

**MINING LITERATURE IN THE ANDES: MINERAL NARRATIVES FROM PERU,  
BOLIVIA AND CHILE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.**

by

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## Abstract

This thesis examines twentieth-century Latin American novels that consider the figure of the miner, the mine and the role of the mineral in their plots. I focus on narrative and poetic texts from Bolivia, Chile and Peru to analyze the affect that the hyperobject global mining exerts over human and non-human bodies depicted in the narratives. One of the goals of this project is to call attention to a set of forces and processes previously ignored by critics, such as the impact of mining on spaces and individuals during long temporalities, or the intensity of the mineral and the metallic over larger social processes that have shaped modern Latin American History. Narratives such as *En las tierras de Potosí* (1911), by Jaime Mendoza, allow me to do so by highlighting the affective intensity arising from the relation between the body of the miner and the mineral. I employ interdisciplinary concepts such as the hyperobject, elaborated by literary critic Timothy Morton, and the assemblage and becoming, from French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, to better understand the interactive processes unleashed by the intensity of this contact.

Using the framework of Affect Theory, I argue that the metallic mineral described in the Chilean gold-rush novel *Llampo de sangre* (1950) becomes a determinant that not only releases movement across geography but also lethal violence. Lastly, and as the discussion approaches the present, I discuss the mine as an absent center in the global chain of production and distribution represented in Peruvian novels of the late twentieth century. I argue that Peruvian mining literature allow us to identify lines of deterritorialization and escape as they materialize into lines of flight in the canonical texts of José María Arguedas's *Todas las sangres* (1964) and Mario Vargas Llosa's *Lituma en los Andes* (1993).

## **Lay Summary**

This thesis analyzes twentieth-century Andean novels that explore the social and cultural impact of mineral extraction in Bolivia, Chile and Peru. This thesis fills a gap in the critical literature by examining works of fiction, and specifically mining narratives, that have been overlooked by critics. In addition, it argues for a more careful consideration of forces previously ignored, such as the role of long temporalities in mining camps, and the importance of the mineral and the metal over social processes that have determined Latin American history.

## **Preface**

This dissertation is an original, unpublished and independent work conducted by Juan Felipe Hernandez.

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## **Dedication**

To my parents.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Consider the encounter between a miner and a subterranean vein: man and mineral or metal, facing each other. This encounter is marked by extreme physical conditions: extraordinary pressure had been needed to form the metallic minerals, and extraordinary human labor is required to reach them. Yet this is but one encounter among many. Other encounters are subtler, occurring slowly and silently. The mineral's granularity allows it to penetrate bodies almost unnoticed and to disrupt machines designed to extract it. Rock becomes dust and its particles enter human and non-human bodies, as well as other material flows constitutive of reality. Yet the properties of the mineral and the metal are not limited to the physical, as they trigger affective energies in human bodies. Gold actualizes man's movement and capacities in extraordinary, often violent, ways; silver, tin and copper can determine the economic fate of entire nations, and the same is true of nitrate salts, coal, or lithium. The mineral and the metallic, seemingly inert and dull, have the power to move humans under the effects of widely different affects.

This thesis studies the way in which such encounters are documented by writers, novelists and poets in Andean America during the twentieth century. I analyze the ways in which Bolivian, Chilean and Peruvian *letrados* perceived, and attempted to codify in language, the affective capacities inherent in minerals, as well as the ways in which these affects moved them to write about mines and miners, minerals and metals.<sup>1</sup> On one level, this project evaluates mining's effects on literary consciousness and the unconscious being of the writer. On a second level, it situates

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<sup>1</sup> *Letrado* is a term from Spanish and Latin American history that designates a member of a particular socio-economic class (predominantly white and male) who since the colonial period was able to access formal education and become a privileged intermediary between the law and the subject. For a classic definition in the Latin American context see Ángel Rama's *La ciudad letrada*.

specific texts within a social, political and economic context to better understand the nature of the relationships described and created by the art object, in this case the literary work vis-à-vis national politics, the role of mineral extraction in notions of development, and the abject poverty that accompanies and complements the surplus wealth created by extraction. Bolivian, Chilean and Peruvian texts are discussed individually but are also located in a wider constellation of symbolic works, to assess them comparatively and contextually.

When discussing affect, I employ Spinoza's definition as outlined in his *Ethics*: "By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections."<sup>2</sup> Or in critic Brian Massumi's words, affect is "an intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act."<sup>3</sup> I focus on Bolivia, Chile, and Peru because mineral extraction has played a unique role in their formation as well as in their insertion into the wider global market. This is very evident in the case of Peru or Bolivia (in colonial times, Alto Peru), countries critical to the modern project of global trade. From colonial times, metallic minerals have catalyzed Europe's drive for colonization and the exploitation of labor needed to trade with the great eastern powers, especially China. It is the effect of this matter on Europeans' desire and belief that impacted the land and peoples of the Americas, and especially Andean America.

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<sup>2</sup> *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, trans. Edwin M. Curley, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 154.

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvi.

The story of the first encounter between two civilizations is fascinating, but this thesis examines more recent encounters.<sup>4</sup> It focuses on extraction and writing over the course of the twentieth century, to gain a better understanding of the poetics and politics of more contemporary experiences in the region. In a present embattled by the contradictions of development, extraction reflects the constitutive and emblematic failures of modernity vis-à-vis the ecological environment and the ethical relation to the Other. A discussion of the culture and problematics of extraction in the recent past is both necessary and relevant to our troubled era. I believe that this work not only offers a new perspective on Cultural and Latin American Studies, but can also inform non-academic publics about the history of struggles against the despoliation inherent in extraction.

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<sup>4</sup> The list of mining fiction in Latin America is long and stretches back to the expeditions of Christopher Columbus, and the first debates on the status of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas and its resources. The following literary works organized by country and chronologically can help the reader form an idea of this heterogeneous corpus.

The list in Peru includes, “La desolación de Castrovirreina” and “La mina de Santa Bárbara” from *Tradiciones peruanas* by Ricardo Palma (1872); *El tungsteno*, César Vallejo (1931); *Siete ensayos de la realidad peruana*, José Carlos Mariátegui (1928); *La serpiente de oro*, Ciro Alegría (1935); *Crónica de San Gabriel*, Julio Ramón Ribeyro (1960); *En la noche infinita*, Miguel De la Mata (1965); *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, José María Arguedas (1971); *Todas las sangres*, José María Arguedas (1964); *Redoble por Rancas*, Manuel Scorza (1970); *Lituma en los Andes*, Mario Vargas Llosa (1993); *Volcán de viento*, Roberto Rosario Vidal (2008); *Destinos inciertos*, David Eli Salazar (2006); *El Balcón de Judas*, Danilo Illanes Bustamante (2007); *La Mina y otros relatos*, Víctor Villanueva (2013).

From Bolivia, *En las tierras de Potosí*, Jaime Mendoza Gonzáles (1911); *Raza de Bronce*, Alcides Arguedas (1911); *El oro negro*, Julián Céspedes (1921); *Aluvión de fuego*, Óscar Cerruto (1935); *Los eternos vagabundos*, Roberto Leitón (1939); *Altiplano*, Raúl Botelho Gosálvez (1945); *Metal del Diablo*, Augusto Céspedes (1946); *Socavones de Angustia*, Fernando Ramírez Velarde (1947); *Mina: novela póstuma* Alfredo Guillén Pinto and Natty Peñaranda de Guillén Pinto (1952); *Canchamina*, Victor Hugo Villegas and Mario Guzmán Aspiazu (1956); *El Coraje del Pueblo* (film), Jorge Sanjines (1971); *Los Andes no creen en Dios*, Adolfo Costa du Rels (1973); *El koya loco*, René Poppe (1973); *Si me permiten hablar*, Domitila Chungara (1978); *La narrativa minera boliviana*, ed. René Poppe (1980); *Cuentos de la mina*, Víctor Montoya (2000).

In Chile, twentieth-century mining literature proper begins with *Subterra* (1904) and *Subsole* (1907) Baldomero Lillo; *Norte grande*, Andrés Sabella (1944); *Residencia en la tierra*, Pablo Neruda (1945); *Cobre*, Gonzalo Drago (1946); *Canto general*, Pablo Neruda (1950); *Llampo de sangre*, Oscar Castro, (1950); *Hijo del salitre*, Volodia Teitelboim (1952); *Sewell*, Baltazar Castro (1953); *Mi camarada padre*, Baltazar Castro, (1958); *El Mocho*, José Donoso (1997); *El invasor*, Sergio Missana (1997); *Santa María de las flores negras*, Hernán Rivera Letelier (2002); *Geología de un planeta desierto*, Patricio Jara (2014); and *Antología del Cuento Minero Chileno*, ed. Javier Jofré Rodríguez, (2015).

Such a discussion traces the lines and flows that constitute the Latin American cartography, examining in detail key places where this mode of production becomes representation, addressing the specificity of this literary representation and mode of accumulation. This thesis therefore cuts through regional narratives to examine an activity—mineral extraction—that in its multifaceted complexity transforms and displaces life as such towards its limits. Narratives that deal with the extraction of minerals, or what I term “mining literature,” become a discourse uniquely positioned to understand the intricacies of human and natural exploitation. Mining literature reveals the most dramatic aspects of modern capitalist exploitation, where the value of human life competes with the exchange value of commodities determined by abstractions such as international prices. It uncovers the rationale of extraction while describing the irrational conduct of its agents, the prospector, the industrialist, the state, etc. It enables a comparative analysis of the contradictions of mineral extraction as a particularity in relation to the universality of the general equivalent and its historical path in the region.

The term “mining literature” is a way of organizing literary works that depict the experience of the miner, but also fictional accounts that narrate wider political events that are determined by the effect of minerals over the flows of desire that constitute society: revolutions, strikes, massacres, memory, war, etc. All literary production that deals with the mineral can be grouped under this term. A second implication of the term “mining literature” is that what is at stake is the act of mining the literary corpus in order to extract surplus symbolic and analytical value to produce a finished product. Mining literature is not only a corpus within the wider field of Latin American literary studies, but a disposition and willingness to study literary works with an eye for the objects and bodies that can thereby be unearthed, analyzed and processed; in other words, the procedure of this thesis is not too dissimilar from that of the miner. This practice allows

us to see that a previously marginalized genre such as the novel of the mine expresses and condenses more than previously thought: the mineral is no longer a commodity and symbol of oppression, but affective matter loaded with intensities that resonate with other bodies. I thus aim to sketch an understanding that captures affective, speculative, creative, and critical registers often left aside by historical discourse.

Why study mining through literature? What does literature offer to the field of “mining studies” that already counts with ample studies from the physical and social sciences? Yet what else *but* literature could allow the critic to understand a disparate object such as the sum total of mineral resources extracted, in addition to the instruments and discourses employed and all the relations formed among them? The realm of literature is, after all, life itself. Literature is a total space insofar as it does not tend to limit its subject of study and allows the practitioner to investigate freely all phenomena, natural as well as social. It is that privileged site where the author can describe her reality in a freer way than elsewhere (often protected by the notion that the events being narrated are, after all, fictions). Here she can intercalate social problems with the most inventive of solutions; she can alternate between denunciation and a simple recounting of life-stories picked up from experience at the mines, or in the field in general, and speculate liberally about the consequences of economic imperatives forced on individuals. Literature allows a window into unexpected assemblages, affective formations and the ramifications of long temporalities as they form hyperobjects. In Josefina Ludmer’s words, literature can be “a lens, machine, screen, [a] vehicle to be able to see something from the factory of reality.”<sup>5</sup> It is this

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<sup>5</sup> Josefina Ludmer, “Literaturas postautónomas.” Accessed September 19, 2019, <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v17/ludmer.htm>. My translation. All translations are mine except otherwise noted.

“factory of reality” that is the object of study here, beginning with the miner and his milieu, but analyzing rhizomes and affects that form in the universe of the novel. The goal then is to examine the production and the producer, that is, the society described by the author as well as the way in which he opts to do so: words, and gestures, but also cadences and silences. Literature becomes a machine from to perceive and evaluate the production of this reality.

## 1.1 Literature Review

In literary criticism, specifically in texts such as *The Cambridge Companion to the Latin American Novel*, edited by Efrain Kristal, Ericka Beckman’s *Capital Fictions*, Jennifer French’s *Nature, Neo-Colonialism and the Spanish-American Regional Writers*, and Adrian Taylor Kane’s *The Natural World in Latin American Literatures*, attention to mining or oil extraction is surprisingly absent. Even in the broader field of ecological studies, such as in Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin’s *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, or Louise Wesling’s *Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, which describe at length the development of ecocriticism from its origins in the European pastoral to today, contributors leave out mineral extraction. To my knowledge, the only book-length project that takes the experience of mineral extraction seriously is Scott M. DeVries’s *A History of Ecology and Environmentalism in Spanish American Literature*, albeit in one short chapter. Why this general disavowal of mineral fiction?

The historical and sociological bibliography on extraction in the region is more complete. However, it leaves out important works of literature that inform the experience of extraction and would enrich its conclusions. Classic studies such as June Nash’s *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us* (1979), Michael Taussig’s *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (1980), and Kendal Brown’s *A History of Mining in Latin America* (2012) helps us understand the



complexity of extraction over the social, but neglect the literary aspect of extraction as mediated by novels, short stories or poems. Thus, this thesis aims at filling that gap by writing a (not merely historical) history of the region by using literary archives alongside the historical ones, to create a hybrid account that reads literature in its specific historicity without neglecting a sustained critical literary discussion.

Nash's *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us* is rooted in ethnographic observation and dependency theory. Nash's study marked a point of interest in Latin America as a site for alternatives to hegemonic forms of capitalism. She is concerned with locating the origin of a class consciousness that emerges from home and community, and derives its strength "through the interpenetration of social reproduction and industrial production."<sup>6</sup> But although her discussion is a comprehensive effort to understand the dynamic complexity of the mining environ, it relegates the perspectives offered by a literary consciousness that has meditated on the mining experience in Bolivia for centuries and has mediated relations between subaltern and centers of political power. It is not that literary creation about the miner is scarce: by the time of Nash's book, more than half a dozen novels and countless short stories had been published, not to mention the countless folk tales in the oral memory of miners across the country.<sup>7</sup> Nash does not include any discussion of mining literature or the writings of miners or the literary volumes written by well-

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<sup>6</sup> June C. Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines* (New York: Columbia UP, 1993), XXXIII.

<sup>7</sup> Bolivian fiction concerned with the mineral and extraction includes: Jaime Mendoza, *En las tierras de Potosí* (Cochabamba: Los Amigos del Libro, 1911); Julián Céspedes, *El oro negro* (La Paz: 1921); Roberto Leitón, *Los eternos vagabundos* (La Paz, Potosí: 1939); Adolfo Costa Du Rels, *Tierras hechizadas* (La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1940); Augusto Céspedes, *Metal del diablo* (La Paz: Ediciones La Calle, 1947); Fernando Ramírez Velarde, *Socavones de angustia* (La Paz: G.U.M., 1947) and *El embrujo del oro* (Buenos Aires: Vía, 1948); Alfredo Guillén Pinto and Natty Peñaranda de Guillén Pinto, *Mina* (La Paz: Talleres Gráficos Bolivianos, 1953); Victor Hugo Villegas and Mario Guzmán Aspiazu, *Canchamina* (La Paz: Canata, 1956); and Néstor Taboada Terán, *El precio del estaño* (La Paz: Librería Juventud, 1960).

known liberal writers such as Adolfo Costa du Rels or Jaime Mendoza. Furthermore, her study overlooks the nature of extraction in and of itself: she never asks what it means to extract, as a metaphysical, philosophical or phenomenological perspective beyond the most common definition that conceptualizes the mineral as a commodity within a global market.

Another monograph concerned with the violent imposition of a capitalist mode of production on indigenous peoples is Michael Taussig's *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*. Here, Taussig investigates the traumatic passage between a social order based on use-value to one based on exchange-value; i.e., the incomplete and uneven transition between modes of production based on reciprocity and balance (Mauss), and modes of production based on marginal profit and capital accumulation (Marx). Taussig's account is particularly interested in understanding how these processes become manifest in rituals, magic and the metaphysical reasoning of the inhabitants of the Valle del Cauca in Colombia and Oruro in western Bolivia. These are processes usually accompanied by a series of transformations in the perception of objects and behavior, whether that is the fetishism of the commodity as such or the re-signification of pre-Hispanic rites and idols to cope with capitalist exploitation. In *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism* we find an anthropological account somewhat different from the total and empirical picture of Nash's *We Eat the Mines*. But Taussig's contribution to the field is again oblivious to the insights offered by novelists and poets who have reflected on the nature of extraction in the modern Bolivian state. His focus on the clash of Inca and Spanish metaphysics relegate his analytical attention on the one hand to early modern intellectual debates, and on the other to the consequences of capitalist modernity on the miner's consciousness. His analysis leaves out the bourgeois and proletarian storytellers who understood, perhaps better than anyone, the nature of extracting mineral or the craft of tracing a genealogy marked by massacres, regrouping and revolution.

These storytellers writing about mines and miners configure a text marked by a series of moral, ethical, social concerns but also articulating an anxiety about the economic dynamics of their states; that is, they express an unconscious preoccupation with dependency on resource extraction. These are diverse and expressed in different cultural languages. Some focus on a moralistic narrativization of the system of extraction and labor exploitation, using different scales: the community of miners, or the individual as subject. Others discuss larger social transformations, such as José María Arguedas's *Todas las sangres* (1964), a text that questions the possible futures laid down for a fractured nation like Peru faced with intense pressure for industrialization and modernization and its consequences for the country's highlands inhabitants.

From literary quarters, *Capital Fictions: The Literature of Latin America's Export Age*, by Ericka Beckman, analyzes the relation of literature and money in the region focusing on the exuberant bourgeois fantasies she names "export reveries" and anxieties about development and the underlining metaphoricity of economic narratives deployed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Her contribution to the field is welcome inasmuch as she links economics and culture, exposing an emerging intellectual anxiety between these two realms during Latin America's age of export and industrialization. But Beckman omits the mineral and material aspect of this process, or the way in which writers grappled with mineral extraction and the social reordering that followed it. Her discussion is concerned with the uneven integration of Latin American economies into the global market between 1870 and 1930, and specifically with the effect of this process on the "intellectual production of Latin American's lettered elite."<sup>9</sup> My

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<sup>8</sup> Beckman, *Capital Fictions*, x.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

project overlaps with hers, but expands the field with a wider set of texts ranging from early twentieth-century Bolivian *letrado* novels, to mid-century Bolivian and Chilean proletarian narratives, and from poet Pablo Neruda's understudied mineral poems to the canonical works of Peruvian writers José María Arguedas, Manuel Scorza and Mario Vargas Llosa.

Instead of mapping "export reveries" dreamt by liberal literary elites, my project surveys narratives that account for larger processes beyond the world fantasized by *letrados*. My goal is a critical reading of authors and poets whose lives are decisively marked by the mineral and the metal, with the purpose of understanding the relationship that forms between the mineral and other bodies (human and otherwise). Not so much "dreams," the narratives studied here could be called "export crises" because they reveal the contradictions of capital accumulation based on mineral extraction. These narratives are concerned with the social and cultural consequences of export-oriented Latin American economies during the long twentieth century, and specifically with exploring the impact of these changes on bodies—miners, tools, associations, prospectors, industrialists—and assemblages formed in the process of extraction and production.

The narratives discussed here are seldom designed and presented self-consciously as "narratives of crisis" (although a common theme evinces moments when a certain type of social order breaks down, giving way to a process of reordering of society, if not at large, at least partially where mining was a dominant mode of production). So rather than assigning a univocal valence to the texts selected and reading them under the constraints of a transcendental concept like "crisis," I advance a critical examination of each under their own competencies and claims. I bring Beckman's concept then to delineate a basic difference between her remarkable study of Latin America's literary consciousness, and this discussion which focuses on a specific type of extraction—mineral extraction—and a single stage in Marx's central triad of production,

distribution, and consumption: *production*. My project engages with the universe of the mine and the miner to account for social and cultural processes that have been relegated or simply ignored by literary criticism or cultural studies. This project plots the coordinates of mineral extraction and production. Its focus is the multidimensional repercussions of mineral extraction on the social.

## 1.2 Theoretical Choices

My project is a study of the literature of mining but it follows critical literary methods while keeping in mind larger phenomena that inform more recent theories on global warming, our relation to non-living objects, extended temporalities, the hyperobject, and slow violence.

I employ the materialist thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and specifically their concept of becoming and the assemblage, to analyze the configurations of human and non-human bodies that inspired the narratives told by mid-century Bolivian and Chilean novelists and more recently Peruvian writers. The assemblage is usually thought of as an abstract rhizomatic concept to define processes or relations.<sup>10</sup> I use the term to discuss formations that take place in the novels affecting the unfolding of the plot narrated. However, Deleuze also thought of it as a tool to name a political subjectivity: “A left assemblage can take the form of a political party, a non-governmental organization, a punk rock collective, or any loose and provisional material and expressive body that works for freedom and equality.”<sup>11</sup> This is another way of understanding the term and one which I use not only to define unlikely groups of human and objects working and producing reality, but to map a political subjectivity that would go beyond traditional categories

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<sup>10</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Deleuze envisioned the left as a network of intersecting and conflicting assemblages, “a garden rather than a tree.” See Nicholas Tampio, “Assemblages and the Multitude. Deleuze, Hardt, Negri, and the Postmodern Left,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 8, no. 3 (June 2009): 385.

such as “capital,” “the proletariat,” or “the bourgeoisie.” My use of the term decentralizes these categories—categories dominant in structuring earlier accounts on the life of the miner—to facilitate new approaches and perspectives on the relation between man and mineral.

Mining novels tend to stress the logic of the victimization of the miner and the surge of a reactive multitude in normative terms: miner-good and police-bad. I evaluate these discursive formations but also examine other assemblages that escape this logic allowing us to understand how political change was sought in twentieth-century Latin America in new ways. Here, it is not so much the proletariat, or the revolutionary guerrilla, but the assemblage as a fluid and rhizomatic formation that offers a perspective into the way in which groups of bodies formed the constellations needed to bring political and material change. The concept “de-proletarianizes” the vocabulary used to describe the political narrative of the continent and specifically the political subjectivity of the miner. In these texts, one might be tempted to believe that the main referent and political subject was the miner, but this gradually changes as “the miner” slips away and other characters emerge: The Indian, the Indian-miner, women, the gold prospector, the rural Maoist guerrilla... These subjective formations broaden the scope of the thesis but also force us to think the problem of political subjectivity and extraction differently.

To study these formations, I employ a set of theoretical tools that allow us to see things differently: the assemblage, the agentic properties of the mineral, the role of affect in the mining narratives plots, the impact of slow violence and long temporalities of exploitation. This involves turning somewhat from Marxist analysis, which offers clarification on the logics of exploitation and destruction of human and non-human life by processes of accumulation, but is less adequate (I believe) when examining the reactive formations constituted by eclectic and mobile assemblages

that arise as resistance to this destruction.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, vernacular historical or sociological discussions of mining based on a Marxist framework are unable, I suggest, to explore and account for the affective intensities of the mineral itself or deterritorialized lines traced by characters in Peruvian narratives.<sup>13</sup> They do not zoom in to examine the affect of metallic minerals (something that we observe in texts like *Llampe de sangre*) and very few zoom out enough to capture a wider image of the hyperobject. In addition to concepts taken from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, I use the environmental theory of Timothy Morton, specifically his concept of the hyperobject, and the spatial analysis of Marxist geographer David Harvey, because they suggest a vocabulary adequate to name and grasp the relation between extraction and subjectivity.

In Chapters 3 and 5 however, I employ one of Marx's key concepts to explain the process of what he termed "primitive accumulation," and to better understand dispossession from the land and from the means of production described in the narratives analyzed. According to Marx, "primitive accumulation is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production."<sup>14</sup> As a contrast to Adam Smith's original accumulation, Marx detailed so-called primitive accumulation as a process "by which large swaths of the population are

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<sup>12</sup> Obviously, my account requires a certain flattening of Marxism to make its point. I hope to show the benefits of the approach I take and the concepts I use in place of classic Marxist theory. A full engagement with the complexities and nuances of contemporary Marxist and post-Marxist engagements with ecology and the Anthropocene is, however, beyond the scope of this dissertation. I refer the reader to texts by authors such as John Bellamy Foster, Jason Moore and Christian Parenti for some of the important recent work on this topic.

<sup>13</sup> Classic accounts of the history and socio-cultural universe of the Andean miner include: Heraclio Bonilla, *El minero de los Andes: una aproximación a su estudio*, (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1974); Alberto Flores Galindo *Buscando un Inca* (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1988) and Josh DeWind, *Peasants become miners: the evolution of industrial mining systems in Peru, 1902-1974*. (New York: Garland, 1987). These studies analyzed the history of unionism and strikes in Peruvian mining camps during the twentieth century, rejecting earlier deterministic explanations based on geographical isolation or the role of a proletarian identity. For a historiography of labor relations in Peru, Bolivia and Chile see Francisco Zapata S., "Los mineros como actores sociales y políticos en Bolivia, Chile y Perú durante el siglo XX," *Estudios Atacameños* no. 22, (2002): 91.

<sup>14</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 874-5.

violently separated from their traditional means of self-sufficiency.”<sup>15</sup> This accumulation is a violent process of dispossession of resources from one group of people by a capitalist class in order to subsume it under the cycle of capital and surplus value.

The assemblages formed by miner-writer-novel influenced political history in Latin America. We should not think that the work of novelists, journalists, and editors ended as soon as their manuscripts were turned into books. On the contrary, their stories went on to build assemblages of resistance that determined the course of national histories. Consider Bolivia in the years immediately before the 1952 Nationalist Revolution. There, a constellation of miners, writers, editors and other bodies were activated and released into the public space with no guarantees of changing anything in the country’s public life. However, those assemblages were capable of actualizing those ideals. They harnessed public support across wide sections of the population, pushing for radical democratization. In Chapter 3, I argue that without the work of writers and journalists whose work was based on the experience of the tin miner this revolution would not have occurred. In Chapter 4, I argue something similar for Chile. Narratives centered around a 1907 Santa Maria Massacre in Iquique, specifically Volodia Teitelboim’s *Hijo del salitre* (1952) and the work of master assemblage-creator Pablo Neruda, mobilized popular and lettered constituencies to advance a progressive politics. In Chapter 5, Peruvian mining narratives show how they also impacted the political and contributed to the debate on modernity and modernization vis-à-vis the split national character of a country divided into two cultures.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “Glossary of Terms,” Marxists Internet Archive, Accessed December 26, 2019, <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/p/r.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> See the debates stirred by Arguedas’s publication of *Todas las sangres* and the subsequent controversy collected in Guillermo Rochabrún’s *La Mesa Redonda sobre “Todas las Sangres” del 23 de junio de 1965*, (Guillermo Rochabrún ed. Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2000).



The assemblage reminds us that there is much more to our jobs than analyzing the pair author/work: these two figures are enmeshed in a network constituted by many non-human bodies, prostheses, objects, and so on. It reminds us to consider less anthropocentric approaches and reflect on change and creation over time as flows (and flows of flows) emerge, not in a vacuum but in the friction and dissonance of a multiple affects, becomings, and intensities. But since these forces and flows are often beyond the threshold of detectability, we also need a theory to account for the invisible causes, effects, and unfolding of such macro events. Hence the hyperobject. Viewing mining from a hyperobjectual perspective allows us to evaluate these works of fiction and these socio-political processes from a different angle. This is not a matter of entirely abandoning Marxist theory or rejecting close reading, rather it is a matter—in Michael Taussig’s words—of knowing “where the focus lies and what the implications are of that angle of vision.”<sup>17</sup>

The term “hyperobject” was coined by environmental theorist Timothy Morton to describe “objects so massively distributed in time and space as to transcend spatiotemporal specificity, such as global warming, Styrofoam, and radioactive plutonium.”<sup>18</sup> Mining in the Andes is spread over such vast temporal and spatial scales that anthropocentric discussions, narrowly focused on economic parameters or political analyses, miss the point of the type of object we are talking about. Mining is no regular economic activity, but an object imbued with long temporalities and massively distributed in space that generates a series of consequences that often escape science.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the work of mules and llamas, miners and machines round-the-clock and from pre-colonial

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<sup>17</sup> Michael T. Taussig *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 257.

<sup>18</sup> Morton, *Hyperobjects*, 130.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Bebbington, and Jeffrey Bury, eds. *Subterranean Struggles: New Dynamics of Mining, Oil, and Gas in Latin America*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 180.

times to the present, continuously excavating, processing, amalgamating, but also touching, breathing, *becoming* one with these elements (as we will see in the literature of Jaime Mendoza discussed in Chapter 1), produces an alienated reality that defies our traditional thinking: man and commodity become one as the mineral enters the miner's body and its flows; toxic waste from the mercury to separate metals filters down the water system and is now found in all life and far beyond the regions where it is employed. Today, places such as Huancavelica, Peru suffer from the legacy of mining since the toxicity of these extracted ores has found its way into construction materials used to build houses affecting both the physical and mental health of those who dwell there.<sup>20</sup> The concept of the hyperobject is a strategy to think through the uncanny qualities of mining and its legacies.

The hyperobject forces us to think according to its scales and its dynamics and compels us to think beyond anthropocentric tendencies that lead to an arrogant blindness about the working of humans and nonhumans in the region and their contribution to material reality. Thinking about hyperobjects can reveal aspects of phenomena we might have suspected but never been quite able to conceptualize and enunciate as such. Among the hyperobjects that figure in Morton's book are global warming, black holes, and radiation, yet mining does not appear in his constitutive concept nor as a case in point to highlight other particularities. There is mention of fossil fuels, but the issue of mineral extraction—in all the ways that it affects the human and the nonhuman—is barely noted. Yet mineral extraction has a long history not only in Latin America but wherever men have

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<sup>20</sup> Recent reports from Huancavelica have revealed the presence of high levels of mercury in the biosphere as well as in 75% of the—still inhabited—buildings that date from colonial times. The mercury sealed in the bricks and walls of these structures has been linked to case of poisoning, depression, and physiological disorders. See “El Comercio” <http://elcomercio.pe/peru/huancavelica/huancavelica-familias-riesgo-envenenamiento-mercurio-noticia-1821600> and the Environmental Health Council report at <http://www.ehcouncil.org/RI-spanish.pdf>

discovered deposits of ores. And this set of relations, forming these objects, has a significant impact on the human and the nonhuman as well. This impact is so dramatic that it pervades any discursive expression that is concerned with understanding and revealing something about the mystery of objects. In novels such as *En las tierras de Potosí* (1911), the hyperobject mining infiltrates the narrative as well as the bodies of those described in the plot. These texts are valuable not only due to their potential to destabilize strict canonical conventions in the field but more importantly perhaps because they allow us to see beyond the threshold of the human. They respond to Morton's call for works that pierce through human scales and human-centered relations. They allow the nonhuman to appear front and center.

Before I summarize the contents in the next section one word about molecular movements and intensities. I use the term "molecular" from Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the pair molecular/molar. Molar masses or bodies are 'punctual', very organized, easily represented and expressed, and are perceived as clearly demarcated assemblages such as a political subjectivity, a political party, a mining site, the state, but also physical objects like a stone block, or a piece of gold as described by author José María Arguedas in *Los ríos profundos*. The molar refers to a line that "forms a binary, arborescent system of segments."<sup>21</sup> It is defined by its self-similarity across its variations, or rather, its invariant self-identity. The molecular, on the other hand, designates imperceptible movements occurring at the heart of molar structures. "Molecular movements are incessant, and unruly operating below the threshold of perception and associated with becomings of innumerable kinds."<sup>22</sup> A derivative notion also implies the issue of scale: microscopic particles,

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<sup>21</sup> Adrian Parr, *The Deleuze Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 147.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Merriman, "Molar and Molecular Mobilities: The Politics of Perceptible and Imperceptible Movements." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37, no. 1 (2019): 67.

tiny perceptions or inclinations that destabilize perception as a whole. Molecular movement is found in the mineral but also in the aggregate masses that form the multitude or in the unconscious of mining literature protagonists. What these molecular movements respond to are affects or intensities. Following critic Brian Massumi, I use the term intensity to describe an individual's physical reaction to a stimulus such as when a body "is filled with motion, vibratory motion, resonance"<sup>23</sup> when encountering other bodies. Intensity can be conceptualized as the quantity of affect, and like affect, it precedes emotions and feelings, and is involuntarily embodied within and throughout the individual. For instance, our bodies undergo a physical/somatic change depending on a particular intensity or affect to which it is exposed. In this context, I employ the term to describe the energy or strength of materiality, most prominently in this case, minerals, metals, and rock formations over mining writers and its effect (or affect) over their literary accounts.

### 1.3 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 discusses three Bolivian novels: *En las tierras de Potosí* by Jaime Mendoza, *El oro negro* (1921) by Julián Céspedes and *Los eternos vagabundos* (1939) by Roberto Leitón. Each is concerned with the affective intensity arising from the relation between the body of the miner and the mineral. They explore the implications of the pervasiveness of mining at the cellular level in descriptions of the mineral's presence in the miners' brains and human life flows such as circulation of blood and breastfeeding. I argue that these authors' narratives are uniquely attentive to these fascinating but uncanny processes and non-human worlds, landscapes and assemblages which allow us to learn about the multidimensional nature of mining. To understand these

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<sup>23</sup> Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect." *Cultural Critique*, no. 31 (1995): 86.

phenomena, I argue that mining has effectively become a hyperobject in the region which has operated for many centuries causing the formation of a myriad assemblages and affecting all life.

I also employ the concepts of slow violence and slow temporalities to examine these texts. In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), literary critic Rob Nixon argues for a new understanding of violence taking into account the long temporalities inherent in extraction. According to Nixon, this violence is “neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales.”<sup>24</sup> Mining literature responds to Nixon’s call for a literature or an art that “engages the representational, narrative and strategic challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence.”<sup>25</sup> Bolivian authors such as Jaime Mendoza, Julián Céspedes and Roberto Leitón have something similar in mind when they describe the vastness of the industry and the slow destructive processes in the miners’ health and in the nature around them. Nixon emphasizes that the challenge is representational and the issue is “how to devise arresting stories, images and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects.”<sup>26</sup> This is precisely the concern of these mining writers. Their self-imposed task is to study literarily all the scalar levels, the molecular, the social and the planetary of this unfolding violence.

Chapter 2 moves from the phenomenology of mining as a hyperobject to the specifics of its impact in material reality, specifically, in mid-twentieth century Bolivia. I analyze three mid-century Bolivian novels interested in the social and interpersonal extensions of mining: *Metal del diablo* (1946) by Augusto Céspedes, *El precio del estaño* (1960) by Néstor Taboada Terán and

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<sup>24</sup> Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 3.

*Socavones de angustia* (1947) by Fernando Ramirez Velarde, three texts of major relevance in the popular consciousness of the country.<sup>27</sup> The unifying anxiety of these works revolves around the impossibility of achieving an improvement in living standards for Bolivian miners in spite of macroeconomic achievements due to the surging demand for tin during the Second World War. Their response therefore consisted in redressing the injustices perpetuated by the establishment against the miners' collective in the realm of fiction by using sophisticated rhetorical devices and embarking on a resignification of symbols and discourses. This literary production had a significant impetus specifically in the aftermath of the Catavi Massacre of 1942 which became a powerful political symbol in the whole of Bolivian society.

The novels discussed here propose a resignification of the miner as an active, capable subject full of agency. They construct a miner-subject who can change his material conditions despite systematic poverty and abuse. They do describe in detail the victimization of the miner by the association of capital and state. But after this affective task of indignation and denunciation, they announce a new subject: a miner determined to change his reality by all means. These creators used literary realism as a weapon against the dominant discourses that portrayed the miner as an irrational subject prone to alcoholism and other excesses. One of their techniques is the extensive use of the paratext to fend off the accusation that they were describing a world too similar to the material one. Another was the use of proto-testimonial accounts and "factual" reports to validate their claims. Others go further: Néstor Taboada Terán includes images, to make his narrative more accessible to semi-literate publics.

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<sup>27</sup> These novels are on the curricula of Bolivian public schools, and *Metal del diablo* is a text universally familiar but also debated in the country.

What one obtains in these works is the sense not so much of a militarization of literature but perhaps of its functionalization as a mechanism capable of facing the abuses of capital, the complicity and moral decay of the state, evidenced in the recurrent massacres, the success of a status quo dominated by the interest of mining industrialist Simón Patiño and La Rosca (pro-Patiño capitalists and politicians), and augmented after the humiliating defeat in the Chaco War against Paraguay. These convulsions of Bolivian society in the years prior to the 1952 Revolution were so momentous that they can be identified in the prose of the mining texts, which focus on the miner's individual melodrama. These writers effectively adopt the privilege of author/authority to define the field: the power of definition and signification allows them to configure a set of actors with whom readers should identify and sympathize, and another set of characters whom readers should morally condemn. Through detailed historical research and close reading we see how these authors used their narrators to frame different characters in the narrative, using para- or extra-literary avenues to circumvent the paradoxes of realism and how their work ultimately contributed to the optimization of the contradictions of the status quo to bringing about a revolution.

In chapter 3 the discussion moves west to the flatlands of northern Chile to analyze the cultural logics of the nitrate workers that plowed the Atacama Desert in search for saltpeter, the basis for agricultural fertilizers. The overarching theme of this chapter is the study of the miner in an expanded field. That is, a miner that exercises political agency *before* entering processes of labor organization and sindicalization, in the shape of a multitude, as we see in Volodia Teitelboim's *Hijo del salitre*, or a miner-pro prospector whose socioeconomic position is not perpetually tied to the mine-owners rate of production and exploitation, but is presented as a free entrepreneur, as in Oscar Castro's *Llampo de sangre* (1950). Mining literature in Chile is more than narratives focalized on the miner as a victim. The gold rush novel *Llampo de sangre* describes

the powerful but deadly magnetism between human and metallic bodies. The text reveals the affects of gold, as a substance trumping all other commodities, unleashing extraordinary and often violent forces.

The chapter concludes its exploration of the various definitions of the miner proposed by Chilean authors by exploring the poetry of Pablo Neruda, the Nobel-winning author who also served as senator for the northern provinces of Antofagasta and Tarapacá in the Atacama Desert where he had become familiar with the social problematics of the nitrate workers. Neruda's poetry analyzed here, selected mostly from the *Canto General* (1950), reminds us once again that the miner as a literary referent is not a subterranean entity exclusively marked by suffering. It is often the voice of a man, a woman, or a child whose testimony goes beyond the realist portrayal of a life of exploitation to initiate a multivocal project where testimonies usually emerge from the dead, or from other dimensions effectively relating to the reader a narrative that associates the history of Chilean mineral exploitation with the life-stories of his fictitious characters. The mineral vein found by Neruda in his early years not only impacted his politics but reached his creative consciousness, allowing him to craft moving literary machines. Neruda's shorter poems, with their powerful condensed imagery, functioned as assemblages capable of extending their relations into reality, connecting to larger discursive and material assemblages that pushed for an improvement in the miners' physical conditions.

The final chapter discusses the mine as an absent center in the chain of production and distribution represented in three novels of the late twentieth century. I focus on how Peruvian mining literature mapped lines of deterritorialization and escape as they materialized into lines of flight by analyzing three canonical texts, José María Arguedas's *Todas las sangres* (1964), Manuel Scorza's *Redoble por Rancas* (1970), and Mario Vargas Llosa's *Lituma en los Andes* (1993). I use



Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization to describe a process of undoing codes, expressions and contexts where objects escape their pre-assigned roles becoming new components of an unexpected assemblage. This chapter allows us to understand that mining literature's concerns extend far beyond the phenomenology of the miner as a victim, or the affective surplus of gold prospectors. *Todas las sangres* and *Redoble por Rancas* document processes that unfold in longer, perhaps non-anthropocentric temporalities; Arguedas's work before and after *Todas las sangres* inquires into the molecular scales of movement in the rock and the mineral encountered by his protagonists. *Lituma en los Andes* prompt us to rethink the detective novel through the figure of the geologist, a specialist in the long temporalities, layers of history and the effects of time and pressure. These texts also reveal a fading away of the miner as an epic subject emerging from oppression to configure the desires and hopes of a new social. Now the mine is depicted in passing by these texts and often used as a symbol for the detrimental effects of modernization in rural and proto-urban Peru. In *Lituma* the mine is little more than a dump for sacrificed bodies offered by the locals to please the Apus or mountain gods. The mine appears to have lost its impetus as a generative site of resistance and is rather depicted as the paradigm of a destructive modernity or the site of technified exploitation via a subdued and automated labor no longer able to imagine alternative futures but rather satisfied with earning an income as a piece in the global machine of modernized extraction.

I conclude by arguing that mining literature continues into the twenty-first century but under different trajectories, expressing different values and perhaps commanding less impetus and less certainty as to its social role: the self-righteousness characteristic of mid-century narratives has faded away, and the highly spirited combative tone of Bolivian novels is unlikely to be found in contemporary literary production. In other words, mining literature has lost its self-awareness

and self-assurance as an instrument for changing society. Literary work is still produced, but present-day narrators seem more interested in other aspects of extraction: in Chile, the melancholic voice of Hernán Rivera Letelier has used the experience of the northern saltpeter workers to recreate personal life-stories and commemorate a specific regional identity. In Peru, Roberto Rosario Vidal rehearses the experience of the miner enmeshed in antagonistic social configurations that differ little from those described by earlier mining writers.<sup>28</sup> My closing argument is that in recent decades the drive to tell mining stories shifted mediums and referents. That is, mining literature's stories are no longer told in novels, but by filmmakers and documentarists who employ the immediacy of film and visual resources to tell stories that mainly focus on nature and the pair human-nature rather than merely centering on the male miner as was traditionally the case.<sup>29</sup>

Much of mining literature is concerned with miners, prospectors, industrialists and other roles who tend to be fulfilled by male subjects. Occasional strong female characters emerge out of some narratives, and when they do, I analyze their interventions in the plot keeping always in mind the social positioning of the author who was someone usually belonging to the male *letrado* class and therefore spoke from their class perspective. This is the case in Chapter 2, where I observe the roles and duties, but also the agency of female characters in *Socavones de angustia*, or prostitutes

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<sup>28</sup> Rivera Letelier is a commercially successful author whose work attempts to rescue the experience of the saltpeter workers. His novel *La reina Isabel cantaba rancheras*, (1994) captured national attention. See Solotorevsky, Myrna. "Pseudo-Real Referents and Their Function in *Santa María de las flores negras*, by Hernán Rivera Letelier and Amuleto by Roberto Bolaño." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 4 no. 2, (2006): 249-256. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/pan.0.0101. Rosario Vidal is a Peruvian former mine administrator who has published a series about his fictionalized experiences in the mine camps of Peru for over 30 years: *Volcán de Viento* (Lima: Editorial San Marcos, 2008), and *Volcán de fuego, Pique Esperanza* (Lima: Editorial San Marcos, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> Among the documentaries that have achieved a degree of international visibility are the Peruvian production *Hija de la laguna* (2015), centered around the conflict over mine exploration in Cajamarca; the American-Colombian production *Marmato* (2014), a chronicle of the arrival of a Canadian gold mining company in a small mining town in the Colombian mountains; and *Minerita* (2015), which tells the story of women who work as night guards in the Cerro Rico mining district in Potosí and face physical and sexual abuse from other miners.

depicted as sympathizers of the miners' efforts in *El precio del estaño*, or when I evaluate the poem-assemblages crafted by Neruda where voice is given to the female victims of the exploitation of human life on the margins of the Chilean territory. These voices constitute privileged points for accessing a differential subject perspective that reveals new insights into the complex and vast hyperobject mining and its relations to and formed among us. Their views however are not included systematically in the novels, and literary attention is mostly centered on the exploitation of the male, sometimes indigenous, miner, with limited space directly given to the agency of women, children and other subjects. It is true that in mining film, by contrast, there is a tendency to explore life-stories told from a female point of view, and to focus on how women are not only victims but important components in assemblages formed to resist capitalist exploitation, as in *Hija de la laguna* (2014), or physical and sexual abuse, as in *Minerita* (2015).<sup>30</sup> But overall this project does not aim at an anthropology of the mine, but to examine other aspects of mining: the protagonist role of ores and metals, the effects of larger-than-human scales, the processes of slow and invisible violence and other non-anthropocentric issues. In other words, probes beyond stories of human exploitation and accompanying melodrama.

My hope is that this contribution will expand the scope of our critical inquiries by including the concern to investigate the way in which non-human actors, elements or matter come into relations with human agents altering and forming reality. Another way to put it could be not to ask what *is* the mineral or what is the miner, or even what is mining literature, but rather, following the materialist thinking of seventeenth-century philosopher Benedict Spinoza, what can *become* of

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<sup>30</sup> In the future, I plan to study in more depth the symbolic and social configurations—focusing on the role and complex subjectivity of female land defenders—presented in mining film from the wider American context to include South, Central, and North American productions.

it? What can the body of a miner do? What can the mineral do? And what can mining writing accomplish in the social field?

## Chapter 2: Mining Literature in Bolivia - Hyperobject, Affect and Becoming

Mining in the region has been traditionally understood as either an economic activity or a cultural/social process.<sup>1</sup> I argue that to understand it more comprehensively and constructively, we have to go beyond traditional disciplinary definitions to really grasp the vast and multiple dimensions of this object and its yet-to-be-seen consequences on human and non-human life. My wager is that only a new understanding of mining—not as a mere economic activity or as the archetype of economic imperialism or colonial oppression—would allow us to see things which were previously hidden, such as the omnipresence of the mineral in all forms of life, or the slow temporalities at which violence is inflicted on miners and other life-forms. These new insights can only emerge when one repositions one's own critical gaze to detect encompassing processes and objects ignored by traditional literary analysis and related disciplinary apparatuses. This discussion is thus guided by terms and notions from both literary and nonliterary fields that combined yield a relationship of productive tension on the reading of the primary texts, the writers and commentators concerned as well as on mining as an entity unto itself in the region.

Here, I focus specifically on three Bolivian novels, *En las tierras de Potosí* (1911) by Jaime Mendoza, *El oro negro* (1921) by Julián Céspedes, and *Los eternos vagabundos* (1939), by Roberto Leitón because they pay careful attention to several aspects of mining in Latin America,

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the works mentioned in the Introduction there are other historical accounts that focus on the socio-cultural formations produced by mineral extraction in the Andes but are deeply structured in their disciplines and fail to consider trans-disciplinary perspectives or fiction literature as object of their study. See for example, Heraclio Bonilla, *El minero de los Andes: una aproximación a su estudio*, (Lima: Instituto de estudios peruanos, 1974); and *Buscando un Inca* Alberto Flores Galindo (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1988). For a more recent historical anthropology of Cerro de Pasco in Peru see *Transformations in Labor, Land and Community: Mining and Society in Pasco, Peru, 20<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present* a doctoral thesis by Federico M. Helfgott. More recent accounts such as Maristella Svampa, *Del cambio de época al fin de ciclo* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2017) analyze extractive economies in the context of progressive governments of the so called “Pink Tide.”

such as the becoming of the miner, the pattern of physical displacement, and the intensities and affects always at work in the milieu. My reading of these primary sources centers on three theoretical concepts: the hyperobject, affect and becoming. Building on Timothy Morton's work, I argue that mining in the region is so encompassing that it can now be conceptualized as a hyperobject which affects both bodies and discourses. This affect in turn induces a becoming which, following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, I use to designate a process of change, flight, or movement within an assemblage. These terms allow me to rethink the ontology of mining as an object that goes beyond a determinate set of relations, practices or process of accumulation.

Reading Latin American mining literature from a hyperobjective and Deleuzian perspective does not constitute a departure from the human experience, i.e., the miner's *Lebenswelt* which is characterized by his uprooting, subjection to brutal labor conditions and a set of strong familial and communitarian social bonds. Rather, my intention is to "step back" to better observe other -previously ignored- dynamics of mining. My attention to larger spatial and temporal scales responds to my dissatisfaction with tiresome repetition of themes and concerns so common in the Spanish American literary criticism. My aim is to carry out a critical reading of texts that does not just repeat the critical gesture of the text itself. This decision to incorporate theoretical readings from other disciplines responds in part to Carlos Alonso's warning about literary criticism of the Spanish American regional novel. In *The Spanish American Regional Novel: Modernity and Autochthony* (1990), Alonso describes how most literary criticism about the *novela de la tierra* has accepted and adopted the same rhetorical discourse deployed by the original work. According to his genealogy, critical discourse tends to imitate a set of rhetorical gestures already expressed

in the novels themselves. And this mimesis, this “continuity [...] between discourses,”<sup>2</sup> tends to make critical work on these texts appear “as mere paraphrase, if not an outright repetition.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, when criticism becomes description it has effectively abdicated thought in favor of a repetition of the work.

My critique strives to depart from this repetition in description by borrowing from other disciplines. For instance, the objective of discussing early mining texts such as *En las tierras de Potosí* (1911), *El oro negro* (1921), and *Los eternos vagabundos* (1939), texts imbued with a positivist impulse in their rhetorical discourse, is not so much to deconstruct their outmoded (and implicitly paternalistic, sexist, and racist) claims, but to locate in them something that always escaped earlier criticism. In causal order: the partially hidden but larger-than-life hyperobject, the affective intensity inherent in the figure of the miner, and the becoming of the author which was always self-inscribed in his texts performing a continuous re-subjectification while writing.

The decision to borrow from Speculative Realist Philosophy, or from Deleuze and Guattari’s work does not equate to a flight from vernacular social criticism invested in the figure of the Latin American miner. Au contraire, these cases represent an opening towards an analysis of the cultural logics of extraction and its representation in literature, paying attention to the impact of mining on human and nonhuman life, which was previously disregarded or barely conceptualized in the narrative. I believe that this opening, based on the careful analysis of early mining texts, will contribute to advance a new understanding of the Latin American literature of resources and mining.

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<sup>2</sup> Alonso, *The Spanish American Regional Novel*, 70.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. *Novel*, 71.

## 2.1 Martín: Hyperobject and Becoming

Consider becoming enveloped by particles of mineral all around your body. You're a miner and dust has landed on your skin, but also found its way into your lungs via nose, eyes, mouth. This is a shocking image, but beyond its repulsiveness it raises several questions about the nature of what we call mining. This is exactly one of the first experiences described in mining texts in general, and in particular the image that welcomes the protagonist of the first twentieth-century mining novel, Martín, in *En las tierras de Potosí* to the world of the mine. When Martín finds himself enveloped by dust on his arrival to the Llallagua mines, his friend and host Emilio promptly interjects: "Este es el país del polvo. Nadie se libra de él. El polvo es el rey. Es como un símbolo. La misma industria se reduce a hacer polvo. [...] Aquí el estaño está en todas partes: en el seno de la tierra y en su superficie, en la arena, en las piedras, en el agua... —¿Y en el aire?— añadió Martín con buen humor. —También, y, por ende, en la ropa de las personas, en su piel, en sus pulmones, en su estómago. . . — ¿Y en su cerebro? —En su cerebro sobre todo."<sup>4</sup>

The industry of mining has effectively reached inside the body and in fact the bodies of thousands more who earn a living working the rich tin veins of Bolivia. This penetration is not restricted to the private organism; it also operates at a macro level turning the entire nation, symbolically and to a degree factually, into a factory of dust. Mining has effectively intruded all sorts of spaces: bodies as well as constructs. I argue that mining as described here ceases to be a

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<sup>4</sup> Jaime Mendoza, *En las tierras de Potosí*, (Barcelona: Imprenta Viuda de Luis Tasso, 1911), 52-54. The citations provided here are taken from this edition. All translations are mine unless noted otherwise. "This is the country of dust. Nobody gets rid of it. The dust is king. It's like a symbol. The industry itself is in charge of producing powder [...] Here tin is everywhere: in the bosom of the earth and in its surface, in the sand, in the stones, in the water ... — And in the air?— Martín added with good humor. —There as well and therefore, in people's clothing, in their skin, in their lungs, in their stomach . . . —And in their brain? —In their brain above all." An electronic transcript of the book is at [http://laturka.webcindario.com/tierras\\_del\\_potosi.htm](http://laturka.webcindario.com/tierras_del_potosi.htm).



tradition or a trade and becomes an object that goes beyond all calculation and which is for the most part still unaccounted for. I say beyond calculation and unaccounted for because the impact of mineral extraction (biological and social) on ecosystems and human bodies is still unfolding as we speak and in many cases these effects are not yet fully understood by modern science or mining experts.<sup>5</sup> This leads to thinking about mining as a type of object—perhaps a hyperobject—that defies the boundaries of traditional thought. I base my reading on Timothy Morton’s *Hyperobjects* (2013), where he explores the commonality of entities marked by vast spatial and temporal dimensions. Morton defines hyperobjects as “things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans,”<sup>6</sup> such as global warming, black holes, radioactive contamination. As multidimensional vast objects, they seem to challenge familiar scales of time and space, as well as our relation to one another, and to non-humans. Ethnographer Stephen Muecke offers a definition in laymen’s terms: “You can’t pick them up as easily as an orange. They exceed human apprehension, but we constantly notice their local manifestations. They challenge our assumptions of human mastery over things; we can philosophize more simply about the existence of ordinary things like oranges, but hyperobjects are scary game-changers, and they have a touch of the sublime.”<sup>7</sup> I argue that mining uncannily resembles the objects or hyperobjects considered by

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<sup>5</sup> “The evaluation of environmental health impacts of mining and smelting is a very difficult task, because of the complexity of factors that should be submitted to assessment as well as lack of uniform methodology, which may lead to conflicting results.” Stanislaw Dudka, and Domy C. Adriano, “Environmental Impacts of Metal Ore Mining and Processing: A Review.” *Journal of Environmental Quality* no. 26 (1997): 591, doi:10.2134/jeq1997.00472425002600030003x. Huancavelica in Peru, the most prolific source of mercury in Spanish America during the rule of the Spanish Empire is a dramatic example of long-term contamination and unknown effects of toxic metals released into the environment. In the study “Remedial Investigation: Huancavelica Mercury Remediation Project Huancavelica, Peru.” Bryn Thoms, RG and Nicholas Robins of Environmental Health Council noted that “outdoor soil, earthen homes, indoor air, sediment, and food in and near Huancavelica are contaminated with Mercury (Hg) from historic Hg processing associated with colonial era mining operations at the nearby Santa Barbara mine.” 10; The full article can be accessed at: <http://www.ehcouncil.org/eng/files/2016/03/RI-english-1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Morton, *Hyperobjects*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Muecke, “Global Warming and Other Hyperobjects.”

Morton specifically in regards to two characteristics that define them: Nonlocality and Phasing. Hyperobjects are nonlocal simply because they are massively distributed in time and space to the extent that their totality cannot be realized in any particular local manifestation. For example, global warming is a hyperobject that impacts meteorological conditions, such as tornado formation. According to Morton, though, objects don't feel global warming, but instead experience tornadoes as they cause damage in specific places. Thus, nonlocality describes the manner in which a hyperobject becomes “more substantial than the local manifestations they produce.”<sup>8</sup> In a similar fashion mining and its diverse effects cannot be pinned down to a specific location and rationalized as a contained event with contained byproducts. Rather, mining has been carried out for so long and in so many places on earth that it has come to define our way of living greatly. We cannot think of ourselves separately from the product and waste that result from our habit of digging metals and rocks out of the ground.

Since hyperobjects are by definition the largest, longest-lasting objects we know it follows that our equipment to detect them (head and ears but also computer models and graphs) cannot apprehend them entirely and immediately but in parts and intermittently. “Hyperobjects occupy a higher dimensional space than we can experience directly, we can only experience somewhat constrained slices of them at any one time. The hyperobject global warming churns away, emitting ghosts of itself for my perusal.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, hyperobjects appear to come and go in three-dimensional space, but would appear differently to an observer with a higher multidimensional view. Mining or “global mining” can be considered a hyperobject in that in order to apprehend it

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<sup>8</sup> Morton, *Hyperobjects*, 48.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 74.

we must look at mines, minerals, waste, miners, companies, hammers, prostitutes and boomtowns beyond our economic or sociological minds and instead conceptualize them as indexes or parts of a larger entity. The value of the narratives discussed in this chapter is that they locate the hidden ghosts, or the phasing of the hyperobject as they describe the multiplicity and heterogeneity of mining in its many forms. Analyzed as a whole these texts allow a clearer view into the nature of mining beyond stereotyped assumptions and common places.

