

Fascism and Culture in Roberto Bolaño's *Estrella distante* and *Nocturno de Chile*

El artículo analiza cómo las dos novelas se complementan entre sí para ilustrar distintos impulsos autoritarios. En estas obras Bolaño analiza la forma en la cual el fascismo domina el ámbito cultural chileno. Si bien está claro que el personaje principal de Estrella distante, un oficial de la Fuerza Aérea de Chile durante la dictadura de Pinochet, tiene tendencias fascistas, el personaje principal de Nocturno de Chile, un sacerdote del Opus Dei, desea permanecer fuera de los tiempos políticamente tumultuosos de la historia reciente. Sostengo que, al analizar a estos dos personajes juntos, podemos ver cómo la cultura fascista define la literatura como autónoma de la historia y la política. El novelista analiza los mecanismos del fascismo literario y al mismo tiempo busca dismantelar esta tendencia fascista sin reinstaurar la misma lógica en sus propias obras al caracterizar los personajes como jánicos (Jano bifronte). Los personajes jánicos desafían los binarismos de identidad y diferencia, formulando una noción de lo político que procura desmitificar y repensar binarismos políticos.

“Je est un autre.” Arthur Rimbaud

Novelist Roberto Bolaño seeks to understand the nature of Chilean fascism in *Estrella distante* (1996) and *Nocturno de Chile* (2000), two novels that complement each other in illustrating Chilean authoritarian manifestations. In these works, Bolaño analyzes the way in which fascism pervades the Chilean landscape beyond politics and into the cultural realm. I argue here that by looking at the novels' two main characters together, we can see how fascist culture defines literature as autonomous from history and politics. In the context of Bolaño's efforts to describe a “ubiquitous, insidious fascism that permeates daily life, social relations, and culture” (López-Vicuña 214), I shall demonstrate that this insidious fascism works by establishing and maintaining conceptual borders. Bolaño exposes the mechanisms of literary fascism in order to dismantle them, but without reinstating that same logic in his own works. To that end, the final recognition scenes in both novels enable a dismantling of the friend/enemy dichotomy previously established by the main characters. These scenes distinctly superpose the fascist artists with Bolaño's fictional

persona. The characters become Janus-faced, challenging the binaries of identity and difference, thus calling for a notion of the political that seeks to demystify and rethink political binaries. The novels offer an understanding of the political that is acutely aware of the dangers that lie in believing that post-coup politics may be rethought without reckoning with the fascist tendencies latent in all of us.

While critics have tended to refer to them as “Chilean” novels, my argument here is that Bolaño is seeking to go beyond national or regional circumstances and pathologies. While there is no facile comparison between historical fascism and Chilean authoritarianism, Bolaño’s insistence on referencing European fascist figures and events cannot be ignored. For example, German rightwing writer Ernst Jünger and *Luftwaffe* fighter pilot Hans-Joachim Marseille serve as inspiration for the main characters in *Nocturno* and *Estrella*. Furthermore, Bolaño’s critique of literary fascism extends to most of his other works, such as *Literatura Nazi en América*, *El tercer Reich*, and *2666*, suggesting an ongoing concern with the multiplicities of fascist configurations.

Bolaño’s study of Latin American fascist tendencies and articulations underscores its specific manifestations during the Chilean dictatorship and also goes beyond its temporal borders, thus providing a shift in the critical discussion of culture and politics from the State level to the individual level. As in the case of European fascisms, Pinochet’s dictatorship cannot be conceived as an aberration that has been overcome with Chile’s transition to democracy, but rather is a continuation (or at most a limit-case) of certain aspects of Western history and thought.¹ Bolaño’s understanding of fascism as inherent in all of us does not imply the dissolution of responsibility or accountability; on the contrary, it marks the starting point of a difficult process of self-examination.

While it is clear that the main character in *Estrella* has fascist tendencies, the main character in *Nocturno*, an *Opus-Dei* priest, desires to remain outside of the politically tumultuous times of recent history. In their similarities and differences, the two novels and their respective main characters complement each other in the illustration of fascist culture as autonomous from history and politics. *Estrella* details the search for a former pilot in the Chilean Air Forces, Carlos Wieder, who had committed several murders of female poets during the dictatorship. Alongside his criminal activities, Wieder’s ambition is to re-invent Chilean art, to create “el nuevo arte de Chile” (93). Wieder tests the discursive limits of fascism and places himself outside of history through his foundational “art-acts.” Years after the end of the dictatorship a private detective enlists Belano (Bolaño’s *alter ego*), an exiled writer who had known Wieder before the

coup, in the task of identifying and killing him. The novel ends in a recognition scene, where Belano identifies Wieder, but he also recognizes himself as Wieder's "horrendous Siamese twin" (152). Belano's uncomfortable identification with the assassin poet problematizes the clear demonization of the main character.

Bolaño makes an explicit connection between Wieder and the *Opus-Dei* priest, H. Ibacache, who appears in both *Estrella* and *Nocturno*. In *Estrella* Wieder's poetry is highly praised by Ibacache, a prominent Catholic priest.² In *Nocturno* Ibacache is the pen name of the main character, Sebastián Urrutia-Lacroix, so it is clear that Bolaño wanted to draw an explicitly *literary* connection between the pilot and the priest. Aside from his activities as *Opus-Dei* priest and poet, Urrutia is also the most visible literary critic of the conservative national newspaper *El Mercurio*. *Nocturno* consists of Urrutia's deathbed autobiography, prompted by a character called "el joven envejecido," whose biography is uncannily similar to that of Bolaño. The "joven envejecido" slanders Urrutia and forces him to explain his actions, particularly his complicity with the Pinochet military dictatorship. Urrutia tries to portray himself as an intellectual functioning outside of politics. Nevertheless, his own version of the events reveals his tacit complicity with the regime through his institutional affiliation with the literary establishment. The priest "confesses" in an effort to exonerate himself and escape responsibility. Like *Estrella*, *Nocturno* also ends in a recognition scene, where Urrutia recognizes himself as his own accuser.

RE-CONCEPTUALIZING "FASCISM" FOR BOLAÑO STUDIES

Bolaño's interest in representing fascist manifestations is a unique contribution to post-dictatorship narrative because most other post-dictatorship narrative has tended to focus on *testimonio* accounts and on the nature of memory in the neoliberal present. For example, Ariel Dorfman and Pedro Lemebel among many others have focused on strategies of resistance to the dictatorship. Ramón Díaz-Eterovic has explored the connections between the *desaparecidos* and German Nazi collaborators in the south of Chile in his detective novels. These important cultural contributions have emphasized literature's capacity for resistance but have shied away from analyzing literature's complicity with fascist discourse.

