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WORKING LIVES:
ARTISTIC SOLIDARITY IN REVOLUTIONARY PERU (1960-1980)

by

JOSÉ R. CHÁVARRY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT


by

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Advisor: Fernando Degiovanni

This dissertation examines the discourses and experiences of cultural work as a form of intellectual and artistic solidarity in Peru during the 1960s and 1970s. Amid the broader Latin American and global spirit of revolution, anti-imperialism and Third World liberation, in Peru these decades saw a radical transformation in society where rural and urban masses rose against a traditional political and socioeconomic system that maintained colonial structures of domination and oppression of marginalized populations. In an attempt to rein in this desborde popular, as it became known, the nationalist and populist Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces and a consolidating Left sought to include these masses into their hegemonic projects. In this context of revolution, a number of intellectuals and artists (writers, poetic collectives, filmmakers) looked for novel ways to demonstrate their solidarity with the masses, both by representing work and by performing as workers. In doing so, these cultural producers sought to close the gap between manual and intellectual labor, thus creating sites for identification and collaboration with the mobilizing rural and urban populations. For the likes of novelists José María Argüendas and Manuel Scorza, the poetic movement Hora Zero, filmmaker Nora de Izcue and peasant activist Saturnino Huillca, the realm of cultural work became an arena to demonstrate solidarity through physical presence and affective connections, and to enact the promise of a more just society and a better life.
Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation was, at the same time, an individual and a collaborative process. Individual because I spent many hours, by myself, in front of a computer or going for (very long) walks to arrange my thoughts, but collective because I never once felt alone. I am incredibly lucky to have had the opportunities I did and, more importantly, the people that were with every step of the way. I cannot offer enough thanks to all who helped, mentored and put up with me throughout these years.

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For over ten years, my professors and colleagues at Manhattan College have been an incredible network of support and friendship. Antonio Córdoba and Laura Redruello were always
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A mi papá, mi hincha número uno.

Y a mi mamá, mi héroe.
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Introduction

On May 15, 1963, a group of eight Peruvian guerrilleros infiltrated the small town of Puerto Maldonado, located in the Amazonian province of Madre de Dios, as members of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). Among them was renowned 21-year-old poet Javier Heraud, who after a year of studying film in Havana had returned to Peru to participate in a guerrilla insurrection that intended to replicate Cuba’s successful revolution on Peruvian soil. After a few days in the jungle trying to plan their next move, the young insurgents were outmaneuvered by military officials. Attempting to escape, Heraud and one other jumped into the river, climbed aboard a raft and on it raised a white flag in surrender. According to the poet’s father, who after receiving news of his son’s fate traveled to the town, Heraud’s comrade had clamored out: “no disparen más”. Whether they were not heard by the soldiers, or their pleas simply ignored, bursts of gunfire reached both students: Heraud’s body was riddled with bullets and, to his father’s horror, an explosive shell, used to hunt large animals and whose use against humans was forbidden by war regulations, had ripped straight through his torso (12). His body floating down the river, Heraud’s end could not be but reminiscent of his 1961 poem, “Elegía:” “Yo nunca me rio/ de la muerte. /Simplemente/ sucede que/ no tengo/ miedo/ de/ morir/ entre/ pajaros y arboles” (56).

Like other Latin American writers who put aside their artistic craft to take up arms in the fight against imperialism, such as Salvadorian poet Roque Dalton, Heraud’s untimely, martyr-like death embodied the choices and contradictions at the center of intellectual and artistic commitment in the sixties and seventies. Claudia Gilman has referred to these decades as an era defined by the intellectual’s need to secure his place as a revolutionary actor, and transform his literary production into a pragmatic, political artistic creation that could become a weapon in the liberation of the
region. How exactly to do this, argues Gilman, was at the center of the “debates and dilemmas” that characterized the era, and led committed intellectuals and artists to rethink their public personas and roles (29). While these questions regarding the possibility to reconcile artistic and social commitment were by no means novel or exclusive to these decades (and rather point to the deeper and fraught relationship between theory and praxis), in the sixties and seventies they were actualized because of the world events taking place that seemingly presaged a global moment of emancipation from colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. The Latin American cultural elite, aware and in tune with the liberation movements (in the context of the Cold War), became increasingly committed to political progressiveness, interested in public affairs, and sought to define a relationship with the mobilizing masses of students, peasants, factory workers, and other marginalized and oppressed subjects.

In this context, Heraud, a nationally and internationally recognized poetic promise, became convinced that his art was insufficient for revolution, and decided to take a step into direct military action – and substitute the pen for the rifle, as Gilman would say. His sacrifice came at a moment when small insurgent groups in Peru had decided the time was ripe for the overthrow of an oligarchic, traditional ruling caste that placed the interests of the United States and foreign multinationals over that of the Peruvian population. The success of Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and the Cuban revolutionaries over the US-backed Batista dictatorship in 1959 meant that revolution was no longer a pipedream but could – and would – be achieved. If the guerrilla insurrections that spread throughout Latin America in the sixties were the born out of social movements arisen during the fifties, the Cuban success was the trigger that ended a revolutionary drought and allowed the Left to think beyond dream utopias and into the realm of action (Lust 29-30). Ultimately, the Peruvian insurrections such as the ELN were a failure because, as I will show, they were unable
to attract the masses of the disenfranchised who had begun their own mobilizations throughout the country and incorporate them into an alternative and popular organizational model. Furthermore, the guerrilla insurgencies were one of the causes of the 1968 coup that would establish a nationalist and populist military regime that governed the country until 1980. This Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces (RGAF) would attempt to create, also unsuccessfully, a so-called “democracy of full participation”, where the masses of peasant and urban workers could have access, and a role, in the construction of a modern and more equal Peru.