Martín's experience described above opens up a set of questions concerning the threshold of categories such as object/subject, internal/external when conceptualizing miner and mineral in such circumstances. For instance: Is the experience of the Bolivian miner so liminal that one can argue that worker and commodity become one, or perhaps from a different angle, become neither? If so, how did we obtain such scenario? After all, miner and mineral form the most basic components of a complex and productive assemblage where any attempt at extrapolation becomes at best futile. And in terms of representation, how does the creole literary and rhetorical discourse respond to this? If the categories of object/subject become challenged by the formation and becoming of the assemblage mine, miner, writer, novel etc. perhaps the notion of a centric, disinterested subjectivity (writer) and an objectified and neutralized referent (miner) can no longer function as stable separate entities, but are always already becoming something else altered and modulated by lines, intensities and discourses. Here, neither one is just himself; rather, they are entities that are slowly becoming imperceptible. Each affects and changes the other in a two-way relationship. The miner affects the writer's work and the writer's discourse affect the miner and the notion that readers of this literature use to form their own rhetorical interventions about the latter. These "becomings" will be discussed using the experience of Martín in *En las tierras de Potosí* and the protagonists of *El oro negro*.

*En las tierras de Potosí* is the first twentieth-century work of Bolivian literature entirely dedicated to the topic of mineral exploitation articulated from a positivist but denunciative framework of realism and social critique. I begin the discussion commenting on this text because of its focus on the becoming mineral of its protagonist Martín, and its attention to the hyperobject mining. The novel tells the story of Martín, who sets off to the mining town of Llallagua in search of opportunities in the tin mining business.<sup>10</sup> Once there, he undergoes a series of transformations. In what follows, I read Martín's experience as the first of a series of becomings. At this point it is important to remember Gilles Deleuze's discussions on becoming as a "line of flight."<sup>11</sup> In his *Dialogues* (1987, with Claire Parnet), Deleuze clarifies what he and co-author Félix Guattari mean by becoming: "In a becoming something passes between two terms such that both are modified: It is not man who sings or paints, it is man who becomes animal, but at exactly the same time as the animal becomes music, or pure color, or an astonishingly simple line: with Mozart's birds [in *Die Zauberflöte*] it is the man who becomes a bird, because the bird becomes music. Melville's mariner [from *Moby Dick*] becomes albatross when the albatross itself becomes extraordinary whiteness, pure vibration of white."<sup>12</sup> In other words, becoming erodes stable identities and tends toward becoming imperceptible

In the narrative this becoming is twofold: it is seen most clearly (1) in the gradual transformation of different protagonists and characters when they first come in contact with the rocks, the mountains, the dust, but it is also working (2) in the subconscious of the author who

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<sup>10</sup> The decade of the 1900's is considered by economic historians as the decade of emergence of Bolivian tin export. The steady increase in production by 1895 output was slightly more than 4000 tons and in 1900 nearly 7000 tons. See Griess, "The Bolivian Tin Industry," 240.

<sup>11</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 73.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

writes about miners. This is so because the affective charge of the miner as a historical but also as an individualized subject is so high that it effectively destabilizes the writer's subjectivity and displaces him, perhaps without him even noticing, to a new stage where miner and writer are closer than they would ever thought. But affect and becoming in the literature of mining do not appear ex-nihilo. They are caused by the long lasting multidimensional consequences of the hyperobject mining as it spreads beyond our detection.

In Llallagua, Martín slowly realizes that his dream of acquiring a fortune through the apparently simple business of buying and speculating with contracts is just an illusion. Soon after his arrival, Martín's plans take a turn for the worse. Instead of easy money, he encounters desolation and hopelessness all around: unemployment, exploitation, destructive drinking on paydays, and so on. But there is also hope expressed in the ethical values of some characters through the narrative. We learn about Emilio, Martín's childhood friend who works as a sort of clandestine middleman between the miners who produce sacks of stolen mineral and local buying agencies. Emilio serves as Martín's link to the town and is peculiar due to his occasional anarchist and communist digressions, which notably go entirely unheard by Martín. Other characters are Lucas "el niño," a handsome but humble young man who plays the role of a local Robin Hood by reselling tin to help the poor; Claudina, a "*cholita*"<sup>13</sup> from a poor family who works as a mineral washer (*lavadora*) with whom Martín falls in love, but who rejects him and finally betrays him escaping with a lover during a carnival night; and in the last chapters, the mine doctor, who together with Martín can be read as a literary symbol where Mendoza, a doctor himself, projects

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<sup>13</sup> "Cholo" is the common signifier in Latin America for a person of mixed Spanish and Indian heritage. In the Bolivian context Herbert S. Klein identifies them as "The urban lower and middle classes and the rural farmers who wore European dress spoke Spanish and one of the Amerindian languages." Klein, *A Concise History of Bolivia*, xii.

his values by deploying an autobiographical discourse that exalts the virtues of experience and wisdom over material gains. The contrast between Martín's optimism and other characters' influences on him is set against the background of unquantifiable affects, such as the strong collective pathos lived in a mining community, the schizophrenic nature of days of carnival, the effects of communal drunkenness and the poetics of the land.

Mendoza constructs Martín as a vehicle through which the reader can access spaces that are otherwise physically and poetically inaccessible to him and Martín fulfills this role perfectly. He is the son of a well-to-do Sucre family who renounces his prospective career in law and the privilege implied by his status, gender and age. *En las tierras de Potosí* is a Bildungsroman about the formative experiences that Martín encounters located in the specificity of a provincial mining town in a provincial country during the early years of the twentieth century. I read *En las tierras de Potosí* paying attention to the displacement that Martín experiences not without some pain in certain spheres of his life previously taken for granted. This undoing or becoming is not only Martín's but Mendoza's himself and along with them the reader's. The experience of reading the book is an opening to a displacement that is not only representation (Martín) but active in the reader as one ceases to be a reader and enters a becoming miner, and with him a becoming mineral. The reader becomes miner when she shares more things with the miner than previously perceived. The reader is not imitating but her affinities to the miner are increasing as when she begins to think like a miner when caught in the narrative, when following the path of a story which shares much with a mineral vein or an assemblage containing these elements. This becoming, always running along different lines and temporalities, is caused by the exposure to the hyperobject mining. Martín's first encounter with it proves revelatory in the sense that his idea about mining is suddenly shaken by direct experience and anecdotal observation by his host Emilio.

The first instance of this displacement is in the first and second chapters where Martín on route to Llallagua slowly and painfully abandons his poised persona and concedes to the hardships of travel: this is a series of minor privations that affect him physically as well as subjectively. Martín is already another subject. No longer the son of the local landowning family, he is subjected to the inconveniences of renting mules and dealing with insolent innkeepers. Once Martín arrives to Llallagua, he is hosted by his friend Emilio and decides to go out for a walk to become familiarized with his surroundings. Next, they visit the mines, the mill and soon Martín realizes the extent to which mining has invaded every sphere of life as was noted in the passage cited above. The image of the excessive presence of dust everywhere reveals, maybe without Mendoza even noticing, one of the most fascinating points of departure for examining mining literature: the inescapability of the mineral. Here, mining is already described as a larger-than-life affair. Or as a hyper-object made of bodies, tools, acts and discourses that envelop the subject beyond his own realization.

The becoming of Martín does not stop here; on the contrary, it continues in unsuspected ways. Martín experiences this becoming also by dealing with the patent rejection caused by his bourgeois values in a provincial town such as Llallagua. Eventually Martín does find a job, but this is nowhere close to the mine contractor job he had in mind. He's offered a post as a mine supervisor making sure the mineral-washing women, the *lavadoras*, do their job and do not steal any tin from the raw mineral. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, the process of "becoming-" is not one of imitation or analogy, it is "generative of a new way of being that is a function of influences rather than resemblances. The process is one of removing the element from its original functions and bringing about new ones."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Heckman, "'Gotta catch 'em all: Capitalism, the war machine and the Pokémon trainer.'"

Martín's becoming is not imitating or acting as a miner, but undergoing a slow process of blurring of stable identities where Martín, miner and mineral form an assemblage made up of human and non-human life and objects that unfold as the narrative progresses. This is the real or *subterranean* plot of *En las tierras de Potosí*. Reading Deleuze's concept of becoming alongside the novel allows us to understand how Martín becomes miner and becomes mineral, as ultimately the mineral in this context is no longer a product or byproduct of miners' labor, but is one with the body and their thinking. Mendoza describes Martín's realization of the degree of pervasiveness of the mineral "El polvo se la había metido por todas partes. Sus ojos estaban enrojecidos bajo su acción; por la boca tragaba y escupía tierra. Su negra cabellera ya no era negra. Sus orejas eran depósitos de aquella. Y hasta en los más íntimos rincones de su cuerpo se le había metido la tierra."<sup>15</sup> But Martín is not alone in this becoming: even mining writers undergo a process of becoming miner and becoming mineral as the miner and the mineral cease to be such and become a story, a referent or a symbol in their narration. In mining literature, the author receives the heightened affect emanating from the hyperobject via the literary referent, the miner and other related assemblages only to become affected by the same events he chooses to narrate and in turn write a mining text that reflects this affect. Author becomes miner, mineral, proletarian, because they undergo a process of deterritorialization in which the properties of the constituent element disappear and are replaced by the new properties of the assemblage. Again, the author does not imitate a rock or a miner but there is a rock-becoming on the condition that the rock itself becomes

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<sup>15</sup> "The dust had gotten everywhere. His eyes were red; he swallowed and spat dirt. His black hair was no longer black. His ears were held it. And even in the most intimate corners of his body the dust had gotten in." Mendoza, *En las tierras de Potosí*, 29.



something else, line, sound, block for “everything which changes passes along that line: assemblage.”<sup>16</sup>

Others also turn Martín into a miner just by surrounding him in the most natural circumstances: for example, in Chapter 12 we encounter the paradoxical image of Martín secretly pitying the poor women he is supposed to watch while they in turn mock him for being ill-suited to the job: “Algunas cuchicheaban entre ellas y aun se reían mirando de reojo al *canchero* (Martín) que, de cuando en cuando pasaba cerca vigilando el trabajo, con su delgado gabán que mal le cubría del frío ambiente.”<sup>17</sup> As the weeks go by, Martín grows intrigued by a *cholita*, Claudina, who works under his watch. But a deeper and confusing mood overwhelms him as he begins to understand that he is fascinated with Claudina and repulsed at himself for falling for a *cholita*: “¿Sería que también su gusto se iba pervirtiendo? Martín, al pensar en esto, no dejaba de sentirse avergonzado. [...] Las polleras de las *cholas*, que tan repulsivas le habían sido en un principio, ya ahora le parecían más pasaderas y hasta hallaba algunas dispuestas con mucha gracia, v.gr. en Claudina.”<sup>18</sup> Martín is no longer the dandy boy from a wealthy Sucre hacienda, but one more miner with miner inclinations. Martín is painfully becoming something else at every turn. He is becoming when—for fear of offending local conventions—he fails to decline the *chicha* that his coworkers offer him during carnival. Overloaded with the heavy maize brew, his stomach gives up and leads him to endless nightmare-like nights followed by episodes of de-intoxication. Martín is once again

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<sup>16</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 75.

<sup>17</sup> “Some whispered among themselves and even laughed looking at the *canchero* (Martín) who from time to time walked closely watching their work and wearing his thin coat that covered him badly from the cold weather.” Mendoza, *En las tierras de Potosí*, 146.

<sup>18</sup> “Would it also be that his taste was perverting as well? When thinking about this, Martín did not cease to feel ashamed. [...] The skirts of the *cholas*, which he found repulsive at first now seemed more acceptable and even graceful, i.e., in Claudina.” Ibid., 155.

becoming when in the depth of carnival week, he realizes that while the world appears as an endless surreal party, in the humble house next door, an agonizing miner is approaching a miserable death. There is no hope of salvation, nor even a doctor, or a charitable visit. His son is in the city spending his savings in the frenetic collective party. When Martín asks if this is not a clear injustice, Emilio answers: “Al contrario. Él debe estar en la seguridad de que va haciendo una buena obra. Esperará que con su peregrinación ha de conseguir que sane su padre.”<sup>19</sup> In despair Martín struggles to assimilate the reasoning of miners.<sup>20</sup>

After a few months of laboring in terrible conditions, exasperated by his failure to understand the locals and to secure a promotion, Martín gives up his dream and renounces the company. The pay is meager and the job is menial, the routine too grey and the weather slowly driving him mad. *En las tierras de Potosí* is not structured around a dramatic event that would constitute the climax of the plot. There is no great strike or massacre as we find in other novels of mining. The story rather turns around the failed expectations of a young man aspiring to be a contractor and his permanent becoming a miner without actually being one. Mendoza narrates how on his way back, riding an old mule, Martín finally sees his hometown Sucre from the distance. He is not returning with bags full of coins but with a different form of wealth: “una que a veces vale más que sendos talegos de dinero: esa riqueza que aunque sea a costa de golpes crueles, sabe enseñar a los hombres a vivir: la experiencia.”<sup>21</sup> Experience, more than money, seems to be Mendoza’s moral affirmation at the conclusion of the novel. This is a rather different lesson from

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<sup>19</sup> “On the contrary. He must be sure that he is doing a good deed. He will hope that with his pilgrimage he will get his father to heal.” Ibid., 194.

<sup>20</sup> A case similar to Martín’s becoming in *En las tierras de Potosí* can be found in the indigenista novel *La Chaskañawi* (1947) by the Bolivian author Carlos Medinaceli.

<sup>21</sup> “A type of wealth that sometimes is worth more than two bags of money: one that even at the cost of cruel blows, teaches men how to live: experience.” Mendoza, *En las tierras de Potosí*, 355.

say *Metal del diablo* (1946), (one of the most important mining novels in Bolivia and case study in chapter 3) which condemns the greed of the great tin tycoon Simon I. Patiño, but does not say much in detail about the coming into adulthood of a miner. Mendoza seems to argue for this compensation of values based on his own experience as a privileged man of letters who was able to serve in governmental posts due to his earlier civil service as a doctor in the Altiplano mines and in the tropical lowlands of Bolivia. *En las tierras de Potosí* fails to become a collective text able to mobilize the multitude in search of new political horizons due to Mendoza's obsession with the experience of Martín and his journey.<sup>22</sup> But from a socio-ethical standpoint there is perhaps some redemption in the gesture of shedding some light on the plight of low-skilled workers in the mines of Bolivia. Mendoza's text is valuable in that it gives us a sharper image of the mining assemblages that come together in the milieu and the subjectivity of Martín and his becoming a miner.

## **2.2 The Location of the Author**

More than a work of representation about the life of the Bolivian miner, the novel is perhaps the autobiographical attempt of Mendoza to remember and relive his personal experiences while he was working as a mine physician in Llallagua and Uncía -mining towns in the department of Potosí. In contrast with social realist novels such as Bolivian Fernando Velarde's *Socavones de angustia* (1947) and Chilean Volodia Teitelboim's *Hijo del salitre* (1952), the novel is articulated as a device designed by and for members of the local political elites and the European readership.

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<sup>22</sup> Guillermo Lora advances a critique of Mendoza's novel on the account that it fails to include the most important elements of the mining world; namely, the lives of miners, descriptions of the natural landscape, the importance of miners' rituals about el Tío and most importantly the critical role of the working class—embodied by the miner class—in the national history of Bolivia. Lora, *Ausencia de la gran novela minera*, 77.

Mendoza, like his contemporary, the Oruro born writer and journalist Julián Céspedes, author of *El oro negro*, is concerned with literary accounts about the miner but not *for* the miner. Here the miner is a vehicle to deploy their concerns about national progress, the fate of the predominantly poor native population, and plans for their redemption. Consequently, these texts can be read more as a device where the rhetoric is mainly centered *on* the miner but not necessarily intended *for* the miner who was likely illiterate and had no interest in reading *letrado* positivist rhetoric.

Their narratives, following the denunciatory spirit of French naturalist authors such as Émile Zola, are composed of a simple plot line on which they introduce lightly disguised positivist digressions that respond to their own socio-political concerns more than to the requirements of literary demands. Thus, their novels read at times more like a pamphlet than a work of literature preoccupied with the literary as such. For the most part, this is not done in conjunction with or consulting the miners themselves. Nor through the production of a collective text that enunciates as one anonymous mass in the fashion of *testimonio*. But rather, conferring the authority of speech to the author as the sole figure able to “translate” -using the medium of the novel- the local social preoccupations of the time across publics and language. In these works, the old Parnassian dictum of “art for art’s sake” remains geographically as well as literarily foreign. In my view then, Mendoza represents a continuation of *letrado* writers who assumed the responsibility of offering a historical and social analysis on the Bolivian subaltern always accompanied with a set of parameters to improve the social ills that affect this segment of the nation. Following Doris Sommers’s genealogy, authors such as Jaime Mendoza and Julián Céspedes can be grouped as commentators who “[t]ypically wrote from a nativist or reformist opposition in order to sway

opinion about, say, race relations or economic policy.”<sup>23</sup> The critic argues that canonical figures of nineteenth-century political thought such as Argentinean Domingo F. Sarmiento constituted archetypal *letrados* who embodied a spirit of nation building through literature and, more specifically, education. This last point is particularly true in the case of mining literature where the role of the educator in the mining milieu described by most narratives is often deployed as a progressive agent in the plot. In *La novela social de Bolivia* (1973), Evelio Echevarría reminds us how the educator, present in almost all accounts, appears not only as a character but as a liberal voice through which writers of the time expressed their social and pedagogical concerns for the nation. Echevarría notes that, in addition to the figure of the educator, other two personae play similar roles in mining narratives: physicians and union leaders.<sup>24</sup> In *En las tierras de Potosí* and other works discussed here the doctor appears as this progressive figure. In later works discussed in chapter 2 mining literature becomes more politicized and includes the union leader and the teacher as figures that guide the mining collective in their struggle against the status quo.

Throughout most of the works discussed here prefaces, epilogues and occasional digressions from the plot evidence a pressing need to advise, explain, interpret: in short, to serve as a sort of cultural translator mediating between subaltern and elites. We will find similar cases of this writing modality in subsequent mining novels, such as *El oro negro*, or *Mina* (1952) by educator Alfredo Guillén Pinto and his wife Natty Peñaranda de Guillén Pinto. These works not only served as cultural vehicles of communication, but perhaps more latently reveal a profound gap that separated miners from the writers interested in the miner experience who took to write

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<sup>23</sup> Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Evelio Echevarría, *La novela social de Bolivia*, (La Paz: Difusión Ltda., 1973), 132.

about their world: *letrado* and subaltern constitute the formal model of this production. Early mining literature in Bolivia is always saturated with this tension. This model, prevalent in the early part of the century, will eventually morph allowing space for other representational strategies and rhetorical discursivities: by the late 1940's and 1950's, different literary and pictorial choices effectively regrouped into other forms of making literature, perhaps more democratic and closer to experience itself, producing works like *Socavones de angustia* (1947) or *El precio del estaño* (1968) by Néstor Taboada Terán in Bolivia and Volodia Teitelboim's *Hijo del salitre* (1952) or Baltazar Castro's *Sewell* (1946) in Chile.

Early texts such as *En las tierras de Potosí* or *El oro negro* testify to the fact that authors of the time were not only concerned with the construction of a poetics of their referent, but also sharply aware that the social and denunciatory tone of their works needed to be supported in material reality. In other words, Mendoza is careful to give his towns and mines real names as if following the imperative of backing his claims with factual places and descriptions. He also uses his personal experience as a physician to document and enhance his literary narratives. But again, beyond this autobiographical or autofictional impulse, Mendoza seems to be writing as mentioned earlier, for a foreign audience employing a “explicatory drive” that permeates passages of the work and describes perhaps sometimes redundantly the details of the mining industry and the culture it produces. Mendoza and other authors in a few words wrote for the foreigner, for the Latin American intellectual residing in Paris or the European men of letters who needed assistance on behalf of the author to locate native and critical referents inside the work.<sup>25</sup> Mendoza's *En las*

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<sup>25</sup> A case in point is the Bolivian writer and diplomat Adolfo Costa du Rels, who published most of his works in French. His work and language of choice embodies the radical end of this logic of location. One needs only to examine the chronology of publication of his novel: *Terres embrasées: roman* (1930), published in Spanish as *Tierras hechizadas* (1940), and in English as *Bewitched Lands* (1945). *Bewitched Lands* -an unremarkable *costumbrista* novel

*tierras de Potosí*, originally written in Paris and published in Barcelona in the publishing house Viuda de Luis Tasso in 1911, became rather than a text written for miners -in any way- or uniquely about the miner, a point of reference for early political commentators such as Bolivian writers Alcides Arguedas and Franz Tamayo, frequent visitors to liberal circles in Europe.

*En las tierras de Potosí* is, according to critics Evelio Echevarría and Javier Sanjinés the first novel on the so-called mining cycle that opens up the Bolivian literary tradition from 1911 and concludes with the culmination of the Revolution of 1952 and the nationalization of the mines.<sup>26</sup> As such it is worth examining (1) as a document removed from the spirit of the following decades that insisted on the liberation of the miner through the construction of a socialist political horizon; and (2) as a work of literature written by a member of the lettered elite of Bolivia. As a man of letters, Mendoza's text displays several properties that set him apart from other writers: namely, a more balanced descriptive approach when relating literary images, as well as a lack of either demonization or glorification of his literary antagonists (the miners *contra* the mine owner). In stark opposition to later mining novels, his works, marked by a strong reformism, never become a literary cry advocating for rebellion or revolution. *En las tierras de Potosí* can be conceptualized as the chronicle of the coming to maturity of Martín as he experiences the dramatic world of the tin miners. This exploration occurs not only as a literary study of the labor conditions of the workers, but is extended into other spheres of miner life. Mendoza, through the narrative vehicle that is Martín, exposes the reader to unexpected dimensions of everyday life: the presence of nature

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about the discovery of oil in a remote hacienda in the lowlands of Bolivia- was made available to the most directly affected and interested parties, only ten years after its original publication in Paris, in French.

<sup>26</sup> Evelio Echevarría, *La novela Social de Bolivia*, 41. See Javier Sanjinés's "Discurso minero y lo simbólico en la recomposición popular." *Hispanamérica* 18, no. 53/54 (August-December 1989): 25-34. Also, Luis H. Antezana's "Rasgos discursivos de la narrativa minera boliviana" in *Ensayos escogidos: 1976-2010*, (La Paz: Plural Editores, 2011).

in the wind that sweeps the altiplano during Martín's walk to work (or during the funerary procession of Lucas); the materialization of dust as the absolute entity that symbolizes man, the industry and the country; the unbecoming of Martín's proper bourgeois referents and tastes (for food, for dress, for language, for the normative idea of a female companion) -a sort of ever escaping proletarianization of his subjectivity; the peculiar juxtaposition of the ideas of life and death mediated by the representation of the native carnival and terminal illness. As the first modern account dedicated specifically to study the life of the miner, *En las tierras de Potosí* functions as a model for later writers to imitate or reject when writing about the place of the miner in the political and historical specificity of Bolivia.<sup>27</sup> An extension of this discourse takes place in the short novella *El oro negro* where Julián Céspedes focuses on the tumultuous life of three miners also paying close attention to the dynamics of mining in terms of large scales and temporalities.

### **2.3 *El oro negro* and Affect**

Writers are always at the point of intersection of a myriad affects. Reading *En las tierras de Potosí* revealed how affect, defined as intensities that pass body to body (human, non-human, part-body and otherwise), destabilized author Jaime Mendoza's narrative triggering a becoming in himself and in his protagonist, Martín. The mining writer, that is, the author whose main concern is exploring mining in all its forms, always creates a text that reflects these affects and becomings.

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<sup>27</sup> Succeeding Bolivian authors writing about the social question of mining will invariably react to Mendoza's account *En las tierras de Potosí* by endorsing and repeating his reformist gesture: Julián Céspedes, Alfredo Guillén Pinto, Natty Peñaranda de Guillén. Or by rejecting his bourgeois politics and calling for a more active role for the miner in literature as well as in political participation: Augusto Céspedes, Fernando Velarde Ramírez, Néstor Taboada Terán, Víctor Hugo Villegas, Mario Guzmán Aspiazu and Raúl Botelho Gosálvez. The critical literature on *En las tierras de Potosí* is scarce. Edna Coll's *Índice informativo de la novela hispanoamericana, Volume 5*, (San Juan: La Editorial UPR, 1992), offers a brief description of Jaime Mendoza's life and works. The articles cited above mention Mendoza's work in passing only. Also see the newly edited *El macizo boliviano y El factor geográfico de la nacionalidad boliviana* (La Paz: Biblioteca del Bicentenario de Bolivia, 2016) by Jaime Mendoza.



These affects aren't single but multiple and motley. Again, in Spinoza's words, affects are "affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections."<sup>28</sup> Brian Massumi's definition comes close to the use I mean when emphasizing the displacement from bodies, from the material rock to the miner, to representation. Affect is "an intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act."<sup>29</sup>

*El oro negro* manifests these intensities in a particular form: unlike most mining writers, author Julián Céspedes's prose indulges in a sort of sentimentalism that usually frames the miner in a tone of tenderness and compassion. In Céspedes's text these instances of affection toward his main literary referent, the poor miner, alternate in the narrative with more general affectual flows, such as descriptions of harsh work conditions, displacement, extravagance and death. *El oro negro* follows the life stories of a few miners struggling to find stable work and a balanced life in the town of Oruro, but if we direct our attention beyond these life stories it seems that the only protagonist is the hyperobject mining and other actors are mere reflections. Céspedes discusses how Oruro grew and declined several times always subordinated to the discovery of tin in the surrounding areas. In other words, there is no colonial history, or republican past in the Oruro presented by Céspedes, but only a town that grows and declines and a score of characters who wander around the province responding to and forming in some measure the hyperobject mining.

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<sup>28</sup> *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, trans. Edwin M. Curley, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 154.

<sup>29</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvi.

*El oro negro* tells the story of Antonio Saldaña, a common miner from the Bolivian highlands whose life seems almost determined by the boom and bust cycle of tin demand and its international price during the late 1910's. The period is not accidental but responds to the historical demand for mineral commodities during the European arms race and leading up to the Great War. Interspersed with moralist reformism and calls for better governance and temperance laws, especially in the preface, the novella reads more as a vehicle to push for a national social reform than a serious literary work on the richness of the mining collective consciousness. Likewise, the monotonous voice of *El oro negro* precludes the desired effect of assigning specificity to the form of the motley discourses that intervene in the novel.

The opening line situates the life of Antonio our protagonist under determinant macroeconomic forces: “Un entusiasmo febril se había apoderado de los habitantes de Oruro.”<sup>30</sup> The novel chronicles the lives of three miners -Antonio, his friend Nicolás and Nicolás’s wife Dorotea- as the price of minerals embarks into a veritable global roller coaster at the beginning of the century. *El oro negro* reminds us that not only the lives of the main characters seem deeply tied to these abstract forces but whole villages and towns remake themselves according to the demands of the economic seasons. The story of Antonio is atypical. Born in misery but a hard worker from early years, he is able to overcome poverty in his twenties to become one of the most prosperous miners of the region. But the achievement of wealth, as is usually the case in mining life and literature, is transitory. In a few years, Antonio loses everything and, due to his unsustainable habits, is confined to an almshouse where he will slowly recover his health and lift

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<sup>30</sup> “A feverish enthusiasm had seized the inhabitants of Oruro...” Julián Céspedes, *El oro negro* (La Paz: La prensa de José Calderón, 1921), 1.

his spirit to enter again with nothing but his ability to sell his labor power to the workforce of the local mines. Antonio's only means of subsistence is to become once more a proletarian.

After a few years of toiling under oppression, Antonio successfully organizes a labor union to demand an improvement of conditions and reduce the working day from 12 to 8 hours.<sup>31</sup> The negotiations are successful but Antonio seems bitter and removed. After meditating on the futility of all life, and specially his, one marked by senseless work and more absurd habits of wasting money and health, he decides to take his own life by detonating a stick of dynamite in his mouth on an isolated mountain. The triggering event for the suicide, according to author Julián Céspedes, was perhaps reading modernist and nihilistic literature, specifically the radical work of the Colombian poet José María Vargas Vila: "Los aforismos de Vargas Vila habían hecho profunda huella en su cerebro débil y enfermizo."<sup>32</sup> Rarely do the readers of mining literature encounter this unexpected turn of events. Miners never commit suicide. They endure one of the harshest working environments ever imaginable but their commitment to their family, their peers and their culture weigh heavier than the compounded difficulties. This is the first and perhaps the only instance of a miner taking his own life in the corpus.

Secondly, committing suicide after reading modernist literature seems to be more the resolution of a Romantic novel than the realistic end of a common miner. True, Antonio enjoyed his wealth in Bolivian cities surrounded by school friends and women during long nights of debauchery. But Céspedes never hints at Antonio's interest in literature, much less anticlerical writings of the Colombian critic. The anachronism seems to be more the result of Céspedes's

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<sup>31</sup> Céspedes, *El oro negro*, 96.

<sup>32</sup> "The aphorisms of Vargas Vila made a deep impression on his weak and diseased brain." Ibid., 97.

confused prose, where the development of the literary plot is interrupted by pamphleteering digression, than the possibility of Antonio ever reading the Nietzschean writings of Vargas Vila. Be that as it may, and despite its shortcomings, the novel offers the intriguing episode of Antonio's absolute self-effacement as well as other points worth examining. Let's recall that Antonio's last act is marked by the trace of the suicide letter. The letter, as expected, turns out to be another moralistic intervention addressed to the youth of the time exhorting them to exercise the habit of saving and to live in moderation.

But let's return to the narrative and explore a couple of points. In my reading of Latin American literature of mining, I have seldom found texts that express the general tenderness, which often times borders on paternalism, when addressing the plight of the mine workers of the Bolivian highlands. *El oro negro* certainly suffers from a monotonous register and a lack of depth when exploring the subjectivity of extraction. Nevertheless, critics have noted, regardless of these flaws, the compassion that moves Céspedes to write works in defense of the oppressed.<sup>33</sup> In *El oro negro*, there is no mention or homage to early chroniclers of the discovery such as Bartolomé de las Casas or Felipe Guamán Poma; however, Céspedes infuses the narration of downturns and the solitary deaths of Nicolás and Dorotea with a dose of social compassion that one rarely encounters in the literature of the time. Recall the description of the final days of Dorotea: “Una mañana fría de invierno, Dorotea cerró los ojos para no abrirlos más. En medio de los sollozos y del llanto de su viejo, el único que lamentó su desaparición, después de una compañía de 38 años, tanto en la

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<sup>33</sup> Edna Coll, *Índice informativo de la novela hispanoamericana Volumen 5*, (San Juan: La Editorial University of Puerto Rico, 1974), 36.

desgracia como en la buena suerte.”<sup>34</sup> One can almost feel the hopelessness in the room experienced by Nicolás who is now absolutely alone in the world and will probably not be mourned by anyone. This realization only adds to his despair.

Passages like this one evidence the sympathy that *letrados* like Céspedes express toward his fellow countrymen and countrywomen in the form of tenderness and affection. As we know, death is always imminent for the miner. But it usually takes the form of a violent accident or an untimely end brought about by alcohol-induced excesses and black lung disease. In describing these episodes there is little room for tenderness. However, it is rarely the case that the literature dedicated to mining narrates with such care and attention the death of elderly miners by “natural” causes. As we approach the end of the book, and the deaths of Antonio, Nicolás and Dorotea become inescapable, we notice that in his prose Céspedes is mourning the death of his own creations as he would that of a friend. In certain moments it appears as if Céspedes ceases to be in total command of the authorial figure that plans and assigns roles for his characters. Narrating Nicolás’s death, Céspedes resorts again to highlighting the wretchedness of such existence and the values of endurance and abnegation exemplified in the ethos of the Bolivian miner: “Nicolás había consagrado tres cuartas partes de su vida a las pesadas faenas de roturar las entrañas de la tierra para llegar a una senectud desdichada, al amparo de esas bondadosas mujeres que le brindaban hospitalidad generosa.”<sup>35</sup> The miner is no longer an object of contempt due to his dirty drunkenness, his conformity or lack of entrepreneurial spirit, but a victim of oppression left to age

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<sup>34</sup> During a cold winter morning, -one of those that make the stones burst- as the local folk used to say, Dorotea’s eyes closed to open no more. In the midst of the sobs and cries of her old man, the only one who lamented her passing, after a marriage that lasted 38 years, both during misfortune and better times. Céspedes, *El oro negro*, 111.

<sup>35</sup> “Nicolás devoted three quarters of his life to the drudgery of plowing the bowels of the earth to reach an unhappy old age, under the protection of the kind [almshouse] women, who provided them with generous hospitality.” Céspedes, *El oro negro*, 114.

in absolute destitution. For Céspedes the valuation of the native miner seems to shift as the situation of the latter reveals itself multiple and at times even undecipherable. More affected than *affecter*, Céspedes now writes under the pathos induced by the humble passing of his characters weaving the thread of description and sentimentality in homage to the simple values of the miner. I will recap the last lines of the novella to show how this impulse materializes when bringing to a close Nicolás's life and the work itself:

Nadie derramó una sola lágrima, al saber la noticia del fallecimiento de aquel esforzado obrero, que [...] fue conducido a la última morada, para ser arrojado a la fosa común y servir de pasto a los gusanos. Tal fue el triste fin de otro de los abnegados exploradores del oro negro. Sobre su tumba ha crecido el musgo del olvido y sólo han quedado estas páginas de cariñoso recuerdo para quien supo rendir culto al trabajo honrado.<sup>36</sup>

Beyond its sentimentalism, *El oro negro* presents itself as a document of witnessing authority who rescues the testimony of poor miners who were left behind by the dominant literary discourses of the time who mainly saw them as the cause of Bolivia's inferiority.<sup>37</sup> When he self-references the text in the last sentence of the quoted passage Céspedes evidences the gesture toward rescuing the stories of ordinary miners in early twentieth-century Bolivia a task that was carried out only partially in *En las tierras de Potosí* but would be further expanded in *Los eternos vagabundos* and the literature analyzed in Chapter 2. Later works like *Socavones de angustia* and *El precio del estaño* will raise the stakes of this labor by adopting ordinary mine workers, peasants, women, and children as full protagonists in their narratives. Read as a whole, the novella seems to mean that

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<sup>36</sup> "No one shed a single tear for the death of that hardworking miner who [...] was led to his last abode to be thrown into the common grave and serve of grass for the worms. Such was the sad end of another of the selfless explorer of black gold. Over his tomb the moss of oblivion has grown and only these pages of affectionate memory have remained for he who knew how to worship honest work." Ibid., 115.

<sup>37</sup> Alcides Arguedas's *Pueblo enfermo* is perhaps the best-known Bolivian iteration of the discourse of environmental determinism, race and modernity.

unless the reforms so colorfully promoted by him through the text do not come to realization, the life of the common miner will inevitably rehearse the depressing sketches delineated here.

Such a pessimistic ending conflicts directly with his otherwise positive introduction where he praises the “Los procedimientos rutinarios de antaño han sido reemplazados por nuevos sistemas de trabajo, que [...] han aliviado la situación de los obreros, evitando los frecuentes accidentes.”<sup>38</sup> It all reads the more bizarrely when we contrast the ending of the novella with the celebratory preface openly dedicated to Simon I. Patiño, the infamous Bolivian tin magnate. Céspedes praises the advancement of the national mining sector due in part to his efforts: “En sus valiosas propiedades mineras de Uncía, Huanuni y Kami, [sic] ha rodeado de todo género de garantías y comodidades a sus trabajadores, cuyas reclamaciones las atiende con solicitud y benevolencia, cual un padre cariñoso y compasivo. Como homenaje respetuoso de admiración y simpatía.”<sup>39</sup> Such an avowed endorsement alerts the reader about the hidden politics inside the piece. One is left wondering if Julián Céspedes the writer is concerned with describing reality “as it is,” a continuous demand of literary realism, or rather is used by Capital as an instrument to whitewash the scandals that plagued the Patiño mines.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> “The routine procedures of the past have been replaced by new systems of work, which [...] have alleviated the situation of the workers, avoiding the frequent accidents.” Céspedes, *El oro negro*, 1.

<sup>39</sup> “In his valuable mining properties of Uncía, Huanuni and Kami, [sic] he has surrounded his workers with all kinds of guarantees and comforts, whose claims he attends with solicitude and benevolence, like a caring and compassionate father. As a respectful homage of admiration and sympathy.” Céspedes, *El oro negro*, “Dedicatoria.”

<sup>40</sup> Guillermo Lora, *A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement 1848-1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 214. This is also, needless to say, a far cry from one of the best-known mining novels in Bolivia, *Metal del diablo* (1946) by Augusto Céspedes (no relation to the former). In said work, Augusto Céspedes launches a virulent attack on the Bolivian industrialist through the novel as the King of Tin is reduced to a caricaturesque, “estatua de estaño,” “rey mestizo,” “Buda viviente.” *Metal del diablo* can be read as an all-out denunciatory text that reveals the manipulations of capitalists to ever increase their profits at the expense of miners. The novel goes to great lengths to construct the hypothetical life of Patiño as one marked by pure chance, an ability for business and chronic avarice. *El oro negro*, on the other hand, seems to denounce the work culture of other mining companies.

## 2.4 *El oro negro* and the Hyperobject

After reading early twentieth-century Bolivian narratives, mineral extraction begins to appear less as part of a larger primary sector of the economy, and more as something that goes beyond the axe and pick or pneumatic drill. Its location seems to be highly indeterminate as mineral is discovered literally everywhere. Mining seems to be located not only at the mining camp, but at a non-location, at a vast unquantifiable space that encompasses the mineral vein as well as the deepest of the private bodies of miners: since the early days of Potosí, as mercury (*azogue*) brought from Peru entered the local waterbeds, or was breathed into the lungs of all those who live close to a mine, not only the laborer. For instance, in *El oro negro*, the protagonists as well as the urban center where they live seem to partially be more the result of the temporality of a hyperobject called mineral extraction than the product of historical national development as historians or novelists of the time would argue. As noted above, in the novel, there is no history of Oruro that explains the origins of the town, or the regional forces that converged to form the city; there is no mention of the libertarian movements born in Oruro that challenged Spanish colonial rule or the rebellion of 1781, or other developments that made Oruro what it is at the time of writing. Rather the town seems to grow and contract according to the cycles of the commodity boom and bust that characterize mining. In a few pages, we are told that the demand for tin during the Great War and its rapid decline after the armistice of November, 1918, had dramatically shaped the local economy and life in general in such towns. The hyperobject mining shapes towns in slow temporalities:

Entre tanto, los trabajos mineros se habían suspendido. Las enormes ruedas de las maquinarias ya no giraban sobre sus ejes. Los carros de los andariveles estaban colgados en el aire. Los dinamos eléctricos paralizados. El ruido incesante que producían los pisones, al triturar los metales, había cesado ya. El acompasado martillar de las palliris, ya no se escuchaba. El agitado ir y venir de los chivatos que llevaban sobre las espaldas las bolsas de cuero rebosantes de metal, había desaparecido. Aquella colmena del trabajo estaba herida de muerte. Sólo se veía el



silencioso caminar de los obreros, con las cabezas inclinadas y la mirada fija al suelo.<sup>41</sup>

Mining narratives use the category “national” to organize their interpretation on the origin of the Bolivian state or the causes of its chronic backwardness and poverty. They go on for pages devising hypothetical plans that have worked in other nations about how to improve their material conditions. In *El oro negro*, for instance, Céspedes interrupts the narrative to insert passages that add little to the literary quality of the work but allow a window for his social criticism. He laments how mining companies have been able to suppress a progressive labor law reform: “Han [sic] habido algunos ensayos de legislación obrera, de limitación de horas de trabajo; pero han sido voces aisladas que no han dejado huella de ninguna clase. Muchos representantes nacionales, surgidos por el apoyo de empresas mineras, han ahogado esas generosas tentativas, tomando el frívolo pretexto de no estar preparado el país para esas reformas revolucionarias!”<sup>42</sup>

But after reading these texts with a critical eye, one easily notices that the national is just one force among many. There is, of course, by this time a hundred-year-old nation-building project in Bolivia and in the region that attempts to find a balance between domestic and international forces always destabilizing the state. But the global forces of production and consumption that shape life, human and non-human alike, should not be overlooked, or analyzed separately without formulating the causal connections that allow for interpreting the globalization of commodities,

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<sup>41</sup> “In the meantime, mining work had been discontinued. The huge wheels of the machines no longer turned on their axes. The ferry cable carts were hanging still in the air. The incessant noise produced by the grinding metals had ceased. The cozy hammering of the *palliris* was no longer heard. The hectic come and go of young boys carrying leather bags on their backs overflowing with metal had disappeared. That hive of work was deathly wounded. One could only see the silent walk of the workers staring to the ground.” Céspedes, *El oro negro* 15.

<sup>42</sup> “There have been some attempts of labor legislation, and limiting hours of work. But they have been isolated voices that have left no trace. Many national representatives, prompted by the support of mining companies, have drowned these generous attempts, taking the frivolous pretext of not being prepared the country for these revolutionary reforms.” Ibid., 20.

territorializations and desire. Hence, the units that make up narratives like *El oro negro*—the population and sudden depopulation of Oruro, the drawing and redrawing of large areas by peasant and miner displacements, the penetration of toxic waste into the water system, among others - can be thought of as units that mark the temporality and rhythm of the hyperobject of mining. Let's recall that each hyperobject displays signs that mark its development. For instance, radiation -now globally spread-, global warming, and in this case global mining all have different stages that defy the basic scales to which thought is used to operate: regardless of any plan to contain it, radiation will be with us for the next thousands of years, the same with global warming.

The effects of global mining will also affect human and non-human life drastically, in ways that are still difficult to predict: water scarcity, species extinction, exposure to mercury and other pollutants, intensification of resource conflict, among many, present us with an indeterminate chain structured as a multiplicity of events hinged on others which are in their own way unforeseeable. If one takes another step back to observe the dynamics of social being at a larger scale, the ruination of hamlets and towns is but the materialization of this cycle at the collective scale. This embodiment is reflected in the displacements of the miner and his family as their bodies drew invisible cartographies in the Andean altiplano.

We have noted that the hyperobject mining not only has a global impact on large scale thinking as evidenced in the temporalities alluded to in *El oro negro* and the spatial dimensions that fascinated the author of *En las tierras de Potosí*, but permeates deep inside the consciousness of mining authors in the region. If the affective intensities shown in *El oro negro* took the form of sentimentality expressed in tenderness for the old and poor ex-miner, they acquire new forms and flows in later texts where historical conditions are different. *Los eternos vagabundos* by Potosí writer Roberto Leitón showcases how affect, intensities and the resonances that circulate about

and between bodies make their way to the text and reach the signifier as a unit able to refract the flows of energy emanated by the hyperobject mining.

## **2.5 *Los eternos vagabundos*: A Divided Text**

Leitón's *Los eternos vagabundos* is another case of mining literature where the heightened injustice of what's narrated, the tragedy of the Bolivian miner, or the Bolivian people as a whole, seems to alter the author's consciousness and instead of only affecting the reader - as was the writer's original purpose - it effectively begins to affect the writer himself. This was evident in early mining texts discussed above such as *El oro negro* where tenderness and affection permeate entire passages of a novel that was otherwise positivist and mainly addressed to an elite readership. I argue that in these cases the depth of pathos overflows the sensibility of the writer and unexpectedly begins to move him as much as he wanted to move the reader. But in *Los eternos vagabundos* things are somehow different as tenderness and affection do not figure prominently through the tone of the text. Rather the double register that structures the body of the text alternating with prose and lyrical fragments seems to be concerned with something else: the powerful role of nature, the almost mystical everyday routine of miners working in a desolate spot, or the effectiveness of juxtaposing images of extreme poverty next to ones of extreme wealth to raise heightened indignation and outrage. My reading of *Los eternos vagabundos* highlights the formal criteria of the novella to signal a movement away from the early pamphletarian and positivist texts discussed above. I place special emphasis on exploring the becoming of the writer, the becoming of the miner, or the intriguing interest of many of these writers with the effects and affects of what I term the hyperobject mining.

*Los eternos vagabundos* is organized as an anti-story that sometimes reads more like a cross-section of the lives of a few miners where nothing special really seems to take place. Here, the positivist prescription characteristic of early texts or the cry of denunciation and appeal to action characteristic of later mining literature, is absent. *Los eternos vagabundos* is refreshing because it simply aspires to illustrate the plight of the Bolivian miner but doing so perhaps in a more refined form. If in earlier novels we discovered entirely delineated characters and followed them through their journeys (Martín, Antonio and Dorotea), in *Los eternos vagabundos* the cast is small and partially nameless: there are a few miners, such as Lucachu, the young and rebel worker; there is also Don Marcelo, a despot mestizo manager who is the object of contempt of every miner in the story; there are a few tragic events, and there's deceit and greed but in all nothing really changes after we turn the last page.

The novella consists for the most part of dialogues between two or more miners in unnamed mining sites in the highest regions of the Cordillera Real. Their interventions begin media res, and little is given to the reader to locate herself in the narrative context. The voices the reader hears in a sort of literary staccato are one of the most realistic in all mining literature due to Leitón's good ear when transcribing oral interventions and his experience as a mine school teacher. *Los eternos vagabundos* is written in a sort of double register where two alternating discourses form the body of the text. Leitón separates prose sections by using a series of poetic images that add a sense of rhythm that in effect come to substitute the classical narrator-voice which is for the most part absent in the book. These two registers are: the conversations between miners and their families (1), and Leitón's own short interventions where he situates the reader spatially by describing the inhospitable landscape or where he inserts brief moralistic notes that portray the disproportionate imbalance of power and continual injustices perpetrated on the miners and their families (2).

The palpable modernism of his technique won Leitón praise and blame in Bolivian literary circles. He is perhaps the first writer to challenge a linear use of time and question the central role of the narrator. Augusto Guzmán famously commented on Leitón's novel: "fragments are pleasant, but little by little the reading becomes uncomfortable, it becomes excruciating for the mind in discovering if it is a story, a set of loose images or a novel."<sup>43</sup> Writer and literary critic Carlos Medinacelli added more generously: "you are the most modern writer in Bolivia. Yours is a style, as synthetic and graphic as the new times demand. You also have an outstanding pictorial vision of reality and landscape, and a way of expressing yourself so original that were you to not disregard it entirely, you could become the most interesting writer of the republic."<sup>44</sup> Leitón's tone and register moves beyond the traditional models of writers of the time. This brings mining literature to a new phase where serious attention to form and awareness of international trends influence the quality of such narratives. The novel's technique is a far cry from another contemporaneous and famous novel in mining literature, César Vallejo's *El tungsteno* (1931), which due to its fairly simple narrative and its Manichean treatment of characters became more popular and easier to commercialize than Leitón's, which I argue is superior in both form and procedure.

*Los eternos vagabundos* is centered on the unexpected discovery of a rich tin vein by two workers and their attempt to conceal it from the administration. But, Leitón's narration technique prevents us from a facile grasping of situations and tends to defer the meaning of events and expressions to challenge the reader's ability to keep up with nonlinearity, fragmentation and implied meaning. Later we understand that the workers have decided to consult the local manager,

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<sup>43</sup> Alba María Paz Soldán, ed. *Hacia una historia crítica de la literatura en Bolivia Tomo II*. (La Paz: Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia, 2002), 323.

<sup>44</sup> Elías Blanco Mamani, *Enciclopedia Gesta de autores de la literatura boliviana* (La Paz: Plural Editores, 2005), 104.

Marcelo, in order to obtain some commission for their finding. Most of this is told in dialogues without proper names, using indirect discourse and peppered with Quichua expressions. These two miners agree to set off to explore the vein but their journey becomes interrupted by a freak snowfall that forces them to stop and eventually leads them to an early death by freezing. In view of this, Marcelo grows even more disgruntled and his treatment toward miners and their families becomes more tyrannical. His habit of openly mistreating workers, chasing after Lucachu's partner Pascualita and greeting by insult, proves unbearable for the latter and a few other miners who harbor a deep resentment for Marcelo but fail to confront him directly or denounce him to the management. The novella ends with the workers asking Marcelo to not insult them gratuitously, but they stop short from organizing against exploitation, or resorting to violence to exact some vengeance from their enemy. There is talk of a humble list of demands presented by the workers, but this event is described incompletely and toward the end of the book. Leitón leaves no space to develop these ideas. The last line, "La lucha está abierta,"<sup>45</sup> does little to harness the social mobilization required to initiate a revolt, much less a revolution. In a way, it leaves the reader dwelling in a sort of open horizon where all options to improve the lot of the Bolivian miners appear available. Let's recall that *Los eternos vagabundos* was published early in 1939. The massacres of Catavi in 1942 or San Juan in 1967, which were able to move much public opinion in favor of the miners and in a way catapulted them as the vanguard in bringing down the Bolivian *ancien régime* during the 1952 Nationalist Revolution are still far away in the future.<sup>46</sup> Likewise,

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<sup>45</sup> Roberto Leitón, *Los eternos vagabundos* (La Paz: Editorial Potosí, 1939), 148.

<sup>46</sup> In *Llallagua* (1977), Roberto Querejazu Calvo devotes a chapter to these events "The Massacre of Catavi" and concludes on its relative importance: "The 13 dead and 39 wounded were to have historical significance. There were other deaths and injuries in the mines in previous periods, but the political circumstances were not the same (269). Quoted in Luis H. Antezana's "Rasgos Discursivos de la Narrativa Minera Boliviana." in *Ensayos escogidos: 1976-2010*, (La Paz: Plural Editores, 2011), 353.

the excesses of the Patiño Mining Company are just beginning to be documented and publicized. Perhaps Leitón's bet is for education and reform if his training and service as a mine teacher means anything in his fiction. There is nevertheless one historical event that challenges Leitón's open-ended novel or at least in his proposal for an open outcome to the struggle. This is the Uncía massacre of 1923, which was a significant event in the history of Bolivia's labor movement.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps Leitón's fiction was holding on some hope for gradual change like his positivist predecessors Mendoza and Céspedes. Or it may be that the massacre had not yet become a significant motif in the Bolivian mining *imaginarium* and Leitón did not feel the need to narrativize it in the novel. Whatever the case, his modernist open ending is unique in the corpus of mining literature. Later works such as *Mina*, *El precio del estaño*, and *Metal del diablo* clearly advocate for change through popular mobilization using testimonial sources and the demonizing companies and industrialists such as Simón I. Patiño and Carlos Víctor Aramayo, using the historical record to anchor their veracity and their claims to reality.

## **2.6 Affect and Becoming in *Los eternos vagabundos***

In *Los eternos vagabundos*, Leitón's characters are so well designed that they talk as if we were in their company in the depths of a mine. The character closer to a protagonist is Lucachu, a young miner who repeatedly exclaims, “¿Qué?” or “¿No me oye?”<sup>48</sup> -expressions that add to our feeling of being an outsider. We're also made to feel somewhat unwelcome by the characters' use of

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<sup>47</sup> The Uncía Massacre was an important event in the formation of an organized labor movement in Bolivia. Although it constituted a major setback for striking miners it set the precedent of using “sub-councils” and a “pliego de peticiones” as a way of negotiation with the companies and the state. It was also the first episode of direct military action taken against protesting miners. See Robert Jackson Alexander and Eldon M. Parker *A History of Organized Labor in Bolivia*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 22.

<sup>48</sup> “What? Can you hear me?” Leitón, *Los eternos vagabundos*, 15.

specialized mining words or terms related to the Quichuan culture of the Altiplano. This feeling of isolation is enhanced by the absence of the traditional narrator so common in Spanish American novels from this period. In lieu of narrators we're received with a cut-dry dialogue marked by expletives that testify to the relations of production inside a Bolivian mining complex. We also read instructions, expressions and interjections written in eye dialect to highlight the vernacular of the region. After a passage is over, Leitón rejoins by describing a landscape in a Burkean fashion where terror and grandeur conjugate to design the Sublime as a category of perception.<sup>49</sup> At other times he is intoning a eulogy for the fallen miner rather than describing a shocking event designed to move the reader or the plot forward. As a former mine school teacher himself, Leitón was well aware of the peculiarities of the miner's jargon and his proclivities. This is why he is able to produce that sense of alienation palpable not only among miners but vis-a-vis the reader herself. A case in point: one time we hear that the mining company is a sovereign state, a "República independiente"<sup>50</sup> and, as such, miners are not to complain but to be thankful: "Ustedes nacieron para ser esclavos."<sup>51</sup> Another time, we hear the administrator and his friends talking about Pascualita, the wife of Lucachu, in vulgar terms and later read about this administrator breaking into Luchachu's house at night demanding to see the woman.

But when the pathos of what's being narrated exceeds the threshold, Leitón's poetic interventions turn either denunciatory or sentimental. In short, his literary voice becomes

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<sup>49</sup> According to Burke, the Beautiful is that which is well-formed and aesthetically pleasing, whereas the Sublime is that which has the power to compel and destroy us: "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling." *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful With Several Other Additions* (New York, P.F. Collier & Son Company, 1909–14), 20. In the corpus, the landscape, mainly the *altiplano*, figures prominently as a harsh and destructive force in contrast with the valleys of Cochabamba.

<sup>50</sup> Leitón, *Los eternos vagabundos*, 60.

<sup>51</sup> "You have been born to be slaves." Ibid., 61.



something else as the highly affectual figure of the miner or the mineral itself begins to make inroads into his language. For instance, throughout the story the local mine manager keeps repeating that it is due to the international low price of tin that the company cannot provide a doctor or make the prices of basic goods in the local company-managed stores [*pulperías*] more affordable.<sup>52</sup> This excuse is brought once again toward the middle of the book when workers argue that it is practically impossible to live on the fixed wage of \$1.20 Bolivian pesos a day. Leitón's strategy to use poetic descriptions seems to work differently this time. Using lyrical prose, he turns his attention to examine the misery of the "Indian nation" in a way that reveals his own intimate shame and a moving sadness for the miner and his destiny: "Cerebros huecos. Estómagos vacíos. [...] ¿Hay alguien que levante el eco de la redención para estos hombres? ¡Nadie! ¡Nadie!"<sup>53</sup> Moved by this indignation, Leitón's prose approaches the denunciatory tone of social realism that would dominate later narratives in Bolivian literature in the decades to come. But for the time these calls to action tend to remain marginal to the plot, as we have seen in contemporary narratives. If there is an appeal for action, it is probably addressed to the politician or the *letrado* using the lyrical as a literary category to elevate the discourse of denunciation.

But beyond a raised awareness vis-à-vis the social problem of the Bolivian miner Leitón's prose seems to undergo a becoming that destabilizes his individualized authorial self. Recall that for Gilles Deleuze in a becoming something passes between two terms such that both are modified. Examining mining novels with an eye on Deleuze's "becoming" reveals how Leitón's miners

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<sup>52</sup> This can be called a "super-reason" that transcends reason itself. This argument is deeply present in mining literature in Bolivia. *El precio del estaño* (1960) by Néstor Taboada Terán is based on the same external factor and the historical repercussions of keeping wages low and basic necessity products high on the *pulperías*.

<sup>53</sup> "Hollow brains, empty stomachs [...] Is there anyone who raises a voice of redemption for these men? Nobody! nobody!" Leitón, *Los eternos vagabundos*, 69.

become mineral, as mineral is no longer a product or byproduct of their trade, but is one with the body and their thinking.