Literary and social critics from a variety of disciplines have minimized the fascist elements of the dictatorship in favour of an acute analysis of its neoliberal characteristics. Scholars such as Tomás Moulian, Nelly Richard, Willy Thayer, Diamela Eltit, and Federico Galende have examined the

relationship between the dictatorship and Chilean neoliberalism, first imposed under the dictatorship.³ Moulian is clear in his characterization of the dictatorship as a capitalist revolution. In contrast to historical fascism, in which the State aggressively protects the national market and seeks to monopolize other markets, Moulian sees Pinochet's dictatorship as wanting to insert itself in the flow of globalization and free markets beyond the nation-State (245-246).⁴ While the dictatorship's focus on market and neoliberal policies has been clearly established and while Chilean authoritarian manifestations are clearly different from historical National Socialism, there are other aspects that need to be addressed, in particular the conditions of possibility of the coup and the ultra-nationalist motivations espoused by Pinochet's rhetoric.

Since *Estrella* and *Nocturno* are two of Bolaño's best-known novels, there is a wealth of academic criticism on both. Those clearly related to the focus of the present article are a great number of readings which explore the gray area where art and violence intersect.⁵ Ignacio López-Vicuña signals the "solidarity between high culture and barbarism," arguing for the exhaustion of the redemptive view of literature in Latin America (199). Literature ceases to have a civilizing mission and instead serves to contemplate the barbaric nature of Western modern civilization (213-214). Indeed, the novels dismantle the discourse around literature's civilizing mission in Latin America. My own interest lies in *how* Bolaño's characters believe they can "civilize" through art by deliberately detaching art from its historical and political context. Paula Aguilar examines the novel's representation of the urban space in the Chilean dictatorship. She notices that the spatial and identitarian limits have become diffused and examines how Bolaño explores a dual internal structure of spaces. In other words, her work signals how the limits between inside and outside are diffused *as a result of* the dictatorship.⁶ I agree with Aguilar about the "gray zone" produced by the dictatorship. Bolaño, indeed, works to draw attention to the "dual internal structure of spaces." Complementing this, my argument focuses on how Bolaño's characters go to great lengths to *hide* that grey zone, to create and impose boundaries in places where those boundaries seem diffused. This is the fascist impetus I am interested in analyzing. Wieder and Urrutia *produce* those grey spaces, but they *disavow* their existence.

Other readings have focused on the limits of representation explored in the novels. Silvana Mandolessi's analysis puts an emphasis on the concept of the abject in Bolaño's work. She proposes this term as a strategy of Bolaño's when dealing with the political realm. Like the previous critics, her reading points to a liminal space and to how Bolaño's work illustrates

the division and “blending in” of otherwise discrete elements or concepts, dichotomies such as self and other or life and death. On her part, Laura Fandiño analyzes how the two novels deal with the difficulties of representation of memory by focusing on the two main characters’ interest in poetry as a way to reckon with the limits of post-dictatorial linguistic representation. The common thread in her analysis is that the two main characters are poets, but she fails to analyze Urrutia in the context of fascist ideology. She does allude to fascist art and fascist ideology in the case of Wieder (401). While indeed indicating the separation between art and life or aesthetics and ethics (409), she does not give it a framework to understand the reasons for and the implications of that separation. My interest is to build on Fandiño’s observation of the separation between art and life in order to show that poetic ambition is one of the many elements Wieder and Urrutia have in common. I seek to connect the characters’ particular use of language with a certain fascist discourse.

Through the analysis of literary fascism and through the final recognition scenes in these novels, Bolaño complements other artists and critics’ focus on preserving the memory of repression during the dictatorship. His novels work against a different kind of forgetting: the forgetting of the pervasiveness of the fascist element before, during, and after the dictatorship. Moulian’s analysis of the continuation of neoliberal policies into the present complements Bolaño’s analysis of the continuation of the fascist element. The post-dictatorship is “a time when all social antagonisms and ideological conflict have been banished from the national stage” (Dove 148). Bolaño tries to invoke a “conciencia del horror” by working against the cleansing discourse of the dictatorship.⁷

The term “fascism” resists a unified definition, but my interest is to see it not as a limited historical period, but as an ideology that is deeply concerned with establishing a mythical conception of time geared towards the production of an endless war against that which it interprets as outside of itself. Fascism emerges as a process of hyper-rigidifying boundaries, an attempt at containment. Firstly, fascism combines a very rigid notion of geographical borders with a cyclical (primordial) vision of time: “Fascism is a genus or political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism” (Griffin 26). Even in this most compressed definition, the term “palingenetic” clearly indicates that the demarcation of spatial and temporal borders is a key concern. Thus, fascism combines a very rigid notion of geographical borders with a cyclical (primordial) vision of time: “palin (again, new) and genesis (creation, birth)” (33). Furthermore, it is important to note that in Griffin’s definition fascism need not depend on the State for its existence

and proliferation. Secondly, fascist literary discourse presents art as a sphere completely separate from politics and history, thus promoting a conception of the autonomy of art that seeks to cover its violent politics (Carroll 249). Thirdly, the fascist subject's fear of being absorbed into the other results in defining the self in negative relationship to what is perceived as other. I borrow this reading from Klaus Theweleit's work on the *Freikorps* soldiers, in which he argues that these protofascist German soldiers were driven by a fear of dissolving borders, a reactive need to affirm the body's hardness and invulnerability (230-234).⁸

The aforementioned understandings of fascism are not so much concerned with what happens when fascist ideology becomes institutionalized as part of the State, but with the individual beliefs that inform fascist attitudes. Similarly, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari are interested in how fascism can be expressed through a force that does not need the State and is instead a proliferation of molecular forces that functions at the micropolitical level:

What makes fascism dangerous is its molecular or micropolitical power, for it is a mass movement: a cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism ... only microfascism provides an answer to the global question: Why does desire desire its own repression, how can it desire its own repression? ... Leftist organizations will not be the last to secrete microfascisms. It's too easy to be antifascist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish and cherish with molecules both personal and collective. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 214)

In addition to fascism at the macropolitical level (the level of the State), Deleuze and Guattari point to fascist tendencies that permeate the everyday. Microfascism is the fascist predisposition that we all have within ourselves.