The question that triggers this research project has been, precisely, how the Peruvian committed artist and intellectual of the sixties and seventies demonstrated, deployed or performed his or her solidarity with the mobilizing masses within this revolutionary context. Part of this process of self-fashioning had to do, as Gilman covers in detail, with the debates around compromise that these intellectuals took part in and that circulated through journals, newspapers, public pronouncements, manifestos and their literary creation itself. Ultimately, this demonstrated a seemingly irresoluble contradiction between artistic innovation and political action, a distinction which underscored that the artist, in order to leave behind a bourgeois nature, had to become a revolutionary by, paradoxically, abandoning art. Heraud is a prime example, therefore, of this transition – in a sense successful, and yet, of course, realizable only in death. However, neither the abandonment of radical politics (as novelist Mario Vargas Llosa would do in the late seventies) nor the ultimate sacrifice (as in Heraud) exhausts the realm of possibilities for artists and intellectuals who sought to reaffirm their revolutionary commitment. What I argue is that there was an alternative form of conceiving solidarity that did not pass through the choice between the pen or the rifle, but that was rather understood as a form of work.
My argument throughout these pages is that in the Peruvian sixties and seventies there emerged a conceptualization of solidarity with the urban and rural masses where the intellectual or artist identified as a cultural worker whose labor was the same as any other worker of society. The cultural worker, as a radical, committed cultural producer might have identified as (and sometimes more specifically as “art worker” or “film worker”), sought to break down the social and conceptual barriers that separated intellectual work from “el diario quehacer creador del pueblo” (Peru, Proyecto de bases 22). Instead of becoming a martyr in the struggle for liberation, becoming a cultural worker meant an identification with the working class and their struggle for achieving a more just, fair and productive society for those who had, for centuries, been bound by the yokes of colonialism and marginalization. Whereas the revolutionary-hero was an individual figure to be venerated and emulated, cultural work aimed at collective creation, which in turn implied notions of intercultural communication, collaboration and understanding. As a worker, instead of as a letrado or an insurgent, the committed artist’s attention became life itself, since work and life, as I will further explain below, were seen by the Marxist postulates upon which this conceptualization rested as being fundamentally connected.

Cultural work was neither a concrete movement nor a single artistic tradition or trend, but rather a looser conceptualization employed by different actors within the revolutionary context of the Peruvian sixties and seventies, from the military state to radical committed producers. The RGAF, in its nationalist approach to the modernization of the country, was backed by socially progressive intellectuals that saw culture as a human capacity that needed to be expanded and cultivated in order to achieve an inclusive democracy. After all, culture was “el tejido interno de la vida cotidiana” (Peru, Proyecto de bases 2). Cultural work, therefore, was for the RGAF a humanist and participatory process that would guarantee freedom and social justice and would
promote national and universal values (Peru, Proyecto de bases 7). It was another form of work, and as such it had to be promoted and regulated as all other kinds of labor, because only in the organization of work could a collaborative and just society be built. The philosopher Augusto Salazar Bondy, one of the main ideologues of the military regime, wrote that every social reform needed to conceive the transformation of work: “El trabajo…no alienado, esclavizado, el trabajo oprimido, sino el trabajo libre, un trabajo expansivo, un trabajo fecundo” (110, my emphasis). All work, then, needed to be fecundo: that is, fertile, fruitful, productive of life. Figure 1, an ad on the back of a 1972 issue of the state-sponsored Textual cultural magazine reads: “La Revolución hace posible una nueva vida. Convierte cada día en una promesa y una posibilidad. 1972 consta de 366 promesas y 366 posibilidades. Son 8,784 horas de trabajo construyendo una nueva sociedad, en la cual tú serás lo más importante” (Textual 4, 89). The state invited every worker – from the factory laborer to the cultural producer – to partake in this promise of life.

However, it was outside the utopian formulations of the state that the possibilities of cultural work materialized. Many of the official cultural policies the RGAF deployed during the late sixties and early seventies were, though novel, either short-lived or insufficient to create truly democratic, collective and participatory artistic processes. But many artists and intellectuals identified as cultural workers or saw the experience of work as an arena where to create cultural processes that would bring them closer to the masses. As I will show in what follows, through the sixties and seventies the modernization process begun in the first half of the twentieth century had resulted in the emergence of increasingly organized and radicalized popular sectors who mobilized throughout the country demanding better labor and living conditions. This desborde popular, as it became known, represented the possibilities for a drastic transformation of Peruvian society, as it allowed the emergence of new subjects such as the unionized peasant, the migrant worker or the
informal vendor. In this changing social arena, cultural workers saw the possibility of forming part of this transformation, of helping unleash the revolutionary potential that these masses held. Therefore, cultural work became an alternative form of conceptualizing solidarity and emancipation, where substituting the pen for the rifle was no longer necessary. Instead, cultural work opens up the possibilities for conflating artistic and social commitment, for creating spaces – diverse, heterogenous, and not unproblematic – where intellectuals and masses could come into contact.

Throughout the four chapters that follow I analyze distinct cases in which the notion of work was used as a discourse and practice of solidarity, and where cultural workers aimed at forming part of the revolutionary environment of sixties and seventies Peru. While each case is self-contained, there are nevertheless certain thematic and theoretical axes that bring them together or draw direct connections between them. That is, I have aimed at exploring the notion of work not as an abstract concept but in the very concrete and particular ways in which it might have materialized. One of these is the role of money: whether it is a necessary means of survival, the object of desire, or a matter of contempt, money (and its lack thereof) mobilizes or curtails the projects of cultural workers. Related is the place of the home economy and, with it, the relationship between work and gender: in many ways, cultural work reinforced traditional gender roles, despite its democratic ideals, because it often equated revolutionary artistic production with masculinity and male sociability. The home and the family as supportive environments for the cultural worker, therefore, are common images in the cases studied. Another element is the representation and use of technology: the modernization of the country brought the proliferation of industrial and communication technologies that created new relationships between the body of the worker and the machine. In these new interactions with machinery – either the centrifuge processing fishmeal
or the handheld camera used to record labor manifestations – work was also systematized, sped up and automated. Money, gender and technology, therefore, are some of the aspects of cultural work that take prominence throughout these pages; through them, we might visualize how intellectual solidarity was not just an abstract discourse that took place in magazines or was subject to debate, but instead intersected with other aspects of life in the Peruvian sixties and seventies.

