and just makes it cute. Latin America is not cute" (Fuguet 2001: 69). Unlike the Crack group, who are very open about their admiration for the *boom* and magical realism, Fuguet's project is focused on unseating magical realism as the primary term associated with Latin American fiction. Not surprisingly, Fuguet has received a strong backlash for this position, more so than the Crack group. My interest is not on what magical realist did or did not do, but rather how Crack and McOndo groups produce distinct chronotopes to articulate the spatial and temporal conditions of global capital.

### **Globalization or the Space-Time Dynamics of Neoliberalism**

To understand the temporal and spatial theories these novels produce through their chronotopes, it would be helpful to clarify what I mean by "globalization," and how the

chronotope of Fuguet's *The Movies of my Life* and Volpi's *Season of Ash* contributes to an understanding of globalization that does not assume it's a synonym for neoliberalism. As Nestor Garcia Canclini states "globalization has not managed to generate one definition on which everyone agrees, nor do we agree about the historical moment when it began or about its capacity to reorganize or undo the social order" (20). According to Carlos Pabón's *Nación Postmortem* (2003), however, there are two traditional ways of defining globalization during the neoliberal epoch<sup>3</sup>. The first, and best known, tends to make globalization an equivalent to neoliberalism. In this school of thought, globalization is first and foremost the complete economic deregulation carried out by the nation-state that results in absolute market control (Pabón 360). Globalization in this sense is understood as a manifestation of the economic policies of neoliberal reforms. "Globalization, in its neoliberal version," Garcia Canclini tells us, "attempted to establish a single model for developed and underdeveloped countries that did not want to be left out of the world economy" (23). This form of globalization takes place primarily through changes in the function of the state as exemplified by what David Harvey calls the neoliberal state's contrary relation to the nation. Harvey states: "on the one hand the neoliberal state is expected to take a back seat and simply set the stage for

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<sup>3</sup> A key debate with regards to globalization has been identifying when it began, as some authors argue that globalization starts in the sixteenth century (Wallerstein 1989), and others with the disappearance of the Soviet Union (Albrow 1997; Giddens 1996; Ortiz 1997). For the purposes of this chapter, I am interested in how it is understood in the neoliberal epoch.

market functions, but in the other it is supposed to be active in creating a good business climate and to behave as a competitive entity in global politics” (Harvey 2007: 79). When the global capital and global politics assume priority over the local, neoliberal states adapt a concept of the world based on open markets and competition. This version of globalization has also been interpreted as a new phase of cultural imperialism known as the “Americanization” of the globe. The idea of “Americanization” suggest there is a global culture propelled by markets that homogenize the globe in the image of Western thinking and erases local cultures.

The second school of thought, as Pabón describes, contends that globalization has less to do with economic reforms and more to do with a new regime of space and time (Appadurai 1996; Giddens 1998; Sassen 2000). According to Arjun Appadurai, the historical novelty of the globalization process lies in the speed, scale, and volume that transnational flows have acquired. Pabón quotes Appadurai:

People, machinery, money images, and idea now follow increasingly nonisomorphic paths; of course, at all periods in human history, there have been some disjunctures in the flows of these things, but the sheer speed scale, and volume of each of these flows are now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture. (Pabón 364)

According to Appadurai and Pabón, the result of these transformations in speed, scale, and volume is a heightened importance in deterritorialization that applies not only to

transnational corporations and financial markets, but also to the different ways in which people organize themselves. As a result, people do not just live in imagined communities as Benedict Anderson argued that nations imagined they did, but also live in and produce imagined worlds (Pabón 365). This tradition affirms that globalization, understood as a compression of space and time, also transforms the cultural relationships between local and global. In doing so, this school of thought challenges the idea of globalization as synonymous with homogenization, cultural imperialism, or an Americanization of culture at a global scale. This perspective allows for new possibilities of interaction produced by globalization that opens the doors to a notion of “global culture” that is not a common and unified culture, but a field in which differences, struggles for power, and disputes for cultural prestige are settled (Pabón 367). With these two arguments in mind, I want to offer a working definition of “globalization” with which I will be working with in this chapter. I regard “globalization” as the spatial and temporal dynamics upon which economic and cultural conceptualizations of the globe operate. In other words, I am interested in the changing conditions of time and space necessary for both the imagined worlds of Pabón and Appadurai, as well as neoliberalism’s claim upon the world. What both sides of the arguments seem to agree upon is that globalization produces a “global culture,” whether because of neoliberal reforms or as the result of the relations produced by the compression of time and space.

Although my own definition favors the idea that global culture must be understood in relation to changing temporal and spatial dynamics, I reject the way this tradition simplifies these changes to a compression of space and time. Trying to reject neoliberal and cultural homogenization, this tradition falls into a different act of homogenization through its explanation of spatial and temporal changes. Without denying the significance of a compression of time and space in the production of global culture, I want to stress that globalization also includes other spatial and temporal experiences which are crucial to the formation of heterogeneous global cultures. To borrow Mariano Siskind's term, we must ask how these authors novelize the global at the same time their novels are globalized in new markets.

***The Movies of my Life and the here-and-now man's chronotope***

For Alberto Fuguet, the reconfiguration of local and global dynamics is the condition of possibility for contemporary Latin American literature, as well as all other forms of cultural production. Given the necessity of moving past magical realism. It is important though to note that his own development as a writer is deeply connected to that literary tradition as Fuguet emerged in Chile's narrative scene out of a group of young Chilean writers who had formed in literary workshops lead by Jose Donoso and Antonio Skarmeta. Fuguet's narrative often looks to distance itself from his old teacher Donoso, whose work he sees as little more than cultural elitism (Carcamo Huechante 176-177).

Fuguet's attack of magical realism and claim that Donoso was an elitist prompted notable backlash which he was forced to address: "In the view of many left-wing ideologues, McOndo was little more than a neoliberal, or even fascist, manifesto suggesting that the poor had been all but erased from the continent and that the new Latin American fiction was no more than rants of U.S.-style alienated rich kids" (Fuguet 2001: 71)<sup>4</sup>. Whether or not we consider Fuguet a neoliberal, an affirmation he denies, I believe Fuguet's work confronts the dynamics of neoliberalism and globalization in a way that these debates tend to overlook. The question should not be about him being a neoliberal or not, but rather how his novels articulate the changes of Latin America brought by global capital and neoliberalism.

Fuguet's primary understanding of "globalization" corresponds to the use of the term as the world after neoliberal reforms produce a global free market. Even so, Fuguet rejects the notion that this means that globalization is a form of cultural imperialism. The term "McOndo," according to Fuguet, is the artistic sensibility of this globalized Latin America (Fuguet 2001: 69). "It is," Fuguet states, "a global, mixed, diverse, urban, 21<sup>st</sup>-century Latin America, bursting on TV and apparent in music, art, fashion, film, and

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<sup>4</sup> One of the most notable essays being Diana Palaversich's "Rebeldes Sin Causa. Realismo Mágico vs. Realismo Virtual"

journalism, hectic and unmanageable. Latin America is quite literary, yes, almost a work of fiction, but it's not a folk tale... More than magical, this place is weird" (Fuguet 2001: 69). He presents this in his novels leaving behind the Boom-towns made famous in novels like García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Paramo*, and José María Arguedas' *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, replacing them with the gritty, urban, spaces of Santiago or Mexico City, and often placing his characters in spaces of global circulation, like airports, malls, hotels, pubs, roads<sup>5</sup>. The "McOndo sensibility" is "global yet rooted" (73) and suggests the interactions that happen between global and local could perhaps be called "the FTAA way," named after the proposed trade agreement, is Fuguet's approach cultural production in the context of exchanges between the local and the global. He is interested in how cultural exchanges are contested or agreed upon in similar fashion to trade deals, with some exchanges being more successful than others, and a constant need to adjust to local dynamics. Contestations between the global and the local are one of the driving forces of *The Movies of my life*, where Chile and the United States are presented as trade partners and not as examples of Americanization or neocolonialism. The FTAA way not places

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<sup>5</sup> Cárcamo-Huechante develops this idea throughout the third chapter of *Tramas del mercado*, titled "Las ficciones del mall: narrativa y libre mercado en Alberto Fuguet," in which he analyzes some of the earlier work of Fuguet, not presented in this paper.

cultural exchange front and center, but also coming together of multiple temporalities over a single space.

*The Movies of my Life* (2003) follows Beltrán Soler, a Chilean seismologist, who is literally and figuratively shaken by an earthquake after missing a connecting flight from Los Angeles to Tokyo. After the earthquake, Soler recounts his childhood and teenage years by remembering the 50 most important films of his life. Soler was born in Chile in the mid 60s, but his family quickly moved to California, where they stayed for a few years until eventually returning to Santiago in 1974. The novel is told from the perspective of present day Beltrán Soler in 2001. In the “FTAA way” described in Fuguet’s essay, *The Movies of my Life* moves between Chile and United States following Beltrán and his family. At various points in this process, Beltrán describes his father as a version of the Steve McQueen character, and he in turn reminded of his father whenever he sees McQueen on screen. Both, to his mind, have a capacity to choose the right scenario for themselves despite their limitations. According to Beltran, his father’s decision to live in California is similar to Steve McQueen’s selection of acting roles based on his limited skills as an actor. When Beltran and his family return to Chile in 1974, his father in unable to assimilate to life in Chile. Which Beltrán sees as a matter of his father choosing the wrong role: “McQueen smiled little and knew his limitations: he was no great actor, but he chose his roles well. Similarly, my father chose his location well:

California. Outside of the Golden State, he was intimidated, out of context, as if he didn't know his lines, the language, the strange local customs" (Fuguet 2003: 79). The Steve McQueen trope allows Beltrán's father to come into contact with different local realities. Although Santiago's upper middle-class circles are still too anchored in tradition and the family to accommodate the cosmopolitan lifestyle of Beltrán's father (Caro Martín 268), this does not keep the Hollywood tropes from adapting to Chilean situation or even transforming the local dynamics. The spaces of global versus local tension produced by the encounters between flows of global capital, global culture, and local traditions are what Fuguet calls "global-yet-rooted" spaces. For him, it is here contemporary Latin America is defined, and it is the cultural production that emerges from these urban global-yet-rooted spaces which, according to him, escapes the magical realist tradition, and its followers.

In *The Movies of my Life*, Beltrán is always on the move from one space of circulation to another. He begins narrating from his hotel room in Los Angeles, just as the action begins, he moves into a van heading to the airport. He spends time in different airports, on different planes, rides in a taxi in California, and from a DVD Planet store. He is, most often, either in motion or surrounded by signs of global capital, or both, suggesting that the chronotope of the contemporary Latin American novel is set in an urban space where signs of global capital are always evident, and in never-ending

contestations between with the local culture. The time of Fuguet's chronotope is also experienced in a mixed way in Latin America, where despite the spatial connectivity between to the world, he argues the region is not fully emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. "It [Latin America]," he writes, "is a volatile place where the 19<sup>th</sup> century mingles with the 21<sup>st</sup>" (Fuguet 2001: 69). Both space and time are in flux and the relation between them contested, resulting in a new artists that must grapple with these spatial and temporal changes: "It seems to me that, in this new FTAA<sup>6</sup> era, borders will be even less explicit and influences will become so global that a new type of artist will evolve who will not be the nowhere man but, on the contrary, *the here-and-now man*" (Fuguet 2001: 68 Italics are mine). The "here-and-now man" represents a mode of writing based a process of individual introspection, and more importantly, introspection by the kind of individual he calls a "global soul." This sensibility seeks to leave behind the village as a way to understand the world, and instead moves further into the subject as he<sup>7</sup> traverses the urban spaces where flows of global capital interact with local traditions. The McOndo sensibility claims that the urban subject's "here and now," and not the land or village, is the privileged space-time from which novel can properly portray global dynamics in the neoliberal age.

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<sup>6</sup> The FTAA, which stands for Free Trade Area of the Americas, was a proposed agreement to eliminate or reduce the trade barriers between North, Central, and South America, along with the Caribbean.

<sup>7</sup> As Diana Palaversich has noted, the editors of McOndo not only failed to include any women in their anthology, but often feature flat female characters in their work (Palaversich 67).

The here-and-now-man, represented in the novel through Beltrán, becomes the surface on which both the temporal and cultural struggles between local and global, past and present, come into visibility. As mentioned in the introduction, Beltrán compares seismologists to historians, workers of memory and space, a task he applies to every aspect of life. Standing in front of the LanChile boarding gate, he says: “I notice the tarmac is cracked on account of the hundreds of telluric movements that it’s had to endure year after year, decade after decade. The terminal might be new, but not the runway... This is one of the drawbacks of being a seismologist: I always look deeper, I search for the cracks. I scan for flaws and resistances” (27). Following Fuguet’s claim that in Latin America the 19<sup>th</sup> century mingles with the 21<sup>st</sup>, even the airport gate shows signs of this interaction between past and present, the accumulation of decades within one space meant for global circulation. The here-and-now-man, the contemporary Latin American writer embodied in this novel through the figure of the seismologist, analyzes the time and space of precise points in the globe where breaks are recorded.

In addition to seismology, *The Movies of my Life* uses films and the film industry as one of its primary signifiers for temporal heterogeneity and tensions between global and local cultures. According to Caro Martín, films in *The Movies of my Life* act as an index to globalization, and take on new meanings that are enriched by the local, but films are also indexes to the temporal dynamics at play in globalizing processes. When

Beltrán first arrives in Santiago, he is ten years old and believes he and his family have come to Chile and Venezuela to spend time with relatives, not to move to Santiago. Upon arriving in Santiago from Venezuela, he is surprised by how “antique” everything seems and volunteers this comparison: “Unlike Venezuela, everything here was in black-and-white. At least it seems that way to me now; that’s how I remember it. I think, in effect, that’s how it was. The few channels on TV, which only began to air material starting at four in the afternoon, broadcast in strikingly contrasted black-and-white. Everything was antique, archaic, from another time” (Fuguet 2003: 175). What stands out in these descriptions is not only the notion that Santiago, compared to California or Venezuela, is a city stuck in another time, but also the use of film genres and film technology to highlight Santiago’s sense of past. Cinema and cinematic technologies operate as temporal markers that indicate the backwardness of Santiago in relation to Los Angeles. The use of adjectives like antique and archaic, as well as cinematic terminology indicate that Santiago is behind the times, conforming to what Johannes Fabian calls “devices of temporal distancing” and “denial of coevalness” (Fabian 1).

Fabian’s *Time and the Other* examines the uses of time in anthropological discourses to produce what he calls the “denial of coevalness.” Fabian begins from the premise that there is no knowledge of the Other that is not also a temporal, historical, or political act (1), and explains how anthropology as a field of study constructed its

relation to the Other by means of temporal devices that implied an affirmation of difference as distance (16). As he says of the different devices of temporal distancing, “Beneath their bewildering variety, the distancing devices that we can identify produce a global result. I will call it *denial of coevalness*. By that I mean *a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse*” (31, italics in the original). Speaking as a Western anthropologist, Fabian is primarily focused on how Western culture has constructed its image in the globe that sets the Other outside of the tradition of Western modernity. Fabian develops a theory of the temporalization of the Other that situates the Other in the past, as signified by such terms as “savage” or “primitive,” which denote a stage in development with moral, aesthetic and political connotations (75). As he explains: “*Savagery* is a marker of the past, and if ethnographic evidence compels the anthropologist to state that savagery exists in contemporary societies then it will be located, by dint of some sort of horizontal stratigraphy, in *their* Time, not ours” (75). These distancing devices, or strategies of temporal containment, as Blis Cua Lim also calls them, engage in temporal politics that establish clear hierarchies between the subject that temporalizes and the object that is temporalized as a noncontemporary. More specifically, as Fabian makes clear, these terms are not just neutral temporal makers, but

markers of the past. They dismiss the Other as a creature of the past rather than a contemporary being.

In Fuguet, we see a similar temporal distance between north and south, as well as between two different Latin American countries. Still at the airport, Beltrán again emphasizes the temporal distance between Santiago and the United States: “Was I in 1974 Santiago, or some enemy city during the Second World War? (Fuguet 2003: 175). Beltrán thus lands in Santiago not only uncertain about where he is, but also uncertain as to *when* he is. How could this city exist in the same 1974 that he left in California? As oppose to the homogenized time of global compression, Beltrán’s landing in Santiago reveals mixed and uneven temporalities at play in the processes of imagining the globe. Even when spaces appear to be homogenously compressed because of the opening of borders and advances in technologies of transportation, time is experienced differently at the local level than at the global. In his classic *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson credits the newspaper with creating the illusion of a simultaneous consumption in a collective present (Cua Lim 126). Anderson states: “The date at the top of the newspaper, the single most important emblem on it, provides the essential connection—the steady onward clocking of homogenous empty time (Anderson 33). The release dates of films in Fuguet’s *The Movies of my Life*, I would argue serve much the

same way for an imagined community as newspapers in Anderson's work. In a chapter called *The Towering Inferno*, Beltrán is still adjusting to life in Santiago:

I had been waiting for months and months to see *The Towering Inferno*. I'd seen the previews in Encino, and the day of its release in Chile couldn't come soon enough. In Chile, if you stopped and looked at a theater's marquee, it seems as if the country was living in a parallel reality. But there I was, watching *The Towering Inferno* and thinking about what would happen if it was struck by an earthquake before it caught fire. (Fuguet 2003: 190)

The film industry in this scene is both an index of globalization and a device of temporal distancing. On the one hand, Hollywood is presented as a sign of the growing American influence on Chilean culture. On the other hand, the delayed release dates also offer some sort of proof that Chile has not yet caught up with the present, as defined by Hollywood or California. Beltrán's film industry example is a temporal device that relegates Chile to the past. Chile is presented in these moments as an Other that is always trying to "catch up" to the present established by Hollywood releases in the United States<sup>8</sup>. In other words, the temporal distance, along with its devices, are not questioned by Beltrán but rather reaffirmed in his acceptance of Chile belonging to the past.

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<sup>8</sup> A similar use of the film industry is used in Joaquín Lavín's *Chile: revolución silenciosa* (1987) to justify the economic reforms made during Pinochet's dictatorship as part of an integration to the world.

*The Movies of my Life* insists on the temporal distance of cinema with its exploration of the viewership experience as Vivian Sobchack has shown in her phenomenological approach to film. According to Vivian Sobchack, cinema produces an experience of otherness by making time visibly heterogeneous. Sobchack's work focuses on the existential phenomenology of the of the cinematic experience to account for the ways our vision is informed by and filled with other modes of access to the world (Sobchack 2004: 179). She states: "my point of view and the film's would be the same isomorphic, identical. However, I do not have a point of view. As a lived-body engaged in intentional acts of perception in an intended world, I have a place of viewing, a situation" (Sobchack 2004: 179). To comprehend the film experience, we must understand how our whole body and mind are engaged, in more than just the act of seeing and listening. For Sobchack, the cinematic experience is thus an experience of otherness through the machine, one that never fully absorbs us, but nevertheless stands in contrast to ordinary experience. According to her, this experience of otherness makes time visibly heterogeneous. For her the temporality of the present is constituted and experienced paradoxically as the homogenous experience of discontinuity (Sobchack 1992: 156), with two distinct forms of time that are at odds here, objective time and the time of the subject<sup>9</sup>, or in other words, collective time, and individual time. Sobchack

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<sup>9</sup> In Bakhtin, the novel explores this relationship in terms of historical time and biographical time, which I

identifies a shift in our relationship to technology where on the one side our sense of subjective time has retained a nonlinear structure while our sense of objective time has been reconstituted from its previous constancy as streaming forward in a linear progression into a nonlinear and discontinuous structure (Sobchack 1992: 156).

According to Sobchack, during the cinematic experience we visibly perceive time as structured differently in its subjective and objective modes, and we understand that these two structures exist simultaneously in a demonstrable state of discontinuity. They are, nonetheless, actively and constantly synthesized as coherent in a specific lived-body experience. (Sobchack 1992: 150-151). She argues that with film we experience time both in its objective form and its subjective form. The objective form being the passing of time of the film, as the picture moves from start to finish, while the subjective time of the film consists of the temporal structure of each film. Despite an objective “moving forward,” the film simultaneously constructs its own subjective temporality through its presentation of memory and desire, as well as the editorial techniques of flashbacks, flash-forwards, freeze-framing, pixilation, reverse motion, slow motion, and fast motion (Sobchack2 151). Therefore, we experience a contrast between the film’s subjective time and our own subjective time, or the time of our viewing situation.

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look at in more detail in Chapter 2

In the case of *The Movies of my Life*, the viewing situation makes visible temporal differences between viewers and even between the same viewer when watching a film multiple times, as well as between “the viewer” and the film. The clearest instance of the viewing situation producing difference in *The Movies of my Life* takes place in the viewing of Richard Fleischer’s *Soylent Green* (1973). The chapter begins with a description of Beltrán’s shock as he arrives in Santiago, and uses the language of film to mark a temporal difference between Chile and California. The chapter ends with Beltrán and his grandfather watching *Soylent Green* and Beltrán leaving struck by the idea of people being stolen and turned into food. The chapter concludes on this note:

“Tata, they don’t take people away here, do they? You can walk around without being afraid you’ll disappear?” I asked my grandfather, thinking of the movie. I didn’t know New York, but 1974 Santiago seemed a lot like the decrepit Manhattan of 2022

“No,” he said. “Luckily, not much happens around here. Things are pretty peaceful.” (Fuguet 2003: 178)

In this scene, the novel blurs the lines between reality and fiction based on the viewing situation. The dystopian future of the film is in reality the present-day Santiago. However, the young Beltrán that sees *Soylent Green* in 1974 is unaware of what is happening in Santiago. The chapter begins with Beltrán using film to filter his arrival in Santiago, and it ends with him being told Santiago is not like the movies. The fact is that *Soylent Green* uses science fiction to project into the future the actualization of a fear or

concern in the United States of the early 70s, but in the novel it mixes the temporalities of Chile and the United States: Santiago, with its actual kidnappings under Pinochet's dictatorship, ends up approximating the future New York envisioned in *Soylent Green*. Rather than Chile being used as a case of backwardness, Fabian's denial of coevalness is reversed when applied to this science-fiction film, where Chile becomes the actualization of fears regarding the future in the United States. In the chronotope of *The Movies of my Life* the relationship between subjects and space is fundamentally determined by time. When Beltrán moves from one space to another, it is the memories and histories of these spaces, personal or collective, that ultimately produce the narration.

**Jorge Volpi's *Season of Ash* and the crack's chronotope zero.**

In Fuguet's "Magical Neoliberalism" he makes mention of Mexico's *Crack* clan writers and praises Ignacio Padilla and Jorge Volpi for not only rejecting the village model that Fuguet wanted to get away from, but for doing so by writing novels where the action often takes place outside of Latin America (Fuguet 2001: 70). One of the most ambitious projects in this sense, by any of the writers of the *Crack*, is Jorge Volpi's trilogy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the initial recognition in Mexico that came because of the "Manifiesto del Crack," Volpi emerged as one of the leading voices of contemporary Latin America when in 1999 *En busca de Klingsor* won the Seix Barral award (Zavala 66). Much like

Fuguet, Volpi's personal life has been used to criticize his work, especially his years working for the government during Vicente Fox's presidency, before supporting leftist candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Zavala 66). *En busca de Klingsor* (1999) is the first novel his 20<sup>th</sup> century trilogy, which also includes *El fin de la locura* (2004), and *No será la Tierra* (2006)—which we will refer to using the English translation, *Season of Ash* (2009). This last entry focuses on the final years of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of the capitalism as a global hegemony. If Fuguet's metaphor for the contemporary Latin American writer is the seismologist as a historian of spaces, Volpi uses the cartographer to further accentuate the tension between objective time and subjective times.