In Chile, some critics have used the term "fascism" to describe the ideological bent of the Pinochet dictatorship. For example, Hernán Vidal observed that Pinochet's discourse reproduces the blood-purifying *Reconquista* rhetoric, while proposing a "national project" that will result in the development of capitalism and the modernization of Chile (in McClennen 75). Vidal's main focus is the figure of Pinochet, and while his is a valuable contribution, the approach risks converting Pinochet and the military regime into an exceptional (aberrant) case that has been overcome in the transition to democracy.

Historians have clearly traced an authoritarian tradition that combines Spanish imperialist reason, the Chilean constitution of 1833

under Diego Portales, and Prussian army training. The armed forces, which act to defend the nation against external threats and to maintain the internal security, “base their mission on a presumed natural law: despite efforts to achieve peace, there will always be war” (Loveman 229). Therefore the presumption of “eternal war,” as previously discussed by Benjamin and Theweleit in their analyses of European fascism, is also the foundational discourse of the Latin American military *raison d’être*.

Brian Loveman demonstrates how the 1973 coup merely followed a long tradition of regimes of exception beginning in the early nineteenth century. At that moment, the military needed only to insert itself into a national institutional and legal tradition. Nonetheless, Pinochet chose to exalt a radical nationalism and a foundational narrative to explain the need for the coup. In one of Pinochet’s discourses he describes the day of the coup as a foundational moment for a new nation, where the land was irrigated with the blood of sacrificed soldiers:

Y cuando acudiendo al llamado angustioso de *nuestra ciudadanía*, las Fuerzas Armadas y de Orden, decidieron actuar el 11 de septiembre de 1973, nuevamente *nuestra tierra* fue regada por la sangre de muchos de nuestros hombres, que cayeron luchando por la liberación de Chile. Quedaba de este modo en evidencia que el temple de *nuestra raza* y la fibra de *nuestra nacionalidad* para defender la dignidad o la soberanía de *nuestra patria* no habían muerto ni podrían morir jamás, porque son valores morales que se anidan en el alma misma de la *chilenidad*.⁹ [my emphasis]

Pinochet’s rhetoric employs a mythical discourse, claiming an ethical imperative in the “sacrifice” for the country. There is a clear call to a “chilenidad” that is able to recognize and eliminate the threats to national sovereignty at all cost. The nationalist discourse here is linked to the possessive pronoun “nuestra” in order to naturalize the “us versus them” dichotomy.

In the same discourse Pinochet advocates a new type of political regime, which must be completely re-created, with roots in an “authentic ... national tradition”:

... el 11 de septiembre no significó sólo el derrocamiento de un Gobierno ilegítimo y fracasado, sino que representó el término de un régimen político-institucional definitivamente agotado, y el consiguiente imperativo de *construir* uno nuevo. No se trata pues de una tarea de mera restauración sino de una obra eminentemente *creadora*, sin perjuicio de que dicha creación para ser fecunda debe enraizarse en

los signos profundos de nuestra auténtica y mejor tradición *nacional*. [my emphasis]

It is crucial to observe the closed concept of nationhood, which is based on a very strict notion of geographical borders in a negative relationship to “foreign elements” that threaten national integrity, such as the ideological attacks of Marxism-Leninism. Theweleit makes the same observations regarding the proto-fascist soldiers and their repulsion of the communist floods that threaten the Prussian national integrity. Using uncannily similar rhetoric, Pinochet rails against “foreign pressures and threats” and “international spillover.”¹⁰ Historically, the military has seen communism as a threat to the patriotic values of “chilenidad” and this view has affected the civil-military relations in Chile, especially after 1940 (Loveman 128). In other words, the social contract that the military saw itself as having with the civil society was the preservation of the ideological borders created by nationalism. Anticommunism was equal to patriotism. In this context, the election of Salvador Allende as president prompted the military to act according to the political duty of safeguarding the constitutional order that Allende allegedly violated with the promise of a “Chilean road to socialism” (Loveman 130). The dictatorship’s discourse, thus, invokes a rigid concept of nationhood as a basis for the new regime. The inclusion of terms such as “the imperative to build” and “creative labor” serves as a reminder that the dictatorship’s perceived task was to create something anew, completely disregarding historical and political precedents.

Although Pinochet’s discourse is characterized by ultra-nationalistic values, the institution of free-market policies after the toppling of the Popular Unity government is aligned with the dictatorships’ foundational narrative because it discounts previous economic measures. Brett Levinson writes:

The *coup* or *golpe* did not occur in 1973 but is taking place today. To be sure, the *golpe de estado* happened in 1973, continued throughout the dictatorship, and insidiously exercised its force during the first phases of transition. But it did not *make a direct hit*, a real *golpe*, until now, as Chile experiences a kind of mass concussion to which, in the end - because of the stunned state of the people and the stunned people of the state - nobody can testify. And *that* is the *golpe*: the impossibility of testimony, and through testimony (true or false), of *knowledge* of the event that is now striking. (98-99)

Levinson’s observation on the continuation of the dictatorship into the present strengthens the case of a mythic temporality. Fascist values seep

unquestioned into the neoliberal present, forming part of the post-dictatorial amnesia. So, while it is clear that Pinochet used fascist-like rhetoric during the time he was in power, we cannot understand the persistence of molecular fascist forces if we do not look beyond the framework of the authoritarian state.

Given this context, literature helps us track how microfascist elements operate within, but also beyond, Pinochet's totalitarian state. It is for that reason that Urrutia's deathbed confession and the search for Wieder blend pre- and post-coup temporalities. Also, it is important to note that Wieder's prosecution for the murders of several female poets is forgotten about in the transition to democracy: "Chile lo olvida" (120). "Forgetting" Wieder in the post-dictatorship allows for viewing the transition to democracy as a break, not as the continuation of the dictatorship. That is why it is important not to forget Wieder, but to see him as an agent operating before, during, and after the dictatorship. Wieder's character embodies the foundational and ultra-nationalistic rhetoric espoused by Pinochet, but he also goes beyond this. He is an officer in the Chilean Air Force, aligned institutionally with the dictatorship, but he is also a free agent, operating beyond and above (literally) the totalitarian State. Similarly, Urrutia, while not institutionally aligned with the dictatorship, contributes to a fascist attitude that can be noticed at the micropolitical level.

