THREE

THE DIS-JOINTURES OF HISTORY

Market, Virtuoso Labor, and Natural History in Post-dictatorship Chile

> Me pregunto: cuál será la manera posible de referirse a la historia política chilena cuando esa historia es a la vez personal [y] corporal, sin caer en el absorto vértigo testimonial o en el previsible ejercicio de construir una mirada "inteligente" o distante sobre acontecimientos que radican caóticamente—sin principio ni fin—en la memoria y cuyas huellas perviven en una atemporalidad transversal que, a menudo, asalta perceptiblemente en el presente.
>
> —Diamela Eltit, "Las dos caras de la moneda"

> History begins where memory ends. It begins where representation ends.
>
> —Jean-Luc Nancy, "Finite History"

> It is . . . event-ness that one must think, but that best resists what is called the concept, if not thinking. And it will not be thought as long as one relies on the simple (ideal, mechanical, or dialectical) opposition of the real presence of the real present or the living present to its ghostly simulacrum, the opposition of the effective or actual (*wirklich*) to the non-effective, inactual, which is also to say, as long as one relies on a general temporality or an historical temporality made up of the *successive* linking of presents identical to themselves and contemporary with themselves.
>
> —Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

In the first epigraph, taken from a 1997 essay entitled "Las dos caras de la moneda" (Eltit 2000), Diamela Eltit poses a fundamental question for post-dictatorship cultural production: how to narrate disruptive experiences from the recent past, experiences associated with loss, destruction, and defeat, in a way that would allow the past to be understood in its social-historical context but without thereby losing sight of how history itself marks us on a personal and corporeal level. Narrative deploys an episodic time of causes and effects leading up to the final denouement, as if an overarching logic governed the flow of everything that happens, culminating inevitably in the historical present. In that case, how can the logical time of narrative hope to do justice to the contingent nature of experiences that cut across regions ordinarily considered to be separate and distinct, such as the public and the personal, or the intangible realms of cognition and understanding versus the material register of the body? Post-dictatorship writing faces the challenge of avoiding what Eltit understands to be two dead ends: the self-absorbed mirror of testimonial narrative with its focus on the autobiographical subject, and the false objectivity of historiography, which seeks to recover a past that this historiography presumes to be in full possession of its own meaning. Eltit then adds an additional layer of complexity to this problem. On one hand, the memory traces she has in mind—she hasn't yet told us anything about what these experiences might have entailed—have, akin to the structure of perception and cognition described by Freud, been inscribed on psychic and/or corporeal surfaces in such a way that they exist outside of time ("*sin principio ni fin*").[1] On the other hand, these same memory traces have a way of crossing over into the temporal register of the present ("*una atemporalidad transversal*") where they are experienced as so many "assaults" on the here and now. The "eternal" or atemporal nature of inscription thereby gives rise to a secondary and untimely—but nonetheless temporal—experience of return.

While biographical criticism would likely conclude that Eltit is alluding here to a specific and well-known historical context, the fundamental problem thematized here—of narration and experience, history and memory, event and repetition, material inscription and meaning—is not unique to the Chilean experience of dictatorship in the 1970s and '80s. As Freud proposed in comparing the process wherein sensory data is registered in the psychic apparatus to a so-called mystic writing

pad, the experiences of everyday life entail mediation and inscription in a register other than that of consciousness. What we ordinarily think of as the "immediate" nature of lived experience is therefore already characterized by several degrees of mediation: inscription, deferral, and repetition (Freud 1961, 230–31). The mystic writing pad, as Freud explains, was an early-twentieth-century commercial writing device consisting of a wax or resin tablet covered by a pair of semitransparent sheets that were glued together at both ends; the sheets were fixed permanently at the top to the tablet while the lower edges rested loosely on the wax tablet. The bottom of the two translucent sheets was made of waxed paper and the top sheet was durable celluloid. To use the mystic writing pad, one would press with a stylus on the transparent sheets; the pressure of the stylus point would cause the bottom of the two sheets to adhere to the underlying wax or resin wherever the stylus may have passed, leaving visibly darkened outlines in its wake. The written text could then be erased simply by lifting the adjoined sheets away from the wax base; when the sheets returned to their original position the contact with the wax had been broken. The tablet itself, however, continued to bear the traces of prior inscriptions that were no longer visible on the transparent surface.

For Freud, this technological device offered an analogy for how the mechanics of perception draw on conscious and unconscious processes. Like the celluloid sheet, the psychic register that first receives external stimuli—Freud calls this register the "perceptual-conscious system"—retains no permanent record of those occurrences, while the material medium in which these sensory traces are inscribed and stored belongs to another system that adjoins the conscious processes. As Jacques Derrida notes in his commentary on Freud's essay (Derrida 1978), the Freudian analogy reminds us that all experience, no matter how "immediate," is always already marked by mediation and deferral. There is no such thing as a direct or firsthand experience, insofar as all experience is mediated by way of this transversal movement of inscription and transferal between recording and transmitting systems. When we experience something for the first time we are already experiencing it "after the fact," as it were: through the traces of prior experiences and through the signifiers produced by the unconscious as the supplementary condition of possibility for any experience of presence. As Derrida puts it in "Freud and the Scene of Writing," "[W]riting supplements

perception before perception even appears to itself" (Derrida 1978, 224).

In the "Dos caras de la moneda" essay, Eltit provocatively uses the Chilean historical trauma of September 1973 and its aftermath to highlight a general set of questions and problems having to do with perception and experience, cognition and materiality, memory and narration. It is fitting that this somewhat surprising formal juxtaposition between the singularity of September 1973 and the generality of "experience as such" should be duplicated at the level of what the essay appears to be telling us: that all experience, understood as singular encounter or contact with the real, turns out to be mediated by structures of repetition.

One of the key terms in Eltit's essay is *golpe,* which mobilizes an array of associations having to do with contact between bodies as well as the effects thereby generated. A list of ideas and meanings associated with *golpe* would include: blow, scar, bruise, fracture, mutilation, interruption, surprise, shock, accident, assault, pain, aggressive play, and symptom. Each of these possible connotations refers back to a scenario in which one corporeal surface comes into contact with another, initiating a transfer of forces and stimuli that in turn crosses over from outside to inside, from soma to psyche—and then back again. We are prompted to envision a scenario in which some form of ideality—recognition, cognition, understanding, judgment—overwrites and codifies the material register in which bodies reside, move, and interact. One of the primary concerns in Eltit's essay has to do with the temporality of experience and memory insofar as their end result (consciousness, self-consciousness, etc.) tends to project itself as the origin or justification of the process. What gets forgotten, meanwhile, is the necessary role played by materiality in such processes.

> The *golpe* [blow, but also coup d'état], privileged and familiar domain of infancy, is seen frequently in the form of a fall or aggression and is perhaps the first memory. It is through such an experience that this word is internalized corporeally: when the body bursts forth as body or when it appears in its difference from the other, that precocious opponent who is plotted as the enemy body by virtue of the collision. (Eltit 2000, 17–18)[2]

As index of infantile experience, *golpe* holds the place of a mythical first memory.[3] Repeated endlessly, as with a toddler losing its balance and falling or suddenly seizing a companion's toy, it is the *golpe* that first delineates a distinction between inside and outside, psyche and soma, self and other, proper and improper. Here we have a complement to the Lacanian scene of the "mirror stage," in which misrecognition inaugurates the life of the autonomous Ego or subject. For Eltit, it is the materiality of bodily contact that first gives shape to the self in distinction from the other. *Golpe* names an encounter with the other that gives rise to corporeal sensations, which will in turn help to delineate a sense of self, a *that happened to me*. Freud has something similar to say in *The Ego and the Id* about how the Ego and its structure derive from bodily sensations. The self that experiences things as happening *to it,* and which sees itself as the "depth" that resides beneath skin and flesh, is in fact a projection generated through the interactions of the body with the world: "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego: it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface" (Freud 1961, 25). *Golpe* names a material occurrence—a collision, a blow, a puncturing—that first delineates what will become a series of self-evident differences: between one body and another, and between corporeal and spiritual realms (soul, self, consciousness). *Golpe* thus designates a materiality prior to matter, prior to distinctions between matter and form, the sensible and the intelligible, and so on. It is the name for an occurrence that gives rise to an entire system of perception and intelligibility, but which for necessary reasons is not itself registered within that system. The origin of perception and consciousness, and of the self and its relation to others, cannot be subsumed within the distinctions to which it gives shape.

Somewhat paradoxically, alongside this meditation on the absent material origin of self-consciousness we find in Eltit's essay a thought of event as repetition. Among its many possible meanings *golpe* names the symptom whose return "assaults" us in the here and now. Of course, this term points unambiguously to the historical events of September 1973 in which the Chilean "experiment with socialism" through democratic means was interrupted, and replaced within the course of a few years by the world's first experiment with neoliberalism. At the same time, it also points to a generalizable thought of history as event, as occurrence that shapes perception and memory while resisting

cognitive capture. *Golpe* as material (i.e., nonidealizable) event traces a horizon of intelligibility within which the here and now can understand itself, but it does not itself appear within this horizonal frame as one entity or moment among others.

In recent years a sometimes-heated debate has arisen in Chilean critical circles concerning how artistic production under dictatorship should be understood in its relation to history—social and political history as much as art history. The debate has to do with competing critical assessments of a neo-avant-garde movement whose productivity peaked in the late 1970s and 1980s.[4] This movement, which Nelly Richard famously dubbed "la escena de Avanzada," draws on visual and performance art as well as poetry and narrative. Its participants share at least two primary concerns: denouncing violent repression under military dictatorship and calling attention to the severe impact of neoliberal monetarist policies on the most impoverished and vulnerable sectors of Chilean society. The highlighting of how neoliberal reforms in Chile led to increased inequality and suffering is intended to refute the self-congratulatory discourse of neoliberal economists, as exemplified by Milton Friedman's 1982 proclamation that a pair of "miracles" had occurred in Chile: first, the (arguable) return to relative economic stability following the hyperinflation of the early 1970s; and second, the fact that a free-market economy had been introduced by a military government with a centralized, authoritarian state apparatus (Friedman 1982, 59).[5] At the heart of the more recent critical debate, which picked up steam in the first decade of the new millennium, is the question of what sort of meaning the critical concept of the avant-garde retains in the wake of September 1973. I will say more about what is at stake in this question in a moment. Although Eltit's *Mano de obra* was published long after the historical conjuncture in which the *Avanzada* emerged, the critical debate about the Chilean neo-avant-garde has something important to say about how we read Eltit's post-dictatorship writing. Her 2002 novel shares fundamental concerns with the *Avanzada* scene concerning the social impact of neoliberalism and what can be expected of art and literature in the time of neoliberal-administered globalization. Factors that distinguish *Mano de obra* from the *Avanzada,* meanwhile, include the obvious difference between two political regimes (representative democracy and dictatorship), together with the various ways—some of them more obvious than others—in

which globalization has become increasingly entrenched (and arguably also more violent) over the course of the two decades that separate the publication of *Mano de obra* from the *Avanzada* scene.

In her groundbreaking 1986 book *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile Since 1973,* Nelly Richard frames the aesthetic and political aims of this neo-avant-garde movement in the following manner. The *Avanzada* deploys its creative forces to disrupt the languages of administrative authority and power deployed by the military junta and its allied governmental and civic institutions.[6] As "disruptive force," artistic form can no longer be understood as a vessel or mirror whose primary purpose is to convey a meaning or message whose origin lies elsewhere, outside of the creative realm of art. Literary and artistic composition become politically charged spaces or procedures not because they transmit information or judgments about the external world (though this can of course happen) but because, in the context of the Pinochetista restructuring of Chilean society, these artistic fields constitute sites where the very determination of truth—of what counts as meaningful speech versus what is to be discounted as mere babble or outdated jargon—is at stake. The avant-garde's historical association with the critique of prevailing social forms thus reemerges as contestation of authoritarian neoliberal common sense in the aftermath of September 1973.