*Season of Ash*, is narrated by a writer and journalist named Yuri Mijáilovich Chernishevski, who is writing from his cell after the murder of Éva Halász. Yuri Mijáilovich's narration is centered around the lives of three women, Irina Gránina, Jennifer Moore, and Éva Halász. Along with these three women, he also gives significant importance to Irina's husband and daughter, Arkadi Granin and Oksana, as well as Jennifer's sister Allison and her husband Jack Wells. Yuri, presents his story as an act of cartography, he writes:

How I would like to not be the narrator of this story, of this heap of stories—of accidents—and vanish without leaving a trace of my passage over the Earth!... Eva once told me that only six links are necessary to connect any person with any other person on

Earth. This phenomenon doesn't derive from a coincidence but from a topology of humanity, from the thing we could call its *form*. Now I understand: I pursue that architecture, I persist in discerning it here in this grave on the fring of the present moment. Because of an inscrutable principle, Irina Nikolayevna Sudayeva, Arkady Ivanovich Granin, and their daughter Oksana; Jennifer Moore and her sister Allison; the infamous Jack Wells; and my beloved Eva Halász formed an immaterial network, mere points on a Cartesian plane. In this model, I became the miserable cartographer who had to connect them. (Volpi 2009: 94)

One of the more interesting aspects of Yuri's description of the narration is the use of cartography and topology as the metaphors to describe the act of writing. In a narrative about the grand historical events of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Yuri choses two different spatial metaphors to describe his task. Yuri's narrative connects these seven subjects like dots in a Cartesian plane. As a cartographer, Yuri is supposed to make sense of different spaces, which in this case includes the entirety of the globe. In other words, if humanity obeys a unique topology, which is that every individual is a maximum of six degrees of separation from every other person, Yuri's task is to make visible how these individuals are linked to each other and to him. The cartographer metaphor does not make mention of the passing time, but rather assumes it as an objective experience which can be read as the homogenous empty time of Walter Benjamin: a spatialized, featureless time across which the history of nations supposedly marches forward (Freeman xxii). This "empty"

notion of time is commonly measured by clocks and calendars, which are indifferent to the specifics of any event. Most chapters in the novel are organized in a way that naturalizes this notion of time, specifying the dates in which the events took place before describing any actions, creating a sense of simultaneity and shared time across chapters and events. However, although this empty time might serve as the backdrop to Yuri's map of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the characters that Yuri uses as the dots to his Cartesian pane reveal a diversity of temporalities or temporal experiences. This attempt to tackle at once both homogenous and heterogeneous temporalities was one of the ideas describe in the "Manifiesto del Crack" by Ignacio Padilla, who proposes the ideal chronotope of a *Crack* novel is the "chronotope-zero." According to Padilla *Crack* novels aim to make "stories whose chronotope, using a Bakhtinian word, is zero: the no-place and no-time, all-times and all places, and none of them." He goes on to say that the dislocation in these *Crack* novels will be nothing more than "a mockery of a crazy and dislocated reality, the product of a world being controlled by mass media takes it to the end of a century which is truncated in times and places, broken by a surplus of ligaments" (Ángel Palou). What Padilla describes as the chronotope zero of dislocation and allocation, can be better understood as the chronotope of Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization, which takes on special significance during the period of mass media as it not only applies to transnational corporations and financial markets, but also to

ethnic groups, religious groups, and political tendencies as these transcend borders that used to be limited by specific territories (Pabón 364).

In the case of *Season of Ash*, Padilla's chronotope zero is best captured in the apocalyptic imagery and deterritorialized spaces that run through the entire of the novel (Ángel 45). Volpi's narrative not only leaves behind the village or the boom-town as the primary setting, his narrative leaves behind the idea of a primary setting altogether. Unlike Fuguet, who tries to replace the village with gritty urban spaces of Santiago and Los Angeles, Volpi tries to account for the heterogeneity of spaces that exist even after the fall of communism and the epoch of global capital hegemony. The paces of *Season of Ash* include New York, Moscow, Washington, East Berlin as well as West Berlin, St Petersburg, combat fields, deserts, Latin America (Ángel 46). The novel consistently indicates the place and the time of the section or chapters before narrating the events. At times the section headers are specific to a date like "Moscow, Russian Federation, December 30<sup>th</sup> 2000" (Volpi 2009: 15), while other times they present a period of time such as "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 1929-1953" (Volpi 2009: 28). In either case, these dates serve as examples of empty time. They link the heterogeneous spaces of the novel to a homogenous global calendar that is indifferent to the specifics of New York, Mexico, or Moscow. According to Roberto Ángel, what brings these spaces together and makes them so similar is a post-apocalyptic, dystopic and disenchanting feeling that

permeates the entire novel (Ángel 46). For Ángel, the chronotope zero is best displayed in the novel's use of ruins to produce a rupture with modernity and put an end to an emancipatory sense of history (Ángel 47). In other words, he reads the chronotope zero in the novel as the relation between spaces of ruin and the negation of progressive time. One way the novel challenges time as linear and progressive is by its cyclical structure.

*Season of Ash* is organized into a prelude and three acts. Following the prelude, the first chapter of the first act is "Three Women." This chapter is then divided into three sections which introduce the reader to Irina, Jennifer, and Éva. Each of these sections is dated December 30, 2000. At this point in the novel, the reader does not yet have the information to link these women's lives, so the only thing that creates a relation between them is the date and the fact that each section involves a significant death. The reader learns about the deaths of Irina's daughter Oksana, Jennifer's sister Allison, and Éva in this opening chapter. The final chapter circles back to the same date and will also be titled "Three Women." Both versions of "Three Women" also begin with the same line: "Those aren't her eyes" (Volpi 2009: 15; Volpi 2009: 392). Repetition however, as Gilles Deleuze has made clear, should not be read solely in terms of the dystopic and the end of progressive history. For Deleuze, it is crucial that we understand that not all repetitions are the same and it is instrumental that we distinguish between what he calls good repetitions and bad repetitions: the one that ruins us, and the one that saves us. On

the one side, good repetitions are creative, they abolish limits, and open us to the world; bad repetition on the other hand, are the reason events fail, as opposed to being a result or consequence of an event failing (Deleuze 1986: 132).

In Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche's eternal return, he claims that good repetition is affirmative, as opposed to the bad repetition which is negative. The eternal return is not the return of the identical, but only the being of becoming: "Repetition in the eternal return, therefore, consists in conceiving the same on the basis of the different" (Deleuze 1995: 41). It is not that the Same disappears in the eternal return, but rather that it finds itself in the periphery while Difference is at the center of the return; the circle revolves constantly decentered around the unequal rather than the same (Deleuze 1995: 53).

Deleuze says of repetition and the eternal return:

The subject of the eternal return is not the same but the different, not the similar but the dissimilar, not the one, but the many, not necessity, but chance. Moreover, repetition in the eternal return implies the destruction of all forms which hinder its operation, all the categories of representation incarnated in the primacy of the Same, the One, the Identical and the Like" (Deleuze 1995: 126).

In other words, the subject of Deleuze's eternal return is not a subject stuck in a loop, but rather a subject that identifies the instance of repetition as an opening towards innovation. In Jorge Volpi's contribution to the "Manifiesto del Crack," Volpi asks what happened with the end of the world, and presents a theory of the end of times that

seems to be in line with Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche. Volpi states: "paraphrasing Nietzsche, the end of time does not happen outside the world, but inside the heart. More than a mere superstition, the end of the world supposes a particular state of the spirit; what matters less is the external destruction when compared to the inner collapse, this state of anguish that precedes our internal Judgment Day" (Ángel Palou). For Volpi, the decay or ruins of the planet are secondary to what happens to the interior of the subject. This is significant in reading *Season of Ash*, which begins with a prelude describing the nuclear disaster that took place in Chernobyl April of 1986. The prelude, titled "Ruins," describes the events of Chernobyl along with the state's attempts at erasing any damaging news coverage of the accident. The passage concludes with the line "The final legacy of communism" (Volpi 2009: 12). The novel begins, in other words, with the destruction of a space as a prelude to the end of History. Yet for Volpi, this is not the same as dystopic, instead, he highlights the heterogeneity at the end of the world. "The end of the world," Volpi states, "can be believed and praised, as in *Memoria de los dias*; can be reached by car or train, as in *Las Remoras*; can be recalled and rebuilt in childhood and in the past, as in *La conspiracion idiota*; can be cultivated inside oneself to the point of madness, as in *Si volviesen sus majestades*; and can also be granted to others as an infamous Pandora's box like in *El temperamento melancolico* (Ángel Palou). What these cases have in common for Volpi is they are all a state of the heart from which nobody is

free. But we must also highlight that with the examples he presents, Volpi is presenting the end of the world not as the end of the novel, but rather as the ideal field from which the novel must emerge. By calling it a state of the heart, Volpi, much like Fuguet, suggests that we must look inward now “our land” has gone global. Volpi however, does away with the single protagonist of the here-and-now-man approach, and chooses instead to imagine reality in polymorphic terms. If the end of the world is experienced heterogeneously, Volpi’s novel creates a meta-narrative on how the novelization of the globe must be heterogeneous as well. He highlights this idea by presenting the heterogeneity of temporalities displayed through the different subjects of the novel.

Yuri produces his map of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by drawing lines that connect the seven key characters of his narrative. Unlike Fuguet’s protagonist, whose sense of time and history drives *The Movies of my Life*, Volpi establishes his connections using seven different individuals, each with his or her own temporal experience. One of these key characters is Jack Wells, husband to Jennifer Moore and eventual lover of Éva Halász. Jack Wells is an investor, and along with Jennifer, is the character who most embodies the mentality of the neoliberal *homo œconomicus*.<sup>10</sup> As Yuri describes him, “Wells cannot imagine the world without order an order, a hierarchy, a plan of attack. Jennifer is convinced he must have calculated the death of his own parents. The poor

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<sup>10</sup> I am using the term *homo œconomicus* as understood by Michel Foucault in *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2010) and Wendy Brown’s *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (2015)

bastard. People who think he's only interested in money are wrong. *His only goal has been to foretell the future and to control those around him*" (Volpi 2009: 22 my Italics). As the perfect embodiment of the *homo æconomicus* throughout the novel, Jack prioritizes the future and his ability to control that future above all other investments. His ability to predict the future in this respect is related not only to making good investments, but alas—and more importantly—to controlling others. What is true of Jack Wells is also true of other characters in the novel who embody the ideals of liberalism. Jennifer's father Edgar, for example, whom the narrator describes as born to conquer the future (57). Jennifer's sister Allison, by contrast, operates as the complete antithesis to Jack Wells. She shares no interest in economic investments, but instead participates in protests against the Vietnam War and the effects of global capital. Nearing 30, Allison begins to question her sexuality and the social limits on desire: "She wouldn't have to decide. She'd let herself be *carried along by impulse, the desire of the moment*, forgetting the illusory and authoritarian barriers of sexual desire... Maybe it's better this way, she thought, no shadows, no echoes, *pure present*" (Volpi 2009: 127-128 Italics are mine). In defiance of the ideals of Jack and Jennifer, then, Allison lives with a different temporal framework. She forfeits any obligation towards the future and decides to embrace the present as a state of constant becoming. Along with the fact that Allison and Jack have fundamentally different ways of experiencing and prioritizing time, it is important to

highlight the experiences that temporalize the as so. Allison's sexuality is central here, as it becomes indicative of the intertwining of sexual and temporal dissonance in relation to history as theorized by Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds* (2010). As opposed to the compression of space and time, which usually prioritizes speed a closer relation to the future, Allison's time fixates on the body's present desires and reveals a temporal experience that continues to be globally informed throughout the novel in a spatial sense, but is out of sync with the temporalizing ideas embodied by Jack Wells. While Jack's temporal experience is clearly presented as part of a neoliberal entrepreneurial mentality, Allison's temporality is tied to her coming to terms with her sexuality and her desires, as well as an acceptance of life as a process of becomings.

### **Conclusion**

Alberto Fuguet and Jorge Volpi represent the two leading voices of 1996's *McOndo* and the "Manifiesto del Crack." In the novels *The Movies of my Life* and *Season of Ash*, they articulate in fiction some of the central theories that were proposed in the anthologies and manifestos of their early years. For both writers, and their respective groups, Latin American literature in the mid 90s required new voices capable of understanding through formal changes in the novel the ways that globalization had transformed Latin America as a result of neoliberal reforms. For the writers that took part in the *McOndo* anthology, this meant a renunciation of magical realism in its entirety, as the distinctive

mode of the global South. While the writers of Mexico's Crack clan praised the Boom and magical realism for calling attention to the Latin American novel at a global a scale, they also wanted to take a clear stand against the generation of magical realist that followed, and who dominated the market during the late 80s and early 90s. For writers of Mexico's *Crack*, the canon of novels by Carlos Fuentes, García Márquez, Rulfo, and Cortázar, among others, had nothing to do with the magical realism that followed in their footsteps in the Post-Boom.

Central to the debate over what the contemporary Latin American novel should be after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of Latin America to new markets, is the question of the Bakhtinian chronotope in relation to the novelization of the globe. Fuguet's *The Movies of My Life* observes the limits and possibilities of the here-and-now man, best exemplified by seismologist Beltrán Soler. Weaving together history, film, and the movement of tectonic plates, Beltrán acts as the surface in which spatial and temporal conflicts at a global scale can be read. Volpi, on the other hand, embraces the cartographer as the ideal narrator for the era of global capital, which prioritizes a polymorphic approach. Volpi's cartographer draws lines that show the relationships between seemingly disparate points, and in doing so brings to the surface the heterogeneity of times that flow underneath the seemingly homogenous time of globalization in theories of space-time compression. In both novels, neoliberal reforms

present one of the ways in which spaces become connected and compressed, which in turn makes possible collective notions of a global culture based on market circulation (Fuguet) or the end of history (Volpi). However, both novels also emphasize the formation of a heterogeneous understanding of “global culture” produced by the different spatial and temporal conditions, alongside the compression of space and time, which take place when we consider the interactions produced between flows of global capital, global culture, and local traditions. Volpi and Fuguet’s novels, not only demonstrate heterogeneous spatial conditions of global capital using the metaphors of cartographers and seismologists, but also illustrate the heterogeneity of temporal experiences which drive these spatial changes. *McOndo* and *Crack* writers were a transition stage in Latin American literature who in pursuit of a novel which could account for the conditions of the region and the globe under neoliberalism returned to the questions of time. Without explicitly praising neoliberalism, the groups did embrace a turn towards branding and new markets. This confidence in neoliberal markets which helped form these groups was short-lived, as made clear by the authors I analyze on the following chapters grapple with the never-ending crises of neoliberalism.

## Chapter 2: I've Read this Before: Narrating the Temporal Tensions of Neoliberalism in Pedro Mairal's *El Año del desierto*

In the final chapter of Pedro Mairal's *El año del desierto* (2005) [The year of the desert], the main character, Maria Valdés Neyla, finds herself captive by a group of cannibals. She sees them devouring one of her friends from an indigenous tribe she had joined, and a man with a sword comes out to cut his head off. She describes the scene: "Se escucharon aplausos y silbidos. El tipo hizo un *swing* de golf, un *swing* de práctica, arrimándole el filo al cuello" (Mairal 295) [Applauses and whistles could be heard. The man made a golf swing, a practice swing, bringing the edge of the sword to his neck]<sup>11</sup>. The image of the man practicing his golf swing brings us back to an early scene in the novel, where Maria is in an elevator with Baitos, the business-partner of Maria's boss, Suárez, at the financial conglomerate Suárez & Baitos: "justo apareció Baitos y bajó conmigo en el ascensor. Era un ex *rugbier* economista... Cuando entrabas a su oficina, tenías que tener cuidado de no recibir un palazo porque estaba distraído, practicando su *swing* de golf" (Mairal 9) [Just then Baitos appeared and took the elevator with me. He was an ex *rugbier* economist... When you entered his office, you had to be careful not to get wacked because he was distracted, practicing his golf swing]. The man does indeed turn out to be Baitos, who is still partnered with Suárez, and the novel's final chapter

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<sup>11</sup> Translations of Mairal's text are my own unless specified. The novel does not currently have an English translation.

gives us its most explicit critique of Argentina's economic history with financial executives at the center of the 2001 Argentinian crisis turned cannibals<sup>12</sup>, preserving their existence at the expense of what is left of society and the nation. The business partners recognize Maria, put a dress on her, another callback to the opening chapters, place her on boat and they drift into the sea, until Maria no longer sees any land. The final scene concludes the novel's journey of narrating the history of Argentina in reverse, starting with the 2001 financial crisis, and ending with the Spanish invasion. "In the end is the beginning," Susan Hallstead and Juan Pablo Dabove suggest, "cannibalism and violence are the "original sins" of Argentina" (Mairal xvi). Or, as Zac Zimmer argues: "This is the truly post-apocalyptic content of the novel: if we invert the already inverted chronology, María's ship, this time arriving to the American coast, is the originary apocalyptic moment. The extended narrative of the Crisis ends up at the beginning of the long American history" (Zimmer 381). If, on the other hand, we start from Maria's story rather than the nation, we could also say that in the beginning is the end, all the elements of cannibals leaving a land from which there is nothing left to extract, are found in the moment of financial collapse which initiates the novel. At the heart of the novel is the temporal contradiction of going forwards and backwards at the same time: Maria's story of a year from January to December on the one hand; the nation, the state,

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<sup>12</sup> According to the account of the German Ulrich Schmidel, the early Spanish settlers of Buenos Aires were indeed driven to cannibalism as a means of survival (Page 89).

Buenos Aires, technology, going backwards 500 years from the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the arrival of the Spanish. Mairal's reverse history of Argentina not only covers historical events but also includes literary and artistic references, such as scenes from Argentinian classics like Borges' "Emma Zunz" (1948) and José Hernández's *Martin Fierro* (1872), as well as scenes from the paintings of Xul Solar. Mairal's novel brings together the cyclical crises and violence of Argentina's capitalist development with Argentina's history of narration and representation. Not only does he attempt to tackle the already challenging task of articulating and representing the financial crisis of the turn of the century, he goes through a 500-year history representations of crisis in Argentina. The novel is not merely a manual of histories told in reverse, rather it is an archive of "fables" which encapsulates an identity (Mairal xvii). The novel verbalizes the uprooting of progress by way of aesthetic journey backwards in history and forwards in time, generating ruins along the way, the last one being language itself (Montoya 277). To put it in Bakhtinian terms, Mairal explores the relationship between biographical time and historical time, when history is rewound. My goal for this chapter is to analyze how *El año del desierto* showcases the centrality of temporal contradictions under neoliberalism, and the way these are intensified during moments of crisis. Martijn Konings has argued that the temporality of neoliberal rationality is engendered by the affectively charged tension between the necessity of speculation and the anticipation of certainty (Konings 29). In

the novel, I will demonstrate, Koning's two modes of time are present in the form of sideshadowing and vortex time, or in other words, in the novel's capacity to narrate open and closed times. Unlike Fuguet and Volpi's realism, the moment of crisis is for Mairal best explored through a science fiction that goes forwards and backwards at the same time, a chronological year forward and all of Argentina's history in reverse. Mairal's novel about the end of an Argentina, I argue, underscores the potential of open time even when neoliberalism and its crises propose history had to take place as it did.

### **Maria and the Intemperie: Narrating the Time of Peripheries**

Maria Valdés Neyla, is both the protagonist and narrator of *El año del desierto*. The novel opens with her living in Ireland, five years after the events that lead to the end of Argentina. In the opening chapter, "Mapas", Maria tells the reader how she had lost her ability to speak, and had only recently recovered her languages: "Estuve cinco años en silencio, hasta que las palabras volvieron, primero en inglés, de poco a poco, después en castellano, de golpe, en frases y tonos que me traen de vuelta caras y diálogos" [I spent five years in silence, until the words came back, first in English, little by little, then in Spanish, all at once, in phrases and tones that bring back faces and conversation] (Mairal 1). She practices languages after hours in a library where she now works, and looks at maps which also help her remember her past, and the parts of the place she came from: "Despliego los mapas viejos sobre la mesa, miro los lugares, los nombres, las avenidas.

Recorro con el dedo las estaciones de tren y las calles, *trato de acordarme* de algunas esquinas, algunas cuadras o plazas de esa grilla enorme, *inexistente*” [I spread the maps over the table, look at the places, the names, the avenues. I trace with my finger the train stations and streets, *I try to remember* some of the corners, some blocks and plazas from that enormous grid, *inexistent*] (1 italics are mine). From the beginning of the novel Maria lets the reader know the place where she came from, before arriving in Ireland, no longer exist, and she is going through a difficult process trying to remember by relearning the language and looking at maps. María is a survivor, a witness of the catastrophe (Zimmer 377), and the fragments that begin her narrative feel like pure foreshadowing: her home country will be inexistent, she will lose her ability to speak. The library becomes Maria’s place “outside of time” (Mairal 2), where she reconnects with the past by looking at maps and practicing Spanish. Practicing her native language which she believed long gone, she says: “Y es como volver sin moverme, volver en castellano, entrar de nuevo a casa. Eso no se deshizo, no se perdió; el desierto no me comió la lengua. Ellos están conmigo si los nombro, *incluso las Marías que fui, las que tuve que ser, que logré ser, que pude ser*. Las agrupo en mi sueño donde todo está a salvo todavía” [And its’s going back without moving, returning in Spanish, entering home again. That was not undone, it did not get lost; the desert did not eat my tongue. They are here with me if I name them, *even the Marias I was, the ones I had to be, the ones I got to*

*be, the ones I could have been.* I group them all in my dream where everything is still safe] (2 italics are mine). The account of Maria “returning” to her home-country without moving is reminiscent of Bergson’s notion of recollection: “we become conscious of an act *sui generis* by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first, in the past in general, then, in a certain region of the past... Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud; from the virtual to the actual<sup>13</sup>” (Bergson 151). Bergson, as Deleuze and Grosz have noted, refers here to a genuine “leap,” or a leap into ontology. “We place ourselves *at once* in the past”; Deleuze stresses, “we leap into the past as into a proper element... we only grasp the past at the place where it is in itself, and not in ourselves, in our present” (Deleuze 56). Maria’s narrative throughout *El año del desierto* consists of a series “leaps” to the past, but, as Deleuze makes clear, this past is always caught between two presents: the old present that it once was and the actual present in relation to which it is now past (Deleuze 58). Caught between her present in the Irish library, and the present that was—the main story which takes place in Argentina—the narrative voice prioritizes the preterit and a constant use of prolepsis, hinting at things that will eventually happen in the story. At first glance the novel appears to establish foreshadowing as its primary narrative device, yet Maria’s narration produces an openness that is denied by foreshadowing. As Gary Saul Morson has

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<sup>13</sup> The relationship between virtual and actual as a coexistence of past and present is explained in more detail in the introduction.

indicated, foreshadowing robs a present moment of its presentness, it lifts the veil on a future that has already been determined and inscribed (117). “What will be must be;” he affirms, “events are heading in a single direction; time is entirely linear, because the future is either known for certain or calculable (at least in principle) with mathematical certainty” (117). However, when describing her “leaps” to the past, Maria opens the possibility of other times in which there are also other Marias. Instead of foreshadowing, Maria’s narration accentuates sideshadowing, which relies on the concept of time as a *field of possibilities*. Each moment has a set of possible events (though by no means every conceivable event) that could take place in it (119). Sideshadows conjure the ghostly presence of might-have-been or migh-bes (118). In sideshadowing, time ramifies, and the present we know is one of many possible presents, but every actual moment could have been other, and it could lead to many possible futures, some more likely than others, but none inevitable, as often appears (119). Even when the events of the novel are being narrated in past tense, Maria often demonstrates how the episodes represent possibility and uncertainty: “pero ¿quién era yo? De golpe me recibía a mí misma como a una desconocida que no tenía ganas de conocer... ¿cómo ocuparse de alguien que no sabe quién es?... Solo tenía que mantenerme en movimiento, sin preguntarme tantas cosas” [But who was I? All of a sudden I received myself as a stranger I had no desire to meet... How do you take care of someone doesn’t know who they are?... I only had to

keep moving, without asking myself so many questions] (93). By presenting uncertainty, the biographical time of the *El año del desierto* avoids what Bakhtin calls the modernization of the past, and achieves what according to Bakhtin makes the novel unique. “[O]nly in the novel” Bakhtin insists, “have we the possibility of an authentically objective portrayal of the past as the past. Contemporary reality with its new experience is retained as a way of seeing, it has depth, sharpness, breadth and vividness of that way of seeing, but should not in any way penetrate into the already portrayed content of the past, as a force modernizing and distorting the uniqueness of the past” (29-30). *El año del desierto* is in a constant tension of on the one hand following Bakhtin’s warning of not penetrating the content of the past, and in the other hand, bringing the past to the present as Argentina’s history is rewound after the 2001 debt crisis.