Finally, with this investigation I also aim to divert from how the Peruvian sixties and seventies have been analyzed in more traditional literary studies. This era, in Peruvian studies, is often read through its major figures (José María Arguedas, Mario Vargas Llosa, among a few others), or, in the social and political sciences, as the period of failed economic reforms which created the conditions for the emergence of the Shining Path Maoist sect and the civil war that, when it ended in 2000, had left over 70,000 dead. In my reading, both these interpretations are insufficient: they close off the possibility for alternative and more nuanced understandings of revolution in Peru, conflating it instead with Andean utopias or dystopias or the celebration of canonical writers. An exploration of alternative cultural practices, in a context of similar developments in other regions of Latin America, opens new spaces for examining the relationship between art, revolution, intellectuals and community in sixties and seventies Peru. After all, as Eric Zolov (2014) points out, in the new approaches to this time period, which in countries like Chile, Mexico, Uruguay and Argentina has come under renewed attention from cultural studies and what he terms as “global sixties”, Peru has remained mostly elided.

I. Desborde popular and cultural work: Peruvian modernization and artistic solidarity

At the time of Fidel Castro’s insurgency, president Manuel Prado Ugarteche, a banker and prominent member of the Peruvian oligarchy, and whose family members included former presidents and national heroes, sided with the United States and supported Cuba’s expulsion from
the Organization of American States. And yet Prado’s presidency (1956-1962) was characterized by the “convivencia” of the country’s different political groups and parties: he legalized both Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre’s Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) and the Partido Comunista Peruano (PCP). Both parties, founded in the 1920s (the former by Haya de la Torre; the latter by Marxist thinker José Carlos Mariátegui), had emerged as populist or workers’ parties that had sought to draw the support of the growing organized labor unions and increasingly radicalized university student sector. Because of this, their members and leaders had faced arduous persecution since, especially during periods of military rule. With the reintegration of both parties into Peruvian political life (which led to the return of their many exiled leaders, or their release from prison), Prado gained the support of these organizations, which in turn allowed for political cohabitation. The 1962 elections were decided in favor of the leader of the populist APRA; Haya de la Torre’s failure to obtain the required third of the popular vote, however, led to accusations of fraud from another one of the candidates, Fernando Belaúnde Terry. The military, which supported Belaúnde, intervened and imposed a Junta that lasted a year, when new elections were called. In 1963, Belaúnde, renowned member of the oligarchy and an architect with grandiose plans for the modernization of the country, was elected president.

Prado and Belaúnde’s presidencies were marked by the definitive transformation of Peru’s economic structure – and with it, drastic demographic, social and cultural changes. The rapid industrialization and modernization of the country (which had begun decades earlier but gained traction during the 1950s, with the liberalization of the global economy after World War II) and the growing presence of US capital meant the erosion of the traditional, agricultural-based model which had persisted since the colonial era into the republican period and a shift towards growing industries such as mining, manufacturing, fishing and hydrocarbons. Increased US investments in
the Andean highlands (especially through mining companies such as the Cerro de Pasco Copper Corporation), as well the development of new industries in coastal cities (namely fishmeal), led to an economic boom from the late forties into the early sixties. Between 1948 and 1963, for example, there was a steady climb in the GDP of over 6% as a result of growing export and import rates (Zegarra 66; 84). But this industrial modernization also resulted in the collapse of traditional agrarian societies, and agricultural sectors became increasingly difficult to sustain because of the massive migration of workers into Lima and other major urban centers. On the one hand, the transformation of the economic model led to the demographic explosion of urban centers, and with it the emergence of new social classes and actors, who left their rural towns looking for employment and better opportunities in the cities. With these social and demographic transformations, barriadas, or shantytowns, emerged in the outskirts of these cities. On the other, the power of the Andean latifundios, and the gamonales that ran them, already in peril since the first decades of the century, effectively declined as the concentration of labor and capital shifted to the coast or to the new mining sectors. Using this situation to their advantage, peasant workers became increasingly organized and radicalized, and began taking land back from the debilitated hacendados, the traditional ruling caste. This economic transformation, therefore, meant the reorganization of the very way Peru was imagined as a nation: no longer was the distinction between an “official Peru” and a “deep Peru”, a dichotomy historian Jorge Basadre had proposed in the 1930s, an appropriate model to describe the national reality.\footnote{See Thurner, Mark. “Jorge Basadre’s ‘Peruvian History of Peru,’ or the Poetic Aporia of Historicism”} The “real Peru,” José Luis Rénique argues, “se había desplazado al centro del sistema” (2015b, 112).

In 1980, sociologist José Matos Mar sought to explain this socioeconomic transformation with his highly influential \textit{Desborde popular y crisis del Estado: el nuevo rostro del Perú en la...}
In this fundamental text about Peruvian modernization, Matos Mar coined the term *desborde popular* to refer to the “popular overflow” or “popular brimming-over” of the working masses into the national scene, referring both to the peasants’ land takeovers and the growth of urban labor in the new sectors. Through this idea, he was looking to explain how emerging popular sectors were mobilizing throughout the country, challenging the subaltern position assigned to them by the state and, in doing so, questioning the very idea of nation that had functioned since independence (36-7). Characterizing it as a “spontaneous” and “novel” dynamic, Matos Mar wrote:

Esta dinámica procede de la movilización espontánea de los sectores populares que, cuestionando la autoridad del Estado y recurriendo a múltiples estrategias y mecanismos paralelos están alterando las reglas de juego establecidas y cambiando el rostro del Perú…Lo novedoso de la situación actual es que el impulso para el cambio no solo ha surgido mayoritariamente de los sectores populares, sino que genera un poderoso ascenso de masas, a escala nacional, sin respetar los límites del orden establecido oficialmente (17-18).