This becoming is not restricted to the miner in the novel becoming mineral. The intensity of the hyperobject mining not only affects those dealing directly with it, but even the writers of mining novels who become affected by the situations they chose to narrate in their works. Deleuze writes: “The conjunction of flows, of becoming other, produces a general deterritorialization, which liberates a pure matter, it undoes codes, expressions and contexts on a zig-zag broken line of flight.”<sup>54</sup> I argue that the writer is unbeknownst to himself becoming deterritorialized as he escapes towards miner, collectivity, rock, debauchery, millionaire or union leader. His territorialized subjectivity, as he embarks on a process of writing flees, in an erratic line, just like a vein of mineral that traverses three-dimensional space in irregular or rhizomatic fashion: “Writing is either becoming or not. Institutionalized writing is reterritorializing oneself, conforming to utterances, or established state of things. But it can also be becoming. Becoming something other than a writer.”<sup>55</sup>

In Bolivian mining literature’s early works such as *En las tierras de Potosí*, *El oro negro* or *Los eternos vagabundos*, there is a constant becoming, perhaps against the grain, of the writer which tends to read the mineral as something endowed with properties that go beyond raw material in the economic sense or poetic image in the workings of poetic representation. There is a tension within the text to become mineral precisely when the mineral is read through non-conventional lenses: As in the exclamation discussed above from *En las tierras de Potosí*, “The industry itself

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<sup>54</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 73.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 74.

is in charge of producing dust.” Even miners’ bodies are no longer separate, individualized, closed entities as we understand human subjects. But they are always becoming something in the middle, between lines: between human and mineral, between human and nonhuman. Authors, in a way, resist but fail to remain territorialized. In *En las tierras de Potosí*, author Jaime Mendoza becomes Martín and Martín in turn becomes miner by undergoing a process of deterritorialization where the properties of the constituent element disappear and are replaced by the new properties of the assemblage: Mendoza becomes Martín when Martín is no longer a name in paper but part autobiography, part popular stories, part collective voices. Becoming is never imitation or analogy, it is generative of a new way of being that is a function of influences rather than resemblances. Through these lines of flight we witness the formation of assemblages always made up of human, non-human and a series of non-personal or non-organic units. The literature of mining, in its representational form, in its tracing of the preexistent hyperobject, comes to form a motley assemblage crossed by segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, deterritorialization and destratification.

In Roberto Leitón’s *Los eternos vagabundos* we can witness a similar becoming-miner when the reading becomes tortuous as a subterranean path, the speech becomes mine (echoes, broken utterances and void) and the narrator never really shows up to properly guide the disoriented reader: In an early passage Lucachu and Don Pascual an older miner are chatting when a supervisor arrives and asks about their findings. Notice the narrator’s attempt to transmit the difficulty to convey meaning through language: “—Lucachu hace falta un poco de ‘singani’. Siquiera alcohol. Alcánzame mi *chuspa*. Fíjate esta vena. ¡La mala suerte!... Llega este abusivo. ¡Ujjj!... —¿Cómo les ha ido? ¿Has cortado, Pascual? ¿No me oyes? —Le hablaaá..., don

Pascual!... Buena, señor. ¡Ojala! ¡Pachamama!”<sup>56</sup> A few pages later when describing the last moments of two miners who get trapped in a snowfall while exploring a vein in a remote site the narrator returns to incomplete utterances, partial expletives and pure sound which points to a different way of conceiving and using language: “—!Benjamín!... por tus hijitos... No me abandones... ¡Ayúdame! ¡Ya no puedo!... ¡Ya no!... ¡La gran...! ¡Que jo...! ¡Hip- hipp!... ¡Hip- hipp! ¡Ufjj!...”<sup>57</sup> Deterritorialization of early mining literature is evident in the way that Leitón uses language to recreate the speech one needs to use when enunciation is subterranean.

In *Los eternos vagabundos* language is also affected by the impressive quality of the physical world. In lieu of a literary call for a social mobilization to harness the revolution the novella bets for a poetic understanding of the contradictions of capitalism, the irony of the alleged correlation between war and prosperity, the overwhelming landscape, and the unbearable face of extreme destitution. Leitón is fascinated by the dominance of these imposing features from the perspective of representation. But his interest in these assemblages has become internalized to the extent that language itself -when used under the pressure of the material conditions narrated- seems to experience a radical transformation. Voices, utterances and exclamations aren’t transcribed in standard language but rather in brief and choppy sentences. They seem to refrain from much talk, or use the bare minimum when necessary. Critics have noted an analogy between the signifier and the signified in Leitón’s language. Alba María Paz Soldán writes, “The laconic style of using broken sentences, in which the human does not appear but as part of the inert matter, comes in

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<sup>56</sup> “Lucachu, we need a bit of singani. Alcohol perhaps. Hand me my *chuspa*. Look at this vein. Bad luck! ... The abusive is here. Ujjj! ... —How did you do? Have you cut, Pascual? You do not hear me? —He speaks to you ..., Don Pascual! ... Good, sir. Hopefully! Pachamama!” Leitón, *Los eternos vagabundos*, 22.

<sup>57</sup> “—Benjamin! ... for your children ... Do not abandon me ... Help me! I cannot anymore! ... Not anymore! ... The great ...! What the ...! Hip-hipp! ... Hip-hipp! Ufjj!” Ibid., 94.

consonance with the landscape of the mines where it is perceived that time can only be measured by the temporality of the mountains.”<sup>58</sup> Here something new happens. Not only mountains and cliffs move the sensibility of the writer, but the abysmal conditions inside a mine and the type of work carried out inside push Leitón’s prose to the limits of representation. When this point is reached he moves to poetic language to deploy allegorical and symbolic passages to convey desolation and hopelessness.

## 2.7 Conclusions

Early mining literature from Bolivia is valuable for its understanding of mining as an activity endowed with multiple facets for the worker, the community, but also as a hyperobject whose limits extend beyond traditional spatial and temporal scales. The literature of this period is *not* yet concerned with the formation of worker’s unions, or transnational alliances that occurred between Bolivian and Chilean miners, or much less the construction of a national revolution. Those concerns will arrive later. For now, the early cycle that begins in 1911 with *En las tierras de Potosí* is much more interested in other aspects: exploring the corners of miner’s subjectivity, language, and the mysterious properties of the land rather than formulating a program for political action. In fact, one of the purposes of this discussion is to rescue the quality of attention that early writers invested in thinking about mining from these varied perspectives. This is why I use the object-oriented-ontology category of hyperobjects to discuss the large-scale processes that form mining in Andean America. This decision is made in part by the notion’s privileged point of view that allows me to conduct literary analysis while examining a deeper layer -always present but not

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<sup>58</sup> Paz Soldán, ed. *Hacia una historia crítica de la literatura en Bolivia Tomo II*, 325.

necessarily noticeable- of mining as an entity that goes beyond previous definitions. I believe viewing mining from this perspective allows for a dialectical with an eye on the macro scales (deep time, Anthropocene, slow violence)<sup>59</sup> and their impact on human and nonhuman life, while at the same time, allows me to conceptualize the act of mineral extraction beyond a conventional economy-base model or a folklorist-anthropological perspective.

But interests and problems are always in flux. In a matter of a few years the chroniclers of mining would turn their attention to other preoccupations. The intensive curiosity with the individual, subjectivity and non-human life that prompted many authors to narrativize everyday life in the mines yielded to a certain urgency to organize and disseminate other stories with other protagonists. These novel accounts trace parallel lines in common with the authors discussed at length here, such as Mendoza, Céspedes, and Leitón, but their stories gesture toward the territorializing of factual history, or mobilizing popular indignity and related affects to form a collective bloc able to transform the given political conditions. By the mid-twentieth century mining literature tends to present itself as a document of *vérité* tasked with representing truth and real-life experiences as lived by real people.

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<sup>59</sup> The name *Anthropocene* is a combination of *anthropo-* from *anthropos* (Ancient Greek: ἄνθρωπος) meaning “human” and *-cene* from *kainos* (Ancient Greek: καινός) meaning “new” or “recent.” The Anthropocene Epoch is an unofficial interval of geologic time, characterized as the time in which the collective activities of human beings (*homo sapiens*) began to substantially alter Earth’s surface, atmosphere, oceans, and systems of nutrient cycling. John P. Rafferty, “Anthropocene Epoch” *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Accessed February 19, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/science/Anthropocene-Epoch>.

### Chapter 3: New Voices and Strategies in Bolivian Mining Literature

The literature of mining can be conceptualized as a confluence of many lines. Some are lines of escape which subvert accepted narratives through denunciation while others attempt to enforce an official point of view. Some attempt to pin down the intensities emanating from the hyperobject mining and others are content with capturing and reterritorializing. These lines run across decades and genres of the Bolivian tradition of mining literature: they flow like a mineral vein within a mountain range, heedless of lakes, property delimitations, deserts or towns above. After examining earlier lines which were concerned with the nonhuman, with the disproportionateness of scales, with the breaking down of representation, we move on now to study how these lines begin to change direction seeking alternative patterns and becomings. To understand these continuities and ruptures, I will discuss three mid-century Bolivian novels concerned with the multilayered nature of mining: *Metal del diablo* (1946) by Augusto Céspedes, *Socavones de angustia* (1947) by Fernando Ramírez Velarde, and *El precio del estaño* (1960) by Néstor Taboada Terán. These three novels echo through the working class consciousness of the country due to their relative accessibility, being assigned readings in high schools nationwide, and their use at miners' meetings and on communitarian radio stations before and in the aftermath of the Nationalist Revolution of 1952.<sup>1</sup> These narratives trace different lines according to changing interests. Earlier obsessions, such as the previous generation of writers' careful attention to the forces of nature are traded for more anthropocentric and perhaps urgent concerns.<sup>2</sup> These include analyzing in detail the life of

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<sup>1</sup> June C. Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 108-109.

<sup>2</sup> Guillermo Lora, *Ausencia de la gran novela minera: análisis de un aspecto de la literatura social en Bolivia*, (La Paz: Ediciones El Amauta, 1979). See Guillermo Lora's critique of Mendoza

new literary referents such as Simon I. Patiño (1862-1947), the controversial Bolivian millionaire, the role of women in mining camps, the experiences of union leaders inside and outside the mine, the recurrence of labor conflicts and the Catavi Massacre of 1942, all of which begin to figure more prominently albeit unevenly in the Bolivian literary and historical discourse.<sup>3</sup>

In general terms, the unifying preoccupation of these writers revolves around the impossibility of achieving an improvement in living standards for Bolivian miners in spite of macroeconomic achievements caused by the global surge in the demand for tin during the Great War and World War II.<sup>4</sup> This is reflected in the form and tone of their work. Attempting to break from earlier discourses, these mid-century authors eschew the positivist reformism that underscored previous accounts of mining, such as *En las tierras de Potosí* or *El oro negro*. Their chronicles are no longer concerned with sketching large-scale plans for the improvement of the nation or investing in the sentimentalism of describing miners' abject poverty as mostly passive subjects condemned to endless toiling. To the contrary, these writers' narratives seek to redress the injustices perpetuated by the establishment against the miner's collective. This was an important motivation, specifically in the aftermath of the Catavi Massacre, which became with time a political symbol of increasing force throughout Bolivian society. Surely, the description of extreme poverty is a key aspect of mining literature everywhere, but these narratives attempt to move beyond this affective strategy in order to shift -within the space of representation- the

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<sup>3</sup> The Catavi massacre was an attack by the Bolivian government forces against the Catavi miners and their families carried out the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 1942 which effectively ended the miners' strike. The official report indicated that there were 19 deaths and 400 wounded, while estimates by the workers themselves reported up to 400 deaths. The Catavi massacre was undoubtedly a major factor undermining president Peñaranda regime (1940–43) who was overthrown a year later by a coalition of young military men such as Gualberto Villarroel and the MNR or Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario. See Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us*, 41.

<sup>4</sup> James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins Political Struggle in Bolivia, 1952-1982* (London: Verso, 1984), 12.



asymmetrical balance of power that favored Capital over workers and to depict the latter no longer exclusively as victims but as subjects who exercise a moral agency. These new narratives explore a diversity of themes ignored by earlier thinkers, such as the role of women in mining camps and mining life in general, the uprooting of families from the Bolivian countryside to mining cities, and the formation of a pro-miner *discourse* and a reactive and conservative *counterdiscourse*. In short, I argue that this period displays a more democratic scope at the level of narrative and its choice of what types of characters are worth representing as well as in terms of discourses, preoccupations, and ways of saying and stating.

Some authors attempt to write the “total novel,” that is, a work of literature where subjects of study need to be seen in their ‘totality’ in which the novelist supplants or displaces God by creating an autonomous fictional world capable of competing with exterior reality.<sup>5</sup> Augusto Céspedes’s *Metal del diablo*, for instance, explores many thematic lines: it is a fictionalized biography of the rise of the Bolivian tin tycoon Simon I. Patiño, but also more generally it is an account of the destitution of mining camps, and the manipulations of Bolivian politics by the mining and political elite that was commonly known as “La Rosca.”<sup>6</sup> Néstor Taboada Terán in *El precio del estaño* and Alfredo Guillén Pinto in *Mina* (coauthored with his wife Natty Peñaranda de Guillén Pinto), by contrast, are interested in dissecting the layers of everyday life inside a mining camp. Focusing their narratives on a few characters from radically different social class positions (an industrialist, a miner, a teacher, a union leader, a local *chichera*), they attempt to

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Anderson “A Reappraisal of the ‘Total’ Novel: Totality and Communicative Systems in Carlos Fuentes's *Terra Nostra*” *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures*, 57 no. 2, (July 2003): 69.

<sup>6</sup> This was the informal name given to the formation of a government made by professional politicians operating primarily in the interest of the leading tin barons of the nation, the abovementioned Simon I. Patiño, the Aramayo family, and Mauricio Hochschild. See, Dunkerley *Rebellion in the Veins*, 6-9.

understand the types of subjectivity that emerge from these inhospitable sites. Taboada Terán recounts the failed negotiations during the general strike that leads to the Catavi Massacre. Guillén Pinto examines the experiences of a solitary teacher who suffers stigmatization in these already marginalized environments. Other writers, like Fernando Velarde in *Socavones de angustia*, explore the suffering that the *hacienda* system and mining exploitation alike inflect on the inhabitants of a local mining town: broken relationships, shattered families, unrealized potential.

These novels reveal how becoming, affect, and long-temporality forms of violence continually change course within the literary consciousness of mining. But they also show the extent to which specific historical events altered Bolivia's political aesthetics, the literary voice and the narrative strategies of its mining literature. Indeed, one of the goals of the chapter is locate and analyze processes of change and alterity found in the discussed narratives vis-à-vis Bolivian's historical events. Attention in the previous chapter was directed to the "specificity" of mining as something larger than what presents itself to the senses; as something that escapes or exhausts compartmentalized cognitive categories such as "economic activity," arguing for a hyperobjectual perspective following an object-oriented ontology. My task then was to show how mining as hyperobject overflows our traditional ways of thinking about it, pushing any definitions to the limit. If the previous chapter thus endeavored to sketch a phenomenology of mining, this chapter will be concerned with understanding the *politics* of mid-century mining literature in Bolivia. If Chapter 1 was concerned with large entities, the hyperobject, and the affective, this chapter zooms in to focus on shorter temporalities and human-sized events and actions. Its aim is to understand how literary consciousness comes to terms with the demands of new times, such as the post-Catavi political landscape and the early glimpses of a national revolution.

The scarce critical literature on the subject has mainly focused on the shift of the narrative voice of some of these works according to the physical environment that is being described. Luis Antezana and Javier Sanjinés have argued for the dichotomy of a literary social realism opposed to a fantastic realism to account for this shift.<sup>7</sup> When authors are writing about events that take place outside of the mine, Antezana and Sanjinés argue, they tend to employ a social realist approach. But when they treat events that happen *inside* a mine, mining authors use a fantastic style that infuses their descriptions of the “interior mine” and what takes place there with traits from fantasy and the supernatural. I would challenge this thesis by arguing that there are more than two modes of narrating life in the mines. Certainly, there are traits of these alternating modalities in some passages, but many works go beyond them to include fragments and gestures towards other literary discourses. In fact, as discussed in Chapter 1, even some early works such as *Los eternos vagabundos* challenge this dichotomy by using narratological choices and deployments that effectively break from this mold in several ways.<sup>8</sup>

My critique of the reading of Antezana and Sanjinés positions my own intervention and suggests a revalorization of the previously ignored narrative lines based on heterogeneity of discourses, alternate narratological modes, and a varied group of voices that can be heard through these works expanding the register of the literary. The third novel discussed in this chapter, *El precio del estaño*, also contains episodes that again enrich the representational register of mining literature. Some of its passages appear almost testimonial: accounts derived straight from oral

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<sup>7</sup> Javier Sanjinés C., “Discurso minero y lo simbólico en la recomposición popular.” *Hispanoamérica* 18, no. 53/54 (August-December 1989): 35. And Luis H. Antezana, “Rasgos Discursivos de la Narrativa Minera Boliviana.” in *Ensayos escogidos: 1976-2010* (La Paz: Plural Editores, 2011), 353.

<sup>8</sup> Let us recall Roberto Leitón’s usage of a poetic voice in his lyrical passages alternating with the transcription of vernacular speech formations usually deformed by the vast physical dimensions of the mine and the pressures under which speech is enunciated regardless of any interior/exterior division.

sources and documentation that point to the text's implicit tension of dwelling in a representational space marked by the rehearsing and sampling of a variety of narrative modes. *Contra* Antezana and Sanjinés, then, I claim that the notion of a dyadic split between internal (inside the mine) and external (outside the mine) is problematized by a multiplicity of voices that enter and exit the pages of these texts, as rhizomatic as the veins of tin themselves.

### 3.1 Beyond Miner and Mine

The most evident and productive aspect of these narratives is the inclusion of new subjects that go beyond the male miner who stands as the main referential subject of aesthetic representation and political potentiality in early twentieth-century texts. These new narratives, *Metal del diablo* (1946) by Augusto Céspedes, *Socavones de angustia* (1947) by Fernando Ramírez Velarde, and *El precio del estaño* (1960) by Néstor Taboada Terán, by contrast, suggest new referents through which one can understand the life and the politics of the miner: the miner-turned-millionaire, the family group (particularly women), and union leaders. I will discuss how each novel reshapes the discourse of mining literature in Bolivia, making it more democratic and showing the multidimensional consequences of the hyperobject mining over human relationships.

Furthermore, these texts express different politics in their form: unlike earlier texts, which usually enabled a dialogue only between elites, these novels are closer to the miner and his political goals. For one, we know that their books were read in union meetings and broadcast on miners' communitarian radio.<sup>9</sup> As letters for the multitude, the literary strategies pursued by these authors

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<sup>9</sup> Nash interviews miners who remember hearing communitarian radio broadcasts of *El precio del estaño* after the 1952 Revolution. June C. Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines* (New York: Columbia UP, 1993), 109. Keith Richards notes that the novel was also read during the 1965 resistance against the Barrientos dictatorship. Keith Richards, *Lo imaginario mestizo: Aislamiento y dislocación de la visión de Bolivia de Nestor Taboada Terán* (La Paz: Plural Editores, 1999), 84.

are closer to the contemporary forms of social realism, and to the pamphlet, than the positivist and naturalist views endorsed by earlier authors. In other words, there is a shift from *letrado* reformism to a popular narrative of social commitment. The mining authors active during this period were experimenting with new narrative points of view, unabashedly denunciative rhetorical modalities, and visual art to complement the task assigned to the traditional use of social realist prose.

Before exploring these new angles, a word about the medium and its double workings as an aesthetic form and a tool for intervening in the symbolic and material social ordering. In *Literature and Subjection: The Economy of Writing and Marginality in Latin America*, Horacio Legrás recalls Derrida's remarks about the double movement internal to literature which grants it the possibility of denouncing and deploying critical lines of thought yet at the same time opens it up to the possibility of being undermined if it is accused of being a purely fictional exercise. Literature as a modern form "is linked to an authorization to say everything and doubtless too to the coming about of the modern idea of democracy."<sup>10</sup> Yet, as Derrida explains, even though "the freedom to say anything is a very powerful political weapon,"<sup>11</sup> it can also be a weapon rapidly neutralized if and when it is marginalized "as fiction." Thus, the critical function of literature "can be undermined by the very thing that grants literature its disruptive force."<sup>12</sup> If literature is condemned to be a fictional account of the world, its commitment to criticism may appear as hypocritical and futile. This observation is particularly important when discussing Latin American

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<sup>10</sup> Legrás, *Literature and Subjection*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

literature which, as some critics have argued, has traditionally operated as a tool supplementary to power to sustain and justify the colonial and republican social order.<sup>13</sup>

Mining authors attempted to enable to the maximum extent possible the critical quality of literature, while suppressing or downplaying the potential to be disregarded as mere fiction. Their narrative is an exercise in trying to escape this paradox and imprint their literary works with an aura of truth and veracity while retaining the quality of “lo literario.” One way they maneuver out of this contradictory space is through the use of paratextual devices. This strategy evidences the author’s wish to deflect the possible accusation that his or her representation is disassociated from the real and the factual, and aims at subverting or at least manipulating this double movement to favor interests such as collective politics, mobilization, popular education, and so on. This will be an unspoken but recurrent preoccupation for mining authors analyzed here, specially Augusto Céspedes’s *Metal del diablo* and Néstor Taboada Terán’s *El precio del estaño*. Such writers invest their text with critical voices in hopes of changing the general and material conditions for mineworkers, but are also painfully aware that their medium can be rhetorically delegitimized and their content neutralized as mere fiction, folklore, mythology and legend.

If we accept Derrida’s conceptualization of literature as an “authorization to say everything” and this “authorization” as a “very powerful political weapon”<sup>14</sup> then I propose to take the argument one step forward and think of literature as a space of symbolic war where these critical attacks on behalf of miners are conceived as part of a larger process of warfare which takes place on paper, and has as a main objective, the mission to delegitimize and deface the main figures

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<sup>13</sup> See Angel Rama *La ciudad letrada*; Julio Ramos, *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina* and Antonio Candido *A Educação Pela Noite e Outros Ensaio* specially his “Literatura e subdesenvolvimento.”

<sup>14</sup> Legrás, *Literature and Subjection*, 5.

of the status quo. I argue that this is clearly seen in the literature of the Post-Catavi Massacre, which for writers represents an opportunity to continue a war by other means. Perhaps Bolivian mining writers of the mid-twentieth century conceived of literature as a variant of the Foucauldian reversal of Clausewitz's dictum. For Foucault, *politics is the continuation of war by other means*.<sup>15</sup> For mining writers, then, their critically engaged literature constituted the continuation of war by other means. They approached the realm of the literary as a space of warfare where the historical failures of Uncía, Catavi and other lost battles could be re-fought, at least symbolically. Bolivian literature of this period deals with issues of violence, warfare, and politics in detail, not just in the context of mining-related literature, but at a key point of intersection of historical lines: the failures of the political elites to achieve victory in the Chaco War, the disastrous economic policies of the mining industry, and the recurring episodes of violence in mining camps after the war. Thus, my definition of the literary can be found at the threshold of these critical perspectives: denunciation of treatment of Indian troops in the Chaco campaign, and of the most visible figures of the pre-revolutionary socio-cultural order, Patiñismo, the Rosca and everything it stood for.

### **3.2 Denouncing Patiñismo: Disfiguring at the Margins in *Metal del diablo***

More than a novel, Augusto Céspedes's *Metal del diablo* is a declaration of war against Patiñismo or the larger structure of political and economic domination colloquially known as "La Rosca." The text goes to great lengths to unmask the debasement of morals in the circles of political decision-making in Bolivia and to undermine the image-myth of Simón Patiño, who was formerly portrayed, specially by renowned writer Alcides Arguedas, as an exemplary paternalist figure, an

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<sup>15</sup> Michel Foucault, *Society must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, (New York: Picador, 2003), 16.

industrialist of benefit to the Bolivian nation.<sup>16</sup> One of the main goals of the novel is then to recast him as a voracious businessman skilled at the game of blackmailing and manipulation.

Formally, the text is structured along three intersecting narrative lines: (1) the social and individual life in the mine in boomtowns close to the sites of extraction; (2) Omonte's personal life and that of his family and his associates as they experience the banalities of living abroad and the necessary anxiety of running a transnational industrial conglomerate; and (3) the political maneuvering and scheming in the arena of Bolivian politics which includes discussion about how to influence the administration or how to persuade congress to sink pro-labor laws such as the Busch Labor Code.

The novel is a sort of "biografía novelada" of Patiño, the Bolivian tin tycoon of the early twentieth century. It aims to narrate the rise and fall of the man also known as "El rey del Estaño," the King of Tin. The novel is an exercise in the classic tradition of revealing and exposing power embodied in an almost mythical figure, but it does not offer much in terms of experimentation: its narrative is linear, the threads are left open, and characters are subordinated to their encounters with the protagonist Zenon Omonte (the character who stands in for Patiño in the novel). The third-person omniscient narration is implausible as it attempts to convey the psychological state of Omonte and other characters in detail. But despite its shortcomings, the novel is important because it introduces the life of a key historical figure in Bolivian history. *Metal del diablo* offers an opportunity to understand the texture of the everyday life of Omonte as well as the minutiae of running the world's "greatest international mining conglomerate."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See, Roberto Querejazu Calvo, *Llallagua: trono del "Rey del Estaño" Simón I. Patiño* (La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1998), 16

<sup>17</sup> Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins*, 9.



More importantly, and perhaps due to its linearity and relative simplicity, the novel captured the collective imagination of the reading public and reshaped reading and thinking habits in pre-revolutionary Bolivia about the question of the mines, the idea of “nation,” and notions of justice, rightfulness, and restitution for miners. Historian Guilherme Couto e Silva argues that *Metal del diablo* paved the way for key MNR (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement) documents -such as the Pulacayo thesis- to be better understood. “This novel came to be widely known by the mining community because those who could not read it heard it in the “centros culturales.” Through their dissemination, union leaders tried to remind workers that while there was a Patiño company there would be a threat of further massacres, and that if Catavi was to be prevented from repeating itself, workers had to arm themselves, organize themselves into Groups of Armed Workers.”<sup>18</sup> The novel not only demonized Patiño and La Rosca but triggered the transition from the act of reading to the act of waging a war: a direct translation from a symbolic attack to a concrete one that characterized the reading ethics of the time. *Metal del diablo* also utilized modern communication technologies like radio broadcasting to reach the miners and their families. Thanks to these technologies of dissemination, it was able to penetrate private spaces and politicize subjects overcoming the obstacle of illiteracy. The text was broadcasted from March 1947 through a union radio station where it was read in two voices to increase the dramatic effect. “Groups of miners and their families listened to the story and perceived that what was being read and heard was the history of their oppressed people, therefore their own history as a family and individual social class.”<sup>19</sup> Céspedes’s novel is one among many discourses, fictional and otherwise, that in

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<sup>18</sup> Guido J. Arze, *La novela revolucionaria. contribución a la crítica* (Xlibris Corporation, 2008), 226

<sup>19</sup> Arze, *La novela revolucionaria*, 228.

their uncompromising anti-reformism, aimed at subverting the established social order and its habits. I agree with Guido J. Arze when he argues that *Metal del diablo* was “an important document among a constellation of other pronouncements that had challenged the mining oligarchy status quo; among these we can mention the famous Pulacayo Thesis, ‘Nacionalismo y coloniaje’ and ‘El manifiesto de Ayopaya’ all nationalist and anticolonial documents.”<sup>20</sup> What these manifestos have in common is a spirit of iconoclasm that reacts against older literary and political figures such as Alcides Arguedas and advances the bases for ridding Bolivia of oligarchic exploitation and imperialist interventions. The Pulacayo Thesis -a document redacted and adopted by the Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia (FSTMB), in 1946- was a “revolutionary document that adopted the concept of the permanent revolution and called for a violent armed struggle of the working class. It rejected all reformist positions and demanded a worker-peasant alliance and a government under worker control.”<sup>21</sup>

Historian James Dunkerley describes it as “an application of Trotsky’s 1938 Transitional Programme to Bolivian conditions and with a special reference to trade-union objectives.”<sup>22</sup> “Nacionalismo y coloniaje” by journalist Carlos Montenegro critiqued the defeatist historiography of Bolivia and developed a series of concepts that underlie the action of the MNR which Montenegro founded in company with Víctor Paz Estenssoro, Hernán Siles Zuazo, Walter Guevara Arze (the author of the Manifiesto de Ayopaya), and Augusto Céspedes himself. When deployed to the social field, the novel was not only received as one more text but “served as a vehicle for the nationalist ideas formulated by Tamayo, Montenegro, Guevara Arze and later repeated by Siles

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>21</sup> Herbert S. Klein, *Concise History of Bolivia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 204.

<sup>22</sup> Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins*, 17.

Suazo and Paz Estenssoro. These ideas, when exposed in the novel in a simple and accessible way to popular culture, helped develop the revolutionary consciousness necessary for the materialization of a revolutionary goal as a historical fact.”<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the dissemination of these ideas among the multitude, the intensification of the repression during the interim known as the “sexenio” (the six years of conservative rule from 1946 to 1952) paradoxically ended up favoring the reception of literary works like *Metal del diablo*. Céspedes and Montenegro stood out among the writers who, in Arze’s words, “helped with their literature to create the necessary awareness so that nationalization could harness the support of the unions and veteran’s associations, organizations that effectively did mobilize in favor of this anti-imperialist measure.”<sup>24</sup> Other critics such as Augusto Guzmán, author of *La novela en Bolivia* emphasize Céspedes’s work as a direct cause of social change in mid-century Bolivia, “His social and political novel *Metal del diablo* a militant novel of the MNR can be described not only as a precursor, but as an inducer of the nationalization of mines, decreed in 1952.”<sup>25</sup>

My contention is that authors like Céspedes used literature, and specifically the “authorization to say everything”<sup>26</sup> to which Derrida refers, as a political weapon against the Bolivian oligarchy and the military that backed them. Several traits run through Céspedes’s description of Omonte in *Metal del diablo*: his inferiority complex, bad temper, personal insecurities and an obsessive distrust of politicians, associates, and technicians. The novel depicts Omonte as a cunning businessman ready to manipulate political bodies in order to avoid paying taxes, outmaneuvering pro-labor laws, and buying support from local politicians who would back

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<sup>23</sup> Arze, *La novela revolucionaria*, 229.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>25</sup> Augusto Guzmán, *La novela en Bolivia* (La Paz: Juventud), 161.

<sup>26</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature* (New York: Routledge), 37.

his plans. There are episodes where Céspedes describes Omonte's disdain for ordinary workers and Bolivians as a whole. In others, he shows Omonte's aggressive impatience toward middle management or the Bolivian government: during a welcome cocktail in Bolivia, for instance, after being away from the country for twelve years, Omonte fires an American engineer, McNogan (the novel's main gringo character), in a dramatic fit of rage. When McNogan tries to defend himself, Omonte interrupts him to add: "Sólo este señor entiende de minas. ¡Yo, yo seré un agricultor, un doctor...! Pero ha de saber usted —gritó de pronto encarándose con Nogan [sic] —que yo entiendo de minas más de lo que usted cree, para que no me roben."<sup>27</sup> McNogan tries to present himself as an engineer who doesn't deserve to be called a thief, only to receive insults and orders to leave the room from Omonte.

Céspedes describes an offensive figure obsessed with micromanaging his businesses and affected by a quasi-schizophrenic relation vis-à-vis members of his company—in Paris as well as Bolivia- who he believes are secretly stealing from him. Several times he is portrayed interrogating his aides about menial expenses in his Paris residence or in the *pulperías* of the Potosí mining camps: "Escriba a Estrada diciéndole que haga aumentar en la pulpería el precio del champán, de los calzados extranjeros y de las camisas de seda, que allá se cobra lo mismo que aquí por artículos franceses. Es el colmo. Así nos vamos a ir a la quiebra. Otra carta a Estrada; que ya no se reparta aguardiente a los peones sino alcohol. ¡Que lujos se dan allá con mi plata!"<sup>28</sup> On other occasions Céspedes combines this impression of a pinchpenny persona with descriptions of cabaret visits

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<sup>27</sup> "Only this man understands mines. I will be a farmer! A doctor! But you must know that I understand about mines more than you think so do not steal from me!" Augusto Céspedes, *Metal del diablo la vida del rey del estaño* (La Paz: Editorial GUM), 182.

<sup>28</sup> "Write to Estrada. Tell him to increase the price of champagne, foreign footwear and silk shirts. They charge the same as here for French items. That's too much. We're going to go bankrupt. Another letter to Estrada; peons should receive no more *aguardiente* but alcohol. What luxuries they enjoy with my money!" Ibid., 122.

and bacchanals to intensify the visual dissonance of an obscene character set against the background of young prostitutes. The avarice of Omonte is often emphasized to produce a sense of repugnancy about the character but also to highlight the contradictions between Ormonte's excess and the abject poverty of the miners. Céspedes describes the miners' living quarters as "viviendas con puertas bajas por donde entraba el viento. En el piso se mezclaban la tierra, cáscaras de papa, tallos de cebollas, y otros restos dejados al cocinar ahí mismo. La pieza estaba tiznada de humo y el lecho consistía en un bloque de adobes [...] una sórdida y animada vida de andrajos, gritos de mugrientos llocallas [chicos callejeros] semidesnudos que jugaban con la basura y mujeres que cocinaban."<sup>29</sup> This rhetorical strategy of juxtaposition is recurrent throughout the book and draws on a long tradition in mining literature. Recall Roberto Leitón's use of the narrative and the lyrical as voices engaged in articulating a discourse of excess and indignity in *Los eternos vagabundos*. But in this case things end up differently. By its time of publication in 1946, *Metal del diablo* enters a dialogue with other texts that are also preoccupied with the decline of the Rosca order and navigated a milieu ripe for social change that would have fateful consequences in the unfolding of national history.

*Metal del diablo* achieves this through disseminating a distorted representation of the most visible face of the Rosca establishment. The text alternates between the historical/factual of Patiño's life in Bolivia and then in Paris with the literary interpretation/recreation of episodes which Céspedes uses to describe a despicable tyrant. But if *Metal del diablo* achieved this reception in the lettered circles of La Paz and later became a credible source in the defacing of Patiñismo it

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<sup>29</sup> "Houses with low doors where wind flows through. On the floor earth, potato peelings, onion stems, and other remains left after cooking mixed right there. The piece was smudged with smoke and the bed consisted of a block of adobes [...] a sordid and animated life in tatters, cries of filthy, half-naked *llocallas* [street boys] playing with garbage and women cooking." Ibid., 151.

was also through its use of paratextual devices to ground its claims. These strategies, always operating beyond the text as such, allowed it to impact society from the standpoint of a denunciative account based on factual reality, rather than from a position of a work of “mere” literature based on fictive premises. In other words, the book’s preface, epilogue and the more than fifty footnotes work not only toward clarity and organization but also more importantly allow Céspedes to circumvent the risk of having his critical literary intervention rapidly neutralized “as fiction.” A paratext, what is written on the text’s margins, is not so much a boundary or a frame for the text, but can be better thought, as Gérard Genette suggests, as “a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy.”<sup>30</sup> This aspect of transaction comes into special relief in *Metal del diablo* where an economy of the paratext marks the effectiveness of the novel as more than a literary account based on fiction foregrounding the veracity behind the lines of fiction and aesthetics.

Céspedes often resorts to footnotes to validate a statement pronounced by one of his characters. He departs from the unfolding plot to introduce the reader into a sort of contextual experiment that clarifies how things *really* happened. For example, in a passage showing Omonte and his lawyer scheming to rig the local elections in favor of the industrialist’s candidate, Céspedes adds a footnote reading: “Esto le consta al autor.”<sup>31</sup> Here, the narrative voice is suspended in favor of an authorial intervention that can introduce the legitimacy of factuality to support the claim to the real. But other times Céspedes performs the opposite move, turning to the paratext to disprove something presented in the fiction but which in reality never happened. This ambiguous usage of

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<sup>30</sup>Gérard Genette. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>31</sup> “The author can verify this.” Céspedes, *Metal del diablo*, 95.

these ancillary productions may seem disorienting for the reader, but they help Céspedes ground his fictional work in reality so as to use its critical discourses as a weapon against the society of his time.<sup>32</sup>

The profuse use of footnotes, more than fifty in the text, indicates the degree to which the text needs to be supplemented by non-literary information. And one should not be surprised by this, considering that the novel is always negotiating a difficult path between fiction and documentary. This also points toward the instability of a text that presents itself as a novel but in its “prologue” states that “Toda analogía que se encuentre entre los personajes o empresas de la presente novela y los de existencia, no depende solo de una coincidencia causal.”<sup>33</sup> *Metal del diablo* is thus caught in the space of tension, the double movement internal to literature identified by Derrida in that it wants to be taken as a serious work of fiction (retaining its authority to denounce everything from that position) while at the same time launching an all-out attack on the Rosca and Patiño (and avoiding being dismissed as propaganda or misinformation by those directly attacked). Céspedes uses the paratext to drive home the denunciative telos of the novel: in one instance, we read about “Mr. Backuw,” the general director of the Patiño Mining Company explaining to a group of investors that due to the new tributary policies in place the company was able to declare “losses” and avoid new taxes. This information, provided in the main body of the text, is supplemented by Céspedes’s authorial intervention in a footnote, where he ironically

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<sup>32</sup> One can easily see how *Metal del diablo* Céspedes uses these resources to deny what his character had just stated in the body of the text leaving the reader slightly confused but acutely aware of the importance of these resources for mining authors of the time in tracing the lines that separate fiction from reality and expression from invective. Ibid., 248.

<sup>33</sup> “Any analogy between characters or companies introduced in this novel and those that actually exist in reality is not a coincidence” Ibid., 6.

commiserates with the capitalists of Bolivia, and then enumerates the consequences of defunding charities, juxtaposing this with anecdotal incidents that highlight the greed of the dominant class:

Así piensan las grandes empresas, como la Compagnie Aramayo de Mines en Bolivie, que alegando tener muchas pérdidas se negó a hacer un donativo de 5.000 Bs. (100 dólares) en la colecta que las damas de La Paz hicieron para la capilla del señor del Gran Poder... Fue también por suma pobreza que en 1931 don Carlos V. Aramayo se resistió a pagar el impuesto aduanero de 4.000 Bs. por internación de licores alegando haberlos importado en su función de diplomático. Entonces el presidente Salamanca suplió esa suma con un cheque de sus fondos personales que giro a la orden de la compañía Recaudadora de Aduanas.<sup>34</sup>

Rhetorical attacks against Bolivia's economic and political elites are found throughout the book, in the text as much as the paratext. But it is the paratext, and especially the footnote, that helps Céspedes switch voices effectively thus expanding the register of the novel as a whole. In one instance, we see how the authorial voice not only takes over the narration to comment on recent history or add factual information, but self-refers to the book we hold in our hands to inscribe it into that recent history it attempts to describe. In chapter 13, "Boya," Céspedes presents a litany of imaginary events that bring a tumultuous government down immediately followed by the congratulatory "statements" of the representatives of the new order: "Los abogados de Omonte en su nombre felicitan a los generales del cuartelazo, al pueblo heroico y hacen donativos a la universidad por haber iniciado la 'verdadera gesta restauradora de la Constitución y de las leyes.'"<sup>35</sup> But right after the sentence is over, Céspedes marks it with an asterisk to disavow its

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<sup>34</sup> "This is how big companies think, companies like the Compagnie Aramayo de Mines en Bolivie. Claiming to have many losses, it refused to make a donation of 5,000 Bs. (100 dollars) in the collection that the ladies of La Paz made for the chapel of the Lord of the Gran Poder ... It was also due to extreme poverty that in 1931 Don Carlos V. Aramayo refused to pay the customs tax of 4,000 Bs. for liquor import claiming to have entered it in his role as a diplomat. Then President Salamanca payed that sum with a check of his personal funds that he turned to the order of the Customs Collection Company." Céspedes, *Metal del diablo*, 239.

<sup>35</sup> "Omonte's lawyers in his name congratulate the generals of the *cuartelazo*, [military uprising] the heroic people and make donations to the university for initiating the 'true restoration of the Constitution and the laws.'" Ibid., 216.



fictionality: “Esto no es invento.”<sup>36</sup> He clarifies that Patiño himself resigned as Bolivian minister of mines right before the ousting of progressive MNR President Hernan Siles and sent from Paris a letter supporting the “new leadership” which is quoted in the footnote. Céspedes expands on the historical consequences of this coup and later ones, such as the overthrow and murder of General Villarroel in 1946. Finally, he adds: “El nuevo gobierno formó su gabinete y su servicio exterior con abogados del millonario y la primera edición de este libro fue quemada.”<sup>37</sup>

Céspedes may be a minor writer, but his liberal use of the paratext is significant in the corpus and in Latin American literature as a whole. Few writers use it so extensively—and the footnote specifically—to alternate narrative modalities and in his case advance an attack against the constituted power in his day. Here, Céspedes uses this tool not only to support the claims of his “fiction,” but also to call attention to the previous attempts (and failures) of power to erase the very same discourse we are reading now. It goes beyond this strategy to register the location and operation of the book during the conservative rule of the *sexenio* and endows the novel with some capital of victimhood, revealing the extent to which it successfully challenged the political rule and achieved enough discomfort among the dominant classes as to merit its destruction, (as to wish it destroyed).

In *Metal del diablo*, the paratext is not only used to frame an attack on the elite or to supplement the text with other sources. Céspedes also reminds us of the linguistic layering of these accounts mostly articulated by authors familiar with Quechua or whose narratives included the use

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>37</sup> Gestures of this nature constituted weapons in waging the war that these mining writers launched against the Rosca and the status quo of their time, and won over the support of the popular classes who saw in these narratives potential allies for political change. “The new government formed its cabinet and its foreign service with lawyers of the millionaire and the first edition of this book was burned.” Ibid., 216.

of this language at some point. In a peculiar turn, Céspedes acknowledges that the passage or dialogue we are reading is taking place not in Spanish but in Quechua without defining the precise limits of code-changing or the implicit reasons behind this operation. For instance, a young Omonte trying to strike up a conversation with a *cholita* who is washing her clothes in the river is described as throwing small pebbles in the direction of the young woman who shouts: “Khara ¿Quién te ha dicho que me tires piedras? Ocioso.”<sup>38</sup> In the text, the word “khara” has a footnote which defines the word as meaning “young man” in Quechua and adds: “Es deplorable que el diálogo siga en castellano, porque en quichua es muy sabroso. Así por lo menos lo cree el autor.”<sup>39</sup>

This apparently insignificant footnote discloses some of the tensions within the text. For one thing, it reveals the limit of the text itself not only at the level of the paratext, as noted above, but placing the reader in a sort of threshold between the dominant language of communication, Spanish, and a hidden but pervasive Quechua. The ambiguity and open-ended nature of the information disclosed in the footnote opens a door for doubt for the rest of the reading of the episode or the dialogue where such change in language takes place. We are reminded of this “minor” language working stealthily (or subterraneanly) throughout the novel and more generally in the literature of the time. The reader is offered a clarifying and at the same time confusing word that indicates the occurrence of code-switching but not much beyond that. One is not sure about when this dialogue in Quechua is supposed to end, when does it resume in Spanish, or why is it more pleasant or “sabroso” in Quechua. This use of the footnote reminds us of the text’s need for

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<sup>38</sup> “Khara! who told you you can throw stones at me, you slacker.” Ibid., 16.

<sup>39</sup> “It is deplorable that the dialogue continues in Spanish because in Quechua it is very pleasant. So, at least, the author believes.” Ibid., 16.

supplementary support from extra-literary resources that enhance the authoritative voice of the writer by creating an expanded field of rhetorical intervention.

In a broader context and as we will see, the use of paratext also appears in texts such as *El precio del estaño* which invest heavily in the validation of their narrative as “a true account”<sup>40</sup> based on oral testimonies and primary sources from the archives. As I argued above, these works resort to the paratextual due to the intrinsic tension caused by their handling of history and fiction; namely a tension between having their works taken seriously as documents that denounce material reality while still appealing to the protection of passing as simply fictive stories. *Metal del diablo* reminds us of the text’s need for supplementary assistance, and in this case a series of paratextual devices helps to locate and relocate the narrative and authorial voice’s authority. The novel expands the use of such tools to increase not only the democratic scope of the narrative as mentioned above, but also the way in which what needs to be communicated is configured and delivered. As a new narrative voice in mid-century Bolivian literature, *Metal del diablo* utilized techniques notably absent in earlier accounts highlighting its relative sophistication in terms of narratological strategies and the level of rhetorical maneuvering needed to avoid falling into the trap of having his literary intervention rapidly dismissed and neutralized as “fiction” a risk all too present particularly in the mutinous and highly contested pre-revolution years in Bolivia.

In all, *Metal del diablo* covers the experience of Simon I. Patiño as he becomes one of the richest men in the world, while simultaneously configuring an attack against the social order of his day. The novel’s focus on Bolivian politics or the life of Patiño allows the reader a privileged

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<sup>40</sup> Taboada Terán addressed his motives to write a novel based on real facts and to a specific audience. Richards, *Lo imaginario Mestizo*, 95.

insight into the boardrooms where decisions are being made; it also reveals the cruel logic of extractive capital's exploitation and accumulation and unveils business and politics as rude manipulation and self-serving action. However, the miner, the miner's wife, the peasant or the Indian are somehow relegated as other characters take primacy in the narrative. This is not without some irony since the telos of the novel is directly aimed at changing the material conditions of the poorest. We have to look into other texts to better understand how the literature of the time reflected the experience of the ordinary worker, the miner and his family.

### **3.3 Women and peasants in *Socavones de angustia***

Published in the midst of political upheaval -one year after the promulgation of the Pulacayo Thesis- Fernando Ramírez Velarde's *Socavones de angustia* (1947) dramatizes the miners' harsh working conditions and struggle to survive in small and large mining camps. This short novel introduces us, perhaps for the first time in Bolivian mining literature, to a serious discussion of women's complex interpersonal issues as well as a sustained consideration of the migrant peasant. There is not much criticism or history about the novel, but we know that *Socavones de angustia* gained more popularity after it was published under the new cultural policies of the revolutionary regime by a state press. The preface to the 1953 edition, penned by the mayor of La Paz and later dropped from subsequent editions, reads: "One of the purposes of the National Revolution is to improve and expand the facilities for printed publications in order to ensure and increase the production of scientific and recreational literature in the country."<sup>41</sup> It adds that the mission of the "Biblioteca Paceña" is to print previously "unpublished works of permanent interest and of

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<sup>41</sup> Fernando Ramírez Velarde, *Socavones de angustia* (La Paz: Biblioteca Paceña, Alcaldía Municipal), 1953. Juan Luis Gutiérrez Granier. Presentación, i.

importance for their intrinsic cultural message.”<sup>42</sup> *Socavones de angustia* is identified by the state and promoted as a tool in forging a revolutionary national-subject. It becomes an instrument for shaping affects and allegiances especially of young members who might be coming of age while reading state-sponsored literature such as this.

I agree partially with Augusto Guzmán when he notes that there is no clear character in *Socavones de angustia*.<sup>43</sup> Rather, the main character seems to be the exploitation of miners and laborers in the mines of Bolivia. This “character” runs along the three parts of the novel and is narrativized paying special attention to the everyday life of those oppressed in the mines. Guzmán adds: “Las dos mujeres que hacen de protagonistas, Donata y Sebastiana, son gentes del montón auténticas sin duda pero privadas de la singularidad necesaria para encarar papeles importantes en la narrativa.”<sup>44</sup> I would argue that there are indeed two characters with primary importance in the text, but more importantly, by reading the text we experience for the first time that the miners’ personal affairs are worthy of representation and should be integrated into a mining narrative. In a literary world dominated by the male perspective, this salutatory gesture opens up the narrative register and the valuation of women’s lived experience as worthy of inclusion and discussion. In

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., ii.

<sup>43</sup> Augusto Guzmán, *La novela en Bolivia* (La Paz: Editorial Juventud 1955), 167.

<sup>44</sup> “The two women who act as protagonists, Donata and Sebastiana, are ordinary people without a doubt but are also deprived of the singularity necessary to assume important roles in the narrative.” Augusto Guzmán, *La novela en Bolivia* (La Paz: Editorial Juventud 1955), 167. But he adds, “Ahora las cosas han cambiado, el pegujal es del que lo trabaja y en muchísimos casos es más bien el patrón quien ha sido echado de la finca por los pegujaleros.” (Now things have changed, the pegujal (small plot of land) is the property of the one who works it and in many cases it is the boss who has been thrown out by the pegujaleros). The digression—jumping from the literary to the political—suggests that things have changed dramatically and that the hardships illustrated by these writers have been overcome. Seemingly, the changes brought about by the Revolution are so comprehensive and ambitious that—in a matter of just eight years (*La novela en Bolivia* was published in 1955)—they are noted in catalogs of national literary criticism. Augusto Guzmán seems to be praising the Agrarian Reform of 1953. In January 1953, the government established the Agrarian Reform Commission, and decreed the Agrarian Reform Law the following August. The law abolished forced labor and established a program of expropriation and distribution of the rural property of the traditional landlords to the Indian peasants.

most of the narratives discussed so far, the miner has been defined as a male who endures adversity, poverty, a harsh environment, exploitation by capital and other calamities.

*En las tierras de Potosí*, for instance, goes to great lengths to show how Martín is able to adapt to a changing environment and navigate the mores and ways of the alien mining town where he resides. *El oro negro* and *Los eternos vagabundos* are also concerned with crafting an image of the miner as a victim who tries to survive and keep alive his culture in spite of all possible adversity. But for the most part, these one-dimensional accounts represent the miner as a homogeneous entity, failing to note the diversity of the miner's milieu. They represent a subject devoid of any life *before* his becoming miner; a young male able to break the rock by virtue of his own strength but who is generally unable to keep his mental or physical health for more than a few years before eventually breaking down. I argue that one cannot truly understand the Bolivian miner, and much less the accounts of the miner and his surrounding environment, if we take him to be a transhistorical or ahistorical abstract entity without paying attention to the significance of his origins and background. *Socavones de angustia* is key to understanding the extent to which the Bolivian miner is constituted and represented as a miner only after he leaves behind his former self usually associated with peasant-indigenous communities and practices.

One of the merits of this work is that it allows us to see the realities of the miner, the female miner, the child, the teacher, the miner-turned-supervisor, the union leader etc. embedded as subjects in a specific and detailed position of movement and action: a subject at the intersection of forces such as culture, class, race, the hyperobject mining and others. We learn about the characteristics of their trade, their routine, their assignments, and the texture of their everyday life. More importantly perhaps, we learn also about the impact of these forces and habits on their psychology expressed in moods, emotions, and affects that permeate the narrative. This is not to

say that the political edge is relegated in favor of individual melodrama or in describing the singularity of the miners' experience. On the contrary: the authors discussed here utilize and represent these nuances ever-present in the life of miners as part of literature's repertoire of contention deployed against the status quo. In fact, the whole plot of *Socavones de angustia* depends on the expulsion of the Ari family from their land, or in Marxist terminology the innate violence of primitive accumulation within the process of capital accumulation on a world scale.

Before dealing directly with *Socavones de angustia*, a word about the status of women in other texts of the period. So far, the literature of mining has treated women as referents through the experience of the male protagonist. In *En las tierras de Potosí*, Claudina appears as a character, but only as the object of desire of Martín and as a referent for author Jaime Mendoza for his elaborations on the cultural specificity of carnival, or his discussion on class difference and social demarcations. Claudina is a *palliri* as well, a (usually) female laborer who breaks down small rocks to look for residues of tin, but the text does not explore the social texture of that space mainly inhabited by female miners or become interested in exposing their preoccupations about life in the mines. In *El oro negro* we're introduced to Dorotea, but only as the wife of Nicolás, the real protagonist of the story. Little about her personal life is disclosed. We learn about their poverty, their displacement from town to town and their death at an old age. But their treatment is always focalized as a couple, not as two individuals, and their roles are firmly rooted in the classic dichotomy of public/private space offering little to no attention to her own development as a character inside the narrative.

In mid-century Bolivian literature, however, women are depicted as able and astute subjects capable of circumventing the authority of the male head of household when he asserts power through violence, as well as the authority of the camp's administrators who impose

restrictions and curfews, especially during strikes or voluntary stoppages.<sup>45</sup> They also emerge in the narrations as politicized subjects who support the miners. In *Metal del diablo*, the wife of young Omonte is depicted as a stable individual ready to encourage her partner's adventurism. In *Socavones de angustia*, women are portrayed as caring mothers, daughters and workers who support the male miner but also help each other to endure economic hardships. They are represented as active agents committed to a sense of selflessness towards a higher form of good, the well-being of the family group or in this specific case the families that live and migrate together. Their relations are marked by a spirit of cooperation, but other affects, such as a notion of self-dignity, honor, pride or self-respect, are present throughout the text.

In *El precio del estaño* women are not only caring mothers, but appear as laborers and prostitutes willing to help the miner's cause, sneaking out food and provisions for barred union leaders and defending their strike by marching against the Bolivian military and giving up their lives.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps this evidences a partial overcoming of certain paternalistic and positivist forces that directed earlier texts such as *En las tierras de Potosí* or *El oro negro*. Again, these new narratives are far from being calls for gender equality, but their interventions when representing women constitute salutatory gestures part of a larger set of progressive politics that emphasize social economic and political justice in the time of the Rosca and its abuses of power. *Socavones de angustia* however, is not a feminist text and is far from being particularly egalitarian. It still represents and reproduces patterns of *machismo*, sexism and practices of oppression under the guise of tradition. Yet the space dedicated to explore women's responses to adversity beyond

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<sup>45</sup> This will be discussed later when analyzing the narrative modes in the novel *El precio del estaño*.

<sup>46</sup> Néstor Taboada Terán, *El precio del estaño* (La Paz: Ediciones Librería Juventud, 1960), 80.



sentimentalist discourse is new and valuable as a gesture toward the inclusion of other subjectivities.

The novel tells the story of the Ari family as they become displaced from their rural origins in the *hacienda* Jatun Rancho near Cochabamba and forced to look for work in the mines of Oruro and Potosí. It begins with the young Donata who arrives to live with her family in the rancho after the death of her husband in a mine accident. Pregnant and devastated by her loss, Donata has to return to live with her mother, but soon after they become expelled and wander around carrying out odd jobs in the mines and navigating poverty in the urban landscape of Oruro. Their expulsion is caused by a crime committed by Severo (Donata's younger brother), which first forces him to flee and live in hiding and later pushes the whole family out of the rancho.

Severo is accused of choking his wife to death after he found her having sexual relations with the son of the *hacienda* owner during their wedding night. After describing the incident, one notices how the narratorial voice is concerned with representing women's relations as they coordinate to help Severo who's hiding from the community: there's a special attention to Sebastia, Donata and their *comadres* as agents able to navigate this period of uncertainty establishing communication with Severo, and delivering provisions wherever he's hiding. We hear about women like Florentina, a friend of the family who helps mediate between the family and the fugitive: "No podía decirles nada por evitar sospechas, ya saben que la casa de ustedes siempre ha estado vigilada por los soldados y los secuaces del dueño."<sup>47</sup> After this Donata, her mother Sebastia, and their infant sons are turned into pariahs due to the flight of Severo, the only able-bodied man

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<sup>47</sup> "I couldn't let you know just to avoid others from suspecting. You know that your house is under surveillance by soldiers and associates of Casilda's old dad." Fernando Ramírez Velarde, *Socavones de angustia*, (La Paz: Editorial GUM), 60.

of the family and evicted from the rancho. On the train to Oruro, not knowing what to do next or how to survive, they meet Juan Calle, a handsome youth who takes them to the mine “Buena Estrella” where they eventually are able to find work as *palliris* breaking the ore down and selecting out remaining metal.

Ramírez Velarde creates interactions between his characters that allow us to understand key aspects of women’s social relations vis-à-vis rivalry for power and status inside a mining camp or the emotional intelligence needed to survive and adapt to a new work routine which go beyond the innate physical exertion of the trade and include accepting and adopting the role of mother, housewife, care giver, etc. For example, when the family first arrives to the mines, Donata and Sebastia encounter hostility and mockery from other mining women for the simple fact of being newcomers. Instead of venting their anger, they respond with self-control. During their first day of work in the slag pile, we read of other women saying “¡Qué manera de pallar! Si nos descuidamos esta mujer nos va a pallar la cabeza.”<sup>48</sup> Or another *palliri*: “Deberían sacarlas si son inútiles.”<sup>49</sup> Just when the women are about to become physical, Sebastia intervenes and begs them to stop arguing, saying that she wants to be a friend rather than a cause of conflict.

Sebastia and Donata slowly form new habits as new lines previously hidden from the story begin to emerge, most importantly Juan’s infatuation with Donata. This is no small problem since the Ari family is living with Juan, his partner Josefina, and three other families. Here again Ramírez Velarde expounds this new “problem” and the nuanced approach by the two women. Both Sebastia and Donata are very aware of the negative consequences for everyone if Juan decides to

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<sup>48</sup> “What a way to work. If we’re not careful this woman we will hammer our heads out.” Ibid., 101.