The novel stages the Argentinian crisis which reached its worst moment in December 21, 2001, under the presidency of Fernando de la Rúa. The first day of Maria’s story is January 2<sup>nd</sup>, while protests in Buenos Aires were ongoing, and many of the employees at the financial conglomerate where she worked were still on vacation. The crisis was the result of a radical restructuring of the economy during the 1990s in line with the neoliberal orthodoxy of international lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the World Bank (Sutton 36). Argentina’s

neoliberal transition started during the military dictatorship (1976-1983), but it was under the administration of Carlos Saul Menem (1989-1999) that the country fully implemented neoliberal economic principals. At the center of Menem's program was the Convertibility Plan that pegged the peso to the dollar, which was finally abandoned after the economic collapse of 2001 (Sutton 36). The crisis put an end to one of the great fictions of the decade: the one to one parity between the dollar and Argentinian peso; resulting in proliferation of barter economies (Laera 45), and the emergence of a host of new currencies, each based on forms of value that were derived from the human beings producing them (Dodd 392). Although these new currencies emerged as a "grassroots" reinvention of money by the very communities that had been declared insolvent and cut off, there was nothing romantic about this story, as many of the currencies failed, and the successful ones where short lived (392). According to Hallstead and Dabove, the 2001 crisis stopped being a process and became a subject, "La Crisis", with its own identity and tempo: It was an institutional crisis, a crisis of legitimacy, an economic crisis, and a crisis of the systems of collective negotiation (xiii). In the novel, the crisis takes the material and temporal form of an unexplainable force from the desert that consumes the Argentinian metropolis over the course of a year called "la intemperie<sup>14</sup>."

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<sup>14</sup> "Intemperie" roughly translates to the outdoors or the open skies in a sense of being exposed. To be in the "Intemperie" is to be exposed to the dangers from outside. I will use the term in Spanish throughout the

The *intemperie*, according to Hallstead and Dabove, is a metaphor of the inevitable coming of The End, and the temporal regression a metaphor of the development of the Crisis (Mairal xv).

Maria's first experience with the *intemperie* is a flyer she finds in the street: "La calle estaba alfombrada con volantes. Agarré uno. Decía: "La *intemperie* que el Gobierno no quiere ver". Tenían fotos de una cuadra antes y después de la *intemperie*. En el antes había casas, una al lado de la otra, y en el después se veían sólo los baldíos" [The was covered with flyers. I took one. It said: The *intemperie* the Government does not want to see." It had pictures of a block before and after the *intemperie*. In the before there were houses, one next to the other, in the after you could only see wastelands (10). The characters in the novel recognize the destructive character of the *intemperie*, but not its temporal logic. The way these key events of Argentina's history reappear in the present is not acknowledged by anyone, the characters instead treat these events as the new reality of their present crisis. María herself never sees the *intemperie*, she is never present when key events take place. As Hallstead and Davone have noted, it is impossible for her to "inhabit the present," because María is never present when the events take place: never sees "la *Intemperie*." (Mairal xx). The story of Argentina's crisis

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chapter as there is no direct translation to English that properly conveys what Mairal is doing with the term. Other critics have also chosen to keep the original term from the novel

in the novel play with Tzvetan Todorov's description of the whodunit detective story: "a double movement which is at the same time forwards and backwards, working forwards from the crime through the events of the investigation and in the process working backwards to reconstruct the events which lead up to the crime" (Currie 36). However, unlike the whodunit, the characters of the novel are not aware that they are witnessing the backwards reconstruction of the nation. Mairal's narrative follows what Alejandra Laera has described as "displaced perspective" in contemporary Argentinian literature, in her book *Ficciones del dinero* (2014): The contemporary novel which is a criticism of modernization and modernity does not aspire neither loftiness nor interiority. It does not search for omnipresence which sees everything, nor the psychologism which loses itself in the mind. The narrator's perspective is at the same level as what is observed, just in a different place (Laera 57). The Argentinian critic analyzes the role of money in Argentina's literary history from 1890- 2001, with an emphasis on what she calls Argentina's "money fictions", referring to novels where money functions like a character. She highlights some of the key publications of the 1990s and first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, like Sergio Chejfec's *El aire* (1994), Alan Pauls' *Wasabi* (1997), Ricardo Piglia's *Plata quemada* (1999), and César Aira's *Varamo* (2001). Although Laera does not discuss Mairal's novel given that it was written and published after the period of her study, her description of displaced perspectives applies to the

way that Maria narrates her story: She is not omnipresent, she is not even present when major events take place, her level of understanding of other characters goes as far as their dialogues, and she never notices how the changes taking place operate according to paths previously traversed historically, socially, or technologically. Mairal therefore performs a reversal of the center-periphery logic between Buenos Aires and the desert, as well as between the intemperie and the protagonist. Although we read the novel from Maria's perspective, at no time is she at the center of the event. The center-periphery dynamic of Maria and the intemperie reproduces Deleuze and Guattari's desiring-machine:

This subject is itself not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states through which it passes... the subject is born of each state in the series, is continually reborn of the following state that determines him at a given moment, consuming-consummating all these states that cause him to be born and reborn. (20)

Deleuze and Guattari's peripheral subject is a subject in constant becoming, produced at the different stages, through different affective encounters. The affective encounter, following Spinoza, is their method for undoing Althusser's notion of an "always-already subject," replacing it for a subject always becoming through its capacity to affect and be affected by the world. Deleuze writes of Spinoza's affect:

*Affectus* is thus the continuous variation of someone's force of existing, insofar as this variation is determined by the ideas that s/he has. But once again, "determined" does not mean that the variation is reducible to the ideas that one has, since the idea that I have does not account for its consequence, that is the fact that it increases my power of acting or on the contrary diminishes it in relation to the idea that I had at the time, and it's not a question of comparison, it's a question of a kind of slide, a fall or rise in the power of acting. (Deleuze 1978, 5)

Christian Marazzi has described a similar phenomenon of encounters under neoliberalism with regards to "just-in-time" production, which organizes labor in the most flexible ways possible, thus avoiding the accumulation of stock (Marazzi 2011: 19-20). Whereas the Fordist factory functioned through rigid planning, post-Fordism is driven by constantly reacting and adjusting to changes in the market. In Deleuze and Guattari terms, the neoliberal worker is no longer an always-already subject produced through the rigid planning of the Fordist model, but rather a flexible worker defined at each state of market changes. "Just-in-time" production revolves around practices linked to the rise of new technologies and a transition towards a feminization of labor, such as communication and affective labor, or what Hardt and Negri have called immaterial labor. Gago describes the feminization of labor under neoliberalism as a twofold process in which on the one hand, women's public presence increases, positioning them as important economic actors, while on the other hand, transferring characteristics of the

economy of the household into the public sphere (83). Therefore, the feminization of labor is both a quantitative as well as a qualitative modification of labor processes. For Hardt and Negri, the categories of labor under neoliberalism, what they call in general terms immaterial labor, can be categorized as forms of “biopolitical labor.” They underscore how post-Fordist labor creates not only material goods, but also relationships and ultimately social life itself (Hart and Negri 2004: 109). For Marazzi, as well as Hardt and Negri, labor under neoliberalism must be understood not only in terms of what it produces, but more importantly in terms of how affects and social practices are mobilized.

During her year in the desert, Maria begins as a secretary, whose primary task is to answer phones and emails, and ends a subject in silence, as told by the title of the final chapter, “En silencio.” She describes reacquiring language as recovering those who did not make it, as well as the different version of herself: “las Marías que fui, las que tuve que ser, que logré ser, que pude ser” (Mairal 2) [the Marias I was, the ones I had to be, the ones I got to be, the ones I could have been]. Maria’s account connects two Deleuzian concepts we have seen thus far, the subject that is defined at each state and the dynamics of the actual/virtual relationship, with Marazzi’s “linguistic machines”: “in post-Fordism, we have a “speaking,” “communicating” production process, and the technologies used in this system can be considered true “linguistic machines,” whose

main focus is to facilitate and accelerate the circulation of data" (23). According to Marrazi, post-Fordism forces us to question language itself, which is at the basis of human communication (30). He understands language as a disciplinary structure, as a "filter" which imposes limits and prohibitions to the "lived world," but also recognizes language as what allows man to "enter into History" (38-39). The most important element of the "linguistic machine" is the organization of a grammar that is as formal and logical as possible. Language must facilitate "just-in-time" production at every step, in lieu of prior planning. In the process of Argentina's "evolution in reverse" (Page 88), María goes from working as a secretary at Suarez & Baitos, to a series of unexpected occupations: laundry woman, candle manufacturer, garbage collector, nurse, servant, prostitute, singer, assassin, semi-forced farmer, rural teacher, captive, sexual slave, and wife to an indigenous man (Mairal xii). She goes from being at the center of financial flows of communication, to being incapable of speaking, describing the scenes of cannibalism as lacking any form of language: "Estas cosas sucedieron sin palabras, fueron sólo sensaciones en espiral, confusas, como estar bajo el zumbido del dolor estridente, el ruido de un moscardón gigante" [These things happened without words, they were only spiraling sensations, confusing, like being under the buzz of the strident pain, the noise of a giant botfly] (297). As the nation break down her jobs become less fixated on language or communication, and more directly related to the body: "Yo, que

unos meses atrás, atendía teléfonos en una oficina con piso de moquette, que traducía cartas al inglés vestida con mi tailleur azul y mis sandalias, ahora hundía mis manos en la sangre caliente, separaba vísceras, abría al medio los animales, despellejaba, buscaba coyunturas con el filo" [I, who months ago, attended phones in an office with moquette floors, who translated cards to English dressed in my blue tailleur and sandals, now sunk my hands into warm blood, tore viscera, gutted animals in half, skinned animals, found the contours with the blade" (245). From the point of view of the financial conglomerate, the transition goes from the global economy of the Suárez and Baitos offices, to the literal consumption of bodies.

Mairal's novel showcases the effects of the 2001 Argentinian crisis, as transformation of the notions of community, as future oriented projects, and the foundations upon which they are built. With an emphasis on Maria's body, and women's bodies in general, the novel underscores how nostalgia often denies the role of women's labor throughout history. Mairal shows us that antitechnological idylls are rooted in slavery and the oppression of women (Page 94). With the passing the year, we witness women's rights slowly disappear, and simultaneously more pressure on women's work. In post-crisis Argentina, one of the most significant transformations of the urban landscape came precisely through a wave of informal, predominately feminine, labor, which with its bustle and transactions redefined the metropolitan space,

the family, and women's place (7). Maria explicitly narrates the imbalance in labor responsibility twice in the novel, the first time while with a group called the "puentistas": "Era todo una pérdida de tiempo, todos esos tipos discutiendo. La mayoría de las tareas las hacíamos las mujeres. Se suponía que ellos trabajaban en experimentos con motores en el garaje, que hacían trabajos duros, pero se sabía que se pasaban la tarde apostando a los dados en las cocheras húmedas, casi a oscuras" (74), then again once she joins an indigenous group "Las mujeres hacíamos todo el trabajo. Los hombres domaban sus caballos y se preparaban para pelear" (245). The common factor between both scenes is the myth of community which frames both instances in spite of the clear inequalities between male and female members, or what Veronica Gago has called the "eternal irony of the community."

### **National Times at the End of the Nation**

The historical events in *El año del desierto* signify the evolution of the Argentinian state, and what Michael Shapiro has described as the pedagogy of homogenous national time, in his essay "National Times and Other Times: Re-thinking Citizenship" (2000). Shapiro's understanding of the nation insists on a "symbolic maintenance of the nation-state," where the state is understood as a territorial entity that historically expanded its political, legal and administrative control by monopolizing violence and incorporating various sub-units into a legal and administrative entity with definitive boundaries, and

the nation as embodying a coherent culture, united on the basis of shared descent or, at least, incorporating a 'people' with a historically stable coherence (80). According to Shapiro, following the work of Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes, the state's control over models of temporality monopolizes the future orientations of its citizens, and creates a national narrative by erasing alternative pasts: "as states narrate themselves as an ultimate organizational achievement of modernity, they locate themselves in an identity-producing story which replaces both the religious story of salvation and the evolutionary biological story of humanity's emergence from the 'great chain of being,' which served previous forms of power and authority" (83). In this model, the state's power to create national narratives using temporality is related to the state's control over both individual and collective memory. In other words, homogenized time creates a way of connecting memory and time where plurality is eradicated and memory can be discussed in terms of right and wrong with regards to what the state considers to be the "facts." Shapiro explains the state's autobiographical narrative through Homi Bhabha's "double time of the nation:" "To produce a coherent people, it produces a national pedagogy, making the people 'historical "objects" in a story of a pre-founding social homogeneity' (p. 297). At the same time, however, the prior, historical presence is erased in a signifying process aimed at showing the national life as a continuous heterogeneous process of renewal" (84). According to Shapiro, national time is not about instruments or

technologies, but rather about a national pedagogy that is imposed by the state, and is responsible in the formation of narratives and national cultures (84).

Novels have played an important role in both the history of national time, as well as resistance to national times. In Benedict Anderson's *Imagined communities*, novels, along with clocks, newspapers, and calendars produce and presume a shared cultural field coextensive with the nation's territorial span (Cua Lim 142). These technologies helped produce an empty and homogenous sense of time which is crucial to the formation of the imagined community since it allows its citizens to imagine a horizontal fellowship despite their vertical inequities (141). For Carlos Fuentes and Michael Shapiro however, the novel provides evidence of disjoint presences that have been endemic to nation-states since the colonial period (Shapiro 82). The use of narrative by novelistic fiction can subvert the Western nation-state's monopoly of spatio-temporal presence (83). "More than any other discipline," Fuentes writes, "literature forcefully tells us that if you chase the past out of the window it will come back through the front door wearing the strangest disguises" (Fuentes 62). Mairal presents both sides of this debate in his novel. *El año del desierto* is scattered with literary references not only from Argentina, but also Chekov, Woolf, Plath, and Joyce, among others. As Joanna Page has suggested, the written book, we are led to understand, is only one stage in the development of human culture, and as transient as any other technology (94). The first

scene from Maria's year is her catching the train on her way to work, and being unable to read a Hawthorne book she had in her purse (3). By the end of that same chapter, as the provincial masses flock to the city, all of Maria's books are confiscated by the military to create barricades:

Pero se los llevó [los libros] sin mirarme a los ojos, cargándolos arriba de una puerta con otro soldado. Ahí se iban los libros de inglés de mamá de cuando era profesora...

También se llevaron un libro de grabados de anatomía, de mi abuela Rose, que había sido enfermera en el Hospital Británico... A través de ellas [mamá y abuela] me llegaba el inglés y esos libros ahora se llevaban los soldados. Tres novelas de Virginia Woolf, todo Shakespeare en un tomo azul que yo leía salteado y con dificultad, *The Sound and the Fury* en una edición de Vintage, *El proceso*, los cuentos y el teatro de Chéjov, varios Penguin que me había ido regalando mi abuela en cada cumpleaños, como *Gulliver's Travel*, *Alice in Wonderland*...

[But he took them [the books] without looking me in the eye, carrying them up a door with another soldier. There went my books in English from when mother was a teacher... They also took a book anonymously engraved, that belonged to my grandmother Rose, who had been a nurse at the British Hospital... Through them [mother and grandmother] English reached me and now the soldiers were taking those books. Three novels by Virginia Woolf, every Shakespeare in a single blue volume which I read haphazardly and with difficulty, *The Sound and the Fury* in a vintage edition, *The Process*, the short stories

and plays of Chekov, various Penguin which my grandmother had gifted me every birthday, like *Gulliver's Travel*, *Alice in Wonderland*] (Mairal 40-41)

The scene describes a last and ultimately futile attempt to shore up the privileges of the social and cultural elite, perfectly ready to sacrifice their accumulated wealth of knowledge and learning to defend their private property (Page 94). Maria's books place her within an Argentinian urban and cultural elite that is more familiar with the Anglo and "global" literary tradition than with local literary traditions. The descriptions of the books emphasize their materiality and branding, not only are the texts important, but also the fact they are "vintage" or Penguin editions. The imagined community produced by these books is not Argentina, but Maria's British heritage and links to the women in her family. Additionally, the jobs held by Maria's mother and grandmother in the passage, will eventually be some of the jobs she performs throughout the year. The passage creates an important contrast between the explicit and implicit use of literature in *El año del desierto*, where Maria's explicit mentions of literature are related to a pedagogy of social and cultural elitism, while the rest of the novel is saturated with Argentinian literary and cultural references that require an astute reader to identify. The literary references that Mairal would therefore place as belonging to the national pedagogy, do not appear in the form of books, instead the novel produces space as an archive of cultural elements and literary characters appear forming the national identity

(Bonacic 112). The literary and the historic cannot be told without each other in Mairal's story of Argentina, as the literary becomes itself another field of possibility.

One such instance of literature and history as fields of possibility is the use of Jorge Luis Borges's "Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires." As Hallstead and Dabove state many of the authors and works alluded to in the novel are not Borges, but are read through Borges, that is, through fragments that Borges emphasizes in his own readings (xxiv). Borges also plays a crucial role in the novel that seems to be present the entire time even if never explicitly mentioned. At no moment is that more evident than when Maria hears her friend Laura read the following verses:

¿Y fue por este río de sueñera y de sangre  
que las vuelos vinieron a arruinarme la patria?  
Irían con sus chumbos los milicos pintados  
arrojando los cuerpos a la corriente zaina. (Mairal 56)  
[And was it along this drowsy, bloodied river  
that the flights came to ruin my country?  
They would have had their revolvers with them, those painted  
soldiers,  
throwing the bodies into the dark brown current.<sup>15</sup>]

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<sup>15</sup> This translation is not mine as the others, but rather taken from Joanna Page's analysis of *El año del desierto*

The verses are a direct reference to the opening of Borges's "Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires," which begins as follows:

¿Y fue por este río de sueñera y de barro  
que las proas vinieron a fundarme la patria?  
Irían a los tumbos los barquitos pintados  
entre los camalotes de la corriente zaina.  
[And was it along this drowsy, muddy river  
that the prows came to found my country?  
They would have lurched and reeled, those little painted boats,  
among the water plants in the dark brown current.]

The altered phrases, as critics have highlighted, unmistakably refer to the ruinous violence of the dictatorship of 1976–83, and specifically its favored method of “disappearing” the bodies of dissidents: throwing them from airplanes into the sea (Page 91). Whereas Bakhtin warns us that we should never modernize or distort the past by inserting our present into it, Mairal's reverse history bring the past into the present. The use of Borges is not merely about contrasting the ruins of the present with the hope of the past (Page 91), as Page suggest—performing that contrast would be the type of distortion Bakhtin condemned. Instead, *El año del desierto* activates what Saul Morson calls the “ghostly presence of might-have-been or migh-bes” in the context of a

neoliberal debt crisis. Mairal avoids historical revisionism, and instead stages the institutionalized links between politics, history, and progress (Di Dio 45).

Mairal not only traces the production of a national pedagogy, he also highlights the violence and conflicts that took place every step of the way. The hyperbolic temporal reversals of *El año del desierto* make it easy to detect the expression of a common anxiety concerning a nation that has dropped out of the global race and confounded linear models of historical development (Page 105): the military dictatorship that took place between 1976 and 1983, the first Peronism, the development of organized labor movements, Italian migration, the civil wars, the “rosismo” (inverted in the novel as Celestes rather than Rosas), the war against indigenous peoples, English invasions, and the Spanish conquest (Mairal XIX). Although all these conflicts play a role in the state-driven national pedagogy of Argentina, they are also intrinsically part of the nation’s economic development. The repetition of the rosismo, which the novel fictionalizes through a leader called Juan Martín Celestes, is one of the scenes that most explicitly parodies Argentina’s modernization:

–“Lo que se llamó tecnología y progreso no fue más que la mano siniestra del capitalismo salvaje. Hay que volver a la tierra y a las manos. Las máquinas les quitan el trabajo a los hombres, la ciencia nos quita el pan de las manos, la ciencia todo lo pudre.”

Ahí estaban entonces las milicias celestistas matando máquinas muertas, rompiendo todo lo que tuviera poleas o engranajes o manijas giratorias; todo lo que fuera más allá del carro y arado de mansera.

[–“What was named technology and progress was nothing more than the sinister hand of savage capitalism. We must return to the land and to manual labor. The machines take jobs away from men, science takes bread from our hands, science rots everything.”