Though rural and urban mobilization was not entirely new (massive protests in the capital had led to labor laws and a new constitution in the twenties), the emergence of the *desborde popular* in the fifties did point to a centuries-long economic system finally reaching its breaking point. After all, independence from Spain and the institution of the Republic in 1824 had not eliminated colonial political, economic and social structures; in fact, it had been little more than a power transfer to an oligarchy that sought to maintain their control over the means of production and distribution in the country – and thus their status, wealth and political position. The many military regimes the republic had had in a century and a half also aimed at sustaining these models. The
general population, made up of working-class peasants and poor urban dwellers, was almost entirely excluded from any sort of official political participation; the Andean highlands and the Amazon region, in particular, were seen as sites of economic expansion and their inhabitants as potential sources of financial gain, not as active national subjects. But by the fifties, Matos Mar argued, it was becoming impossible for the state to ignore the forces mobilizing throughout the country and demanding land, rights, better wages and an active role in the modernizing nation.

That is, the concept of desborde popular refers to how the masses became the protagonists of a socioeconomic transformation affecting the whole country. This was only catalyzed by developments in infrastructure, education and mass communication. The Pan American Highway, which ran through coastal Peru and connected the country to its neighbors to the north and south, the first highways to Andean provinces and Belaúnde’s proposed “Carretera Marginal” along the Amazonian region allowed for faster travel to and from major cities, and around the whole country. New education laws were also enacted by the governments of Prado and fifties military strongman Manuel Odría, giving a push to technical and scientific preparation to fulfil the needs of the new manufacturing sectors of the country. Finally, mass media such as the radio, and later television, became significant in bridging distances between the country’s different regions, both by creating a general consciousness about political events and as forms of entertainment (Matos Mar 34). Desborde popular refers, therefore, to both the changing social structuring in Peru as well as the various processes that made it possible.

The result was a national mobilization of the masses, whose main weapons became the labor strike and the land takeover. Both in the Andean region and the cities, the popular sectors asserted their presence and their capacity as political subjects; they represented a displaced mass of workers who, having lost their means of employment and livelihood when the agrarian sectors
collapsed, now sought to either reclaim their land or find new opportunities around the urban centers. In the outskirts of Lima, these migrant workers founded precarious neighborhoods, facing continuous eviction, but returning once and again and establishing community centers and unions to defend their populations. Work also changed, in this context, as these masses inserted themselves first into the coastal industries (for example fishmeal or manufacturing) or other menial occupations (for example regulated or unregulated transportation jobs, such as bus or cab driver). But soon after and given the massive number of workers pouring into the cities, and with it increasing numbers of unemployment, there emerged an “informal” sector of street vendors or per diem laborers who lacked any kind of stability. From an industrial city, writes Matos Mar, Lima became in the mid seventies and into the eighties “una ciudad bazar desbordada por actividades precarias, informales o fuera del circuito oficial…[characterized by] uso intensivo de la mano de obra, utilización del trabajo familiar, baja relación capital-trabajo, alta flexibilidad, sentido agudo de la creatividad” (60). This, added to a declining national economy within the global financial crises of the seventies that further resulted in unemployment and recessions, meant that work was a daily preoccupation across all Peruvian sectors.

Under Matos Mar’s theorization, desborde popular might be thought of as an identitarian concept or as a problem of sovereignty. On the one hand, the sociologist stressed throughout that the result of the mobilization of the masses and the growth of the urban sectors caused a fundamental transformation in the “face” of the country, as the rural populations moved into cities and created a new culture where both sectors, once so clearly distinct, meld together. The result, he argued, was a melting pot of people and their customs, “una fusión interregional de culturas, tradiciones e instituciones” that would represent the integration of the different parts of the country into a unified national culture (94). On the other, for Matos Mar this represented a crisis of the
state, inasmuch as the governments learned they could not simply subjugate the masses under outdated institutional and legal systems. The state, he argued, needed to “enter into dialogue” with its population, to find viable ways to incorporate it into a new national model. That is, it was a problem of sovereignty, of establishing a social contract between ruler and ruled: “Sólo en esas condiciones podrá constituirse la futura legitimidad del Estado y la autoridad de la Nación” (108). For Matos Mar, therefore, the most pressing issues seemed to be what kind of national project will emerge through the incorporation of the *desborde popular*, and how the nation-state would attain its legitimacy in this new political context. How the country dealt with these changes will determine its future, he concluded: “La respuesta no podrá formularse eficazmente en otros términos que los de una reforma profunda de la estructura del Estado y una redefinición de la identidad nacional peruana en la cultura” (108).

In my reading, the concept of *desborde popular* may also be understood through the notions of constituent versus constituted power. Antonio Negri writes that constituent power “is in fact the revolution itself” (2); not necessarily the proletariat subject, as Marx defined it, constituent power represents for Negri “a faculty to construct a political arrangement” (35). Constituent power, as the force of democracy itself, is a perpetual outside to the state, as it challenges and defies its authority and validity. Therefore, the state, or constituted power, seeks to reabsorb constituent power, to make it “immanent to the system” and to eliminate its creative potential and originality (6). In this way, for Negri, power is not a singular entity but a double mechanism, that of a constituent power of democracy whose primary outlet is revolution, and a constituted power that is trying to curb and control its forces, to make them not only harmless but also productive for the state. Beyond the search for a new identity or the viability of the state, *desborde popular* holds a potential for democracy: it is a multitude emerging from the collapse of a traditional, agrarian
economy and coalescing as a politicized working class that demanded land rights, the nationalization of mining and petroleum industries, the stabilization of urban labor, and full participation within the industrial sector as well as within the state. Its dismantled the oligarchical economic and political infrastructure of the country, and in turn ushered a series of new actors that sought, once again, to rein it under their control, to channel its forces for their own hegemonic projects. The guerrillas, the military and the consolidating Left are often seen as the protagonists of the insurgencies and revolutions in sixties and seventies Peru; however, these all vied for control of the desborde popular, looking to legitimize themselves through the support of the rural and urban multitudes mobilizing throughout the country.