In at least two different respects, the artistic deployment of language and image as fields of contestation helps explain why the works of the Chilean neo-avant-garde are notoriously resistant to interpretation, favoring ambiguity, circumlocution, and linguistic play over transparency and immediacy. For one, says Richard, the conditions for artistic production in the late 1970s and early '80s are constrained by the practical matters of political repression, censorship, and fear or self-censorship. While the use of metaphor and ellipsis serves to dissimulate political content that might run afoul of state censors, such rhetorical devices also stage a confrontation with the instrumental logic of business culture and its demand for efficacy and transparency in communication. While the *Avanzada* conceives of itself as a disruptive agent vis-à-vis the forces of reinscription that are in the process of transforming the symbolic order of post-1973 Chile, this contestatory movement also breaks with assumptions about the representational nature of art. The *Avanzada* constitutes a critique of the post-Kantian

ideal of aesthetic autonomy as well as a departure from earlier radical traditions in which art was frequently instrumentalized in the service of one or another ideological program.

Richard locates in *Avanzada* artistic production an attempted solution to the self-censorship and paralysis that afflicted much of the Chilean Left in the aftermath of September 1973. As artistic and critical practice, the *Avanzada* endeavors to invent a new symbolic fabric and to initiate a new network of libidinal investments that could replace the old political imaginary that was shattered in September 1973. It also seeks to steer clear of the ideological polarization that plagued Chilean politics in the early 1970s.

> [The Avanzada] emerges from a catastrophic wreckage of meaning that results not only from the failure of a specific historical project [Allende's Unidad Popular and the Chilean "experiment" with socialism through democratic means] but, even more fundamentally, from the breakdown of an entire social and cultural referential system which, until 1973, had provided the key through which Chilean reality was comprehensible. With the dismantling of this system and of the Chilean social framework, it is language and its intercommunicative texture that must be reinvented. (Richard 1986, 2)

To assess the catastrophic effects of September 11, 1973, and its aftermath, Richard asserts, we need to look beyond the immediate circumstances in which the Chilean military deposed a popularly elected President and thereby brought to an abrupt and violent conclusion the possibility of achieving socialism through a democratic process. What was destroyed during and after September 1973, she asserts, was not only the generational project of the Chilean Left but an entire social and cultural referential system that had served for the better part of the twentieth century to orient perception, thought, speech, and action in the public sphere in Chile. Above and beyond what it might have meant for the Chilean Left, 9/11/73 names the destruction of the *res publica* together with its conceptual and pragmatic vocabularies, its parameters for understanding and acting.[7]

Alongside its deployment of aesthetic experience in an effort to interrupt authoritarian neoliberalism's prevailing common sense, the *Avanzada* also seeks to create a new shared referential framework and

collective idiom that could free itself from the constraints of authoritarian order as well as from the culture of fear that dominated much of Chilean society during the mid to late 1970s. The aim is not only to establish less coercive and more democratic parameters for social coexistence; it is to inaugurate a new symbolic order that could help to revitalize personal and collective desire following the collective shock of September 1973. For the *Avanzada,* at least according to Richard, the solution to the task of world-creation is found in the figure of the fragment, which serves both as a memory of destruction and as the index of a possible collective project and a new way of being in common that would renounce the absolutist claims found in both the Latin American Left of the 1960s and the authoritarian traditionalist responses of the Right. The aesthetic of the fragment as conceived by the *Avanzada* carries out two artistic operations at the same time: on one hand, it constitutes a form of historical memory that attests to the secret connection between progress and destruction, while on the other it proposes that we consider dislocation and the impossibility of wholeness—the impossibility of a social totality that would have freed itself finally from all forms of strife, conflict, and difference—as the factical conditions in which any world first becomes possible. Fragmentation performs double duty in Richard's account, indicating both the actual conditions about which art offers a critical response and an originary condition of finitude that constitutes both the limit and the only hope for a democratic project in the 1980s.[8] The *Avanzada* is thus a consideration of how our world takes root in a void or a gap. In emphasizing the creative potential of the fragment, Richard goes to great lengths to distinguish Chilean neo-avant-garde production from tendencies that defined militant experience in Latin America during previous decades. The *Avanzada* rejects the utopian determination of historical time as programmed in advance by the idea of a unified, homogeneous, and conflict-free social totality, for instance, the plenitude and harmony that would obtain with the end of separation and alienated labor, or the natural efficacy and productivity of the market.

> The figures that constitute the avant garde scene are atopic rather than utopian. Instead of aspiring to transcend reality through the ideal postulation of a fictive or an imaginary beyond that would evade the constraints of an unlivable here-and-now, the works of the Avanzada posit the non-place of a

> distance that separates the real from desired alternatives. The Avanzada explores these nomadic distances through maneuvers calculated to dismantle prevailing systems or to interrupt the sense of normality prescribed by disciplinary techniques of training. In so doing it constitutes a practice of dissent. (Richard 1986, 5)

Whereas the vanguard traditions of the early twentieth century often dedicated themselves to the figuration of imagined realities that had yet to see the light of day, as an atopic praxis the *Avanzada* attends not to ideality per se but to the ideal insofar as its semblance helps to illuminate a gap between the actual and the possible. Its aesthetic object, therefore, is not this or that utopian future but the structuring void at the heart of authoritarian neoliberal social order. The *Avanzada,* as Richard understands it, is a radically antirepresentational project. It will be important to bear this point in mind when it comes to exploring some of the most forceful critiques of Richard's account of the *Avanzada.*

Critical emphasis on the negative (the void, the gap) in the work of the *Avanzada* is echoed in Richard's analysis by what she calls "a practice of the interstice" (Richard 1986, 11). Aesthetic thematization of intermediacy pushes back against the totalization of sense at work in such disparate projects as sovereign dictatorship, neoliberal Consensus, and the political militancy that characterized much of the 1960s Latin American Left. The interstice forms an internal limit for any and all ordering and accounting procedures. There can be no count of the whole—of bodies, social categories, roles, words, and so on—that does not rely on interstitial spaces, which is to say the gaps and the contiguity between constituted, recognizable spaces: between male and female, bourgeois and proletariat, intellectual and worker, and so on. And yet the interstice itself cannot be counted or ordered; the sexual difference that allows for the distinction between "masculine" and "feminine," for example, cannot itself be assigned a sex or a gender. The interstice therefore introduces a limit for the calculative logic that governs politics (the friend/enemy distinction) and the mediatic regime of globalization (complete coverage, full exposure). Its prominence in neo-avant-garde art brings to light those points or moments where the logic of the prevailing order is made to tremble.

For Richard it is the focus on the body in its materiality that best illustrates both the new challenges faced by Chilean contestatory movements in the aftermath of September 1973 as well as the strategies developed by the *Avanzada* for intervening in the new conjuncture that is authoritarian neoliberalism. Neo-avant-garde attention to the body should be understood in part as a response to what was happening to the concept of the public in Chile in the aftermath of the 1973 *golpe de estado,* when established public spaces and institutions—including labor movements, political parties, free elections, the free press, and so on—were severely curtailed or suspended. In a context where public space as such has been subjugated to the state of exception, the private sphere—and especially the body—present new sites for struggle between power and the resistance that is proper to life. The body is not just one site among many; as a primary site for interrogating confrontations between power and resistance, the body calls attention to a tectonic shift whereby the old delineations between public and political on the one hand, and private and personal on the other, have become unstable. As interstitial surface, the body makes evident a shift in contemporary configurations of power, in which the spectacular displays of September 1973 give way to more subtle, routine, and unremarkable forms of domination.

> The focus on corporeality in art . . . aims to reassign critical value to all zones of experience that make up everyday social life. Art thereby seeks to produce critical interferences in those zones where both body and landscape are constituted as scenarios of self-censorship or repression on a "micro" level. (Richard 1986, 5)

In focusing artistic attention on corporeal surfaces—through "body art," for example—the *Avanzada* bears witness to the emergence of new forms of power that closely align with Deleuze's notion of control, as opposed to the modern disciplinary power theorized by Foucault (Deleuze 1992). A similar dynamic can be observed in the generalization of corporate supervisory power in *Mano de obra*, to which I will turn shortly. The reorientation of art and literature toward the body, seen as an interstitial contact surface where the personal/private and the mechanisms of power interact, sets the tone for the *Avanzada*'s

artistic practice of "critical interference": the task of art is to explore and make visible how the body in its materiality constitutes a site of struggle between new forms of power and resistance for these apparatuses of capture, control, and subjugation. A passage from Deleuze's essay on societies of control could provide an epigraph for the Avanzda: "[T]here is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons" (Deleuze 1992, 4).

What Richard calls *el Golpe* tends, as we will now see, to function as a metonymical reference that holds the place of a series of historical occurrences that began in the late 1960s. The term holds the place for a chain of effects that is not governed by any discernible necessity—no predetermining goal or rationale—and whose meaning is subject to retroactive transformations in the context of subsequent historical developments. This metonymic chain is not a sequence in the traditional, linear sense of the term; its figure attests to a strange multidirectional temporality in which any particular occurrence may be at one and the same time: an effect that is made possible by the occurrences that precede it; a deviation that departs from the political intentions that engendered it; and a cause that retroactively confers new meaning onto the past. *Golpe* in this context designates as a discrete occurrence something that in fact demands to be understood as repetition or as part of a circuit defined by retroaction. What follows is a condensed account of how these conceptual categories—event, repetition, and reinscription—interact with one another in the Chilean context.

As Javier Martínez and Alvaro Díaz argue in their 1996 book *Chile: The Great Transformation*, economic modernization in Chile following the 1973 *golpe* was facilitated by reforms initiated as early as the late 1960s. These reforms involved nationalization of land and industries, such as *latifundios* and copper mines, that had long been in the hands of the Chilean oligarchy. The expropriation strategy was initiated by the moderate Christian Democratic regime of Eduardo Frei (1964–1970) and later extended and radicalized under Salvador Allende's socialist Popular Unity government (1970–73). Nationalization broke the traditional power monopoly of Chile's landed oligarchy and deposited considerable resources in the hands of the state.[9] In the aftermath of September 1973, much of the expropriated land and capital was transferred back into the private sector—not to the landed oligarchy from whence they came but to a newly emergent group of entrepreneurs and investors who were in a position to purchase land and capital at

greatly reduced prices. The *golpe* is thus only poorly understood as a power play in a long-standing conflict between the landed elite and the working class. The turbulent transformative process that runs from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s in Chile more closely resembles what Marx described as "so-called primitive accumulation," in which the violence of destruction and expropriation gives rise to a new dominant social class and to a new logic for organizing social relations, time, legal codes, and so on. The imposition of neoliberal economic reform and monetary policy in Chile after the 1973 *golpe* has as its primary goal the dismantling of the modern state form and its role as mediator between global capital and the local (Martínez and Díaz 1996, 88–89).

In his monograph on the political thought of Jaime Guzmán, an economic advisor to Pinochet as well as one of the regime's leading ideologues, Renato Cristi documents how the junta and its advisors continued redefining the meaning of the *golpe* during the mid-1970s and in accordance with new economic and juridical goals (Cristi 2000). In the weeks and months leading up to the September 1973 *golpe de estado,* the anti-Allende opposition in Chile had been calling for military intervention on the premise that Allende's executive acts were in violation of the rule of law established in Chile's 1925 Constitution. Such allegations were accompanied by calls to protect constitutional rule of law and provided the major pretext under which the military intervened on September 11 to overthrow Allende. In its inaugural moment, the military junta was seen publicly—and, just as importantly, apparently understood itself—as a commissarial dictatorship charged with protecting constitutional rule of law against the twin threats of disorder and Marxist dictatorship.[10] However, in the days following the September 11 *golpe* and in the context of internal conversations between the military command and its legal and economic advisors, the regime's self-understanding began to evolve into something more closely resembling what Schmitt would call sovereign dictatorship. The first clear indication of this metamorphosis in the meaning of the *golpe* and dictatorship came in the days following the coup, when the junta announced the creation of a new commission charged with producing the first draft of what was to be a new constitution, which would become known as the Constitution of 1980.[11] Jaime Guzmán, then a twenty-seven-year-old constitutional law professor at the Catholic University of Chile, was selected by the junta to head the Comisión Ortúzar. Although Guzmán asserted publicly in his mid-September

1973 university lectures that the military command believed it was acting in defense of the existing constitution, according to Cristi he was at the same time working to convince the junta that the 1925 Constitution was in fact already dead—it had been killed by Allende and his subversion of the rule of law—and that a new constitution was therefore not only desirable but absolutely necessary. One of the most significant differences between the 1925 and 1980 constitutions is a discrepancy in how political sovereignty is determined. Whereas the 1925 Constitution acknowledged the Chilean people as constituent power the new constitution arrogated this sovereign power to the junta itself. It was not until 1975, however, that the junta finally announced publicly—again, through Jaime Guzmán in a communique published in the Santiago daily *El Mercurio*—that the 1925 Constitution was no longer in effect (Cristi 2000, 33–36).