LITERARY FASCISM, FOUNDATIONAL ACTS, AND THE JANUS-FACED CHARACTER OF HISTORY

In line with the fascist operation of hyper-rigidifying borders, it is not surprising that art is seen as a separate domain from politics and history. The aesthetic basis of totalitarian political vision has been analyzed by Walter Benjamin, who saw fascism as the aestheticizing of politics and communism as the politicization of aesthetics: "This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art" ("The Work of Art" 242). Starting from the first half of Benjamin's thesis, David Carroll sought to analyze the role played by art and literature in fascism.¹¹ The heart of his argument resides in suggesting that literary fascism asserts the autonomy of literature from history and politics. Yet, Carroll counters, this culturalist attitude towards literature has drastic and inescapable consequences in the political realm. By insisting on the totalized, organic unity of the artwork, literary fascism transforms the idea of integral national culture into a political ideology:

In a sense, literary fascism exploits the totalizing tendencies implicit in literature itself and constitutes a technique or a mode of fabrication, a form of fictionalizing or aestheticizing not just of literature but of politics as well, and the transformation of the disparate elements of each into organic, totalized *works of art*. (7; original emphasis)

Carroll's analysis serves as a useful framework to understand the specific ways in which Urrutia and Wieder attempt to establish and maintain conceptual borders.

Urrutia conceives literature as a space that allows one to escape from the world, especially from political events. However, the priest's repeated and compulsive attempts to isolate himself from the life of the country are undermined when he is faced with the constant irruption of public life into the autonomous literary space he strives to create and maintain. For example, when his mentor, an older literary critic named Farewell, invites him to his *fundo*, he is pleased to have found a "literary refuge" (22). Having set up this space as a refuge, he is disturbed by what he comes across when he ventures outside of the house. The various encounters with the *peones* produce negative physical reactions: the priest feels "miedo y asco" (20) or he feels sick to his stomach (29). Patrick Dove has observed how, for Urrutia, the *campesinos* reside in a historical temporality that is radically different from that of the priest (148). Furthermore, there is a gender component to the encounter: the group was composed of three men and two women, but the priest focuses on the women's externality. He speculates that they had come from a different *fundo*, had transgressed spatial borders, in order to make selfish demands of the priest and to delay the priest's return to the house, where he is expected to converse with Neruda:

Y allí estaba yo. Y ellas me vieron y yo las vi. ¿Y qué fue lo que vi? Ojeras. Labios partidos. Pómulos brillantes. Una paciencia que no me pareció resignación cristiana. Una paciencia como venida de otras latitudes. Una paciencia que no era chilena aunque aquellas mujeres fueran chilenas. Una paciencia que no se había gestado en nuestro país ni en América y que ni siquiera era una paciencia europea, ni asiática ni africana (aunque estas dos últimas culturas me son prácticamente desconocidas). Una paciencia como venida del espacio exterior. (31-32)

Not fully Chilean, thus not part of Urrutia's nationalistic discourse, they are marked as absolute difference in relationship to the priest's spatial and temporal borders. In other words, the female parishioners exist to define the outer limits of his spatial and temporal universe. His "impaciencia"

comes from the fact that these women, who have been reduced to the status of “nature” (even their speech makes Urrutia laugh), stand in the way of “culture,” that is, his meeting with Neruda in Farewell’s house.

Later, during the Allende government he isolates himself by reading the Ancient Greeks in his house and not going out (96-97). While the country goes through political turmoil, he remains a detached observer, impassively reporting some key political events alongside names of Greek philosophers. By sharply separating spatially the act of reading from public life, he creates a false opposition between literature and history. During the dictatorship, a third house acts as a safe haven during the curfews: the house of María Canales, who appears to offer a space for open intellectual discussions with members of the Chilean vanguard. However, the priest finds out that in the basement of that same house, at the same time as the dissident intellectual meetings were taking space, the host’s husband was leading torture sessions for the Chilean intelligence. The priest claims not to have seen or not to have known “until it was too late,” the implication being that he would have done something (142). This is “another instance of disavowed responsibility” (Dove 149). Furthermore, it is a disavowal of the clear connection between literature and politics. While the temporality of the scene is unclear due to the priest’s delirious condition, it is suggested that he found out *during* the dictatorship, yet he maintains that there was nothing he could do. So, while this might seem as a clear paradox, Urrutia’s non-action logically follows from his conception that culture and politics are two distinct realms that cannot or should not touch each other. What shocks Urrutia is not that tortures happen, but that they happen *in the same house* as the *tertulias*, which implies that these two spheres might come into contact.¹² The spatial juxtaposition between “culture” on the ground floor and political terror in the basement is a clear spatial metaphor for Urrutia’s separation of literature from politics.

Complementing his activity as literary critic, Urrutia also has poetic ambitions that echo his convictions about the autonomy of art. Like Wieder, he envisions a kind of poetry that has never been practiced in the country: “... planeaba una obra poética para el futuro, una obra de ambición canónica que iba a cristalizar únicamente con el paso de los años, en una métrica que ya nadie en Chile practicaba, ¡qué digo!, que nunca nadie jamás había practicado en Chile...” (37). His literary projects have the same foundational and nationalistic impetus as Wieder’s. However, the priest undercuts his own narrative of purity in the next lines, when he connects the idea of “purity” with a story about a German writer, “uno de los hombre más puros” (37). We soon find out, however, that the man he is describing as “pure” is Ernst Jünger, a German novelist and essayist, the

leading voice of the intellectual radical right of the Weimar Republic.¹³ These juxtapositions allow us to see Urrutia's vanguardist ambitions as already tainted by a fascist narrative tradition. Whereas he sees himself surrounded and inspired by "pureza," he is in fact deeply entrenched in a historical narrative that is a mere repetition of other "foundational" gestures.

While Urrutia is very much concerned with erasing politics from literary life, Wieder is particularly obsessed with erasing history and founding a new concept of the nation modeled on his artistic acts. Wieder's version of art is the extreme of the creative (and creating) genius of German Idealism and the sinister inversion of the Chilean vanguard.

In *Estrella*, Alberto Ruiz-Tagle, later known as Carlos Wieder, is the enigmatic participant in two literary circles during the Popular Unity government: "1971 o tal vez en 1972, cuando Salvador Allende era presidente de Chile" (13). Ruiz-Tagle's language is ahistorical and antithetical to the politically charged discourse of the Allende years. His formal Spanish, "ese español de ciertos lugares de Chile (lugares más mentales que físicos) en donde el tiempo parece no transcurrir" (16), contrasts sharply with the "Marxist-mandrakist" slang that served to create a sense of community and solidarity among the other literary circle participants. Specifically, in terms of artistic production, the narrator noted that Ruiz-Tagle's poems were written with "distance and coldness" (21), another indication that language had a particularly insignificant and immaterial function in the formation of the discourse proposed by Ruiz-Tagle/Wieder. Nonetheless, Marta (la Gorda), one of the participants in the literary circles, is convinced that Alberto will revolutionize Chilean poetry (24). In her words, the new poetry will not be written (*escrita*) but made (*hecha*). In contrast to "escribir poesía," "hacer poesía" implies the idea of creating something concrete and material, which supersedes and replaces language.