<sup>49</sup> “They should kick them out. They are useless.” Ibid., 101.

break his marriage. Donata is attracted to him but acknowledges the possibility of wrongdoing: “Qué terribles impulsos de aceptarte tengo [...] pero no es posible Juancho. Lo he pensado mucho durante todos estos días y todas estas noches.”<sup>50</sup> When Juan responds that he won’t be able to forget her, Donata replies: “Podrás, si pones algo de tu parte. Y por último, aunque no lo lograras, aunque fueras desgraciado, ¿no es acaso hermoso el sacrificio de uno por la tranquilidad y la dicha del otro?”<sup>51</sup> What is noteworthy here is Donata’s appeal to Juan for the exercise of simple values like fidelity, restraint and prudence, values that at any rate are hard to find in the corpus.

Generally speaking, miners were characterized as victims in the first wave of mining novels and as subjects with agency in the mid-century literary production; but as we have seen so far, their habits oscillated between extreme devotion to work or overindulgence in alcohol and escapism. The Ari family instead, and specially Donata and her mother Sebastia, have from the beginning of the narration shown prudence and moderation. Their expulsion from the rancho was only caused by Severo’s crime and their survival in the mines has depended on their patience and the careful handling of this affair so that the suspicion of this love triangle does not filter out to the public. They would never achieve their dream of returning to the rancho or buying a piece of land for themselves, but due to their perseverance and the lucky encounter with Juan they avoided becoming beggars in the desolate landscape of the country.

A second contribution is the highlighting of the pre-mining background of the miner as an individual subjected to the requirements of rural life. *Socavones de angustia* shows how the background of most men and women who become miners plays an important role in their

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<sup>50</sup> “What terrible impulses I have to accept you [...]. But this is not possible Juancho. I have given it much thought during all these days and nights.” Ibid., 110.

<sup>51</sup> “You will be able to do it. Even if you wouldn’t be able to do so and even if you were miserable, is it not beautiful to sacrifice oneself for the tranquility and happiness of the other?” Ibid., 111.

motivation to save and return to the country but also in the life that precedes their life as a miner. The figure of the miner has long been associated with a hereditary trade where father passes down skills and knowledge to his sons and so on. But in the Bolivian mining literature we heard about a different reality. Increasingly over time, the number of men and women who looked for work in the mines came from rural Bolivia, specifically from the fertile Cochabamba valley which has a direct connection with mining zones in Oruro and Potosí.<sup>52</sup>

Ramírez Verlarde comments on the anxiety experienced by this family in view of an imminent move to the city, a place of uncertainty where they have no relatives or friends, a place entirely alien to the ways of the countryside. The second and third part of the book—“Noche” and “¿Cuándo llegará el alba?” respectively—documents this dislocation from the rancho to the mine, from the rural to the urban. The narrator illustrates how important it is for the majority of Bolivia’s indigenous population to share or own a parcel of land where they can live away from the uncertainties of the city and the abuses of hacienda owners: “La eterna ilusión de los indios. Tener tierra propia en el valle sin patrones malos y trabajando para si [sic] mismos, con las únicas contingencias de las heladas, sequías y otras plagas que con la gracia y la bondad de Dios, pueden ser menos dañinas y más soportables.”<sup>53</sup> As Héraclio Bonilla reminds us in *El minero de los Andes*, *campesinos* migrate to the mines only out of necessity and in some cases forced by the industry in what was known as the *enganche* system—a form of debt bondage—due to shortages of labor

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<sup>52</sup> Martín from *En las tierras de Potosí*, Donata and Sebastia from *Socavones de angustia*, and even the historical figure of Simon I. Patiño all hailed from a non-mining region, the Cochabamba valley. In the three novels analyzed in this chapter, the protagonists come from rural backgrounds and never give up the hope—even in the case of billionaire Patiño, represented as Zenon Omonte—to one day return to the countryside to enjoy benevolent weather and live alongside their *paisanos*.

<sup>53</sup> “The eternal illusion of Indians. To have their own land in the valley without evil foremen and working for themselves with the only contingencies being frosts or droughts and other pests which, with the grace and goodness of God, may be less harmful and more bearable.” Ramírez Velarde, *Socavones de angustia*, 71.

around mineral rich locations.<sup>54</sup> In other instances his narrator expands on this dichotomy juxtaposing images of the rural against the bleak landscape of mining camps.

El minero es generalmente un trasplantado que nunca acaba de acostumbrarse. Es un campesino que se fue a las minas, alucinado por los buenos salarios, y siempre tiene nostalgia de su vida pastoril en el valle o en la puna. El cambio del arado por el barreno; del trigal maduro por el negro socavón; de la tierra fértil y fragante de las siembras, por la roca dura y traicionera de las minas, resulta demasiado duro y radical para ello. Por eso es que el minero constantemente vive soñando con el retorno al terruño.<sup>55</sup>

But to understand the origin of this pathos it is necessary to revise the process of the initial expulsion from the land in relation to the forces of production and the effects on the peasants' subjectivity. These practices are not too different from those documented by Karl Marx in chapter 27 of *Capital* when he describes the process of primitive accumulation in terms of the historical shift in England's economic structures occasioned by the active enclosure of the commons. Mid-century mining literature in Bolivia is well aware of the provenance of their protagonists and their socio-economic positioning in Bolivia's economy as victims of processes of violent dispossession. Time and again they reiterate the rural origin of miners, the nostalgic affect of remembering their lives before becoming miners, their dream to work and save enough to eventually go back to the valley and work their piece of land without suffering from the abuse and the dangers of mine work.

In simple terms, "primitive accumulation is the process by which precapitalist modes of production, such as feudalism and chattel slavery, are transformed into the capitalist mode of

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<sup>54</sup> Héraclio Bonilla, *El minero de los Andes* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1974), 40.

<sup>55</sup> "The miner is usually a transplant who never gets used to his new environment. He is a peasant who went to the mines, blinded by good salaries but is always nostalgic for his former pastoral life in the valley or in the *puna*. The trading of the plow for the drill, the ripe wheat field for the black tunnel; the fertile and fragrant fields for the hard and treacherous rock of the mines, is too hard and radical for him. That is why the miner constantly dreams of returning to his plot." Bonilla, *El minero de los Andes*, 115.

production.”<sup>56</sup> Or in Marx’s words, “primitive accumulation is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production.”<sup>57</sup> From a spatially comparative stance, Marxist geographer David Harvey argues that primitive accumulation is about “the violent dispossession of a whole class of people from control over the means of production, at first through illegal acts, but ultimately as in the enclosure legislation in Britain, through actions of the state.”<sup>58</sup> However, taking into account the Bolivian mining context, I would add that primitive accumulation has indeed varied dimensions consisting not only of the generation of proletarianization and changes in property relations, but importantly the reorganizing of affects it produces such as the change in interpersonal relations (between the Ari family and the rancho-owning family), the breaking of familial ties described above and the transformation in human-environment relations that are its byproduct.

In the novel, we witness the violence of a double movement of primitive accumulation exerted over the Ari family. At the novel’s outset we encounter a family group that has been expelled of their *allyus* and dispossessed of their ancestral traditions and forms of organizing life by the semi-feudal haciendas that were the predominantly social structure operating in the region from the colony well into the second half of the twentieth century. But the Ari family then undergoes a second episode of dispossession as they become victims of the expulsion from the rancho by the owner Don Cosme Salinas. The family now has nothing but their labor power to sell, which they eventually do to the mine owners. The family has in fact become a group of free individuals not bound to any *hacienda*, but not yet incorporated to any new instruments of labor

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<sup>56</sup> “Glossary of Terms,” Marxists Internet Archive, Accessed October 9, 2017, <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/p/r.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 874-5.

<sup>58</sup> David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (London: Verso, 2010), 293.

such as factories or any other capitalistic venture: in other words, and following Marx's conceptualization of free labor, they effectively became "free birds" or *vogelfrei*. The German compound expresses a double meaning of newly freed subjects who are arguably emancipated from their obligations to their feudal lords, but who also have become fragile and rootless as their social structure has disappeared relatively quickly. "These men, suddenly dragged from their accustomed mode of life, could not immediately adapt themselves to the discipline of their new condition. They were turned in massive quantities into beggars, robbers and vagabonds, partly from inclination, in most cases under the force of circumstances."<sup>59</sup>

In *Socavones de angustia*, Donata, her mother Sebastia and their two toddlers are able to avoid falling into the category of beggars or vagabonds due to their resourcefulness and the lucky encounter with Juan Calle when they leave the community. But in the interim they are nothing but *vogelfrei*: rootless individuals dispossessed from their life-world and thrown upon the world with no self-conscience or purpose. It is only after encountering Juan that they go on to become sellers of their labor power in the local mines. They enter the mines as proletarians, as "the lowest class of industrial workers who have no capital or any other means of production except their own labor."<sup>60</sup> The Ari family, forced out of their land and means of subsistence, become *vogelfrei* and later proletariat in the repeating process of capitalism's apparently endless subsumption of peoples and natural resources.

Before turning to our next text *El precio del estaño*, I would like to highlight a moment in *Socavones de angustia* that rejoins with my critique of Luis Antezana and Javier Sanjinés's

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<sup>59</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I: A Critique of Political Economy*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1992), 896.

<sup>60</sup> Kendall W Brown, *A History of Mining in Latin America*. (University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 47.

correlation between referent and style, that is, between an internal (inside the mine)/fantastic and an external (outside the mine)/realism modality of narrating. To be fair, there are passages in earlier works that describe the interior environment of the mine in realist as well as fantastic terms. But their appearance, perhaps read by critics as a symptom of social change and the formation of literary currents or patterns, should not be directly linked to overarching generalizations.

*Socavones de angustia* problematizes these generalizations in several places. In the second part of the novel entitled “Noche,” we’re presented with a description of the interior of the mine which is portrayed in realist terms. There’s nothing fantastic about it. The narrator seems more interested in deciphering the nature of the mine using the tools of objectivity offered by realist description than borrowing from fantastic literature. This is no insignificant passage in the narrative. The reader can sense that the purpose of the description is to introduce her to the interior of a mine and transmit the singularity of this experience. Furthermore, the title of the novel is dramatically put forward and justified to an audience moved by the terrifying working conditions that miners have to endure. The narrator describes the mine as: “laberinto de galerías subterráneas que crecen constantemente, se estiran como tentáculos que quisieran atrapar a una presa, se alargan y retuercen como pesadilla; galerías negras y amenazantes como bocas de monstruos hambrientos: ¡Socavones de angustia! Mina, vivero de la muerte.”<sup>61</sup>

In the same vein, and throughout the narrative, the galleries are described as spaces loaded with the possibility of an accidental death but without using fantastic language or metaphors. On the contrary, the spaces underground are described from the modality of realist discourse because

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<sup>61</sup> “Labyrinth of underground galleries that are constantly growing; tentacles that stretch like they would catch prey, they lengthen and twist like a nightmare; black and threatening galleries as mouths of hungry monsters: cavern of anguish! Mine, nursery of death.” Ramírez Velarde, *Socavones de angustia*, 129.



it is there where things become most real or concrete for these combative mining writers. It is underground where workers die, where their health deteriorates, where they earn their living, where they become rich or continue digging to death. This is a space of heightened affect marked by a sense of immediacy and contingency. But it is also a space that reconfigures political subjectivities becoming a site where workers discuss and become radicalized, where they plan strikes, store dynamite when resisting the military, as we are told in *El precio del estaño*, or simply imagine a different reordering of nature and humans, a different society. Perhaps the subterranean instead of obstructing the faculty of vision (or in addition to it) allows for the visualization of a new angle where stranger but deeper perspectives can emerge. In this specific case, the narrator describes a group of miners aware of their own exploitation who decide to come together to find ways to address their conditions. “Allá, ya se encontraban varios obreros, posiblemente todos los citados. Sentados en el suelo o en cuclillas, formaban un grupo pequeño y compacto. A la sazón acullicaban ávidamente mientras alguno hablaba.”<sup>62</sup> It is clear that this information is provided in plain language; the words of the narrator are designed to reach the most basic readers to expand its audience. There is little talk about the historical role of the working class, or the party as the vanguard of the people. Rather, the narrative voice focuses on the discussion between five miners trying to decide how to launch a strike.<sup>63</sup> The interior of the mine appears but it does so in a way that problematizes and contradicts the conceptualization earlier advanced by Antezana and Sanjinés.

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<sup>62</sup> “There were already several workers possibly all those summoned. Sitting on the floor or squatting, they formed a small, compact group. Some chewed [coca leaves] while other conversed.” Ibid., 130.

<sup>63</sup> The miners are able to draft and deliver a list of demands but soon after the company uses the police to arrest them before they could secure any concessions from management.

### 3.4 *El precio del estaño* or Chronicling a Double Failure

*El precio del estaño* is another iteration of the combative spirit that guides the texts here discussed. Broadly, the novel is an attempt to recreate in literary form the events that led to the historical 1942 Catavi Massacre, which was the conclusion of a months-long stand-off between the Patiño Mines allied with the military government of General Enrique Peñaranda and the mining workers' union of Catavi. It is mainly concerned with the political manipulation of government decisions by the company as it tries to bring the ruling administration in line with its interests. Structurally, *El precio del estaño* is outlined using the factual story of a strike that lasted about three months from November 7<sup>th</sup> when, in general assembly, the Catavi Various Trades Union declared a strike (initially intended for 1 week) that eventually extended until December 21<sup>st</sup>, the day that Bolivian army troops attacked a peaceful march provoking a confrontation that would lead into the massacre.<sup>64</sup> The work reflects how the company and the state used these negotiations, where power was never equal, to successfully end the union's main goal of a salary increase by deferring, deceiving and finally using lethal force against the miners.

Formally, the novel targets the Rosca and delegitimizes its political authority and cultural dominance by adopting several strategies to reach the mining collective. It borrows from official and testimonial sources to thread a narrative about the events that led to the massacre but also to “teach” a relevant historically-based story to future audiences;<sup>65</sup> it uses simple language and easily

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<sup>64</sup> Néstor Taboada Terán, *El precio del estaño* (La Paz: Ediciones Librería Juventud, 1960) “Cronología de los acontecimientos.” Unpaginated. This chronology structures the narration but prevents it from engaging in a deeper literary exercise of creativity. The novel seems to be outlined to match the dates and elaborate on the factual historical events more than in opening or bringing forth the work of art as poesis.

<sup>65</sup> I concur with Keith Richard's about the novel's tone to reach onto future generations as a document of collective popular pedagogy (92). I'd add to this its functioning as a “letter” to the future. In the preface Taboada Terán states that he used the WTO Report of the joint Bolivian-U.S. Labor Commission headed by Judge Calvert Magruder to support the novel.

identifiable characters to guide its readers and allow an easy conceptualization of their discourse and action; and it makes use of illustrations in the body of the text to depict pictorially several scenes and characters narrated. The 1968 edition includes 35 illustrations by the Bolivian painter and muralist Walter Solón Romero, making it the only work of literature in the Bolivian mining corpus that utilizes artworks to advance its strategies of representation.<sup>66</sup> But since the novel's emphasis is placed on dramatizing the historical sources about the strike and the negotiations, little attention is given to the actual massacre—its consequences for the social movements that emerged later, for example- or other aspects of mining as such. Meditations, usually found in earlier texts, about the deep strangeness of mining or the phenomenology of the mineral are notably absent. Rather, the text is marked by a strong drive to narrate the experience of the strike “as it was”<sup>67</sup> supported on primary documents and archival sources.

At the level of the subject, *El precio del estaño* focuses on individual relationships to nuance the experience of the *altiplano* miner both as a laborer and as a union leader, but it also dwells on other subjects to note how they form mining assemblages: we hear about the lives of ordinary miners, prostitutes, family conflicts, American managers in the mining camps, the extravagant life of Simon I. Patiño and his associates, etc. But in its attempt to be well documented and inclusive of all experiences, *El precio del estaño* fails to become the revolutionary pro-miner pamphlet-document that organizes collective memories to utilize them in the fight against the military dictatorship.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> It seems to me that the novel is caught in a desire to transcend the written word and impress the reader directly through visual representation. The 1953 edition of the Chilean novel *Hijo del salitre* by Volodia Teitelboim also uses figurative illustrations to supplement the text.

<sup>67</sup> Richards, *Lo imaginario mestizo*, 83.

<sup>68</sup> Guillermo Lora, *Ausencia de la gran novela minera: análisis de un aspecto de la literatura social en Bolivia*, (La Paz: Ediciones El Amauta, 1979), 16.

This is not to say that the text is “neutral” in its documentation of the strike, or that its allegiances are conflicted between miners and the company. On the contrary, it is clearly organized as an assault on the political class of its day with the aim of changing the moral economy of discourse and material conditions on the ground. But its digressions subtract from the main narrative conduit, diverting our attention to other aspects of reality and losing from focus the tin miner as the subject of social change in Bolivia. The narrative discusses macrohistorical events that show authorial knowledge about the globality of the Bolivian mining industry vis-à-vis the superpowers in the context of the two World Wars, but leads the reader to ask herself about the need for such insertions and their effect on the overall feel of the text. We hear speculation about the causes of Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, the possible flight of Rudolph Hess to England, and the tiresome back and forth between the Patiño Mines and the government representatives.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps the inclusion of these digressions responds to Taboada Terán’s eagerness to identify and trace the many linkages between Bolivia’s production and the global war effort to emphasize the interconnectedness among seemingly disparate events and processes; or it may respond to a need to show the contradictions of war-making abroad via poverty-making at home. In any case, the text partially highlights these connections but at the expense of analyzing other problematics. Although it unfolds with the miner in mind and toward a concrete telos, namely the revalorization of the miner and his experience, its exhaustive drive to register every scale of reality eventually proves somewhat counterproductive to its alleged goals.

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<sup>69</sup> Taboada Terán, *El precio del estaño*, 99.

If *El precio del estaño* fails to mobilize a constituting power smoldering in the mining masses through becoming their manifesto or *the* great “mining epic,”<sup>70</sup> it does however offer a wide scope into a few key aspects to truly understand mining literature in the region. To begin with, *El precio del estaño* is valuable because it is intended to interpret and explicate rather than only express indignation as is the case with novels such as *Metal del diablo*. It achieves this through its use of “testimonial and documentary material in a context of the frequent falsification of the facts.”<sup>71</sup> Taboada Terán’s project is informative since it focuses on explaining the flows and forces that impact the life of the Bolivian miner, partially avoiding the propagandistic and sentimental tone found in previous accounts. Again, the novel is not conceived as a neutral or impartial document where the two poles of opinion—pro-miner and anti-miner/anti-strike— might be awarded the same amount of attention. On the contrary, its goal is to mobilize affects favorable to the cause of the miner in the aftermath of the Catavi Massacre and the abuses of the Rosca. The text is not a historical report but a historically-informed narrative where the author’s loyalties are articulated and expressed using *discourse* and *counterdiscourse* respectively. I call discourse a set of verbal iterations enunciated by the narrator and the miners which supports their cause. Since the novel is structured as a whole with a pro-miner narrative in mind (discourse), one is bound to find many instances of support for the miner from the narrative voice as well as from the representation of the character’s personalities. Here I will show a few cases of how discourse works to advance the goals of the novel.

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<sup>70</sup> Lora, *Ausencia*, 16.

<sup>71</sup> Richards, *Lo imaginario mestizo*, 83.

This discourse is opposed by a counterdiscourse which I define as the sum total of all opinions, statements and indirect speech remarks made by representatives of the company, politicians, managers and anyone whose verbal intervention in the texts indicates a measure of hostility or at least disapproval towards the miners' claims.<sup>72</sup> Counterdiscourse is generally composed from official documents or fictionalization of historical events that emphasize the manipulative character of the company's representatives, the corruption of the state underlined by a general sense of racism and misogyny. In what follows, I analyze how these two narrative modes operate in the novel to achieve the goal of creating an informed account of the standoff and its aftermath.

### **3.5 Rhetoric of Power: Discourse and Counterdiscourse**

In "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," Indian historian Ranajit Guha studies the modalities of writing that guided official reporting on riots and revolts during the British rule of the Indian subcontinent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Revising the historiography, Guha notices how it fails to give an account of these events beyond the logic of spontaneous events: "a sort of reflex action, and instinctive and almost mindless response."<sup>73</sup> Deconstructing the primary sources on which these accounts are based, he demonstrates how "state reports" and other administrative documents used regularly to write the history of the British Raj cannot be read as neutral documents given the

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<sup>72</sup> My analysis of the text's operations to narrate and "resignify" the miner relies on these concepts outlined above and not on the Foucaultian understanding of counter-memory, "as an individual's resistance against the official versions of historical continuity." While his schematization is valuable, his focus relies on an investigation of the uses of memory -in relation to knowledge and power- as constructs of history and not literature as a primary category of study. See Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Cornell University Press 1980.

<sup>73</sup> Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency" in *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 47.

complicit associations of its authors and their “commitment to colonialism.”<sup>74</sup> To better understand these ambiguities Guha identifies three types of discourse in the corpus of historical writing on peasant insurgency in colonial India: “*primary, secondary and tertiary* according to the order of their appearance in time and their filiation, -the degree of its formal identification- with an official point of view.”<sup>75</sup> Primary discourse is characterized by its contemporaneity and immediacy to the events it is discussing. It is usually state-issued and meant primarily for administrative use. Secondary discourse is deprived of this instantaneousness and generally uses primary discourse as material for its own construction and intervention. Its publication is removed from the original events and intended for a public readership. Tertiary discourse is farthest removed in time and is usually penned by non-official writers with no constraint or obligation to represent any institution. This discourse is distinguished by its effort to break away from the code of counter-insurgency.

The taxonomy presented by Guha allows for an expanded understanding into the causes of a certain blindness in Indian historiographical writers who rely on problematic sources due to their proximity and conflicted positioning vis-à-vis power. Historians thus remained stuck circularly in their own discourse or in Guha’s words, “it is by refusing to *prove* what appears as obvious historians of peasant insurgency remain trapped—in the obvious.”<sup>76</sup>

*El precio del estaño* organizes discourse and counterdiscourse in a space that is not immediate to the event but neither shorn of contemporaneity. Rather, it is articulated through this technique of braiding discourses in an indeterminate space too recent or too close to be presented as historiography (secondary discourse), but at the same time too removed from the historical facts

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<sup>74</sup> Guha, “The Prose,” 53.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 47. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 53. Emphasis in the original.

to be immediate or categorized as primary discourse as defined by Guha. His definition of primary discourse is characterized by a sense of being “written concurrently or soon after the event.”<sup>77</sup> In this sense *El precio del estaño* goes beyond these definitions offered by Guha about temporality of discourse. The text’s publication date is relatively removed from the immediacy Guha notes, but it inserts and alternates between sources contemporary to the event, written in the aftermath of the massacre and those written years later.

*El precio del estaño* is worth studying because of this alternation and play between discourses and voices at work. Whereas *Metal del diablo* uses false appellations and pseudonyms to name the targets of its rhetorical assault, *El precio del estaño* aims at bringing into relief the texture of history unprocessed and unmasked: historical characters appear with their real names, narrations about meetings to block the strike are derived directly from the archives and testimonies.<sup>78</sup> This operation enriches the text adding a layer of factuality to the novel, bringing the audience as closely as possible via the words of the perpetrators to the limits of literature and the signifier.

Guha’s cataloguing of historiography is helpful to understand the mechanics of *El precio del estaño* as a text committed to counter the reach of an official narrative while endorsing the miners’ value. I make use of his structural distinction to identify and classify the text’s play with my separation of discourse and counterdiscourse. I also use Guha’s distinction between indicative (reporting) and interpretative (explaining) components to analyze the formation of counterdiscourse as it unfolds in *El precio del estaño*. However, my reading of the *narrative* is

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>78</sup> Taboada Terán, *Oficio de coraje* (Los amigos del libro: Cochabamba, 1981), 26.



influenced, and not directly correlated, by his reading of Indian *historiography*. Given that these discussions have a different object of study, a straightforward borrowing of his methods would be pointless. So whereas Guha's intervention is focused on probing the unfolding of historiographical discourse, this discussion is interested in understanding the literary techniques used by authors such as Taboada Terán in devising combative narratives to foster immediate social change.

*Discourse* is favorable to the miners from page one. The narrative begins when we hear about a few miners who -fed up with working conditions, low salaries, and high prices at the company's food store- show up to the local lawyer to put their claims in writing: “-Queremos aumento de nuestros salarios. —Ah ya... ¿Y cuál es el motivo? ¿No les alcanza lo que ganan? — Sí doctor. No nos alcanza... La coca el chuño, el charque, la quinua... Y los hombres empezaron una triste peroración sobre la miseria, la pobreza y el desamparo de los trabajadores de Catavi.”<sup>79</sup> The letter is immediately redacted. We're presented with a full copy of the original document dated September 28<sup>th</sup> 1942 printed in italics with a footnote that confirms that all the documents used in the novel are “factual.” As we have noted before, the claim to historical accuracy based on marks and signs of factuality is recurrent in the narrative modalities of this period. Factuality drew the narrative and its accompanying attacks on the Rosca and its symbols close to the “real” world. But beyond this, the reader should notice two things. Format: the opening lines of the novel are spoken by the protagonists and dictated to the lawyer who would transcribe the oral language into written language as a result obtaining the letter which sets the plot in action. That is, the letter as a document addressed to the other is the first medium to appear in the novel. Perhaps the novel can

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<sup>79</sup> Taboada Terán, *El precio del estaño*, 16. “We want an increase in our salaries. —Ah ... And what is the reason? Is what you earn not enough? -Yes doctor. It is not enough ... The coca chuño, the charque, the quinoa ... And the men began a sad peroration about the misery, the poverty and the helplessness of the Catavi workers.”

also be read as nothing but a letter for an unexpected, unforeseeable future or *l'avenir* in the Derridean sense. Content: the second point is to note that these lines already announce the representation of the miner as an oppressed but honest working laborer who is merely demanding an increase in salary to achieve basic quality of life. The rest of the novel is an extension, projection and negotiation of this set of grievances addressed to the political and economic ruling class of Bolivia. The appeal is to move the reader, to affect her mood by way of portraying misery and oppression juxtaposed with determination and resourcefulness. Discourse begins the narrative reinforcing the positive valuation of the referent miner.

The miners deliver their “pliego de peticiones” to no effect. They are sent from office to office with no goal other than deferral and exhaustion. A few days later, a document summons “tres delegados para que en La Paz tramiten, ‘de acuerdo a la ley’ el aumento de salarios.”<sup>80</sup> Once there, miners are ignored and wander around for two weeks only to meet with a military officer who in the narrative serves as an interlocutor for the miners: they are portrayed as clever individuals aware of their position in the Bolivian economy, the war effort, and cognizant of the government inconsistencies regarding the existence of progressive labor law and its null enforcement. “En todo lo que manifestaban había poca sinrazón y mucha certeza. De ahí que con exagerada insistencia demostraban la superficialidad de los planteamientos oficiales.”<sup>81</sup> Discourse is in charge of presenting the miners’ cause and their determination as worthy.

Sí mi coronel, creemos al igual que usted que por hoy no habrá otra posibilidad de arreglo ya que el poderoso pulpo capitalista que oprime a nuestro país está contra nosotros. [...] Nosotros no queremos ser intransigentes, hasta la fecha no hemos sido. La intransigencia es propia de aventureros. Nosotros, mineros de Catavi,

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<sup>80</sup> “Three delegates to La Paz, to negotiate ‘according to the law’ the increase in salaries.” Ibid., 37.

<sup>81</sup> “There was little unreason and much certainty in everything they said. Hence, with exaggerated insistence, they demonstrated the superficiality of the official proposals.” Ibid., 114.

fervorosos demócratas creemos que algún día gozaremos de una auténtica democracia que sirva a las mayorías populares del país.<sup>82</sup>

Pro-miner discourse shows the miners' union representatives as able and reasonable negotiators. It also draws from the repertoire of mining literature to "endear" the miner and other marginalized subjects to the reader: we hear about the ethics of prostitutes in La Paz, about the miners' poverty, and the toil of the *palliri* working women. While waiting to be heard in La Paz, Eulogio (one of the Catavi union leaders) is approached by a prostitute and asked to come to her room. Eulogio reluctantly accepts. Once upstairs, the woman called "Pura" reveals that they are being watched by undercover agents of the police. "Ustedes parecen hombres buenos, al principio creí que eran contrabandistas, ladrones o algo pero no, ustedes son de otra levadura. En fin, esas perras que se queden calladas, está bien pero que yo me calle, jamás."<sup>83</sup> This is the first time that prostitutes appear as characters with their own voice and agency where they not only appear as politically aware subjects but as individuals willing—at least in one case—to aid the miners' cause.

Later when the union leaders return dispirited from La Paz having achieved none of their goals, we are presented with a grim description of the miners' quarters. Isidoro Callata observes the *ingenio* or mining camp from afar. "Las viviendas de los empleados estaban en la periferia de la gerencia. Moraban hacinadas dos, tres y cuantas familias pudieran caber turnándose para dormir en el sistema cama-caliente que originaba conflictos domésticos juicios de divorcio y separación

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<sup>82</sup> "Yes, colonel, we believe as you do that today there will be no possibility of settlement since the powerful capitalist octopus that oppresses our country is against us. [...] We do not want to be intransigent, to date we have not been. Intransigence is typical of adventurers. We, Catavi miners, fervent democrats, believe that one day we will enjoy an authentic democracy that serves the country's popular majorities." Ibid., 115.

<sup>83</sup> "You look like good men, at first I thought you were smugglers, thieves or something but no, you are of a different kind. Anyway, those bitches may remain silent, but not me. I will never shut up." Ibid., 80.

en los concubinos. Sin agua potable, sin luz eléctrica, sin servicios sanitarios.”<sup>84</sup> These descriptions acquaint the reader with the material environment of the miner and create some form of empathy with him. They aren’t necessary for the characters’ roles or the unfolding of the plot but essential to bring the reader closer to the harsh conditions of the miner’s life and affect her mood. Later, the narrator introduces us to the daily labor of a female laborer, Maximiliana: “La profesión de *palliri* en la mina [era] aparentemente la mas cómoda, era la más pesada. Bajo la mirada inquisitoria de los capataces las mujeres sentadas en el suelo a la intemperie con sol o con frío perennemente masticando coca destrozaban y escogían el metal.”<sup>85</sup> Women in *El precio del estaño* are represented as proactive subjects of action within the plot, with specific individual histories and personalities, but they are not explored literarily as much as in *Socavones de angustia*. Nevertheless, the text offers heterogeneous profiles of women in society as well as their literalization in mining fiction prose. These motifs add a sense of legitimacy to the miners’ cause, increasing the reader’s sympathy toward the referent while dramatizing a historical event of importance for Bolivian popular history.

There is a clear divide between the way women are treated in discourse, as honest hard-working miners, and in *counterdiscourse* where they are usually relegated to the background as secretaries, wives of the ministers and sometimes even treated with a dint of misogynistic hate. In one passage, we hear about Doña Rosa who asks her husband, the mining minister of the time, about the lack of political participation for the military. She is ignored and later rebuked: “Si no

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<sup>84</sup> “Employee housing was on the periphery of management offices. Two, three, and as many families as possible lived in the same unit taking turns to sleep in the so called hot-bed system that gave rise to domestic conflicts, divorce and separation trials. Without drinking water, without electricity, without health services.” Ibid., 34.

<sup>85</sup> “The profession of *palliri* in the mine, apparently the most comfortable, was the hardest. Under the inquisitorial gaze of the foremen, the women sat on the ground in the open in the sun or in the cold, perennially chewing coca, shredding and choosing pieces of metal.” Ibid., 38.

seré un estúpido: ¡discutiendo de política con una mujer! Schopenhauer tuvo razón: las mujeres tienen largos cabellos y cortos pensamientos...”<sup>86</sup>

*El precio del estaño* is organized by alternating between iterations of discourse and counterdiscourse to explain the logic of both positions and stress the resulting tension implicit in the story. After the miners are done presenting their complaints and concerns, we soon hear about the criminalization of their right to strike and its equation to a destructive terrorist force led by “movimientos subversivos, grupos extremistas y agitadores sindicales.”<sup>87</sup> The context is a meeting attended by the president and his ministers where someone overhears something to the effect that “una paralización que obstruya la producción organizada y continua, equivale a la sustracción de materiales estratégicos destinados a la producción de [sic] guerra. *Esa sustracción tiene la misma significación destructiva que la de un submarino que hunde un cargamento de minerales en alta mar.*”<sup>88</sup>

Several things are worth discussing here. Politically, we witness not only the criminalization of the right to strike, which was won by the miners under the government of General Peñaranda and the much praised 1939 Busch Labor Code, but also the equation of exercising a basic labor right such as striking to terrorism. Literarily, we attend to an iteration of counterdiscourse in the novel, which effectively criminalizes the miners, setting the tone for subsequent interventions. Let us analyze this passage and highlight the way counterdiscourse operates to define its referent as a negative force and justify itself based on indicative and factual

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<sup>86</sup> “Am I not stupid? Discussing politics with a woman! Schopenhauer was right: women have long hair and short thoughts ...” Ibid., 104.

<sup>87</sup> “Subversive movements, extremist groups and union agitators.” Ibid., 120.

<sup>88</sup> “A paralysis that obstructs organized and continuous production, amounts to the theft of strategic materials destined for the production of [sic] war. This subtraction has the same destructive significance as that of a submarine that sinks a cargo of minerals in the high seas.” Ibid., 117. Emphasis added.

information. If we take a second look at the quoted passage it becomes clear that there are two components at work which do not operate autonomously but actually depend on each other “not merely as a matter of fact but of necessity.”<sup>89</sup> This dichotomic operation is common in the workings of counterdiscourse (as I utilize the term here) where we often encounter a division between the function of reporting (indicative component) and that of explaining (interpretative component). Here, the straight print stands for the indicative segments and the italics for the interpretative which interpenetrate and sustain each other in order to give the documents their significance. The function of interpreting the given information supports and justifies the indicative component not only by offering “meaning” to but also by implicitly leading to and answering simultaneously the question, “what ought to be done?” The double faculty of explaining and interpreting found at work in counterdiscourse allows it to misinform and lead to false conclusions.

The workings of counterdiscourse do not reside at the level of negativity only. To the contrary, it produces stories, anecdotes and interpretation to fit into their narratives as we noted above. In the next quotations we see how operating only from the interpretative company representatives construct a new narrative out of the situation caused by the strike to shift opinion and gain the president’s support. During a meeting, one of the representatives of the Patiño Mines -firmly set against any type of salary raise- reminds the president of Bolivia that the company is doing the miners and the nation “a favor” by producing so much tin for the war and as a byproduct, salaries and royalties for the national treasury. “La Patiño Mines que paga los salarios más elevados

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<sup>89</sup> Guha, “The Prose,” 53.

no podría seguir elevándolos sin arrastrar en la corriente a las demás empresas.”<sup>90</sup> In another occasion, we hear from the president’s secretary a communiqué sent from the board of directors in New York stating that the company adamantly refuses any talk of raising salaries (for the first time mentioning sending troops to occupy the mines to guarantee production) and underscores the benign nature of its activities: “La Compañía por su propia iniciativa ha mantenido y continúa manteniendo el pago de los salarios más altos en Bolivia en adición a las importantes inversiones hechas para preservar salud y bienestar social.”<sup>91</sup> The efficacy of counterdiscourse is such that one is almost led to believe that the overseas industrialists are indeed being oppressed by the subaltern. In this highly subjective view the capitalists become victims of the abuses and manipulation of the miners! The faculty of interpreting implicit information drives the efficacy of the prose of counterdiscourse in historical cases as well as when re-presented in literary fiction with denunciative goals in mind.

One bewildering aspect of counterdiscourse is that it does not need to be deployed by those who speak from power or need to justify themselves. Back in the mining camp, in the middle of a back and forth between the government and the union leaders, employees begin to feel the tedium of the work stoppage due to the strike. We read of a young accountant of the Patiño Mines, Jorge Vacaflor, strolling down with his girlfriend when they see Soledad, the lover of the American manager Rocky Hutcheson. Asked about the strike, Jorge confesses that he does not know what will happen. However, one thing is true, “A los mineros hay que conocerlos mucho para

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<sup>90</sup> “The Patiño Mines, the company that pays the highest salaries cannot keep raising them without taking the rest of the companies astray.” Taboada Terán, *El precio del estaño*, 31.

<sup>91</sup> “The company pays the highest salaries and by its own initiative keeps commitments in order to preserve the health and social well-being of its workers.” Ibid., 57.

entenderlos. Son unas bestias emocionales si es que pueden tener emoción las bestias.”<sup>92</sup> He clarifies: “¿Qué es por ejemplo la huelga actual? El desborde insensato de sus instintos. Nosotros los empleados nunca hemos aprobado de las actitudes de los mineros.”<sup>93</sup> For a mestizo like Vacaflor it goes without saying: miners are Indians and Indians are brutes. The condemnation of Bolivia is that it has too many Indians. “Es una raza perdida, sin salvación. Los judíos, en todo caso son mejores. Los judíos están haciendo la grandeza de Norteamérica y los indios la decadencia de Bolivia. ¡Bolivia sin indios sería un país ideal!”<sup>94</sup> Counterdiscourse infused with centuries of structural oppression bears strange fruits such as these speculations. Taboada Terán designs the whole exchange to take the form of a casual comment: soon after Vacaflor is done with his tirade, they decide to walk back to avoid the protesters and the uncomfortable spectacle of malnourished children’s faces. His views and nonchalance evidence the intensive and extensive nature of a counterdiscourse that uses different variables: racism, anti-left attitudes, criminalization of striking, machismo, etc. embody a larger discursive or counterdiscursive entity. Counterdiscourse in *El precio del estaño* is not reducible to the citing of official “real” documents from the archives. Rather, it goes beyond the task of the historian, to recreate and fictionalize episodes of racism and its justifications, which might have otherwise been lost had not Taboada Terán decided to include them in the narrative. Their inclusion constitutes a useful strategy when it comes to defacing not only Patiño and his associates as symbol, but also combating the dominant *doxa* of the time expressed in everyday utterances and habits.

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<sup>92</sup> “It’s always hard to understand miners for miners are “emotional beasts, if beasts have any emotions at all.” Ibid., 160.

<sup>93</sup> “What is this strike for example? The senseless bursting of instincts. We, employees, have never approved of the miners’ attitudes.” Ibid., 160.

<sup>94</sup> “This is a lost race without salvation. Jews at any rate are much better. Jews are doing the wonders of North America and Indians only disasters in Bolivia. Bolivia without Indians would be an ideal country!” Ibid., 161.



This chapter showed how literature, specifically mining narratives, was able to open up a space for representation of previously subordinated matters. I discussed *El precio del estaño*'s use of discourse and counterdiscourse as novel rhetorical method to democratize fiction writing and narrative in mid-century Bolivia. By employing this strategy Taboada Terán was able to represent to the Bolivian reading public both the plight of the ordinary miner and his determination to improve his physical surroundings in spite of an oppressive and exploitative state. But the novel also serves to expose the biased logic of the mine owners, their representatives and even common people who opposed the strike. The exposition of counterdiscourse in all its forms from dismissive remarks to the scandalous violence of some passages effectively antagonized the readers from the cultural and political order of the time. I'd argue that the power of works like this resides in their capability to thread passages about the criminalization of dissent, for example, with other events and statements in order to create a larger narrative that stir emotions and invites the reader to act towards the ameliorations of the described grievances.

### **3.6 Conclusions**

Perhaps what helped change the course of Bolivian history was not so much the issuance of a few documents and stories but how society received and reflected them in the reorganization of the body polity. *Metal del diablo*, for example synthesized a number of narratives critical of the status quo—and working in tandem with the pro-MNR newspaper *La Calle*— they popularized the active disfigurement of Patiñismo in the eve of its collapse in April 1952. *El precio del estaño* for its part, popularized the memory of the lived experience of the Catavi Massacre as a rallying cry against General Barrientos's military coup, which brought down the Revolution in 1965. The novel was read and broadcasted using the network of miners' communitarian radio stations to harness support

for the resistance.<sup>95</sup> In this context, American Hispanist Luis Monguió's axiom about knowledge and perception seems pertinent. "Las ciencias sociales nos dirán como son las cosas, pero en un ambiente revolucionario como el de Bolivia, lo que importa no es saber cómo son las cosas sino como las *ve* una sociedad cambiada y cargada de emociones."<sup>96</sup> Something similar is at stake in Jon Beasley-Murray's remark about discourse. "The most interesting thing about a discourse is not what it says [...]. The most interesting possibilities lie on the other side, or under the same discourse specially in the ways in which this discourse forms, organizes and synchronizes intuition, instinct and affect."<sup>97</sup>

In the end, a constellation of symbols no longer held: the legitimacy of the Rosca was being defaced in popular culture as in formal politics; the precarious balance of the moral economy of the Chaco defeat was receding; and the affect inspired by a few charismatic leaders who preached military socialism such as General Busch or General Peñaranda had evaporated after their demise or suicide in the case of Busch. This iconography gradually failed to mobilize political support across classes and regions in the diverse Bolivian polity. In 1951, after a series of political scandals that plagued the *sexenio* and further deterioration of the economy, the sitting president Mamerto Urriolagoitia was obliged to hold elections. The MNR was allowed the chance to nominate candidates for the presidency, which it did and, to the surprise of every Bolivian, won with a clear plurality with Victor Paz Estenssoro who was in exile in Argentina and Hernan Siles who was running the party from underground. Urriolagoitia refused to give power to Paz Estenssoro and

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<sup>95</sup> Richards, *Lo imaginario mestizo*. 93.

<sup>96</sup> "The social sciences can tell us how things are but in a revolutionary environment like that of Bolivia what matters is not knowing how things are but how a changing society charged with emotion sees them." Luis Monguió, "Nationalism and Social Discontent as reflected in Spanish American Literature." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 1, no. 334, (March 1961): 63. My emphasis.

<sup>97</sup> Beasley-Murray: "La clave del cambio social no es la ideología, sino los cuerpos, los afectos y los hábitos," 20.

installed the General Hugo Ballivián instead. On April 9, 1952 the MNR launched a rebellion by seizing army arsenals and distributing arms to civilians. Armed miners marched on La Paz and after three days of fighting and the loss of some 600 lives, the army surrendered. Paz Estenssoro assumed the presidency on April 16, 1952 and the Bolivian Revolution began.<sup>98</sup>

We have discussed narratives that evidence the multilayered nature of the mining assemblages through a diversity of subjects previously ignored by early twentieth-century writers, such as the making of a Bolivian tin millionaire in *Metal del diablo*; the uprooting of families from the Bolivian countryside to mining cities combined with the awareness of an active female subjectivity in *Socavones de angustia*; and the formation of a pro-miner discourse and a reactive and conservative counterdiscourse to chronicle the Catavi strike and massacre in *El precio del estaño*. The democratic scope of the period's narrative insists on the resignification of the miner, even when focusing exclusively on its nemesis, the billionaire Simon I. Patiño or Zenon Omonte. They construct a miner that is able to challenge his material conditions and the established order specifically during the conservative and repressive *sexenio* years. Even when their efforts are crushed by a repressive state, miners are portrayed as individuals who exercise agency by organizing in unions and becoming aware of their importance in the assembly line of global mining during Second World War and the post-war period. This agency is no longer restricted to male miners as they are represented in the country's literature shifting from a passive and victimized figure to an active and politicized. The novels studied here include and explore the role of women as key characters in their narratives endowed with a political consciousness and with an extraordinary ability to endure and rise above conditions of extreme material and emotional

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<sup>98</sup> Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the Veins*, 35.

hardship. Mining writers of the time reflect alternate patterns and lines of thought when attempting to embody this subjectivity: *Metal del diablo* used the paratext as a way out of Derrida's caveat about literature's risk and potentiality. *Socavones de angustia* employs ordinary language to better approach the experience of the miner. And *El precio del estaño* makes extensive use of historical sources and "factual" accounts to support and validate their claims, in addition to the use of illustrations to expand its register of representation and make the narrative more accessible.

## Chapter 4: Metallic Encounters in Chile

In previous chapters, I have studied narratives that portray the miner as a subject exploited by the capitalist tin machine or actively struggling against it. Here, I take a step back to understand the wider nature of the miner's encounter with other bodies, human, mineral, metallic or otherwise. I discuss Chilean novels and poems concerned with the productive aspect of the encounter for larger social bodies (in the formation of a multitude, for instance), as well as for other subjects, such as the impact of the appearance of gold, its effects and affects. I begin with a reading of Volodia Teitelboim's *Hijo del salitre* (1952), a novel about the salt lands workers in the north of Chile paying special attention to how chance determined their trajectory and ensured their dramatic confrontation with the state. Secondly, I examine *Llampo de sangre* (1950), by poet and novelist Oscar Castro, which explores the heightened affects produced by the encounter with gold to show how the materiality of this metal elicits a series of responses. Lastly, I comment on a set of poems from Pablo Neruda's *Canto General* (1950) to underscore the poet's technique of multivocality employed to represent the miner and the understudied encounter with the mineral vein in his life as well as his work.

As we know, mining literature in Bolivia constituted an important part of the literary and political tradition, not only as production of fiction but as a vehicle to forge political projects. In Chile, however, things unfolded differently. For one, this literature did not succeed in aligning discourse and bodies towards a revolutionary becoming which materialized in the unexpected advent of the Nationalist Revolution in 1952. In Bolivia, a handful of authors located in a pair of cities, La Paz and Cochabamba, successfully helped to mobilize bodies and intensify affects toward political change around the figure of the tin miner as a revolutionary subject. The Andean

miner constituted the Bolivian proletariat and the fiction written about him claimed a sense of identity and representation. In Chile, coal and copper mines, nitrate flatlands, and gold fields, all congregated miners in different regions who articulated cultural and political identities in relation to varied social environments and practices of exploitation. Here, the miner “competed” for proletarian status and representation with the central valley *campesino*, the urban industrial worker (subjects which were absent or weak in Bolivia’s labor tradition).<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that the Chilean miner was not an agent of social change: during the early decades of the twentieth century, nitrate workers kick-started labor organization setting the precedent for the coal miners’ heightened participation through strikes and mobilizations during the turbulent 1930’s and 1940’s.<sup>2</sup> Later, miners were critical in prompting Salvador Allende to power in 1970.<sup>3</sup> But the narratives produced by their lived experience did not materialize in mobilizing publics to channel direct action into revolutionary changes the way they did in Bolivia.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Historian Peter DeShazo has studied other experiences central to labor movements during the early twentieth century. DeShazo, Peter, “The Valparaíso Maritime Strike of 1903 and the Development of a Revolutionary Labor Movement in Chile,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2:1 (1979): 145–68, and *Urban Workers and Labor Unions in Chile, 1902–1927* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin University Press, 1983); Peter Winn has documented the struggle of factory workers and textile workers in organizing and challenging the power of factory owners. Winn, Peter, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yaurur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive history of miners’ social movements in Chile see Jody Pavilack’s *Mining for the Nation*.

<sup>3</sup> Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-2002*, 334.

<sup>4</sup> In Bolivian literature, strikes and mobilization is key. Strikes appear either in passing i.e., *Metal del diablo*, *Socavones de angustia* or as a structure into which characters and narratives are plotted a priori within the framework of the *agon* between unions and the state such as in *El precio del estaño*. There, the narrative is much too structured for a reading of the internal dynamic of its constitution and its results. Author Néstor Taboada Terán’s main concern is producing a pro-miner rigid narrative following the historical timeline of the failed negotiations that led to the Catavi Massacre of 1942, and not a discussion on the actual formation of a multitude. The novel ends with the massacre itself and the death of the spontaneous but short lived body who is attacked and disperses immediately.

Historians agree that the Chilean proletariat originated in the northern plains -the Norte Grande region<sup>5</sup>- with the organizing of nitrate workers under the leadership of Emilio Recabarren.<sup>6</sup> Several events, however, weakened its consolidation through the twentieth century. One critical and very visible episode was the Santa María School Massacre of 1907 where about 1000 nitrate miners and their families were assassinated by the Chilean army in the port town of Iquique.<sup>7</sup> Macroeconomic forces also affected this process: the decline in the demand for saltpeter around 1914, combined with the onset of the Great Depression, decimated the concrete power of action of the proletariat and threw the labor movements into limbo for about a decade.<sup>8</sup>

Paradoxically, however, these defeats fostered the emergence of compelling aesthetic representations that denounced the abuse of workers and celebrated their resolution and determination to overcome these setbacks. These works mainly focus on the experiences from the Santa María School Massacre, so I call all literary, visual or musical representation configured around it the Santa María School Massacre corpus.<sup>9</sup> The Santa María School Massacre inspired an array of literary and visual works.<sup>10</sup> This corpus was plentiful, emotionally moving, and effective

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<sup>5</sup> The Norte Grande is one of Chile's five natural regions and its northernmost, bordering Peru to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Altiplano, Bolivia and Argentina to the east, and the Copiapó River to the south. Its most outstanding feature is the Atacama Desert: the driest in the world, containing areas where no rainfall has ever been recorded. Its landscape is typically made up of rock and gravel spread over wide plains.

<sup>6</sup> Gabriel Salazar Vergara, Julio Pinto Vallejos, Julio Pinto. *Historia contemporánea de Chile*, Vol. 4. (Santiago: LOM, 2002), 82. For a complete historiography of the Chilean labor movements see Vergara, Á. "Writing about Workers, Reflecting on Dictatorship and Neoliberalism: Chilean Labor History and the Pinochet Dictatorship." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 93, 52-73.

<sup>7</sup> Official Chilean state numbers estimate no less than 1000 deaths. See Lessie Jo Frazier *Salt in the Sand: Memory, Violence and the Nation-State, in Chile, 1890 to the Present*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 303 n.7.

<sup>8</sup> Manuel Fernandez "British Nitrate Companies and the Emergence of Chile's Proletariat, 1880-1914" in *Proletarianisation in the Third World Studies in the Creation of a Labour Force Under Dependent Capitalism* Edited by B. Munslow and H. Finch (London: Routledge, 1984), 68.

<sup>9</sup> Pedro Bravo Elizondo called this set of works the nitrate cycle or "ciclo salitrero" Pedro Bravo Elizondo and Bernardo Guerrero Jimenez, *Historia y ficción literaria sobre el ciclo del salitre en Chile*. (Iquique, Chile: Universidad Arturo Prat, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> *Norte Grande* (1944) by Andrés Sabella, *Hijo del salitre* (1952) by Volodia Teitelboim, *Martes tristes* (1983) by Francisco Simón Rivas, *Actas de Marusia* (1993) by Patricio Manns, *El invasor* (1997) by Sergio Missana and *Santa*

in mobilizing memory and resistance, but somewhat creatively narrow; it gathered experiences and testimonies serving as a sort of letter-to-the-future by the oppressed, via the artist, but was ultimately focused on one particular story making it monothematic and perhaps predictable. Its repeated portrayal points to the fact that every generation had a way of commemorating and mourning this event in different aesthetic iterations. The sum of these works, novels, stories, theater plays, film, poems and songs forms a constellation of texts that modulated affects and constituted symbols able to sustain the memory of those killed in the massacre and push the survivors forward in their struggle for improved labor and human rights.

As I mentioned, Chile's mining culture (as varied as its regions and resources) did not produce narratives that would lead directly to structural social changes. But the texts dealing with the Santa María School Massacre constitute a popular and literary effort to record and transmit a set of stories with the aim of passing them on to the younger miners in a historical process that was uneven, uncertain, and contingent. These narratives were kept alive by common storytellers, the *roto chileno*,<sup>11</sup> and the masses of laid off itinerant miners who would carry them as seeds waiting to find a more propitious soil. The stories about the Norte Grande and its peoples, the *pampinos*, the *salitreros*, and their struggle spread through the country due to the highly mobile former saltpeter miners who traveled south in the 1920's after the decline of nitrate exploitation.<sup>12</sup> They rallied bodies and generated affects in the coal and copper rich regions of central Chile, such

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*María de las flores negras*, by Hernán Rivera Letelier (2002). The massacre was also adapted for the film *Cantata de Chile*, (1975) by Cuban filmmaker Humberto Solás.

<sup>11</sup> Roto or "broken" is a term used to refer to Chilean people and in particular to the common Chilean. The roto is also considered a figure of national identity and pride in Chile.

<sup>12</sup> After World War I, German scientists developed the Haber-Bosch process; an inexpensive method of producing synthetic nitrates that severely affected the Chilean nitrate producers. Germany, Great Britain and Norway increased the output of nitrate substitutes from 1925 onwards driving down the world price.



as the emblematic copper mine “El teniente.” Historian Thomas M. Klubock documents this movement, noting that “many former nitrate miners found work in the copper mine and brought with them the experiences of labor conflict and leftist political activism gained in the northern desert.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Chilean coal mining writers like Gonzalo Drago (1906-1994) and Baltazar Castro (1919-1989) narrativized this transmission from former saltpeter miners in the north to copper and coal miners in central Chile.

These coal writers fictionalized the experience of the coal miner in several novels and short story collections which I omit from the discussion since these accounts tend to be configured on the model of the victimization of the miner and variation on this theme, narrative lines similar to those previously discussed in chapter 3. I opted to exclude them to focus on different accounts that enable us to better understand the heterogeneity of the mining literature corpus. Since literary production about the Santa María School Massacre is extensive, I focus on one work belonging to the corpus, *Hijo de salitre*, to assess the importance of encounters before, during, and after their march through the Atacama Desert.

#### **4.1 Multitude in *Hijo del salitre***

*Hijo del salitre* chronicles the experiences of Elías<sup>14</sup> as he matures and becomes a young worker in the context of a nitrate mining camp or *oficina salitrera*: we hear about Elías’s attempts to become an actor in the camp’s theater, his development, and in general, the texture of everyday

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<sup>13</sup> Klubock, *Contested Communities*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> A character based on the historical figure of Elías Laffarte, a witness of the Santa María School Massacre and later on secretary to Emilo Recabarren in the Federación Obrera de Chile (FOCH) which would later become the Chilean Communist Party. Laffarte was not only close friend and source for Volodia Teitelboim’s *Hijo del salitre* but “mentor” or older friend of Pablo Neruda who wrote several poems for him, see Neruda’s autobiography, *Memoirs*. See also Elías Laffarte, “Vida de un comunista,” accessed April 19, 2018, [http://www.luisemiliorecabarren.cl/files/La\\_vida\\_de\\_un\\_comunista\\_1ra\\_parte.pdf](http://www.luisemiliorecabarren.cl/files/La_vida_de_un_comunista_1ra_parte.pdf).

life. Later, the narrator announces the declaration of a strike and things change dramatically: workers from different camps meet and write up their grievances only to be rebuked by the local manager. There is discontent and uncertainty; the only option is to abandon production, to march down to Iquique and demand a renegotiation of their contracts. Once there, they are met by a hostile group of state representatives. Negotiations fail and workers are ordered to return to work. They refuse. The military is called and instructed to shoot the striking miners housed in the Iquique school of Santa María. Elías is one of the few survivors who escapes the bloodbath and denounces the killing to the rest of the country. This is the baseline of the novel: oppressed workers refuse labor abuse and mobilize to seek change only to be violently repressed by the state.

The novel is also valuable because it helps us understand the split between a canonized political subjectivity and an unruly one. That is, between the subjectivities reported by Bolivian writers and prior Chilean writers such as Baldomero Lillo or Baltazar Castro, and the ones troubling author Volodia Teitelboim throughout the narration of the strike and the Santa María Massacre. *Hijo del salitre* shows the formation of a multitude during the miners' march through the desert, the good encounters which enabled them to configure assemblages, and the habits which increased their power to affect and be affected. I draw on the analytic concept of assemblages advanced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and the ambivalent instability that Jon Beasley-Murray assigns to Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's concept of the multitude to show how the striking miners represented in *Hijo del Salitre* formed a body marked by "good encounters" and habits able to challenge and paralyze Chile's nitrate industry. Note however, that while these workers effectually challenged the Chilean state in their struggle for better labor conditions, they did not succeed in optimizing the conditions for a revolution as Bolivian workers and writers did.