In the early hours of October 3, 1968, members of the Peruvian armed forces entered Palacio de Gobierno and escorted Belaúnde out, placing him aboard a flight to Argentina. By the morning, the bloodless military takeover was complete, and General Juan Velasco Alvarado declared the beginning of a new era in Peruvian politics. The coup was not entirely unexpected. A crisis surrounding the International Petroleum Company’s holdings in the northern regions of La Brea and Pariñas had devolved into a corruption scandal that accentuated the Belaúnde administration’s incapacity to respond effectively to the economic pressures from foreign powers. When a page from a contract that would supposedly nationalize the oil company’s holdings went missing, it signaled, for many, that Belaúnde had no idea how to control national resources and the country’s economy. This was, however, only the final straw for a government that was under pressure from several fronts, including, most significantly, the emergence of the desborde popular through the continued peasant uprisings and land takeovers in the Andean region. And, at the same time, the small but threatening guerrilla insurgencies looking to mobilize these masses and
replicate the Cuban success challenged Belaúnde’s authority to stabilize the country. Velasco’s Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces, through its socioeconomic reforms and ideologies of participation and community, was a state attempt to channel the forces of the desborde popular in the construction of a modern Peruvian nation. Though ultimately unsuccessful because of its rigid hierarchies, the ideological differences of its members and widespread corruption, the nature and the role of RGAF was unique in the region: “in a context dominated by Latin American right-wing dictatorial regimes and the fight against communism, the Peruvian armed forces actually embarked on a process aimed at achieving national liberation and promoting social justice...[through] popular mobilization as the means to achieve social and economic emancipation” (Aguirre and Drinot 18-19). The experience of the reform-oriented military regime, authoritarian and repressive to dissidence, nevertheless allowed the Peruvian Left to develop in the margins; through the sixties and seventies, more than a dozen progressive political parties emerged and offered resistance to the state. These, too, vied for the support of the rural and urban working masses, looking to include them in their political projects and make them agents of change against a military regime that quickly began to lose the backing of its constituents. In the sixties and seventies, therefore, the guerrillas, the RGAF and the Left all sought to mobilize the constituent power of the desborde popular.

By the late 1950s, in the valley provinces of La Convención and Lares, Cusco, peasant unions had organized against the latifundio owners to regain control over the land they worked. They were led by the Trotskyist Hugo Blanco, who unlike other Leftist leaders and organizations who advised the peasant groups “from above” sought to organize the revolution “from within” the communities themselves (Béjar 59). Blanco lived with the peasants, learned their languages and customs, and began working as a union leader in La Convención; he also helped establish medical
posts and schools in the communities he visited, spreading social consciousness and inciting political mobilization. By 1961, the unions had multiplied in number and had become significantly radicalized, and began demanding a thorough restructuring of the agrarian system in the province. Until his arrest in 1963, Blanco led the takeover of lands and the expulsion of the *latifundistas* under the motto of “Tierra o Muerte;” the expropriated lands were distributed among the peasants and the unions. Faced with continued insurrection, president Belaúnde carried out a series of land redistribution measures for the valley region. However, these were small, insufficient, and could not quell the spirit of revolution ignited by Blanco’s activities in Cusco. Adding to this, the success of Castro, Guevara and the Cuban insurgents made clear, throughout the rest of the country, that the conditions for revolution, and the end of imperialism, were at hand in Peru and throughout Latin America.

The new political organizations that emerged in the early 1960s were inspired both by Blanco’s and Castro’s insurrections. This “New Left” represented a generational break, and it attracted young intellectuals and professionals from middle and upper classes, some of whom had not previously militated in political parties (Gonzales 1999, 80). Among these were the ELN, a military movement formed in the image of Castro’s and that in 1961 sent several members to be trained in guerrilla warfare maneuvers in Cuba, and the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), created out of APRA’s radical wing and organized as a political party. Despite their ideological and organizational differences, both groups came together to launch pointed attacks in different regions of the country. The revolutionaries did not receive the popular support they had expected and were quickly outmaneuvered by the military: most of their members and leaders were killed in combat, including the young poet Heraud, who had been a militant in the ELN, and MIR’s leader Luis de la Puente Uceda. As Osmar Gonzales points out, the failure of the 1965 guerrillas
can be attributed to their failure to understand, and include, the peasant masses that had begun mobilizing in the highlands in the late fifties (84). That is, the ELN and MIR, despite their attempts to form broader coalitions and reach the larger population, were still operating through traditional politics of representation and were unable to channel the desborde popular and its potential for revolutionary action to their cause. The guerrilla’s failure coincided with Belaúnde’s own defeat in restructuring the economy from within the oligarchy and the capitalist model. In the mid-sixties, writes chronicler Guillermo Thorndike, “el país hervía socialmente” and both capitalist reform and armed insurrection seemed to be leading nowhere, since they failed to take into account the forces of the mobilizing working masses (1993, 115).