Over the course of the first decade of dictatorship, Guzmán's thought reveals its own transformations. These changes are consistent with the ongoing process of reinscription that I am suggesting is at work in public perception and discourse about *el Golpe* and the meaning of September 11. Guzmán came from a deeply conservative Catholic background. As a student and a junior faculty member, he advocated a traditional form of national corporatism, which he—like many Latin American intellectuals of the late nineteenth and twentieth century—viewed as providing a moral buttress against the destructive forces of modernization and the amoral tendencies of consumerism. After assuming his new role as leading juridical theorist for the junta, however, Guzmán came to see Milton Friedman's account of the moral foundations of liberalism in new light. As Cristi tells it, Guzmán's reservations about unregulated capitalism appeared to subside in the mid-1970s, and by 1980 he had become a staunch supporter of Friedrich Hayek's brand of neoliberalism, which advocated doing away with the Welfare State and returning to the "Lochner Era" of unregulated liberty of contract as the only effective solution to the moral and economic crises of modernity (Cristi 2000, 192–97).

I now turn to Willy Thayer's response to Richard's theorization of the *Avanzada* in order to shed further light on how this ongoing process of reinscription informs our understanding of both the *golpe* and artistic responses to it. Like Richard, Thayer understands the vanguard tradition as grounded in two fundamental aims. The first is what he calls the critique of representation, which entails two related registers:

first, a critique of the reduction of art to mimetic representation; and, second, a critique of the liberal reduction of politics to representative structures and institutions, which goes hand in hand with the suppression of radical forms of political action and politicization. Alongside this double critical impulse, Thayer also understands the avant-garde tradition as striving to bring about a rupture within prevailing social organizational logic. Paraphrasing Nietzsche, he terms this rupturalist impulse a "voluntad de acontecimiento" (literally, "will to event") (Thayer 2006, 16).

This association of the avant-garde with a rupturalist intention differs little, if at all, from Richard's influential account of the *Avanzada*. The real disagreement arises because, according to Thayer, Richard takes for granted the possibility of generating a ruptural event at a time when representation may no longer have a primary role to play in organizing social relations and justifying power relations. From a postmillennial perspective, Thayer argues, the *Avanzada* can be seen as a belated attempt to salvage an aesthetic and political modernity that had already been suspended. The attribution of a ruptural potential to artistic innovation in Chile after September 1973 covers over the real event, which, for Thayer, had already taken place before the *Avanzada*. In retrospect *el Golpe* can be seen to have beaten the *Avanzada* to the punch and already carried out its vanguard "will to event."

As Thayer sees it, there is an unexamined formal symmetry between the avant-garde tradition—exemplified by both the Unidad Popular and the *Avanzada*—and its attempt to bring about what Walter Benjamin called the "true state of exception" on the one hand, and the *golpe* understood in Benjaminian terms as routinization of the state of exception, on the other hand. Whereas Benjamin posits a distinction between "routinized" and "true" states of exception, Thayer proposes that the one has annulled the possibility of the other. The institutionalization of the state of emergency exposes the hidden truth of the constituted order of the *res publica,* in which legitimacy always served to occlude or naturalize underlying violence. As Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott puts it, "[T]hrough its so-called state of exception dictatorship ends up confirming the exceptionalist foundation of Chilean history in its more than two hundred years of political violence, 'Republicanism' and 'rule of law' notwithstanding" (Villalobos-Ruminott 2013, 134). Thayer would thus reject the critical relevance of the Schmittian distinction between "commissarial dictatorship" and "sovereign dictatorship" for the Chilean

context. That distinction has been relegated to secondary status following September 1973, because the *Golpe* exposes a secret formal link between the rupturalist will to event on the one hand and the absolutization of the state and its representational apparatuses on the other.

Thayer's assertion that the *golpe* already accomplished the purported aim of the neo-avant-garde requires some explanation. For one, it is not difficult to see that the *golpe* initiates a break with the past; the military junta first suspends a constitution that had oriented almost a half-century of democratization and development in Chile and then declares that constitution dead. But the reconfiguration of political sovereignty and constituent power as proper to the junta rather than the people cannot alone bear the explanatory weight of Thayer's argument. The suspension or annulment of the constitution is not the event. The avant-garde's postulated association between critique of representation and rupture has become inoperative today because what the *golpe* ushers in is a new conjuncture in which the political logic of modernity, grounded in the principles of representation and sovereignty, has now been subjugated to the global capitalist system.

Thayer terms this new conjuncture "post-sovereignty," and I in turn am calling it "interregnum." Interregnum as I am using the term does not refer to a time in between sovereign orders nor does it name the disappearance of sovereignty tout court. Interregnum is the time of political sovereignty's subordination to the requirements and dictates of global capital and, at the national level, to an administrative rationale that precludes any debate over what criteria are to be used for decision making. The Chilean experience confirms that the economic principles of neoliberalism function equally well under democracy or dictatorship; and what could be more compelling evidence of the subordination of political sovereignty to the economic? Jaime Guzmán was also well aware of the indifference of neoliberal reason to democratic or nondemocratic political forms. In his view, if and when democracy is conceived in republican terms (as freedom from domination) instead of liberal criteria (as freedom from interference) then democracy becomes a detriment to liberty, progress, and security.[12]

The organization of social relations (time, labor, bodies, etc.) under neoliberal reason is grounded in a preunderstanding that determines what counts as intelligible, reasonable, practicable today, and which cannot itself be submitted to scrutiny. Neo-avant-garde movements may well be capable of producing their critiques and generating their

disturbances within the symbolic order, and they may even be very good critiques and very compelling ruptures. What has changed, however, is the likelihood that today we can no longer expect of critique that it provide the spark for an event. The targets of critique, namely representation and ideology, have now been relegated to subservient positions (Thayer 2006, 16). The inevitable conclusion to which Thayer's essay points (without actually saying as much) is that we must look elsewhere to find the real target of this movement's artistic innovations and interventions, or else we must look precisely to the *absence* of any stable distinction between appearances and truth, surface and depth, narrative and reality in order to understand what the *Avanzada* might have been responding to—albeit without necessarily being fully aware of it at the time. It is in proximity to the void that opens up with interregnum, a vacuum left by the retreat and exhaustion of old models for determining sense, that the artists and writers of the *Avanzada* sought to invent new forms of being with others.

We now come to the heart of Thayer's response to Richard:

> Thirty years later, the globalizing Golpe acts posthumously to deflate the vanguardist will to presence. It deflates the *presentation of the unpresentable* by showing that the unpresentable, or presence as such, has now been reduced to a mock-up of itself. Globalization is nothing other than the posthumous nihilization of the will to event that impelled the avant garde. We experience the truth of the Golpe more intimately today in the time of globalization, when there is no longer any room for the promise of an *other time* within the global time of exchange. What reveals itself, a posteriori and in uncanny fashion in the Golpe, is not the irruption of a presence that annihilates everything associated with the representational immanence of the modern subject. What comes forth with the Golpe, as we now know in the time of postdictatorship, is that the vanguard promise was nothing more than a progressive version of the state and its representational teleology of history. Avant garde utopia turns out to have been just another recourse of capital. (Thayer 2006, 31–32)

Thayer is not simply dismissing Richard's account as mere ideology of the *Avanzada*. His critique calls attention to the peculiar temporality

of critical insight, which is never contemporaneous with the occurrences and experiences it seeks to understand. Thayer's response to Richard's foundational account seeks to bring forth something that could not have been apparent to Richard or to the participants in the *Avanzada,* something that only becomes legible today, twenty or more years after *Margins and Institutions* and when the form of life it sought to theorize has grown old. The structures against which the *Avanzada* took aim had, as it only now becomes clear, already been dismantled or subjugated. There is thus a missed encounter in the scene of the *Avanzada* that only becomes visible or legible after the fact: after the military intervention of September 1973 that interrupted Chile's democratic experiment with socialism, after the archi-political transfer of constituent power from the people to military junta, and after the neo-avant-garde response that culminates in the publication of *Margins and Institutions* in the mid-1980s. Akin to Freud's understanding of the *Nachträglich* structure of traumatic experience, the term *golpe* names a series of occurrences—recall Eltit's "Las dos caras de la Moneda": encounters, blows, collisions, etc.—through which the meaning of past is subjected to ongoing transformation. This temporal structure of deferred disclosure and retroaction reveals in uncanny fashion ("*esto sería lo siniestro que se ha presentado*") the long-forgotten identity between avant-garde rupturalism and the representational domains to which it stands opposed. The avant-garde in Thayer's analysis would therefore find its ultimate truth, in inverted form, in the modern configuration of the state as mediating and disseminating agent for capital, insofar as both avant-garde and state are based on the nihilistic postulation of the will as origin of all truth in the world.

For Thayer, the exhaustion of the avant-garde and its will to event only becomes fully legible in the aftermath of that *other* 9/11: the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington of September 2001. The latter 9/11, as we will now see, telegraphically announces the inauguration of a new time of global war in which the United States and its allies are engaged in endless conflict with violent fundamentalisms that are themselves the reactive product of capitalist globalization and whose organizational structures likewise depend on technological globalization. For Thayer, the experience of the "other 9/11" from Chile is also a metonym for mediatization or the mediatic integration of the planet through real-time telecommunicational technologies that serve

to unify our world today within a single temporal horizon ("real time") and under the regime of the image in its im-mediacy.

> The main photograph on the September 11, 2001 special edition of *El Mercurio* once again put into circulation the teledigital image of the skies over New York City, scorching screens and front pages across the planet. Over the next year this televisual image would prove inescapable in shop windows, restaurants, on the couch in one's living room and in the imagination. The famous photo does not capture the second plane crashing into the tower so much as the event of its mediation: the closure of eventness itself in and through mediation, and the unfolding of mediation as event. This is to say that the speed of mediation is faster than the speed at which things occur. Or, as Virilio puts it, "that events are virtualized at the very moment they take place." The event is grasped in the velocity of its arrival through the speed of mediation. (Thayer 2006, 34)

Mediatic globalization exposes a hiatus within the time of modernity and generates a flattening out of its representational logic. What the endlessly repeating televisual images of the attacks on the Twin Towers tell us is that no event can arrive or appear on the horizon except insofar as it aligns itself with prevailing forms of visibility and intelligibility, namely, the law of mediatic representation (no event before the camera) and the calculative rationale of the market. In other words, within the horizonal time of neoliberal globalization and mediatization there can be no event that is not *mediatable*. It is crucial to note here that the concept of event presupposes both absolute singularity (an event is not an event unless it somehow punctures the prevailing epistemic horizon and disrupts our accustomed ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting) and recognizability (an event is not an event unless it can be perceived as one; an event that could not be registered as such would not be an event).

If Thayer is correct, then globalization is itself the event, the *golpe* that conditions what is perceivable and comprehensible in our world. But globalization does not take place as such, as a discrete occurrence; it names a process that is spaced out over time to include mediatization of flattening out of representational structures as well as the

subjugation of political sovereignty to global capital and then again to global war. Globalization, as the real event or *golpe,* does not happen, but it conditions what can take place today.