There were the Celestine militias killing dead machines, breaking everything that had pulleys or gears or rotating handles; everything that was more advanced than a carriage and a plow hand] (Mairal 218)

Because of the novel's reverse chronology, the idea of wild, or savage, capitalism which the celestistas are fighting is not 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalism, but rather 21<sup>st</sup> century neoliberalism, and the “salvajes” [savages] who they fear are not the savages of Sarmiento's *Facundo*, but rather the financial district, led by Suárez and Baitos. Mairal's use of repetition is not nostalgic, the novel does not suggest a return to a “better time,” instead these instances show the expanded present of the crisis, and the duration of past. For Henri Bergson, duration is the subsistence of the past in the present and the capacity of this reimbued present to generate an unexpected future beyond that of the imminent action (Grosz 2004: 186). According to Deleuze, there are two fundamental characteristics to duration: continuity and heterogeneity (Deleuze 37). Duration is not merely experience, but rather it is an internal condition for experience. He states: “It is

an internal multiplicity of succession, of fusion, of organization, of heterogeneity, of qualitative discrimination, or of *difference in kind*; it is a *virtual and continuous* multiplicity that cannot be reduced to numbers” (Deleuze 38). Unlike *discrete multiplicities*, or multiplicity as it relates to mathematics, duration consists of multiplicities that must remain continuous. It is not simply that duration is invisible or nonmeasurable, but rather that duration is “that which divided only by changing in kind, that which was susceptible to measurement only by varying its metrical principle at each stage of the division” (Deleuze 40). The key here for Bergson is that measuring duration or time through stages of division, rather than continuity, is precisely what spatializes time. If we take for example typical instruments for measuring time like clocks or calendars, what we are really measuring is not duration, but the change in the position of objects in space with regards to one another—in this example of the clock, the Earth with respect to the Sun. Mairal’s novel narrates duration by getting rid of the dates of these events. Although we as readers understand the reference in relation to specific dates in Argentinian history, in the novel these moments take place as a continuous event amid the crisis. Mairal displays a logic of repetition in so far as it reflects on the “extended present” of the crisis which brings together the remains of other times and spaces that appeared long gone, but that remained in force (Campis 4). In Mairal’s novel, as María A. Semilla Durán has observed, there is no memory, no collective resistance that

indicates the happening of events, instead History traverses through the heroine, who survives with wit but no dreams or aspiration, and therefore does not carry with her any community project (Duran 333). The 2001 collapse appears as the most extreme dispossession experienced by citizens after the dismantlement of the welfare state, the failure of collective aspirations, and a new order of social belonging (Dio 47). The novel problematizes the association of “contemporary” with innovation and presentism, showing instead how neoliberalism produces ruins and fossils (5), particularly in its destruction of the city.

### **The Breakdown of Neoliberalism Urban Space-Time from Above**

As historians have noted, Argentina’s national project was conceptualized in terms of the irreconcilable struggle between barbarity coming from the desert and civilization which comes from Europe and expands from the port city. Mairal’s emphasis on the frailty of Argentina’s nation-building and civilizing projects might be seen to resurrect and reinforce the nation’s founding literary myth of civilization and barbarism, presenting the twenty-first century’s advances as nothing more than a veneer that is quickly erased in the nation’s regression back to its barbaric origins (Page 93). The novel stages the breakdown of what Gago calls neoliberalism from above, both in terms of its material condition within urban space, but also as a temporality of global space-time

compression. Urban space is not only crucial to the modernizing project of Argentina, but also the driving force behind the act of narrating by Maria:

“El avance de la intemperie me había hecho sentir que toda la ciudad, a medida que se borraba de la realidad, debía quedar grabada en mi cabeza. Yo tenía la obligación (nadie me lo había pedido) de memorizar cada rincón, cada calle, cada fachada, y no dejar que los nuevos terrenos baldíos se superpusieran sobre la nitidez de mi recuerdo y borrarán” [The progress of the intemperie had made me feel that the entire city, as it was being erased from reality, must be recorded in my head. I had the obligation (nobody had asked me) to memorize every corner, every street, every façade, and not let the new wasteland territories superimpose themselves over the clarity of my memory and erase them] (192).

As David Harvey and Georg Simmel have demonstrated, the story of capitalism cannot be told without accounting for the development of modern cities, and vice versa. For David Harvey, understanding the urbanization of capital is pivotal, as capitalism has survived not only through the production of space, as Lefebvre insists, but through superior command over space (Harvey 1989: 58). Harvey claims that building a capacity for increased efficiency of coordination in space and time is one of the hallmarks of capitalist urbanization. This “efficiency of coordination” is linked to the needs of capitalism for the accumulation of capital, production, circulation, exchange, and consumption (Harvey 1985: 14). Bringing together the work of Marx and Lefebvre, he

showcases the needs of capitalism for spaces that facilitate movement, either to reduce the time it takes for an exchange to take place, or to accelerate the labor market: “The cost, speed, and capacity of the transport system relate directly to accumulation because of the impact these have on the turnover time of capital. Investment and innovation in transport are therefore potentially productive for capital in general” (Harvey 1985: 24). Unlike Bergson, whose ideas of duration are an attempt to think about time without relating it to space, Harvey focuses on temporal categories that cannot be separated from space. According to Harvey, the tightening of the chronological net around daily life had everything to do with achieving the necessary coordination for profitable production and exchange over space (Harvey 1989: 173). According to Gago, neoliberalism exploits and takes advantage of the economy’s new (micro)scale, but the popular classes, the city’s poor, also challenge the city and often struggle to produce situations of urban justice, conquering the city and defining a new “right to the city.”

It should come as no surprise that economic crises like Argentina’s not only have a profound impact on urban landscapes, but also often lead to protests structured around occupying urban spaces, as was the case of the “Argentinazo.” At the beginning of the novel Maria’s partner, Alejandro, is attending the protests in Buenos Aires, while Maria lives in a petit bourgeois bubble, with no concern or awareness of *la intemperie* until it is too late. At the beginning of the novel, Maria’s only worry is wanting to buy a

blue dress out of her price range. Georg Simmel has also argued that development of the modern metropolis is almost exclusively designed for the production market (Simmel 327). According to Simmel, the modern city is designed to facilitate the mobility and flow of money: "The metropolis has always been the seat of money economy because the many-sidedness and concentration of commercial activity have given the medium of exchange an importance which it could not have acquired in the commercial aspects of rural life" (326). Unlike Harvey, however, Simmel's focus is the effects this production of space has on the mental life of subjects as one of reserve: "if I am not mistaken, the inner side of this external reserve is not only indifference, but more frequently than we believe, it is a slight aversion, a mutual strangeness and repulsion which, in a close contact which has arisen any way whatever, can break out into hatred and conflict" (331). For Simmel, the metropolis places emphasis on striving for the most individual forms of personal existence (337). The Maria we find in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, as well as the other employees at Suárez and Baitos fall into this category, in which relationships there is no sense of collectivity. Life in the modern metropolis, for Simmel, requires a new precision calculating punctuality:

Punctuality, calculability, and exactness, which are required by the complications and extensiveness of metropolitan life are not only most intimately connected with its capitalistic and intellectualistic character but also color the content of life and are conducive to the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and

impulses which originally seek to determine the form of life from within instead of receiving it from the outside in a general, schematically precise form. (328-329)

For Simmel, the subject of the metropolis embodies this contradiction between punctual, calculated, on the one hand, and irrational, instinctive, we could also add affective, on the other. The distinct approaches to capitalism the city between Harvey and Simmel are also indicative of the two different approaches to the category of neoliberalism as a form of governing from above, or as a rationality from below. According to Gago, from above, neoliberalism recognizes a modification of the global regime of accumulation—new strategies on the part of corporations, agencies, and governments—that induces a mutation in nation-state institutions (Gago 6). Neoliberalism from above recognizes a modification of the global regime of accumulation—new strategies on the part of corporations, agencies, and governments—that induces a mutation in nation-state institutions (Gago 6). “Since the 1970s”, Gago states, “after the defeat of the revolutionary movements, Latin America has served as a site of experimentation for neoliberal reforms propelled “from above,” by international financial institutions, corporations, and governments” (2). The “from above” approach is how David Harvey understands neoliberalism and by extension, how he understands the relationship between capitalism and the city. According to Harvey neoliberalism is based on a set of state reforms and practices in which the state’s priorities shift from the welfare state to a market-oriented state. Neoliberal urbanization, seen from above, is just another stage in

Harvey's history of capitalist urbanization, but with a stronger emphasis on the global market. From below, Gago suggest, neoliberalism is the proliferation of forms of life that reorganize notions of freedom, calculation, and obedience, projecting a new collective affectivity and rationality (Gago 6). Understanding the neoliberal city, from below, therefore requires analyzing the relationship between the production of space, Simmel's notion of the metropolitan mentality, and Gago's now forms of life.

*El año del desierto* presents a city in which everything is rotting, along with a changing relation to labor. The 2001 crisis entirely changed the urban landscape of Buenos Aires, producing informal jobs to pick up trash, often carried by women, children, and entire families who would gather as much as they could during the day for food, exchange, or selling (Laera 45). Many of these individuals and families moved into these precarious urban settlements to be closer to opportunities of survival (Laera 45). These settlements also gave way to Gago's primary example for understanding neoliberalism from below, La Salada, a massive market described as the largest illegal market in Latin America, occupying over twenty hectares on the border between Buenos Aires and its urban periphery (Gago 16). The novel contrast the emergence of these markets with a disappearance of shopping malls: "En el Shopping Abasto, ahora funcionaba un mercado. Adentro había un ruido de carretillas y gritos. Vi naranjas, mandarinas, manzanas; parecían jugosas y ricas" (Mairal 104). The transformation of the

city and its disappearance to the desert, most sharply contrasts with the Torrey Garay, the building where the financial conglomerate Suárez & Baitos is located, and the last building left standing in the novel. Maria's description of the Suárez & Baitos offices is the novel's clearest picture of neoliberal urbanization from above:

La altura del piso veinticinco permitía esa mirada geográfica. *Era la vista de los hombres poderosos.* Por eso habían puesto las salas de reunión hacia ese lado. No era una linda vista, pero parecía perfecta para hacer negocios. Como si fuera un lugar en otro país, lejos del barro nacional, como visto de un avión. *Era la altura de la economía global,* de las grandes financieras del aire, donde se establecían a la perfección los contactos telefónicos con las antípodas. Como si, ahí arriba en el mejor oxígeno, *en la cima del mundo, pudieran tocarse la punta de los dedos con New York, con Tokio...* El truco del lugar era la altura, *lejos del tercer mundo,* el horizonte lejano, diáfano, donde podía verse, en los días más claros, la orilla de enfrente, la salvación *off shore,* el Uruguay, la ciudad de Colonia del Sacramento.

[The height of the twenty-fourth floor allowed for that geographic view. *It was the view of powerful men.* That is why they had placed the meeting offices facing that direction. It was not a pretty view, but it seemed perfect for business. As if it were in a different country, far from the national mud, as if seen from a plane. *It was the height of the global economy,* of the great finance agencies in the sky, where they established to perfection the phone contacts with the antipodean. As if, up there the oxygen was better, *on top of the world, they could seemingly touch their fingertips with New York, with Tokyo...* The key to the place was height, *far from the third world,* the far way horizon, diaphanous, were one could see, in the clearest days, the shore in

front, the off-shore salvation, Uruguay, the city of Colonia del Sacramento] (Mairal 8, italics are mine)

The altitude of the Suárez and Baitos offices gives the impression of belonging to a network of economic activity that is unrelated to the local dynamic of Buenos Aires. The initial chapters of the novel reflect on neoliberalism's transformation of the subject into the *homo oeconomicus*, the glorification of the individual, and aspirations of personal professional gain (Campis 2), best exemplified in the characters of Suárez and Baitos. The description of the offices' geographic view from above contrast with the rest of Maria's narrative, which at ground level emphasizes the national over the global. *El año del desierto*, Page claims, stages the rapid degeneration of society into barbarism, but maps it very precisely with reference to the local and national (Page 88). As historians have noted, Argentina's national project was conceptualized in terms of the irreconcilable struggle between barbarity coming from the desert and civilization which comes from Europe and expands from the port city. Mairal's emphasis on the frailty of Argentina's nation-building and civilizing projects might be seen to resurrect and reinforce the nation's founding literary myth of civilization and barbarism, presenting the twenty-first century's advances as nothing more than a veneer that is quickly erased in the nation's regression back to its barbaric origins (Page 93). What is interesting about Maria's narration is how her nation-building in reverse does not begin with the distinction between the city and the desert, but rather a distinction between the high and

low in terms of the global and the local. The mention of Uruguay, New York, and Tokyo underscore both neoliberalism's lack of commitment to the local, in reference to the escape of capital in the form of off shore accounts by the richest Argentinians, and Harvey's idea of space-time compression in which the entire world is within reach for those with enough capital. By the end of the novel, the building owned by Suárez & Baitos is the last building left standing in Buenos Aires as the executives saved themselves at the expense of everyone else by turning to cannibalism.

If sideshadowing is the primary mode of time used to narrate the story of Maria and to employ Argentina's literary past, the city's demise plays with sideshadowing's opposite, vortex time. If in sideshadowing apparently simple events ramify into multiple futures, in vortex time an apparent diversity of causes all converge on a single catastrophe (Morson 163). Morson states: "When a vortex is strong enough, it attracts everything, any stray thought, or chance event, even if the character struggles against it. In the vortex, all forces, all theories, no matter what their initial trajectory, are redirected to point toward the catastrophe ahead (164). According to Morson, it was Dostoevsky who most famously combined these two modes of time in his novels. In Dostoevsky, characters (both main and minor) are often possessed by vortex time, but the world is governed by sideshadowing (167). Mairal however uses these distinct modes of narrative time in a way that more aptly displays the temporal problems underlining

neoliberalism. Konings *Capital and Time* argues two crucial points about neoliberalism: neoliberal reason is characterized by a concern with temporality that remains absent or suppressed in classic economic liberalism and in neoclassical economics (23); the inability to think self-referentiality properly binds heterodox economic critique to foundationalism (33). For Konings, whereas orthodox economic theory unreflexively reproduces the self-referentiality of monetary value, heterodox or critical theories have insisted on clear distinctions between real and fictitious money, turning a blind eye to the ways money works as a self-referential value (32). Konings suggests that, following Niklas Luhmann's work on self-reference, we must instead seek to understand how systems endogenously generate their conditions of possibility (33). Self-referentiality, for Konings and Luhmann, denotes the way systems reproduce themselves through their own operations (47). This does not mean self-referential systems are self-sufficient or autonomous, but they lack an outside foundation: "Self-reference is never an expression of ontological self-sufficiency, disconnect, or metaphysical autonomy – it is the mode of constitution in a world where divine acts of creation do not occur and we cannot hope to find essential substances that exist independently of the functional needs of biological or social systems" (47). For him, a key strength of neoliberalism has been recognizing the limits of rationalist approaches and discerning the possibilities for steering and ordering opened up by the ways politics and governance are increasingly endogenous to the logic

of the economy (60). He accuses heterodox economic critique, especially those who follow Karl Polanyi, of interpreting neoliberalism's self-referentiality as a mistake by the part of its founders and supporters, even when key figures in neoliberal thinking already offered their own ideas on exceptionalism and self-organizing systems.

Self-referentiality leads to a temporal logic of speculation as its act of observation cannot observe itself: "Every act of self-referential reproduction is speculative, beset by an irreducible element of uncertainty that cannot be neutralized as a matter of principle" (48). Neoliberalism signifies a movement of governmental rationality from a logic of anticipation and prevention, to a logic of speculative preemption (110). Capitalist temporality works on an affectively charged tension between the acute awareness of ineradicable contingency on the one hand, and the anticipation of riskless security and infinite time on the other (55). For Konings, the way neoliberalism brings speculation into the heart of governmental rationality means that it functions on a logic of preemption, a paradoxical practice that fully blurs the distinction between prevention and activation (67). Describing the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, he writes: "As Massumi puts it: "The before-after seizes the present. The future-past colonizes the present" (2005: 6). Or as Adams, Murphy, and Clarke put it, "the future arrives as already in the present, as if the emergency has already happened" (2009: 249)" (68).

## **Conclusion**

Marx tells us in *Capital* that credit accelerates the violent outbreaks caused by the inherent contradictions of capital (Marx 572). Mairal's *El año del desierto* explores the conditions produced by the 2001 crisis as the violent outbreak of not only contradictions in productions, but also contradictions in in time. Mairal's contradiction vortex time and sideshadowing functions as the literary articulation of what Konings calls the intensification of the preemptive temporality during times of crisis (Konings 67) and of Marx's acceleration of violent outbreaks. Vortex time, in *El año del desierto*, is best portrayed in the form of the intemperie, which is never clear if it is a natural phenomenon, historical or supernatural (or none of the above) (Mairal xxii). Different critics have interpreted the intemperie in various ways. For Zac Zimmer the intemperie vaguely points towards an ecological disaster, but it is also intimately connected—via a realistic representation of the events of 19–20 December—with the 2001 crisis (376). For Paula Di Dio, the intemperie is a metaphor used by Mairal to illustrate the link between political power and the suspension of human rights amid the crisis (47). According to Nicolas Campis the intemperie unveils the social function of time in the novel (1). And for Jesús Montoya Juárez the intemperie symbolizes a force that erases capitalist civilization (276). What makes the intemperie a mechanism of vortex time is how despite the possible readings of what it is, or how it works, what is undeniable is that it points towards the end, towards the final catastrophe that erases the material existence of the

nation, the closed time of preemption. Although, as previously stated, Maria is never present in the intemperie, she never sees it happen, her attention to the materiality surrounding her is a testament of her desperate attempt to “construct reality,” when that reality is in constant dissolution (xx). The novel’s tension between sideshadowing and vortex time, between open and closed temporality, is indicative of neoliberalism’s affectively charged tension between the necessity of speculation and the anticipation of certainty (Konings 29). The end of the novel, the culmination of the vortex, is, as Allstead and Dabove point out not the end of Argentina, but the end of *an* Argentina (Mairal xv). The novel’s temporal paradoxes close cycles of crises on the one hand, but also underscore the potential of open time, the ways the past had the potential to be different so do the present and the future. Looking back at Argentina’s literary tradition from Sarmiento, to Cortazar, to Borges, and others, Mairal stages the broader history of Argentina’s crises and the role of fiction in relation to that history. As fictions such as the nation, the state, and market collapse, Mairal uses literature and cultural production as the surviving fiction from which to rethink the others.

### Chapter 3: The Domestic Dispositif in Diamela Eltit's *Los trabajadores de la muerte* and *Mano de obra*

In October of 2019, Chile, often seen as the birthplace of neoliberalism in Latin America, saw massive protests in the streets against the country's latest austerity measures, the rising costs of public transportation, attacks on pension for retirees, cuts to healthcare, and low wages. Some protestors carried signs that read "El neoliberalismo nace y muere en Chile" [Neoliberalism was born, and will die, in Chile]. As the protests continued, a feminist collective called La Tesis [The Thesis] went viral in late November for their performance of "El violador eres tu" [You Are the rapist] in which they highlight violence against women in Chile, and the state's role in that violence. Although the direct relationship between these two protests may not be glaring at first sight, recent scholarship in feminist economic criticism in Latin America, such as Veronica Gago and Luci Cavallero's *Una lectura feminista de la deuda* (2019) [*A Feminist Reading of The Debt*] and Ariadna Godreau Aubert's *Las propias* (2018) [*The Proper or The Self-Owned*], have highlighted how the category of debt helps us better establish links between sexual politics and political economy. In Latin American literature, Diamela Eltit has most prominently been exploring this relationship between neoliberalism, debt, and gender for more than 30 years.

Diamela Eltit emerged out of the 1980s-narrative scene in Chile, a time when writers were feeling pressure from Pinochet's dictatorship, and ever since she has been one of the most scrutinized authors of her generation. Most famously, Diamela Eltit has been read as the most significant novelist out of Chile's second wave of postmodern writers—the later Donoso, Alberto Fuguet, and Antonio Ostornol (Williams 73). Her novels have been mined for everything from the relationship between literature and economics, the postmodern novel, the Latin American Avant-garde, women's literature in Chile, the memory of the dictatorship, and Chile's transitional period. She published her first novel, *Lumperica*, in 1983, but had previously published a book of essays in 1980 titled *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento*, and had also been a member of the collective resistance art project Colectivo de Acciones De Arte (CADA) (Llanos 162). At the time *Lumperica* was published, Eltit was the only woman in Chile's "new literary scene" (163). She has been acutely analyzed in the context of Chile's memory of the dictatorship (Avelar, Richard), the transition period after the dictatorship (Masiello, Richard), neoliberal labor (Fornazzari), and the role of motherhood (Green).

*Los trabajadores de la muerte* [*The Workers of Death*] ([1998], 2009) and *Mano de obra* [*Workforce or Hand of Labor*] (2002) are novels that unveil the devastating unification between religion-based "traditional values" and market values spearheaded by the neoliberal transition in Chile, as well as the direct impact on women's lives produced by

this union. *Los trabajadores de la muerte*, is a story of debt—where indeed debt usurps the place of the traditional protagonist as the agent of his destiny. In the novel, a young man, known simply as the son, is forced by his mother to travel from Santiago to Concepcion after his initial attempt to leave the household leads to nothing but indebtedness. In Concepcion, he has a love affair with a woman who turns out to be his half-sister, finds out his father, now dead, had abandoned his mother to marry a wealthier woman, sinks further in debt, and eventually murders his half-sister. This tragedy of nameless characters—we only learn the names of the son and the half-sister (Patricio and Monica) once the crime has been committed—is Eltit’s rewriting of Euripides’ “Medea” as a story in which debt assumes the place occupied by the gods in determining fate. Inspired by a family crime in newspapers, Eltit saw Medea as a narrative that could spell out the limits of life in present day Chile: “What interested me is how the dramas of the Greek tragedy keep repeating themselves today, maybe not in the registers of the nobility, because the tragedy always works with demigods, but in the most popular registers” (Gomez, 32). *Los trabajadores de la muerte* draws on the forms of classical tragedy—including a prologue, three acts, and an epilogue—and translates it into the “popular register” of the Chilean marketplace. Praising this transformation, literary critic Francine Masiello suggests that Eltit provides us with a sense of the marketplace in its original and local sense—the central plaza as the site of exchanges

between impoverished peddlers and members of the “polis,” rather than the abstract virtual market of financial capitalism (Masiello 209). While agreeing with Masiello to this point, I show that Eltit’s use of classical tragic form yields still more important insights into neoliberal capitalism, as I pursue the implications of her translation of that form into the family tragedy composing the three central acts of the novel.

Criticism generally falls short in recognizing that *Medea* is a *family* tragedy. To be sure any number of readers have discussed the concept of motherhood, the dynamics of family, the relation between the stories of Medea and Oedipus, and the body politics of Eltit’s oeuvre, but they do not consider what the problem of debt does to the organization of the family. I see this division in scholarship on *Los trabajadores de la muerte* as symptomatic of the critical approach to Diamela Eltit’s work: Why should one of the most scrutinized Latin American writers of the past thirty years be read either as a critique of post-dictatorship Chile or as an exposé of the gender dynamics producing violence against women, but not as an exploration between political economy and sexual politics? The purpose of this chapter is therefore twofold: to place Diamela Eltit’s *Los trabajadores de la muerte* ([1998], 2009) and *Mano de Obra* ([2002], 2004) within discussion of feminist economic criticism and to situate her domestic tragedies within

the networks of power that Michel Foucault defined as *dispositif*<sup>16</sup>. This twofold argument shines light on the centrality of debt within what I will call the “domestic *dispositif*,” the material, emotional, and imaginative possibilities and limits that make certain things likely to happen in the household, and happen in a certain way, and other things unlikely to happen.