The RGAF aimed to resolve this national crisis through a nationalist and populist program it termed the “social democracy of full participation”. Laid out in the accordingly named “Plan Inca”, the program would follow an economic and political structure devised for the nation’s specific needs, rather than try to appropriate capitalist or communist systems. It was to be a third path, distinct from both capitalism and communism, and instead modeled after Peruvian reality. It moved to include, in both theory and practice, the emerging power of the national masses – and eventually cede to them control of the means of production. After the coup, Velasco, who had quickly ascended through the ranks despite his humble beginnings, was installed as head of the revolutionary regime. For Velasco, it was necessary to move beyond traditional, representational politics and into a system of full participation: “Quiero, por eso, reiterar que ninguno de nosotros tiene ambiciones políticas. No nos interesa competir en la arena electoral. No hemos venido a hacer politiquería. Hemos venido a hacer una revolución” (“Mensaje a la nación”). The RGAF moved quickly: days after the coup, the International Petroleum Company’s holdings were seized, and the company expelled from the country and refunded for its losses. A year later, the largest
agrarian reform in the history of the nation was put into effect, eclipsing Belaúnde’s previous attempts. As anthropologist Enrique Mayer points out, this was not so much a redistribution as a collectivization: large tracts of land were condensed into smaller units and divided out among agrarian cooperatives; this meant that there was not necessarily a greater access to land, but better salaries, social services and wealth distribution (51-55). The purpose, according to Velasco, was to give the land back to those who worked it: “Campesino, el patrón ya no comerá más de tu pobreza”, he famously declared on his 1969 national address.

The word “campesino”, or peasant, is of particular importance here, because it underscored the RGAF’s modernization program founded upon the figure and role of the worker. If the populations of the Andean region had long been called “indios”, a demeaning category based on positivist notions of race and ethnicity, the term “peasant” emphasized these subjects’ capacity as producers. While indio represented backwardness, peasant referred to an active national subject, vital to the modernization process and on whose labor rested the country’s economic infrastructure. When Velasco changed the term “Día del Indio” to “Día del campesino”, then, he was stressing that the Andean subject was neither backwards nor extinct, but rather instrumental to the national revolution. Less symbolic was the creation of labor cooperatives and other worker-based organizations. Founded in 1972, SINAMOS (Sistema Nacional de Movilización Social) was the RGAF’s principal organism for the reorganization of worker and working communities; its stated goal was to create the conditions for social participation and eventually give all production centers back to the masses. SINAMOS often competed with other unions and workers’ organizations, many of them with ties to the more established sectors of the Peruvian left. SINAMOS, therefore, was the state’s attempt at co-opting workers away from these unions, because it understood that only by controlling the labor force could its revolutionary design move forward (Clarke 276).
SINAMOS expanded its discourse of the participation and collectivization of the working masses through marginalized areas of the country, including the Andean highlands, the urban *barriadas* and the Amazonian region. Promoting his nationalist revolution, Velasco traveled throughout the nation, especially to the parts often neglected by previous mandataries. In the Amazonian town of Contamana, for example, he called out to the masses and inciting their participation: “…solicitamos su participación social y su esfuerzo indesmayable para construir juntos el desarrollo real de Contamana” (“Notas” 41).2

The cultural policies of the RGAF, enacted through both institutional reforms and the promotion of new art forms and designs, were also articulated in relation to the notions of work, participation, and collective creation. The 1975 “Proyecto de la escuela nacional de arte folklórico”, for example, argues that the artist, “como cualquier trabajador” (9), must produce in accordance to the material conditions surrounding him or her. Art is not “una categoría ahistórica o un privilegio de un individuo especial, ni el resultado de los procesos subconscientes de un solo individuo (sentimientos, deseos), es más bien *una forma de trabajo* de un individuo o grupo (que pueden o no conservar su privacidad), cuyo producto o resultado tiene una *meta colectiva* (producto social)” (8, my emphasis). Under these frameworks, the RGAF sponsored the creation of cultural publications, schools for the teaching and promotion of popular art forms (in theater, music and dance), annual art and music festivals, cultural television and radio programming, museum exhibits, and cheap collections of classic texts like Biblioteca Peruana. Many artists and intellectuals were invited to form part of these programs, as journalists, directors, editors, coordinators, or cultural advisors to Velasco and his generals. This collaboration was a surprising

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2 Many committed writers, artists and intellectuals formed part of SINAMOS and their outreach projects, including Hora Zero poet Tulio Mora and anthropologist Hugo Neira. Their roles in the state organization will be discussed in further detail in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively.
but welcome development for many committed intellectuals, who saw this as an opportunity to enact cultural policy. Under Velasco’s nationalist ideals, so-called traditional arts (folkloric music, artisanship and dances) were given a grand stage and a broad institutional support. In doing so, the military state sought to revitalize an authentic, national culture over the more modern, cosmopolitan production of established artists, many of whom were living in Europe during these years. I will come back to this important issue in the following section.

Yet the military state was suspicious of all forms of collectivization, participation and mobilization that began to take place outside of its jurisdiction and its rules. The RGAF became increasingly authoritarian and repressive, expropriating all media companies in 1974 in an attempt to streamline content and “give them back to the people”. Newspapers, radio and television networks were taken from the families that owned them and given to a select group of editors and directors, who were only allowed to publish material preapproved by the regime, and were kept under continuous vigilance. The military state’s contradictions and shortcomings were made further apparent as its organizations, especially SINAMOS, not only failed to adequately promote the social and political inclusion of the peasant and urban masses, but also punished the efforts of all other political organizations from the left. The teachers’ union, the Sindicato Único de

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3 To oversee these programs, the government ordered the restructuring of the Casa de la Cultura into the larger Instituto de Cultura (INC), and its direction given to respected intellectuals such as literary critics José Miguel Oviedo and Antonio Cornejo Polar, and linguist Martha Hildebrandt. The INC held many high-profile events, such as inviting Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal and hosting the so-called “poetic duel” between poets Antonio Cisneros and Jorge Pimentel, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. To expand its audience, the center sold cheap tickets to its events at schools, unions and poor urban areas, and relied on the increasing availability of television to transmit some of its programming (Razzetto 89-90).