But before this, a short definition of the multitude is needed. In brief, the multitude is a compound body made up of many diverse bodies and characterized by a heterogeneous composition and fluid interaction. Unlike the notion of “the people,” a unitary conception which reduces diversity to a unit and makes of the population a single identity, the multitude is many. In *Multitude* Negri and Hardt define it as a body “composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity -different cultures, races, forms of labor, ways of living; different views of the world and different desires.”<sup>15</sup> In short, the multitude is a multiplicity of singularities. Negri’s definition of the multitude is influenced by a subversive interpretation of seventeenth-century Dutch Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza’s thought on the importance of the body, and particularly of the powerful body. Multitude is the name of a multitude of bodies. In other words, “the multitude as power.”<sup>16</sup> This power in multiplicity is one of the salient aspects of the narrative presented by *Hijo de salitre*.

## **4.2 Encounters in the Desert**

The strike is declared and miners become marchers in search for material improvement. We are told about spontaneous walk-outs and the congregation-in-movement of miners trailing through the Atacama Desert towards Iquique. In the chapters on the march the narrator describes a series of encounters which have positive effects on the marchers’ affects: encounters with other miners from far away camps, encounters with the newly-formed community, etc. But before proceeding we should ask ourselves, what is an encounter and what type of encounter can be positive?

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<sup>15</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, xiv.

<sup>16</sup> Negri “Approximations,” 38.

For Deleuze, everything is an encounter in the universe, a good or bad encounter. “Adam had a bad encounter with the apple, hence the force of Spinoza’s question, ‘What can a body do?’, of what affects is it capable?”<sup>17</sup> Good and bad encounters. There are many in this chapter: the marching miners had good encounters with stories, habits, and other objects; but good encounters can quickly become bad encounters. Deleuze develops his theory of the encounter reading Spinoza’s *Ethics* as a text that conceptualizes encounters between bodies on the basis of their relative “goodness.” “The shark enters into a good relation with salt water, which increases its power to act, but for fresh water fish, salt water degrades the characteristic relations between its parts and threatens to destroy it.”<sup>18</sup> Encounters then have no transcendental scale to be measured upon, but are always relative and perspectival, good and bad assessments based on specific bodies.

As the miners march, they are joined not only by other Chilean miners and their families but also by scores of Bolivians, Peruvians, and even Argentines, who work in other mining camps across Chile’s Norte Grande. This section of the novel is marked by the process and result of these encounters between and within the multitude in formation. The narrator highlights these instances in which two or more bodies produce good encounters, increasing their affectual index and maintaining and sustaining this event. Beasley-Murray argues that “the multitude comprises a multiplicity of singular bodies organized in a nonhierarchical open network in which each body is in touch with every other body. Its principle of organization is contiguity, contact rather than contract.”<sup>19</sup> Encounters and growth in the narration are structured around similar experiences of contact and contiguity with human and non-human bodies alike.

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<sup>17</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 60.

<sup>18</sup> Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 275.

<sup>19</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony*, 246.

On several occasions, there is a description about how miners of different nationalities and members of their families relate to each other, what kind of activities take place during the march as well as in town. This formation of spontaneous networks and relations fascinates Teitelboim. One of the first such encounters happens after the miners' first day of marching, when Elías and his coworkers spend the night at a mining camp called "La Perla" where they are able to rest and recover. In the middle of the night the camp is alerted to the sound of a large group of people approaching from the darkness of the empty desert. "Un acento boliviano ligeramente cantado entreabrió la noche y llegó hasta ellos. Somos nosotros los de la esmeralda compañeritos hermanitos chilenos. Chacames [minero chileno-boliviano] dio un golpe en el bombo. Y se precipitaron a su encuentro a tientas, dando tropezones. Comenzaron súbitamente a abrazarse, cosa que no acostumbraban."<sup>20</sup> Other positive affects begin to disseminate among the members of this exodus. The narrator points to moments where the miners' dignity is regained. "Quizás tales hombres a quienes la vida en el pasado solo había hecho desprecios eran ahora amados y respetados por ella, tomados en cuenta."<sup>21</sup> These encounters and practices sustain the multitude through its march, and once they settle in Iquique, there is comradeship, care for each other, humor, recreation, the revelation of an entire, highly affective, community that grew in the days before they were massacred. After their first contact with workers from other countries, the narrator describes the affective configurations that develop among workers and their families: "Los invadió una rápida camaradería que no solían cultivar en la oficina. Era algo más que la amistad bebedora y

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<sup>20</sup> "A slightly sung Bolivian accent opened the night and came to them. —We are the ones from La Esmeralda, Chilean brothers—. Chacames [a Bolivian-Chilean miner] hit the drum. And they rushed to his encounter, fumbling, stumbling. They began to embrace suddenly, which they did not usually do." Teitelboim, *Hijo del salitre*, 150.

<sup>21</sup> "Perhaps such men to whom life in the past had only made contempt were now loved and respected, taken into account." Ibid., 149.

pendenciera. Podría compararse con un contacto sanguíneo. Algo propio de hermanos que estaban muy alejados y un día se encuentran. Un hombre que tiene mil hermanos.”<sup>22</sup> These are embodied flow of intensities that modulate the power of a body, individual or collective to affect or be affected by other bodies.

The formation for all its spontaneity and openness is not teleological. The multitude described by Teitelboim makes and unmakes itself at each stop, at each moment. There are good and bad encounters. At points, there is dissonance among the miners and their representatives; there are bad encounters even within themselves. While waiting for the negotiations, the striking miners and their families are entertained by a film projection in the local public hall. The multitude is captivated by the moving images, but we encounter a worried Elías meditating on the purpose of the strike and sharing privately with fellow miner José Briggs the decline of the negotiations. Random images of Venice, an approaching train, and other cuts do not appease a worried Elías as he breaks away from the group: “No tenía en ese momento alma para el cine. Miró a Ruiz y le habló como si le estuviera hablando a todos sus hermanos: -Las cosas están a punto de romperse- confesó, pensando en qué extraña ebullición de ideas, reacciones, y temores se produciría en cada uno de los que le escuchaban.”<sup>23</sup> We see Elías indifferent and diminished after a bad encounter with the film projected only for entertainment. The film not only fails to distract him from the talks with management, but also brings to the fore the stagnation of talks. This relation of good and bad encounters both fascinates and frustrates the narrator who notes a cycle of efforts within the

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<sup>22</sup> “They were invaded by a quick camaraderie that they did not grow in the *oficina*. It was more than the drunkard and quarrelsome friendship. It could be compared to a blood contact. something typical of brothers who were far away and one day they meet. A man who has a thousand brothers.” Ibid., 152.

<sup>23</sup> “He didn’t have soul for the movies. He looked at Ruiz and talked to him as if he was talking to all his brothers: – things are about to break– he confessed thinking about what strange boiling of ideas, reactions and fears would occur in each of those who listened to him.” Ibid., 249.

multitude itself to regroup, to reconsolidate in discourse and in behaviors and habits, but always returning to a permanent molecularization of its composite particles: workers lose morale and express their disappointment with the negotiations. The striking miners become a motley community of families, employees, small traders, the poor of Iquique, and spectators, rather than a homogeneous bloc.<sup>24</sup>

These encounters do not take place in a closed community. On the contrary, miners and their families create room for the creation of new encounters and practices. The multitude is open to the role of chance. The materialization of the multitude is unpredictable and almost miraculous, since communication and transportation are slow and unreliable. Their openness to chance in their march through the desert, and to alterity in including non-Chileans and non-miners, evince the contingency that marks the strikers-turned-multitude from its onset and until their final hour before the Chilean firing squad. “Its motion is not random though it may be guided by (and affirm) the role of chance (which is the very principle of the life of the multitude) and is open to the contingent, the fortuitous, and the unexpected.”<sup>25</sup> This openness allowed for another positive encounter, with the words of Chilean Socialist leader Emilio Recabarren. The miners do not meet Recabarren in person but via the reading of his speech, “Mi juramento.” Juan Ruiz, one of the strike leaders, quotes from Recabarren’s speech directly, ““Yo llegué a la cárcel porque un juez radical calificó de delincuentes a los hombres honrados que se atrevían a luchar por ideales de reivindicación social y de emancipación de las clases trabajadoras””<sup>26</sup> The narrator adds that, as Ruiz read, he was

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<sup>24</sup> Eduardo Deves reminds us that the miners coming from the desert were not alone in expressing their grievances. There was considerable social discontent in the town of Iquique by the time the miners arrived from the different guilds and tradesmen. Deves, *Los que van a morir te saludan*, 51.

<sup>25</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony*, 250.

<sup>26</sup> “I arrived in jail because a radical judge considered criminals the honest men who dared to fight for ideals of social rights and emancipation of the working classes.” *Hijo del salitre*, 222.

slowly becoming one with Recabarren's words. He is affected by the ideas he reproduces through his own body: "Ruiz peroraba inspirado sintiendo como si él mismo fuera el autor de esa música sagrada."<sup>27</sup> Recabarren, or rather the spirit of Recabarren, arrives only through the reading of his words, but this is enough for miners to express their sympathy, "deseando tenerlo con ellos."<sup>28</sup> This is an encounter with bodies that agree with their nature, "that increase their power: encounters that engender joyful passions."<sup>29</sup> The encounter with Recabarren's words increases the miners' power to affect others and themselves in the coming days, but the multitude's fate is uncertain.

### 4.3 Assemblages of Resistance

All these encounters during the march not only shape a more resolute and resilient multitude but also form new material configurations that guarantee more efficacy and more power to affect other bodies. I would call them assemblages since the term encompasses a higher degree of mobility and functionality. In chapter 2, I used Deleuze and Guattari's notion from their discussion of a rhizome to describe the relations between author, miner, and mineral. Here I use it to make certain arrangements legible and utilizable. But what is an assemblage? An assemblage is a new set of bodies at work in an unexpected way. This is Deleuze's most compressed explanation: "Horse-man-stirrup: a new man animal symbiosis, a new assemblage of war. The stirrup made possible a new military unit in giving the knight lateral stability. [It] replaced the energy of man by the power of the animal."<sup>30</sup> More abstractly, an assemblage "is what a set of bodies is capable of. Man and animal enter into a new relationship, one changes no less than the other."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "Ruiz was perorating inspired and feeling as if he himself was the author of that sacred music." Ibid., 222.

<sup>28</sup> "Wishing they had him with them." Ibid., 222.

<sup>29</sup> Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, 283.

<sup>30</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 69.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 70.



Miners crossing the pampa and becoming multitude, enter into symbiosis with other objects forming an assemblage which changes them as well as the other objects. The drum of a Bolivian miner, Chacames, becomes a war machine, no longer a simple musical instrument; the stories about Recabarren become technologies, just like the stirrup, which aid the marchers as much as the stirrup a knight. Their march is a line of flight filled with new assemblages that push them forward. “Here as elsewhere it is the set of the affects which are transformed and circulate in an assemblage of symbiosis.”<sup>32</sup>

The multitude is made up not only of bodies but of assemblages. It is a matter not only of the interrelations between individual bodies but also assemblages made up of bodies, body parts, objects, matter, and time. Assemblage theory argues that “the relationships of component parts within a body are not stable and fixed; rather, they can be displaced and replaced within and among other bodies.”<sup>33</sup> These parts, codes, or elements are not essential and static qualities that belong to individuals or things, but rather interact among themselves with unexpected results: the acting skills that Elías developed while he was a teenager in the local playhouse now become the equipment through which bodies congregate and good encounters happen.

We see the formation of an assemblage in the displacement of the component parts of a body and the emergence of new types of arrangements. The striking miners encounter a veteran of the War of the Pacific who is reading a newspaper. Intrigued to know what is happening in other mining camps, they ask him to read them the news. The old man refuses and Elías grabs the paper to read out loud about an attack on a mining camp. Elías begins to read the names of the killed and

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>33</sup> DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, 10.

injured. But he is not simply reading. He is using the devices learnt while he was an amateur actor to increase the effect of his words: “Elías leyó con voz teatral: moldeó una pausa para sopesar el efecto en su audiencia y silabeó los nombres con morosidad.”<sup>34</sup> His words not only communicate meaning but add a degree of affect that stays with the crowd. The audience becomes enraged by the killing, by the newspaper’s decision to withhold some of the names, by the negation of basic humanity this implies. Enunciation goes beyond communication. His equipment, his machine-body, works with and toward the striking miners. More concertedly perhaps, the component parts of Elías’s body (mouth), in conjunction with air, sound, and vibrations assemble and disassemble to produce new effects over other miners.

There is another leitmotif in the novel that affects Teitelboim and his narrator; namely, the strikers’ use of national flags. At least four times we are told of the workers’ spontaneous decision to fly the national flags of Chile, Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina together.<sup>35</sup> These passages where flags are mentioned are always signed by heightened affects and mark crises or successes of the multitude. The flags might be a gesture to highlight the internationalism of their struggle: workers from neighboring nations partake in a symbolic solidarity. But they can also be a way of deterritorializing national colors. That is, instead of emphasizing national identities working together, the display changes the meaning and function of these colors, to territorialize them under a different function: to create through reconfiguring existing patterns and contrasts associated with national colors. For philosopher Levi Bryant, deterritorialization is “the decontextualization of

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<sup>34</sup> “Elías read with a theatrical voice, he took a pause to weigh the effect on his audience.” When reading the individual names of the casualties the narrator reports: “He spelt the names with slowness.” *Hijo del salitre*, 167.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 144, 163, 223, and 279.

something or a theft of a bit of code that then resituates that thing elsewhere.”<sup>36</sup> “Code” is to be understood as formed matter that serves a particular function. That is, codes are always functional. For example, the tree bark serves a particular *function* for the tree, the greenness of leaves serves a particular function for leaves. Deleuze and Guattari talk about the crocodile and the chameleon as animals that steal a bit of code or function from the tree or the leaf: “When code is stolen it is separated and isolated from its original milieu or territory, liberated from its original function, and then resituated in a new territory.”<sup>37</sup> In their words, “The Pink Panther imitates nothing, it reproduces nothing, it paints the world its color.”<sup>38</sup> They explain further, “What the crocodile and chameleon do is steal a bit of code—formed matter—the former stealing the texture of tree bark, the latter bits of color.”<sup>39</sup> This deterritorialization of the flags’ colors and shapes is not a case of representation, resemblance, or imitation, but rather the formation of a new set of functions.

But if codes are always functional, what would be the function of the new arrangement of national flags? Claiming membership in an imagined community? Or invoking the state represented by each flag? Perhaps workers can escape the fixity of their national identity only through reaffirming it through the flying of their national flags. They utilize the colors of their flags, but not to appeal to the state or the official authority of their countries; they use them rather to summon a multitudinous identity, an image or an idea of the bodies behind these color arrangements to form a new collective. This color formation symbolizes a new social formation which has been emerging since day one of the strike. We hear a miner stating “No soy chileno, ni

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<sup>36</sup> Levi R. Bryant, “Deterritorialization.” *Larval Subjects*, Accessed November 20, 2018, <https://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2011/07/02/deterritorialization/>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 11.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 11.

peruano, soy piqueño [from the town of Pica].”<sup>40</sup> It also reflects the formation of a new local identity, one marked by the common experience of suffering at the hands of the company and the state; one that overrides the logic of nationalist allegiances. Perhaps we are witnessing the formation of a new assemblage of man-fabric-color working at its full capacity while flown from a moving train.

The resulting assemblage de-territorializes colors but also affect-formation among the striking workers. Teitelboim’s narrator tells us that on the day of the massacre, the miners are ordered to go back to their mining camps but they refuse. Foreign consuls beg their countrymen to return to the pampa, but they also refuse. The Bolivians despise the official because he is mestizo and does not represent them: “Tú no eres nosotros.”<sup>41</sup> The logic of the state cannot process these responses. It is only able to speak the language of molar segments: workers, government, industrialists, Chileans, Peruvians, Bolivians, Argentines. But these lines always break and the molecular begins to act “upon the molar organizations to reshuffle their segments their binary distributions of sexes, classes and parties.”<sup>42</sup> In Deleuze and Guattari’s words, “there is always something that flows or flees, that escapes the binary organizations, (the resonance apparatus and the overcoding machine).”<sup>43</sup> The striking miners as an entity—which was never homogeneous or organized—begins molecularization; the foreign miners defect from their national identities, recoding the colors of their national flag and claiming: “Con los chilenos vinimos, con los chilenos morimos.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “I am not Chilean or Peruvian I am a piqueño. [From the town of Pica].” *Hijo del salitre*, 110.

<sup>41</sup> “You are not us.” *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>42</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 217.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>44</sup> “With the Chileans we came with the Chileans we die.” *Hijo del salitre*, 276.

The gesture of deterritorializing colors and segments encourages the miners. “En estado de exaltación ondean las banderas chilenas y bolivianas. Alguien dijo, —Ustedes saben desde chiquitos que la unión hace la fuerza.”<sup>45</sup> But it also changes affects in anyone who sees them, especially the state representatives sent from Santiago and the military. “La muchedumbre bullía con un extraño ritmo, ondulando banderas chilenas, peruanas, bolivianas y argentinas, algunas con visibles desgarrones a causa del uso continuo. Avanzaba con un movimiento coordinado levantando una bruma de polvo amarillo. Voces atronaban el aire en oleadas. ¡Viva Chile! ¡Viva el intendente! ¡Viva el Presidente Montt. ¡Vivan las fuerzas armadas!”<sup>46</sup>

#### 4.4 Continuous

This was the last cry of the multitude of striking miners. Immediately, the battalion opened fire on them. “Se produjo la primera descarga. —¡Viva Chile, Viva el ejercito...! Un estruendo. Otro. Una pausa. Tiros a fogueo. Fuego de ametralladoras con puntería fija hacia la puerta. Cayó una bandera de la azotea, luego uno dos, cinco cuerpos. [Elías] No sabía cuántos. No podía contar tan rápido.”<sup>47</sup> In a matter of minutes, the multitude is eliminated. Surviving miners are rounded up and taken to be shot by the firing squad. All this is told with a generalized sense of shock at the speed and brutality of the massacre. Elías is able to escape only by playing dead; others like Chacames are

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<sup>45</sup> “While the Chilean and Bolivian flags waved, someone said: —You know from a young age that the union is strength.” *Hijo del salitre*, 144.

<sup>46</sup> “The crowd was seething with a strange rhythm of impetuous breathing, while advancing persistently, flying the Chilean, Bolivian, Peruvian and Argentinean flags, some with visible tears due to continuous use. They advanced in a disorganized movement raising a yellow dust. Their voices stunned the air in waves. They seemed to throw all their blood to the heavens when they exclaimed, —Viva Chile! —Long live the superintendent! —Long live President Montt! —Long live the Armed Forces.” *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>47</sup> “The first shock occurred. —Viva Chile, long live the army ...! A roar. Another. A pause. —Blank shots— Elías thought. Machine gun fire with fixed aim towards the door. A flag fell from the roof, then one, two, five bodies. He did not know how many. He could not count so fast.” *Ibid.*, 279

gunned down one by one by mounted soldiers. The remaining miners disband, return to their mining camps, or perish in the attempt. The multitude is dead but it will live on, in the imagination and storytelling devices of people such as this novel. It will reappear in countless literary and musical forms.<sup>48</sup>

Theorists of the multitude argue that it continues through history. Beasley-Murray argues that the multitude persists “by continually extending its sphere of influence and contact as it opens up to the common.”<sup>49</sup> Negri adds: “the only limits of constituent power are the limits of the world of life.”<sup>50</sup> The multitude or constituent power “persists.” Once a new order is established, the multitude goes underground (in mining literature, literally) to regroup by expanding its relations and constituting itself until a new social crisis emerges. Emilio Recabarren points to something similar when he states, “The people have no end... in spite of the massacres the people continue.”<sup>51</sup>

The multitude persists, yes, but the one described in *Hijo del salitre* does so in other ways. Eliminated by the state, it does not have time to “extend its sphere of influence and contact” directly to other bodies. Instead, it extends into the future through art. The novel itself constitutes an extension of its effects. Bolivian and Chilean narratives, and to a certain degree the corpus of mining literature, document the multitude’s emergence, its destruction by the state and its later recomposition in different shapes and under different circumstances, but generally guided by a combination of the principles analyzed here and following this constitutive logic of defeat and

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<sup>48</sup> We find it in countless narratives and songs such as the ones mentioned earlier. In addition to those we can count Luis Gonzalez Centeno’s “Los pampinos,” Julián Cobo’s “Yo vi nacer y morir a los pueblos salitreros” and Luis Advis’s popular “Cantata Santa María de Iquique,” as expressions of a cathartic memory that in the context of the mobilizations and organization of students in the 1960s sought to recover the history of the 1907 repression. See Lessie Jo Frazier, *Salt in the Sand*, 136.

<sup>49</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony*, 270.

<sup>50</sup> Negri, *Insurgencies*, 327.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Frazier, *Salt in the Sand*, 140.

regroupment. This is a regroupment not only of bodies but of affects, of assemblages of resistance as well as assemblages of oppression, of lines molar as well as molecular. The reemergence of exploitation by other forms causes its resistance by others.<sup>52</sup>

*Hijo del salitre* allows us to see how assemblages and affects formed a multitude able to challenge the state. This particular multitude is fascinating because it constitutes itself in movement, along the line of flight, nomadically, describing the transit from territorialization, from life as it was lived in mining camps and configured by capital, to a deterritorialization of space and a creation of assemblages while in movement. Bodies, elements, and affects all flow around what they had in common regardless of differences or bad encounters.

More self-reflexively perhaps, the story became part of an assemblage in and of itself. For Deleuze and Guattari, literature and writing do not merely *resemble* the world or seek to model the world. Literature is not simply *about* something, it *is* something. “We will never ask what a book means.”<sup>53</sup> The book is a machine that deterritorializes certain elements of the world and hooks into all sorts of other machines—physiological, affective, social, bureaucratic—functioning like a factory and producing social effects. Therefore, to attribute the book to a subject is “to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations.”<sup>54</sup> To simply argue that the novel is about death<sup>55</sup> or to read it as one more work on the emergence of the modern Chilean proletarian with the pampa in the background is to miss the point by negating the contingency of

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<sup>52</sup> These heterogeneous forms resistance to oppression occur quite often in the literature of the region. In the corpus of mining literature, we can list, *El precio del estaño* (1968), or the film *El coraje del pueblo* (1971), by Third Cinema director Jorge Sanjinés. In the larger field we think of works such as *Hijo del Hombre* (1960) by Paraguayan novelist Augusto Roa Bastos and *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* (1941) by Ciro Alegria. These works are configured around the cycle of oppression, destruction and later recomposition of the multitude.

<sup>53</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Miguel Mansilla and Constanza Velez. “La pampa asesinada en la ciudad: la muerte en el libro *Hijo del salitre* de Volodia Teitelboim.” *Revista De Letras* 56, no. 1 (2016): 135-50. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26459997>.

the multitude and its constitution.<sup>56</sup> Even more, to claim that the objective of these authors was “to represent the popular world”<sup>57</sup> obscures the possibility of a new and deterritorialized understanding of the multitude beyond the limited language of nation, people or party.

*Hijo del salitre* inserted itself into affective and social machines to disseminate rhizomatically the story of the Santa María School Massacre from the miners’ perspective. It did so at a moment when the massacre was almost forgotten due to the state’s efforts of censorship and a promulgation of a distorted version which favored the role played by military intervention,<sup>58</sup> but also, during the highly volatile period immediately after President Videla’s declaration of the *Ley Maldita*.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the book is so effective as a machine, deterritorializing elements and turning them into new functions, that it appeared as a threat to constituted power and led to the detention and incarceration of its author in the Pisagua internment camp.<sup>60</sup> Teitelboim’s experiences in Pisagua in turn served as raw material for his *La semilla en la arena: Pisagua* (1957), which claimed that moment of state violence as “generative of oppositional consciousness for Chilean leftists in the future.”<sup>61</sup> The “exteriority of the book’s relations”<sup>62</sup> (in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s words) extends to our days in the form of other assemblages that have been molded and affected by Teitelboim’s narratives; most visibly in the work of Hernán Rivera Letelier, which documents the poetics of life in the *oficinas salitreras* of the Norte Grande from a postmodern narrative stance.

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<sup>56</sup> Pedro Bravo-Elizondo and Bernardo Guerrero Jimenez, *Historia y ficción literaria sobre el ciclo del salitre en Chile*. (Iquique, Chile: Universidad Arturo Prat, 2000), 36.

<sup>57</sup> Fernandez Fraile, *Historia de la literatura chilena. Vol. 2* (Santiago de Chile: Saleciana, 1994), 482.

<sup>58</sup> Deves, *Los que van a morir te saludan*, 11.

<sup>59</sup> The 1948 Permanent Defense of Democracy Law or *Ley de Defensa Permanente de la Democracia*, referred to by many as the Damned Law (*Ley Maldita*), outlawed the Communist Party of Chile.

<sup>60</sup> Volodia Teitelboim, *Un hombre de edad media*, (Santiago: Editorial Sudamericana, 1999), 429.

<sup>61</sup> Frazier, *Salt in the sand*, 54.

<sup>62</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 3.



Rivera Letelier's novel *Santa María de las flores negras* (2002) reactivates the connections first traced by Teitelboim in the 1950's, expanding the register of the historical to configure new tools, assemblages, and habits for Chile today.

#### **4.5 *Llampo de sangre* or the Affects of Gold**

Now we move from larger bodies to the individual in order to follow other types of encounters. We leave behind the assemblages formed by the striking miners during their desert march to focus on new ones that unfold in a dissimilar setting: a gold mine nested in the mountains of Chile's central valley system and perhaps located outside of history altogether. The discussion zooms into the individual and micro level where affects move human and non-human bodies toward new encounters. We leave the examination of an oppressive state machine to examine the role of metal in a novel that follows the lives of mine owners and prospectors in their frantic search for gold.

Gold and storytelling are the bodies that move the novel *Llampo de sangre* forward. Arborescent structures of labor unions, parties, or associations are entirely absent here. Instead of charting these organizations, we trace the lives of unruly frontiersmen caught in the material world of rugged individualism and the matrix of hostile social relations characteristic of the boom town. If *Hijo del salitre* elaborated a phenomenology of the pre-unionized worker while he formed spontaneous assemblages to confront capital, *Llampo de sangre* highlights the effects of the encounter with gold as it moves human and nonhuman bodies (miners, women, tools, violence, mountains) toward forming other assemblages and tracing other lines.

Gold does not appear in the Chilean collective consciousness as strongly as other metals or minerals do.<sup>63</sup> What appears quite often, however, is the trope of the voyage of Chilean miners to California where prospectors and *rotos* alike embark on this adventure.<sup>64</sup> In the national canon, however, there is a brief but uncanny apparition of gold at the beginning of the foundational novel *Martín Rivas* (1862) by Alberto Blest Gana. In that case, it is the bankruptcy of José Rivas, Martín's father, a gold prospector described as "a madman who had lost his fortune pursuing an imaginary gold vein"<sup>65</sup> which sets the entire story in motion. Not much is added to this event except that it is after this setback that Martín is forced to emigrate to Santiago looking for new opportunities and coming in contact with the Encina family. Gold, or rather the failure to find it, seems to be the cause for this encounter between Martín and the Encina family and the basis of Blest Gana's most accomplished story. Gold is not explicitly presented in the narrative, but it underlines the entire structure of the plot; without it there would be no *Martín Rivas*.<sup>66</sup>

Gold is a precious metal usually associated with stability during volatile times, but *Llampo de sangre* shows that stability comes at a high cost.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, this stability has a dark underside, an almost antithetical side marked by the metal's power to set bodies into movement forming all

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<sup>63</sup> To my knowledge only two Chilean authors have examined the relations between humans and gold in literature, Oscar Castro and Oriel Alvarez. *Llampo de sangre* is one of a few novels in the region which spends considerable attention studying the affect of gold on bodies. It is surprising that so few works of Latin American or Chilean literature focus on this unique metal. One part of the answer may lie in the fact that Chile is not a great gold producer. Rather, it has always been famous for its iron and copper in the center of the country and nitrates and more copper in the north.

<sup>64</sup> The sub-corpus of the Chilean-Californian connection includes works by disparate authors from diverse periods: *Viaje a California* (Perez Rosales), 1848, *Murieta* (Neruda), 1967, *La rebelión de los placeres* (Fernando Alegria) 1990, *La hija de la fortuna*, (Isabel Allende) 1999.

<sup>65</sup> Alberto Blest Gana, *Martín Rivas*, (Santiago de Chile: Zig-Zag, 1961), 8.

<sup>66</sup> A similar mechanics regarding wealth and literature can be found at work in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Blest Gana's occlusion of the origin of wealth of the Rivas family operates similarly to Austen's treatment regarding the wealth of the Bertram family in *Mansfield Park*. For an analysis of Austen's case see Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books 1994), 90.

<sup>67</sup> Jenifer Marx, *The Magic of Gold*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company: 1978), 23.

sorts of assemblages and deterritorializing behaviors and relations. In the novel, gold's instability produces all sorts of encounters: good and positive passions can arise as easily as they can decrease and morph into uncontrolled violence. In a sense, gold is rhizomatic. From an underground perspective it runs through mountains, rivers, and other formations; no one can stop it, nor delimit its reach, concentration and form. But this is also because it manifests itself intersubjectively in different ways: in a flash of human delirium, in dreams, in unlimited potentialities, in entrepreneurship and progress, as well as in violence and death.

*Llampo de sangre* allows us to chart the flow of capital and mineral in Latin America since it reveals the path of gold as it moves from Bolivia to Chile and then sets other bodies in movement in the depths of the Chilean mountains. Hitherto we have focused on Bolivia but have not discussed the role of profit of the tin ventures: that is, we are familiarized with the exploitation of mineral and men, but have not traced the path of the mineral after it is extracted. *Llampo de sangre* follows the mineral not as a raw material destined for the Allies during World War Two, but as profit, transformed into liquid capital to be moved and invested elsewhere. There is, in other words, a certain quality of convertibility inherent in the excavated ores that allows them to be transformed into other liquid stores of value. According to the narrator, the protagonists—Mister Dick Russell and his son Edward—own property in the Bolivian tin mountains, which is invested in prospecting for gold in Chile; this forms the economic basis of the novel. The chain of mineral, money, and metal helps us reconstruct the transit of these substances across an entire region.

#### **4.6 Gold, Ghosts, and Indians**

The plot of *Llampo de sangre* is relatively simple. A couple of young mine owners, Braulio Vargas and Edward Russell, encouraged by their fathers Don Belarmino Vargas and Mister Dick Russell

respectively, compete (each with their own methods) to locate the mysterious gold field of “El Encanto.” Braulio finds it first, but partners with the Russells to build a prosperous mine. From the start, “El Encanto” is clothed in both myth and mystery.

The narrator tells us about an early encounter with extraordinary samples of “clavos de oro,” but the location of the alleged gold fields is incongruous and changes depending on who’s telling the story.<sup>68</sup> There is also a legend claiming that these gold fields were cursed by early indigenous inhabitants when they were expelled by the conquistadors. No one is sure about the location of the rich fields, but everyone knows there is something worth exploring in these remote mountains. Many years after the original expulsion by settlers, an older descendant of these Indians escaped Chile ending up in Oruro, where he sold his labor-power to a foreigner tin industrialist, Mister Dick Russell. On his dying bed, the Indian disclosed the location of the gold deposits to the Englishman who immediately felt transfixed with thrill and expectation.

Mister Dick is not a regular mine owner: an older man in his 80’s and bound to a wheelchair, he is portrayed as a deliriously obsessed with finding gold. He wears a gold bead in his ear and traces his ancestry to an eccentric and tragic lineage of gold prospectors in Australia and elsewhere while rubbing his golden prosthetic. After receiving this information, Mister Dick sends his son, Edward, a rational and reluctant young engineer, to explore valleys of fictitious names: such as Poque, Huamay, Huiñalauca and the real valley of Talamí. Supported by his training, Edward embarks in his mission to find these evasive but promising gold deposits, but upon hearing these stories surrounding the mine, a general uneasiness invades him. Edward “por

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<sup>68</sup> Oscar Castro, *Llampe de sangre*, (Santiago: Editorial Andres Bello, 1950), 12.

primera vez en su vida sintió la sobra de la superstición atravesar su espíritu.”<sup>69</sup> Edward experiences an intensity that “invades” him, that cannot be fully realized in language, but “pierces” his spirit. The sentence, in its brevity, records Edward’s passage from one experiential state of the body to another where the intensities of gold affected his subjectivity.

Edward is not the only prospector looking for “El Encanto.” Braulio Vargas is a hacienda owner who initially shows no interest in the mining business and rejects his aging father’s proposition to look for the mysterious gold fields. But after his father’s death, his attitude changes dramatically when Don Belarmino’s ghost appears to Braulio and commands him to pursue the mine by examining the ore samples left behind. Shocked by this, Braulio decides to initiate the project, but his father’s assistant, an old muleteer known as Mardones, rebukes him. In desperation, Braulio confesses to the apparition of Don Belarmino’s spirit and only then does Mardones agree to join him.

After a few days of exploration, Braulio locates the mine with Mardones’s help. The muleteer rejects any payment and spends his final days in a small town refusing riches and gold. Braulio beats Edward in the search for El Encanto. In spite of his reason, maps, measurements and local help, Edward fails to locate the gold deposits first. Braulio discovers El Encanto, but since he knows little about mines, he forms a partnership with the Russells. The new company quickly break ground and find high quality ores which allow them to expand their operations. Work in the mine is regularly structured and there are no strange apparitions or Indians haunting the miners or the owners. *Llampo de sangre* is loosely based on history of the mining deposits of Alhué which had been exploited earlier in colonial times. Records indicate that since 1756 Spanish settlers had

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<sup>69</sup> “For the first time he felt the shadow of superstition cross his spirit.” *Llampo de sangre*, 18.

used native indigenous labor to pan for gold in that area. The property exchanged hands through the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to decreasing output and was finally bought by an American company in 1916 the Albion Mining Company which continued registering losses on this property. In 1934, the property was sold to a Chilean society which recovered production. However, the high quality ores extracted from the Alhué fields during the previous century would not be seen again.<sup>70</sup>

In the following, I focus my discussion on the methods used by different characters to find these metals and then examine the last sections of the novel where events unfold rapidly and even violently to better understand the affective power of this substance. But before this, a word about gold and the effects of its glitter in our body and mind is in order to evaluate the impact of our encounter with gold in the novel and explain part of our modern fascination with it today.

#### **4.7 Phenomenology of Gold**

Gold is the primary substance that activates characters in *Llampo de sangre* and the internal storytelling apparatus of miners, prospectors and other characters in the story. But gold is also special because it moves freely as a signifier between dreams and reality disseminating heightened affects and producing an exceedingly unstable subjectivity. According to the story, it commands so much power that it makes the dead return to the world of the living. This relation between stability and instability is at the core of the substance.

Gold is usually associated with stability, which can signify social mobility and economic prosperity. Traditionally, in much of the world, gold has been “the common man’s insurance in volatile times.”<sup>71</sup> But this stability can very quickly become a cause for conflict even ending in

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<sup>70</sup> Augusto Millán, *Historia de la minería del oro en Chile*, (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 2001), 145.

<sup>71</sup> Jenifer Marx, *The Magic of Gold* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company: 1978), 23.

violence and death. Gold has drawn men across continents, oceans, deserts and mountains to lonely deaths and only rarely to bonanza. From a Spinozian point of view, it seems that humans need to manage a certain economy of proximity to gold: too little can bring sad passions and decrease our affects; some gold (or a moderate amount) can represent a tool to carry out things immediately -it enhances our capabilities extending our potential-, and too much gold can enhance these possibilities to the limit, but quickly become lethal, as we see in *Llampo de sangre* and in the Colombian gold novels I have explored elsewhere.<sup>72</sup> Too much gold can blind our reason and put us at the mercy of desires we do not even know.

What happens then when we encounter gold in its immediacy? To understand the encounter gold-human body, I use Jane Bennett's notion of enchantment as a dual affect that activates the bodies involved. The figure of enchantment points in two directions: the first "toward the humans who *feel* enchanted and whose agentic capacities may thereby be strengthened, and the second toward the agency of things that *produce* (helpful, harmful) effects in human and other bodies."<sup>73</sup> In simpler words, enchantment is a delight "but also a spell."<sup>74</sup> And perhaps the novel is nothing else but an attempt to grapple with these affects (and effects) on the body of the miner but also in the other realms (dreams, visions) via literature. This affectual-mode, expressed in the duality of enchantment, underlines the novel and haunts the literary unconscious of Oscar Castro as gold seems to appear always surrounded by mystery. Affect inspired by the metal attracts the body toward it (strengthening its agentic capabilities), but also confers in it with a power to produce

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<sup>72</sup> Juan Felipe Hernández Gómez, "Crónica de la minería de oro en Colombia: de la montaña al texto." *Revista de Estudios Colombianos*, no. 51 (July-December 2018): 58.

<sup>73</sup> Jane Bennett *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), xiii. (Her emphasis).

<sup>74</sup> Michael T. Saler. "Modernity, Disenchantment, and the Ironic Imagination." *Philosophy and Literature* 28, no. 1 (2004): 137-149. <https://muse.jhu.edu/>. 138.

(mostly harmful) effects in human bodies. The encounter of a minor character in the novel, an old prospector named Bustamante, with gold nails initially expanded the register and reach of his affects and actions: “Se dio a buscarlo con una fiebre angustiosa que apenas le dejaba tiempo para comer.”<sup>75</sup> But it eventually led him to madness and death. Later, after Don Belarmino’s apparition, we hear about his son Braulio’s encounter with the astonishing data analysis result of “382 gramos por tonelada.”<sup>76</sup> The affect of the metal clearly increased the capabilities of these prospectors while the agency of gold was asserting itself in their bodies producing internal physiological effects as well as interpersonal and social. Gold rhizomatically moves through every realm, human-constructed or physical-formed unrestricted.

But at a more corporeal level, gold activates two parallel responses in the human body: wonder and fear. When one of our characters sees gold in the novel, it seems as if he was enchanted, “traversed by a momentarily immobilizing encounter; transfixed spellbound in a moment of pure presence.”<sup>77</sup> Following the literary critic Philip Fisher, Bennett adds, “Thoughts and limbs are brought to rest even as the sense continue to operate indeed in high gear.”<sup>78</sup> This is the feeling of Braulio when he discovers the high ore grade in the samples left by his dead father, wonder and fear. Braulio reads the results from the local laboratory. They are staggering, “todos los músculos se le pusieron duros, como si hubiera recibido una descarga eléctrica. 382 gramos... 382 gramos...”<sup>79</sup> To emphasize the factuality of the number the narrator adds the assayer’s note:

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<sup>75</sup> “He threw himself to look for gold with an agonizing fever that barely left him time to eat.” *Llampo de sangre*, 13.

<sup>76</sup> “382 grams per ton.” *Ibid.*, 27

<sup>77</sup> Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 5

<sup>79</sup> “All his muscles turned hard, as if he had received an electric shock. 382 grams ... 382 grams...” *Llampo de sangre*, 27.



“Esta es una de las muestras más ricas que hayamos analizado”<sup>80</sup> According to Fisher, “The subject is simultaneously transfixed in wonder and transported by sense, she is both caught up and carried away—enchantment is marked by this odd combination of somatic effects.”<sup>81</sup> This is what’s happening to Braulio at this point, but also to other characters, as we examine the novel with more attention. Time after time we find descriptions of encounters with gold that illuminate these abstractions. Toward the end of the novel, when a few miners encounter unexpectedly large and easy-to-access gold nails, we encounter several descriptions that register a somatic change in the body, “Las pupilas del minero cambiaron drásticamente.”<sup>82</sup> “Las manos se tendían como garras, los ojos escrutaban, se hacían ardorosas las respiraciones.”<sup>83</sup> Hands, eyes, breathing: suddenly corporeal functions accelerate and senses sharpen. Enchantment triggers wonder but also fear. The event of pure presence of gold for our protagonists instills a measure of fear that is palpable in the text. This fear leads to precipitated action and, as a consequence, more fear. The sudden encounter with unexpected quantities of gold generates in the miners of *Llampo de sangre* a violent reaction to secure the new findings among themselves. This translates into murder, and murder into anxiety, coupled by fear of losing the plunder. Gold overrides friendships and allegiances turning stability and economy into uncertainty and excess.

#### 4.8 Edward versus Don Pascual

In *Llampo de sangre*, two competing modes of rationality operate in different applications (functions). On the one hand, there is the Western technical notion of reason exemplified by

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<sup>80</sup> “This is one of the richest gold ores we had ever analyzed.” Ibid., 27.

<sup>81</sup> Philip Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 131.

<sup>82</sup> “The miner’s pupils changed dramatically” *Llampo de sangre*, 202.

<sup>83</sup> “His hands stretched like claws, the eyes scrutinized, the breaths became ardent.” Ibid., 202

Russell and expressed in his management of the mine, relations with workers, and personal behavior. On the other hand, there is an autochthonous reason that is more elastic and open to communication with supernatural forces via dreams, apparitions, and legends. Dreams and visions serve as a medium for folk knowledge to appear in the material world and transmit the affect of gold. But gold is not any metal. It isn't tin or saltpeter. Gold is the element that activates and transmits the highest affect of all minerals discussed so far. I will show instances in which gold affects miners and prospectors who come under its spell or enchantment. I catalogue these two types of reasoning because works of mining literature studied so far do not offer this clearer encounter and contrast between these rational methodologies. *Llampo de sangre* is a privileged literary space to locate these differences and follow the impact of vernacular reason on Western reason, as Edward Russell slowly adopts new ways of being (and becoming) a miner.

Let's direct our attention to a prominent passage that highlights the dichotomy between Edward Russell's use of mining science and old foreman Don Pascual's methods for finding and following gold veins. It is a few months since operations had begun in El Encanto and the partners are satisfied with the quality of ore found, but Edward is planning to expand production by digging at an angle in the mountain to reach the main vein faster. The engineer calls in his foreman Don Pascual to explain his plans. The narrative voice focuses on his desk: "Edward Russell permaneció un momento frente al plano y enseguida unas hojas en blanco se llenaron de números, ecuaciones, ángulos y curvas."<sup>84</sup> Edward brings Don Pascual closer to the paper to help him visualize the proposed trajectory of excavation and how the veins would eventually meet inside the mountain.

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<sup>84</sup> "Edward Russell stood for a moment in front of the blueprints and then a few blank sheets were filled with equations, angles, and curves." Ibid., 78.

To this Pascual answers, “No patrón, no se puede estar seguro de eso.”<sup>85</sup> Edward argues that this is almost certain and that his calculations are double-checked, “Es un cálculo muy simple. Basta saber el grado de inclinación de las vetas y medir la apertura del ángulo.”<sup>86</sup> Pascual cautions the engineer, “Cuidado señor que soy viejo y algo sabré de minerales. Plata que se va a gastar como el diablo sin provecho ninguno.”<sup>87</sup> He adds later, “La mina, Don Eguar [sic], no es puro número, ¿No ve que por algo hay santos y brujos?”<sup>88</sup>

We find for the first time in mining literature a description of applied mathematics and geometry necessary to find a vein. Until now we had only read about engineers and technicians as removed employees and only in their relation to the rank and file miner. Here, however, we see how science and instrumentalized reason intervene in the narrative through the observations of Russell about the mine works. But we also note a marked dichotomy between Russell and older miners who ground their disagreements with Russell following other logics: signs, stories, popular culture, conferring agency to gold inasmuch as they refer to the metal as “veleidoso”<sup>89</sup> or fickle, and respond and interact with it according to its assumed “behavior.”

A few days later, we hear a few miners chatting about the new direction in excavations. Resting in their bunk beds, Don Pascual commented on the absurdity of Edward’s calculations, “Las minas tienen dueño, finados que las protegen y las cuidan cuando se hallan en buenas manos. Estos piques, los vigilaba un difunto fiero de facciones guaina [de hombre joven] todavía el que

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<sup>85</sup> “No boss, you can’t be sure of that.” Ibid., 79.

<sup>86</sup> “It is a very simple calculation. You just need to know the degree of inclination of the veins and measure the opening of the angle.” Ibid., 79.

<sup>87</sup> “Be careful sir, I am old and I know a thing or two about mining. You will spend a fortune digging for nothing. These are devilish things.” Ibid., 79.

<sup>88</sup> “The mine, Don Eguar [sic], is not a pure number, don’t you see that there is a reason for saints and witches?” Ibid., 80.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 88.

se murió aplastado o que se yo: como mueren los mineros.”<sup>90</sup> When asked if he has seen this “guardian,” Don Pascual answered that he never had, but Don Chuma, an older miner and friend also employed at El Encanto, has. Don Chuma, who’s present in the room, corroborates the story. Many years ago, an Indian appeared to him in the middle of the night, gave him instructions with his hands, “Levantó cinco dedos de una mano, dos de la otra y después apuntó por donde sale el sol y desapareció.”<sup>91</sup> When he came back the next morning, he found “un clavo de oro del porte de una chaucha [green bean].”<sup>92</sup> No one paid much attention to Don Chuma’s encounter with the Indian and the gold nail. Generally, miners disregard older coworkers’ stories as products of old age fantasy. Don Chuma never abandoned this idea to search for the mine, seven leagues to the east to find the promising gold nails, but his exploration so far had been in vain. The vernacular method of locating gold interpreting signs and apparitions might appear risible, but for Don Chuma it was all he needed. The gold miner, unlike his tin or copper counterpart, is submerged in an intensive flow of delirium and fantasy. This can be seen not only in the divergence and diversity of methods of gold locating and extraction, but in the abundance of external actors that are supposed to communicate with the miner or prospector: Indians, legends, magical birds, the dead, among others, are involved in striking this gold.

In addition to these opposite ways to find metal, there are two principles of gold mining in the vernacular described by *Llampo de sangre* that guide the behavior of our protagonists: gold is fickle and greed drives the mines away. We see an instance of this early in the novel; specifically,

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<sup>90</sup> “The mines have owner, deceased ones that protect them and take care of them when they are in good hands. These shafts were watched over by a deceased guardian with young factions, who died crushed inside a mine or who knows: how the miners die.” Ibid., 88.

<sup>91</sup> “He raised five fingers of one hand, two of the other and then pointed by where the sun rises.” Ibid., 90.

<sup>92</sup> “A nail of gold the size of a green bean.” Ibid., 91.

in Mardones' rejection of Braulio's initial plans to find El Encanto: "Yo no tengo nada que ver con eso. La mina era de Don Belarmino y él se murió."<sup>93</sup> Immediately he reproaches Braulio for his insistence, "Usted tiene codicia, yo le dejé las muestras a un muerto para que se llevara lo que era de él. Y a un muerto no se le puede robar."<sup>94</sup> In the last instance, a desperate Braulio decides to reveal the apparition of his father's spirit to convince the old muleteer. Only then Mardones accepts the task of finding this mine. "Ahora sí le creo que usted es minero patrón."<sup>95</sup> It is only when Braulio leaves the reason, prospects and numbers behind and argues from a vernacular logic of mining -which accepts dreams, visions, the agency of gold, as valid actors in the game of mining- that Mardones believes Braulio to be a real miner. Mardones' answer encapsulates the popular conventions generally found in gold narratives: "The narrative reproduces the popular and traditional belief according to which the ownership of wealth has to match with a mythical, legendary and moral framework."<sup>96</sup>

But let us think about what has just been narrated. We are told that the dead return from the underworld to order the living about their finances. What other substance but gold has that type of power? Belarmino's apparition from the dead commands the living to continue the search for gold, that is for increasing their accumulation of capital. This is significant because the surviving family is relatively well off and not in need of this gold. The brief episode says much about the powerful affects unleashed by gold. It all seems to indicate that gold not only affects concrete objective reality, but permeates dreams and the world of the dead. It almost sounds as if it "wants"

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<sup>93</sup> "I have nothing to do with it. The mine was Don Belarmino's and he died." Ibid., 32.

<sup>94</sup> "There are things that can't be passed down"— adding —"you are greedy." Ibid., 32.

<sup>95</sup> "Now I believe you are a miner, patrón." Ibid., 33.

<sup>96</sup> Marcela Orellana y Juan Muñoz Correa. *Mundo minero: Chile siglos XIX y XX* (Santiago: Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 1992), 14.

to be found. Like the ghost of King Hamlet in Shakespeare's tragedy, Belarmino's spirit commands the living to take or continue an action. The former in the name of personal revenge and public justice, the latter under the enchantment of gold. The mineral, or the metal better yet, enters the narrative in the form of a dream or a nightmare; this is key since it configures from the beginning the devilish effect of gold on man. Gold is powerfully productive of desire.

#### **4.9 Becoming a "Real" Miner**

The dichotomy of methods is not reduced to a clash between Edward the engineer and his superstitious miners. To emphasize this contrast, author Oscar Castro surrounds Edward with a cast of characters that continuously challenge his faith in science and technical methods. For instance, we find in Mister Dick a character diametrically opposed to Edward's subjectivity and more favorable to the native miners and their practices than his son's claim for science. We hear about a delirious but pleased Mister Dick -stuck in his wheelchair- but eager to examine the samples brought by the foreman. He wasn't satisfied with simple observation like his son, rather he desired direct contact with the mineral, "pulía las piezas con el roce amoroso de sus dedos, las sopesaba con deleite, las ponía a vivir con su anhelo de siglos."<sup>97</sup> This "feeling" of rocks is so opposed to his son's attitudes and decisions that Edward only tolerated it on account of his father's old age. Other times he read about a vexed Mister Dick troubled by their failure to locate the mine: Mister Dick compulsively rubbed his earring invoking his ancestors who wore it before himself, adding "Será tuya cuando yo muera, pero antes deberás convertirte en un legítimo minero."<sup>98</sup> But

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<sup>97</sup> "Mr. Dick polished the pieces with the loving touch of his fingers, he weighed them with delight, he put them to live with his longing for centuries." Castro, *Llampo de sangre*, 86.

<sup>98</sup> "One day, when I die, it will be yours, but before you have to become a real miner." Ibid., 45.

it was no doubt Edward himself the only legitimate miner among an array of fanatics that had preceded him! Our narrator tells us that Edward is quick to disavow his father's persisting obscurantism positioning himself as the only true miner, one who had studied minerals and metals, "El sabía mejor que nadie como crecía y se desarrollaba el metal, como se formaban las capas geológicas. Su sabiduría no era de presentimientos sino de exactas comprobaciones."<sup>99</sup>

In reality Edward's subjectivity was yielding under the pressure of these statements and practices. In his mind, a battle was being fought between his rational subjectivity and a more sensitive side that was open to apparitions and dreams, "A Edward Russell le estaba naciendo un alma de jugador, vale decir de minero."<sup>100</sup> Anthropologist Michael Taussig reminds us that gambling and mining have a lot in common, "each in its own ways enters into a game with nature—the first with probabilities, the second with the history of the world, which in relation to mining is also called geology, meaning the wisdom or latterly, the science of the good earth."<sup>101</sup> This is then the dilemma that Edward faces: what methods ought to be used to predict the future, to enter the game of luck with "geology" to find gold without surrendering even more money or miners? The story of Edward and Mister Dick reveals the slow transformation of the former under the recalcitrance and credulity for supernatural forces of the latter.

Toward the end of the novel Edward appears to have changed his relation to non-Western logics. After an accident takes the lives of his foremen Chuma and Pascual, Edward is asked if he is going to pursue the Talamí vein: "No. Trae desgracia. El indio se la dio a Taita Chuma y él solo

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<sup>99</sup> "how metal was born and evolved, how geological layers were formed." "His wisdom," we are told "wasn't based on presentiments but on exact verification." Ibid., 45.

<sup>100</sup> "Edward was growing a gambler's soul, that is, a miner's soul." Ibid., 43.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 7.

podía descubrirla.”<sup>102</sup> Not only does he reject exploiting the vein due to it “belonging” to someone else now dead, but he confesses a sort of conversion on account of his experiences surrounded by characters like old miners and his father, “Mi viejo me ha dicho siempre que no moriría hasta que sea un minero legítimo, un hombre como ustedes, como Taita Chuma. Soy el último Russell y conmigo iba a morir la tradición. Pero mis antepasados mandan. ¿Qué puedo yo contra ellos, qué puede mi conciencia contra los poderes desconocidos?”<sup>103</sup> The miners struggle to understand this and insist about prospecting the fields where Chuma died. Edward adds, “La mina quedará en su sitio porque nadie podrá descubrirla. Oigo hablar a Taita Chuma, oigo la tradición y me rindo. Mi padre ha triunfado.”<sup>104</sup> The story of Edward and mister Dick seems to come full circle as we approach the final chapters of the novel. Minutes later, after Edward announces his new moral and political coordinates vis-à-vis gold business—his fidelity to his father’s ways and passion for the metal—we are told that he receives a bunch of letters from town. When he opens one of them a small gold sphere rolls out of the envelope. Mister Dick had passed away.

This is nothing less than the slow-becoming-miner of Russell, miner understood as an individual able to “read” the mine beyond calculations, someone like Don Chuma. “Tradition has won; my father has won”<sup>105</sup> seems to demarcate the acknowledgement of the process. The last time that Castro brings up Russell he seems to accept his fate as a miner and not an engineer. While describing this yielding to the unknown and apparent acceptance, Castro inserts an event that

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<sup>102</sup> “No, it brings misfortune. The Indian gave it to Taita Chuma and only he could discover it.” Castro, *Llampo de sangre*, 228.

<sup>103</sup> “My old man has always told me that he would not die until I become a legitimate miner, a man like you, like Taita Chuma. I am the last Russell and with me the tradition was going to die. But my ancestors rule. What can I do against them?” Ibid., 228.

<sup>104</sup> “The mine will remain in its place because nobody will be able to discover it. I hear Taita Chuma speak, I hear the tradition and I give up. My father has triumphed.” Ibid., 229.

<sup>105</sup> Castro, *Llampo de sangre*, 228.



would seem to seal via the tactile this decision. Castro's aim here is to produce the effect that gold seals (but does not conclude), this slow becoming of Russell. The acceptance of his father's will is materialized by the apparition of gold which just as the beginning produces a feeling of wonder and fear. Wonder and fear is what should have captured Edward's body and mind as he seems to have been rewarded or cursed by a very real and concrete sign. Emerging from the underworld again, gold has come to push Edward just like it pushed Braulio toward an unknown destiny. Gold mining, according to Castro, is a cursed business: whether you use Western or vernacular - indigenous and mestizo "language" and conventions- sometimes gold is best left alone. Edward failed to find El Encanto, but other miners, Chuma and Pascual, local Chileans who use unorthodox methods for exploring, end up much worse. The routes and circuits drawn by rushed men acting under the enchantment and spell of gold turn out badly. Deleuze has something similar in mind when he states that these lines end up destroying themselves not because they are imaginary, but precisely because they are real and in their reality. "They turn out badly on their own account, as a result of a danger which they conceal."<sup>106</sup> *Llampo de sangre* then teaches about the potential affects residing in gold and the potent force it exerts over the bodies and assemblages it constitutes.

#### **4.10 Pablo Neruda and the Poetics of the Subterranean Vein**

The title of Pablo Neruda's *Canto General* can be translated as "general song," that, is the song of all. But it can also be understood as the song of everything, meaning both the concrete world of objects and the history of the world. These two concepts, objects and history, help us to define this monumental work: a vast poem that encompasses a meditation on the natural, physical and

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<sup>106</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 140.

geographical features of Latin America intersected by a chronology dedicated to the region's heroes, its detractors, and its peoples, heavily marked by the poet's own experiences while composing and finalizing the manuscript.

In what follows, I discuss how the mineral appears in Neruda's literary work, specifically in *Canto General*—the most exhaustive and revolutionary of his publications—but also his life-changing encounter with minerals and miners and what impact this had on his poetic production. I am not particularly interested in dissecting each poem in which the referent “miner” or “mineral” appears, but in locating the general route that the mineral traces in Neruda's poetics. I begin by including a brief relation of Neruda's personal experiences to showcase the points of contact where Neruda and the mineral came close enough in order to form productive assemblages that touched his life and his body as well as his poetics. My second aim is to highlight the multiplicity of perspectives through which the poet sees (and sings to) the miner. Neruda's technique of multiple internal narrators and spectators constitute novel interventions in the subfield of mining literature. To do so, I examine a few poems to better understand the mechanics of these innovative strategies. My wager is that Neruda's importance in the corpus of mining literature can be understood better if one thinks of him not as a poet or a politician, but as a builder of assemblages. His international impact beyond literary circles is in part due to his ability to form and shape assemblages able to move his readers beyond an aesthetic experience.