Rather than speak of eternal truths, or solutions to power relations, Eltit forces the reader of her texts to question the cultural and political constructs that legitimate power (Williams 77). The most studied mechanism in Eltit’s work for questioning power relations has been the female body. In her work, according to Bernadita Llanos, the body becomes the site of experience, the place where ideological systems struggle to impose their regimentation. This understanding of experience as embodiment stresses the materiality as well as the specific location of the subject’s body (Llanos 164). What is most important for my purposes, however, is not what the body in her novels tells us about the destiny of her characters but the role it plays as a figure of thought in formulating her alternative model of reasoning. Her extraordinary originality rests, in my view, on that reasoning challenges the limits on linguistic expression and expands

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<sup>16</sup> In a 1977 interview Foucault provides a definition of the term as “a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions... The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements” (Peltonen 2004). For the purposes of literary scholarship, Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope serves as the literary manifestation of the *dispositif*.

their possibility to the point where language ceases to represent human life and acquires a life of its own, one arguably closer to actual experience (164).

But if her writing is closer to experience, then, we have to ask, why do her readers find Eltit's writing "difficult," "experimental," cryptic," or just plain "unintelligible?" "Although [Eltit] denies these specific accusations," Gisela Norat explains, she also "recognizes that fragmented, unstable, open-ended, highly symbolic, sometimes contradictory, and yes, even occasionally incoherent narrative, which has come to characterize her writing, is not reader-friendly" (Norat 15). Alberto Fuguet, for one, regards Eltit as an academic novelist who writes for precisely the cultural elites from which he tries to distance himself (Hoyos 112). If for Fuguet the task of the Latin American novelist is to explore the sensibilities produced by the impact of global market reforms on local subjectivities, then for Eltit, the novelist's task is not only to explore sensibilities disfigured by neoliberalism but also to resist them. In this respect, she is very leftist intellectual that Fuguet denounces as outdated, despite the fact that her novels do not continue the magical realist tradition he links with that type of intellectual. What Fuguet overlooks is the degree to which both are invested in the novel as a means of exposing the impact of neoliberalism and on the formation of local subjectivities. For Eltit this impact has everything to do with the memory of torture and genocide under Pinochet, the surveillance state he established, and the violence that regime inflicted on

the bodies and lives of women. *Los trabajadores de la muerte* and *Mano de obra* focus on the neoliberal transformation of the *dispositif* of the wage-labor system and how it erases the distinction between being at work and being at home. As a result, domestic space is no longer a respite and source of replenishment from labor so much as an extension of the factory. It is crucial, however, to think about how these readings meet in the domestic *dispositif* when we consider the relationship between debt, motherhood, the family, and the neoliberal household.

A *dispositif*<sup>17</sup>, according to Foucault, determines how neoliberal control of social space comes into dominance as it displaces disciplinary institutions and procedures (Frost 152). Foucault first uses the term in *History of Sexuality*,<sup>18</sup> and most notably during his lectures *Society Must be Defended* and *Security, Territory, Population*, where he develops his concept of the *dispositifs de sécurité*. It is here, in his last University Lectures, that the security *dispositif* emerges as an assemblage of strategies of power to transform discipline (Muller 206). Here, Foucault's understanding of *dispositifs* as assemblages of power mutates into a political formation resembling Deleuze's "societies of control" (207). Deleuze states:

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<sup>17</sup> I will use the term in French as there is no direct translation to English that captures exactly what Foucault intended when using the term. The most common translation to English has been "apparatus." For a detailed account of the linguistic problems with the term see "Bussolini, Jeffrey. "What Is a Dispositive?" *Foucault Studies*, no. 10, Nov. 2010, pp. 85–107.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Hurley, who translated *Histoire de la sexualité* into English, rendered the term *dispositif* as 'deployment.' (Bussolini 86)

Two important consequences arise for a philosophy of social apparatuses [dispositifs].

*The first of these is the repudiation of universals.* The universal, in fact, explains nothing; it is the universal which needs to be explained ... The One, the All, the True, the object, the subject are not universals, but singular processes—present in the given apparatus. Also *each apparatus is a multiplicity in which operate processes of this nature still in formation,* distinct from those operating in another. (Deleuze 162, italics are mine)

Deleuze's formulation of the *dispositif* underscores the repudiation of universals which is also found in the work of Diamela Eltit. The fragmentary, and at times cryptic, style of Eltit gives the reader an experience of the multiplicity within the *dispositif* rather than just a representation. For example, the embodied experience previously noted by Llanos, serves as one of the most common processes in the apparatus used by Eltit. It could be said that Eltit's theory of the novel is less concerned with what novels say, and more focused on what novels do. Her novels become a site where assemblages of power act ways, that as Eltit herself has recognized, can be fragmented, unstable, open-ended, contradictory, and even incoherent. To understand how this multiplicity operates in *Los trabajadores de la muerte* and *Mano de obra*, it is crucial that we look at how the Chilean household was transformed by the neoliberal transition.

During Pinochet's dictatorial regime, Chile embraced traditional religious values which associated women with conventional roles by elevating motherhood and promoting "The Family" as women's natural destiny (Mora 47). Under the dictatorship,

women were represented as the moral reserve that would rebuild a great Chile. As Claudia Mora explains, their adherence to traditional values, such as domesticity, motherhood and sexual propriety, embodied the recovery of a lost order. The regulation of women's bodies became the immediate locus of social control, as evidenced by the regime's declaration of its population policy as an issue of national security (Mora 47). At the same time, Chile's neoliberal transformation also meant more economic demand for women workers, who were seen as an important source of cheap labor. This led to more women having access to the market, but often for poor women it also resulted in higher levels of indebtedness in the form of micro credit loans (Mora 45). The expansion of credit took place under Pinochet's regime as the country opened to the global markets. Between 1975 and 1979, foreign loans flooded the Chilean economy, with an expansion of credit from private international banks that amounted to more than 6,120.9 million USD (Han 8). This allowed the regime to service Chile's public debt. The costs of such measures were felt throughout the population, but especially by the urban and rural poor, who saw the minimum wage drop by 50 percent during the first two years of the military regime and the loss of disposable income sharpened by the reduction in social expenditures by the state (Han 8). The private sector under the dictatorship could take as much debt as they wished, domestically and abroad, since it was the exclusive responsibility of the borrower (Valdés 27). This initial phase of neoliberal reforms and

credit expansion, also known by some as the Chicago Boys' "naïve" phase (Valdés 28), lasted until the debt crisis of 1982, which swept across of all Latin America. In 1985, Chile received a three-year structural adjustment loan from the World Bank and made a three-year agreement with the International Monetary Fund (Han 8).

The transformation of debt in Chile can be seen not only in credit expansion, but also in the language of debt permeating and transforming all spheres of life in Chile. An example of this dynamic is Clara Han's *Life in Debt: Times of Care and Violence in Neoliberal Chile* (2012), which illustrates how the expansion of credit in Chile changed household dynamics, resulting in a heavier burden for women workers. Han brings to light how notions like "commitment to the house," and "obligations that come with kinship" bring into focus credit and indebtedness in order to attend to the difficulties in caring for kin (Han 33). She also underscores how the question of debt in Chile not only refers to this expansion of credit, but also the "debts" owed to the population after the dictatorship. Since 1990, the coalition of democratic parties cast the state's project of transitional justice in terms of debts to the population. The state owed a "social debt" to the poor due to the inequalities generated by the regime's economic liberalization, while society owed a "moral debt" to the victims of human rights violations (Han 4). Han's case study of indebted life in Chile points to a broader problem concerning the role of the family as a necessary internal exception to the free market under neoliberalism.

The family under neoliberalism, as a result of the previously mentioned bond between traditional and economic values, becomes the means of ensuring a transfer of both debt and equity into the future. In order for the market reforms of neoliberal theorists to work, they required the family to play the role of an internal exception to the free market, an immanent order of non-contractual obligations and inalienable services without which the world of contract would cease to function (Cooper 58). For example, in Melinda Cooper's *Family Values*, she explores the origins of this bond between neoconservatives and neoliberals in the United States, highlighting how their relationship was built on a mutual interest in ensuring the future of the traditional family, which would absorb the responsibilities no longer provided by the government after dismantling the welfare state. Cooper traces how the neoliberal counter-revolution was intimately informed by a concern with private family wealth and its transmission (131). "If the history of modern capital," Cooper states, "appears on the one hand to regularly undermine and challenge existing orders of gender and sexuality, it also entails the periodic reinvention of the family as an instrument for distributing wealth and income" (16). For economic theorists like Milton Friedman, Gary Becker, The Chicago School of Economics, and Virginia School of Economics, the unit of the family played a fundamental role in the production of the neoliberal economic subject and the care economies that appeared after the dismantlement of the welfare state.

Neoliberalism, Cooper suggests, enlists the subject into an affective culture of investment that defines the “self” as an asset or “human capital” (125). The neoliberal subject that emerges out of this affective culture of investment, is what many critics, following the work of Foucault, have called the “entrepreneur of the self<sup>19</sup>.”

The production of neoliberal subjects from the household entails a transformation of the temporalizing strategies associated with domestic space, temporalities which are primarily at what Julia Kristeva coined as “Women’s Time.” In *Time Binds*, Elizabeth Freeman argues that domestic time emerges as a disembodied, secularized, and hypervisualized version of Kristeva’s “women’s time”: disembodied insofar as the biological rhythms that anchor Kristevian “cyclical” time get subsumed into patterns of household labor and ritual, secularized insofar as the stasis of the eternal get replaced with the bourgeois *mise-en-scène*, and hypervisualized insofar as home photography and video secure the status of family as such and make domesticity visible as a form of temporality (Freeman 44). Kristeva argues that we confront two temporal dimensions: the time of linear history, or *cursive time* (as Nietzsche called it), and the time of another history, thus another time, in *monumental time* (again, according to Nietzsche), which englobes these supra-national, social-cultural ensembles within even

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault also refers to this “entrepreneur of the self” as the *homo oeconomicus* of neoliberalism in his lectures. The worker is replaced with an entrepreneur of himself, into a credit-card citizen invested in individual strategies of personal responsibility and self-care. Under this logic of entrepreneurship of the self every moment becomes a potential investment or a way of increasing one’s human capital.

larger entities (Kristeva 189). Women's time, therefore involves two distinct components: the cyclical time that conforms to nature through gestation, regularity, and biological rhythms; and the monumental time that evokes infinity through its affiliation with myth, mysticism, and the cosmos (Murphy 26). According to her, female subjectivity is persistently associated to modalities of cyclical repetition and eternity throughout the history of civilization. For Kristeva, there is an incompatibility between the time of "feminine subjectivity" and a certain notion "linear time" that conceptualizes time as a project or teleology. She considers that women's subjectivity differs in providing a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. She stresses how the women's movement has gone through three different phases with regards to temporal politics. The first was an aspiration to gain a place in linear time as the time of project and history (Kristeva 193), followed by a second phase that almost entirely refused linear temporality, and finally a mixture of the two which she describes as an *insertion* into history and the radical *refusal* of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time on an experiment carried in the name of the irreducible difference (195).

Kristeva's "Women's Time," in tracing the repetitive structures of women's time to the time of the reproductive body, ends by privileging the bodily experience of reproduction, arguing that pregnancy is an ethics insofar as it offers the "radical ordeal

of the splitting of the subject: redoubling of the body, separation and coexistence of the self and of the other" (Freeman 44). Elizabeth Freeman, on the other hand, suggests that women's temporal experiences were also shaped by the labor processes of the household. She argues that the secular cyclical time offered a new version of monumental time. "Within the ideology of normative domesticity", Freeman states, "the proper maintenance of cyclical schedules and routines produces the effect of timelessness... the middle-class household not only effaced the conditions of its own production (the housewifely and servant labor necessary to produce such order and stasis) but also appeared as pure temporal plenitude (Freeman 40). As with Kristeva, she also highlights a link between women and cyclical temporalities. Yet, Freeman's cycles are not part of the body's biological rhythms, but rather shaped by domestic labor. She understands middle-class femininity as a matter of synchronic attunement to factory rhythms, but with the machinery hidden (39).

Freeman also underscores the significance of family and family time after industrial capitalism had transformed the United States. The "family," according to her, was no longer comprehensible through the rhythms of its labor and Sabbath-keeping but manifested itself through its own, separate hourly, daily, weekly and yearly calendar of leisure activities. At this time, the family began to be defined by clocked rituals and schedules, representing itself to itself in a series of daily, weekly, annual performances

that substituted for the working relationships that had previously constituted the everyday experience of family life (39-40). This new form of family time moved a formerly religious ritual time into women's domain, replaced sacred time with the secular rhythms of capital, feminized the temporalities considered outside of the linear, serial, end-directed time of history, and demanded and depended on visual technologies that required increasingly less physical effort from their users (40). In short, Freeman shows how Kristeva's notion of women's time must be thought in relation to changes in family, labor, and domestic space. According to her, when industrialization synched up not only wage-based production, but also household labor, it created new bodily hexes cued to the needs of profit but experienced as modes of enjoyment (48). The question we must ask is what happens to these modalities of time once the ideas of family, labor, domestic space, and debt they were built upon have changed?

### ***Los Trabajadores de la muerte and the Indebted Entrepreneur of the Self***

Published in 1998, *Los Trabajadores de la muerte* marks a second phase in Diamela Eltit's novelistic career. Eltit's first five novels— *Lumpérica* (1983), *Por la patria* (1988), *El cuarto mundo* (1988), *Vaca sagrada* (1991), and *Los vigilantes* (1994)—are generally known as her most cryptic, experimental, and fragmented novels. These aspects of her work never fully went away, but *Los trabajadores de la muerte* takes on a more traditional narrative form. Circling back to the murder mentioned in the introduction, the novel speaks to

both violence against women in Chile, and the mother's vengeance against the father, which results in the murder of the half-sister. The mother in the novel is unequivocally shown to be both victim and perpetrator of violence (Green 134). Crucial to the violence presented in the novel is the language and relations of debt of the son. As Graeber states in his famed *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*: "If history shows anything, it is that there's no better way to justify relations founded on violence, to make such relations seem moral, than by reframing them in the language of debt" (Graeber 5). *Los trabajadores de la muerte* is a novel that shows the never-ending search for origin stories and the inevitable violence of debt resulting from the domestic *dispositif*.

The eldest son's debt in *Los trabajadores de la muerte* is presented as a failed attempt of the neoliberal subject as investor or as an "entrepreneur of the self." He continually underscores his estrangement from his mother and younger brother, emphasizing his self-sufficiency in relation to his family and any ideology of normative power. The son constitutes the *ethos* of the new neoliberal working class in *Los trabajadores de la muerte* (Barrientos 31). After interior monologues, he constantly concludes that he has no need for God or any other authority so long as he has himself (Eltit 2009: 129). Yet, despite his best efforts to define himself in autonomous terms, he is unable to escape the influence of his primary contact with the maternal body (Green 145). He is haunted by a sense of debt to the mother which he fails to accept, but which

keeps him from ever becoming the ideal self-made investor that neoliberalism imagines. His relationship to the mother and the maternal body, is at its most intense when it becomes one with his other creditor/debtor relationships:

En esos días sucedieron mis olvidos, quizás un cansancio inadvertido me hizo cometer una serie de errores, pero nunca tenía el tiempo para repararlos y así llegué al instante en que me vi sumido en la más radical de las miserias. Estaba rodeado de acreedores... Pero, de pronto, sin el menor control, empezó a aparecer en algún lugar de mi mente, sentenciosa mi madre... Aparecía justo en medio de mis viajes abriendo una cadena de reproches, haciéndose una con mis acreedores. Yo nada le debía a mi madre y, no obstante, estaba allí para recibir mis reclamos.

[My forgetfulness happened during those days, maybe an unnoticed fatigue drove me towards making serious mistakes, but I never had the time to fix them and that is how I found myself in the most extreme of miseries. I was surrounded by creditors... But soon, out of my control, my mother, sententiously, began to appear somewhere in my mind. She would appear in the middle of my journeys, exposing a chain of reproaches, becoming one with my creditors. I didn't owe my mother a thing, yet, there she was to receive my complaints].<sup>20</sup> (124-125)

This scene takes place once the son is traveling back and forth between Santiago and Concepcion. The novel is not entirely direct about the origin or purpose of an initial debt

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<sup>20</sup> Translations of Eltit's work are mine, unless otherwise specified.

or about his line of work, but at least part of the debt seems to be the result of his nights in the city trying to seduce women. He unknowingly repeats the actions his father's search for a wealthy wife. In the first instance in which his indebtedness is mentioned, the son tries to keep news of his debts hidden from the mother, but then realizes that although he had left the household, she had continued following him, waiting for him to fail (80). This "initial debt," or moment he can no longer hide his debts, results in a conversation where the mother demands that he head to Concepcion (80). The novel's arch of incest and vengeance is initiated by an inability to scape indebtedness. Once in Concepcion, following the mother's orders, the son continues indebting himself, deferring payments by providing names of supposed endorsers. As the son becomes obsessed with the love affair with his half-sister, which is his attempt at reconciliation with the paternal body, he also spirals into his previously shown worst moment of economic misery and indebtedness. He is surrounded by creditors, but has no interest in paying them and settling his debts as he is consumed by the desire to resolve his past. As he sinks further in debt in Concepcion, the mother comes back to haunt him; he ultimately describes her shadow spying on him as he murders his sister (Eltit 2009: 175).

The point of view of the narration itself also plays a key role in this scene and throughout the novel. *Los trabajadores de la muerte* is divided into a prologue and epilogue—I will provide more detail on these later—and three acts, each one containing

three chapters. The chapters within each act follow a similar narrative pattern: chapter one is a first-person narration by the mother, chapter two focuses on the son but narrated in the second person by an omniscient narrator, and chapter three is a first-person narration from the son's point of view. The scenes mentioning the son's indebtedness, such as the previously quoted one, primarily take place in his own first-person narrations. It is this entrepreneurial subject, or failed attempt at such, who defines in the novel what constitutes debt and what does not. As Graeber has noted, most of us can imagine what we owe to our parents as a kind of debt, but few of us can imagine being able to actually pay it—or even that such a debt ever *should* be paid (92). Not only does the son in the novel not even question this possible payment, he entirely dismisses the idea of owing or being indebted to the mother and the family—in spite of the fact that he continued benefiting from the family after leaving the household (Eltit 2009: 77- 80). His narration and dismissal of the family most clearly highlights the family as a necessary exception to the free market, and immanent order of non-contractual obligations.

From the perspective of a “good” neoliberal investor, the problem with the son in the novel is not just the indebtedness itself, the problem is that he does not invest his debts towards maximizing his human capital. Not only is he not increasing material growth, he also entirely focused on searching for a lost past rather than investing

towards his future<sup>21</sup>. Foundational thinkers in neoliberal theory, such as Gary Becker, argue that it is every citizen's individual responsibility to act according to proper entrepreneurial values and to invest in the way that maximized their human capital. The key problem with Becker's theory is that subjects born without wealth are left with no alternative but to invest through indebtedness. Elettra Stimilli has recently shown how this form of indebtedness as a form of investment is at the center of the neoliberal understanding of debt and guilt in her books *Debt and Guilt* (2018) and *The Debt of the Living* (2018). Stimilli shows how under neoliberalism, "debt" and "guilt" have undergone a radical transformation directly connected to the principles of human capital. Stimilli links the relationship between debt and guilt in Western culture to an evolution of governmentality and Christianity. She aims to radicalize Weber's thesis that capitalism originates in inner-worldly Protestant asceticism (Stimilli 2017: 49). Her work reassesses Weber's logic of "profit for profit's sake" in relation to Foucault's notions of *dispositif* and pastoral power. She revives Weber's thought to suggest that inner-worldly asceticism is not, as Weber thought, the premise of capitalism but rather the way capital reproduces itself (Stimilli 2017: 45). Following Foucault, she exposes the role of Christianity in relation to capitalism in terms of mechanisms, technologies, and practices, rather than as a historical evolution (Stimilli 2019: 102). "The specificity of

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<sup>21</sup> In Chapter two I do an analysis of debt theories which claim debt is future oriented form of governance.

Christianity," for Stimilli, "is precisely that it was able to transform debt into an investment, into an impetus for spiritual and material growth" (129). Stimilli credits Christianity with transforming debt into a necessary condition for investment (161). The groundbreaking claim of Stimilli is that she reads "guilt" under neoliberalism not as the result of indebtedness, as Nietzsche and his readers have suggested, but rather as the condition produced when the subject does not invest his or her debts. In a society of generalized debt, every subject is already indebted, but the "guilty subject" is the one who does not invest on himself through this indebtedness: "Guilt, here, is not just the expression of a bond that condemns *a priori* to be culpable. It is the condition produced when the ways of attributing value to life with neoliberal policies fully correspond to the valorization of capital, making it possible for each individual to become "human capital" (161).

Of the son's multiple debts, the indebtedness to the mother is the one that he refuses to acknowledge as debt. This debt however, is not only what leads to him going to Concepcion, but also transforms the mother into a Christ figure by the time of the murder. The mother not only becomes one with the creditors, she also becomes a Christ-like figure, last described "nailed to a digital cross" as she spies on the murder (Eltit 2009: 175). This transformation is crucial considering that as Nietzsche, Graber, and Stimilli have all noted, the very core of the Christian message, salvation itself, the

sacrifice of God's own son to rescue humanity from eternal damnation, is framed in the language of financial transaction (Graeber 80). What happens then when subjects and states deny indebtedness to the domestic labor that makes investments possible? *Los trabajadores de la muerte* suggests that the network of power relations, or domestic *dispositif*, responsible for this denial is at the heart of the production of the neoliberal subject.

The son's indebtedness also presents its own temporality which is linked to the mother and to the search for his past. The son's efforts to recover the memory of his father, always happen through the body and conversations with his half-sister:

En esos días sucedieron mis olvidos, quizás un cansancio inadvertido me hizo cometer una serie de errores, pero nunca tenía el tiempo para repararlos y así llegué al instante en que me vi sumido en la más radical de las miserias. Estaba rodeado de acreedores... Pero, de pronto, sin el menor control, empezó a aparecer en algún lugar de mi mente, sentenciosa mi madre... Aparecía justo en medio de mis viajes abriendo una cadena de reproches, haciéndose una con mis acreedores. Yo nada le debía a mi madre y, no obstante, estaba allí para recibir mis reclamos.

[Once again you traverse time, you traverse the words, you complete the empty scenes of the story, you search for a piece of your father in the body that girl hands over to you because you when try to dig them up from your own memories you never find them, you could never separate your mother from your father, in your memory they are always

together... Only the joy gives you a moment of truce, and that is why you've become a worshiper of joy, because immediately afterwards you have to face the necessity of putting back together a time that does not belong to you] (Eltit 105)

The scene presents an unfulfilled desire for an origin story. Masiello and Green have both read *Los trabajadores de la muerte* as a novel about the search for origin stories. Masiello, on the one hand, identifies a search for origin stories amongst the novel's popular voice. Green, on the other hand, reads *Los trabajadores de la muerte* as a novel that challenges archaic myths of origin. She argues that the myth of Medea functions in the novel as a counter-myth to Oedipus, which strips the Oedipal narrative of its primary prestige, allowing Eltit to write the mother into the Oedipal story (Green 136). *Los trabajadores de la muerte*, according to Green, challenges the patriarchal monopoly on the origins and transmission of culture, showing, in opposition to Freud, that culture begins at the mother's breast and that it is this primary relationship which encodes the infant's subsequent thoughts and actions (137). In the end, the son is always reminded that the time of the father and his half-sister does not belong to him, he can only inhabit it for brief moments through his half-sister.