4 Many of the most prominent Peruvian intellectuals initially supported Velasco and the RGAF’s agenda. In 1969, “La Declaración de los 100”, signed by the likes of Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Ramón Ribeyro, Blanca Varela, Fernando de Szyszlo, among others, recognized the regime and its measures. The narrator Ribeyro, living in Paris at the time, said in an interview for the literary magazine Narración that “El proceso desencadenado por el actual gobierno es positivo en la medida en que está llevando a la práctica reformas que el Perú necesitaba desde hace una cuarentena de años y que ningún gobierno había hasta entonces logrado ejecutar” (“Reportaje” 17). Ribeyro’s hopeful, yet measured analysis of the RGAF was a common stance during the first years of the military regime. Not long after, however, the increasing authoritarianism of the state (especially with the expropriation of the newspapers in the mid-seventies) led many intellectuals to come out against it.
Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú (SUTEP) became a prominent opponent of the RGAF, as they were more closely aligned with the radical left and competed with the regime for affiliates. The 1973 teachers’ strike led by the SUTEP, when more than five hundred teachers were arrested, demonstrates the struggle between the already existing collective organizations and those organized through the revolutionary state for control over the masses (Oliart 141).

The year 1973 marked the beginning of a profound crisis for the RGAF, as not only teachers but also many other sectors of the working population went on strike. In Chimbote, the fishing port that a few years earlier novelist and ethnographer José María Arguedas had described as reaching a “boiling point”, the unions displaced by SINAMOS organized large strikes against the government’s attempt to co-opt the working masses. During the “Chimbotazo”, as the event was called, protesters sacked SINAMOS offices, calling the organism “antipopular” and “antiobrero” (Clarke 282). The same year, unions mobilized in Cusco, also looting SINAMOS headquarters and demanding autonomy. Over the following months, discontent and unrest grew, and the RGAF’s turn toward authoritarianism to repress social mobilizations reflected its inability to keep in check the forces it had unleashed. The problems came to a head on February 5, 1975, a day also known as the “Limazo”. After a police strike ended with military intervention, masses throughout Lima and Callao took to the streets to protest, causing the state to respond with violence. Looting, sackings, fires and widespread violence followed the clashes between the protesters and the military, with dozens killed and over a hundred injured. The day after, new labor and grassroots organizations emerged, including the Comité de Coordinación de Organizaciones Populares (COCOP). In his 1976 novelized chronicle No, mi general, Thorndike wrote:

Campesinos, sacerdotes, revolucionarios, juventudes, obreros, pueblos jóvenes del resto del país se sumaron al COCOP, organizando Comités Regionales mientras comités de
seguridad empezaban a aparecer en fábricas y barrios. El COCOP, además, establecía centros de almacenamiento de víveres y artículos de primera necesidad. Poderosas empresas campesinas de la Cordillera ayudaban a este abastecimiento controlado por el pueblo...El lunes, Velasco humeaba. Vaya, quién gobernaba el país. El COCOP se le escapaba de las manos… (271, my emphasis)

This and similar associations were short lived. However, the fallout of the 1975 Limazo points to the formation of collective movements alternative to the state, which, as in the description above, not only brought together different social actors (peasants, students, poor urban dwellers, leftist militants), but also provided food and emergency supplies. What is relevant here is not the degree of success of these movements, but the way in which the revolution started by the state “got out of hand”, leading to the creation of new sites for the organization of the masses beyond (and against) the regime. The social unrest, coupled with Velasco’s deteriorating health (he had suffered a stroke and had a leg amputated), led the military to stage another coup the same year. This Second Phase, led by General Francisco Morales Bermúdez, undid many of his predecessor’s reforms, but dissatisfaction mounted and labor strikes increased throughout the decade. Between 1973, when workers across the country began overtaking SINAMOS offices, and 1978, when over a million mobilized throughout the country to protest new economic measures, it became clear that new spaces for collectivization and new social actors had emerged outside of state jurisdiction (Lynch 83; Sulmont 26-7). Pressed by these movements, Morales called elections for a Constituent Assembly in 1978, and general elections were held in 1980.

During the late sixties and throughout the seventies, social initiatives had consolidated into small but active political parties. Associations like Vanguardia Revolucionaria, Patria Roja, Partido Comunista Revolucionario and others, were at the forefront of the mobilizations of the
seventies, at first tacitly supporting and then outright denouncing de military regime, but all created because of the conditions allowed by the RGAF (Gonzales 113-4). Made up of political activists and radical university students, these parties sought to attract – competing with the state – the masses of urban and rural workers into their own hegemonic programs of nation-building. Social coalitions like the Frente Obrero Campesino, Estudiantil y Popular (FOCEP), led by intellectuals Genaro Ledesma Izquieta and Manuel Scorza, opted for the electoral route, looking to gain seats in the Constituent Assembly of 1978 and the presidency in 1980. On the other hand, many parties, taking a firm stance against the military reformism, abandoned representative politics and turned increasingly radicalized. A return to Marxism-Leninism, the enticement of Maoism, and a revitalized appreciation of Mariátegui, founder of the Peruvian Communist Party, meant that armed struggle and violence became the only “true” forms of revolution. Because it was ultimately the former that brought the greatest changes to Peruvian society in the seventies – the end of the RGAF, alliances with rural and urban social organisms – these small parties, increasingly separated from its base, proved inviable (Adrianzén 57). Not all disappeared, however, and in the late seventies, in the Central Andes, in the University of Huamanga in Ayacucho, the Partido Comunista Peruano - Sendero Luminoso continued to consolidate its influence over radical students and locals. In 1980, shortly after the return to democracy (with the reelection of Belaúnde Terry) this Marxist-Leninist-Maoist organization would declare war on the state and civil society.