Before doing this, it is appropriate to weigh the importance of the mineral and the miner in Neruda's *Canto General*, especially since the critical literature about it is scarce and tends to ignore

the relation between the two.<sup>107</sup> The mineral and the miner appear throughout *Canto General* significantly. I have tallied the number of poems that deal with either of these two referents to show the extent to which it inhabits Neruda's work in the *Canto*. There are 48 poems in the *Canto General* that deal directly with these referents. This is 15% of the total number of poems in the volume. A catalogue of this minerality shows the heterogeneous responses and reactions that the mineral caused in Neruda and the broad scope of his poetic gaze. Neruda's perspective traces all of the continent's resources and experiences, from Colombian emerald mountains to Chilean coal valleys, and from the early Spanish enterprises to social conflicts inscribed in Neruda's contemporary present.

#### **4.11 Encountering Shock and Crisis**

Literary creation doesn't happen in a vacuum and in Neruda's work this is particularly true. This is why reviewing the poet's material life enables the reader to better understand his poetry critically. I emphasize specific moments of his life, often told as part of the larger narrative of the poet's life, but rarely related to the unfolding of his political aesthetics. I should, however, disclaim that any commentary on life as such is conditioned to a hermeneutics of a text such as a biography or autobiography, and not to direct access to lived experience. In other words, even when restricting oneself to "biography" and "facts" enclosed there, the operation inevitably implies performing a reading of a text that *claims* adherence to life mediated by language and historical contingency. Criticism, however, should be carried out and, as historians know well, one should make the most out of whatever sources remain from the catastrophe of the past.

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<sup>107</sup> René De Costa in *The poetry of Pablo Neruda* discusses *Canto General* under the lens of epic poetry, paying little attention to this relationship.

Let us begin in 1945, the year that Neruda traveled through the Norte Grande region of Chile with his friend and campaign partner Elías Lafertte while running for a senate seat representing the northern provinces of Antofagasta and Tarapacá in the Atacama Desert.<sup>108</sup> Lafertte was a survivor of the 1907 Santa María Massacre and an early associate of Emilio Recabarren. The months in the northern desert were decisive for Neruda personally and for his poetic production. The territories specifically impacted the poet deeply. He was shocked by the desert's desolation: "Entrar en aquellas planicies, enfrentarse a aquellos arenales, es entrar en la luna. Esa especie de planeta vacío guarda la gran riqueza de mi país. En pocos sitios del mundo la vida es tan dura y al par tan desprovista de todo halago para vivirla."<sup>109</sup> Perhaps more importantly, he was impacted by the tough but simple character of the land's inhabitants, the saltpeter miners or *calicheros*, who had endured decades of exploitation by the foreign nitrate industry and systematic repression by the Chilean state. In his prose, Neruda conceives of his poetry and life employing the metaphor of a river flowing onto the sea ("Como un río americano, como un torrente de aguas de Chile").<sup>110</sup> This flow is drastically altered after his time in the desert. It shakes the foundation of his language and allows him to incorporate something new in his production, namely a change in subjectivity which will not be the same after his encounter with the assemblage saltpeter-worker-capital. This encounter harnesses the core of a political epiphany first manifested in "Alturas de Machu Picchu" but materialized and expressed fully when singing the canto for the

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<sup>108</sup> Mario Amoros, *Neruda el príncipe de los poetas* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, S.A. 2015), 239.

<sup>109</sup> Coming into those lowlands, facing those stretches of sand, is like visiting the moon. This region that looks like an empty planet holds my country's great wealth. There are few places in the world where life is so harsh and offers so little to live for. Pablo Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias*, (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1974), 237.

<sup>110</sup> "My poetry and my life have advanced like an American river, a torrent of Chilean water." Ibid., 237.

oppressed but dignified miner. In Neruda's own words, "Yo tuve una infancia de lluvia y nieve. El hecho solo de enfrentarme a aquel desierto lunar significaba un vuelco en mi existencia."<sup>111</sup>

The Norte Grande reroutes Neruda's poetry and alters his subjectivity, but it also leads to a moment of crisis about the fundamentals of representation, political and aesthetic. It seems that the desert and its people, combined with their history marked by violence and abandonment unsettles the productivity of the poetic apparatus employed by the writer thus far. The functioning of this "machine" enters a crisis as the land and its inhabitants stand for a representational challenge. Neruda himself is aware of that aporia. He comments how difficult it was to understand the northern Chilean landscape and to endure the pains of necessity and poverty of its inhabitants, but also the problematics of all of political representation: "Representar en el parlamento a aquellos hombres, a su aislamiento, a sus tierras titánicas, era también una difícil empresa. La tierra desnuda, sin una sola hierba, sin una gota de agua, es un secreto inmenso y huraño. Bajo los bosques, junto a los ríos, todo le habla al ser humano. El desierto, en cambio, es comunicativo. Yo no entendía su idioma, es decir, su silencio."<sup>112</sup> First there is a shock and a sense of anxiety about the strategies for translating his lived experience into words. This is a mute but implacable land. He confesses that he fails to communicate with it and therefore its dwellers. But after that initial shock, the poet seems able to carry out this translation from the lived experience of mutism and silence to the written word. The land affects the poet the same way it affected the marching strikers dramatically described by Teitelboim in *Hijo del salitre*. It confronts him and holds him

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<sup>111</sup> "I had a childhood filled with rain and snow. The mere act of facing that lunar desert was a turning point in my life." Ibid., 237.

<sup>112</sup> "Representing those men in parliament—their isolation, their titanic land—was also a difficult task. The naked earth, without a single plant, without a drop of water, is an immense, elusive enigma. In the forests, alongside rivers, everything speaks to man. The desert, on the other hand, is uncommunicative. I couldn't understand its language: that is, its silence." Ibid., 238.

back but at the same time pushes him to write and tell; to meditate on the historical experience of the saltpeter workers and disseminate their story.

This intensity of the desert, of the saltpeter workers' humanity, permeated his poetic voice as well as his politics: "Era difícil y áspero caminar por la pampa. Por medio siglo no llueve en esas regiones y el desierto ha dado fisonomía a los mineros. Son hombres de rostros quemados; toda su expresión de soledad y de abandono se deposita en los ojos de oscura intensidad."<sup>113</sup> Poems such as "Los Hombres del Nitrato" testify to the encounter of Pablo Neruda the politician with the workers. There's a concern to transmit the harshness of their life, but also a shift in the narratorial strategies that allow him to display their interaction with the narrator. The miners are no longer just represented as either passive or active victims only but become agents who speak through Neruda's poem to a wider audience.

Ellos me dijeron: "Mira,  
hermano, cómo vivimos."  
Y me mostraron sus raciones  
de miserables alimentos,  
su piso de tierra en las casas,  
el sol, el polvo, las vinchucas,  
y la soledad inmensa.

So far, the narrator has described the miserable working conditions of these "hombres de nitrato."<sup>114</sup> But after a few verses, Neruda yields the word again to the miner who concludes by asking the poet to serve as a messenger:

Y me dijo: "Adonde vayas,  
habla tú de estos tormentos,  
habla tú, hermano, de tu hermano  
que vive abajo, en el infierno."

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<sup>113</sup> "Walking over the pampa was laborious and rough. It doesn't rain for half a century there, and the desert has done its work on the faces of the miners. They are men with scorched features; their solitude and the neglect they are consigned to has been fixed in the dark intensity of their eyes." Ibid., 236.

<sup>114</sup> Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido*, 238.

“Los Hombres del Nitrato” is a case-study of Neruda’s poetic technique of ventriloquizing the experiences of others, especially the humble claims uttered by the oppressed peoples of the region, at a personal, almost intimate level. I will consider a couple of poems from the *Canto General* which exemplify the strategy of allowing others to speak directly to the audience, and in some cases, others who are no longer living, but who return to life thanks to Neruda’s creative spirit.

Neruda was not only a great poet but a prolific prose writer who meditated on his own poetry and life experiences. Therefore, we are allowed to piece together specific poems with periods of his life and deduce information that would have been lost. Here it is relevant to discuss a letter written by Neruda addressed to his friend Miguel Otero Silva, a Venezuelan journalist and writer, which recounts the poet’s dramatic social epiphany. In “Carta a Miguel Otero Silva, en Caracas,” included in the twelfth cycle “Los ríos del canto,” the mine appears a key site producing an irreversible change in the poet’s subjectivity and literary production. Literary critic René De Costa identifies a “conversion” theme and the motif of the “poet’s awareness of his transformation,”<sup>115</sup> but fails to notice the direct influence of the mineral line that traverses the poet’s life and work as a cause for this transformation. In the critical literature about Neruda, the poem “Alturas de Machu Picchu” is generally used to exemplify the sincerity of the poet’s conversion and is often catalogued as a paradigmatic Nerudian poem about the celebration of death and renewal of life. But few critics notice the presence of the subterranean vein running along and through Neruda’s life and poetics even before the publication of *Canto General* and “Alturas de Machu Picchu.”<sup>116</sup> Here is an excerpt of the letter:

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<sup>115</sup> René De Costa, *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 120.

<sup>116</sup> Among others, René De Costa, Enrico Mario Santi, and Roberto González Echavarría.

Cuando yo escribía versos de amor, que me brotaban por todas partes, me decían: “¡Qué grande eres, oh Teócrito!” Yo no soy Teócrito: tomé a la vida, me puse frente a ella, la besé hasta vencerla, y luego me fui por los callejones de las minas a ver cómo vivían otros hombres. Y cuando salí con las manos teñidas de basura y dolores, las levanté mostrándolas en las cuerdas de oro, y dije: “Yo no comparto el crimen.”

It is in the mines, in the shafts and tunnels, that Neruda’s conversion takes place. The humble mine and its universe is the place of birth of the socially-committed Neruda, a figure much more known internationally than the Neruda of the *Residencias*. In sum, mining and the practice of writing mining literature gave Spanish America one of its greatest poets. Perhaps without this encounter the poet would not have produced the socially-minded poetry for which he became famous outside small literary critique circles.

This is no small moment in Neruda’s own life and much less in his poetic creation. The poet confesses that he paid a price for his denunciation, and this discrimination became formalized in censorship and legalized in prosecution.<sup>117</sup> Neruda was forced into exile due to this encounter, allowing the formation of an assemblage poet-miner-solidarity that would release unexpected consequences. This mineral encounter changed Neruda’s poetry: from seer of objects and historical figures, to comrade, to partner. From that point on, Neruda’s poetics will encompass an active encouraging voice that participates in the history marked by a new humanism, a sense of social justice. “Carta a Miguel” actualizes what was so airily recounted earlier, in more public fashion but also perhaps more hermetically in “Alturas de Machu Picchu.” “Alturas de Machu Picchu” is one of Neruda’s highest poetic achievements due to its progressive form in which the mystic communion with the past unfolds “authorizing the poet to speak with a voice of biblical authority

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<sup>117</sup> Enrico Mario Santí. Introduction to *Canto General*, Pablo Neruda, (Madrid: Cátedra, 2017), 63.



for all the people of the Americas.”<sup>118</sup> The earlier cycle “Alturas de Machu Picchu” was inspired and published earlier than the rest of *Canto*, in 1946, after the poet was decommissioned from his diplomatic post in Mexico and decided to stop in Peru to make the trek to the long-lost city of the Incas perched on a two-thousand-meter mountaintop. But the cycle is important to our purposes because it serves as a sort of touchstone for the poet’s conversion and commitment. In its progression, the poem opens a space for a transformation of vision permitting the poet to witness the past in the present. It is here that Neruda’s poetic voice is transformed from contemplator of the remote past to a voice of its present. “It expresses a solidarity with the realities of America in the current time.”<sup>119</sup>

#### 4.12 Multiple Narrators

Neruda’s voice is the only one in the corpus that speaks to us from the first person, as the protagonist of the action. Every narrative discussed so far has been told in the third person using an omniscient or partly omniscient narrator. These narratives deal with history sometimes as a supplement, as is the case in *El precio del estaño*, and other times as texts outside of it, as in *Llampo de sangre*. They deploy their politico-aesthetic programs from a limited narratological perspective. In Neruda’s *Canto*, however, we encounter the use of various planes and angles of perception which allow the poet to “speak” from different perspectives.

Neruda becomes a ventriloquist for the many lost voices of the Latin American subaltern. This act of speaking through them makes his work a heterogeneous corpus formed by the registering of his encounters with other bodies. This is especially true in the *Canto* where we find

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<sup>118</sup> De Costa, *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*, 124.

<sup>119</sup> Santí, *Canto General*, 93.

not only poems about the miner's struggle told by a narrator but also poems declaimed by characters who very rarely appear in literature speaking in their own right. Commonly, and in most of the corpus discussed here, the reader hears about the oppressed in the third-person voice. However, what sets Neruda apart from other narrators consists in exploring good and bad encounters through every enunciative perspective possible in order to create a richer poetic image of his literary referents. Each character has its own voice, tone and lexicon, it relays events in a distinct way. Perhaps, like Pablo Picasso, Neruda was able to create a stark collage of images unconcealing the subjectivity at the heart of human experience. This is clear in cycles such as "La Tierra se llama Juan" or "Las flores de Punitaqui." To read these sets is to embark on an intellectual exercise where multiple thought and affective processes are simultaneously put to work. Neruda's use of voices is able to move the reader beyond the position of a mere witness of the suffering of miners to explore other poetic perspectives: "a score of contemporary laborers parade before us recounting life's tragedy, poverty, exploitation and injustice."<sup>120</sup> In the poem "Margarita Naranjo (Salitrera 'María Elena,' Antofagasta)," the reader is uncannily introduced to the life of a former saltpeter female worker who is now dead, but still insists on you attending to her story. The former miner tells the story of her husband's assassination in the detention camp of Pisagua and her subsequent death. All this is preluded by a clear but unsettling pronouncement: "Estoy muerta. Soy de María Elena [mining camp]. Toda mi vida la viví en la pampa. Dimos la sangre para la Compañía norteamericana, mis padres antes, mis hermanos."<sup>121</sup> We read about a miner who speaks directly to the reader (from the first person perspective) in a matter-of-fact approach just as she

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<sup>120</sup> De Costa, *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*, 126.

<sup>121</sup> "I am dead, I am from the saltpeter camp María Elena, I lived all my life in the pampa. We gave our blood for the North American company. My parents before as well as my brothers." Pablo Neruda, *Canto General*, 435.

would in front of a documentary crew or a reporter. She recounts her life and abuses endured, to modulate affects in the audience's unconscious. This is also the first time we encounter a dead narrator speaking to us from her condition of being dead and addressing injustices committed by those still living, in fact individuals alive during the time when the poem is written and published. This enunciative gesture allows Neruda to bypass traditional denunciative narrative modalities from which social realist literature has traditionally engaged the audience.

Another way in which Neruda avoids again repetition of the grammatical person can be seen in the poem "Juan Figueroa (Casa del Yodo 'María Elena' Antofagasta)" where Neruda himself appears as the hearer of Juan Figueroa, an iodine manufacturer who addresses the poet about his miserable working conditions. The first verse sets the scene as a conversation to which we have been allowed to listen to, "¿Usted es Neruda? Pase, camarada"<sup>122</sup> Later, Figueroa relates to the poet the abuses of the police and the toxic effects of the acidic substance when it encounters their bodies, "El ácido nos roe, nos socava, entrando por los ojos y la boca, por la piel, por las uñas."<sup>123</sup> The reader seems to merely be an accidental hearer to a set of grievances expressed to the poet and representative. Neruda is able to increase the effect of the real in the construction of the poem by using the testimony of the victim, assigning a proper name and a verifiable location, directly without mediations. In a shrewd upset of traditional perspective, the poet appears to not be writing for the reader, but rather relaying the testimony given by the miner, and allowing us as an audience to witness the nature of their oppression (almost as a byproduct of that encounter). Multiple narrators, multiple protagonists, and sudden shifts in narrative voice create a sort of

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<sup>122</sup> "Are you Neruda? Come in, comrade." Ibid., 439.

<sup>123</sup> "The acid eats away at us, saps us, entering our eyes and mouth, the skin and our fingernails." Ibid., 439.

alienation as Pablo Neruda inserts himself in the narrative system as one more character. Perhaps this alienation is devised to create a collective-perspective to actively involve the audience or following Bertolt Brecht, with the intent of de-familiarizing or distancing: “to create a sense of astonishment and curiosity about an otherwise self-evident, familiar or obvious event.”<sup>124</sup> Neruda’s rhetorical strategies produce the effect of miners introduced to the audience to give their accounts, but they also do so directly without mediators of any kind and even from the underworld.

#### **4.13 The Poem as Assemblage**

These multiple perspective poems are also the written record of the forming and un-forming of innumerable sets of assemblages. That is, Neruda can be read as the poet of assemblages because of his talent to arrange objects, words, signs and release them into the unknown, the indeterminate receiver. Let’s recall that assemblages form when a set of objects are placed “together” and are available to unpredictable reactions: “An assemblage is a set of bodies at work in an unexpected way.”<sup>125</sup> In this sense, Neruda is a master enabler of assemblages. I conceptualize his poems as the written record of his coming into contact and reacting to people and things, the record of little and big social experiments. Each poem can be read as the transcript of a set of reactions deriving from the hidden potentialities of objects interacting with each other: nitrate salts and exploitation, mountain loaded with ores and miners, foreign capital and native labor, and so on. Neruda’s genius consists in recording an impressive amount of reactions derived from these assemblages.

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<sup>124</sup> Peter Brooker “Key words in Brecht’s theory and practice of theatre” In P. Thomson & G. Sacks (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. doi:10.1017/CCOL0521414466.014), 191.

<sup>125</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 69.

But these assemblages are not confined to ink and paper, rather they are released into the open community of readers and made available as little machines of potentiality and affect. It is important to understand his poetic expression as the chronicling of his personal experiences. But also to read it as an assemblage in its own right. One that not only leaves an account of social order at the time of writing, but that is also able to change the exteriority of relations, the conditions in the present and the future due to their affective power. Neruda's work, specially his more social oriented poems, are loaded with intensities necessary to transmit a set of affects in order to move the reader toward change.

Neruda was not only attentive to the formation of assemblages around him, but sought to organize and poetize them to make them available for others. Neruda registers good and bad encounters and releases them to act upon the material world beyond the boundaries of representation. As we know from *Hijo de salitre*, not all encounters are equal: some engender joyful passions, while others record the entering of its constitutive parts into bad relations with each other. Some produce in the reader the effects desired by the author (outrage, indignity, etc.), and others produce different effects in each reader and in each reading.

Man and mineral enter into a new relationship: one changes no less than the other. But in this movement the mechanics are not determined by what man does with his surroundings alone, but its opposite relation as well, that is, the ways, paths, and intensities that the mineral traces in Neruda's life and work. I have pointed to places where the first operation occurs in his poems. However, I also want to show how the mineral affected Neruda's life and work perhaps beyond himself by advancing two ideas that join and separate simultaneously Neruda's life and poetic work.

Critics of Neruda tend to establish a distinction between his early “primitive and mythical” poetry in the *Residencias* or in the first sections of the *Canto* characterized by an “extraordinary aura of vagueness and mystery”<sup>126</sup> and a more socially committed, politicized production characterized by the use of the first person and the employment of a more historically-engaged discussion. My concern, however, is to resist the conceptual and political perimeters of this dualism to highlight the continuity and the contiguity of the mineral vein throughout the *Canto*. The rhizome (or the mineral vein) unites these apparently distinct and opposite sets of poetry. Neruda’s mineral subsists much like a physical vein, a substratum beneath everyone’s perception, but present and powerfully moving the poet and propelling much of his voice forward. This is not to say that we find minerals and miners in most of his poetry. But that if we read closely the *Canto*, we find the affects of mining imprinted in the poet’s elaborations of images, descriptions, denunciations in *both* of his “periods.” The mineral vein is not an appendix of a more socially concerned poet but a connector between the first and second Neruda. If we evaluate his production more closely, these two periods appear more interrelated and interdependent than previously thought. In “Visión del agro y la mina en Pablo Neruda,” Manuel Alcides Jofré similarly argues that already in the *Residencias* we find a Neruda preoccupied with matter as such. In *Residencia I* (1933) we find poems like “Unidad” where “the speaker penetrates into the terrestrial as a creation of his own identity to meet a telluric superreality that completes the cycle cosmic life, death and regeneration.”<sup>127</sup>

“Hay algo denso, unido, sentado en el fondo,  
 repitiendo su número, su señal idéntica.  
 Cómo se nota que las piedras han tocado el tiempo,

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<sup>126</sup> De Costa, *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*, 110.

<sup>127</sup> Manuel Alcides Jofré “Visión del agro y la mina en la poesía de Pablo Neruda,” *Revista Universum*, no. 7 (1991): 78-91.

en su fina materia hay olor a edad...”

Or consider “Minerales,” one of the opening poems in the entire *Canto* which describes the physicality of minerals found in Mexico, Colombia, and Chile as well as a song to the “madre de los minerales” or mother earth lamenting the abuses committed against her and her resources.<sup>128</sup> The mineral is not only present in the first half of *Canto* and earlier work, such as the *Residencias*, but traverses Neruda’s work joining parts and words, objects and images, previously thought dislocated. Neruda’s vital temporality is crossed by the mineral vein and the affects and effects produced by the functioning of the machinic assemblages: saltpeter-workers-capital. Just as the mineral cuts through a literary organization of his work separating but joining these periods simultaneously, it does so in Neruda’s own temporality as well. The line that separates his life at the precise moment of a conversion can be thought of as the mineral vein which separates and/or unites a younger Neruda from a socially-conscious and a politically-mature one.

#### 4.14 Conclusions

Chile’s mining literature allowed us to learn about encounters: the encountering of bodies that formed a multitude, the encounter with gold or finally Neruda’s understudied encounter with the miner and the mineral. It also revealed another type of the miner: one that no longer inhabited the enclosed dark subterranean spaces but a more heterogeneous body marked by movement, agency and driven to change. One can understand the change in focus by adopting the metaphor of Ricardo A. Latcham who argues about a change in perspective: “Whereas Baldomero Lillo looked vertically to the ground, Federico Gana [cousin of Alberto Blest Gana] did it horizontally working

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<sup>128</sup> Neruda, *Canto*, 128.

and visiting farms and haciendas.”<sup>129</sup> This change in perspective characterizes the literature analyzed here. In Bolivia, all mining literature is a study of the relations and assemblages formed underground between men, nature and objects performed with a vertical gaze. On the contrary, Chilean mining narratives discussed here disclose new sets of relations marked by movement, as they happen in open spaces, in the vastness of the northern pampa or the imposing mountains of central Chile.

This was the background of another important point in the chapter: the analysis of a social body prior to a certain territorialization. In fact, Chilean literature of mining can be characterized as a space of deterritorialization as bodies become engaged in a cyclical but contradictory movement of escape and capture, of tracing individual (or collective) lines of flight which are then counteracted by segmentarity. These movements between regroupings and disbandment can take shape in the structural organization of a mine, of a subject (as was the case of Edward Russell) or of a collective body, be it union, associations, or management. According to Deleuze everything takes place on a plane of immanence, envisaging a vast desert-like space populated by concepts moving about like nomads.<sup>130</sup> This spatial thinking allowed me to re-read texts that betray the canonical corpus (except for *Canto General*); texts that have been buried and ignored by the latter and its practitioners. Chilean mining literature expands the corpus by including distinct relations of movement and congregations, revealing an innumerable set of new encounters marked by a rhizomatic and unpredictable mineral vein.

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<sup>129</sup> Ricardo Latcham, *El criollismo* (Santiago: Universitaria, 1956). 33.

<sup>130</sup> Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert, Eds. *Deleuze and Space* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), Back cover.



## Chapter 5: The Mine as Absent Center in Global Accumulation

Peruvian mining literature discussed here expands the scope of styles and referents of the corpus. We find narratives written not only as realism, but also magical realism in *Redoble por Rancas* (1970), indigenism in *Todas las sangres* (1964), and a detective novel in *Lituma en los Andes* (1993). Mining literature in Peru opens up a wider consideration of mining where the focus is not only the mineral and the mines, the process of extraction, but also the broader issue of land dispossession and accompanying processes of accumulation together with other social dynamics such as revenge on behalf of miners, and the inclusion of new victims and new actors. The narratives discussed here are concerned with changes in the tenure and use of land; changes which can take place spectacularly, but also over long temporalities. Sometimes these processes are due to the intervention of international conglomerates, and other times by domestic capital looking for ways to reproduce itself. Mining literature in Peru displays an unparalleled concern with land and processes of rapid industrialization, urbanization and modernization in the public sphere but also with correlative instances of dislocation and deculturation. These novels register these changes with anxiety as well as fascination.

*Todas las sangres* and *Redoble por Rancas* attend to a continuous process of enclosure enacted by the war machine of accumulation and disruption of the use of land and other resources. Accompanying the description of these transformations we identify the development and inclusion of new perspectives such as that from the industrialist Fermín or the resistance of characters in *Redoble por Rancas*. We also see a change in focalization from novels mostly focused on the miner to stories concerned with larger events and characters. The shift in focus from miner to peasant or technician allows us to understand more comprehensively these new assemblages beyond the

miner as victim. We conclude our discussion by following the line of flight traced by the Peruvian Marxist-Maoist organization Sendero Luminoso in *Lituma en los Andes*. I include a discussion of this because this group appears to take public revenge on many who hitherto benefited from private and abusive exploitation. The erratic line traced by Sendero constitutes an agent of revenge responding to what it sees as forms of oppression.

There is a tendency in this Peruvian mining literature to relegate the mine to a secondary or even marginal level. One would expect it to occupy an important part in activating and catalyzing processes of industrialization and proletarianization in texts that discuss social and cultural transformations in the Andes. Yet often the mine and the miner are absent or simply forgotten. This is true of the novels discussed here but also of earlier works such as Ciro Alegría's *La serpiente de oro* (1935) or *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* (1941). Ostensibly, these novels are concerned with documenting and exposing the harsh reality of the subaltern in rural Peru. In the former, the entire plot revolves around the prospect of starting excavations for a mine (that never materializes), but examination of the nature of the mineral is absent. In the latter, Alegría dedicates a short chapter to the living conditions in a mining camp where he comments on the injustices perpetrated against the miners by inserting the description of a massacre. But the social formations created by miners and their families, stories, extensions and assemblages are left out.

Accumulation in these texts is shown through description of its symptoms, of its reciprocal response in acts of revenge on behalf of miners and other actors, such as Anto, a servant of Don Bruno in *Todas las sangres*; Chacón, the protagonist of Scorza's *Redoble por Rancas*; and Sendero Luminoso in *Lituma en los Andes*. These new actors open themselves up to a path similar to that theorized by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their discussions of captain Ahab, the protagonist of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. All occupy a line of flight, a zigzagging line that breaks through

the segmentarity of the state and other rigid molar lines. These texts show a disposition to explore the lines that run through them, tracing uncharted terrain: tendencies of deterritorialization and escape that are represented more often and along lines of flight. These texts do not chronicle oppressed miners organizing into unions to establish negotiations with their exploiters or the state. Rather, they document a double unfolding: on the one hand, of the injustice inherent in processes of accumulation and extractive projects and on the other, of the lines that escape from this violence toward unknown sites of resistance.

### **5.1 *Todas las sangres*: Where is the Mine?**

*Todas las sangres* is Arguedas's most ambitious novel, in which he attempts to portray the confrontation between the forces of modernity and a traditional society as it affected Peruvian life, but mainly focusing on the Andes. The novel begins with the suicide of Don Andrés Aragón de Peralta, head of the most powerful family in the village of San Pedro de Lahuaymarca. Don Andrés climbs the town's church to announce his decision to kill himself, which is motivated by the fact that he can no longer endure the slow decomposition of his family, especially the rivalry between his two sons, Don Fermín and Don Bruno, who have already divided his property. The main conflict, however, arises around the exploitation of the mineral found in the Apark'ora mountain discovered by Don Fermín on his lands, and his failed attempt to exploit this resource. Conflict further intensifies with the arrival of the international Wisther-Bozart consortium, which through bribes and coercion forces Fermín to sell the mine. Tensions escalate to include not only individuals but the entire region due to the corporation's encroachment on more lands and appropriation of the commons. The company owned by the Wisther-Bozart group is but a cog in the global war machine of accumulation, pursuing profit without regard to damages caused to the

townspeople. The concept of war machine originally proposed by Deleuze and Guattari is wide and has several meanings; here, however, I use it to define an apparatus of accumulation that has escaped the grasp of the state and now serves as a variable model of realization for capitalist extraction.<sup>1</sup> The war machine is a global machine that redefines life itself as a resource to be exploited, reordering by coercion or violence social flows and relations to extract and convert life into profit.

*Todas las sangres* is notable for its detailed description of the complex social problems that Peru faced in the 1960s, such as the danger of imperialist penetration into the country and the problem of modernization for the indigenous world.<sup>2</sup> It has been commended for its effectiveness to “allegorize the political situation in the Andes through representation of diverse levels of exploitation and inequality that characterize it.”<sup>3</sup> Yet the novel pays little attention to the miner or to the mineral as a category in itself worth discussing in the narrative vis-à-vis human and non-human aspects of life in the Andes. Considering that the entire plot of the novel is centered around the struggle to control a mine, it is surprising that minimal attention is devoted to exploring concepts recurrent in other works, such as the affects of the mineral over other bodies or the becomings of those directly engaged with it.

The novel’s narrator is more interested in charting large social changes, such as the economic transition from hacienda to mine, the choloization and urbanization of the Indian, and mapping the political projects of industrialists, *hacendados* (state owners) and financiers, than in

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<sup>1</sup> See plateau 12, “1227: Treatise on Nomadology: The War Machine.” Also, Eugene W. Holland’s *Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus: A Reader’s Guide* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 126.

<sup>2</sup> Antonio Cornejo Polar, *Los universos narrativos de José María Arguedas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1973), 187.

<sup>3</sup> Mabel Moraña, *Arguedas/Vargas Llosa: Dilemas y ensamblajes* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2013), 168.

studying themes that were primary concerns for previously other authors, such as the nature of the mine or mining in itself. While other texts focused on the worker, the worker-in-the-multitude, the strike, and the assemblages produced in such conjunctures, *Todas las sangres* is more concerned with processes and transformations beyond the localized experience of extraction. The mine seems contingent, since what captured Arguedas's imagination and interest was "the birth of a new Peru of a new world,"<sup>4</sup> that is, the uneven, heterogeneous, sometimes violent transition from one economy and set of social values to another. Perhaps in an alternative version of the story, the mine could have been replaced by the industrial factory, or the emerging fishing industry, so long as these sites of production also dramatized the nature of this transition.

If the mine is only partially described, the miner fares little better. None of the story's main characters is a miner *per se*, and the reader seldom encounters a description of the miner as a referent emplaced in his world. The narrator constantly refers to Fermín as "el minero," but Fermín is a local capitalist who has never set foot inside the mine. The only time he walks into the mine is to examine the first encounter with the silver vein (which is described very briefly). As for the mineral itself, silence is more prevalent than discussion. In the narrative, we are told just once and in passing that the substance producing all this upheaval is silver.<sup>5</sup> Beyond this, there is little exploration by the narrator of the worlds that are formed underground. Only twice does the narrator venture inside the underground tunnels: first, to narrate the accidental death of Gregorio in a failed attempt to scare the Indians away from digging for Fermín orchestrated by the engineer Cabrejos; and second, to capture the moment when miners finally strike the vein. Beyond this, there is little

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<sup>4</sup> Cornejo Polar, *Universos narrativos*, 196. Another canonical text in the Peruvian national context that occludes the mine while centering the narrative around it is *Aves sin nido* (1889) by Clorinda Matto de Turner.

<sup>5</sup> José María Arguedas, *Todas las sangres* (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 2014), 73

discussion of the mine, the miner or the mineral. Whereas mining narratives elsewhere regularly focus on the miner's experiences, Arguedas seems to be working on the big picture. This is more but also less. Reading Arguedas, and other Peruvian mining literature, we obtain a complex view of socio-economic processes in the Andes, but at the expense of an account of the miner and the mineral as entities not restricted to their material presence but able to affect minds and bodies both near and far, as was the case in Bolivian novels that preceded the 1952 Revolution or in the poetry of Pablo Neruda and other Chilean mining writers.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps this silence can be explained by recalling that mining is not a set of isolated practices but a massive object, a hyperobject that defies easy comprehension and simplification. The hyperobject mining is so large that it evades Arguedas's literary consciousness, specifically the writer's ability to pin down processes and objects in *Todas las sangres*. The multidimensional quality and massively distributed nature of mining is like the octopus's ink, obstructing a full view of the flows and assemblages that form this massive hyperobject. For "hyperobjects occupy a higher dimensional space than we can experience directly, we can only experience somewhat constrained slices of them at any one time."<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this explains, in part, the absence of a conscientious analysis of the mine or mining in Arguedas's text. Rather than investing in a full description of the mine, the miner or the act of mining, the text occasionally interrupts the narrative

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<sup>6</sup> Naturally, there are exceptions to this observation if we consider novels and stories from lesser-known writers such as the novella *La mina* (1960) by Peruvian military engineer and author Victor Villanueva which delves into the texture of everyday life at a mining camp following similar literary conventions to those Bolivian narratives discussed previously: the growth and fall of a company, the efforts of miners to organize into a union, and the surplus of violence exercised on them by management and the state. There are of course more recent monographs on the mine such as *Volcán del viento* (2008) by Roberto Rosario Vidal. The story describes the crude nature of labor, union formations, social and cultural situations also examining the occurrence of a bizarre accident inside a mine. Chilean mining authors, like their Bolivian counterparts, explored the world of the mine and mining camps in detail in works such as the classic collection of stories *Subterra* (1904) by Baldomero Lillo; *Sewell* (1946), and *Mi camarada padre* (1958), by Baltazar Castro and a collection of short stories *Cobre* by Gonzalo Drago (1941).

<sup>7</sup> Morton, *Hyperobjects*, 74.

flow to comment briefly on these “constrained slices” without achieving or approaching a totalizing or systematic idea about the hyperobject. These slices are few: Gregorio’s accident, the discovery of the vein, the description of an insipid and uneven proletarianization. But beyond the appearance of the disjointed descriptions, *Todas las sangres* fails to tie them together or to put forward an interpretation of mining or global mining in itself rather than through reflections. Hyperobjects are nonlocal because they are massively distributed in time and space to the extent that their totality cannot be realized in any particular local manifestation. This non-locality challenges the writer’s ability to address mining beyond the discussion of local manifestations of the hyperobject. In *Todas las sangres* this non-locality prevents an engaged analysis of extraction and all derivate assemblages.

However, there are points in *Todas las sangres* where Arguedas’s narrator focuses on critical moments to grasp mining, such as his discussion of the hyperobject mining seen in processes of land accumulation. I discuss these instances employing Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of a war machine, an abstract machine carrying out this accumulation, and argue that for Arguedas, expropriation is not simply expulsion from the commons but something closer to an apocalyptic threat for Andean societies. I trace a mineral vein running through *Todas las sangres* but also elsewhere in his literary work. If in *Todas las sangres* the mine, the miner and the mineral do not appear and the hyperobject mining is barely grasped analyzing moments of dispossession, in Arguedas’s oeuvre the mineral is perceived and discussed with an exceptional sensitivity attuned to the molecular and the affective.

## 5.2 Accumulation by War or Apocalypse

In chapter 3, I discussed novels that explore the social problematics of expulsion from the *ayllu* and the rapid and uneven transformation that subjects undergo from hacienda or local community environments to become waged salaried workers. I focused on Ramírez Velarde's *Socavones de angustia* to argue that the Ari family, the protagonist mother and daughter, had been subjected to these processes through expulsion, wandering and later proletarianization. In *Todas las sangres*, Arguedas's narrator is concerned with similar events relating to expulsion, displacement, and dislocation in all their social and cultural aspects. If in the Bolivian novel the tragedy fell on the family and was subjectified in individuals, in *Todas las sangres* the processes are experienced by larger and more heterogeneous social groups, making the description more complex and fascinating.

The main difference, however, between these two narratives is the decidedly pessimistic and even apocalyptic tone of *Todas las sangres* when the narrator describes the nature and complexities of accumulation. For Arguedas, mining is the worst industry imaginable in the highlands: the text is marked by the impossibility of any improvement in material or social conditions for workers or for nearby towns and villages. In contrast to Bolivian narratives, in the Peruvian literary consciousness the reader fails to locate anything that could justify these extractive operations, such as better salaries or higher rents collected by the state.<sup>8</sup> Arguedas's case is not isolated. He deploys a narrative line in a specific literary context that includes several narratives based on the struggle of Andean Indians from Alegría's *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* to that

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<sup>8</sup> In *Socavones de angustia* or *Metal del diablo* we read about a corrupt state and the Rosca as entities that facilitated exploitation of minerals incentivized by the possibility of higher royalties. In Peruvian narratives only the foreign consortium and its representatives are shown as beneficiaries and this in a very superficial way.



described six years later by Scorza in *Redoble por Rancas*. The arrival of foreign forces—mainly international mining companies—altering the use and relationship with the land and initiating practices of appropriation, or enclosure seems to be a constant concern and a creative problematic for these writers.

To understand Arguedas's concerns with social and economic changes in the Andes, I turn to a theory of accumulation. Marx conceptualized original accumulation as a set of historical practices that allowed for the emergence of capitalism as marked by the use of force and theft to rob the world of value—both human beings and nature—in its insatiable quest for profit.<sup>9</sup> However, accumulation, as described in *Todas las sangres* and in Peruvian mining literature more broadly, can be better understood as accumulation by war, following Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a war machine, since their conceptualization of accumulation takes into account the use of more recent and sophisticated abstract and concrete instruments to localize and establish capitalist control over collective forms of property.

Pushed by its drive to accumulation, the global war machine “assigns as its objective a peace still more terrifying than fascist death, maintaining and instigating the most terrible of local wars as parts of itself, and setting its sights on a new type of enemy, no longer another state but the ‘unspecified enemy.’”<sup>10</sup> State and accumulation enter a new alliance: state policies and even war itself are now the continuation of accumulation by other means. The global capitalist war machine invades San Pedro and other communities turning life into commodity, and causing the emergence of lines of flight. This accumulation “now assumes a rhythm and scale that necessarily

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<sup>9</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 159.

<sup>10</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 422.

takes the route of a war machine actively contributing to the redistribution of the world necessary for the exploitation of maritime and planetary resources.”<sup>11</sup> *Todas las sangres* is Arguedas’s interpretation of the role and persistence of capital accumulation within the long historical geography of capital accumulation in the Peruvian Andes. Arguedas is aware that market liberalization—as exemplified in the privatization of the mineral-rich mountains—was not going to produce a harmonious state in which everyone is better off (which seems to be Fermín’s idealist economic philosophy), but rather will produce ever greater levels of social inequality and alienation. He was also cognizant of the even more destructive role that global capital would have in the country through the intrusion of large transnational companies such as Wisther Bozart. In a way the real protagonist of the novel is this mode of accumulation.

In what follows, I discuss a few episodes of dispossession imposed by this global war machine of accumulation over the communities of and around San Pedro, noting the apocalyptic framework used by Arguedas’s narrator to describe these changes. In *Todas las sangres* the appropriation of lands, water and the commons in general is not unexpected. The machinery of capture has been operating ever since colonial times. We hear a local *hacendado*, Don Lucas, explaining that “Nuestros abuelos convirtieron en brutos a los indios para que reináramos nosotros.” And we also know that the Aragón family had long accumulated wealth by appropriating surrounding lands by deed or by force.<sup>12</sup> Not so long ago hundreds of Indians had perished in mine tunnels, the “túneles malditos.”<sup>13</sup> But what we see now is a new wave of appropriation of lands and resources carried out not by other *hacendados* or local capitalists but

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 466.

<sup>12</sup> “Our grandparents turned the Indians into brutes so that we could reign.” Arguedas, *Todas las sangres*, 54. I examine this economic continuity in the next section.

<sup>13</sup> “Cursed Tunnels.” Ibid., 99.

by a global war machine that appears more powerful, more articulated, and capable of bringing about large scale irreversible changes.

Early in the story Cabrejos, the civil engineer employed by Fermín, articulates the explicit need for water, and the anticipated riots by the Indians. Cabrejos's tone reveals an awareness that this dispossession will mean war against the San Pedro community for resources and the necessary conclusion will take the form of "resignation and submission"—in other words, the defeat of all ways of systems of managing nature and life that do not synchronize with the logic of capital. "Necesitamos el agua del río y la pampa de la Esmeralda. El agua será defendida por el fanático Bruno que acaso largue una pataleta de puma antes de morir. A los cholos se les quitará la pampa sin riesgo alguno. Por el contrario, no solo no habrá pataleta sino lágrimas y sumisión; dos cosas que siempre han dado el mejor resultado."<sup>14</sup> An operative of this war machine, Cabrejos is depicted planning the forceful expulsion of peasant and Indian populations in favor of reordering the flows that would take place on this land. In one of the first instances of direct intent of expropriation we understand the importance of manipulating local forces (the conflict between the Aragón brothers, the Indians and Rendón as their leader) to secure a source of water for the eventual exploitation of the mineral vein buried under the mountain Apark'ora for the Wisther Bozart.

These attempts culminate, in the novel's final chapter, with the resolution of this and other claims previously made by the company. We read about different cases of dispossession caused by the war machine in the Andes, for which Wisther-Bozart is just a part of a larger assemblage.

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<sup>14</sup> "We need the river water and the Esmeralda Grassland. The water will be defended by the fanatic Bruno who may throw a puma-size temper tantrum before dying. The *cholos* will be brushed off the pampa without any risk. On the contrary, not only there will be no fight but tears and submission; two things that have always given the best result." Ibid., 74. "Cholo" or "chola" is a somewhat derogatory term for mixed-blood descendants in the Spanish Empire in Latin America and its successor states.

The mining company succeeds in its war against the community: in a downtown Lima office surrounded by members of the board, the president of Wisther-Bozart announces the constitution of the mining company “Aparkora” after obtaining the expropriation order: “El ministro ha obtenido ya el decreto de expropiación de las tierras que eran indispensables para el desarrollo de la explotación.”<sup>15</sup> When the San Pedro natives—now living in Lima as proletarianized subjects—find out about this they confront Fermín about the decree ordering the expropriation of the villages at a low price of ten cents per square meter. Fermín, however, knows nothing about it. He argues that he only sold the mineral-rich mountain to the Wisther Bozart. He has been partly dispossessed from his means of production and become powerless in the battle over the resources of San Pedro. “La Wisther Bozart me acorraló y no tengo ya ninguna injerencia en la compañía Aparkora. Me han dejado unas acciones pero en lo que hace la compañía soy tan inocente como ustedes.”<sup>16</sup> The powerful capitalist of San Pedro is no more. His rights over the land that holds mineral but also corn fields and water resources have been transferred to the Aparkora Mining Company, and he has been effectively displaced from subjecting force in the Andes to subject of transitional capital. His interlocutors immediately rebuke him, “¡Expropiación! ¡Tu sabes que no se puede expropiar a favor de particulares sino solamente del estado! Ese decreto sería nulo.”<sup>17</sup> Fermín’s answer is short but clear: “El que manda sin ley, como este gobierno ¡qué va a respetar!”<sup>18</sup> Fermín’s answer can be read as Arguedas’s disavowal of any faith in the Peruvian state and awareness of the

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<sup>15</sup> “The minister has already obtained the decree for expropriation of the lands that were indispensable for development and exploitation.” Ibid., 346.

<sup>16</sup> “The Wisther Bozart cornered me and I have no further interference in the Aparkora company. They left me some shares but in what the company does I am as innocent as you are.” Ibid., 362.

<sup>17</sup> “Expropriation! You know that it cannot be expropriated in favor of individuals, only in favor of the state! That decree would be null.” Ibid., 362.

<sup>18</sup> “He who commands without law, like this government, what he will respect!” Ibid., 362.

illegitimacy that surrounds these practices. The spirit of anticipated destruction that resonates through the novel emerges once again when one of the visitors proposes burning the church, the patron saint, and the golden altar, giving words to the apocalyptic affect that has invaded the unconscious of these young sanpedrinos. The war machine has set its sights on the “unspecified enemy” as it has waged and won an irregular war for global accumulation. In this case, the “unspecified enemy” are the locals of San Pedro, but it could have been any other community, as we will soon learn from another text of mining literature, *Redoble por Rancas*.

Thus apocalypse in San Pedro ensues: the novel’s resolution is marked by the materialization of these expulsions and expropriations previously anticipated, and the destruction of San Pedro is symbolized vividly in the burning of the church, which constitutes the coup de grâce for the town. On the eve of the final attack, the town hall convenes to decide the community’s fate. The situation is tense: the army has entered San Pedro and shot the protesting old silversmith Bellido. His body is present in the meeting, and the judge and the subprefect are confronted by the locals. The San Pedro community is anxious and sees no way out of the encroachment of the mining company over their lands and fields. Antonio Yauri, after challenging the subprefect and realizing that the arrival of the company means death to San Pedro, exclaims: “Yo propongo que quememos nuestras casas, nuestra Santa Iglesia. A quemar la antigua, la noble villa y a irnos por ahí como ovejas sin dueño. —¡A Lima! ¡A las barriadas!”<sup>19</sup> The war of global accumulation causes dispossession, and dispossession leads to expulsion. The San Pedro locals know this and understand that their livelihood under the old logics of trade and communitarian exchange is

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<sup>19</sup> “I say we burn our houses, our Holy Church. Let’s burn the old, the noble village and to go around like sheep without an owner. —To Lima! To the slums!” Ibid., 390.

doomed. Just like the protagonists of *Socavones de angustia*, the San Pedro community is expropriated from their means of production through land privatization and forceful expulsion, leaving them vulnerable to becoming beggars, robbers and vagabonds, free to work or to starve. Communities in *Todas las sangres* are *ayllus* deeply dependent on land for their survival. The Lahuaymarca community, for example, represents “a horizontal social organization that has land at the center of its means of subsistence. Without the freedom to utilize their territory they would disappear culturally and physically.”<sup>20</sup> Accumulation has become a threat to their security.

The climax of this destruction comes when the locals, in a last-ditch gesture of despair but also revenge, set the town on fire starting with the church. This is no small act since the narration began with the suicide of Don Andrés at the same site in what was depicted as a clear moment of crisis for the community. The image of the townspeople setting the church on fire completes the cycle of destruction that was announced in the opening scene, suggesting that the end of the text is coterminous with the end of the town, which—for Arguedas, at least in *Todas las sangres*—is equivalent to the end of the Andean world. “Una llamarada salía de la boca y de las ventanas de la iglesia. Los otros jóvenes habían rociado el templo con todas las latas de kerosene y gasolina que encontraron.”<sup>21</sup> This is the key apocalyptic image of the novel which encapsulates the denouement of the clashing forces discussed in the text. The dispossession has finally arrived at a conclusion. Accumulation does not take place in a vacuum or in an abstract space, and in the final scenes of destruction we witness the consequences of these processes materializing in death and flight.

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<sup>20</sup> Irina Alexandra Feldman, *Rethinking Community from Peru: The Political Philosophy of José María Arguedas* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press 2014), 51.

<sup>21</sup> Arguedas, *Todas las sangres*, 393.

To intensify the description of the end of the town and the material flows that sustained it, the sound of a last-minute bell tolling accompanies this shocking fire scene. The image of fire consuming the church seals the fate of San Pedro guaranteeing that the life once lived there will not be reproduced in the future. The church bells that once announced the passing of *señores* now toll for the town itself. If the bells indicate the town's and the community's affectual level or, in other words, an index of intensities and affects that register the community's fluctuating fortunes, then in the scene describing the church on fire, the bells appear to be intoning a requiem for San Pedro.<sup>22</sup> More than a funeral song about a place, this is a lament for a way of life. It is significant that the text opened describing a scene of death—Don Andrés's suicide—in the church tower, and concludes with an image of the church not as a symbol of resigned lamentation, but as a site of no redemption, engulfed in flames. We witness the remains of a final battleground that had been unfolding in Peru as the global war of accumulation ravages its territory.

This global war of accumulation, like every war, produces refugees: human ruins are expelled from the ruins of San Pedro. A mad capitalist reason embodied in the Aparkora mining company operates by producing destruction and turning villagers into refugees. After being expelled by the mining corporation and burning their own church in a display of destructive revenge, the San Pedro people have no alternative but to take to the road. After dispossession, there is no recourse but flight: "Los vecinos de San Pedro llegaron a la carretera principal medio enloquecidos. Los camioneros se detenían ante las señas que les hacían con los brazos, los

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<sup>22</sup> The theme of the requiem appears as a constant in Peruvian mining literature. The next work discussed, *Redoble por Rancas*, frames a narrative using a similar problematic of enclosure and social death. It was translated into English as *Drums for Rancas*, although critic Evelio Echeverría has argued that a better translation would have been "Requiem for Rancas." Review of Manuel Scorza's *Drums for Rancas*. Translated from the Spanish by Edith Grossman (New York: Harper & Row), 1977. *International Fiction Review*, Volume 5, Number 2 (1978), 214.

sombreros o las mantas. —La mina nos ha quitado nuestra tierra. Ya no tenemos pueblo. Hemos quemado la iglesia. ¡Llévenos, por Dios! A cualquier parte.— Las mujeres y los niños lloraban en la pampa.”<sup>23</sup> The mining company has effectively displaced the locals of San Pedro and surrounding communities and this displacement in turn releases bodies now free from previous domination but also dispossessed of their milieu and sources of subsistence. This scene can be compared with one found in *Socavones de angustia*, when Sebastia and Donata, mother and daughter, are expelled from the hacienda and turned into free but dispossessed subjects, *vogelfrei*. Paradoxically, they avoid falling into the category of vagabonds and paupers only because they find work in the mine. In *Todas las sangres*, it is the arrival of the mine that ensures accumulation, dispossession and expulsion. It is the crystallization of the moment when the “Andean universe falls apart.”<sup>24</sup>

In Bolivian narratives, mining brings ruin to a specific social group, namely, the Indian-miners who occupy the lowest rung in the hierarchy of exploitation and alienation but are able to secure a living even if it is through a miserable wage. Everyone outside of this group is not affected directly. They may even become beneficiaries of the Indian-miner’s output: the state benefits largely from royalties, corps of local technicians and mid-ranking employees are able to secure a moderate salary and become “modern.” In Peru, however, everyone is a victim of these social processes except of course a few individuals, representatives of the consortium. Townspeople—owners or renters, “vecinos” or “señores,” mestizos or Indians and common folk who have nothing

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<sup>23</sup> “The neighbors of San Pedro reached the main road half crazy. The truck drivers stopped at the sign they made with their arms, hats or blankets. —The mine has taken away our land. We no longer have a town. We have burned the church. Take us, for God's sake! Anywhere.— Women and children cried on the pampa.” Arguedas, *Todas las sangres*, 427.

<sup>24</sup> Cornejo Polar, *Universos narrativos*, 201.



to do with mining—all see their livelihoods threatened or destroyed. Their *Lebenswelt* disappears overnight. For the narrator, these changes should have been anticipated; they were a long time coming, but for an array of hacienda workers and peasants the arrival of the machinery marks at last and very dramatically—with the burning of the church—the end of their previous life. The only options now are urbanization and alienation in Lima’s *barriadas* (slums) surrendering their cultural identity, or becoming *vogelfrei* in Marx’s words.

Generally, in the Bolivian corpus the mine produces misery, disease, depression, but it also fosters resistance, political organization. In *Todas las sangres* the mine is the effect of modern capitalism invading the sovereignty of Peru and destroying its forms of life. Its political, social, and environmental consequences are wholly negative. Most notably, it is the end of a life for the inhabitants of San Pedro and surrounding villages, the death of agriculture as a sustainable model and displacement for all involved in managing this organization of production and social relations. The mine destroys the social classes and castes that had characterized life in the Andean sierra for centuries, causing the destruction of traditions, customs, and rituals that marked and oriented life for each of the individuals who inhabited the Andean world.

Once the mine is bought by the consortium, it stands for the total destruction of a world and the intrusion of a force with no legitimacy or law. The mining company is a black hole in the Andes, a force that “captures everything coming into its zone of proximity and from which a system cannot escape.”<sup>25</sup> For Arguedas there is no possibility of forming a united front of *señores*, (state owners) *vecinos*, (neighbors) *colonos*, (settlers) *peones*, (laborers) *comuneros*, (local laborers) etc,—a machinic assemblage—to counter the actions of Wisther Bozart. Nor for the

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<sup>25</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 273.

utilization of a holey space, “the space of cave-dwelling, earth-boring tunnellers which is only imperfectly controlled by the state,” such as that of the mine, to counteract striation.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the only act of direct resistance is embodied by Don Andrés’s former servant Anto, who refuses to be evicted and blows himself up with dynamite in an attempt to destroy the machinery that is leveling the fields. Direct acts of revenge are a constant in Peruvian mining literature.<sup>27</sup> But in *Todas las sangres* there is no organization or unionization, unlike many other accounts; only an insipid form of proletarianization which is described by Arguedas entirely from a negative perspective accompanied by the tragic flight from emplacement in *Gemeinschaft* of San Pedro and surroundings to alienation in the *Gesellschaft* of Lima.<sup>28</sup>

### 5.3 A Running Thread of Mineral

In Arguedas’s oeuvre, few mines or miners ever appear, but we encounter a rare sensitivity to the life of matter in the Andes. This sensitivity is more aligned to examining the nature of Indigenous perception and thinking processes than other which focus on elaborating a phenomenology of the mineral or metal. In the Bolivia corpus, writers attempt an approach to this type of study of matter, but they yield more often than not to the impulse of describing the suffering of the miner as an individual exploited by the mineral machine. In what follows, I foreground a continuity that extends beyond an analysis of *Todas las sangres* to encompass Arguedas’s unique treatment of the mineral in his fiction. I argue that his discussion—when he addresses the mineral—is perhaps more

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>27</sup> Arguedas, *Todas las sangres*, 449. In the next two novels, we encounter episodes of explicit revenge against former abuses of power. The *hacienda* owner and the mine administrators are targeted in *Redoble por Rancas* and *Lituma en los Andes*.

<sup>28</sup> *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft*, generally translated as “community and society,” are categories popularized by German sociologist Max Weber to distinguish social ties of two dichotomous sociological types which define each other.

nuanced than other mining authors due to the attention paid to smaller scales. This is done by using different methods of representation to recreate moments and dynamics that are particularly difficult to transmit. Yet this emphasis on the molecular distracts from the body of the miner and other assemblages built by this body with the mineral, with its extensions, tools, and other bodies. In Arguedas's prose we obtain a fine-tuned sensitivity, an ability to interpret the rock specifically, its being in the world, how it is part of the cosmos beyond use-value. His work, and to a lesser extent that of Scorza, considers the land, the mountains, the flowing creeks, life in short, as acquiring an unexpected dimension becoming a medium to express affects. Therefore, I highlight instances when the mineral emerges from the subterranean or unconscious to make contact with Arguedas's characters. The running mineral vein begins with Ernesto's encounter with the stones of the Inca Roca Palace in *Los ríos profundos* (1958), continues in *Todas las sangres* as part of a discussion about macro-changes in Peru's political economy, and reappears in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1971) in the complex character and former miner, Don Esteban.