This conception of "hacer poesía" manifests itself in a number of air shows during the dictatorship, where Ruiz-Tagle, now Carlos Wieder, officer in the Chilean Air Force, attempts quite literally to literally *make* poetry. Shortly after the coup, the narrator observes Wieder's first "poetical act"- the writing in the sky of the opening lines of the Book of Genesis:

IN PRINCIPIO ... CREAVIT DEUS... COELUM ET TERRAM
TERRA AUTEM ERAT INANIS ... ET VACUA ... ET TENEBRAE ERRANT ... SUPER
FACIEM ABYSSI... ET SPIRITUS DEI... FEREBATUR SUPER AQUAS...
DIXITQUE DEUS ... FIAT LUX ... ET FACTA LUX ... ET FACTA EST LUX

ET VIDIT DEUS ... LUCEM QUOD ... ESSET BONA ... ET DIVISIT ... LUCEM A TENEBRIS (36-37)

Wieder attempts to found a certain art through a religiously tinged act. However, the words quickly vanish without a trace. Wieder's creative impetus is also negated by the fact that his "foundational" gesture is quickly exposed as an imitation of earlier historical events in Europe. Norberto, a detainee, recognizes the type of plane: Messerschmitt 109 Luftwaffe, a fighter plane tested at Guernica during the Spanish Civil War and used by the German Nazi Army starting in 1940. The spectral return of an element from WWII stands in, of course, as a metaphor for fascism, and also for the return of a specific type of operation: the solitary agent, who uses discrete, fast, and quick attacks, not unlike electric pulses reminiscent of the electric shocks received by the torture victims of the Chilean dictatorship.

The mythic fascist temporality that Wieder wants to introduce is disturbed. What he presents as a foundational act turns out to be mere repetitions of other fascist shows. Despite Wieder's attempts at erasing historical referents, the erasure is uncovered by Norberto's recognition and articulation of the repetition. Wieder's performative act of writing in the air is merely a parody of the attack on Guernica and the German *Blitzkrieg*. These connections inadvertently shed light on the historical parallels between the Spanish Republic and the Allende government, the Civil War and the *coup d'état*, and the subsequent dictatorships in Spain and Chile.

Before the end of his performance, Wieder writes a final word: "APRENDAN" (39). In this command Wieder positions himself as the God of the Old Testament. The desire to found the world through a performative act is both reactionary - it demands a certain return to the origins of humankind, a pre-history - and empty, since the isolated command in the sky has no material referent on the ground. In the Old Testament the act of divine Creation is understood as a linguistic one, in which God calls things into being: "God spoke - and there was" (Benjamin *One Way Street*, 114). Thus, God guarantees the absolute relationship between object (signified) and name (signifier) (Gilloch 61). Wieder himself, in other words, poses as God, as outside history, and he does it through language. However, Wieder's language, in contrast to the act of Creation, only points to the fact that he is *not* God; his command cannot and does not create a world. His command can only point to the fact that it is unclear what he wants his spectators to learn.

In relation to Wieder's objectless command, Gareth Williams writes:

In contrast to Zurita's *La Vida Nueva*, and in contrast to the neo-avant-garde Chilean *avanzada's* insistence on the insubordination of signs and the dismantling of Chile's representational processes, Roberto Bolaño uncovers not the possibility of historical transcendence or the openings of new critical languages, but what Giorgio Agamben calls 'the limit concept of State power': the fundamental structure of a pure command without the mediation of representation. (137)

While I agree that the novel does explore "the limit concept of State power," I propose that a language-other, a kind of language that Bolaño is attempting to develop, may be formed precisely through the exploration of that limit. By revealing the emptiness of the command, as well as by historicizing it, is where we can make attempts at a dislocation of the kind of sovereignty that Wieder seeks to impose.

In other air shows, where he composes poetry in the sky, Wieder continues to distance himself from the material reality on the ground and assume a position of physical and creative superiority. In one such show, he writes a poem that reads:

La muerte es responsabilidad. [sobre La Moneda]
 La muerte es amor.
 La muerte es crecimiento.
 La muerte es comunión.
 La muerte es limpieza.
 La muerte es mi corazón.
 Toma mi corazón.
 Carlos Wieder.
 La muerte es resurrección.

Here it is important to note that there is a separation between how the attending military officials understand the "poetic act" and Wieder's intentions. While they see it as a simple exhibition, Wieder sees it as a transformative act that converts action into art. The gesture references Raúl Zurita's project in *La vida nueva* (1994). By replacing Zurita's "vida" with "muerte," the vanguard logic is inverted here, with sinister effect. Again, however, Wieder's attempts to fuse art and politics into a transcendental act are undercut by the weather conditions (it is foggy and it starts to rain), as well as by technical difficulties (he runs out of smoke). Thus, his attempts at founding a new mythical language are undercut precisely by the historical conditions within which he is operating.

Following the air show, Wieder organizes another art exhibit, this time a photography exhibit of Wieder's murder victims. The photographs, a monstrous and material complement to the writing in the sky, is presented as national art: "Uno por uno, señores, el arte de Chile no admite aglomeraciones" (93).

Wieder chooses to show the photographs as a new day begins, indicating his desire to break with the past and to originate something new through his act to art gesture. By exhibiting his art at midnight, Wieder seeks to employ art in the service of foundational fascist discourse. Benjamin explains that associating dramatic action with midnight,

lies in the widespread notion that at this hour time stands still like the tongue of a scale. Now since fate, itself the true order of eternal recurrence, can only be described as temporal in an indirect, that is, parasitical sense, its manifestations seek out the temporal dimension. They stand in the narrow frame of midnight, an opening in the passage of time, in which the same ghostly image constantly reappears. (*The Origins* 135)

These "ghostly images" are manifestations of a world beyond history, ahistorical, spirit without matter. It makes sense that Wieder chooses to display his triumph over matter at this time, furthering the idea that he seeks to place himself outside of historical, temporal dimensions. However, midnight is also the opening of time, a moment of repetition, where history repeating itself is obvious and it becomes evident that newness is an illusory form of repetition. Thus, yet again, Wieder's desire for newness is exposed as a mere illusory form of repetition.