The search for origin stories mentioned by critics cannot be dissociated from the language and strategies of debt in the novel, as debt itself is constantly active in the ways we interpret and reflect origin stories. Graeber's overall argument on this subject is that our conception of the origins of debt and money functions retroactively. That is to

say, the “origin” is generated retrospectively in order to address or promote the concerns of the present, rather than to uncover and understand the “truth” of the past (Wortham 5). Simon Morgan Wortham states that “retroactive reappropriation of the meaning of an “origin” at once denies that “origin” by more or less violently transforming its meaning “in the service of new intentions,” yet acknowledges it in the form of the reactive feeling which repeatedly encounters or confronts the “origin” as an almost interminable source of injury, and thus a constant source of debit or debt” (24). In short, the search for the origins of debt does not uncover the “truths,” it violently produces them for the intentions of the present, and it perpetuates the wounds of the creditor and debtor relationship. The changes in narrative voices in the novel speak to these retroactive interpretations of origins.

The scene describing the son traversing time is part of the chapters narrated by the omniscient narrator in the second person. This narrative voice presents sharp contrasts to the son’s narration which expose his weaknesses and internal struggles. Arguably the most significant distinction between these narrative voices is the centrality of affect versus rationality. The son’s narration underscores rationality, competition, calculation as driving forces for his decision making and his eventual downfall. In the worst of his miseries, the son fears his “impeccable intelligence” (159). The second person narrative voice however, emphasizes the affective culture of investment

presented by economic critics like Melinda Cooper. The priority is given to the desires, pleasures, and pains of the son rather than any mention of his intellect.

The further the novel goes into the son's indebtedness and the eventual murder, the more he disassociates from linear and "historical" time. He begins to describe his life as atemporal during these moments (Eltit 2009: 99), and later states: "Comprendo bien que estoy condenado a no pertenecer a ninguna historia consistente y veo como me voy hundiendo ne más temible desarraigo" [I very much comprehend that I am cursed to never belong to any consistent history and I see how I am sinking into the most terrible estrangement] (163). His atemporal experience contrasts to the mother's temporality which is frozen in the past: "Throughout her lengthy and prosaic interior monologues, the mother constantly links her current physical incapacity to the past toll by the father, her sons and the harrowing pain of childbirth... her present life far from the family home is frozen in a time and place rooted firmly in the past" (Green 140). The mother's narrations belong almost entirely to her past, to the violence enacted by the father, to the sacrifices she made for her children. The novel shows how women, represented as the moral reserve to rebuild a great Chile, also become the temporal reserve from which the neoliberal subject constructs ideas of the past. Where Kirsteva sees monumental time for women as maternal, Eltit presents the monumental more explicitly as the time that is extracted from women. The indebted son—the *ethos* of neoliberalism's new working

class—has no time or history of his own, instead, as Kristeva proposes, notions of history and pastness are inscribed on the bodies of the female characters: the mother, the half-sister, and a girl with the mutilated arms who frames the family tragedy in the prologue and the epilogue.

The family tragedy of *Los trabajadores de la muerte* is framed within a market logic in a prologue and epilogue which take place in between a tavern, a hostel, and an outside market where copies of famous brands are sold. In this space, a “girl with mutilated arms” and a “man who dreams” compete for to tell stories and prophesies. According to Masiello, these scenes show the power of the popular voice to undo the banality of the ready-made, to challenge the flatness of a neoliberal economy, by focusing on the presence of popular voices vis-à-vis the market (208-209). “*Los trabajadores de la muerte*” Masiello claims about the prologue and epilogue, “could well be explained as a novel about characters in search of a story, marginal figures who take themes of murder and revenge from legends of classical antiquity and expand this material in order to create stories of their own” (209). My problem with this claim is that it subordinates the three acts of the family tragedy to the marginal figures of the prologue and epilogue creating their own stories. But the family tragedy is not a story about “the power of the popular voice.” It is rather a story about the indebtedness of the popular classes and its violent outcomes—and especially its violence towards women.

The novel's structure therefore frames its reference to the religion-based values within the market values of neoliberal Chile, but constantly shows how these are interwoven, how they function together within a network of power.

### **Mano de obra: Neoliberalism's hidden rhythms and chrononormativity**

Whereas *Los trabajadores de la muerte* explores the family unit as the necessary exception to the free market under neoliberalism, *Mano de obra* reveals how the temporalization of labor under neoliberalism conquers the body to produce a subject that is always working. *Mano de obra* delves into the tension between the synchronization of bodies towards a maximization of productivity and the destruction of collective action. The novel proposes a critique of the disintegration of social and political bonds in favor of new relationship between citizenship and the market, and between culture, salaried labor, and global markets. By presenting both domestic space and the supermarket, the novel highlights how neoliberalism produces what Freeman and Dana Luciano have called a chronobiopolitical society. According to Freeman, in a chronobiopolitical society the state and other institutions, including representational apparatuses, link properly temporalized bodies to narratives of movement and change (Freeman 2010: 4). For her, and Luciano, chronobiopolitics, which refers to the extension of temporal manipulation towards the management of entire populations, serves as the foundation for chrononormativity, which she defines as the use of time to organize individuals towards

maximum productivity, and as a mode of implantation, a technique, by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts (Freeman 2010: 3). According to Freeman, schedule, calendars, time zones, and even wristwatches inculcate, what sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel calls “hidden rhythms,” forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege (3). In Freeman’s *Beside You in Time* (2019), she contends that biopolitics functions as a merger of two developments in the organization of time: discipline which oriented living bodies toward one another through inculcating synchrony between their movements, and historical time, which oriented living bodies toward the dead and unborn through inculcating a sense of temporal sequence, consequence, and succession (189). “Though in terms of time,” she claims, “biopolitics consists of managing populations first via individual disciplinary techniques, then through large-scale coordination of their activities, and finally by their ideological situation on a timeline of those cosigned either to ahistoricity/obsolescence or modernity/futurity” (189). Eltit’s *Mano de obra* bring to the forefront the biopolitics and chrononormativity of labor in the network of power that makes up the *domestic dispositif* under neoliberalism. In *Mano de obra*, the stories of the housemates and supermarket employees highlight disciplinary time, while the structure of the novel, and its use of chapter titles, demonstrates the complicated timeline in which Chilean workers are situated.

*Mano de obra* is a novel that fixates on the supermarket, referred to as “el súper,” as the ideal space for understanding life under neoliberalism does to labor, social bonds, and the family. The first part of the novel follows a nameless employee of “el súper” during different shifts at work, while the second part tells the story of a group of housemates who work at “el súper” as some of the employees try to form a union and others fear the move towards collective action could get them all fired. Divided into eight parts, each with a title taken from old newspaper headlines related to the history of Chile’s workers’ movements, the first part of the novel explores the continuity of disciplinary modes of surveillance in the space of neoliberal labor. Without literally referring to it, the novel ends up configuring the structure that Punta Carretas Mall acquired, as it fictionalizes the place of the hypermarket in the form of a maximum-security prison (Draper 100). the first part of the novel reveals two different levels of surveillance in the supermarket: the employees who pay careful attention to the clients, and the hierarchy between the floor workers and the managers who look over them. In the first part, the supermarket chiefly appears to be an indissoluble social order (Hoyos 99). The temporal logic of labor in the first part of the novel establishes a mix between Marazzi’s “just-in-time” techniques and Foucault’s disciplinary planning, where the worker’s time is predetermined by a manager (“el analista”), but ruined by the clients: “Ay, cómo desordenan todo lo que encuentran en su paso. Mi persona ya no radica en

mí mismo porque los clientes invalidan el tiempo que le he dedicado al orden programado por el analista (ese misterioso supervisor a la distancia)” (Eltit 2004: 256).

The worker’s sense of time becomes split between the minute by minute programing of Taylorism, and a constant repetition produced by the movement of clients inside the supermarket. Foucault’s panopticon is replaced by the technological advancements of the security cameras, which are not only meant to protect the merchandise from theft, but to keep an eye on the employees. The highly-programed time of the analyst is emblematic of Foucault’s disciplinary power, which conditions the body of the governed through rigid schedules, as he demonstrated with the use of timetables in prisons.

Disciplinary time, for Foucault, breaks down time by creating temporal segments within a continuum. These different segments take place on larger scales like childhood and adulthood, but also in the division of daily tasks (labor time, school time). The fundamental question for Foucault when understanding disciplinary time is how can one capitalize the time of individuals, accumulate it in each of them, in their bodies, in their forces, or in their abilities, in a way that is susceptible of use and control? How can one organize profitable durations? (157). The primary instrument for this disciplinary time becomes the time-table, which establishes rhythms, imposes particular occupation, and regulates cycles of repetition (149). The paradigm of the industrial worker was practically defined by a transformation of work and worktime. According to Anson

Rabinbach, for the industrial worker the new discipline of clock-regulated worktime meant an end to traditional workday punctuated by periods of leisure; for the employer it meant the calculation of productivity in terms of hours (31-32). In addition to the increasingly minute divisions, time under disciplinary power is therefore also measurable in terms of its “quality”. “Time measure and time paid must also be a time without impurities or defects;” Foucault writes, “a time of good quality, throughout which the body is constantly applied to its exercise. Precision and application are, with regularity, the fundamental virtues of disciplinary time” (151). With constant supervision, employers guarantee that work time is useful, and not interrupted, even during meal-break periods, or other moments that are not strictly working hours. *Mano de obras*’s anonymous worker forces his body as much as possible to avoid any form of “wasted time,” including holding the need to go to the restroom when he must: “Imposible la orina porque yo no puedo ausentarme ni un instante de la acometida humana que se nos cayó encima” (Eltit 2004: 291). The passage shows both the prioritization of avoiding delays, but also the “just-in-time” worker adjusting to the stages of demands by the market, in this case an increase in clientele as a result of Christmas shopping—itsself a cyclical practice linked to the calendar.

The supermarket worker provides a keen look into the fundamental relationship between time and the body to both disciplinary techniques and biopower. For Foucault,

understanding how the body could be mechanized, how it can be transformed, and also used to extract knowledge is at the heart of understanding disciplinary techniques. In his prime example, that of the eighteenth-century soldier, Foucault describes how the body could be constructed through a series of training techniques : “Recruits become accustomed to ‘holding their heads high and erect; to standing upright, without bending the back, to sticking out the belly, throwing out the chest and throwing back the shoulders; and to help them acquire the habit, they are given this position while standing against a wall in such a way that the heels, the thighs, the waist and the shoulders touch it” (135). These essential techniques can be thought of, according to him, as “a certain mode of political investment of the body, a ‘new micro-physics’ of power” (139). Eltit’s worker displays the stress of this temporality on the body with constant pains and illnesses: “Estoy poseído, lo afirmo, desde la cabeza hasta los pies por un síntoma *eternamente laboral*, una *enfermedad horaria* que todavía no está tipificada en los anales médicos... Soy víctima de un mal que, si bien no es estrictamente orgánico, compromete a cada uno de mis órganos” [I am possessed, I affirm it, from head to toe, by a symptom that is entirely laboral, a temporal illness, that has not yet been included in the medical annals... I am a victim of a disease which, even though not strictly organic, compromises each of my organs]<sup>22</sup>. (Eltit 2004: 278 italics are mine). As Susana

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<sup>22</sup> Translation by Susana Draper

Draper has observed, the worker spends day and night at work, until his organs cease to function to the extent that the narrator's discourse itself enters a form of delirium, punctuated by flashes of panic associated with a temporal illness (102). The worker of the first part of the novel is constantly caught between the inscription of this disciplinary time on the body, and the feeling that these hours do not match his internal temporality: "Las horas son un peso (muerte) en mi muñeca y no me importa confesar que el tiempo juega de manera perversa conmigo porque no termina de inscribirse en ninguna parte de mi ser. Sólo está depositado en el súper. Se trata de un horario tembloroso e infinito que se pone en primer plano" [The hours are a (dead) weight on my wrist and I don't mind confessing that time plays in a perverse way with me because it does not finish inscribing itself in any part of my being. It is just deposited in the supermarket. It's a matter of a trembling and infinite schedule which places itself at the forefront] (267). The worker of the first part entirely loses himself and any sense of being, becoming just another clog in the machine: "¿Quién soy?, me pregunto de manera necia. Y me respondo: una correcta y necesaria pieza de servicio" [Who am I? I ask myself in a foolish manner. And I answer myself: a correct and necessary piece of service] (294). As he loses himself and control over time, the worker also begins to feel feminized: "El tiempo ahora aprieta al súper como si lo estrujara un puño... Después de todo soy un hombre aunque, en algún sentido (lo sé), termino enredado a la imagen con que se

define una mujer. Mujercita yo” [Time now tightens at the supermarket as if crumpled by a fist... After all I am a man even if, in a sense (I don’t know), I end up entangled with the image that defines a woman. A little woman me] (276). Once again, as in chapter two’s discussion of *El año del desierto*, there is a “qualitative” feminization of labor where the narrator understands his submissiveness as characteristics of the economy of the household entering the workplace. In the second part of the novel, which details the lives of various employees of “el súper” from the perspective of an anonymous housemate and fellow worker, we see how the properly disciplined body is that which ignores these illnesses and becomes mechanical to such a degree that it is admirable to others:

Pero Sonia trozaba con una velocidad que nos dejaba estupefactos. Una velocidad absorta que la ubicaba a una distancia geométrica de los pollos, de los supervisores, de los clientes, de los refrigeradores, de la luz, del hacha y de los carniceros que a su lado despostaban los animales entre unas carcajadas en eco que conseguían agotarnos... Allí se cursaba el espectáculo de las pirámides de pollos que Sonia, día a día, trozaba de manera *cada vez más mecánica, más precisa y más bella*. Unos cortes perfectos. Maníacos. [But Sonia chopped with a speed that left us all astonished. An engrossed speed that placed her at a geometric distance from the chickens, from the supervisors, from the clients, from the refrigerators, from the light, from the ax, and from the butchers who next to her deposited the animals in between laughs with an echo that accomplished

depleting us... There took place the spectacle of the chicken pyramids which Sonia, day by day, chopped in *a manner increasingly mechanic, more precise and more beautiful*. Some perfect cuts. Manic.] (Eltit 2004: 327 italics are added)

Rabinbach has examined in *The Human Motor* (1992) how developments across science, cultural production, economics, and politics employed the metaphor of the working body as a human motor capable of transforming universal natural energy into mechanical work and integrating the human organism into highly specialized and technical work process (289). Sonia's mechanical chopping illustrates the persistence of the working body as a human motor within neoliberalism. Her skills are a sharp contrast to another employee and housemate, Isabel. In the case of Isabel, who also happens to be the only member of the house with a child, she becomes increasingly fatigued as the novel develops. For Rabinbach, the daydream of the late nineteenth-century middle classes was the body without fatigue (44). Fatigue becomes directly associated with a moral flaw. A crucial part of "just-in-time" labor is the flexibility of employers to change the worker's schedule on the fly, which in *Mano de obra* increasingly takes a toll on the worker's health and emotional stability: "Isabel se veía cansada. Apenas entró a la casa nos informó que su turno en el supermercado se había extendido en dos horas. Dos horas más de pie, nos dijo, habían devastado su humor" [Isabel looked tired. As soon as she entered the house she told us that her turn at the supermarket has been extended by two hours. Two more hours on her feet, she told us, had devastated her mood] (Eltit

2004: 299). Being forced to work two additional hours not only impacts on Isabel, but also every other member of the house who are forced to simultaneously adjust their schedules.

In contrast to the first part of the novel, which takes place entirely in the supermarket, the second part of the novel takes place mostly in the household, displaying how all the problems from work invade the hours away from worktime. “In the industrial paradigm” Hardt and Negri state, “workers produce almost exclusively during the hours in the factory. When Production is aimed at solving a problem, however, or creating an idea or a relationship, work time tends to expand to the entire time of life” (111-112). The workers of Eltit’s *Mano de obra* take their work-related problems home, where they try to figure how to avoid being fired when the supermarket begins hiring new workers for a cheaper salary, a pattern happening across the entire supermarket chain: “teníamos que sobrevivir porque éramos los más antiguos. Los únicos en toda la larga y ancha cadena de supermercados que nos manteníamos en un equilibrio íntimo y voraz en nuestros feroces puestos del trabajo” [We had to survive because we were the eldest. The only ones in the long and wide chain of supermarkets that kept in an intimate and voracious balance in our fierce positions at work] (Eltit 2004: 327). In a significant twist, it is precisely when the workers have less hours at work that they become even more involved in solving their work-related problems (316).

Although the workers of *Mano de obra* give no indication of a historical conscious, the novel employs a strategic use of the history of Chilean workers which forces the reader to historicize the characters and the novel's claim about neoliberal labor. Each of the chapters of the first part of the novel has a title inspired by worker-based periodicals and the places where they circulated, such as "*Verba Roja* (Santiago, 1918)," "*Acción directa* (Santiago, 1920)," or "*Nueva Era* (Valparaíso, 1925)." These assume a dual function as both subtitles and quotations; dates and places can be read as building an alternative calendar marked by a history of struggles previously erased from the temporality of the world both of the neoliberal hypermarket and of the dictatorship that made this world possible (Draper 103). The title of the second part of the, "PURO CHILE" [PURE CHILE], connects the narrative to Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular. Unlike the uniform theme that underlines the titles of the first part, the individual titles of the chapters in the second part, as Hector Hoyos has shown, are a hodgepodge of anodyne labels ("El momento comercial de las papayas en conserva") [The commercial moment of canned payayas], brutal assertions ("Sonia se cortó el dedo índice") [Sonia cuts off her index finger], and accounts of daily hardship in the style of newspaper headlines ("Se levantó a las cinco de la mañana") [He/She woke up at five in the morning], among others (Hoyos 105). According to Hoyos, this textual apparatus constellates the tens and twenties, the early seventies, and the mid-nineties to early

naughts, or, in other words: the foundations of unionism, the promise of democratically elected socialism, and the center-leftist coalition government of Concertación (105).

Hoyos argues that the section titles in *Mano de obra* are best understood as allusions to the physical, still-existing banners of those periodicals: “when Eltit names them, she is inviting a deeper, historical approximation of the supermarket” (Hoyos 109). The chapter titles make readers aware how little they know of these histories, thus forcing them to imagine ways to connect erased and lost past(s) with a present in which awakening becomes enigmatic (Draper 110). The names of worker periodicals, and the actual holdings that remain of those publications, belong to the historical residues and resources one can mobilize against consensus, in Chile as elsewhere (Hoyos 110). Eltit’s novel forces the reader to historicize the modern worker, the disciplinary techniques of the workplace, and the colonization of household time as an extension of work.

### **Conclusion**

The novels of Diamela Eltit have shown decades of commitment towards divulging the complex networks of power that link gender, politics, economics, history, and debt, among other topics, under neoliberalism. At the heart of this project is a crucial understanding of the role of the household as an extension of worktime and workspace through immaterial labor, as well as its role within the debt economy. *Los trabajadores de la muerte* insists that the transformation of the domestic space into a source of debt

extraction necessary for the financial revolution follows a long history of Western culture's violence towards women which mobilizes a series of discourses, techniques, and practices. *Mano de obra* reveals the destruction of social bonds among workers that takes place in the debt economy of *Los trabajadores de la muerte*. Both *Los trabajadores de la muerte* and *Mano de obra* feature characters whose indebtedness and precarious labor produce a sense of ahistoricity. These are characters who do not own a time of their own, but from whom time and history are extracted. In spite of the eternal sense of presentness felt by the characters of both novels, Eltit's use of Medea and worker-based periodicals present an affirmation of the relevance the past possesses in the development of resistance against a political and economic system that, as Maurizio Lazzarato has argued, tries to neutralize time in the process of subjectivation.

## Chapter 4: Digging for Pasts: Archeology, Anachronisms, and Debt in Juan

### López Bauzá *Barataria*

In Miguel de Cervantes' classic *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, Don Quixote's loyal companion Sancho Panza is tricked by a Duke and Duchess into thinking that he governs an island called Barataria. During his first day as governor, Sancho settles a dispute between a creditor and his debtor, and the novel's narrator states: "Finalmente, el un viejo corrido y el otro pagado, se fueron, y los presentes quedaron admirados, y el que escribía las palabras, los hechos y movimientos de Sancho no acababa de determinarse si le tendría y pondría por tonto, o por discreto" [To conclude, the old men went off, one crestfallen, and the other in high contentment, all who were present were astonished, and he who was recording the words, deeds, and movements of Sancho could not make up his mind whether he was to look upon him and set him down as a fool or as a man of sense] (Cervantes 2010: 379-80)<sup>23</sup>. Sancho's governing in Barataria is built on two clashing perspectives: One the one hand is the deception by the Duke and the Duchess, which the reader knows from the beginning. On the other hand, is the perspective of Sancho and don Quixote, who are unaware that they are being played by the dukes (Rodriguez-Escalona 135). From the perspective of the bluffers, everything has been decided from the beginning, Sancho is not, and will never be, the governor (135).

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<sup>23</sup> Translations of Cervantes by John Ormsby, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5946/5946-h/5946-h.htm>

From the perspective of Sancho, the actions that take place on the island follow a very specific logic guided by his actions. Yet, as Sancho performs his role as governor, he begins to construct himself accordingly, learning to live in the clash between the circumstances thrown at him, and his own convictions (135).

In the two-volume novel *Barataria* (volume 1 published in 2012, volume 2 published in 2013) Puerto Rican writer Juan López Bauzá rewrites Cervantes' text as a way to explore the struggles and constant absurdity that is Puerto Rico in the 21st century. In López Bauzá's satire, Puerto Rico, much like the Barataria of *Don Quixote*, is an island where the illusion of governing is not just a lie, but ultimately a bad joke from which local subjectivities are produced. In Cervantes, everyone, even Don Quixote, is aware of Sancho's limitations as a potential governor, except for Sancho (Rodríguez-Escalona 147). From corrupt politicians, academic disputes, nationalist vs statehood battles, to UFO landing strips, false evangelical prophets and just about everything in between, the nearly 900-page novel presents an island where, much like in Cervantes' classic, it is nearly impossible to tell apart what is real and what is fiction. Ultimately López Bauzá presents Puerto Rico, particularly Puerto Ricans who want to become the 51<sup>st</sup> state, as a modern-day Sancho, convinced of having control in spite of reality. The ultimate fictions being the possibility of statehood, equality as American citizens, political and economic progress, and the American Dream. Following the footsteps of

Cervantes scholars like Carroll B Johnson and David Quint, who have argued through different approaches that *Don Quixote* is a story about the historical transition into a newly emergent world of money, Juan López Bauzá's *Barataria* can be read as a novel about the transition into neoliberal indebtedness. My goal in this chapter is to analyze *Barataria*'s insistence on anachronism as a way to challenge future-oriented notions of indebted time in recent debt theory. I am interested in how history—understood here in Nietzsche's terms as that mode of writing of the past that makes it accessible to and relevant for the present (Grosz 2004: 113)—is informed and shaped by debt as a tool of governance. While debt theory has prioritized the relationship between and the future, I want to emphasize how the temporalization of indebtedness is also about an intensification of the way in which the past is made relevant to the present. I claim that López Bauzá uses Cervantes as way to articulate the past's relevance to the present in Puerto Rico's relation to the United States, not only as colonized and colonizer, but also as debtor and creditor.