> In the wake of the Golpe, state discourse no longer provides the foundation for acting and understanding, just as the state no longer constitutes the principial autonomy of the social spheres. The Golpe de Estado produces a break with the rupture (*epokhé*) that generated that autonomy, and inaugurates not a new form of heteronomy but the invagination of various modalities of social life: business, transnationalism, education, governmental practices, everyday life, mediatization . . . etc. (Thayer 2006, 73)

Although the term *Golpe* clearly alludes to Chilean social and political history, the capitalization of the term in Thayer's text stakes out a space in between historicism and speculative philosophy. It designates an event that is irreducible to phenomenalization or transcendence. Heidegger's distinction between *Offenbarung* or the event of revelation, and *Offenbarkeit* or the conditions of revealability, may prove inadequate here.[13] Whereas Heidegger asserts that an event can only be perceived as having taken place under conditions that are not dependent on the event in question (for instance, in order to be able to register that a "miracle" has taken place one must have accepted a certain religious faith and become familiar with a certain theological narrative structure), Thayer proposes to think the event as transformation of the conditions under which we can perceive and recognize. The Heideggerian privileging of *Offenbarkeit* (revealability) over *Offenbarung* (the revealed) is thus set on its side and destabilized: *Offenbarung* or revelation is nothing other than a puncturing of *Offenbarkeit* or conditions of possibility for revelation.

If, as Thayer suggests, a second 9/11 must take place before the Owl of Minerva can spread its wings and fly, then is not what he calls *Golpe* another name for thinking event as repetition and reinscription? *Golpe,* in distinction from all phenomenal *golpes,* gives a name to the epochal forces that are reshaping not only the social pact but also the ways in which we perceive, think, and understand ourselves in relation to the world—and therefore also, inevitably, the ways in which we act or do not act. This is why the *Golpe* cannot be phenomenalized: because

it is the blow that catches us by surprise, arresting and (re)conditioning all perception and all understanding. We cannot think or perceive the *Golpe* as such because it is precisely from something like a *Golpe* that perception and thought move in the first place.

I now turn to Diamela Eltit's *Mano de obra* (*The Workforce*) (2002), a literary reflection on the history of the present in post-dictatorship Chile. Eltit's novel juxtaposes a portrait of working conditions in neoliberal Chile over against allusions to the erasures, disappearances, and forgetting through which a space was cleared for neoliberal hegemony in Chile beginning in the 1970s. A few words about the organization of the novel will help to clarify how this juxtaposition works. *Mano de obra* is divided into two parts, each of which is organized into chapters. The first part is set in a mega-supermarket, known simply as "*el súper,*" in which the narrator is employed under precarious and highly exploitative conditions. Each chapter from the first part bears a title whose meaning is never explained but which turns out to have been taken from the archives of early-twentieth-century Chilean working-class culture; each title is accompanied by a place name and a date (I will return to the matter of these enigmatic chapter headings later). By contrast, narrative discourse in the first part focuses on the social and psychological dynamics of the workplace as seen through the idiosyncratic first person account of an employee who alternates between viewing himself as an extension of corporate power and as a victim of its technologies of control. Devoid of any substantial plot, the first part follows the narrator's interactions with demanding, self-absorbed clientele and sinister supervisors during a holiday shopping frenzy. These dealings are woven into a meticulously detailed account of his daily routine, which consists of stocking, arranging, and maintaining produce displays and responding to customer queries and requests. Narrative discourse deploys what Dianna Niebylski calls an "aesthetic of scarcity": a minimalist plot mediated by a pseudorealist attention to the minutiae of the narrator's surroundings in lieu of the symbolic language of metaphor. While the privileging of referentiality over the ideality of signifying relations might seem to promise something like direct access to phenomenal reality, what the reader in fact encounters in the first part is not a literary presentation of the concrete reality of the supermarket but a density and opacity in which both mediation and immediacy encounter their limit (Niebylski 2005, 497–98). I propose that the hollowing out of literary language in *Mano de obra* can

be understood as a transcoding of social reality into literary form. In Niebylski's view it also constitutes a form of resistance to neoliberal ideology, a fly in the ointment that exposes what Consensus prefers to keep out of view: the link between neoliberal reform and deepening of inequality; privatization as instrument for a massive redistribution of wealth and resources to the rich; and the pervasive production of precariousness and moral denigration of the working poor.

The novel's second half, entitled "Puro Chile, 1973," is an account of the narrator's domestic life in an apartment shared with a group of fellow employees. It narrates in a more sober, third person voice the collective's desire for the national popular in the time of post-dictatorship. The personal relations between housemates reflect a broad spectrum of attitudes ranging from solidarity among the exploited to the petty jealousies and rivalries that are the symptoms of dislocatedness and precarity. As Franco and Niebylski both point out, the second part of the novel deploys the colloquial use of profanity and other "improper" forms of discourse in order to highlight the breakdown of modern forms of collective existence—not just civility and other bourgeois codes but the very notions of the public and the common (Franco 2007; Niebylski 2014). In the concluding chapters, an overarching theme emerges: the group's previously unspoken search for a charismatic leader who could deliver them from their dislocated situation and resolve their new inability to symbolize exploitation in a way that would make it recognizable as a wrong or, similarly, to effect any significant disruption within the temporality of neoliberal consensus. The saga ends on a somewhat ambiguous note, as it becomes clear that this group continues to be guided by the same racist, sexist, and ontotheological imaginary that has dominated Latin American cultural politics for the past two centuries. The unifying figure these housemates seek turns out to be nothing more than a confirmation of the same dominant signifiers—masculinity, whiteness, and heterosexual virility—that have sustained the *criollista* fiction of national identity in Latin America since colonial times. The concluding lines of the second part—"We walk. We turn the page"—allow for two ways of reading: as holding open the hope of a new path that would puncture a hole in neoliberal consensus, or—more likely—as announcing the full reinscription of this shared yearning for the popular into the logic of the market.

A handful of tropological figures from the novel's first part serve to establish a referential frame for reading the novel as reflection on social transformation in Chile. In order to work through what is going on in the space of the *súper* we must first ask what this topos has displaced. The novel can be read as allegory of post-Fordism in which the factory has been supplanted by the supermarket as new paradigm for commodity production. As industrial manufacture gives way to service economy, the old emphasis on specialized labor is replaced by a new focus on diversification, continuous reskilling, and virtuoso performance (more on the latter shortly). With the privatization of the regulatory state, together with the depoliticization of the relation between capital and labor, providing the backdrop for this story, *Mano de obra* registers how precariousness emerges as a defining element for social relations in the time of post-dictatorship. Employment is now devoid of contractual guarantees and defined by the withdrawal or privatization of social programs, the deregulation of labor markets and working conditions, and the dissolution of shared assumptions about what constitutes a livable wage and decent working conditions. In the time of industrial capitalism the factory was a site of potential conflict between capital and labor; capital would often seek to defuse antagonism by providing workers with tangible measures of security, livability, and dignity—as exemplified when Henry Ford promoted the idea that the worker should be able to purchase the product she or he makes. With the retreat of the labor movement and the exhaustion of old vocabularies for symbolizing antagonism, meanwhile, postindustrial capital no longer finds itself obliged to seek compromises with labor so as to neutralize the radicalizing force of conflict. Workers are now well aware that everyone is equally dispensable in the time of diversification and reskilling, and that agitators will be dismissed and replaced from a readily available stock of surplus labor. Under such circumstances, one is now content to be able to say that one is exploited, because that mark of separation now distinguishes one from the even worse fate of having no job at all.

"The customers . . . meet in the supermarket only in order to talk" (Eltit 2002, 14); "the customers take over the supermarket as a venue [*sede*] (a mere infrastructure) for their meetings" (15).[14] These two passages announce tropologically the subsumption of the modern concept of public space within the (super)market. Together they provide a

figure for what Thayer calls the invagination of the political by extrapolitical (technological and economic) factors. Here the novel provides a language for the fact that the modern division between social spheres begins to break down when the market emerges as first principle of all collective decision making. Let us now see how.

The first of these two passages prepares the way for the narrator's classification of customers on the basis of their purchasing power: the high-volume "good customers"; the slow-moving elderly shoppers who clog the aisles and impede the smooth flow of traffic while beleaguering others with their inane questions and petty requests. The worst of the worst, according to the narrator, are the clientele who come only to look, fraternize, and complain rather than to purchase, and whose persistent lingering impedes the circulation of consumers and merchandise. To use a linguistic analogy, they are akin to a heavy accent, a stutter, or slip of the tongue, all well-known phenomena in Eltit's writing: excesses of speech, devoid of any meaningful content, confusing the exchange of information and preventing language itself from silently retreating from the scene and returning to its place.

The second line, in which "*sede*" substitutes for "*súper,*" repeats the process of societal transformation at the level of the signifier. In this context the Spanish "*sede*" would be translated as "the venue for an event." But in other contexts *sede* also allows for meanings such as "the headquarters of an organization" and "the seat of a government." The semiotic condensation of possible meanings provides a tropological figure for privatization: all of these meanings, together with the institutional logics they designate, have now been incorporated within the fold of the (super)market. The old division between civil society ("the headquarters of an organization") and state ("the seat of a government") has been collapsed into the commercial space of the *súper,* which synechdochally stands for the new social totality. Eltit's *súper,* in other words, would seem to be the only site where anything can happen today. The prefix *super-* refers to what lies over, above or beyond everything else; in the same way, the space of the *súper* illuminates a new temporal horizon within which nothing can appear that has not already been attuned to the administrative rationale of the neoliberal marketplace. Emplotment and setting thereby allegorize the historical triumph of free-market capitalism over all adversaries; in its vanquishing of all ideological alternatives the market comes to be seen, in the words of Francis Fukuyama, as the "coherent and directional [historical

force] that will eventually lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy" (Fukuyama 1992, xii).

In *Mano de obra*, neoliberal Consensus is associated with an epochal shift from modernity to interregnum. This transformation is registered in the narrator's reflections on how the experience of time has been reconfigured in the era of post-Fordism: "The hours impose themselves on my wrist like a dead weight. I have no problem admitting that time plays with me in perverse ways, never ceasing to inscribe itself in my being. Time is deposited in the supermarket alone; it takes place in the super" (31).[15] What does it mean to say that time "is deposited" and "takes place" in the supermarket? In my reading, this passage refers not to phenomenal time but to the way in which the possibilities for experiencing time are determined today. What is at stake here involves both historical and subjective time. While history is determined as a process that inevitably culminates in the neoliberal present, post-Fordist capitalism unfolds as a regime predicated on the total appropriation and management of time. I develop this reading further by way of what Paolo Virno calls "virtuoso labor."

In *Capital*, Marx describes how industrial capitalism shapes the modern experience of time. For one, capitalist production invents its own ways of dividing and allocating time: work time versus leisure time; regulation of break time; coordination of living labor through the calculation of how long the average worker needs to complete a given task; and determination of exchange value in accordance with an abstract, technologically mediated "socially necessary time" required to produce a given commodity. Time also becomes a primary site of struggle between capital and labor: the length of the workday as well as related issues such as increased compensation for overtime (Marx 1977, 340–416).

Temporalization in the supermarket unfolds in a way that is both like and unlike the scene of the factory. The *súper,* as synecdoche for a post-Fordist society, is formally similar to the factory insofar as it develops its own ways of organizing time: reductions in break time, elimination of overtime wage, introduction of surveillance technology to monitor efficient use of time. In the absence of a labor movement and in view of readily available surplus labor, Eltit reminds us, these measures are accepted with nary a complaint. Temporalization in the *súper* is unlike the factory, meanwhile, to the extent that the *súper* is conceived in seemingly contradictory fashion as both a depository of

time and as the only place in which time can take place. While the latter idea would seem to support an allegorical reading of the novel in which the *súper* is the spatialized instantiation of the *Golpe,* or the condition of possibility for what can take place today, the depository motif is a bit more ambiguous. Is this a reference to post-Fordism and its specific temporality as giving rise to a new form of accumulation ("depositing")? Or should we hear this phrase as indicating an unsuspected resemblance between the supermarket and depositories such as a bank?

As suggested earlier, the first half of *Mano de obra* illustrates a situation resembling Deleuze's "society of control." Foucault's well-known conceptualization of disciplinary society was of a striated space with divisions between spheres and institutions, each of which possesses its own distinctive way of codifying behaviors and integrating subject formation with power. By contrast, control society describes a smooth space in which the boundaries separating institutions and spheres have become porous. Codes and logics that were once specific to a given institution are now transferred from one setting to others and tend to become diffused throughout the social. One example of the shift from discipline to control society is found in the dispersion of the economic logic of marketing into realms that used to define themselves as autonomous from commercial forces, such as art, education, health care, and politics. It is a sign that we have entered control society when we are all too familiar with the administrative axiom that students are to be treated as customers, while politicians seek to bolster their popular appeal by declaring in down-to-earth fashion that the nation's affairs should be conducted like a business.