The strong reactions to the exhibit included vomiting and crying, which reintroduce a bodily materiality that Wieder had sought to erase. Wieder's father mitigates the impact by recurring to a discourse that alludes to "transcendental" militaristic values such as honour, camaraderie, and the need to keep the secret. Later, a number of DINA agents arrive and, after a long conversation, leave and take with them the photographs, thus erasing all traces of the incident. Avoiding an arrest because of transcendental moral values, Wieder disappears and reports about him are contradictory and confusing. While this event marks a clear difference between the discourse of the dictatorship and that of Wieder, the secret service collects and carries away the incriminating evidence, allowing Wieder to disappear without being punished. The totalitarian state, even if not strictly fascist, does actively cover the actions of the fascist element within its midst. Through these foundational acts presented as "art," Wieder is theorizing the limits of humanity, taking the

Nazi rhetoric one step further than the limits sanctioned by the totalitarian State. Wieder and Urrutia's acts may be seen as attempts at severing art from its political and historical context. Wieder is particularly obsessed with erasing history, while Urrutia is very much concerned with erasing politics from his life and the life of the country. Nonetheless, Bolaño shows us over and over again that this operation has monstrous consequences.

After showing how Urrutia and Wieder strenuously try to separate art from politics and history, Bolaño tirelessly works to reinsert their actions and discourse within their historical and political contexts. The novels present an alternative use of temporality that actively seeks to challenge both the fascist discourse based on mythical conceptions of time as well as the neoliberal discourse that sustains itself by giving the illusion of a perpetual present. Bolaño's play with temporality and his insistence on making connections among historical events in Europe and Latin America creates multi-faceted, multi-temporal versions of the nation. He also shows how literature and language may complicit in the fascist operation, but he counterposes this with a different kind of language, one that conceptualizes history not as redemptive, but as an amalgam of temporalities.

Bolaño's fascists exhibit a dread of contamination in relationship to literature, in relationship to writing. For example, Wieder's murder of the poetesses stands in for the attempt to eradicate the discourse produced by alternative, feminine voices. Also, in spite of Wieder's efforts to erase history from art, his "art," although presented as "new," merely plagiarises other works (either as a sinister reversal of vanguard art or as appropriation of Biblical excerpts). In contrast, Bolaño's writing asserts the idea of impurity, of contamination. His writing is full of traces of other works, inter-textual references, and allusions to other writers. It functions not to establish a tradition, a kind of artistic lineage, but rather to illustrate the idea of the body of text as always already impure knowledge.

Nevertheless, this is not simply an inversion of the fascist discourse - rather it is an attempt at transgressing it, in the Foucauldian sense. Transgression, as conceptualized by Foucault is an operation constantly involved with the limit (72). Non-fascist discourse, in other words, cannot exist without fascist discourse. It is not about installing a non-fascist language instead of a fascist one through the elimination of the borders of language. It is an interrogation of the limit and the questioning of language by language (Foucault 85): "The experience of the limit ... is realized in language and in the movement where it says what cannot be said" (Foucault 86). Thinking about the limit means living uncomfortably near to the limit. This experience is most clearly articulated in the recognition

scenes at the end of both novels, where Belano recognizes himself as Wieder's "horrendous Siamese twin" (152), and when Urrutia recognizes the "joven envejecido" as himself (149). In the final identification scenes we see most clearly how Bolaño seeks to transgress this fascist tendency without falling victim to the same logic of violent dichotomies (of self vs. other or fascist vs. non-fascist).

In regard to the relationship between art and politics, Walter Benjamin described fascism as the aestheticizing of politics and communism as the politicization of aesthetics. Alternatively, in the wake of the destructive effects of literary fascism, one might be tempted to argue for the bourgeois ideology of the autonomy of art (Bürger).¹⁴ However, I suggest that Bolaño explores another way of thinking about the relationship between politics and art, illustrated through the Janus-faced figure. The figure, which illustrates the tension between newness and repetition, stands for an ambivalent relationship between two apparently contradictory elements.¹⁵ In this case, the reference to Siamese twins in *Estrella* and the pairing of the priest with the "joven envejecido" in *Nocturno* serve as illustrations of the Janus-face concept.

Estrella ends in a recognition scene, where Belano identifies Carlos Wieder, but he also recognizes himself as Wieder's "horrendous Siamese twin":

Entonces llegó Carlos Wieder y se sentó junto al ventanal, a tres mesas de distancia. Por un instante (en el que me sentí desfallecer) me vi a mí mismo casi pegado a él, mirando por encima de su hombro, horrendo hermano siamés, el libro que acababa de abrir (un libro científico, un libro sobre el recalentamiento de la Tierra, un libro sobre el origen del universo), tan cerca suyo que era imposible que no se diera cuenta, pero, tal como había predicho Romero, Wieder no me reconoció. (152)

The novel forces the reader to make comparisons between Belano and Wieder. As the two men sit side by side in the café, Wieder reads a scientific book on the origin of the universe, while Belano tries to concentrate on his reading of the *Complete Works* of Bruno Schulz, a Polish Jewish novelist and painter, gunned down by a German Nazi officer in 1942. The relationship between them reflects the ambivalence and the struggle between hideous similarities and welcome differences. The left and the right are linked together not as extremes, but rather as two sides of the same coin. While Wieder is described as "dueño de sí mismo" (153), owner of his own self, Belano is deeply affected by the act of recognition. Belano acts as a witness who identifies the perpetrator, but in that act, his sense of self is interrogated and put in relation to that of the criminal.