### **Puerto Rico's Disaster Literature and the Public Debt**

Juan López Bauzá is a Puerto Rican novelist, as well as a writer of short stories, scripts, essays, and a translator. He published his first book *La sustituta y otros cuentos* in 1997, *Barataria* was his first published novel. *Barataria* (volume 1 published in 2012, volume 2 published in 2013), is in some respects one the most unique novels of Puerto Rico's 21<sup>st</sup>

century literature, but also fits into the island's most recent literary trends of "literatura del desastre" [literature of disaster] or "literatura de (des)encanto" [literature of (dis)enchantment], terms which have been used to describe trends in Puerto Rican literature after the 2006 financial collapse. In 2015, the Puerto Rican debt crisis became a major headline in the United States and globally when then governor Alejandro García Padilla stated that the debt, at that time around \$70 billion, could not be paid, after defaulting for the first time in the island's history. However, the island had been in economic recession since 2006, as a result of policies that were ongoing since the 1970s. Since the start of the recession, and during the debt crisis, Puerto Rican literature has also undergone drastic changes as authors try to grasp the economic and political crisis. Short story writer Vanessa Vilches uses the term "literatura del desastre" in reference to Naomi Klein's notion of "disaster capitalism": "Mientras Naomi Klein sugiere el término economía del desastre para referirse al capitalismo salvaje que se aprovecha de las crisis para lucrarse, pensamos en la pregunta sobre la literatura que se escribe en ese mismo contexto" [While Naomi Klein suggests the term economy of disaster in reference to the savage capitalism which takes advantage of crises for profit, we think about the question of literature written in that context] (Vilches). Poet and critic Daniel Torres Rodríguez plays with the island's tourism slogan "the island of enchantment" as the primary idea in question by the new generation of writers. According to Torres Rodríguez, the new

Puerto Rican literature speaks to the profound postcolonial disenchantment, but without entirely forgetting the wonders of the island which serves as an incentive for an entire corpus, beyond the limits of previous generations, highlighting the a clear discontent with Puerto Rico as an American colony since 1898 (15).

According to the critic Melanie Pérez Ortiz, Puerto Rican literature in the late 80s and 90s has a resurgence of fantastic themes, and while writers like Pedro Cabiya have rejected the idea that their use of the fantastic is similar to previous generations of Latin American writers, Pérez Ortiz argues that the fantastic in the Puerto Rican literature of the end 20<sup>th</sup> century is accepted as part of the real, there is no opposition between the nonsensical being narrated and an external reality (27). The writers of the (des)encanto continue to explore the relationship between fantasy and reality as part of what it means to articulate the conditions of an island that lives enchantment and disenchantment simultaneously. Although Vilches leans more towards capitalism and Torres Rodriguez towards colonialism, it is a common theme across authors in the generation to explore how these two must be questions in unison when addressing the crises that have affected Puerto Rico through its history.

There have been different theories on what caused Puerto Rico's recession and debt crisis, but the most common and accepted theories look at the 1970s as the origin of the current debt. Beginning in the 1970s, Puerto Rico's economy began to suffer a drain

of profits, to the point where the measure of total income produced in the island, the Gross Domestic Product, began to separate dramatically from the measure of income that residents own, the Gross National Product or GNP (Ayala). As a result, the Puerto Rican government started using bond investment money to balance its budget, this resulted in rapid accumulation of debt, and then in further debt borrowed to cover the interest payments (DePersio). This trend in the 1970s towards borrowing in order to finance the government's expenses began when the limited success of the post-World War II Operation Bootstrap, which transformed the economy from an agricultural one to a light manufacturing one, lost its luster (Morales). The other key moment, which some have identified as the origin of the current debt, took place in the 1990s. During the 1990s, the Puerto Rican government implemented policies that accelerated borrowing for public works, which meant that by the 2000s administration after administration addressed lack of liquidity with further borrowing. This period also saw the phasing out process of section 936 in the IRS code. Beginning in 1976, section 936 of the tax code granted U.S. corporations a tax exemption from income originating from U.S. territories. Section 936 became increasingly unpopular throughout the early 1990s, as many saw it as a way for large corporations to avoid taxes. Ultimately, in 1996, President Clinton signed legislation that phased out section 936 over a ten-year period, leaving it to be fully repealed at the beginning of 2006 (Greenberg and Gavins). The removal of tax

incentives, along with the high price of Puerto Rican workers in comparison to other nearby wages depressed by NAFTA, resulted in companies leaving the island and high levels of unemployment. The Puerto Rican government's response once section 936 expired in 2006, was to increase borrowing aggressively to employ those who had lost their jobs to outsourcing (Rodriguez 14). The administration also began to purchase high-risk capital appreciation bonds, which eventually rack up interest rates from 785 to 1,000 percent (Klein 48). Between 2001 and 2014, debt-service payments, including interest and other profits paid to the banking industry, increased fivefold (Klein 48). By 2014 Puerto Rico was spending more servicing its debt than financing its public school system (Bernabe).

Nearly a year after Puerto Rico's first default, Congress passed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) [PROMISE]. The bill would also pass the Senate in June 2016. PROMESA created a non-elected, federally-appointed control board, with broad powers over Puerto Rico's state finances (Bernabe). Due to amendments made in 1984 to the United States Bankruptcy Code excluded Puerto Rico's municipalities and state-owned enterprises from having the power to declare bankruptcy. Under the Territorial Clause, Puerto Rico is considered a "state" for certain purposes, but not for others. The 1984 revision of the Bankruptcy Code, is one of those instances in which Puerto Rico is not considered as a "state" (Backiel 16). As critics

of the bill have observed, PROMESA therefore represents one of the clearest examples of Puerto Rico's colonial status, as do many of the laws surrounding Puerto Rico's debt crisis. Unlike other debt cases like Detroit or Greece, Puerto Rico lacks options to file for bankruptcy, or debt reduction negotiations. The bill's acronym, meant as a promise of change to the citizens of Puerto Rico, is ironically part of a broader history of failed promises made towards and by the island. In response, the phrase "Se acabaron Las promesas" [The promises are over] has been one of the most common in the island's protests since the bill passed. As literary and cultural critic Rubén Ríos Ávila wrote years before the bill existed: "Puerto Rico se inscribe en la espera por la promesa y en la promesa de la espera" [Puerto Rico inscribes itself in the waiting for the promise and in the promise of the wait] (246).

The issue of "promising" in Ríos Ávila's understanding of Puerto Rican subjectivity and history, as well as in the debt-related protests, is also at the heart of the production of Maurizio Lazzarato's understanding of the neoliberal "indebted man." Lazzarato has been among the most influential, and at times controversial, writers during the surge of critical theory around debt that emerged across disciplines following the economic crisis of 2007-2008. In Lazzarato's *The Making of the Indebted Man* (originally published in 2011, translated to English in 2012) and *Governing by Debt* (2015), the Italian sociologist and philosopher argues that the primary instrument of governing under

neoliberalism has been the expansion of debt, which adds a moral dimension to neoliberal rationality that is complementary to labor:

Debt produces a specific “morality,” at once different from and complementary to that of “labour.” The couple “effort-reward” of the ideology of work is doubled by the morality of the promise (to honor one’s debt) and the fault (of having entered into it) ... “The morality” of debt results in the moralization of the unemployed, the “assisted,” the users of public services, as well as of entire populations (Lazzarato 2012: 30)

The moralization of the “indebted man,” in Lazzarato’s model, is what forces the subject to continue working, as he is guilty of being in debt and must pay for what he promised to pay. This produces a very particular notion of freedom, which is always predetermined by the obligation to pay. He explains: “The debtor is “free,” but his actions, his behavior, are confined to the limits defined by the debt he has entered into. The same is true as much for the individual as for the population or social group. You are free insofar as you assume the *way of life* (consumption, work, public, spending, taxes, etc.) compatible with reimbursement” (Lazzarato 2012: 31 italics in the original). As he highlights in the previous passage, this indebted morality does not just take place at the level of individuals, but also at the level of entire populations. That happens primarily through the expansion of public debts, which turn every citizen into indebted subjects responsible for both the acquisition and the reimbursement of the nation’s debt. For him, debts capacity to exert its power at the level of the individual as wells as

groups is key to its position within neoliberal techniques of governing. He states:

“Neoliberalism governs through multiple power relations: creditor-debtor, capital-labor, welfare programs-user, consumer-business, etc. But debt is a universal power relation, since everyone is included within it. Even those too poor to have access to credit must pay interest to creditors through the reimbursement of public debt; even countries too poor for a Welfare State must repay their debts” (Lazzarato 2012: 32). Debt’s significance under neoliberalism is heightened in comparison to previous periods of capitalism, such as Fordism, because of neoliberalism’s heightened emphasis on the production of a subject that works on the self. This “subject that works on the self” is part of a larger body of work on neoliberalism that claims, following Foucault’s lectures, that neoliberalism produces and shapes subjectivities as part of its art of governing. According to Lazzarato neoliberalism is a subjective economy, that is, an economy that solicits and produces processes of subjectivation whose model is no longer centered, as in classical economics, on the barterer and the producer (Lazzarato 2012: 37). For Foucault, as I have presented in previous chapters, these “processes of subjectivation” are directed towards the production of a new *homo oeconomicus* as an entrepreneur of the self rather than as a partner of exchange interested in the common good. In the case of Lazzarato, the central figure of neoliberal governance is not the *homo oeconomicus* or the entrepreneur of the self, as others have stated, but rather the “indebted man.” That is, the subject whose

investment on the self takes place through acquisitions of debt, and subjects who are made responsible in paying public debts. For Lazzarato, debt breeds, subdues, manufactures, adapts, and shapes subjectivity (Lazzarato 2012: 38-39). Processes, that as we mentioned earlier, are linked to moralization of the indebted which insist that the indebted are always at fault and always guilty of their debts. He states: When it comes to talking about debt, the media, politicians, and economists have only one message to communicate: “You are at fault,” “You are guilty.” (Lazzarato 2012: 30-31) The moralization of the “indebted man,” in Lazzarato’s model, is what forces the subject to continue working, as he is guilty of being in debt and must pay for what he promised to pay.

In Lazzarato’s “indebted man, as in Ríos Ávila’s study of the Puerto Rican subject, the promise is intrinsically linked to temporalization in the processes of subjectivation. According to Lazzarato, the debt economy is an economy of *time and subjectivation* turned towards the future since finance is a promise of future wealth and, consequently, incommensurable with actual wealth (Lazzarato 2012: 46). The debt economy uses the notion of guilt to produce a way of life for the indebted that is compatible with the moment of reimbursement. By anchoring the actions of the debtor to a moment of reimbursement, debt produces a future oriented sense of morality. Lazzarato states: “By training the governed to “promise” (to honor their debt),

capitalism exercises “*control over the future,*” since debt obligations allow one to foresee, calculate, measure, and establish equivalences between current and future behavior” (Lazzarato 2012: 46 italics added). By framing the life of the indebted around the promise to pay, neoliberalism makes a claim on the future of individuals and populations. Debt as a promise to pay operates via a double movement in regard to time which defers the present, but does so by counting on (and counting) the future (Adkins 83). Finally, Lazzarato claims that this process “neutralizes time” as the creation of new possibilities: “The system of debt must therefore *neutralize time*, that is, the risk inherent to it. It must anticipate and ward off every potential “deviation” in the behavior of the debtor the future might hold” (Lazzarato 2012: 45 italics are mine).

For Ríos Ávila, the Puerto Rican subject is produced in the act of waiting for lack to be filled: “Desde la espera, Puerto Rico ha tejido el paño de su historia como carencia, como hueco, como falta, y desde la espera el único tiempo significativo ha sido el futuro, pero un futuro que solo como utopía produce la cristalización de la identidad anhelada” [In the act of waiting, Puerto Rico has weaved its history as a lack, as a gap, an absence, and from the wait the only significant time has been the future, but a future that only being a utopia produces the crystallization of the longing identity] (245). For the subject whose only significant time is the future, the present can only be lived as a moment of crisis. Neoliberalism’s dismantlement of the state is also the end state-produced utopia

of progress from above. The Puerto Rican subject of the latest debt crisis is paradoxically the subject who has been promised the future wealth of financialization, and the indebted subject who must pay for what he promised.

It seems to me that if we are to understand the indebted subject of the Puerto Rican crisis of a present guided towards future promises, we must ask what happens to the past in debt's process of subjectivation? Peter Fleming has made the claim that present-day debt can only be transformed into guilt by erasing a particular version of history. Here, personal liability is not about the past, but always co-present with a timeless 'now'. Neoliberal debt in particular relies upon the freedom of the subject who knows no past but is entirely responsible (Fleming 74). Although I agree with Fleming's initial idea on how debt is transformed into guilt by a particular version of history,—one of those versions being the one theorized by Stimilli, and analyzed in Chapter 3—I disagree with the second part of his claim, which implies that this "particular version of history" is essentially the same as the production of a subject that "knows no past" or that "liability is not about the past." In other words, what pasts are being erased, and what past is being produced. How does the indebted man position himself/herself in this history? How is the past part of the neutralization of time or a catalyst for time as potentiality? I would like to suggest that Juan López Bauzá's investment in the past and

in processes of writing history throughout *Barataria*, highlight the ways in which the past is not erased but rather intensified as a way to insist in the guilt of the indebted.

### ***Barataria*: Digging for Anachronisms**

Unlike many of his Puerto Rican contemporaries, who like the writers of the *crack* and *McOndo*, have focused on the gritty, urban freneticism that Fuguet identifies with the 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural revolution, López Bauzá the past and how pasts become national narratives—similar to the national time of Shapiro discussed in chapter 2. In interviews, he has expressed his distaste towards the writers of the *crack* and *McOndo* as a matter of style as well:

Siempre me ha atraído la novela más ambigua... Ahí hay muchas cosas que se quedan sin resolver, la mayor parte de las cosas. Y me interesaba capturar [en el *Mar de Azov*] más ese aspecto de la vida, que una historia perfectamente hilada, donde no queda nada fuera de lugar, porque yo siempre he visto eso demasiado artificioso... como por ejemplo Jorge Volpi, Ignacio Padilla, Jorge Franco, Paz Soldán no me gusta nada.

[I have always been captivated by the more ambiguous novel... There, there are many things left without a resolution, most things. And I was interested in capturing [in *Mar de Azov*] more that aspect of life, than a perfectly put together story, where nothing was left out of place, because I always felt that was too fictitious... Like for example Jorge Volpi, Ignacio Padilla, Jorge Franco, Paz Soldan I don't like that at all]. (Pérez Ortiz 268-269)

López Bauzá's work purposely leaves room for ambiguity and contradiction in a way, in a way that he believes is missing from these groups of writers. The main character of his second novel, *El Mar de Azov* (2016), written before *Barataria* but published later, is a historian obsessed with World War II as a subtle critique of the similar obsession in the novels of Jorge Volpi and Ignacio Padilla (276), such as *Amphitryon* (2006) and *En busca de Klingsor* (2000). In spite of López Bauzá's dislike of *crack* writers, he shares with them a deep appreciation of the Latin American *Boom*, and as well as Ignacio Padilla, a fixation with of Miguel de Cervante's *Don Quixote de la Mancha*. The use of Cervantes by López Bauza and Padilla is by no means unique, as Don Quixote has long been one of the most referenced characters by Latin American authors, most significantly in Borges' classic "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote." Recent studies such as Williamson's *Cervantes and the Modernists: The Question of Influence* (1994), have also highlighted the legacy of Cervantes across nationalities and languages during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Edwin Williamson has even argued in his essay "The Quixotic Roots of Magic Realism," that the differences between the early and later manifestations of magic realism are best understood if studied in terms of legacy of Cervantes (105). Latin American magic-realist could be said to have been revising the direction in which Cervantes took narrative fiction; they were seeking to re-introduce into the great tradition of the modern novel some of the more ancient interests of the story-teller (104).

*Barataria* is the story of Chiquitín Campala Suárez, a Vietnam veteran and amateur archeologist, obsessed with the annexation of Puerto Rico to the United States, and his Sancho Panza, Margaro Velásquez, an Afro-Puerto Rican who speaks in old outdated phrases. The very publication of *Barataria* by López Bauzá and the local publisher Libros AC presents a commitment to the past of the island and the novel as central towards understanding the islands current hardships. This commitment only deepens once we enter the novel itself. During the acceptance speech for the 2013 Premio Las Americas for best Spanish-American narrative, which *Barataria* received, López Bauzá describes rewriting the Cervantes' classic as his own theory of the novel. Quoting the Spanish critic José-Carlos Mainer's *La escritura desatada: el mundo de las novelas*, López Bauzá states: "El mejor comentario de una novela es escribir otra novela; la mejor manera de entender un relato es volver a contarlo" [the best comment on a novel would be to write another novel; the best way to understand a story is to retell it] (Bauzá 2013b). In an interview years prior to the release of the novel, López Bauzá describes *Barataria* as a novel about the Puerto Rican anachronism (Pérez Ortiz 276). López Bauzá describes *Barataria* as a challenge to what the contemporary novel can be in the 21st century. López Bauzá rebels against the idea that the contemporary reader only reads short, ephemeral, genre novels by writing a novel of almost 900 pages that additionally focus on topics that, according to him, much of recent literature of the

island has ignored, such as: the island's political crisis, economic and social debacle, the collapse of its institutions, mental health, and false democracy (Bauzá 2013b). Although it is true that some of these topics became uncommon during the 1990s, his novel could be read as one of the main examples of the "literatura del desastre," as many of these topics returned with a vengeance in the midst of the crisis.

Chiquitín's *Dulcinea*, his idealistic love, is the Ideal of annexation: "Si una obsesión había en la mente de Chiquitín, si un empeño era absoluto en cada una de sus acciones, era lo que él llamaba el Ideal" [If a single obsession inhabited the mind of Chiquitín, if there was an absolute determining factor in every single one of his actions, it was what he called the Ideal] (López Bauzá 2012: 15) Everything that happens in *Barataria* are Chiquitín's is structured around his political and economic convictions, which are a complete devotion to the United States above anything that, in his mind, could represent Puerto Rican independence, indigeneity, or communism. Chiquitín is therefore a loyal member of Puerto Rico's Partido Nuevo Progresista [New Progressive Party] (PNP), a conservative political party based around the ideal that Puerto Rico should become the 51<sup>st</sup> state of the union<sup>24</sup>. After serving in Vietnam, a memory he

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<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that the PNP is of the only two parties, along with the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), to have ever won the elections for governor in Puerto Rico, while with nationalists,

deeply cherishes and one that he constantly reminds others, Chiquitín returns to a Puerto Rico that is already in somewhat of a crisis and where there are no job opportunities for him. The memories of Vietnam become comes an origin to Chiquitín's memory in a way that disrupts chronology for him: "eran recuerdos anteriores a Vietnam que, no obstante, se sentían posteriores, como si las memorias sangrientas hubiesen ocupado un espacio primigenio y desplazado las infantiles hacia el futuro" (29). His family, which once had a lot of money—we are led to believe his mother's side of the family may have been involved in the Banco de Ponce which closed in the 1970s—asks Benjamin Vals to take Chiquitín with him. The narrator explains: "Llevado a las circunstancias de escasez de empleo en la ciudad a su regreso de Vietnam, su padre le solicitó a don Vals, amigo de la familia, que lo llevara con él a los yacimientos para que se entretuviera un poco, a la vez que le echara una mano en sus faenas" (Bauzá 2012: 10). The reader knows from the narrator that Benjamin Vals was himself a fraud in archeology circles and not a legitimate source of knowledge and information. These amateur archeological adventures with Vals, which began as a cross between

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socialists, and communists have never come anywhere near securing a victory or opportunity to govern in the island.

entertainment and a job, are what eventually convince Chiquitín that Tainos are still alive and influencing 21<sup>st</sup> century Puerto Rican society. Vals asks Chiquitín:

Ven acá, mijito, dime una cosa, cómo es que a ti los recuerdos se te multiplican con los años? No es que se multipliquen, don Vals, decía cándidamente, es que desde que empecé a excavar con usted también a mi memoria le ha dado con excavar, y los esqueletos que vamos desenterrando como que me sacan a flote los cadáveres.

[Come here, kid, tell me one thing, how is it that your memories multiply themselves with the years? It's not that they multiple themselves, Don Vals, he said ingeniously, it's that since I started excavating with you my memory has also began excavating, and the skeletons we unearth bring afloat my corpses](Bauzá 2012: 12).

The traumatic memories of Chiquitín become intertwined with his memories of Puerto Rican origins (Bauzá 10). The events of the novel take place years after the death of Benjamin Vals, when Chiquitín decides to go on his own expedition to find a Taino guanín. At this point, Chiquitín no longer has a relationship with his family, who have lost all their wealth, and he lives off a small pension he receives for his service and some measly checks he received from Benjamín Vals before Vals passed. The novel's first pages contextualize Chiquitín within the economic hardships affecting the island as well as his family since the 1970s. Chiquitín came back to the island after enlisting in the government and serving in Vietnam. He makes this decision as a way to show his gratitude for the United States: "al graduarse estuvo de acuerdo con sus padres, quienes

le conminaron a enlistarse voluntariamente en el ejército, donde podía hacer una carrera paga mientras le agradecía al Americano lo que había hecho por él, por ellos, por su familia, por Puerto Rico” (Bauzá 2012: 16 italics are mine). Chiquitín’s service in Vietnam, his time working with Vals, and his parents’ influence produce a similar effect in him than that of the chivalric books that turned Alonso Quixano into Don Quixote.

If the novel’s title was not a clear enough reference to Quixote, the novel displays its unmistakable commitment to Cervantes’s classic in the opening lines and chapter titles. The chapters in *Barataria* all have titles similar to those found at the beginning of the chapters of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, for example, the opening chapter is titled “Que trata de la condición y preparativos para la primera salida del arqueologo aficionado Chiquitín Campala Suárez” (9), compared to *Don Quixote’s* opening chapter: “Que trata de la condición y ejercicio del famoso y valiente hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha” (Cervantes 2011: 69) [Which Treats of the Characters and Pursuits of the Famous Gentleman Don Quixote of la Mancha]. The novel immediately references the well-known introduction of Cervantes—“En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, no ha mucho tiempo que vivía un hidalgo de los de lanza en astillero, adarga antigua, rocín flaco y galgo corredor” (69)—rewriting it as follows: “En la calle Igualdad de la urbanización Constancia, hacía mucho vivía un veterano de Vietnam, hijo menor de una familia pudiente venida a menos, quien por los pasados treinta y cinco

años fuera asistente del recién fallecido arqueólogo Benjamín Vals” (Bauzá 2012: 9).