The *súper* presents a stark contrast against those scenes of ideological conflict, repression, and violence through which a space was cleared for neoliberal Consensus in Chile during the mid-1970s. To see this, it is enough to recall the "Las dos caras de la moneda" essay where Eltit reflects on how the *golpe* carried out its interruption of the national popular project through a calculated deployment of a bellicose theatrics: of heavily armed soldiers patrolling the streets, breaking down doors in search of a furtive enemy, detaining civilians at gunpoint and herding them into detention centers; of tanks and warplanes bombarding the presidential palace; and so on (Eltit 2000, 18–19). Eltit qualifies the images of war staged in the streets of Santiago and circulated mediatically throughout the country in 1973 as "Hollywoodesque"

(18). Their dissemination effectively transformed the country, not into a battlefield but into a giant movie theater. The primary target in the mediatic reproduction and circulation of these images is the Chilean public, which should be imagined as having been presented in September 1973 with the sudden and spectacular recasting of politics as war. What does this transformation mean, and what effects does it put in motion? What Eltit describes as the cinematic aesthetic of war initiates a recoding in which what Carl Schmitt calls the real enemy—the political adversary with whom one shares common ground and thus also the possibility of negotiation—is symbolically transformed into an absolute enemy. The absolute enemy is one who refuses to play by the rules of the nomic game and with whom reconciliation is therefore impossible.[16] Whereas inside the real enemy there is a potential friend waiting to emerge, the absolute enemy raises the specter of a monstrous, inhuman other whose destruction has been legitimated in advance (Schmitt 2004, 64–68). The "war" of which Eltit speaks in "Las dos caras de la moneda" is not a war conceived according to traditional conceptual categories; it is staged as a battle between uniformed soldiers of the state and a furtive, irregular force who, in disassociating themselves from the rules of the game (they wear no uniforms and they do not show themselves in public), have renounced the rights of protection under which both uniformed combatants and citizens have historically been protected. The cinematic effects described by Eltit project the image of a furtive enemy who is neither a soldier nor a common criminal, and who espouses ideas that are not authentically Chilean but which cannot be properly assigned to any foreign nationality either (not Russian, not Cuban, etc.). The furtive enemy falls outside of the law but not therefore outside of sovereignty tout court; it falls precisely within the space of the sovereign ban and can thus be killed with impunity.

In contrast to that cinematography of war, the *súper* deploys softer but not necessarily less insidious forms of control that go hand in hand with precariousness and technologies of full exposure: the constant availability of a large population of surplus labor; the omniscient video cameras that track the employees' every move; and a corporate culture in which employees are regarded as potential thieves or, stripped of their historical rights as workers, become easy targets for abusive clientele.[17] The bellicose imagery and metaphorics have not dissipated entirely from the contemporary scene, but the militarized violence they once

invoked has now been recodified as a diffuse mixture of psychological and social tendencies that could be associated with the weakening of the social pact: anomie, aggressivity, unregulated corporate power, generalized insecurity, and privatization of risk. The narrator-employee and the store's clientele regard one another through the lens of hatred and enmity (Eltit 2002, 27); his job is likened to combat waged against an enemy caste (26); compulsory extension of the workday without increased pay is translated as a declared "emergency shift" (*turno de emergencia*) (69); and the tanks that once assaulted La Moneda have been replaced by armored vehicles whose comings and goings appear under the metaphor of "a beautiful bellic operation" (*un bello operativo bélico*) (76). These bellic figures metaphorize the subreption of political sovereignty by the military state in the 1980 Constitution and its concurrent subjugation to global and corporate capital. But are these just metaphors? Or does the insecurity that obtains with flexible accumulation, precariousness, and privatization give rise to a different kind of "war" that accompanies the breakdown of modern political forms and restraining structures? The past continues to haunt the present neoliberal Consensus.

Under the new configuration of space, bodies, time, and power that obtains following the 1973 *golpe* it is no longer just the worker's body and time that have been surrendered to capital. The elements of inner life—moods, emotions, states of mind—are also attuned to and absorbed by a production process that has become increasingly reliant on the commodification of affect, care, and the ability to create and manipulate symbolic meanings. The scene of the *súper* illustrates a growing indistinction between what belongs objectively to the production process and what is extraneous—or used to be extraneous—to production. Capital's sway now infiltrates every pore and moment of the worker's existence.

In *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Virno 2004), Paolo Virno introduces the concept of "virtuosity" to shed light on how the interaction between capitalist production and life is transformed in the time of post-Fordism. Virtuoso labor illustrates how elements that formerly had no role in the workplace are integrated into the production process and even come to occupy front and center in the scene of commodity production and the extraction of surplus. Virtuoso labor emerges as paradigmatic form of labor in a context where manufacture is increasingly automated while "living labor" is dedicated to immaterial

production, either as a supplement in the production of durable commodities or as part of the service economy. Virtuosity exemplifies how capitalism today incorporates psychic and somatic processes that were previously considered external to the production process, and it thereby requires us to reexamine old distinctions between "living labor"—or the quantum of time and energy that the worker devotes to production—and life insofar as it is not devoted to commodity production.

Virtuosity similarly calls for a revised understanding of how the capitalist production process relates to its own end or goal. In the factory, the distinction between process and goal or end is clear for everyone to see: the work of assembling a car is nothing like the car itself, and as long as the car is functional the buyer cares little about how it was actually produced. By contrast, virtuoso labor correlates with contexts in which the product that consumers pay for—more often than not an "experience"—is inseparable from the process of making it. The end is immanent to the time of production, which is in every case a kind of performance. Virtuosity is the *praxis* of a *poiēsis* or making. While the term *virtuoso* implies exceptionality, the excellence that is reserved for those who possess a unique talent or expertise, Virno's position is that the formal immanence exemplified in virtuoso performance has become paradigmatic for contemporary capitalist production in general. In a manner of speaking we are all virtuosos now, no matter how inexperienced or inept we may be at what we do, because what we produce as the workforce of immaterial labor is inseparable from the act of producing it. As teachers, administrators, doctors, editors, therapists, consultants, baristas, hotel maids, or produce stockers the services we provide are for the most part inseparable from the manner in which they are carried out and presented. It is our performance that convinces employers to hire us and clients to purchase the goods and services we provide. Because virtuosity encompasses and calls upon the entirety of our being and not just our hands, eyes, or minds, its ascent to paradigmatic form means that it is no longer clear where to draw the line between the time of production and nonproductive time. We are always at work, even when we are at home, working out, or out for lunch.

The universalization of virtuosity as paradigmatic form of labor today is made possible by the fact that virtuosity is inherent to language. The speech act is essentially virtuosic. Indeed, speech turns out to be even *more* virtuosic than whatever we envision as the exemplar

of virtuoso performativity: a Glenn Gould piano recital, to use Virno's example. Why so? In distinction from communicative modes of language whose purpose is to convey information, the speech act is characterized by an immanence found only in activities that constitute an end in themselves. Unlike other forms of discourse, an unscripted speech imitates nothing; or at least it cannot be reduced to an imitative intention. A speech, moreover, has no shelf life beyond the time of its delivery, and it need not produce any durable effects in the listener to qualify as a performance. Unlike the concert pianist, who performs a set piece that has been memorized or is read, and which can thus in principle be repeated endlessly, a speaker is—sometimes to his or her misfortune—under no requirement to follow a script. What is more, the speech genre includes an implied proscription of repetition: the experience of listening to and being moved by a speech is accompanied by the idea that what one is hearing rises to the level of an event, something that is about to be heard for the first—and possibly last—time.

It might seem that Virno's conception of virtuoso performance adheres more or less uncritically to the Platonic association of speech with the self-presence of the logos, and that it is therefore in need of deconstruction.[18] Nonetheless, there is also an important distinction to be made between Virno's conception of the virtuoso act and the Platonic understanding of the logos: whereas Plato wants speech to guarantee a more or less immediate relation to the logos understood as the ideational origin of speech—like a good father, the Platonic speaker always remains present to account for the "offspring" or logoi he produces—for Virno the speech act does not reflect or represent anything other than itself. There is no question of speech offering increased fidelity to some original intention or enhanced security against the risks of errancy and misinterpretation. There is no separating form and content in Virno's conception of the speech act, and hence no possibility of content becoming available immediately—unless it is as form understood as end in itself. Virno is interested in the immanence of the act. What a speech performs is the sheer immanence of language, which in turn provides the model for the immanence of politics and the immanence of post-Fordist commodity production. We can surmise that Virno accepts the Platonic distinction between speech and writing (i.e., that speech is more immediate and writing more fraught by mediation) while moving away from the Platonic project of saving transcendence from the perils of mediation and finitude.

As we have just seen, the paradigmatic status of speech is what virtuoso performance shares with politics. Neither the virtuoso act nor politics is conceivable without language and without an understanding of language as performative act. Both spheres must therefore be understood as containing their own ends: they are praxes of a *poiēsis*. On this point, Virno's thought owes a debt to Hannah Arendt and her observation that virtuoso performance presupposes not just a performer but also an audience and an organized space or place in which the performance is delivered. Arendt posits a "strong affinity" between virtuosity and politics because virtuoso performance presupposes a self-reflective public that does not exist prior to the act (Arendt 1968, 153). The public of a virtuoso performance is constituted in the act itself, that is, through a scene in which the public not only takes in the performance but also comes to see *itself* as the privileged witnesses to a unique or exceptional occurrence. This particular public becomes a public insofar as it is moved, individually and collectively, by the performance and by the spectacle of being there for the performance. Virtuoso performance and public presuppose one another: there can be no act that does not take place for an audience in a performance space; both audience and space are constituted in their specificity—as different from, say, the audience in a movie theater—by the awareness of witnessing a singular performance. Virtuosity highlights both the enhanced capacity of contemporary capitalism to incorporate all moments and aspects of our lives into commodity production as well as the emergence of new possibilities for contestatory politics that are opened through the creation of shared social spaces and activities that constitute ends in themselves.

Where does this leave us in our reading of Eltit's *Mano de obra*? The concept of virtuosity sheds explanatory light on the scene of the *súper* and, by extension, on Eltit's conception of how social relations have been reshaped in post-dictatorship Chile. In the first half of the novel, narrative discourse discloses its identity with narrated content. Emplotment and labor share one and the same purpose: to bestow order on a myriad of disconnected episodes and to maintain aesthetic order in the produce section.

> [The customers] touch the produce as if they were praying to God. They caress them with a fanatical devotion that is driven by religion, and they bolster themselves with sacred, urgent and tragic resentment. It's true. I am now able to ascertain that

> behind these attitudes resides the molecule of a contaminated mysticism. (Eltit 2002, 15)[19]

This portrait of the supermarket describes an aesthetic space in which it is the form of arrangement rather than the arranged content that sells. The virtuoso character of immaterial labor helps to explain the narrator's obsessive fastidiousness in attending to the orderliness of the displays as well as his seething resentment toward a clientele that, in navigating through the produce section, invariably disturbs the careful arrangements of items or impedes the free circulation of shoppers and goods. Not only is the object of his labor inseparable from the vigilance with which he attends to the displays, the careful ordering of commodities over which he presides is the field in which his subjectivity is both constituted and threatened.

While the aestheticization of work in *Mano de obra* thematizes a societal transformation in which material production is replaced by virtuoso labor, the literary portrait of consumption as secularized theology in the above passage alludes unmistakably to the Marxian analysis of commodity fetishism.[20] Consumerism invests the commodity with a "spiritual" force, which in turn facilitates the forgetting of the role that social relations—and, in particular, the expropriation of the surplus value—play in the determination of an object's value. But is this passage simply a literary citation of Marx's critique of valuation, perhaps in the interest of advancing an artistic condemnation of consumerism in post-dictatorship Chile? How we answer this question depends on how we read the novel: if we approach this scene as an isolated episode in possession of its own meaning, then it would seem that the "citation" only makes sense as a derogatory portrait of consumerism; moreover, in light of the novel's allusions to the past, it no doubt also reminds us of what had to be crushed and dismantled in order for this "spiritualization" of the commodity to take place.