Another similarity is described in an earlier passage, where Belano dreamed that he and Wieder were together on a boat heading towards shipwreck:

Soñé que iba en un gran barco de madera, un galeón tal vez, y que atravesábamos el Gran Océano. Yo estaba en una fiesta en la cubierta de popa y escribía un poema o tal vez la página de un diario mientras miraba el mar. Entonces alguien, un viejo, se ponía a gritar *¡tornado!*, *¡tornado!*, pero no a bordo del galeón sino a bordo de un yate o de pie en una escollera. Exactamente igual que en una escena de *El bebé de Rosemary*, de Polansky. En ese instante el galeón comenzaba a hundirse y todos los sobrevivientes nos convertíamos en náufragos. En el mar, flotando agarrado a un tonel de aguardiente, veía a Carlos Wieder. Yo flotaba agarrado a un palo de madera podrida. Comprendía en ese momento, mientras las olas nos alejaban, que Wieder y yo habíamos viajado en el *mismo* barco, sólo que él había contribuido a hundirlo y yo había hecho poco o nada por evitarlo. (130)

Wieder and Belano are irrevocably linked by the history of the shipwreck, of the catastrophe that had split the history of Chile in two. The catastrophe alludes to the 1973 coup, but it can also be interpreted as a broader idea of national political catastrophe. We have reached a moment of impasse in terms of recognition and responsibility. This superposition complicates the friend/enemy division by offering an understanding of the political that is acutely aware of the dangers that lie in believing that post-coup politics can be rethought without reckoning with the fascist tendencies latent in all of us.¹⁶ Bolaño opens the space for an exploration of the limits of the self and questioning those limits as an opening towards the possibility of accountability. I read it as a move towards rethinking the relationships that we have with our (microfascist) others, with the Wieder that we encounter sometimes within ourselves.¹⁷

The end of *Nocturno* is structured similarly to the end of *Estrella* in the sense that it underscores another instance of the Janus-face figure, one in which Urrutia identifies the “joven envejecido” as himself. This act of identification is important because the “joven envejecido” had been his nemesis throughout the novel. The “joven” screams and shouts obscenities at him, forcing him to produce his “confession” in the form of the book. The fact that the account is prompted by the “joven envejecido” opens up a space for recognizing the other in one’s self:

Y entonces me pregunto: ¿dónde está el joven envejecido?, ¿por qué se ha ido?, y poco a poco la verdad empieza a ascender como un cadáver. Un cadáver que sube desde el fondo del mar o desde el fondo de un barranco. Veo su sombra que sube.

Su sombra vacilante. Su sombra que sube como si ascendiera por la colina de un planeta fosilizado. Y entonces, en la penumbra de mi enfermedad, veo su rostro feroz, su dulce rostro, y me pregunto: ¿soy yo el joven envejecido? ¿Esto es el verdadero, el gran terror, ser yo el joven envejecido que grita sin que nadie lo escuche? ¿Y que el pobre joven envejecido sea yo? Y entonces pasan a una velocidad de vértigo los rostros que admiré, los rostros que amé, odié, envidié, desprecié. Los rostros que protegí, los que atacué, los rostros de los que me defendí, los que busqué vanamente. (149-150)

The prevailing reading of this passage is that the “joven envejecido” is his conscience, which prompts him to explain himself and to defend his actions. However, I think that a more complete reading is that the “joven envejecido” represents Bolaño himself, which makes the recognition even more acute from the standpoint of the Janus face. The biographical references to the life of the “joven envejecido” support this reading: “Entonces me pareció ver al joven envejecido en el vano de la puerta. Pero sólo eran los nervios. Estábamos a finales de la década del cincuenta y él entonces sólo debía de tener cinco años, tal vez seis, y estaba lejos del terror, de la invectiva, de la persecución” (22). Since Bolaño was born in 1953, this indicates that the priest is referring to someone who was exactly Bolaño’s age. Urrutia also mentions having read the books written by the “joven envejecido” (24). The real importance of this position lies in the fact that it does not allow us to dismiss fascism as an aberration within or a radical departure from the dominant Western political tradition. The spectre of responsibility is raised again, but this time it is not only the responsibility of Urrutia, but also the responsibility of the “joven”.

The Janus-faced figure acts as a strategic literary device to deconstruct the unity of the monumental self-image of Wieder and Urrutia. At the same time, it introduces an element of ambiguity, of doubt, of uncomfortable recognition. It makes it impossible to write off Wieder and Urrutia as other to Belano and to the “joven envejecido,” respectively. The Janus figure allows for a disarticulation of the unity of the subject. In both instances, the fixed relationship to self unravels to a point where it becomes difficult to distinguish self from other. This uncomfortable recognition produces doubt and fear. However, this is a necessary task because the novel has advanced to the point in which the characters are confronted with an opening up of the limits of self. Furthermore, by allowing the characters to be identified through a shared past, Bolaño expresses another way in which Wieder and Urrutia fail to be a-historical.

The recognition scenes provide a non-redemptive ending to both novels, which does not allow closure through the resolution of conflict.

Instead, the Janus-faced figure opens up the space for a reevaluation of the unity of the knowing subject. In *Estrella* we do not know with certainty if Romero has killed Wieder, thus leaving us with a secret never to be disclosed (Martín-Cabrera 240-241). In *Nocturno*, as observed by Dove, eschatology is replaced with scatology - "Y después se desata la tormenta de mierda" (150). Once again we are confronted with a refusal to accept an onto-teleological vision of history, where all differences are absorbed. The Janus figure does not stand either for the dissolution of conflict or for eternal war - both eschatological visions. Instead, the Janus figure problematizes our own tendencies to resolve conflict either through Manichean binaries (fascist/non-fascist) or through homogenizing difference (either "we are all to blame" or "nobody is to blame").

Wieder and Urrutia believe they can "civilize" through art by deliberately severing art from its historical and political context. In this article, I have sought to show that Bolaño sees the process of establishing and maintaining these conceptual borders as a fascistic operation. Given this context, the role of literature is to dismantle the borders between art and politics, as well as to trace how microfascist elements supersede the temporal borders of the dictatorship. Bolaño illustrates the pervasiveness of literary fascism while seeking to dismantle this fascist tendency without reinstating that same logic in his own works. To that end, the final recognition scenes, wherein the fascist artists are superimposed with Bolaño's fictional *personas*, do not allow for a demonization of fascism as other to the self. The Janus-faced characters challenge the binaries of identity and difference, calling for a notion of the political that seeks to demystify and rethink political binaries.