Arguedas's work is attentive to the relational aspect of phenomena or moments that reflects an awareness of the ancient Andean mind inclination for interdependence and holism. This sensitivity reaches its limit in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, which he wrote after translating the *Huarochiri Myths* from Quechua to Spanish. "Reading and translating the *Huarochiri Myths*, Arguedas encountered the wisdom and knowing modalities of the ancients whose world he had worshiped."<sup>29</sup> For Arguedas, the word and the Western apparatus of classification are inadequate to express something that became more intense and inexpressible

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<sup>29</sup> Sara Castro-Klarén, "Like a pig, when he's thinkin': Arguedas on Affect and on Becoming an Animal" in *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below: Critical Edition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 313.

after reading the Huarochirí myths and which he tried to incorporate in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*. Arguedas complains that the word, the logic of language in general, “shatters,” or “*desmenuza*.”<sup>30</sup> It breaks things apart, while the assemblages “picaflor-sol-fuego”<sup>31</sup> or “pisonay-flores-Rendón”<sup>32</sup> —toward the end of the novel—work under the principle of holism or resonance allowing him to repair or mend a sense of the lost world of the Andes. This is a mode of writing that enables him to express the specificity of a lost and often misunderstood cosmos: he is able to see in the wind, in the rocks, the diaphanous character of Andean nature and spirit. “Man, heaven, earth create resonances in each other.”<sup>33</sup> Something similar is at stake in Joseph W. Bastien’s dictum “Earth and humans no longer exist as dichotomies but rather as endless reflections of differently shaped mirrors.”<sup>34</sup>

Consider the first chapter of *Los ríos profundos*, a deeply autobiographical novel that retells Arguedas’s memories of his childhood. There, young Ernesto, the protagonist and voice for the author, encounters the stonework of the Inca Roca palace in Cuzco and experiences a moment of fascination, in an episode where analysis is directed not so much to characters or their actions but to unconscious processes or affects operating at a smaller or even “molecular” level. I use the term “molecular” from Deleuze’s discussion of the dyad molecular/molar, where molar refers to a line that “forms a binary, arborescent system of segments.”<sup>35</sup> The molar is defined by its self-similarity across its variations, or rather, its invariant self-identity. The molecular line, on the contrary, “is

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>31</sup> José María Arguedas, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1971), 296.

<sup>32</sup> Hummingbird-sun-fire or pisonay-flowers-Rendón. Arguedas, *Todas las sangres*, 477. The Pisonay, or *Erythrina edulis* (Basul), is a tree native to the Andean region noticeable for its colorful foliage.

<sup>33</sup> Richard E. Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently... and Why* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), 17.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Michael T. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 157.

<sup>35</sup> Adrian Parr, *The Deleuze Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 147.

more fluid although still segmentary.”<sup>36</sup> Molecularity consists of “responses of the individual (as opposed to collective) to phenomena or types of behavior where any object has a life of its own and is felt through the tension of its molar mass and molecular parts and pieces.”<sup>37</sup> It refers to processes where “molecules often aggregate and swarm into active masses of molar aspect and vice versa.”<sup>38</sup> Returning to Arguedas, we observe an appreciation of microscopic things, a molecular sensibility that detects the tiny perceptions or inclinations that destabilize perception as a whole. The Inca Roca walls are clearly different from the colonial buildings, and to accentuate the contrast the narrator adds, “La pared española blanqueada no parecía servir sino para dar luz al muro.”<sup>39</sup> Ernesto intervenes immediately: “Papá, cada piedra habla. Esperemos un instante.”<sup>40</sup> For Ernesto, each stone emits movement and life. The stones of the palace are not only seen as physical foundations, but something much more important or powerful. In their relation with Ernesto they effect a sort of action at a distance: Ernesto seems to perceive in these stones the labor of thousands over long periods of time now concentrated in a material entity that speaks about this rather than concealing its origin like the Spanish colonial white wall. He is fascinated by the resonance of these lives in the material object of labor that stands right before his eyes; this is an assemblage rock-Indian-time that unsettles but captures Ernesto’s mind.

Arguedas’s mineral line appears again in *Todas las sangres*. As mentioned earlier, the text has been described as a document about the break and the interim between an old world now in decay—represented by Andrés de Aragón and a semi-feudal order of relations—and the birth of

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<sup>36</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 205.

<sup>37</sup> Parr, *The Deleuze Dictionary*, 177.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>39</sup> “The whitewashed Spanish wall seemed to have no other purpose than that of brightening the Inca wall.” Arguedas, *Los ríos profundos* (Lima: Estruendo mudo, 2011), 14.

<sup>40</sup> “Papa, every stone is talking. Let’s wait a minute.” *Ibid.*, 14.

an irregular and uncertain new one embodied in his son Fermín's project to exploit the Aparkora mine.<sup>41</sup> However, continuities such as mining were not entirely new in San Pedro.<sup>42</sup> San Pedro had been a rich mining town in colonial times, before it declined. The narrator tells us that "San Pedro tuvo fama de villa opulenta, de mineros ricos. Más de cien bocaminas, con su lengua de escoria tendida en las faldas de las montañas, estaban aún abiertas, pero abandonadas, ocultas por el monte."<sup>43</sup> The presence of death is not entirely removed. It haunts Indians and *vecinos* when they "remember" how many had lost their lives excavating in the Apark'ora mountain.<sup>44</sup> Further, the narrator discloses that the great hacienda of the Aragóns is the result of decades of systematic buying and accumulating accompanied by its implicit violence: "Los Aragones supieron comprar tierras a señores e indios, disimuladamente o por la fuerza, según los casos."<sup>45</sup> In a way there is nothing new" about the violence documented in *Todas las sangres*. It simply constitutes the most recent instantiation of irregular and uneven processes of accumulation caused by global capitalism. The machine of accumulation produced the town of San Pedro, and now destroys it.

This is only one more iteration of that foundational violence that displaced peoples and life in the sierra many centuries ago. This foundation was fueled by the same economic logic that is now destroying San Pedro and surrounding lands. The conducting thread however is metallic, the metal vein is the material line that links colonial exploitation with modern exploitation, colonial displacement with modern displacement. The mineral metals of Peru running underground link

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<sup>41</sup> Cornejo Polar, *Universos narrativos*, 196.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>43</sup> "San Pedro had a reputation of being an opulent village of wealthy miners. More than a hundred mine openings, with their tongue of scoria lying on the slopes of the mountains, were still open, but now abandoned, hidden by the mountain." Arguedas, *Todas las sangres*, 54.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>45</sup> "The Aragón de Peralta family knew how to buy the lands of Indians and *hacendados* [hacienda owners] legally or by force." Ibid., 54.

past with present exploitation. “Not everything is metal,” argue Deleuze and Guattari, “but metal is everywhere. Metal is the conductor of all matter.”<sup>46</sup> I agree with Cornejo Polar’s categorization of “stasis and change, destruction and creation”<sup>47</sup> to organize the analysis of the novel, but would emphasize the continuity of the mineral, the miner and the assemblages constructed but ignored. The exploitation of the Apark’ora mountain represents a new epoch, but (in Cornejo Polar’s words) “a new epoch that ruled by capitalism reminds one of the ominous colonial regime.”<sup>48</sup>

The mineral vein appears one last time in Arguedas’s final work, published shortly after his suicide, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*. This novel is concerned with the consequences of an accelerated modernization in the port of Chimbote, fueled by the Peruvian fishing boom of the mid 1960s. Arguedas focuses on Andean immigrants who arrive in Chimbote attracted by the opportunity to earn a living in the industrializing city. One of these immigrants is Esteban de la Cruz, a former miner from the Cocalón mine, who has become a street vendor in Chimbote. Due to decades of working in a coal mine in the highlands, his lungs are full of coal dust, which he expels in the form of black sputum and then gathers in sheets of newspaper. He does this hoping to collect enough matter since a healer assured him that he will heal when he expels five ounces of coal. Esteban’s health deteriorates due to lack of adequate care, but more importantly the presence of a running mineral vein through his body.

In fact, Esteban is no longer a miner. Rather, he is a human ruin and a way for Arguedas to depict the ruin that is produced by mining at the level of the individual. His wife is right when she says that he is caught between the dead and the living: “Estás muerto, pero estás vivo.

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<sup>46</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 411.

<sup>47</sup> Cornejo Polar, *Universos narrativos*, 205.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

Maldición del Señor.”<sup>49</sup> Due to his life-long contact with the mineral, the former miner is a kind of zombie. Esteban is set on collecting the required ounces of black phlegm from his chest: “Gramo por gramo andaré hasta que me [sic] pulmón se sane.”<sup>50</sup> Here again we observe Arguedas’s sensitivity for molecular action over distances and in this case long temporalities. Arguedas studies objects not as they seem to be before the naked eye but as dynamic masses of molecules. His narrator’s gaze zooms in to examine the parts and pieces (of the mine that remain with and inside his body-machine) still enacting “difference, vibration, disaggregation, deterritorialisation and metamorphosis in terms of molecular activities taking place in and about molar masses,”<sup>51</sup> such as Esteban’s lungs or biography. Esteban knows that to eject all the pulverized coal from his lungs he will have to be patient. Years of working in a mine cannot be undone in a few months, the damage done to his body cannot be reversed only by coughing and collecting this residue.

Arguedas’s mineral vein finally disintegrates in the image of mineral as death in Don Esteban. In *Los ríos profundos*, a child is captured by the rock, fascinated by the liveliness of this material. Now, toward the end of his life, anticipating his approaching death (as stated in the diaries interspersed in the novel), Arguedas’s mineral vein appears as part of an assemblage where the former miner is just a human ruin, and the mineral an analogy of the mine: waste and death. In a twist of how to represent the struggle of miners and the world of extraction, Arguedas focuses on aspects that no other writers have focused on before. The body of Esteban becomes mineral as the dust inhaled over decades becomes one with himself and a testimony of the exploitation of the Indian in the Peruvian sierra. Although Arguedas avoids direct engagement with the mine, the

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<sup>49</sup> “You are dead but you are alive. It is a curse from the Lord.” Arguedas, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, 158.

<sup>50</sup> “Gram by gram I’ll keep on goin’ ‘til me lung heals.” Ibid., 161.

<sup>51</sup> Parr, *The Deleuze Dictionary*, 176.



miner and the mineral, he cannot do so entirely. Based on a sociological reading of his oeuvre we can argue that his wider interests are circumscribed to analyzing Peruvian cultural heterogeneity, the issue of language and political logic of the *ayllu*. But the mineral appears everywhere in his work, however sporadically or unacknowledged, however much it emerges almost accidentally. The mineral is a force in *Todas las sangres*, but it is also a symbol of larger flows of unregulated transnational capital as it traverses Arguedas's literary meditation about the pasts and futures of Peru. Our next text picks up on the issue of unregulated flows of capital to elucidate how these processes wreak havoc on the communitarian life of small towns in the central Andes, destroying a form of life but causing the formation of a new and nomadic line of flight to counter the war brought by accumulation.

#### **5.4 *Redoble por Rancas* or the Chronicle of a Line of Flight**

Manuel Scorza's *Redoble por Rancas* is a story of flight and capture. Like every text, *Redoble por Rancas* is traversed by many lines: there are lines of flight drawn by nomad characters, escaping territorialization, but also lines and forces of capture that attempt to territorialize the space as well as codify the instincts, affects and habits of the *comuneros* (local laborers) of the town of Rancas and other Quechua communities. The novel follows and describes the path traced by Héctor Chacón, also known in the novel as “el Nictálope” (a person who sees better during the night),<sup>52</sup> the novel's hero, in his mission to avenge the town from the abuses perpetrated by the Judge Montenegro. Chacón is neither a union leader nor a community spokesman, but rather a sort of

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<sup>52</sup> Borrowed from Latin *nyctalops*, *nyctalōpis*, meaning “that cannot see in twilight, that sees only at night,” from Ancient Greek *νυκτάλωψ* (*nuktálōps*), from *νύξ* (*núx*, “night”) + *ᾠψ* (*ōps*, “sight”). Scorza, however, uses the term to emphasize Chacón's extraordinary night vision.

nomad—always one step ahead of the guards—who is shown planning and plotting the murder of the judge. In Judge Montenegro, Chacón, and to a certain point the narrator, sees the symbol of all injustices committed against himself, his family, and the community.

Another set of lines deployed by capital and the state follow opposite processes of territorialization and capture. We hear about the uncanny appearance and inexplicable growth of a fence running through the lands of the community, a fence that devours everything in its path. At first, the communities affected ignore it, but as it advances, encircling the surrounding fields, mountains, lakes and arid lands alike, townspeople and *comuneros* begin to see the fence as a danger and a sign of enclosure of their lands, which amounts to an appropriation of their means of production and the disruption of their *Lebenswelt*. The story is thus split between the narration of Chacón's plans to avenge the judge and the expansion of the enclosure. Chacón recruits a few *comuneros* from other communities and plans to have the judge assassinated. After much planning and persuading, the group decides to strike, but their attack is flawed and the judge is able to save himself by holing up in his hacienda and thus avoiding the risk of an attack on the open. Yet this is a contradictory move, in that he saves his life but at the expense of his own freedom since his safety requires self-imposed isolation.

The peasants and Indians, for their part, refuse to see their lands fenced in by an alien force, the Cerro de Pasco Mining Corporation, and decide to fight this encroachment in any way available to them. The company, however, able to resist the isolated attacks of Chacón and the old rebel shepherd, Fortunato, uses these actions as a pretext to launch an operation to remove the people of Rancas from their territory. The novel's closing image—not dissimilar to that offered in *Todas las sangres*—is one of (almost) complete destruction: company guards and army soldiers march into town killing Fortunato, along with many others, and setting houses on fire to put the rebellion

down. I say “almost” because, as we will see, Scorza’s narrative choices, specifically his employment of magical realism, allow him to extend the life of his characters beyond death, thus prolonging the story of resistance in Rancas into several volumes published during the 1970s, collectively known as “La guerra silenciosa.”<sup>53</sup>

In what follows, I discuss the impact of the novel on the social and the way in which its paratexts played into the dynamics of its reception, enabling it to act as a force of emancipation but paradoxically permitting the accusation of being too fictitious or alternatively not real enough. As a result, the text was caught between the expectation raised by its paratexts and at the same time supplemented by them in its claim to factuality. Later, I discuss how the conditions created by accumulation produce alien and surreal images fictionalized in the text under the logics of magical realism. My bet is that the style of magical realism employed by Scorza’s narrator is inspired by the extraordinary abuses that take place in and form the same reality he tries to document. His employment of this type of realism allows him not only to depict and make sense of the social and environmental devastation narrated, but also to project the story told in *Redoble por Rancas* into four more volumes documenting the struggle of Indians and peasants against the destructive logic of global accumulation. The magical type of realism interspersed by Scorza in these texts enables him to narrate extreme conditions and otherworldly realities produced by the extent and intensity of accumulation without exhausting the reader with an endless denunciation

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<sup>53</sup> “La guerra silenciosa,” or the “The Silent War,” is the name of Manuel Scorza’s pentalogy chronicling the popular mobilizations that took place in the central Andes of Peru during the late 1950s. The series consists of *Redoble por Rancas* (1970), *Drums for Rancas* (1977); *Garabombo, el invisible* (1971), *Garabombo, the Invisible* (1994); *El jinete insomne* (1977), *The Sleepless Rider* (1996); *Cantar de Agapito Robles* (1977), *The Ballad of Agapito Robles* (1999); *La tumba del relámpago* (1979), *Requiem for a Lightning Bolt* (2000). Each volume has been translated into more than forty languages.

of injustices or a relatively dry journalistic tone. I analyze these processes employing the spatial terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, specifically concepts like territorialization and deterritorialization of space, encoding of life, and the operation of the global war machine of accumulation in the Andes. I conclude my discussion of the text following the affective line of flight occupied by Chacón “el Nictálope” who decides from the first pages to exact revenge.<sup>54</sup> The line of flight is the trajectory traced by not only Chacón but also by other actors not included in the main text but present in the paratexts, such as the Maoist guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso. As we will see later the uncanny extra-textual appearance of Sendero Luminoso would materialize in Mario Vargas Llosa’s *Lituma en los Andes*, the next and final case study explored in this chapter.

## 5.5 Is Fiction Only Fiction?

*Redoble por Rancas* is organized into two threads: each story is told in alternate chapters, in a narrative double helix. The first story, told in the odd numbered chapters, relates the impending, and finally frustrated, confrontation between Héctor Chacón “el Nictálope” and Judge Montenegro. These chapters are written in a more magical, and even baroque style producing at times an unreal tone. The second story, told in the even numbered chapters, narrates the confrontation between the *comuneros* of the subsistence agricultural community of Rancas and the multinational Cerro de Pasco Corporation. These chapters tend to be written in a realist style. This division is perhaps due to the origin of the narrative, which began as an essay rather than a novel. Scorza had initially traveled from Lima to document the cycles of enclosures and resistance taking place in the central Andes, in the Daniel Alcides Carrión Province and specifically in the

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<sup>54</sup> Manuel Scorza *Redoble por Rancas* Ed. Dunia Gras, (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009), 165

communities around the town of Rancas and Cerro de Pasco. Back in Paris, dissatisfied with the flatness of his manuscript, Scorza decided to turn this material into a novel. In conversation with critic Elda Peralta, Scorza confesses, “Vi que le faltaba el corazón, no veía lo que yo había visto. Y entonces un día lo que hice fue arrojar todo esto y soñar la realidad, como si yo estuviera adentro. Y escribí *Redoble por Rancas*.”<sup>55</sup>

Beyond this double helix structure, the text is also notable for its extensive inclusion of paratexts that add another layer of tension to the experience of the active reader. There is an opening epigraph, a “report” before the text, as well as an epilogue after it, all employing a journalistic voice to note real-life facts, such as the fate of people on whom the characters were based and the profit made by the Cerro de Pasco Corporation in 1966. These paratexts draw the text closer to the realm of the real. They anchor the novel in historical or current experience. But from the first chapters of the main body of the text we encounter a very different story: a magical realist narrative unfolds, defying the earlier “agreement” that we have accepted, namely, that everything happened in real life. This is a tension present in most mining literature. Let us recall the tension that mining texts in Bolivia underwent when they navigated the line between documentary and fiction. Derrida’s remarks about the double movement internal to literature is pertinent here again. This movement grants literature the possibility of denouncing and deploying critical lines of thought, yet at the same time opens it up to the possibility of being undermined if it is accused of being a merely fictional exercise. Texts critical of society have to dwell in the ambiguous space of presenting themselves as fiction but not as fiction alone. Likewise, they need

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<sup>55</sup> “I saw that it was missing soul, it did not see what I had seen. And then one day what I did was to throw all this away and dream reality, as if I were inside. And then I wrote *Redoble for Rancas*.” E Peralta, “Conversación con Manuel Scorza,” 12. Quoted in *Redoble por Rancas*, Ed. Dunia Gras. (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009), 37.

to claim that they are related to reality, even if they do not necessarily constitute an objective chronicle or report on reality. They are conditioned to inhabit this contradictory but creative space. All mining literature texts have to negotiate these tensions and contradictions since they usually narrate instances of violence based on historical events. This negotiation is different in each text and can help to determine the subsequent success of the novel. *Todas las sangres*, for instance, was marked by the polemics of reality and verisimilitude beyond its aesthetic merits. According to his critics, Arguedas was not writing close enough to reality and consequently his text appeared obsolete or set on romanticizing the referents employed.<sup>56</sup>

In *Redoble por Rancas*, Scorza deftly administers an economy of reality and fiction by surrounding the body of the text with a set of paratexts that acknowledge the tension inherent in all fiction writing. Once this tension is acknowledged, he uses it to disarm potential critics who might accuse him of writing only fantasy, or others who might accuse him of writing only chronicles and being too close to reality thereby neglecting the fictional component of fiction writing. Scorza then increases this tension by pulling the reader in opposite directions: the paratexts insist the story we will read is based on reality, but the text—far from being an objective account of what happened in Rancas—tells a story in which the real and the magical coexist without much conflict. The narration is populated by magical events that seem unlikely: an episode of people changing colors; a final scene after the massacre where we hear the dead talking, etc. This is a new accomplishment in mining literature: the employment of a technique that mixes narrative resources in order to bypass the charge that the novel is not real enough, or too real and perhaps not matching

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<sup>56</sup> See Guillermo Rochabrún's *La Mesa Redonda sobre "Todas las Sangres" del 23 de junio de 1965* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2000). See also, Horacio Legrás, *Literature and Subjection: The Economy of Writing and Marginality in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 211. And Feldman, *Rethinking Community from Peru*, 3.

the expectation of those real-life persons who are fictionalized in it. In addition, it allows the author to narrate extraordinary events without appearing excessively accusatory moving beyond the literary conventions of simple victimization.<sup>57</sup> Scorza's narrative decisions play with these conventions and enrich the textual quality of the corpus.

However, the art object is seldom received and fitted squarely into the social field. Rather it is thrown into a chaotic plane where the author, painter or composer can barely predict the multiple readings and re-readings it will undergo, or the set of external relations that these art bodies will eventually form with other bodies creating assemblages and unexpected reactions. This was the case for *Todas las sangres* as well as for *Redoble por Rancas*. In *Todas las sangres*, Arguedas's text was criticized for being too detached from Peruvian reality. In the case of *Redoble por Rancas*, Scorza became a victim of his own success. One of the novel's main extra-literary accomplishments was its immediate and positive impact on objective reality. Soon after the text's publication, the real person on whom the protagonist Héctor Chacón was based read a review of *Redoble por Rancas* and learned of its success at home and abroad. Confined to prison after the failure of his rebellion (narrated in the novel), Chacón wrote to the magazine stating that the novel was based on his struggle and that he was still alive.<sup>58</sup> The magazine published this letter, which increased interest in the story behind the novel. As a consequence, on July 28 (Peru's independence day), 1978, the socialist administration of General Juan Velasco Alvarado agreed to pardon Héctor Chacón. Just like in Bolivia before the revolution, and in Chile before the Pinochet coup, here fiction contributed to concrete—and here, progressive—social change.

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<sup>57</sup> Dunia Gras, Introducción *Redoble por Rancas*, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 70.

The novel made Scorza famous and freed Chacón from prison. But people responded to it as though it were the objective chronicle of a massacre, perhaps ornamented but still “real,” and not a novel.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the text came so close to reality, that it effectively changed it in specific and concrete ways, but this change was double. First, it acted as an emancipatory agent, freeing Chacón and bringing attention to the problems of the inhabitants of Rancas and other communities. Second, and quite inadvertently, it also came to be read mostly as a piece of investigative journalism. The effects in reality were conditioned after a “transformation” of the text, or at least of its interpretation, from fiction to journalism. Emancipation came only on the condition that the novel was read, in a way (partly) unintended by the author, as chronicle rather than novel. Cultural critic Dunia Gras remarks on this double movement: “Buena parte de la crítica y del público sobre todo en Perú, cayó en esa misma trampa del realismo, lo que no le permitió ver más allá de la pura comparación de los hechos reales con los ficcionales produciéndose un desencanto y cierto rechazo ante cualquier desviación del código más puramente realista.”<sup>60</sup> *Redoble por Rancas* demonstrates that the body of mining literature is able to affect other bodies beyond any expectation. Commenting on Scorza’s narrative strategies, literary critic Roland Frogues highlights the role of chance and the unexpected always at play in the relation between art and reality: “La ficción literaria no es neutral y a veces más allá de lo deseado por el escritor; puede jugar un rol no despreciable en la transformación de la realidad concreta alienada.”<sup>61</sup> If a body is defined by its

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>60</sup> “Many critics and members of the public, especially in Peru, fell into the same trap of realism. This did not allow them to see beyond the pure comparison of real events with fictional ones, thus producing a disenchantment and a certain rejection in the face of any deviation from the purely realistic code.” Gras, 71. For a detailed discussion of the reception of *Redoble por Rancas*, see Dunia Gras, *Manuel Scorza: la construcción de un mundo posible* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2009).

<sup>61</sup> “Literary fiction is not neutral, and it can sometimes operate beyond what is desired by the writer. It can play a non-negligible role in the transformation of alienated concrete reality.” Roland Frogues, *La estrategia mítica de Manuel Scorza* (Lima: Centro de estudios para el desarrollo y la participación, 1991), 153.



potential to affect and to be affected, then *Redoble por Rancas* is a body very much able to impact and generate other encounters with other bodies in turn forming and dissolving assemblages of resistance that extend beyond the predictable. Scorza's text confirms what I have hypothesized earlier in the Bolivian national context: that literary bodies such as novels or poems can alter other bodies and, in the case of mining literature, fiction can have a direct impact on the social.

## 5.6 The Magic of Accumulation

Since *Redoble por Rancas* is configured following the style and logics of magical realism, we should consider how and why this literary mode is deployed in the text and what are its implications for mining literature. Magical realism is known for incorporating fantastic or mythical elements into otherwise realistic fiction. But the extent of this incorporation as well as what qualifies as fantastic or mythical has been subject to debate.<sup>62</sup> Definitions of magical realism can be vague, and key words used to explain it overlap and merge with other types of literature and critical currents. "Magical realism has been used for such a variety of fictions and theories that the very variety compels critics to teeter on the verge of inconsistency, juxtaposition and even contradiction."<sup>63</sup> I employ a concise definition of magical realism as a narrative strategy characterized by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction.

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<sup>62</sup> See González Echeverría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* (Austin: University of Texas Press; Revised, Subsequent edition, 1991) and William Spindler, "Magic Realism: A Typology," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. XXIX, Issue 1, (January 1993): 75–85, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/XXIX.1.75>.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Hinchcliffe and Ed Jewinski, *Magic Realism and Canadian Literature: Essays and Stories* (Waterloo: University of Waterloo Press, 1986), 6, quoted in Eva Aldea, *Magical Realism and Deleuze: The Indiscernibility of Difference in Postcolonial Literature* (London: Continuum, 2011), 1.

In *Redoble por Rancas*, Scorza's narrator employs several strategies to communicate events beyond the constrictions of social realism or naturalism employed by previous mining and non-mining writers. For instance, during an excursus detailing the arrival of Americans and the foundation of the mining company Cerro de Pasco Corporation in the town of Cerro de Pasco and surrounding communities, Scorza's narrator describes people changing color: "Un día un hombre emergió de una cantina donde bebía aguardiente de culebra con la cara y el cuerpo azules. Al día siguiente otro varón que se emborrachaba en la misma cantina lució verde."<sup>64</sup> People assume this transformation is in preparation for the carnival, but the holidays pass and people keep changing skin colors. In a textbook example of magical realism, the ordinary style of writing contrasts with the extraordinary or even surreal event narrated. The narration goes on to remark in flat and realist terms that the change was also hereditary, so a blue man and a yellow woman would have a green baby. But the story of people changing colors is not some whim of fantasy from a narrator seeking to depict local texture or flavor, nor is it part of a metaphor symbolizing other referents. Rather, it is part of Scorza's strategy to describe real but also extraordinary events caused by the logics of accumulation as it unfolds over these indigenous communities.

The style allows Scorza to program a narrator who describes an altered reality, a reality distorted by the intensity of accumulation. As is often the case in mining literature, these events are usually brought about by the alienating and destructive logics of capitalist extraction in the periphery. People are in fact changing skin colors because they are poisoned by breathing the polluted air produced by the company. But feast and novelty soon disappear and from one

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<sup>64</sup> "One day a man emerged from a canteen where he was drinking snake firewater his face and body entirely blue. The next day another man drinking in the same canteen looked green." Scorza, *Redoble por Rancas*, 246.

“magical” event the reader is taken to another of deeper and graver ramifications. Peasants begin to worry less about the color of their faces than about the fact that seeds do not germinate. To diffuse any conflict and return bodies to flows of labor required by capital, the company “in good faith” offers to purchase the land affected by its emissions.<sup>65</sup> Here Scorza’s narrator again blurs the lines between journalism, social realism, and magical realism since in fact the historical archive confirms this purchase.<sup>66</sup> The narrative mode is not the apparently stable voice of the historian, but continuously shifts between narrative styles and genres. In a strange loop, magical realism returns to the historical and factual, and the byproduct of accumulation—in this case environmental contamination—becomes its cause.

In another magical episode, the narrator describes sudden epidemics of color blindness that attack the locals of Cerro de Pasco. Again, the point of these interventions of the magical into the description of real conflict is to show, and perhaps to come to terms with, the crisis that capitalist accumulation has brought to the central Andes by the logics of extraction turned into the madness of reason. It is on a Friday—we are told as if an ordinary event is to ensure—that the people of Cerro de Pasco notice a virus that has infected their eyes, making them incapable of distinguishing any colors. The medical cases “chosen” by the narrator are telling: “Un enfermo capaz de señalar, por ejemplo, las manchas de una oveja a un kilómetro, era incapaz de distinguir un cerco situado a cien metros.”<sup>67</sup> The sick of Cerro de Pasco are having a hard time seeing colors, but what alarms

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>66</sup> This contamination was so prevalent that indigenous communities and haciendas sued the company for damages. The company moved to installed pollution controls and to buy 200,000 hectares of land at presumably bargain prices. This purchase turned the Cerro de Pasco Corporation into the largest landowner company in Peru. See Peter Flindell Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood in the Andes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 264.

<sup>67</sup> “A patient capable of pointing out, for example, the spots of a sheep one kilometer away, was unable to distinguish a fence located one hundred meters away.” Scorza, *Redoble por Rancas*, 321.

the narrator is the fact that nobody can “see” the fence that has been dividing entire communities. The town’s prefect is shown buying a poncho (which means he can distinguish some colors), but like most everyone else he cannot see the fence. Moreover, the authorities cannot see the injustices perpetrated against the *comuneros* by the enclosures. The epidemics fade from the attention of the narrator, and the reader never knows how all this was resolved. Yet the magical allows Scorza to create fantastic metaphors to highlight the madness of accumulation and its magical and horrifying effects over human and non-human life in the Andes.<sup>68</sup> In Scorza, accumulation deployed by the global war machine working at the margins of capitalism indeed turns reality magical. Alienation is so great and corporate abuses so overwhelming that reality, as perceived by the author, begins to change, and slowly, new and previously unseen things appear: people change colors, others become infected by epidemics, etc. Accumulation at the margins not only turns reality magical but also distorts the narrator’s perception of the real, laying the basis for a text crossed between genres and styles.

Perhaps the most visible but uncanny object revealing the magic of accumulation in *Redoble por Rancas* is the “Cerco” (capitalized by Scorza in the text) or fence that runs through the grazing pastures dismembering the lands and the life of the community. The first time we hear about the fence is via Fortunato’s interior monologue as he runs toward Rancas to notify his people about a line of army trucks heading to the town. Released from Cerro de Pasco’s jailhouse he spots this military convoy and immediately sets out to alert the *comuneros*. The tone of this flight is apocalyptic: “El cielo crujía a punto de desfondarse.”<sup>69</sup> Fortunato is caught inside a world fleeing

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<sup>68</sup> Parallels with the memory loss epidemics endured by the earlier inhabitants of Macondo can be drawn here. The memory loss epidemic described in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* represented the demons of any society that does not know how to remember.

<sup>69</sup> “The sky creaked about to unfold.” Ibid., 160.

from destruction with no precedents: “¿Quién podría recordar un éxodo semejante?”<sup>70</sup> At this point, the reader is unaware that Fortunato’s escape narrated here in the second chapter of the novel will be encountered again in the last chapter, as a moment of climax, after all resistance has proved futile and served only to provoke and justify the invasion and attack of the community.<sup>71</sup>

This fence is unlike any other previously encountered in mining literature. It intimidates *campesinos* and blocks their capability to respond. They ask themselves: “¿Qué ambicionaba el Cerco? ¿Qué destino ocultaba? ¿Quién ordenaba esa separación?”<sup>72</sup> Some decide to ignore the fencing that now had enclosed more than 15 kilometers of land, speculating that it must be the work of road engineers sent from Lima.<sup>73</sup> Other communities, like Yarusyacan, decide to fight it, but the Cerco prevails, aided by armed guards: “Las mujeres empuñaron sus hondas y desde lejos castigaron a las cuadrillas. Los niños de la escuela los apedrearon también; pero una sola atropellada de caballos deshizo las cargas inútiles. El cerco dividió el pueblo en dos: ya no se podía cambiar de vereda.”<sup>74</sup> This delimitation of property tears apart territories traditionally held in common disrupting everyday life with an added sense of surreal alienation predominant in magical realism. We are told about injustices, such as the fact that the fence encloses lands making it harder for locals to access their pastures for cultivation or even to move around, which might rightly cause anger or indignation in the reader, but we also hear something else, something that goes beyond injustice and becomes bizarre or strange. The fence encloses towns right down the middle,

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<sup>70</sup> “Who could remember such an exodus?” Ibid., 160.

<sup>71</sup> In a gesture to Gabriel García Márquez’s *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*), Scorza designs his text inside the geometry of circularity, announcing the end already in the second chapter and drawing the text still closer to the territory of magical realism.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 207

<sup>74</sup> “The women wielded their slings and punished the soldiers from afar. The school children stoned them as well; but a single run of horses undid the useless charges. The fence divided the town into two: it was no longer possible to cross the street.” Ibid., 218.

disrupting people's simplest habits, like crossing a street, increasing the sense of absurdity of this event of accumulation and moving the text closer to the magical.

The fence is built by an anonymous group of armed and uniformed men (of which the narrator discloses very little), which contrasts with the deep sense of community that exists among the inhabitants of these towns and villages. Their alienated labor produces the alienation of the peoples of Rancas: "A los vecinos de Ondores, de Junín, de Huayllay, de villa de Pasco se les conoce. A aquellos enchaquetados de cuero negro, nadie los identificaba. Desembarcaron bolas de alambre. Terminaron a la una, almorzaron y comenzaron a cavar pozos. Cada diez metros enterraban un poste. Así nació el Cerco."<sup>75</sup> This anonymity confers on the fence a sense of impenetrability and unaccountability. When the laborers are questioned by the local representative of Rancas, they rebuke him violently: "No hay paso. No hay orden de informar. ¡Lárguese!"<sup>76</sup> In the meantime, the fence keeps advancing: "Nueve cerros, cincuenta pastizales, cinco lagunas, catorce puquios, once cuevas, tres ríos tan caudalosos que no se hielan ni en invierno, cinco pueblos, cinco camposantos engulló el Cerco en quince días."<sup>77</sup> Just like the machines running in the background of the story "Las Hortensias" ("The Daisy Dolls") by Uruguayan author Felisberto Hernández, the fence is a silent machine that grows without regard for obstacles in its path but is itself determinant over the story and the voice used to tell it.

The Cerco interrupts circuits of transit and makes life harder for the locals of Rancas, but from a different perspective the Cerco is effectively actualizing a territorialization of space in the

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<sup>75</sup> "The neighbors of Ondores, of Junín, of Huayllay, of Villa de Pasco are known to us. But nobody could identified those clad in black leather. One day they unloaded balls of wire. They finished at one, had lunch and began digging wells. Every ten meters they buried a pole. This is how the Fence was born." Ibid., 178.

<sup>76</sup> "This is a closed area. There is no order to inform. Get out!" Ibid., 191.

<sup>77</sup> "Nine hills, fifty pastures, five lagoons, fourteen springs, eleven caves, three rivers so abundant that they do not freeze in winter, five villages, five graveyards were engulfed by the Fence in fifteen days." Ibid., 216.

Andes. Territorialization, as conceptualized by Deleuze and Guattari, draws on the metaphor of territory, but functions as a machine that organizes and systematizes social space. This machine is tasked with implanting a particular type of order on life: it “produces or rather reproduces segments, opposing them two by two and laying out a divisible homogeneous space striated in all directions. This machine is linked to the state apparatus.”<sup>78</sup> Territorialization is an abstract machine that divides and systematizes life in the Andes irrespective of any previous social function. In *Redoble por Rancas* this machine is formed by the assemblage capital-uniformed men-space. Fencers territorialize the space, reorganizing it in segments or molar lines; that is, vectors that rigidly classify, categorize, and divide into binary organization, i.e., they belong to the state or the civic world, they are well defined, often massive, and are affiliated with a governing apparatus.<sup>79</sup> What we are witnessing is large flows of capital, materialized in the changes brought by the Cerro de Pasco Corporation, territorializing the landscape by stripping away local senses of value and social relations, and then aligning it to capital flows, recoding local culture onto another value system. Resources that were once common are now private, paths that connected villages are closed, and *comuneros* have to walk longer distances to visit their relatives and trade: “La pampa quedó dividida. El Cerco cortó la planicie. Pueblos que antes quedaban a una hora de viaje ahora distaban cinco. Conseguir agua se hacía difícil.”<sup>80</sup>

The Cerco not only divides space and redefines it as private property (territorialization) but also actively overcodes the space by furnishing new codes, in other words, programming explicit or implicit sets of concepts, expectations, actions for the bodies involved in the process of

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<sup>78</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 223.

<sup>79</sup> Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Thousand Plateaus* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 120.

<sup>80</sup> “The pampa was divided. The Fence had cut through the plain. Villages that before were an hour away are now five away. Getting water was also becoming difficult.” Scorza, *Redoble por Rancas*, 193.

territorialization. Overcoding consists in the imposition of a regime of meanings arising from fixed representations on the various processes through which social life and desire operate. Before the arrival of the mining company, the lands in dispute—grazing pastures for subsistence agriculture and herding—consisted of a smooth space, “the space of intense process and assemblages,”<sup>81</sup> a space that enabled “free relationships of molecular bodies in local motion.”<sup>82</sup> As the company begins to encircle these lands, the space becomes territorialized and a new ordering is imposed on bodies. Similar processes take place in neighboring countries: accumulation and its effects in the central Andes resemble the enclosures described by Michael Taussig in Colombia. Peasants who continued practicing self-subsistence (after the arrival of the fence) now become an obstacle to “progress” (read: accumulation) making the use of force a legitimate instrument to implement territorialization.<sup>83</sup> Bodies are “recoded,” as what is sensible is given new ordering, and settle on a newly found stability in their patterns of movement responding to the requirement of capital and accumulation.

What we witness is the deployment of the war machine of accumulation just as it was deployed earlier causing the events narrated by Arguedas in *Todas las sangres*. *Redoble por Rancas* constitutes the literary register of this encounter between the war machine and the “unspecified enemy” that is, broadly speaking, the communities of the central Andes. At the individual level, this un-specificity took the shape of a man, Héctor Chacón, and his supporters forming a pack, a group abandoning regulated, habitual circuits of imposed exploitation and

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<sup>81</sup> Mark Bonta and John Protevi, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 145.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>83</sup> Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, 71.



resignation in order to embark in a line of flight that escaped the machine of accumulation as well as the state that enabled it and the space it segmented and territorialized.

Accumulation is not a foreign concept or phenomenon in the central Andes. In fact, it has been operating for centuries, since colonial times, always marked by theft and violence. This temporality is so vast that accumulation itself could be thought of as a hyperobject. For decades, accumulation has configured the processes of establishing the necessary material and spiritual conditions upon which it could operate. As *Redoble por rancas* indicates, accumulation has a concrete history and set of practices that have long been affecting communities and resources. In 1903, a group of North American businessmen took advantage of the devastation of Peru's defeat in the War of the Pacific and bought several properties to extract copper, then the country's most important metal, in Cerro de Pasco, the capital of the department of the same name, and formed the Cerro de Pasco Corporation. The process of accumulation intensified vertiginously with the outbreak of World War One, and by 1929 three U.S. firms accounted for more than 97% of Peru's mineral exports.<sup>84</sup> The corporation extracted copper and then processed the ore in its smelter at La Oroya, which contaminated the surrounding lands intoxicating animals and affecting the germination cycle of local growers' seed.<sup>85</sup> The Cerro de Pasco Corporation also ran a system of payment in company tokens and monopolized food stores. "It owned virtually everything in its vicinity, from roads, water and electric power to schools, hospitals, priests and politicians."<sup>86</sup> This continuous expansion of capital in the Cerro de Pasco department alienated its neighbors,

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<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth Dore, *The Peruvian Mining Industry: Growth, Stagnation, and Crisis* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 103.

<sup>85</sup> Luis Jochamowitz, *Hombres, minas y pozos: 1896-1996: un siglo de minería y petróleo en el Perú* (Lima Sociedad Nacional de Minería y Petróleo, 1996), 48.

<sup>86</sup> Dore, *The Peruvian Mining Industry*, 121.

*hacendados*, townspeople and *comuneros* who formed unlikely and short-lived alliances to combat the corporation's expansion.<sup>87</sup>

From this long history of unregulated exploitation and accumulation arises the material conditions that determined life in the central Andes and precipitated the social events registered in the texts discussed. But when shifting the scale of focus from the human (social history) to decades or centuries (long temporality), we obtain a new angle of vision revealing how the hyperobject mining, operating for decades and centuries, is able to produce the material reality depicted by Scorza and interpreted as “magical” or “fantastic.” The long duration and constant operation of these flows of extraction, accumulation and oppression forms a reality that seems magical and otherworldly to the metropole's gaze, but in fact, conceived in its totality and across a long temporality, constitutes the basis for the center's very material existence. The intense and asymmetrical flows that make up the hyperobject allowed the formation of a center that deems reality in the periphery “unreal” or “magical.” The history of Cerro de Pasco shows that the refuse of capital's logic of accumulation, just as in the case of the hyperobject, does not go anywhere: “there is no ‘away’ in the time of hyperobjects.”<sup>88</sup> Accumulation's products and byproducts are here to stay: they are distributed, managed and employed differently in Lima, in Cerro de Pasco, or in La Oroya, but their impact over other bodies and life remains uncannily present.

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<sup>87</sup> Wilfredo Kapsoli, *Los movimientos campesinos en Cerro de Pasco: 1800-1963*, (Huancayo: Instituto de Estudios Andinos, 1975), 92.

<sup>88</sup> Morton, *Hyperobjects*, 112.

## 5.7 Chacón, a Line of Flight

All this territorialization of space and rhythms of life produces its opposite and equally forceful response in the line of flight drawn by Chacón who is depicted as “going adrift toward other zones of praxis and affects.”<sup>89</sup> From his first appearance, Chacón is programmed under the logics of plot and escape. He is introduced to us during a meeting called on by the members of Rancas who are fed up with Judge Montenegro’s history of abuses. Chacón’s main weapon is his determination to act. When some announce that the *personero* (local procurator) had filed a complaint [citación] about the recent and illegal expansion of lands carried out by the judge expanding his hacienda, Chacón answers back, “Ya lo verán, el doctor Montenegro se limpiará el culo con las citaciones.” When asked about a solution Chacón is clear, “El comparendo será el trece de diciembre, ese día lo mataré.”<sup>90</sup> Chacón is no protesting miner asking for better conditions, nor a greedy gold prospector driven by the promise of instant riches; rather, he is on a line of flight dedicated to avenge injustices and, if necessary, be killed in the process.

From the outset Chacón embarks on a homicide mission, which at some point becomes a homicide-suicide mission. Chacón’s statement is also a sentence: “La muerte de los ricos la debemos comenzar en Yanahuanca. Estoy listo a depositar mi vida. ¿Puedes ayudarme compadre?”<sup>91</sup> He is appealing for help from his jail-time friend Pis-pis in this kamikaze mission. Members of the community gradually become persuaded by Chacón’s hard line: “Héctor tiene razón. Mentira decimos que somos libres. Somos esclavos. La única forma de salir adelante es

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<sup>89</sup> Cesare Casarino, *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 128.

<sup>90</sup> “You will see, Dr. Montenegro will clean his ass with the citations” and “The summons will be on the thirteenth of December, that day I will kill him.” Scorza, *Redoble por Rancas*, 165.

<sup>91</sup> “We must begin the death of the rich in Yanahuanca. I am ready to lay down my life. Can you help me, pal?” Ibid., 333.

matando.”<sup>92</sup> The result then is the formation of a nomadic experience fleeing from the apparatus of capture established in Rancas where most everyone had been jailed after the murder of the judge’s trusted hitman, the bloodthirsty ear-cutter or “Cortaorejas.” Chacón occupies a line of flight that turns into a dangerous extended euphoria in his quest for death. He is depicted fleeing but always looking for ways to take revenge on the judge and to disrupt the war machine of accumulation.

In chapter 2, I discussed how mining authors underwent a creative process of deterritorialization in their becoming miner and mineral by tracing a line of flight in their writing. Here we reencounter the line of flight but this time in a different plane of immanence and pushed to the limits where it takes a dangerous and even lethal direction, as shown by the trajectory of Scorza’s protagonist. Chacón’s irregular life rhythm or non-routine can be paralleled to a nomad agent. Deleuze and Guattari explain the role of the nomad and the types of lines by using the historical case of the Roman Empire as an entity of rigid segmentarity exposed to the nomads from the steppes who come in contact with the center producing various results: some reterritorialize it (abstract war machine) while others integrate themselves. The image of a plotting but fleeing Chacón seeking refuge in isolated places, in an already isolated and barren land, walking for days and spending nights under rocks, going to great lengths to assassinate Judge Montenegro, can be compared to the image of the steppe nomads invoked by the French theorists. “On the horizon, there is an entirely different kind of line, the lines of the nomads who come in off the steppes venture a fluid and active escape, sow deterritorialization everywhere, launch flows whose quanta

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<sup>92</sup> “Héctor is right. To say that we are free is a lie. We are slaves. The only way to get ahead is by killing” Ibid., 333.

heat up and are swept along by a stateless war machine.”<sup>93</sup> The lines traced by the nomads are the lines of flight that territorialize and deterritorialize all segments and molar lines traced by the state. Chacón and his pack produce a general deterritorialization, “which liberates a pure matter, undoes codes, expressions and contexts on a zigzag broken line of flight.”<sup>94</sup> Chacón becomes a sort of vanguard that confronts capital to liberate pure life on the pampa, to undo imposed codes, in quite different ways from what mining literature has led us to believe so far. Organizing unions and establishing talks is passé. The new resistance follows a line of flight that attacks as it escapes; a molecular flow that rejects the logics of molar lines embodied in unions and parties in favor of guerrilla methods that utilize symbolic as well as concrete instruments to alter material conditions. As we will see, this guerrilla war is not confined to fiction but navigates freely between text, paratext, history and reality.

In his search for revenge and justice, Chacón abandons the quadrant of the community (family, job, routine) guided only by his flight to destroy the judge, the symbol of injustices and abuse for the entire community. He abandons an already tenuous tie with the striated space of conventional life to pursue the smooth space of the nomadic subject to the limit point of revenge, seeking the multiplicity of which he is a part. “In his becoming other he becomes many selves all of whom are connected only by the continuity of a line of becoming.”<sup>95</sup> Entering into a becoming-revenge, Chacón becomes an anomalous element in the assemblage community-*campesino-sierra*. But lines of flight always run the risk of derailing, of leading to regressive transformations, even reconstructing highly rigid segments or becoming no more than a line of destruction. “They turn

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<sup>93</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 222.

<sup>94</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 73.

<sup>95</sup> Tamsin Lorraine, “Ahab and Becoming-Whale: The Nomadic Subject in Smooth Space” in *Deleuze and Space*, ed. Ian Buchanan, and Gregg Lambert, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 169.

out badly not just because they are short-circuited by the two other lines, but on their own account, as a result of a danger which they conceal.”<sup>96</sup>

Indeed, these lines of escape turn out badly for Chacón. He finds himself exhausted from the fruitless plotting to hit the judge, and frustration seems to push him towards recklessness. Chacón seeks refuge back in his own house in Rancas, reasoning that no one would look in such an obvious place. His wife, tired and confused about this ordeal, confronts him, “¿Qué vas a hacer tú solo Chacón? Cuando te pase algo, ¿Quién velará por tus hijos?”<sup>97</sup> only to receive the same answer: “Si muero, moriré. Si vivo, viviré. Ese es mi destino.”<sup>98</sup> She asks him to spend the night with his family. Next day, early in the morning before he can continue drawing his line of flight, guards surround the house and Chacón surrenders.

After Chacón’s anticlimactic capture, the novel rejoins the story of Fortunato that was announced in the first pages of the text. Facing the power of the company in the army trucks that head toward the town, Fortunato becomes a sort of natural leader claiming: “Hoy luchamos por todos”<sup>99</sup> in an effort to muster civil resistance against the army troops entering Rancas. Approaching from three different directions (this is a war against the “unspecified enemy”), the soldiers arrive and give orders to evacuate. Fortunato refuses to leave his town. Accused of invading private property, he replies, “Nosotros no hemos invadido nada. Otros nos invaden...”<sup>100</sup> Fortunato cannot complete his sentence because he is shot on the spot. The narration continues, but suddenly the reader understands that this is coming from the speaking dead. From this dialogue

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<sup>96</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 140.

<sup>97</sup> “What are you going to do alone Chacón? When something happens to you, who will watch over your children?” Scorza, *Redoble por Rancas*, 366.

<sup>98</sup> “If I die, I will die. If I live, I will live. That is my destiny.” Ibid., 366.

<sup>99</sup> “Today we fight all for all.” Ibid., 370.

<sup>100</sup> “We have not invaded anything. Others invade us.” Ibid., 372.

of the dead we learn that the *personero* died later the next day and the community was dispersed and burned. As in Neruda's mining poems we hear from different points of view, this time from the dead sharing the news of the destruction of their town: soldiers spray the houses with gasoline, the town burns violently, children try to defend the town but they are gunned down, the older people are also killed.<sup>101</sup>

On the surface, the end of *Redoble por Rancas* is not dissimilar to the story told in *Todas las sangres*: the invading extractive company successfully acquires the land by deed or violence and integrates it into processes of accumulation and supply chain. But the people of Rancas, unlike the people of San Pedro in *Todas las sangres*, decide to fight an impossible battle and defend their town. The community pays a high price for this: its leaders are killed on the spot and the town is burned down. But not all is lost. Scorza's use of magical realism allows him to depict a world where there is life after death; Scorza's narrator creates a reality that opens the possibility for a second round in the war against capital. We learn about the details of the massacre in Rancas from subterranean voices who keep each other company while narrating the events that happened "up there." In *Todas las sangres*, the denouement is different: everyone is expelled or killed, there is a sense of inevitability and resignation. In *Redoble por Rancas*, however, life continues after death. This recourse to another type of realism, a "magical" realism, allows Scorza's characters to reinvent and recompose themselves leaving an open door for the story of the town of Rancas to continue in other volumes.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 375.

## 5.8 End and Revenge

The novel ends in defeat. The hero, Chacón, is captured, despite all his visionary “powers” and the assistance of others. Yet the town resists by itself. The judge is never mentioned again, apparently getting his way. But in an unusual and marvelous overlap of fact and fiction, history brings justice to the injustices left unresolved in the novel. The obsession of avenging Judge Montenegro depicted in fiction spills over to the realm of the real registered in the paratexts. The epilogue of *Redoble por Rancas* tells us in a very journalistic voice that in July of 1983, Judge Montenegro’s wife, Pepita Montenegro, “Fue secuestrada de su hacienda ‘Huarautambo’ por combatientes de Sendero Luminoso. Fue ejecutada luego en la plaza pública de Yanahuanca donde transcurren *Redoble por Rancas* y todos los volúmenes de la ‘Guerra silenciosa.’”<sup>102</sup>

The epilogue here functions as a segue between the fictionalized violence and the denouement of historically factual violence that takes place in the Andes against characters denounced in the novel, such as the judge and his wife. The next text discussed in this chapter, *Lituma en los Andes*, picks up this crescendo of violence and fictionalizes it again effectively, subsuming it into a narrative plot but allowing it to live beyond political history. Vargas Llosa’s text fictionalizes real events of violence perpetrated by Sendero Luminoso similar to those noted at the end of *Redoble por Rancas* shortly before Scorza’s own death in 1983.

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<sup>102</sup> Pepita Montenegro “was kidnapped from her hacienda ‘Huarautambo’ by combatants of the group Sendero Luminoso [Shining Path] and later executed in the public square of the town of Yanahuanca, the place where the plot of *Redoble por Rancas* and all five volumes of the ‘Silent War’ takes place.” Ibid., 378. In the novel she is depicted as her husband’s accomplice in abuse and an associate in legal maneuvers required to justify the increase of her property.



## 5.9 Miners and Terrorists in *Lituma en los Andes*

Mario Vargas Llosa's *Lituma en los Andes* is a story of fear and revenge in the central Andes during the height of Peru's civil strife materialized in the emergence of the Marxist-Maoist group Sendero Luminoso.<sup>103</sup> The text offers new perspectives to mining literature by including the guerrilla group as a political actor perhaps marginal to the logic of mineral extraction but not entirely external to it. The reader also encounters the agency of spirits and deities described not through folklore or magical realism, but rather through a realist voice vis-à-vis the affects produced by these spiritual bodies, the supposed action of *apus* (mountain gods), *huaycos* (mudslides), *Pishtacos* (fat-eating boogeymen) and other Andean cultural formations that Vargas Llosa presents as intriguing but perverse and at times barbaric elements of the vernacular. Formally, *Lituma en los Andes* is narrated in realist terms without the semantic surplus characteristic of Scorza (combining and subverting journalism, historical essay, chronicle) or the lengthy and somewhat artificial interventions of Arguedas's characters in *Todas las sangres*.

The narrative's main thread follows the story of corporal Lituma and his adjutant Tomás Carreño, who are posted to the remote mining camp of Naccos and tasked with investigating the disappearance of three men over the previous month. In the main plot, we follow the story of the skeptical Lituma—a recurring character from Vargas Llosa's *La casa verde* (1966) and *¿Quién mató a Palomino Molero?* (1996)—as he tries to find the reason behind these crimes. The second thread describes the relentless attacks of Sendero Luminoso against foreigners, the state, merchants and international capital, alternating with the life story of the local canteen owners, Adriana and her husband Dionisio who, in their interactions with Lituma, allow us to see how the former's

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<sup>103</sup> *Lituma en los Andes* was translated into English and published as *Death in the Andes* in 1993.

reason clashes with indigenous belief systems. The third thread is based on conversations between Carreño and Lituma about the former's falling for a cabaret dancer in an Amazonian town and their adventures together after Carreño foolishly shot dead the drug lord he was charged to protect.

Some critics have conceptualized Lituma as a detective.<sup>104</sup> I disagree with this reading mainly because it implies an equivalence with Vargas Llosa himself as a detective. A detective is a subject set on searching the field for clues to solve a case, usually a crime. However, this subject rarely expands the scope of his or her investigation to include factors located in other temporalities and other realms. I will expand on this issue in the concluding section of the discussion. For now, I propose that a better analytical focus for understanding Lituma is thinking of the corporal as a geologist. I favor the figure of the geologist over the detective because the former thinks vertically, navigating through layers of crystallized sediment which is the past itself, time collapsed into space, to locate a specific event in the long temporalities considered. The latter, however, usually confines herself to the present or the relatively recent past, thinking and piecing together horizontally. The geologist encounters all sorts of obstacles: erasures, fragments, intensities, and irregular bodies, all objects that prevent easy resolution. The story of Lituma is then the story of these encounters.

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<sup>104</sup> Gareth Williams, *The Other Side of the Popular: Neoliberalism and Subalternity in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 241. Deborah Cohn, "The Political Novels: *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta* and *Death in the Andes*." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mario Vargas Llosa*, Ed. Efraín Kristal, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 93. Ignacio López-Calvo, "Going Native. Anti-Indigenism in Vargas Llosa's *The Storyteller* and *Death in the Andes*." In *Vargas Llosa and Latin American Politics*. Ed. Juan E De Castro and Nicholas Birns (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 121.

## 5.10 An Absent Mine Again

In the text little attention is invested in describing the mine itself. We never know what kind of mineral is extracted and why. Or for that matter, who will buy the ores produced and where they are employed. Vargas Llosa's narrator describes the camp, the threat of the terrorist units of Sendero Luminoso, and other subplots that allow us to understand life in the Andes focusing on the tension between Andean worlds and urban coastal ones, but the mine and the miner are absent in the present. As in *Todas las sangres* and *Redoble por Rancas*, however, the reader hears about a mining boom that occurred in an unspecified time "before," but the general sense is that mining has seen better days and is now but a shadow of itself: "Decían que Naccos había sido un pujante pueblo minero alguna vez. Ahora no existiría sin los trabajos de la carretera."<sup>105</sup>

Mining never quite comes to the fore of the narration: perhaps it is located beneath the level of consciousness, acting only as a backdrop or physical setting, but at the same time it is something more than that. In Naccos, the old mine is abandoned, but not entirely since now it acts as a channel to the mother earth, the receiver of sacrificed offerings to appease its appetite. The mine serves as a dump for the bodies of the three murdered/sacrificed men who Lituma is investigating. It is in the abandoned mouth of the mine where Dionisio reveals to Lituma that three bodies rest at the bottom of the shaft and warns him against searching there: "Al menor paso en falso se viene el derrumbe. Además, los túneles estan llenos de gases. Sí, ahí deben estar en ese laberinto, si no se los comió el muki."<sup>106</sup> The mine has come to signify murder, pestilence, and

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<sup>105</sup> Mario Vargas Llosa, *Lituma en los Andes* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 2010), 37. "They said that Naccos had once been a thriving mining town. Now it would not exist without road works."