But what if, like the chapter headings, this particular episode in the novel is not in full possession of its meaning? What if its meaning has to be sought elsewhere? What if it were to be found in between one episode and others that are either adjacent to it or which, located at a distance, still produce echoes of its thematics? The passage prefigures a later scene (chapter 7, "El Obrero Gráfico"; 61–68) in which the theme of commodity fetishism appears again, albeit in a very different light. There we find the narrator immersed in delirious or drunken musings

about a small Christ figurine, a "plastic Jesus" of sorts, which the narrator, holding it up to the light, imagines to be God poised on his hand.

> I am possessed by a God whose brilliance invades me while exposing me for all to see. God possesses me constantly, as if I were his whore. As I said, He sits on the palm of my hand, or clambers onto my shoulder, or hangs from one of my legs, or inserts Himself so far inside me that He blocks up the vessels surrounding my heavy heart. God is in all things. He is far and wide throughout my body, with an undescribable intensity that causes my organs to resound in His name. He wants to confirm to what extent my body is truly His abode. Woe is me! I have no choice but to sing His praise for the immense, incomparable honor that God has done me. (62–63)[21]

What was earlier presented as a secularized theological narrative now appears as the parody of a mystical narrative that renders obscure the way in which the worker becomes a mere appendage to the scene of commodity production. This inversion in turn unmistakably evokes Freud's famous commentary on the memoirs of President Schreber, albeit perhaps channeled via Deleuze and Guattari and their critique of what they perceive to be the psychoanalytic institution's reinforcement of Victorian heteronormativity. The literary allusion to psychosis in the episode from chapter 7 highlights a distinction between post-dictatorship and earlier organizations of social order, using the Schreberian figure of schizophrenia to comment on a difference between forms of social totalization. The market inaugurates a new totality of sense made up of individual signs (goods, brands) in which no unifying meaning is to be found. In Lacanian terms, it is a totality for which there is no master signifier, no Other to bestow order and confer meaning. In this postsovereign realm, signs inhabit the narrator's world in a devastatingly literal manner. It is as if signs were things and not coded references pointing elsewhere. Seen from the perspective of the history of contestatory social struggles, the subjugation of political sovereignty under the logic of the market raises the specter of a catastrophic loss of sense. In Lacan's vocabulary, this subjugation coincides with the foreclosure of the paternal signifier and the collapse of the distinction between symbolic and real. The new order that is post-dictatorship, in which the market now constitutes the horizonal

condition of possibility for the emergence of anything new, is experienced in Eltit's novel as the absence of that signifier that enables all other potential signifiers to act as signifiers. The scene of commodity fetishism in the supermarket thus inaugurates an allegory of the social impact of neoliberal globalization, where the totalizing function of political sovereignty has been subjugated to economic and technological spheres, and the possibilities for conceptualizing the social as totality have been reduced to one: the fragmentary logic of equivalency and infinite accumulation of particularities that is the market. By the same token, what I am describing as the commodity fetishism episode also illustrates why in such a context old-fashioned ideology critique (e.g., demystifying the commodity by showing how value is in fact the product of social relations defined by separation and exploitation) may no longer be able to make a difference.

At this point, the narrator begins to portray himself as having been "feminized" in relation to the phallic potency of God or, as I will now suggest, in relation to capital. The topos of feminization in *Mano de obra* can be read as literary citation. On one hand, it alludes to Schreber's famous autobiography (Schreber 2000) as well as to Freud's use of it to develop his own understanding of psychosis (Freud 1958), while on the other it gestures to Schreber's significance for Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Freudian psychoanalysis in *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). Through the turn to Deleuze and Guatarri, Eltit's text cites a critique of Freud's presumed privileging of traditional gender roles, such as the unquestioning postulation of the Oedipal (heterosexual and monogamous, nuclear familial) structure of subjectivity. Their critique of the psychoanalytic institution for its failure to address the historically specific question of how capitalist social relations shape psychoanalytic categories may be consistent with the critical outlook of Eltit's novel, in which psychic and affective phenomena offer themselves to be interpreted as symptoms of social realities that have yet to receive sufficient critical illumination—in some cases because in the time of postdictatorship there is no vocabulary or symbolic archive for making antagonism visible.[22] Literary allusions in *Mano de obra* to psychoanalytic conceptual categories—desire, drive, narcissism, aggressivity, perversion, neurosis, paranoia, and psychosis—are open to being read as appropriations intended to resituate reflection, moving it from the individual and psychological domain to a social and historical terrain. These categories function in *Mano de obra* as symptoms of a

societal shift to neoliberal postsovereignty or of interregnum. Whereas for psychoanalysis gender designates the social codification of biological and anatomical differences—or, in Lacan's reading, feminization signals Schreber's inability to constitute a symbolically differentiated field using the oppositional and complementary images of the imaginary register (Lacan 1993, 73–101)—in *Mano de obra* the rhetoric of feminization points to a gendered coding of power in the context of social relations of production. Feminization serves as a nexus for literary reflection on new forms of production and accumulation, in particular the social production of precariousness (e.g., the dismantling of the labor movement, the privatization of the Welfare State, and the maintenance of a large army of surplus labor) as one of the enabling conditions for accumulation in the time of neoliberal Consensus. As Donna Haraway puts it her "Cyborg Manifesto":

> Work is being redefined as both literally female and feminized, whether performed by men or women. To be feminized means to be made extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, exploited as a reserve labor force; seen less as workers than as servers; subjected to time arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of a limited work day; leading an existence that always borders on being obscene, out of place, and reducible to sex. Deskilling is an old strategy newly applicable to formerly privileged workers. (Haraway 1991, 26)

The concept of feminization of work is by no means new. Capitalist manufacture has for a long time regarded women as an abundant source of cheap and subservient labor; women workers with their "nimble fingers" have historically been seen as more docile and less likely to organize or pose difficulties for management in the workplace than their male coworkers (Elson and Pearson 1981). More recently, with the tendential real-time technological integration of the planet within the global capitalist system and with the dismantling of the regulatory state under neoliberal hegemony, the feminization of work acquires new meanings associated with the erosion of job security and increasing diversification in traditional industries. If "deskilling" operates as a general paradigm for the labor market in the post-Fordist and service economy, the "feminization" of work is similarly generalizable insofar as all workers are now equally subjugated to unregulated capital.

The phenomenon of deskilling, or the reduction or elimination of skilled labor in a given industry, is found in such trends as: automatization of the production process; diversification of production (e.g., when workers trained in one industry must acquire news skills required to make a different product); deprofessionalization (redefining doctors as health care providers, etc.); and so on. A form of deskilling is also present in hyper-specialization, which draws new limitations on the number of tasks assigned to any given worker. In the industrial workplace deskilling typically took the form of breaking up and compartmentalizing the production process into component actions (adding a headlight to a car, screwing a lid on a jar) in an effort to minimize wasted movements and unnecessary down time (Harvey 1989, 125). In the post-Fordist world, meanwhile, deskilling no longer simply delimits the number and variety of tasks a worker is asked to perform; it now redefines in more radical fashion the expected "shelf life" of skills, expertise, and even job security. Deskilling goes hand in hand with the production of precarity. Under the paradigm of flexible accumulation it is no longer sufficient that workers learn to do one task well. Workers must now also learn to adapt to unpredictability, which often means being ready to forget what they know and acquire new skills (Harvey 1989, esp. ch. 17).

> My inner ear gathers the insult and amplifies it to the point that it leaves a thin laceration on my temple. The terrible, destructive word they toss at me resounds in my brain and leaves me feeling awful. The word wounds and perforates me, opening a gaping mouth [*un boquete*] in my kidney. It wounds me. It perforates me. (Eltit 2002, 23)[23]

Earlier, in the context of looking at how the term *golpe* functions in the "Las dos caras de la moneda" essay, I discussed a correlation between the body in its materiality and the ideal register of the self as understood by Freudian psychoanalysis. In *Mano de obra*, a similar interaction takes shape in the context of new ways of configuring social relations and new ways of expropriating time and surplus value in the post-Fordist economy. In the narrator's account of interactions with customers, speech displays a peculiar cutting and penetrating power that recalls how the old metaphorics of war is redeployed in the current context of precarity and insecurity. Here the narrator describes

one particularly caustic exchange by literalizing the idea that cutting remarks uttered by customers affect him at an organic level. This poetic description finds resonance elsewhere in the first part through images of perforation and penetration: "I shudder before the threat posed by insignificant pauses, or I find myself tormented by insipid noises. Fully immersed in the violence, I become like a honeycomb riddled with terror" (13); and "I am victim of a malaise which, if not strictly organic, nonetheless compromises each and every one of my organs" (48).[24] In these scenes, the body becomes visible in a way that destabilizes traditional distinctions between inside and outside, materiality and ideality, soma and psyche. The body is experienced here as a surface inscribed by interactions between power and the resistance proper to life. This corporeal surface or boundary does not serve to fix and stabilize the distinction between inside and outside (e.g., public versus private, outer world versus inner life) as it is traditionally understood to do; instead, it offers a permeable site open to the possibility of contamination—from the outside (penetration, internalization) or the inside (discharge of bodily fluids, the expression of symptoms). The first of these three images (p. 23) could serve as an epigraph for the novel as a whole. This literary image of an organ that has been "perforated" in the course of a passing exchange of words between customer and employee succinctly illustrates the way in which previously stable boundaries separating one sphere from another (e.g., the concrete realm of social relations of production versus states of mind; speech and body; material and somatic processes versus psychic processes and moods; etc.) have now become porous. At the same time this image makes palpable the violence of reinscription through which the traces of earlier histories are effaced from the landscape of post-dictatorship Chile.

One might wonder whether the relation between power, inscription, and body is not more complex than what syntax and grammar are able to convey in the "My inner ear" passage cited above. The sentence refers us to a somatic register that has been subjugated under a new logic of sense and a new way of organizing social relations. The verbal exchange between clientele and employee plays out as a kind of theater in which one party displays the power to reduce the other to almost nothing or, more exactly, to reduce him or her to a state of passivity in which she or he is able to understand and follow orders (or denigrating remarks) but is no longer in a position to produce anything comparable in return. Here we see at work two different but complementary ways

of relating to the logos: there are masters who are capable of giving orders and there are slaves whose capabilities are limited to following orders. In this scene, we find an image of the specific form that alienation takes in post-Fordist society: bodies reduced to a standing reserve of serviceable parts; working conditions that mandate the subordination of all dignity to the subservience of "service with a smile"; and body and subjectivity marked and penetrated by forms of sovereign power for which there is no longer any corresponding contestatory vocabulary.

> The cut made by the signifying chain is the only cut that verifies the structure of the subject as a discontinuity in the real. If linguistics enables us to see the signifier as the determinant of the signified, analysis reveals the truth of this relationship by making holes in meaning the determinants in discourse. (Lacan 2006, 678; 1966, 801).

References to the body in these episodes do not allude to a purely natural (biological or physiological) entity that only subsequently gets pulled into the fray of symbolic or social relations. As Jacques Lacan, Judith Butler, and Charles Shepherdson have shown in different ways, what we call the body is a field that has always already been marked by symbolic processes of appropriation and signification.[25] While the body designates a referent that is irreducible to the ideal realms of meaning and identity, its surfaces and physiological processes are not synonymous with a biological state of existence; they have already been inscribed by the same social forces and logics that produce the subject. The point is significant because it helps to shed light on a complexity inherent to the attempt to think materiality and power in distinction from ideality in *Mano de obra*. Eltit's novel sets out to explore a kind of materiality precisely where one would expect to find ideality: in language and in the archives of the Chilean labor movement.

Not unlike a Benjaminian ruin, the body in *Mano de obra* constitutes an in-between site that does not belong fully to nature or to culture. An analogy can be found in the psychoanalytic theory of the drives: the body constitutes a field of symbolic inscription and interpellation as well as a site of resistance to symbolic codification; physiological processes bear witness both to the symbolic coding of differences and to the inability of the signifier fully to suture the subjective field.