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NOTES

- 1 Given Chile's strong military tradition, the Pinochet regime is one of the many manifestations of a longstanding tradition of regimes of exception. With its 19th century Prussian roots, the Chilean military has been part of what Loveman calls "the politics of anti-politics". Furthermore, the 1930's in Chile saw the rise of Chilean Nazism, a movement that sought to emulate German Nazism. The movement did not survive, but it is worth mentioning because it is evidence of the presence of fascist ideology within Chile (see Sznadger). See also Jaime Antonio Etchepare and Hamish I. Stewart on Nazism in Chile (in the 1930s), as

- well as Marcus Klein on Chilean fascism and the Popular Front (also in the 1930s).
- 2 "Ibacache, en la soledad de su estudio, intenta fijar la imagen de Wieder. Intenta comprender, en un *tour de forcé* de su memoria, la voz, el espíritu de Wieder, su rostro entrevistado en una larga noche de charla telefónica, pero fracasa ... El fragmento referido a las lecturas 'del prometedor poeta Carlos Wieder' se interrumpe de pronto, como si Ibacache se diera repentina cuenta de que está caminando en el vacío" (*Estrella Distante* 114). Ibacache's character appears in both *Estrella* and *Nocturno* and is modeled on the real-life José-Miguel Ibáñez Langlois, a prominent Catholic priest (see Dove 153 n.4).
 - 3 See for example, Richard's *Residuos y metáforas: ensayos de crítica cultural sobre el Chile de la transición*, Eltit's novels *Lumpérica* and *Mano de obra*, Thayer's *La crisis no moderna de la universidad moderna*, and Galende's "Diagnósticos de época (A propósito de *Virno y la multitud*)". Also see *Debates críticos en América Latina: 36 números de la Revista de crítica cultural* (1990-2008), edited by Nelly Richard, a three-volume publication that compiles the most significant articles published in Chile's leading cultural magazine in the post-dictatorship.
 - 4 Furthermore, Moulian criticizes the Communist Party (PC) designation of the dictatorship as "fascist," which allowed them to develop a strategy of political opposition to the dictatorship by organizing an "anti-fascist front" (243). Thereby the PC set up a dualism where "fascist" is anything or anybody that is perceived as the enemy. For Moulian, this ultimately dogmatic stance - us vs. them, us vs. the enemy - concealed more than it revealed (244). He is right that the PC's designation of the enemy as "fascist" does not do much to conceptualize the situation, but simply rejecting the term because of a particularly dogmatic interpretation fails to engage with other critically productive aspects of the terms.
 - 5 A number of other articles analyze issues of memory during the post-dictatorship. For example, Rory O'Bryen explores the significance of melancholy in Bolaño's narrative and argues that, in the wake of political disaster, the power of literature lies in its "critical negativity that tugs forever at the ankles of power, inhabiting that power in its interstices and haunting it from within" (485).
 - 6 "Así víctimas y verdugos, sin llegar a ser idénticos ni confundirse, se entremezclan en esa 'zona gris' que describió Primo Levi para referirse a la identificación de las víctimas con los victimarios, ese espacio que los separa y reúne a la vez en la vida cotidiana del campo" (Aguilar 6).
 - 7 The term "conciencia del horror" is borrowed from the documentary *La ciudad de los fotógrafos*.

- 8 Formed after the end of WWI, the *Freikorps*, which later became part of Hitler's Army, were initially soldiers hired to quell social unrest, but they eventually became armed forces. They fought for pay, but also for revenge, claiming that the communists, with their internationalist ideology, had backstabbed Germany. For them, the period of 1914-1945 was a continuous period of uninterrupted war. Theweleit, echoing Benjamin's "Theory of Fascism," sees them as living for perpetual war. War and death are for them a way of life (xii). Upon analyzing letters, fiction, and propaganda by members of the *Freikorps*, Theweleit interprets their actions as prompted by the hatred of women's bodies and sexuality. This hatred, Theweleit reveals, is provoked by the dread of the soldier's dissolution, of being engulfed in women's bodies. The fascist fantasy is ultimately the dread of engulfment by what is perceived as "other" to the self. Theweleit shows how the dread of women transforms into hatred of communism and of rebellious working classes. In more specific terms, communism was seen as a threat to national borders through its internationalist discourse, as well as a threat to the individual borders of the self.
- 9 "Discurso del general Augusto Pinochet en Cerro Chacarillas con ocasión del Día de la Juventud, el nueve de julio de 1977."
- 10 "Quienes pretenden doblegarnos con *presiones o amenazas foráneas*, se equivocan rotundamente, y sólo verán crecer una cohesión interna que siempre se agiganta ante la adversidad. Quienes, por su parte pretenden desde el interior aliarse con estos *desbordes internacionales* que parecieran revivir formas de imperialismo que creíamos ya superadas en el Occidente, sólo logran retratarse mejor en sus ambiciones sin freno, y hacerse acreedores al justo desprecio del pueblo chileno" [my emphasis] (Pinochet discourse 1977)
- 11 While Carroll seeks to understand what he calls "literary fascists"- nationalist extremist pre-WWII French writers and intellectuals - his analysis is useful because it examines particularly fascist rhetoric in relationship to a particular conception of culture.
- 12 The act has been often read as a jab at the Chilean vanguard, exposing it as being complicit with the dictatorship and with being fully integrated within an institutionalized framework (Dove 150). Also, see Draper's analysis of the scene, which she reads as the normalization of forgetting during the process of transition to democracy (46).
- 13 Jünger is the fascist writer behind the *Freikorps* ideology.
- 14 Peter Bürger had shown how the autonomy of art detaches art from the praxis of life while at the same time obscures the historical conditions of this process of detachment (41). In a sense, there is no such a thing as "art for art's sake," since that concept in itself seeks to take us to the idea of "autonomy of art," which is absolutely political even if its political alignment is obscured and is

ideologically aligned with bourgeois society (Bürger 35). The sphere that this opens up for art is itself ideologized. However, Bürger asserts that there must be a *relative* freedom of art *vis-à-vis* the praxis of life otherwise art loses its capacity to criticize it (50).

- 15 I borrow the Janus-faced image from Walter Benjamin's analysis of the Trauerspiel in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, where he analyzes the tyrant/martyr diad in the sense that often the tyrant and the martyr are the same person.
- 16 Williams offers a different reading of this scene, noting a melancholic reassembly of the friend/enemy divide (139). O'Bryen counters William's argument by showing how this melancholic articulation functions to question the consensus regarding literature's obsolescence in the post-dictatorship (473; 480). My view is that, in this case, literature's role is to complicate the friend/enemy division by looking at the details of microfascism.
- 17 We do not witness Wieder's death so we have to rely on Romero's ambiguous account. This situation perpetuates a state of affairs that only encourages continuity between authoritarianism and neoliberalism (we remember that the person who employed Detective Romero to search for Wieder is "really" rich), thus annulling even the possibility of contemplating justice. However, the process of investigation turned out to be more important than the final outcome, since it allowed for the contemplation of the Janus-faced identity of Belano and Wieder with regard to both politics and art. Furthermore, killing him might punish the individual, but it does not put an end to the fascist element he stands for.

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