<sup>106</sup> "At the slightest false step the mine can collapse. Plus, there re toxic gases there. Yes, they should be there if the Muki did not already eat them." Vargas Llosa, *Lituma en los Andes*, 101.

imminent danger. It has morphed from a site of exploitation where life was continuously under threat, but dialectically fostered the first block-units of constituent power to produce social change and even revolution, to a forgotten and dangerous place beyond the threshold of reason, and the depository of the miners' worst projections: accidental death or revenge at the hands of an angered demon. Vargas Llosa's narrator is unsympathetic to these beliefs and the practices they structure since they stand for the "outside of Creole state reason, law and morality."<sup>107</sup> For the narrator, the Andes are characterized by a spirit of transgression that threatens the nation on two fronts. The first threat is embodied by Dionisio and Adriana's perverse, barbaric enjoyment condemned by Lituma who suspects they engage in orgiastic homosexual excesses inspired by superstition. The second is of course Sendero, which is portrayed as a group of misguided young Indians-turned-terrorists exerting violence against representatives of the state and civilization: local officials, a couple of French students, a Belgian ecologist, and of course international capital.

But for all of Vargas Llosa's best efforts, the mine cannot be abandoned completely by his narrator since it symbolizes the resources for which Sendero's combatants allegedly fight; namely, the use of the mineral ores, but more importantly the storage of their primary weapon, dynamite. There is a struggle for sovereignty over resources with the aim of ending the rampant "régimen capitalista feudal, sostenido por el imperialismo norteamericano y el revisionismo soviético."<sup>108</sup> Although the narrative never adopts the Senderista point of view, it allows us to link the Senderista struggle with the affects that emanate from the disavowed mineral and their value configured as a substance of economic and explosive capabilities worth fighting for.

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<sup>107</sup> Williams, *The Other Side of the Popular*, 242.

<sup>108</sup> "The feudal-capitalist system supported by North American imperialism and Soviet revisionism." Vargas Llosa, *Lituma en los Andes*, 79.

## 5.11 Tables Turned

If suffering was the affective narrative convention employed by previous mining writers, in *Redoble por Rancas*—and most clearly in *Lituma en los Andes*—fear constitutes the primary affect inscribed into the general atmosphere. This is clear from Lituma's inner monologue: "Le arrancarían las manos y la cabeza y las piernas al mismo tiempo. Descuartizado como Túpac Amaru, compadre. Ocurriría en cualquier momento, tal vez esta noche."<sup>109</sup> Fear is not so much experienced by the miners but by Lituma (and consequently the reader), who is in the dark about these disappearances. As the representative of an incompetent and almost absent state on the frontier, Lituma is caught at the interface between the impossibility of resolving these disappearances by employing deductive reasoning and the rumors of Sendero Luminoso's extreme rationality becoming pure madness as expressed in images of brutal executions. This conjunction of affective forces become internalized in Lituma's body in the form of an unbearable anxiety: "Nos tienen cercados. Para qué engañarnos."<sup>110</sup> And one can hardly blame Lituma. The policemen are indeed entirely vulnerable to an attack by Sendero. Literary critic Deborah Cohn argues that the narration makes it clear that while Lituma and Carreño "ostensibly represent official Peruvian authority, frequent Sendero attacks leave them with little doubt as to who truly controls the region."<sup>111</sup> The state's representatives know that the Peruvian state's claim for sovereignty in Naccos is empty and that the war being waged by Sendero is precisely about securing a sovereign

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<sup>109</sup> "They would tear off his hands and head and legs at the same time. Dismembered like Túpac Amaru, *compadre*. It would happen at any time, maybe tonight." Ibid., 35.

<sup>110</sup> "We're surrounded. Why deceive ourselves." Ibid., 14.

<sup>111</sup> Cohn, "The Political Novels," 93.

territory, in other words, deterritorializing the central Andes only to reterritorialize them again under a new set of values and inhabited by a new political subject.<sup>112</sup>

Sendero is a haunting, spectral presence because it never appears in Naccos and is always portrayed as playing with invisibility, the power of rumor, never settling, always in movement, making it impossible to detect. This continuous menace of an implacable terrorist band roaming the surrounding mountains that might arrive any time and kill many is what keeps the hapless Lituma and mine technicians and engineers up at night. “No tengo ganas de jugar al héroe y menos por una mina que pierde plata. Lo cierto es que anoche me cagué de miedo.”<sup>113</sup> Lituma is not the only new victim: the tables have also turned for the representatives of capital as well. Fear is also felt by the managers of a nearby mining site, La Esperanza, which was assaulted by the *terrucos* (Sendero terrorists). We hear from the mine’s security guard, “Mataron a uno de mis hombres e hirieron a otro. Se llevaron los explosivos, la plata de la planilla y mil cosas más.”<sup>114</sup> Lituma is asked to visit La Esperanza to file a formal report. Once he is there we hear how the two engineers from Lima and a visiting Danish anthropologist managed to escape Sendero by hiding in the nearby water tanks aided by the miners’ silence. The same guard tells Lituma: “La suerte es que los ingenieros pudieron esconderse. Y también un gringo amigo de ellos que anda allá de visita. Se subieron a los depósitos de agua. Si los encuentran, ya estarían fríos. Ingenieros, administradores

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<sup>112</sup> The state is no longer the sovereign in Peru. But it was never sovereign in the Bolivian and Chilean narratives that documented the case of the multinational corporation securing a piece of territory and circulating its own currency, and adjudicating justice as it saw fit: in a few words, ordering the flow of bodies as to synchronize it with an uninterrupted mineral flow for export. In those cases, sovereignty was disavowed by a weak state and yielded to powerful companies backed by superpowers of the time, Great Britain or the United States. Novels like *Hijo del salitre* in Chile and *El precio del estaño* in Bolivia analyze these social dynamics.

<sup>113</sup> “I do not feel like playing the hero, and less for a mine that loses money. The truth is that last night I shit myself with fear.” *Lituma en los Andes*, 179.

<sup>114</sup> “They killed one of my men and wounded another. They took the explosives, the money from the payroll and a thousand other things.” *Lituma en los Andes*, 146.

y ejecutivos nunca se libran. Y menos los extranjeros, por supuesto.”<sup>115</sup> What is unfolding in the text is a new affective landscape that reflects the degree to which the thread of violence has shifted in favor of the former victimized subaltern. *Lituma en los Andes*, as well as *Redoble por Rancas*, registers an inversion of affects. The burden of terror has been overturned and now the subjects under siege are those who have traditionally been the oppressors. In other words, the actors who formerly terrorized the miners on accounts of increased productivity and work discipline find themselves under a constant threat of terror. These narratives are not so much concerned with the individual exploitation of the miner, but with the changes that a line of flight (Anto, Héctor Chacón, Sendero Luminoso) have brought to Andean social habits: the disruptive alteration of life rhythms by waging a mineral war through the use of shock as a weapon, and the management of (in)visibility.

Peruvian mining literature is characterized by intense repression and a reciprocally violent explosion of counter-repression that takes varied forms. In *Lituma en los Andes*, the narrator places the Maoist terrorist group Sendero Luminoso as a variant of this line of violence that disrupts patterns of exploitation, the illusion of national sovereignty and values of the market. But also, and this has been ignored by historical accounts, Sendero is out to install a new economy of minerals and dynamite.<sup>116</sup> Their goal is ostensibly to “bring justice” to oppressed and forgotten communities of the Andes, but their method is based on a careful administration of violence: they use rocks not

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<sup>115</sup> “Luckily the engineers were able to hide. And also a gringo friend of them who was visiting. They went up to the water tanks. If they find them, they’d be cold. Engineers, administrators and executives never walk away. Much less any of the foreigners, of course.” *Lituma en los Andes*, 148.

<sup>116</sup> Classic accounts of the social movement such as Gorriti’s *The Shining Path A History of the Millenarian War in Peru* or Carlos Ivan Degregori’s *El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso* exhaustively chronicle the emergence and decline of the movement, but bypass the contradictory and complementary association of minerals and dynamite as a primary activity for Capitalism’s logic of accumulation as well as a critical one to Sendero’s task of forging a new social order in the Andes.

bullets for their executions, they search for the mine's stock of dynamite and use it carefully and moderately since they are aware of its potential for future attacks.<sup>117</sup> Their mission is to bring justice, but their methods are nothing but mineral: stones, dynamite are weapons against the state and perceived enemies, and their asymmetrical war takes the miners' struggle against exploitation to a higher and more aggressive plane.<sup>118</sup>

This is a miner's struggle, but it has expanded to include other constituencies and targets where the miner does not directly enact his own revenge. Sendero takes up this fight in the miners' name. Although concession or approval is never explicit, the miner is configured as one of the few subjects to remain practically untouched by violence: the guard at La Esperanza says, "a los trabajadores no les hacen nada."<sup>119</sup> And Lituma speculates: "Había muchos aliados de los terroristas en el campamento sin ninguna duda."<sup>120</sup> When Sendero arrives at La Esperanza to obtain goods, forcing the engineers to run in the dark and hide in water tanks, we observe a sort of reversal of tyranny. Previous villains now become victims. Sendero is the purveyor of a new line of revenge shifting the entire landscape of debt and punishment in the Andes. Authority is under siege and the roles are now reversed. What began in *Redoble por Rancas* as a rejection of submission and an active posture against accumulation now reaches its peak when the mining industry is attacked by Sendero's terror machine.

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<sup>117</sup> Gustavo Gorriti, *The Shining Path: A History of the Millenarian War in Peru*, trans. Robin Kirk (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 63.

<sup>118</sup> This is similar to the characters of Chilean Baldomero Lillo's stories—published almost a century before—who turned their material means of subjugation, dynamite, into a weapon against their oppressors. The story "El grisú," included in *Subterra* (1907), describes a miner taking revenge for his mistreatment using the tool of extraction, dynamite. The concluding sentence expresses much of the spirit of revenge: "Aquel muerto seguía gravitando sobre ellos como una montaña en la cual la humanidad y los siglos habían amontonado soberbia, egoísmo y ferocidad." ("That dead man continued to gravitate upon them like a mountain on which humanity and the centuries had piled arrogance, selfishness and ferocity.") "El grisú," in *Subterra* (Santiago: Origo Ediciones, 2012), 62.

<sup>119</sup> "They don't do anything against the workers." Vargas Llosa, *Lituma en los Andes*, 148.

<sup>120</sup> "No doubt there were many allies of the terrorists in the camp" Ibid., 104.



Perhaps this excess of violence constitutes a sort of revenge for the abuses inflicted on miners vividly documented in previous literary accounts.<sup>121</sup> The threat of terror that falls on administrators is an adjudication of messianic justice that never arrived for the miners described in Bolivian or Chilean narratives. In Bolivia, justice is symbolically expressed with the coming of the revolution and the nationalization of the tin industry; in Chile, we can interpret a metaphoric justice in the shocking poems-assemblages crafted by Pablo Neruda and in the coming to power of a socialist-popular political force, the Popular Unity under Salvador Allende, which planned but failed to implement concrete measures of economic justice. In the Peruvian case, justice is punitive and concrete. Sendero “brings justice” to the mining camp administrators whose occupation had hitherto consisted in managing exploitation and visiting abuse on destitute miners. In each case, mining literature agitates for some type of restoration or reparation, but this carrying out of justice and adjudicating reparations occurs differently. If in Peruvian mining literature the miner was depicted as a victim as in César Vallejo’s *El tungsteno* (1931), now he becomes empowered not by his own class consciousness and union organizing but by the actions of the Maoist guerrillas.

This is not to say that the novel is an apology for Sendero’s goals and means. On the contrary, *Lituma en los Andes* depicts the group as a brutal and barbaric entity silently roaming the area administering brutal forms of violence. Nevertheless, Sendero’s actions can be read as a line of flight carrying out this retributive justice. A variant of the line of escape, following the same operation of deterritorialization of affect and bodies, was earlier mapped by Arguedas in the sudden and final act of resistance performed by Anto the former servant of the Aragón family in

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<sup>121</sup> In Peru, this is documented in *El tungsteno*. In Bolivia, in *Metal del diablo*, *Socavones de angustia* and *El precio del estaño*.

*Todas las sangres*. Realizing that he is under siege by the trucks and equipment of the Wisther-Bozart, in an erratic line of revenge, Anto blows himself up using dynamite from the mine to destroy the machinery intended to raze his house located in the cornfields of Bruno's hacienda. Generally, in Peruvian mining narratives, discourse seems to have lost its potential as mediator in an illusion of communicative democracy opening the case for the need to find new methods and instruments. The weapon employed in these new tactics of deterritorialization is the humble but explosive dynamite.

The explosive elements employed in any mine are key in setting rebellion or civil war: cases of social explosion. Miner, dynamite, and fuse are part of the assemblage needed to extract mineral in Latin America for many decades: both, dynamite and miner, are highly explosive with indeterminate detonating power. This power can be directed inwards and underground to blow up mountains from below and create passages, channels, tunnels and galleries. It can also be redirected outward to modify the existing habits and rhythms of the social, to reorder human and non-human bodies. Dynamite, the miner's main tool, has the potential of explosion but historically it has subjected him to a never-ending routine of brutal work and abuse. At times, however, dynamite can become an instrument for liberation, as we hear in the Bolivian literary account of the Catavi massacre, *El precio del estaño*. In *Lituma en los Andes* we learn that Sendero Luminoso deterritorializes this assemblage to use one of its components, dynamite, to "free Andean bodies from bondage and subjection."<sup>122</sup> Dynamite—usually associated with the spectacular and hypervisibility—is actually a subterranean weapon par excellence. Dynamite was key for Sendero

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<sup>122</sup> Gorriti, *The Shining Path* 63, 109.

Luminoso and it was perhaps its most destructive weapon. Stolen dynamite from countless mining camps thus lubricate the cogs of Sendero's war machine.<sup>123</sup>

Dynamite is mobilized by the line of flight that was Sendero Luminoso, quietly, invisibly, just as it was used and moved around by miners. It is malleable, it is low-key, it is plastic in the broader sense of the word, thus unlike conventional weapons such as handguns it flows causing less friction in the complex geography of Peru. Under capitalism the command is simple: to connect flows of labor and capital and extract a surplus from that connection. What Sendero does with the explosive is to interrupt such connecting nodes to reterritorialize the flows in order to attack capital, thus inverting the explosive power of dynamite to redirect it against the global war machine of accumulation.

## 5.12 From Detective to Geologist

The novel's resolution is disappointing: we never learn what happens to Lituma after he discovers that the three murdered men were actually killed by the locals of Naccos acting under heavy intoxication, and encouraged by Dionisio and Adriana, in a ritual to placate the gods and to keep the road works going on. We learn perhaps too much about the lives of these two characters, prior to their arrival to Naccos, at the expense of more insight into the mind of the Sendero Luminoso commandos who disappear as mysteriously as they first appeared.

Stepping back from the narrative it is important to remember the historical context in which Vargas Llosa wrote *Lituma en los Andes* and specifically his involvement, a few years before the publication of the novel, heading the Investigatory Commission formed to inquire into the

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 71.

Uchuraccay massacre. On January 26, 1983, villagers of the isolated community of Uchuraccay violently killed eight investigative journalists and their guide who were reporting on the first public and terrorist actions committed by Sendero Luminoso in Ayacucho. According to the Commission the locals mistook the journalists for members of the terrorist group and in an act of preventive defense proceeded to execute them. The final report recommended the responsible villagers to be put on trial for the murders.<sup>124</sup> More problematically for our purposes, is the fact that the Commission also insisted on “cultural” arguments to explain the causes of the killings emphasizing an alleged innate disposition of peasants to violence for being still pre-modern subjects living in isolation since pre-Hispanic times.<sup>125</sup> Undoubtedly, the experiences of Vargas Llosa during his appointment to the Commission examining the reasons behind this senseless massacre influenced his views of the political and cultural order of the Andes, and later the portrayal of Andean peoples in his literary creation specifically his novels published after the commission was concluded *¿Quién mató a Palomino Molero?* (1986) and *Lituma en los Andes* published in 1993.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> For a detailed chronology of the Investigative Commission and its critics see, Micha Kokotovic, *The Colonial Divide in Peruvian Narrative: Social Conflict and Transculturation*, (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 170.

<sup>125</sup> Cecilia Méndez, *The Plebeian Republic: The Huanta Rebellion and the Making of the Peruvian State, 1820–1850*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>126</sup> *Lituma en los Andes* (*Death in the Andes*), *La guerra del fin del mundo* (*The War of the End of the World*, 1981), and *Historia de Mayta* (*The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta*, 1984) reveal a change in the author’s political perspective. In his early years of literary production Vargas Llosa adhered to the Sartrean dictum of an engaged writer whose duty is “to transform the world through criticism, dissent and opposition to power and oppression.” See Mario Vargas Llosa, *Making Waves*, trans. John King, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1996), 72. After his break with Castro’s Cuba and the Latin American left, Vargas Llosa began to redefine the core values of his political and fiction writing: a strong defense of freedom framed by a sense of moral indignation whenever civil liberties are curtailed. His political shift was marked by readings of political thinkers such as Karl Popper and Isaiah Berlin, who prized individual liberties over the purported goals of equality of socialism as perceived and practiced in their time. His volume of political articles and newspaper columns *Contra viento y marea* (1983, 1986, 1990) draws on his reading of Berlin’s *Against the Current* and allowed Vargas Llosa to form a political philosophy characterized by support for a liberal democracy which could guarantee free speech and freedoms of expression in addition to pragmatic solutions to the contradictions inherent to democracy such as equality, freedom, justice, rejecting the notion of ideals (an ideal society or an ideal human behavior) as guiding principles. For an assessment of Vargas Llosa’s political trajectory see John King’s essay in *The Cambridge Companion to Mario Vargas Llosa*.

As mentioned previously various critics have interpreted Lituma as the detective of Naccos, and by the same logic Vargas Llosa could be equated as the literary detective of Peru.<sup>127</sup> But after examining his polarizing and less than generous conclusions about Andean cultural space, I would argue that Vargas Llosa investigative task would benefit from a geological perspective. The text can be read as a critique of what Vargas Llosa perceives as the Andean spirit of transgression expressed, as we argued earlier, in two apocalyptic forms. He equates the “primitive” practices of the Andean inhabitants as the reason why Peru has not developed: Lituma fails time and again to understand how could there be, in the time of modernity, in the late-twentieth century, individuals who still believe and practice these barbaric rituals of murder and sacrifice.<sup>128</sup> His frustration is Vargas Llosa’s frustration with the underdevelopment of his country.<sup>129</sup> The second is the emergence of Sendero Luminoso, which is depicted as a band of cruel young conscripts who appear to have taken reason to its limit and become an irrational machine of (self) annihilation. For Vargas Llosa then, the primary question is not the danger posed by modern development to Andean culture (as it was for authors of the previous two texts discussed), but the danger posed by Andean irrationality to “the postcolonial Creole notion of the city as progress, of the nation as universal singularity, and of self-government as the foundation of a morally grounded national culture.”<sup>130</sup>

What Vargas Llosa does not seem to acknowledge is the shared origin and long temporalities of the two apocalyptic forces that spring from the Andes and threaten to engulf Lima

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<sup>127</sup> See footnote 112.

<sup>128</sup> Vargas Llosa, *Lituma en los Andes*, 189, 204.

<sup>129</sup> See John King, “The Essays” In *The Cambridge Companion to Mario Vargas Llosa*, Ed. Efraín Kristal, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 156.

<sup>130</sup> Williams, *The Other Side*, 245.

(read: civilization), the Andean netherworld characterized by a barbaric, ecstatic, superstitious indigenous logic and the ultra-violent, ultra-rational alternative embodied in Sendero Luminoso. Throughout the text, Vargas Llosa's narrator contrasts Lituma's reason—the legitimate Creole state reason—as one that needs to contain and extinguish the native Andean primitive embodied in the subjectivity of Dionisio and Adriana, but refuses to acknowledge that violence is structural. In other words, Sendero Luminoso did not inaugurate violence in Peru, nor did the highland peoples in their ritual practices and festivals that seem to scandalize the narrator. Rather, the two “monsters” that haunt Lituma (as well as Vargas Llosa personally, especially after he was appointed to head the investigative commission of the Uchuraccay massacre) are but the result of a long history of oppression in the Andes, first at the hands of Spanish colonial rule and later in the republican period by the all-powerful *hacienda* owners in complicity with local representatives of the state.

We should recall that Lituma fails to resolve the mystery of the murders by himself supported only by his detective reasoning based on motives and intentions. It is only after he receives some perspective into the long temporalities immanent to Andean cultural practices by the visiting Danish anthropologist Paul Stirrison that things begin to make sense for him. The professor provides Vargas Llosa's protagonist with information on local beliefs necessary to identify the culprits of the murders that Lituma has been investigating.<sup>131</sup> Only an anthropologist or a historian, someone equipped with knowledge about the layers of violence that sediment under long periods and is attentive to its subsisting forces or impulses can solve this case. The task

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<sup>131</sup> I agree with literary critic Deborah Cohn who argues that Stirrison's insight helps Lituma unlock the mystery of the murders although she does not employ the language or the term “geology/geologist” when conceptualizing Lituma's epistemological impasse in solving the murders.

requires a geologist of violence and not a prejudiced writer alien and ignorant of Andean cultural and political continuities and ruptures over centuries. After all, it seems that Vargas Llosa purposefully ignores this stratum in the geology of national violence in favor of an explanation based on present and material evidence.

By equating reason, progress, transparency, development with the Creole Spanish heritage of Lima, and portraying the Andes as a space located beyond the limits of state law and intelligibility, “as the apocalyptical horizon of epistemological breakdown that undermines modernity the nation, the state and civilization,”<sup>132</sup> Vargas Llosa is occluding and disavowing the possibility of truly understanding the root causes of the same problems he so eloquently but misinformedly raises. If the telos of the narrative project is to move past the simplistic reductions that characterize the text, then Vargas Llosa’s narrator would benefit from understanding in totality and *causally* the accumulated layers of violence that constitute Peru’s sedimentary history of domination and abandonment, or, following cultural theorist Mark Fisher, understand that “effect needs to be connected to structural cause.”<sup>133</sup> Vargas Llosa’s detective fails to see that Peru’s problems are larger and stretch far beyond Sendero’s actions mainly because, unlike a geologist, he is not able to evaluate the subterranean forces that run throughout Peru’s historical geology of extraction and the repression needed to enable the former.

Whereas José María Arguedas, and to an extent Manuel Scorza in his own baroque way, performed a genealogy/geology of the nature, causes, and symptoms of social violence in the Andes to ground their aesthetic politics—disinterring as it were, long and short temporalities of

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<sup>132</sup> Williams, *The Other Side*, 243.

<sup>133</sup> Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (London: Zero Books, 2009), 77.

accumulated vestiges of social dynamics, practices of exchange, cohesion, exploitation and theft—, Vargas Llosa's text simply rehearses an exotification and fetishism of an alleged threshold of intelligibility in the simplified and crude coastal/Andean dualism that structures his representation.<sup>134</sup> This gesture not only reinforces the predominant and shortsighted patterns of thinking about Peru, but neutralizes any subversive potentiality of the form employed (the novel) leaving untouched the apparatus of material domination that has operated in Peru ever since the Europeans' arrival.

### 5.13 Conclusions

This chapter discussed how Peruvian mining literature mapped lines of deterritorialization and escape as they materialized into lines of flight. These emerged through the actualization of associations among bodies that were only implicitly releasing new possibilities in the capacity of those bodies to act and respond. Bodies became part of new assemblages that produced new effects on reality: recall the liberation of the real Héctor Chacón (the *comunero* about whom the protagonist of the novel is based), or the Land Reform signed in Rancas, Peru in 1977.<sup>135</sup> These lines did not emerge in a vacuum, but formed reacting to the imposition of a horizon dominated by the global war machine of capital accumulation and a perceived homogenization in the Andes. *Todas las sangres*, *Redoble por Rancas*, and *Lituma en los Andes* all reveal a preoccupation with these multilayered and multi-temporal processes as they become reflected in Andean subjectivities.

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<sup>134</sup> For a discussion about Vargas Llosa's conceptualization of Peru's cultural duality, see Deborah Cohn, "'Regreso a La Barbarie': Intertextual Paradigms for Peru's Descent into Chaos in *Lituma en los Andes*." *Latin American Literary Review*, Vol. 28, No. 55 (Jan. - Jun., 2000), 29.

<sup>135</sup> Frogues, *La estrategia mítica de Manuel Scorza*, 152.



In addition to mapping flights and escapes, these works adopt a different angle of analysis which departs from focusing primarily on the hardship of the individual miner to carefully mapping the consequences of modernization on Andean life and cultures. They register the emergence of a repertoire of mechanisms of resistance devised to counter and defer the effects of these external forces. This gesture allows us to understand that mining literature's concerns extend far beyond the phenomenology of the miner as a victim, or the affective surplus of gold and tin prospectors—two dominant conventions in the corpus. Rather, it is attentive to other less documented phenomena. *Todas las sangres* and *Redoble por Rancas* register processes that unfold in longer temporalities, perhaps non-anthropocentric temporalities such as the “life” of rocks, their fluidity as they move in and out of human bodies (cf. Esteban in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*), and their capacity to affects humans in their sometimes frantic pursue; José María Arguedas's work before and after *Todas las sangres* performs an inquiry into the molecular scales of movement in the rock and the mineral encountered by his protagonists.

Mining literature's concerns are also effectively expressed through other literary genres such as the detective novel where author Mario Vargas Llosa allows us to rethink the figure of the detective as a geologist, a specialist in long temporalities, in layers of history and the effects of time and pressure on human and mineral bodies. Peruvian mining texts discussed here expand their angle of investigation but also their methods and styles of conducting research into their literary and historical referents: they depart from a dominant modality of narrating prevalent in earlier accounts and mainly based on social realist conventions and positivist/naturalist outlooks to explore the possibilities of magical realism, indigenist writing and crime fiction. In other words, they remind us that mining literature is more than stories about miners and their individual and collective experiences, but an elastic set of narratives, ideas, affects, bodies and flows that form

heterogeneous and larger constellations. As these bodies become constellations increasingly expanding their reach and their action they allow us to understand mining literature under a wider definition and to better assess its potentiality as a machine that affects and is affected by material reality.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions: Other Scales

### 6.1 Temporalities

Our analysis of Peruvian mining literature reveals the long temporalities of constituent processes and layers of violence as they appear in literature. Shaped by this common history, Héctor Chacón and Corporal Lituma, the protagonists of *Redoble por Rancas* and *Lituma en los Andes* respectively, share more than we might suspect. Clearly, neither of the two is a miner, but both are formed by the long-term consequences of mining. Chacón is a victim of the accumulation by war deployed by the Cerro de Pasco Corporation, while Lituma is under siege from the demons of mining. Here, I mean demons in two senses. In the first place, he becomes entangled in a world of haunting deities, the Muki, for example, the mining demon equivalent to the Bolivian tío; a spirit constituted under the conditions of exploitation produced by capitalist accumulation first established by the Spanish in the sixteenth century. We hear that the Muki only kills miners, but the thought of it alone unsettles Lituma especially in the context of the disappearances he is investigating and his role as detective to find the reason behind this crime. The second demon of the mine is not supernatural, but the very real threat embodied in the spectral appearance of Sendero Luminoso. Lituma is never captured or tortured by the militants, but his body becomes the site of extreme anxiety caused by the anticipation of their arrival, by the fear of the unexpected. He is aware that the terrorists are getting closer, but more than serving as a defense mechanism this awareness sinks him deeper into the fear of perceiving his own approaching death.

It is over these long temporalities that mining, as practiced in the Andes, produced a world of systems of belief and exchange, “laws” and values embodied in the actions of deities and demons acting on Andean life. If mining were more recent—say, if mining proper had begun a

century or so ago—there would not have been time for these demons and deities to materialize and become synchronized with the logics of capital extraction, accumulation and degradation of all life. It is only due to the long temporality of the hyperobject mining in the Andes that these affective and metaphysical formations arise. More than five hundred years of uninterrupted extraction have molded the bodies and minds of miners as much as the miner has molded the body of the earth and its mineral deposits.

Lituma and Chacón are not miners, but both live with the consequences of centuries of mining; the shadow of the hyperobject is cast upon their every movement and on their very emplacement in the world. One cannot escape the forms of production in one day, especially if these have been operating for so long. And even if these forms are in decline, as in *Lituma en los Andes*, the ghosts unleashed by the hyperobject mining do not simply disappear overnight. This may be an indication that the protagonists and characters in Peruvian mining literature, and in Latin American literature in general, are more determined by inherited long-term material forms of extraction and production than previously assumed. These characters are not subjected to toil and suffering simply because they were born next to a mining camp. That would be economic determinism. Instead, in a place like Peru or Bolivia where mining took place for centuries before the conquest and has only intensified since then, expanding and morphing, something of this constellation of assemblages and flows must remain, not only materially in the land, in the physical infrastructure that underlines and conditions these processes, but also in the predisposition of those who were thrown into existence there. In other words, this constellation produces and is produced by the invisible habits of those who have lived and died immersed in the long temporality of a hyperobject such as mining, one that alters all types of life, human and non human, in pernicious if invisible ways that cannot be comprehended or addressed by politics or economics. The

hyperobject is marginal to Lituma's story according to the narrative, but a subterranean reading based on the phenomenology of centuries-long extraction reveals that it constitutes much of the material basis of modern-day Peru and even the metaphysical world that Peruvians inhabit.

Debates about extraction are often presented from a historical perspective, pitting exploited workers against capital without taking into consideration *longue durée* temporalities and the processes that unfold within these large rhythms. Punctual events like massacres and strikes are over-valued at the expense of longer trends and processes that could allow for alternative hypotheses. These accounts depict political violence against men and women who are represented as victims nobly struggling for their rights. My argument has been that mining literature bypasses this binarism to better comprehend the complex nature and history of mineral extraction in the region. What is at stake in these narratives is much more than capital accumulation and exploitation, but forces that have been ignored by scholars and critics such as the affects and becomings that are inscribed (if unacknowledged) by writers in their mining narratives. Often these narratives reveal instances of political violence. But violence does not happen in a vacuum or ahistorically, as some kind of metaphysical clash between Civilization and Barbarism. Rather, it marks an encounter of forces that have been formed and distorted over time, in processes that occur inside other processes on both molecular and macro scales where affective flows determine a measure of contingency in the encounter between human and matter, miner and mineral.

Adopting a perspective sensitive to longer temporalities means rethinking the scales used to conduct literary and social criticism, in order to better understand the nature of mineral bodies as they interact with human and non-human life. Understanding these interactions is a priority. I have therefore offered a materialist and hyperobjectual reading that not only reveals the long temporalities embedded in the life of the mineral and the bodies that encounter it, but also helps

us understand critically how the mineral's contact with human bodies and social flows forms new and sometimes quite unexpected assemblages. The mineral as represented in the texts discussed exceeds human apprehension, pushing us to analyze its effects beyond their local manifestations and challenging our assumptions of human mastery over things, inviting us to reconsider their importance in the literary and wider cultural canon.

## 6.2 Intensities

One aim of this dissertation has been to locate and analyze something that escaped earlier criticism, namely, the affective intensity inherent in the figures of the miner and mineral that prompted novelists and essayists to address the hyperobject mining and the potentialities of the mine assemblage. Take the case of *Todas las sangres*: in Arguedas's novel, the mineral's affect is so powerful that it underlies the entire plot, saturating it to the point that it cannot even come to the fore of Arguedas's literary consciousness. The mineral appears almost without appearing, but the stakes raised in the subsoil could not be any higher; the mineral ceases to be a simple commodity, becoming instead a symbol and precondition for Peru's hypothetical futures. Mining fiction allows us to see that a previously marginalized corpus such as the novel of the mine expresses and condenses more than previously thought. At the most basic level, the mineral is no longer mere commodity for the merchant or symbol of oppression for the miner, but becomes an affective matter laden with intensities that resonate with other bodies. What mining writers attempt to do is to search for the specificity of mining amid the universality of capitalist exploitation.

Gold resonates differently and perhaps more potently with prospectors than saltpeter from Chile. Yet the saltpeter flatlands in the north of Chile resonate with bodies their own way. The accounts by Teitelboim and others of the exodus of nitrate workers through the desert reveal that

the desert not only comes to signify a space defined by an absence of life but also has the potential to trigger the formation of a heterogeneous body that is a multitude. This multitude should not be overlooked, but rather interpreted as a movement towards non-conformism, rebellion and a set of affects and encounters that mark the birth of Chile's first unions and later the Communist Party of Chile. Therefore, the mineral cannot be ignored in conversations about the affective capacities of materiality in the field. A pile of mineral waste, for example, is not just a pile of mineral but the index of an entity of transdimensional qualities, a hyperobject extending its effects into every aspect of life. A pile of mineral is more than it looks or than is perceived by the senses; it is, in its potential, a trace of futurity inscribed in the present. Writers of mining literature, too closely attached to positivism and scientism, failed to see that mining was something of which we knew less than we thought we did.

Perhaps the storytellers of the time lacked the tools to craft an ecological or philosophical lexicon of events beyond those they inherited and those they coined themselves. But they could intuit, at a low intensity, something they could not quite put into words but that was nevertheless as palpable as the affects released by the hyperobject mining. These authors tried to put into words the strange qualities that these rock formations have on our moods and our subjectivity. The epitome of this mineral-induced euphoria is the gold fever that generates a buoyant feeling of a "free for all." In Chile it was gold and in Bolivia during the period studied it was tin, since for a period "tin was as valuable as gold."<sup>1</sup> And a tin fever is not much different from a gold fever or a rubber fever; they are all deliria of extraction. The encounter with the mineral or metal releases lines that modulate affective states turning audacity into avarice, economic relief into economic

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<sup>1</sup> Kendall W. Brown, *A History of Mining in Latin America: From the Colonial Era to the Present*, 124.

anxiety, or sanity and calculation into delirious behaviors. Mining literature, therefore, attempts to communicate through narrative what innumerable miners felt and attempted to convey orally as they sought to explain the uncanniness of a mine and all its subterranean qualities.

### 6.3 (In)visibility

Mining literature teaches us about the ambiguities of invisibility. On the one hand it challenges the conventional notion of the mine as a site of literal and metaphoric darkness and social stasis, by revealing a constellation of social formations and possibilities that are born in the tunnels and mining camps. On the other hand, it directs our attention to the impenetrability and contingency of the mineral vein's appearance and its invisibility as it rests in the subsoil. The mineral vein is rhizomatic and as such escapes attempts to capture it, continually hiding from our threshold of perception.

Traditionally, the mine has been seen as a site of reduced vision and incommunicability, a site marked by stagnation and senseless repetition. Mining literature reminds us that the darkness characteristic of the mine does not only mean obscurity, a sense of confusion or hopelessness; it can also be the condition necessary to imagine new political horizons.<sup>2</sup> In these texts, the mine is more than a mysterious otherworldly place, but the site from which social change can be thought and planned. Thus, mining literature challenges our assumptions about light and darkness, prompting a shift in how subjects rethink social arrangements and habits. In the Bolivian text *Socavones de angustia*, for example, miners inside the mine “see” things more clearly and decide

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<sup>2</sup> Bolivian literature is especially concerned with this issue. See Chapter 3, “New Voices and Strategies in Bolivian Mining Literature.”



to challenge habit and authority by organizing a strike to change their current material conditions.<sup>3</sup> Another Bolivian work, *El precio del estaño*, describes how miners not only also organize a strike from the subterranean space associated with invisibility and obstruction of the visual, but use this space to store dynamite to be deployed against the occupying military.

Revolutions, strikes and life-changing decisions are planned inside the mine galleries. It is here that fluidity, becoming and regrouping first unfold. Clearly, mining sites are also spaces where hierarchical forms of power and organization are implemented; there is no need to idealize or romanticize the mine. Processes of capitalist accumulation are as hard and devastating on the bodies of those working here as they are on the *caucheros* vividly depicted in *La vorágine* (1924) by José Eustasio Rivera, or on the factory workers depicted in Victorian English literature. But, unlike the factory where panoptical surveillance was applied to docile bodies, working in the mines allowed for the possibility of utilizing invisibility where physical control over bodies was more difficult to enforce. The mine tunnels thus constitute safe spaces or islands of protection that conjugate the invisibility and remoteness required to escape the surveillance regime and plan alternative societies.

While writers claim that miners can see things anew from below, the mineral itself retains a measure of invisibility. The rhizomatic vein becomes part of the hyperobject mining, taking those who venture inside to unexpected places and forcing a shift of perspective with often unpredictable results. Mining literature explores the impenetrability of matter but at the same time presents a window through which the reader is able to apprehend the physical and social dynamics of the encounter between mineral and humans, and the resulting assemblages formed afterwards.

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<sup>3</sup> Fernando Ramírez Velarde, *Socavones de angustia*, (La Paz: Editorial GUM), 130.

Hitherto few novels have expanded our understanding of the Latin American subsoil, not as a “natural” environment but as a site produced and producer of global accumulation.

Studying the literature of mining opens up the opportunity to detect regimes of invisibility that have remained hidden from writers and critics alike. Critical literature about this corpus is marked by a sense of incompleteness and mostly focuses on dissecting visible phenomena: the miner’s exploitation, the recurring episodes of state violence, the economic and symbolic importance of creating a national identity, etc. But the telos of this critique is guided by a deep anthropocentrism and blinded by an analytical loyalty to the visible, the manifest and presence. One of the contributions of my study is to make “visible” some registers and gestures that have remained hidden from fiction writers and obscured by the secondary literature.

#### **6.4 From Hyper Space to Molecular Space**

I have held that mining as a hyperobject cannot be pinpointed to a locality, because it is massively distributed in time and space. In order to apprehend “mining,” one must not only look at mines, ores, and waste but also at companies, trade balances, salt flatlands, sledgehammers, carnivals, prostitutes and boomtowns, all objects floating and clashing with each other in the realm of literary imagination. This analytical focus invites us to conceptualize them as indices or parts of a larger entity spanning long temporalities and hyperspaces, rather than as isolated features of human activity. From La Paz to Paris, or from New York to the Atacama, the hyperobject mining defies our assumptions about the mineral, writing and territorialities.

Mining cannot be reduced to the mining camp. It exists in a non-location, at a vast unquantifiable, unmeasurable, space that encompasses mineral veins running across countries, as well as the private bodies of miners themselves. History and literature confirm the pervasiveness

of the mineral at every scale. Let us recall the consternation experienced by characters in Bolivian literature once they realize that the mineral is not only a constitutive part of Bolivia as a country but part of their human bodies as dust penetrates every form of life becoming a flow entering and exiting all sorts of bodies in all temporalities. We see mining penetrating the human body from the early days of mining at Potosí, as mercury entered the local waterbeds or was breathed into the lungs of all those who live close to a mine, to images collected in *Los eternos vagabundos* of poor working women struggling to lactate: “desencajadas, con rostros maquillados de polvo metálico, envueltos en su desgracia suprema.”<sup>4</sup>

Writers not only identified and evaluated the large-scale operations of mining but also the micro or molecular scale of the mineral itself. Their fictions are interested in objects not as they appear before the naked eye, but as dynamic masses of molecules. They are preoccupied with microscopic things, inclined to detect the tiny swerves and inclinations destabilizing perception as a whole. Rocks, ores and crystals are not inert, dull objects, but entities with a life of their own, a life that is felt through the tension of molar mass and molecular particles. For instance, in Arguedas’s *Los rios profundos* Ernesto perceives in the Inca stones the labor of thousands over long periods of time now concentrated in matter laden with molecular movement.

But between these two spaces, the hyper and the molecular, there is the mine, the locus of most stories told here and a site of contradictions, excess and productivity. The mine is a space of heightened affect marked by a sense of immediacy and contingency. Here, workers toil and die to earn their subsistence, becoming rich or digging themselves to death in the process. But this is also

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<sup>4</sup> Roberto Leitón, *Los eternos vagabundos* (La Paz: Editorial Potosí, 1939), 26. “Faces were covered with metallic make up, and wrapped up is their supreme disgrace.”

a space that reconfigures political subjectivities, a site where workers become radicalized, plan strikes, store dynamite, and imagine a different reordering of nature and humans, a different society.

The mine's main purpose is to break down and molecularize the particles of mineral. An analogous operation takes place over the bodies of those charged with extracting and processing the ores: workers are atomized and reduced to cogs within the extractive machine of accumulation. But the mine also has an opposite effect on those working within it: it forms molar aggregates and territorializes human bodies and objects into miners and tools; it creates an entire hierarchy of power and oppression as complex as its physical structure. Territorialization always anticipates deterritorialization and *vice versa*. Mining territorializes bodies and habits only to undergo a deterritorialization of its constitutive parts in rebellions, strikes and stoppages. The mine becomes a space of deterritorialization as bodies become engaged in a cyclical but contradictory movement of escape and capture, of tracing individual (or collective) lines of flight to destroy patterns of exploitation. One such line of flight is traced molecularly by Héctor Chacón, the protagonist of *Redoble por Rancas*, a line that opposes capital with the goal of liberating life on the pampa.

## 6.5 Mining under Neoliberalism

Naturally, the countries from and about which mining writers tell their stories vary. Economic transformations and export diversifications have eased the reliance on mineral extraction: new commodities and technological methods of extraction have reduced the dramatic poverty and exploitation that once marked mining.<sup>5</sup> National politics have also changed. In Peru, for example,

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony Bebbington and Jeffrey Bury, Eds. *Subterranean Struggles: New Dynamics of Mining, Oil, and Gas in Latin America* (University of Texas Press: Austin, 2013), 16.

the rise of Sendero Luminoso redirected attention away from social struggles to focus on terrorism. thus conditioning the emergence of the modern anti-terrorist authoritarian state characterized by its abuse of power and systemic economic corruption. In Chile, the seventeen-year-long Pinochet dictatorship disarticulated the constellations of opposition and progressive politics based around the problematics of extraction, forcing them to devise new strategies to resist its monstrous state terror. Bolivia after the 1952 Nationalist Revolution did not fare much better. Commodity prices rapidly fell, setting the conditions for social discontent and the return of authoritarian governments and dictatorships. In all cases, literary attention to mining and the highly contradictory realities of distribution it produced were relegated to a second plane. In some countries this was due to the materialization of states of terror, as in Chile and Bolivia; in others, to the emergence of more pressing security concerns like the rise of terrorist groups and the formation of a comparably destructive anti-terrorist authoritarian state.

In an era of technification and depoliticization brought by broad economic and political changes, and pushed by a wider neoliberal turn as depicted by Vargas Llosa in *Lituma en los Andes*, the mine is no longer the site of civil strife and progressive politics but a dump for the dead. Mining once meant exploitation, but also highly dynamic social unions; abuses but also resistant workers who asserted their rights and expanded their claims to wider publics. The world of the strike, the massacre, and subsequent social recomposition is undergoing transformation and is perhaps less explicitly articulated than it was before. According to *Lituma en los Andes*, the mine has become a landfill for bodies and a metaphor for the strategies used to improve their conditions. Old struggles against the state or the foreign corporation now seem passé. This is not at all to say that

the logic of extraction has somehow disappeared (far from it), and yet in an era of neoliberalism, the mine appears subdued, deprived of its previous impetus or its stored volatility. Concerns are now over other matters: terrorism and cultural difference tied to homicide in the case of *Lituma*, for instance. The narratives, styles and modes of expression that the mine inspired across the twentieth century now fade away. There are recently published novels that address the contradictions of mining, but without mobilizing affects towards political change, instead dwelling in the past, re-enacting yesterday's struggles with postmodern methods.

In the chapter on Chile, I discussed realist accounts from the 1950's such as *Hijo del salitre* and Neruda's social realist poetry, which prioritized social conflicts—from a specific set of progressive aesthetic politics—making clear their disagreement with national administrations and their opposition to the new economic and administrative reordering of Chile under the dynamics of Cold War antagonisms. After the Pinochet coup of 1973, mining literature all but disappears from national literary production. Suppressed or forced into exile, writers and artists focused their creative energies on combating the political and cultural lines of regression and fascism at home. Creation concerned with the inherent exploitation of extraction was put on hold.

Mining literature reappeared after the transition back to democracy, not as a combative tool to counter neoliberal projects of extraction but as a way to remember a lost, idealized past. One of its exponents, Hernán Rivera Letelier, is recognized for his portrayal of salt flatlands dwellers, mostly nitrate workers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Writing from a postmodern perspective—which blurs the borders that separate fiction from reality, history from literature, and literary genres from each other—his novels are characterized by parody and humor in which social denunciation is balanced by a more personal voice marked by sentimentalism. Rivera's novel *Santa María de las flores negras* (2002) retells the story of the 1907 massacre in Iquique as an

elegy to the painful life of the ruinous nitrate exploitation camps. The text's structure is similar to that of *Hijo del salitre* in that it follows the nitrate workers' strike, the march through the desert, and finally the massacre in Iquique. But Rivera's version is little more than a rewriting of the massacre, and does not provide the reader with a critical perspective or affective potentialities required to mobilize the reader toward action.

Another more recent text of mining literature is José Donoso's last published novel *El mocho* (1997), which deals with the effects of mining on the dwellers of the small town of Lota, in central Chile. The work is notable for its palpable disenchantment and exhaustion with the mine milieu and its relations: it tells the story of a set of characters hanging on in the shadow of what was once an important coal deposit. Although the novel's tone does not employ the sentimentalist gestures characteristic of Rivera Letelier, it nevertheless dwells in a defeatist subjectivity centered on poverty. This is a mining story that no longer presents workers as proto-revolutionary subjects, or that alludes to natural and social disasters in the modality of a social novel or document of denunciation. Rather, Donoso's narrator is concerned with more personal aspects of the lives of old-timer miners in an environment of decay: a mining accident and the decreasing grade of the ores found submerge the town in a limbo of stasis.

These narratives can be read as an index of the decline of contemporary mining literature. This is not to say that mining novels or short stories are not created and published in the region, and wherever mining has disrupted the life flows of human and non-human communities, but rather that the boldness and complexity that characterized mining texts in the past has dissipated and found an outlet in other art mediums such as film. Today's mining literature appears defeatist if we consider that only a few decades ago this genre was able to mobilize publics, stir opinion and help to bring societies to the brink of revolution. In Bolivia, for example, mining writers formed

an assemblage of progressive pro-miners politics. In Chile, the cultural corpus based on the Santa Maria school massacre voiced poetic concerns about the miners' failure throughout the century, and specially at critical junctures of political authoritarianism during the consolidation of the Pinochet regime. In Peru, the narratives of Arguedas and Scorza directed public attention to the question of land dispossession and mineral extraction in the Andes, catalyzing the development of land reform and the liberation of Héctor Chacón, the *comunero* who inspired Scorza's protagonist in *Redoble por Rancas*. Today, literature's revolutionary *imaginarium* appears to have contracted and its recent iterations dwell with self-satisfaction in a context of sentimentalization and romanticism more attentive to the commercial demands of the culture market than self-conscious about the possibility of becoming an instrument for social change.

## **6.6 Mining Film: Critical Denouncing and Celebratory Nationalism**

Cinematic texts now constitute the principal but not exclusive medium through which the problematics of extraction (formerly expressed in mining novels) are presented. This production focuses on the impact and afterlife of the commodity boom or supercycle, the early twentieth-century rush to exploit and export natural resources in large areas of Latin America, generated by the economic growth of BRIC countries but especially China.<sup>6</sup>

The intensification of extraction in the region has stimulated the creation of texts exploring the nature and impact of these practices and opened a debate on the politics and ethics of resource exploitation. Filmic productions configured to mobilize publics are bringing new audiences into discussions about environmental degradation, human exploitation, and profitability, as well as

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<sup>6</sup> BRIC refers to Brazil, Russia, India and China, deemed to be developing countries at a similar stage of newly advanced economic development, on their way to becoming developed countries.



about issues of extraction in general. There are now many documentaries and films exploring the contradictions of extraction and mining: for instance, award-winning *Hija de la laguna* (2015), which tells about the struggle of highland rural communities in Peru to defend a lagoon, containing large gold deposits, from a foreign mining company; *Marmato* (2014), a study of the social consequences of the arrival of a Canadian multinational mining corporation on a small town in the Colombian Andes; and *The Devil's Miner* (2005), a story of personal achievement in the midst of extreme hardship in the mysterious Cerro Rico mines of Potosi, Bolivia.<sup>7</sup>

In today's conjuncture of decreasing readership and increasing access and participation on mobile Internet platforms, the literature of mining becomes the cinema of mining. In other words, cinematic production, and especially documentaries critical of extractivism, takes off while the impact and effectivity of literature to produce social change decreases in our spectacle-driven neoliberal present.<sup>8</sup> These new Latin American films are usually articulated from an activist perspective of denunciation and aim to "raise awareness," rightly highlighting critical environmental and ethical concerns. However, they fall short of exploring the molecular affective intensities of the mineral itself or the long temporalities immanent to mineral extraction, all of which are recurrent preoccupations in the literary texts that I have discussed. In other words, their rush to craft narratives attentive to injustices or abuses against local forms of life prevents them from zooming in more carefully to detect the affects of metallic minerals as we observed them in

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<sup>7</sup> To this list we can add recent feature films that focus on extraction from a wider perspective such as the Colombian production *El abrazo de la serpiente* (2015) and the Argentinean western drama film *El Ardor* (2014), stories that depict specific historical cases and processes of expropriation and accumulation in the frontier pertinent to our epoch of intensified extractivism in the region. For a discussion of *El abrazo de la serpiente* see *Territories of Conflict: Traversing Colombia through Cultural Studies* ed Andrea Fanta Castro, Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola, and Chloe Rutter-Jensen. For a wider survey of recent Latin American film see, *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Resisting Neoliberalism?* edited by Claudia Sandberg and Carolina Rocha.

<sup>8</sup> *Latin American Documentary Film in the New Millennium*, edited by María Guadalupe Arenillas, Michael J. Lazzara Pallgrave Macmillan New York 2016, p. 1

*Llampo de sangre* with gold, or zooming-out far enough to capture a wider image of the hyperobject beyond a mere glimpse of its relations as Arguedas does in *Todas las sangres*. This line of contemporary filmic narrative remains stuck in personal affects of indignation and denunciation. This is not to say that future productions may not register wider or micro dynamics, or include the historicity of mineral and metallic extraction.

Another line of mineral creation comprises films that do not organize themselves according to this logic of denunciation but prefer to celebrate feats of nationhood. This is the case with the American production *The 33*, a feature-length film based on the 2010 mining disaster in which thirty-three miners were trapped inside the San José Mine in Chile for more than two months. The film popularized the hardship and dangers of mineral extraction, highlighting the individual qualities of Chilean worker and by extension all miners. However, it disappoints insofar as it does not lead to a critical coupling of the accident (the film's *raison d'être*) with the structural problems of capital, extraction and safety, preferring to focus on the heroic role of a state that uses high-technology engineering to rescue the trapped miners.

*The 33* shows the Chilean miners as strong masculine subjects determined to fight for their survival, loyal to the idea of Chilean nationhood, and embodying these national values. They are resolved to live: they ration food, set internal conflicts aside to avoid unnecessary exhaustion, adhere to protocols transmitted from the rescuers, and emerge victorious and humbled by their experience. But with its celebratory voice, the film problematically inverts the economy of morals by presenting former oppressors as literal saviors. The film quite unapologetically, depicts the North American rescue team as the “good guys,” a disinterested group of professionals who help bring back the trapped Chileans using superior technology and a seductive *esprit de corps*. The

North American professional, usually depicted in mining literature and in much of the filmic tradition, as well, as an oppressor, is now redeemed *ex nihilo* by his effort to rescue the miners.

*The 33* leaves much to be desired, but it enables comparison between the literary and the cinematic. One major difference between mining literature and mining film is that much of the latter is co-produced, resulting in a text of binational or multi-national “authorship.” Mining literature, or mining novels, were usually written by national authors for national publics, and partly for international *letrados* in the hopes of moving readers and decision-makers towards action, often in favor of miners’ requests. A film like *The 33*, however, evidences a change in this narrative paradigm: it is aimed at U.S. audiences and U.S. expectations. It provides a “feel-good” tale of disaster and salvation (overlooking the responsibility of the company owning the mine), and “present[s] universalized and homogenized facets that subsume rather than promote their cultural specificity in the interests of wider accessibility and marketability.”<sup>9</sup> This premise in turn predetermines the decisions made about the artwork its implied and explicit politics, its depth or its “consumerability,” and “issues of perceived clichés and implausibilities.”<sup>10</sup> *The 33* is an upbeat account of an event that in fact revealed the dominance of capital and accumulation over life in the context of political regimes where minimal accountability for extraction projects is the norm. It is true that no miner perished in this accident, but the movie hides a sober real-life aftermath: “no legal negligence was found, therefore no compensation for the miners.”<sup>11</sup>

Reception of the art production, however, is never stable, and unexpected events continue to irrupt into the plane of creation and expression. Each medium, literature and film, explores

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<sup>9</sup> D. O’Brien, “Co-Production as Co-Option: Repackaging the National for the Global Market in *Rio, I Love You* and *The 33*,” *New Cinemas* 16 no. 2, (2018): 57–69, doi: 10.1386/ncin.16.2.157\_1, 157.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 165.

similar themes, but they do so in different ways. A major difference is that generally mining literature embraced an explicit desire to bring wider social change, while mining film is more varied in its aims when it comes to directing the public toward action. In addition, and unlike mining texts, such as those in the Peruvian tradition, most filmic texts focus on specific cases in isolated spots of the continent and appear unwilling to link local problematics to broader social issues. Mining film can appear as a flatter text that is over-reliant on the power of the image and spectacle, and since this filmic corpus is mostly documentary, it is designed to present the story it tells as a matter-of-fact event, missing the richness that characterized the literary texts. Such films fail to translate other ways of describing extraction, such as the magical elements that Scorza experimented with, or the awe caused by the realization of becoming one with the mineral as was the case with the work of Bolivian writer Jaime Mendoza.

There are, however, similarities worth mentioning in both form and content. There are comparable narrative lines in the tragic short stories told by Chilean author Baldomero Lillo and the film *The 33*, where an accident endangering the life of miners working underground serves as an opportunity to reveal the toughness of the miner as a subject of national pride. Likewise, the chronicles of dispossession presented in films like *Marmato* and *Hija de la laguna* remind one of those narrated in the Peruvian Andes by Arguedas or Scorza. After all, the stories told by filmmakers are based on a continuity and intensification of the same global processes that shocked and inspired earlier writers. Mining film helps to universalize the miners' struggle in the same way that earlier literature, such as Neruda's poems, attempted, but with an even wider reach. Perhaps mining film is flatter, more sensationalist and as melodramatic as some mining novels, but it has the advantage of quicker and easier dissemination. Like dynamite, film travels easier than print books and does not even need a theater to be projected. It can be consumed on any mobile platform.

It can be accessed, downloaded, reproduced and disseminated easier than the printed booklets used during the period of mining texts discussed. Film and its images become bodies that form new assemblages with other new objects: movements of political resistance, progressive environmental groups or simply distant spectators. These assemblages activate and keep machines of resistance and denunciation working in a larger circuit of cultural politics.

The objective of this dissertation has been to document how these bodies, assemblages and relations interacted with and against each other. But I have also traced the literary vein of mining literature. Along the way, I found all sorts of minerals and metals, all types of assemblages that challenge previously-held ideas about the miner and reveal a wealth of experiences formerly ignored by critics and commentators.

I have even myself become something of a miner by plunging into old universes structured around the ontology of mining. I buried myself in these narratives, equipped with instruments and tools to look for narratives, testimonies and images as much as miners seek ores, crystals or minerals. I return from the depth and void of time past, and the representation of lost worlds, with a handful of stories about the nature of dust. I discovered how much it determined our desires, and the desires of those represented in these narratives; I discovered that this humble element, seldom considered by our hyper-vigilant gaze, is interpenetrated with our physical bodies, forming unexpected but also fascinating assemblages: sometimes awe-inspiring, sometimes horrifying.

It is said that faith is able to move mountains, specifically faith the size of a mustard seed.<sup>12</sup> Reading mining literature, I would invert the dictum and claim that it is mountains that alter our faith, move our bodies by producing affective states comparable to those experienced by the

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 17:20, NAB.

protagonists of mining literature, or make us lose our remaining faith as was surely the case for many characters consumed in their search for gold or tin. Mountains are, after all, made out of rocks and these, in turn, are nothing but the product of pressure and time. Pressure and time are all that is needed to break the strongest of human faiths.

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