It is on the body and in its processes that what Lacan refers to as the holes in meaning or the discontinuity in the real are registered or manifested. In the passage cited above, this limit is figured in the term *boquete*: a hole or tear in the fabric of the organic body—in this case a filter full of holes: the kidney—that has been left by the signifier. The etymology of the term *boquete* points us to the intermediary zone that is the mouth (*boquete*: from *boca*). This peculiar wound would also seem to be an orifice that can act as a site for ingestion and speech.

I now turn once again to the matter of the novel's formal organization, and specifically the chapter headings, which call attention to a certain break or discontinuity in history. My reading will, by way of conclusion, make its way back to the place where this chapter began: the recent critical debate about history and the neo-avant-garde in Chile. For Eltit's novel, the sociopolitical landscape of post-dictatorship Chile is defined by a rift, which both links it to the past in a certain way (the present defined by neoliberal ideology as culmination and overcoming of a long history of ideological conflict) while also marking off certain archives as illegible or inaccessible (as we will see in a moment). There are various ways of understanding what I am calling a rift, and it is not entirely clear that it would in fact be a rift rather than multiple fault lines running alongside one another. For one, we find—most notably in the second part—a literary reflection on the disappearance of "class" in contemporary social awareness and discourse, a retreat that goes hand in hand with the neoliberal determination of Consensus (and the attendant stigmatization of all ideological conflict) as telos of history. Second, and relatedly, in the disjunctive relation between chapter headings and chapter content we find traces of the destruction of the labor movement during the 1970s and subsequently—as inaugural act of the democratically elected Concertación alliance—the foreclosure of any possibility of politicizing the relation between capital and labor. Let us designate these first two rifts under the heading of the *withering of antagonism*. Then there is also the matter of a "deafness" to history which, while by no means unique to Chile, unquestionably acquires a distinctive character in the context of Chile's recent past. For Chilean cultural critique, the so-called transition to democracy is predicated on a collective forgetting or eclipse of historicity; the past becomes illegible to the present insofar as the past was defined by antagonisms and ideological conflicts whose very form has become inconceivable for neoliberal reason. Any reflection and debate about the past that might

have opened in the wake of dictatorship is quickly tamped down and closed off through the combined forces of self-censorship and public stigmatization of contestatory politics; the neoliberal economic model imposed under military rule during the mid-1970s, meanwhile, receives retroactive legitimation under the sign of democracy and is recoded as the only conceivable alternative to fratricidal political violence.[26]

The way of life of one class, in becoming synonymous with the prevailing logic of the social, threatens the existence of other sectors: this is the fundamental conflict that can give rise to the articulation of antagonism. Yet, in the time of post-dictatorship, there are few or no tools available for symbolizing such an existential threat. Post-dictatorship is an order founded on dislocation, which is to say the impossibility of making antagonism visible.[27] Separation and exploitation still obtain, at times in even more entrenched and intense forms than before, yet there would seem to be no poetics capable of bringing these conditions into view as a wrong that is suffered collectively, a wrong that affects the count of the whole. The impossibility of discursively bringing antagonism into view as such today is translated, in Eltit's novel, *in and as* the formal composition of the novel itself. The chapter headings are taken from the titles of working-class political and cultural journals from the early twentieth century, and they allude back to key sites and moments of conflict between labor and capital (e.g., Iquique). By contrast, the contemporary supermarket constitutes a new totality devoid of any recognizable signs of history in which any attempt to politicize the relation between labor and capital will immediately be expelled—not necessarily by police repression but, more probably, through dismissal and replacement drawn from a standing reserve of surplus laborers.

The chapter headings in the first part of the novel, rather than performing the instrumental and contextualizing function that is conventionally expected of a title, present a stark contrast juxtaposing the seamless façade of Consensus against the material ruins of an earlier history of political radicalism. These orphaned headings cast a faint light on the history of the present as an order whose prevailing common sense—or the determination of what goes without saying—has been founded on erasure, destruction, terror, disappearance, and reinscription. Although the novel provides no hints about where these mysterious proper names might come from, readers familiar with Chilean social history will have little difficulty in discerning that the titles in the first half of the novel were taken from working class journals

and pamphlets dating from the early twentieth century, most of which were associated with radicalized workers in the mining industry. The title of the second half, "Puro Chile," is taken from a leftist alternative daily published in Santiago during the time of Allende's *Unidad Popular* government. The first part as a whole, meanwhile, is entitled "El despertar de los trabajadores (Iquique, 1911)." As Susana Draper reminds us, Iquique was the epicenter of labor movement radicalism in the Chilean mining industry during the early twentieth century. The movement grew following a brutal 1907 army massacre of striking miners (Draper 2012, 99–124). *El despertar de los trabajadores* (*The Awakening of the Workers*) was the title of a socialist journal founded by Luis Recabarren, one of the most dynamic voices in early-twentieth-century Latin American labor politics. The first half of the novel is framed by a series of citations through which the novel evokes an older history of class struggle against exploitation and repression. For the neoliberal present this turns out to be a lost history that, like a Mayan glyph, might as well belong to another world. These citations have been torn from their original context and inserted into a new context in which there is no longer any place for the illumination of antagonism that once resonated in them. The headings, as Jean Franco puts it, are "fantasmatic indices of the distance that separates the neoliberal present, in which all that is solid melts into air, and a past in which those who worked had the power to negotiate using the threat of strike, in which labor unions had political force, and in which the working class could dream of inheriting the world" (Franco 2007, 145).

In her very insightful reading of Eltit's novel, Susana Draper proposes that the chapter titles open up a narrative mode that is irreducible to both the empirical domain of actually occurring events (what Hegel terms the *rerum gestarum* of history) and to the narrativization of occurrences within an overarching or transcendent poetic logic (the *res gestae*) in order to inscribe them with meaning. Draper associates this in-between dimension with Benjamin's understanding of how current political struggles can be animated through recollection of past struggles, as well as with Derrida's thinking about iterability as condition of possibility for any event. Draper thereby develops a reading of the poetics of naming in *Mano de obra*, proposing that literary recycling of these names taken from a bygone history of emancipatory struggles might help to catalyze a new "awakening" (*despertar*) in a quite different context: that of neoliberal privatization of the regulatory state,

in which the politics of dissensus has been thoroughly stigmatized through association with the "demons" of the past.[28] This new awakening would rely on what she describes as a "double play between the possibility of remembering . . . [a] truncated past as that which never was in an actual state . . . and . . . a process of learning to remember what is closest to us in a more physical, material way" (Draper 2010, 108). Awakening would involve two different modalities of "remembering." On one hand, remembrance takes up an image from the past in order to actualize something latent in it that could in turn serve as a catalyst for the present. It would not be a matter of reviving a meaning that had been forgotten, so much as a kind of resignification in which old images and signifiers of struggle are redeployed in the here and now in order to open up a space in which new antagonisms could be made visible today.

On the other hand remembrance also means coming to see the familiar arrangements of the present in a different light. In the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin discusses such a potential for turning the familiar into something strange through the examples of domestic space and furniture (Proust), but one might also think of his interest in Brecht's concept of theatrical gesture as a way of bringing to light the social implications of seeming neutral accounts and positionings of bodies.

> What Proust intends with the experimental rearrangement of furniture in matinal half-slumber, what Bloch recognizes as the darkness of the lived moment, is nothing other than what here is to be secured on the level of the historical, and collectively. There is a not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been: its advancement has the structure of awakening. (Benjamin 1999, 389)

In agreement with Draper, I propose that we look at the chapter titles of the first part as a field of symbolic ruins. They are akin to citations that have been torn from their original contexts. Or, like archaeological glyphs, they attest mutely to the existence of cultural practices and milieus whose symbolic world is no longer accessible to us. By the dim light of these enigmatic names the novel's plot content is revealed as belonging to a social order that has been founded on destruction, expropriation, and the foreclosure of history—not just of a specific past but of historicity as such. Not only have the struggles and

conflicts alluded to in the chapter headings been relegated to oblivion, this disappearance has itself been rendered mute in the context of a historical present that understands itself as the inevitable culmination of developmental history. These obscure citations play a role that is analogous to what Benjamin, in his study of German *Trauerspiel* (Benjamin 1977), calls "natural history."

Natural history refers not to the history of nature but to the material persistence of cultural artifacts after the dissipation of the symbolic orders in which they were born. Like a ruin, such signifiers may well find themselves in the process of being "reclaimed" by nature, and yet something that is not reducible to nature—and which may also be irreducible to culture and the human—also haunts such sites. Natural history designates the "afterlife" of culture, a time of material remainders that cannot be categorized as either one or the other, either culture or nature. By the same token natural history can also name what becomes of life itself when it is torn from the lived context in which it emerged. One might think, for example, of Oedipus once he has abandoned his symbolic place in Thebes and set out to wander blindly in the desert. As Eric Santner puts it in *On Creaturely Life*:

> Natural history is born out of the dual possibilities that life can persist beyond the death of the symbolic forms that gave it meaning and that symbolic forms can persist beyond the death of the form of life that gave them human vitality. Natural history transpires against the background of this space between real and symbolic death, this space of the "undead." (Santner 2006, 17)

The epistemological and political import of natural history for Benjamin's discussion of allegory resides with its bearing on our ability to experience history otherwise than its liberal conceptualization—i.e., history as something other than a unidirectional sequence of occurrences in which "progress" serves to rationalize destruction and justify the infliction of suffering on others while also ensuring that any alternative to the liberal order can only appear as regression to a barbaric past beyond which we have thankfully moved. Natural history understood as material "afterlife" constitutes an archive with the potential to animate alternatives to the liberal philosophy of history. As Santner emphasizes, it is violence that gives shape to Benjamin's thinking of

historicity. The linking of history to contingency and violence (destruction, domination, reinscription, massacre, torture, etc.) similarly provides an interpretive key for *Mano de obra*, whose titles attest to the material insistence of residue from a lost history. The chapter headings bear mute witness to the destructive violence and oblivion that have always accompanied what is called "progress" in Chile and Latin America. In this way, *Mano de obra* takes shape as a neo-avant-garde work in which social critique emerges as dissonance between form and content. The disjuncture between form and content highlights what Nelly Richard calls the "insubordination of signs" (Richard 1994), exposing as unstable those reference points that ostensibly serve to secure the appearance of inevitability for neoliberal consensus as the only game in town.

At the same time, and not in an unrelated way, we could say that the chapter headings exemplify a fundamental link between literature and the secret in its opacity, and that they thereby affirm a limit for any understanding of literature as revelation of sacred or inconvenient truths. The chapter headings point to what has been lost and destroyed, and they thereby cannot help but mark a limit for what we can hope to read and decipher. If these proper names and dates attest to an experience of history as irreversibility of destruction, they thereby also introduce within the novel an irreducible exteriority whose alterity cannot be neutralized through interpretation, identification, or any other form of communion with the past. But this is not all. It seems to me that these names that have been torn from their rootedness in a certain past also point mutely, beyond whatever specific historical contexts they may once have been associated with, to an essential void at the heart of the signifier. These orphaned names attest to what Platonism knows all too well and cannot abide: the capacity of any signifier to stray outside the city walls, beyond its preauthorized domain of circulation, or to persist in its material existence after its original signifying intention has exhausted itself. As Derrida has shown, when it comes to the logos, "original intention" can never be truly and purely original (Derrida 1978, 63–171). The event as first time is always already contaminated by the law of repeatability as a condition of its appearing at all. These orphaned names thus do double duty in *Mano de obra*, both calling attention to destruction in the history of the present and pointing to a split within the signifier itself, or the signifier *as* split.

In contrast to her previous work, Eltit's *Mano de obra* at first glance appears to have little in common with the avant-garde. It displays none of the overt experimentation with literary form and genre found in her previous works, and it is largely devoid of the linguistic play for which her writing became renowned during the 1980s and '90s. If there is an avant-garde component to *Mano de obra*, it is to be found in its literary exploration of the double register of the proper name and the signifier, an exploration that engages with forms of materiality that are irreducible to representation: incompatible with a Consensus that presents itself as the rational culmination of history, and irreducible to an idealist conceptualization of the sign as expression or representation of an original meaning. If neoliberal Consensus understands itself as the end of antagonism and exclusion—a time in which there is a place for everyone, a market in which any and all are welcome to compete—*Mano de obra* takes up the task of bringing the void itself into view.