Whereas Alberto Fuguet claims that in Latin America the twenty-first century coexists with the nineteenth century, in López Bauzá’s novel, the twenty-first century coexists with the previous five centuries. Along with the use of Cervantes, the opening chapter of *Barataria* summons Puerto Rico’s past in a way that constantly merges its 500 years of history as a coexisting present, for example, gives himself the name Diego Salcedo (Bauzá 2012: 22)—in his mind the first martyr of annexation—and names his bicycle Anacaona (Bauzá 2012: 21) after the famous Taino cacique. He is obsessed with the idea of going down in history as a martyr for annexation himself (Bauzá 4). Chiquitín’s temporal dislocation becomes mixed up with his experience as an amateur archeologist until he sees Tainos all over the island, who according to him are partly responsible for Puerto Rico not being the 51<sup>st</sup> state of the United States—along with nationalists, socialists, and communists. His loyalty to the United States is fundamentally based on his interpretation of the economic knowhow of the United States. During the entire novel, Chiquitín tends to call the United States “La Gran Corporación” [The Great Corporation]. He explains to Margaro why he calls the United States “la Gran Corporación”: ¿O por qué tú piensas que llamo yo la Gran Corporación a la nación nuestra? Pues porque el único idioma que conoce es el de los dolares y centavos, que tú y yo sabemos que es el idioma universal. En el dinero está el poder. El que más tenga es el

que manda” [And why do you think I call our great nation The Great Corporation? Well because the only language they know is that of dollars and cents, which you and I know is the universal language. In money one finds power. Whoever has the most is in charge] (Bauzá 2013: 781). For him, it is undeniable that the United States runs like a corporation, and Puerto Ricans have no proper business mentality. Chiquitín states: “A Dios gracias que no tenemos soberanía, que no podemos mandarnos nosotros mismos. ¡Tú te imaginas dejarle el tema de la economía a los vagos de esta isla, que no saben ni lo que significa la palabra *industria*! En un dos por tres arman un arroz con bicicleta que no hay quien se lo coma luego” [Thank God we don’t have sovereignty, that we aren’t in charge of ourselves. Could you imagine leaving economic matters to the slackers of this island, who don’t even know the meaning of the work *industry*! In no time at all they’ll make a mess that no one can solve] (Bauzá 2012: 114). This idea that the United States is the only thing keeping Puerto Rico out of a state of savagery and economic crisis is repeated continuously by Chiquitín. He states: “Aquí no hay capacidad de nada, ni inventiva, ni recursos humanos o económicos para hacer un carajo de nada, y me perdona el francés. El día que el Americano recoja sus bártulos y se largue, este corral de prietos se va a convertir en un Haití o en una republiquita de a diez por chavo en menos de lo usted y yo decimos jí” [There is no capacity for anything here, nor inventiveness, nor human or economic resources to get shit done, pardon my French. The day the Americans pick up

their things and leave, this farmyard of blacks will become another Haiti o one of those banana republics in no time] (Bauzá 2012: 39). If one of the defining aspects of neoliberalism has been the transformation of the nation-state into the “managerial state” (Stimilli 2019: 44), Chiquitín pictures the United States as the optimal “managerial state” and Puerto Ricans as subjects who must be managed. Chiquitín also clarifies that these are the principles by which he lives his life. After Margaro calls Chiquitín anti-American for not giving him a salary, Chiquitín responds by clarifying that he is not only an American but also a capitalist, which according to him means living his life around cutting expenses, saving, and balancing budgets (Bauzá 2013: 624). He also describes these practices as values he has learned from the United States.

Chiquitín’s description of American economic principles is also linked to an admiration of the Great Corporation’s stock market. Before they part ways towards the end of the novel, Chiquitín tells Margaro that he has some valuable painting in his house, that Margaro can have these for himself and sell them to make a profit for his job as an assistant (Bauzá 2013: 818). He advises Margaro to sell the paintings to either an American or a pro-statehood Puerto Rican, and to use whatever he makes from the sell to invest in the stock market: “Te sugiero que el dinero de la venta lo guardes en algún banco también americano, que son los únicos seguros, o lo inviertas en la Bolsa, que con ella es fácil darle la vuelta a las leyes y hacerse millonario, amigo mío... dijo Chiquitín,

haciendo alarde de aquella troglodita mentalidad monetaria" [I advise you to take the money for the sale and keep it in an American bank, which are the only safe ones, or invest it in the stock market, where it is easy to get around the law and make millions, my friend... Chiquitín stated, showing that troglodyte monetary mentality] (Bauzá 2013: 818-819). Chiquitín's stock market recommendation displays his understanding of how the market can bend the law to produce millions of dollars. The satire of the character is the constant praising the of United States financial district, which unknowingly recognizes the problematic nature to these financial practices that are largely responsible for his economic misfortunes as well as those of a majority of Puerto Ricans. The passage is also one of the many instances in which the narrator pokes fun at Chiquitín's absurd ideas. The narrator's form of speech is much more elevated than any of the characters, giving it a more grandiloquent tone that connects to original text by Cervantes (Bauzá 2013b).

The primary goal of Chiquitín's journey in the novel is finding a guanin, a Taino medallion that symbolized the power of the cacique who wore it. His intentions with the guanin are questioned the entire time, and his responses, as well as the information provided by the narrator, shows some of the ways in which annexation, economics, and history intertwine in the novel. What López Bauzá conjures are a series of debates the Puerto Rican national identity that dominated the 1990s. During the government of

Pedro Rosselló [1992-2000] the issue of Puerto Rico's *status* reemerged as annexation became associated by its critics as loyal to the United States and not the island (Pabón 285). Among annexationist and nationalist alike, the problem of whether or not Puerto Rico could be considered a nation or a national identity coincided with a radical transformation of the island's finances. Rosselló insisted that Puerto Rico could not be considered a nation as part of his campaign for statehood (289).

The main question Chiquitín faces is whether to make the potential finding public or not. On the one hand, he considers the idea of making it public only if the United States military goes to his house for him to show them, as he would not want anyone else to see it (Bauzá 2012: 24). If made public, the finding would, according to Chiquitín, result in an immediate fortune as well as professional, cultural, and historical recognition (22). He is convinced that the finding would send him straight to the top of the archeological field in Puerto Rico, where other archeologists had never given him any respect because he lacked any formal training (22). On the other hand, he believes making the finding of the guanin public would benefit academic who favor Puerto Rican independence.

Chiquitín imagines the guanin as ultimate emblem of the power belonging to leader of Puerto Rico's original inhabitants (24). The guanin represents the material reality of the island's past (24) and summoning that past would empower Puerto Rican nationalists.

The narrator states:

¡Claro que no podía hacer aquello público!, se dijo en tono reprobatorio, metido de lleno en la fantasía y dando por hecho encontrado. Para colmo, contribuiría a entusiasmar a los separatistas-independentistas-comunistas y a fortalecer una cultura que debería desaparecer ya en ese gran crisol de razas que son los estados todos juntos, se decía. Mejor lo despacho en el Mercado negro...

[Of course that couldn't be made public!, he said in a reproving tone, fully sunk in the fantasy and taking the find as a given. To make matter worse, he would contribute to the enthusiasm of the separatists-pro-independence-communists and strengthen a culture that should disappear in the melting pot of races which was the United States, he told himself. Better dispatch it in the black market...] (25)

Chiquitín settles on not making the finding public because of its potential to help the “separatists-pro-independence-communists,” who could potentially rally around the guanin as a sign of Taino power. In the passage, the past is presented as pure potential for Chiquitín as well as his enemies. Chiquitín recognizes in the potential of the guanin an economic potential that would get him out of the misery he finds himself in, but he is only willing make this past public if it can easily disappear into the “melting-pot” of the United States. This is an idea of Chiquitín's that the narrator will highlight again: “El único peligro para el patrimonio sepulto que él representaba era convertirse en el primer proamericano a quien sí le importa su pasado arqueológico, a quien sí le interesa la cultura, aunque solo fuera con la esperanza de derretirla en el gran crisol de las razas de

los Estados Unidos de América" [The only danger he represented to the hidden patrimony was becoming the first pro-American who cared about his archeological past, who was interested in the culture, even if it were only to melt it into the great melting pot of the United States] (Bauzá 2012: 184-185). Chiquitín constantly expresses his desire to erase Taino history, as a necessary step towards Puerto Rico gaining its statehood. During one of the many discussions he has with his Sancho Panza, Margaro Velásquez, his intentions with the guanin become quite clear. In the scene, Margaro questions Chiquitín's hatred towards everything Puerto Rican despite being Puerto Rican himself, Chiquitín bursts with anger and rejects the idea that there is any Puerto Ricanness left in him. Chiquitín claims to have rid himself of all Puerto Rican thinking, claims he thinks like an American, and even calls himself more American than Benjamin Franklin (Bauzá 2012: 284). He finishes his rant stating that his only interest in the island's Taino culture is ultimately erasing them, and selling their artifacts for the highest bidder: "borrarlos de nuestro pasado, anular la historia, comenzar desde cero. ¡Eso es la estadidad, para que te enteres: borrón y cuenta nueva!" [erase them from our past, void history, starting from zero. That is statehood, so you know: starting over with a clean slate] (Bauzá 2012: 284). At this point it becomes clear that Chiquitín has two key intentions with the Guanín: to make a profit by selling it to the highest bidder, and to erase indigeneity from Puerto Rico's past, producing a new origin to the United States and Puerto Rico relationship

that begins with statehood rather than Tainos, Spanish colonization, and American occupation. The erasure of the Tainos is the production of a new history, it is a specific way of making the past relevant to the present. In other words, this is not a subject that “knows no history” as Fleming says in his brief description of neoliberal debt, instead it is a subject heavily invested in the production of a particular history, that which decides which pasts are valuable and which must be hidden.

Chiquitin’s journey and his vacillation on what to do with the guanin links the past to the present and future through a logic of speculation. In *The Time of Money* (2018), Lisa Adkins argues that the replacement of the logic of extraction by a logic of speculation has transformed our relationship to time and has organized our social world towards the maximization of the productive capacities of populations around flows of money for financial capital. Adkins analyzes how the logic of speculation operates as a rationality that is both a mode of accumulation, and a mode of social organization united by time (Adkins 19). I would argue that a key difference between Lazzarato and Adkins’ notion of indebted time is complementary to Nietzsche’s understanding of time and history. As Elizabeth Grosz has argued, the most central element in Nietzsche’s conception of life is the question of time, time as that which connects, runs through, things and processes and conjugates itself as past, present, and future (113). Nietzsche wants to develop a history, a reading of the past, not just in light of the present, but for

the future, a history that jumps the intermediary of the present, which constraints it to the known and useful in order to allow it to function in a way that enervates and welcomes the future (113-114). Although Lazzarato borrows Nietzsche's notion of debt as the foundation for his own debt theory, his notion of indebted time forgets the ways time organizes life and matter in Nietzsche's work. What Adkins has called the speculative time of debt on that other hand, establishes relationships between past and future that are left out of Lazzarato's theory. According to Adkins the time of debt is a speculative time. Much like the arguments I have tried to present in this chapter, Adkins wants to demonstrate how far from closing down the possibilities of time, the time of mass indebtedness concerns a particular temporal order, namely, that of speculative time (81). Adkins describes speculative time as follows:

Speculative time is a time in which pasts, presents, and futures stand not in a predetermined or pre-set relation to each other but are in a continuous state of movement, transformation, and unfolding... futures may remediate not only in the present but also in the past; the present and its relation to the past and the future may be reset in one action (via, e.g., index rolling); pasts and presents can be forwarded and futures and presents backwarded. It is, moreover, along the flows of these nonchronological pasts, presents, and futures, including their reordering and resetting and even their suspension, that channels for profit are yielded. In Short, in the time of

securitized debt, the time of profit lies in the nonchronological and indeterminate movements of speculative time. (96-97)

Instead of presenting debt as a neutralization of time the way Lazzarato does, Adkins focuses on how debt's speculative temporality transforms dynamics between pasts, presents, and futures, making each of these relevant to each other in non-predicable and nonchronological ways.

*Barataria* functions within a transformation of temporality present in Cervantes's isle into a logic of speculative time and neoliberal chrononormativity. According to Rodriguez-Escalona, for Sancho the present urges a realization of possibility and Sancho is driven by a compromise that causes him to situate himself in a succession that is both chronological and moral: the future *is made*; it is forged in the past, it sets itself in the present and will culminate in a time to come (145). On the other hand, the time of the aristocrats is defined by a lack of compromise to the present as anything other than just another point in the timeline. Time is understood by these as a mechanical succession with no moral significance, just a pure chronological dynamic. To borrow the ideas of time in Lazzarato's theory of indebtedness, Rodriguez-Escalona seems to be pointing towards a difference between time as possibility (Sancho) and a neutralized mechanical notion of time (aristocrats). What is significant is how these two temporal experiences are reversed between Lazzarato and Rodriguez-Escalona. In Lazzarato, it is the creditor that has power over time, while the debtor's time is neutralized. However, speculative

time is built around a different relation to the future which destabilizes the entire chronological morality found in Cervantes. Following the work of Louise Amoore, Adkins describes a change in emphasis from probability to possibility (Adkins 92). She describes this process, primarily, but not exclusively, as a reconfiguration of state authority: state authority and sovereign decision have come to operate less through actions on *future known calculated with reference to the past and present* and more through actions on *future unknowns* calculated with reference to the possible (93 Italics added). The speculative time of debt, not only transforms the dynamics between pasts, presents, and futures, but also produces futures based on possibility rather than probability which in turn affect pasts and presents. If we understand Juan López Bauzá's *Barataria* to be a rewriting Cervantes in the epoch of Lazzarato's "indebted man," then what is happening to these temporal experiences? Keeping in mind Chiquitín's lack of real archeological knowledge, the entire expedition is based on possibility. Chiquitín also takes on expenses and makes investments, such as hiring Margaro with on the possibility of the finding in spite the lack of probability of it even existing. What makes Chiquitín's speculative investment even more interesting is how the investment is based on possibility rather than probability with regards to the past as much as the present and future. Adkins says of the subject of speculative time: "this is a subject who must stand ready to adjust to recalibrations of pasts, presents, and futures, as well as to changes in

the relations between and across these states. Far from being dispossessed of time, the subject who is bound to the speculative time of securitized debt has *too much time*" (98). Chiquitín can be understood as this subject that has too much time, the 500 years of Puerto Rican history from the moment of the Spanish invasion to the 21<sup>st</sup> century coexisting and constantly influencing one another, therefore becoming also a subject who is unable to adjust to the necessary recalibrations between pasts, presents, and futures.

Chiquitín's inability to adjust to specific temporal changes is even more apparent in his understanding of "American time" in contrast to himself. As with everything with Chiquitín, he even believes that Americans have a superior way of organizing in time. He states in a discussion with a fellow pro-statehood Puerto Rican:

... y es un bochorno que los anexionistas no se dejen llevar por el *horario Americano*, tan exacto y *consciente del valor del tiempo* en metálico. Somos la excepción a la regla en la nación americana, la mancha en el mantel, el pelo de gato en la solapa. ¿O piensan que exagero?... ni crean que nada de esto no lo ve el Americano y que esta impuntualidad no lo desalienta de aceptarnos en la Unión con él.

[... and it's a shame that the annexationists don't carry with themselves the *American timetable*, so precise and *consistent with the value of time* in gold. We are the exception to the rule within the American nation, the stain on the tablecloth, the hair on the flap. You think I exaggerate?... Don't think for a second that the American doesn't see it and that

that lack of punctuality does not discourage them from making us a part of the Union with them] (Bauzá 2012: 335 Italics are mine)

Chiquitín is emphatic about the ways in which people chose to live time, and creates a direct relation between these modes of living and the appreciation of “the value” that is given to time. As with most of Chiquitín’s rants, the admiration of an American quality is accompanied by harsh criticism of the ways things take place in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico’s lack of precision is seen as an exception to how things are done in the United States’ impeccable precision. Chiquitín’s “American time” and “Puerto Rican time” can also be understood as an example of Luciano and Freeman’s notion of chrononormativity and chronobiopolitics, which I explored in the previous chapter. Chiquitín’s distinction between American and Puerto Rican time speaks to two different versions of “hidden rhythms” which Freeman identifies in chrononormative societies. As with most of Chiquitín’s claims, this is another case where he does not understand the distinction between the ideals of American practices and his own. Chiquitín himself has no proper “rhythm” since losing his wristwatch months before. The narrator states:

Desde que su reloj de pulsera se detuvo en las dos y treinta siete hacía ya un par de meses, su concepto del tiempo había variado para ajustarse a otros indicadores temporales: luz solar, calor, humedad, patrón de brisa, sequedad del aire, estrellas, luna, tinieblas. Le era imposible calcular hora exactas... Imbuido en la actividad física, el tiempo se le hizo una abstracción, un concepto imposible de sondear.

[Since the watch on his wrist stopped at two thirty-seven a few months ago, his concept of time had changed to adapt to other temporal markers: sunlight, heat, humidity, the patterns of the wind, dryness in the air, stars, the moon, shadows. It was impossible for him to figure out exact hours... Infused with physical activity, time became an abstraction, a concept impossible to measure] (Bauzá 2012: 182)

Chiquitín tries to measure time based on signs provided by nature, but at no point is he able to connect these signs to the hours on a clock. Chiquitín praises the punctuality of Americans and their valorization of time, but the narrator continuously presents Chiquitín being out of sync with his own present. Not only in terms of his broken clock, but also the way different historical periods of Puerto Rican history coexist. Chiquitín constantly serves as the example of the subject who is not in time with either the speculative time of debt, nor the chrononormativity managing most of the populations. Chiquitín falls into such an immersion in the past that it resembles what Nietzsche considered an illness, a debilitation, an inhibition to life, for it prevents our active living in the present (Grosz 116).

Margarito, the Sancho to Chiquitín's Quixote, is a key temporal contrast which conjures a different type of Puerto Rican identity, one who is also linked to the past but through language. López Bauzá has mentioned in multiple interviews and speeches how researching the proper language for the novel was maybe the most complicated aspect of the project. López Bauzá had previously taken the controversial position of attacking

Rosario Ferré specifically for writing some of her novels in English rather than Spanish. He directly associates the use of English in Ferré's work as a form of treason against Puerto Rican identity. In his own work, he instead carries an extensive task of making visible the forms of Spanish spoken across the island and in the small towns that are often left out by authors who exclusively focus on San Juan metropolitan area (Bauzá 2013b). According to Magdalena López, the language of Margaro reveals hidden relations of power in daily life as would an archeology in the Foucauldian sense, which contrast with Chiquitín's amateur archeology (16). Margaro presents an opposite to Chiquitín's obsession with "History" by treasuring popular culture and everyday realities (16). If, as Grosz suggest, a healthy relationship between history and life involves the discernment of the life-enchanting features of the past and the leaving behind of what encumbers life in the present (123), *Barataria* provides a look into both of this relationship through the contract of Chiquitín and Margaro, but also with how the novel as a whole activates the past.

### **Conclusion**

What history gives us, for Nietzsche and Grosz, is the possibility of being untimely, of placing ourselves outside the constraints, the limitations of the present; to write for a future that the present cannot recognize: to develop, to cultivate the untimely, the out-of-place and the out-of-step (117). The task is to make elements of this past live again, to

be reenergized through their untimely or anachronistic recall in the present. The past is what gives us that difference that tension with the present which can move us to a future in which the present can no longer recognize itself (117). López Bauzá's *Barataria* uses Margaro's phrases and Cervantes as a way to produce its untimeliness. Chiquitín presents what Nietzsche would consider a debilitating use of the past, but the novel itself can be read as the anachronistic recall in the present that makes the past useful in so far as it produces difference with the present. Nietzsche aims to think a human sensibility in which history is evaluated, not as a good in itself, not as a preeminent value, but as an aid or discipline that fosters or cultivates our present and future possibilities (Grosz 116). *Barataria*, along with other novels by López Bauzá reproduces the Nietzschean understanding of history as a mode of writing by frequently placing characters who write history at the forefront: historians, journalist, archeologists. The characters of these novels shine light on how recalibrations between past, present and future take place under indebtedness, but the novels themselves insists that the path towards a different future lies in a strategic use of the past which the novel has employed from its origins.

## Conclusion

“Resulta imperativo controlar el tiempo y el espacio. El nuestro, nuestro tiempo y nuestro espacio... Cuidas tu tiempo y tu espacio, me cuidas y, aún más, me vigilas” [It is imperative that we control time and space. Ours, our time and our space... You take care of your time and your space, you take care of me and, even more, you guard me] (Eltit 2012: 102). Those are the words of Diamela Eltit’s nameless female narrator and protagonist in *Jamás el fuego nunca* (2007 [2012]), a novel about two former communist militants spending their days in a room where time stand still, in an era that does not belong to them. The title of Eltit’s novel is taken straight from a César Vajello poem, “The Nine Monsters,” which speaks about various forms which pain takes throughout the world. Eltit’s *Jamás el fuego nunca* reproduces a pattern which is constant in many of the novels featured in this project: heterogeneous theories of how time is lived, managed, and felt under neoliberalism, along which simultaneously engaging with past novels and texts in very explicit ways. As we continue to ask ourselves what the future, or futures, of the novel will look like, these authors seem to insist on a belief in the novel’s past as a field of possibilities yet to be explored. In addition to the novels studied here, I am thinking of other Latin American novels like Rafael Acevedo’s *Flor de ciruelo y el viento* (2011), Pedro Cabiya’s *María V.* (2013), Marcelo Mellado’s *Monroe*, or Pola Oloixarac’s *Las teorías salvajes* (2010), among others. Nilges argument that the shift

towards temporal matters coincides with a transition to realism requires further scrutiny in the case of Latin America. Although it holds up for writers like Fuguet and Volpi's turn to realism in response to the Boom and the Post-Boom, it does not account for the rise of science-fiction, horror, and fantasy. A novel like *El año del desierto* is an example of this trend, but it is also clear is the recent wave of female authors with publications like Samanta Schweblin's *Kentukis* (2018), Rita Indiana's *La mucama de Omicunlé* (2015), or Nona Fernandez's *La región desconocida* (2016), as well the work of writers like Yuri Herrera, Jorge Baradit, and Pedro Cabiya. Yet, it would be a mistake to interpret this move strictly as a return to past ideas of the novel. Instead these novels seem to question how previous works engaged with the nation, the household, the state, the market, debt, time, and space, in order to strategically repurpose these tools within the changes of neoliberalism.

I started my dissertation arguing that at the heart of the Latin American novel's examination of neoliberalism is the question of time and how novels insist on the heterogeneity of temporal experiences. In the works that I have brought together in this dissertation time is controlled and taken care of, manipulated, reversed, accelerated, slowed down, paused, sold, spatialized, deterritorialized, globalized, localized, compressed, neutralized, it can be felt or lived individually, in community, as a nation, as a colony, engendered, disciplinary, biopolitically, indebted etc. If postmodernism was

an epoch of space over time, the Latin American novels that have emerged under neoliberalism have subdued space to time.

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