In his critique of Nelly Richard's account of the Chilean *Avanzada,* Willy Thayer raises important points about the importance of historicizing literary critical concepts while warning us against presuming too hastily that the conceptual categories of aesthetic and political modernity can be applied unproblematically today. Perhaps the critical points raised by Thayer would apply to more than just the avant-garde and its contemporary reiterations. With and against Thayer's argument, Eltit's novel itself could serve as a reminder that the conceptualization of the avant-garde is in fact coterminous with what we call literature itself. If we have reached a point where the avant-garde and its critical or ruptural impulse is no longer available to us, then literature as such may have suffered a similar fate. Literature, at least as it has been understood since the Romantics, is inconceivable without the accompanying thought of a narrative or poetic process that takes up a critical perspective toward representational understandings of language. What we call literature is born with the self-reflexive discovery that its classificatory categories are inherently unstable. Since the Romantics, literature has always manifested a tension between "avant-garde" tendencies on the one hand, which are driven to explore the points where representation and signification stumble, and conservative, "retro-guard" tendencies on the other hand, which serve to reinforce representational uses of language. Literature is its own critique. There can be no literature apart from this self-confrontation and this redoubling. A text that did

not in some way raise unsettling questions about representation and truth would amount to nothing more than a transparent linguistic act that requires no interpretation whatsoever—simply put, there would be nothing literary about it. A text that abandoned representation altogether, meanwhile, would be nothing other than illegible—again, not at all literary. *Mano de obra* deploys this double register of the literary as its own critique in order to bring to light the limits of Consensus. What remains unclear is whether or not such a gesture can hope to produce anything like a rupture or awakening today.

22. For a discussion of what it means to be "in the picture," see "The Age of the World Picture" (in Heidegger 1977), especially pp.129ff.
23. "Nadie capta el conjunto, sobre todo porque en realidad no hay conjunto"; "Nada tenía sentido, aun dentro del sentido."
24. The hegemonic triumph of neoliberalism in Latin America is commonly referred to as "the Washington consensus," borrowing a term coined by the IMF's John Williamson in 1990. Justification for neoliberal reforms frequently appeals to the idea that free markets and unfettered economic opportunity offer the closest possible approximation to freedom; the market, in this ideological vision, becomes synonymous with the end of exclusion and the advent of unlimited choice. "Consensus" would be another name for what I am calling the fantasy of total inclusion and complete coverage.
25. I owe this term to Brett Levinson's article "Dictatorship and Overexposure" (Levinson 2003).
26. On the relation between technics and default, see Stiegler 1998.
27. "En los canales la actividad era frenética. Ya habían encontrado fotos de Cabezas en sus archivos digitalizados, y las estaban intercalando en la emisión en vivo. Era una cara horriblemente deformada por la electrónica, una cara sin explicación. Cada segundo que permanecía en la pantalla se deformaba más. . . . Era otra vez el tema de la brevedad de la vida, en el mundo de las imágenes. La fantasía que sobrevolaba a los teleespectadores en ese momento era una exacerbación de la brevedad de la vida: un viajero intergaláctico que desembarcara en un mundo extraño, sin protección alguna (¿qué protección podía tener?), y en ese mundo las condiciones ambientales hicieran imposible la vida: estaba condenado, evidentemente, moriría en unas décimas de segundo, podía decirse que ya estaba muerto . . . Pero mientras tanto estaba vivo, estaba desembarcando en el mundo, en la realidad horrenda del mundo. Y ese 'mientras tanto' era todo."

CHAPTER 3. THE DIS-JOINTURES OF HISTORY

1. See, for example, Freud's short "A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad'" (Freud 1961, 226–32).
2. "El golpe, territorio privilegiado y repetido de la infancia, cuya frecuencia ocurre bajo la forma de la caída o del ataque, es quizás

la primera memoria, la primera práctica en la que se internaliza de manera carnal esa palabra cuando el cuerpo estalla materialmente como cuerpo o aparece en su diferencia con lo otro—el otro—ese precoz contrincante que se diagrama como cuerpo enemigo desde el golpe mismo."

3. The reference to a first memory can only ever be mythical in that, as memory, it is always already mediated by other memories, ones that ostensibly will have come "after" it. The first memories are always transplants: ones that have been transmitted to us by others or cultivated through referral to other memories. Thus, the first memory, indeed the origin of all memory, would be repetition.
4. Key contributors to this debate include: Nelly Richard (*Margins and Institutions* [1986], among other works); Pablo Oyarzún (*Arte, visualidad e historia* [1999]); Willy Thayer ("El Golpe como consumación de la vanguardia" [2003; revised and republished in Thayer 2006] and "Crítica, nihilism e interrupción: La Avanzada después de Márgenes e Instituciones" [Thayer 2006]); Federico Galende ("Esa extraña pasión por huir de la crítica" [2005a] and "Dos palabras sobre arte y factoría" [2005b]); and Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott (*Soberanías en suspenso: Imaginación y violencia en América latina* [2013]).
5. As numerous critics have pointed out, the "economic miracle" touted by Friedman ignores a series of inconvenient facts, including a series of recessions in the 1970s and beyond as well as the dramatic rise in inequality throughout the 1970s and '80s.
6. "La creatividad como fuerza disruptora del orden administrado en el lenguaje por las figuras de la autoridad y sus gramáticas de poder" (Richard 1986, 1).
7. "La toma de poder que ocasiona la fractura de todo el marco de experiencias sociales y políticas que la antecede, desintegra también los modelos de significación configurados por el lenguaje que nombraba esas experiencias; lenguaje ahora destituido en su facultad de designar o simbolizar una realidad por lo mismo en crisis de inteligibilidad" (2). I am alluding here to the idea that the *golpe* involves the destruction of what Heidegger would call a world. See chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of the Heideggerian understanding of "world."
8. "Sólo la construcción de lo *fragmentario* (y sus elipsis de una totalidad desunificada) logran dar cuenta del estado de dislocación en

el que se encuentra la noción de sujeto que en esos fragmentos retratan como unidad devenida irreconstituible" (2).

9. Under Allende, it was announced that latifundios expropriated by the state would eventually be divided up and distributed to peasant groups, who would then become new owners. However, the land reform measures also built in an intermediate time in which the state was named as owner and the peasant communities were granted usufruct rights over the land. See Chonchol 1973 for details.
10. In *Dictatorship*, Carl Schmitt describes a commissarial dictatorship as suspending constitutional law in the interest of preserving the existing social and legal order against an external or internal threat. A sovereign dictatorship, meanwhile, imposes a state of exception in order to establish a new legal order (Schmitt 2014).
11. The commission was called the Comisión de Estudios de la Nueva Constitución Política de la República de Chile, and was more commonly known as the Comisión Ortúzar. After its work was completed, the first draft was then passed on to a newly formed Consejo de Estado or State Council (1976–1990), which prepared the final draft that was then formally adopted following a highly controversial national referendum in 1980.
12. "Democracy is a form of government, and as such it is only a means—and it is by no means the only one or the best in all circumstances—for assisting liberty, which in turn is the form of life toward which all political systems should take as their end or goal. This form of life encompasses security as well as spiritual and material progress in the social and economic realms" (Guzmán 1979, 18; as quoted in Cristi 2000, 11; my translation).
13. On the distinction between *Offenbarung* and *Offenbarkeit* in Heidegger's thought see Jacques Derrida in Kearney 1999, 73.
14. "Los clientes . . . se reúnen únicamente para conversar en el súper" (13); "Los clientes ocupan el súper como sede (una mera infraestructura) para realizar sus reuniones" (15).
15. "Las horas son un peso (muerto) 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, ocurre en el súper."
16. For an illuminating commentary on the distinction, see Alberto Moreiras, *Línea de sombra*, ch. 2 (Moreiras 2006).

17. "Y expulso de mi mente la escalada de mi atroz resentimiento, porque, después de todo, se trata de clientes que ejercen su legítimo derecho a maltratarme. Nuestros clientes son el lema obligatorio—no te olvides—que el cliente es el amo, el tutor absoluto de la mercadería" (Eltit 2002, 75).
18. Virno's distinction between speech and other performative acts may be problematic insofar as it relies on a traditional, ontotheological classification of speech as self-presence and writing as the secondary order of copies and mere appearances. Furthermore, as we saw in chapter 1 in the context of Lotario's discussion of music theory, no musical recital could ever be reduced to a rote application or rehearsal: a recital, no matter how automatic its implementation may be, is necessarily also an interpretation. The same could be said of other forms of performance. By the same token, however, no speech—no matter how original or extemporaneous—could ever be purified of all repetition: in order to be understood and in order to have its effects (convincing, motivating, etc.) speech necessarily relies on recognizable signs and turns of phrase.
19. "Tocan los productos igual que si rozaran a Dios. Los acarician con una devoción fanática (y religiosamente precipitada) mientras se ufanan ante el presagio de un resentimiento sagrado, urgente y trágico. Es verídico. Estoy en condiciones de asegurar que detrás de estas actitudes se esconde la molécula de una mística contaminada."
20. See Marx 1977, ch. 1, section 4 of *Capital*, v.1: "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret."
21. "Estoy poseído por un Dios que me invade con un brillo que me ubica en la mira ávida de todos los presentes. Dios me posee constantemente como si yo fuera su ramera. Se me sienta (ya lo dije) encima de la palma de la mano o trepa, a duras penas, por mi espalda o se cuelga de una de mis piernas o se introduce de lleno en mi interior hasta oprimir los conductos de mi agobiado corazón. Dios está en todas partes. A lo largo y a lo ancho de mi cuerpo. Y se radica con una intensidad (que ni te digo) en mis órganos para que retumben en su honor. Quiere constatar hasta qué grado su morada se establece en mis retumbos. Ay de mí. No me queda más remedio que alabar el inmenso, incomparable honor que Dios me ha dado."
22. In the same year that Deleuze and Guattari published their *Anti-Oedipus* and along similar lines, two groups of Argentine

psychoanalysts known as "Plataforma" and "Documento" broke with the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association based on the premise that the association's leadership was unwilling to confront the role played by capitalism in the psychic lives of the working class. I thank Moira Fradinger for bringing this Argentine psychoanalytic history to my attention.

23. "Mi oído recoge el insulto y lo amplifica hasta el punto que produce una fina laceración en mis sienes. La terrible palabra destructiva que me dirigen, retumba en mi cabeza y me hace sentir mal. Me hiere y me perfora la palabra abriendo un boquete en mi riñón. Me hiere. Me perfora."
24. "Yo me estremezco ante la amenaza de unas pausas sin asunto o me atormento por los ruidos insípidos y, sumergido de lleno en la violencia, me convierto en un panal agujerado por el terror" (13); "Soy víctima de un mal que, si bien no es estrictamente orgánico, compromete a cada uno de mis órganos" (48).
25. See Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire" (2006), Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (2006), especially Part 3, ch. IV ("Subversive Bodily Acts"), and Charles Shepherdson, *Vital Signs* (2000), especially ch. 3 ("The Role of Gender and the Imperative of Sex").
26. The clearest and most vitriolic account of this foreclosure of historicity in the Chilean transition can be found in Tomás Moulian's *Chile actual: Anatomía de un mito* (1997). For a highly visceral demonstration of the force of "forgetting" and the return of the repressed in post-dictatorship Chile see Patricio Guzmán's documentary film *Chile, la memoria obstinada* (1997).
27. On the difference between "antagonism" and "dislocation" see Laclau 1990.
28. I discuss this stigmatization of dissensus in the context of the Argentine post-dictatorship in chapter 1. For a helpful discussion of stigmatization in the Chilean context see Levinson 2003.

CHAPTER 4. LITERARY CONTRETEMPS

1. I discuss the connections between *Boca de lobo* and the realist novel in more detail in Dove 2012. The *villa miseria* is the topos par