The RGAF and the emergent organized Left attempted to channel the social forces of the desborde popular and incorporate them into competing projects of nationhood. The state, in particular, sought to legitimize itself by attaining popular participation of the masses; in this way, it looked to be its sole representative and mediator. We may understand this through Jon Beasley-Murray’s definition of the social contract: “The contract converts constituent into constituted
power, multitude into people…In and through the contract, individuals are assumed to have transferred their rights to a higher order. But paradoxically it is only through the contract that they become individuals, bearers of civil rights” (237). The radical Left, on the other hand, was often bogged down by its own internal (and often byzantine) differences, and never truly gained the widespread support from labor organizations it had sought. The constituent power of the desborde popular remained a perpetual outside to both, challenging the state’s hierarchies, bureaucratic nature, and cumbersome socioeconomic reforms, and never giving into the small oppositional parties, either. If there was a revolutionary, democratic potential in the emergence of these multitudes, however, this may not be clear. The Left further organized in the early eighties through the consolidation of the Izquierda Unida front, gaining congressional seats and attaining other important victories (Blanco was elected legislator and Alfonso Barrantes mayor of Lima, coming second to Alan García in the 1985 presidential elections). But by then the notion of revolution had taken on different connotations, as Shining Path quickly expanded its war through the Central Andes and into Lima. As social and political scientists later recognized, the social forces unleashed by the political events of the sixties and seventies had created the conditions that allowed a radical, terrorist sect to gain support through its tactics of coercion and scorched earth. The utopian promises of the sixties and seventies were quickly distant memories.

II. Cultural work with and for the people

Perhaps the first Peruvian writer to try to understand and capture the dramatic changes caused by the modernization of the country and the emergence of the desborde popular was the novelist and ethnographer José María Arguedas. Unlike contemporary intellectuals who sought to position themselves firmly within the walls of the lettered city, Arguedas sought to rework a notion of national identity based not on colonial remnants but by positing that the indigenous and mestizo
subjects were the pillars of the nation. Mabel Moraña has called Arguedas a “cultural worker” who “differed markedly from the notion of the lettered subject [el letrado] inherited from colonial time” and whose work emerges from an alternative “form of reason” that “consists in processing cultural materials, preserving their legacies, and disseminating their messages” (2016, 133-4). In my reading, it is possible to broaden this conception of the term “cultural worker”, to think beyond how Arguedas interpreted or communicated the social changes he was experiencing through this “other form of reason”, and look also at how he interacted with these, how he conceived work and how he actually worked. The notion of “work” holds theoretical implications from Marxist philosophy relating to the very nature of the human being and the socialization of individuals. In a context such as the sixties and seventies, furthermore, work became synonymous with revolution, a way to break down class barriers between intellectuals and manual workers, to eliminate the distinction between mental and physical labor. In a politically charged arena, cultural work may not only be an epistemological category but one related to artistic solidarity, to a physical and affective relationship between intellectual and desborde popular. In the two sections that follow, I will flesh out a theoretical definition of development of the notion of work, and also consider how the relationship between art and work was understood in a revolutionary context and particularly in the sixties and seventies.

i. Work and life

The notion of work is fundamental to Marxist thought from its beginnings. Engels, in “The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man” (1876), wrote that the ape evolved into man by using tools with its hands. This physical development led to the increased need for cooperation among apes, which in turn helped in the emergence of speech, or the intellect. Therefore, for Engels work, “is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such
an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created man himself” (7). As Marx explained through his theory of alienation, industrial modernity causes a subject to lose control over the process of his or her work and the objects of production, thus ceasing to be autonomous and becoming dependent on the socioeconomic structure of capitalism. This would lead, according to Marx, to the loss of the human subjectivity of the worker and his or her transformation into a utilitarian element under the control of the machine of capitalism. Even a hundred years later, the philosopher Salazar Bondy, one of the most prominent intellectuals who collaborated with the RGAF, understood work in much the same terms: “en el trabajo está la raíz de la capacidad creadora del hombre, de su posibilidad de transformar la naturaleza y de modificar el mundo para él hacerlo habitable, para hacerlo realmente una morada de la comunidad” (110). As a constitutive element of the human being, in Marxist theory work stands as the basis of personhood and social assembly.

In the seventies the German philosophers Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt wrote that while Marx had theorized the political economy of capital, he had never considered the “political economy of labor power” – that is, the power of workers themselves. They make a distinction between the object of production is capital (dead labor) and the capacity of labor in the process of creation (living labor), arguing that this differentiation “encompasses the entire basic understanding of a society” (130). Kluge and Negt refuse to see labor power as another commodity and instead set out to imagine how a proletarian public sphere would coalesce, arguing that in the process of creation there emerges a product and a “sense of understanding”, a “solidarity…that enable pieces of reciprocal vitality to branch off. For the process of value creation, this is merely the underside of life. For real life contained in the labor process, it is the main portion of this vitality” (133). If there is an emancipatory potential in work, Kluge and Negt argue, this lies in the
worker’s (or labor power’s) ability to interrupt work, to infringe on the time of labor. This potential, however, will not be realized individually but rather by the “quality of alliances that labor capacities enter into among themselves” (147). In other words, the process of work – not its end result, tied to a specific value – generates the possibility for solidarity and alliance, and the realization of the potential of living labor. For Kluge and Negt, it is in living labor that a real potential for politics arises.

Kluge and Negt were writing at the time of transformation in the very idea of what was understood as work. The failure of the labor movements of May 1968 and the global economic crises of the seventies, as well as the emergence of new communications and creative industries radically altered the disposition of labor and of labor power. No longer was work confined to the factory (a conception of Fordism or Taylorism based on the assembly line), but it was becoming an omnipresent activity that occupied all spaces and times of life, and therefore changing the capabilities required for work – namely, the emergence of personal subjectivity as commodity. In 1996, Italian philosopher Mauricio Lazzarato wrote that this emergence of “immaterial labor” creates new subjectivities where life and work become the same: “The fact that immaterial labor produces subjectivity and economic value at the same time demonstrates how capitalist production has invaded our lives and has broken down all the oppositions among economy, power, and knowledge” (142). Immaterial and affective labor becomes another way of capitalist control, as it determines the totality of life, creating workers who are producers and consumers at the same time.

However, because immaterial labor “constitutes itself in immediately collective forms that exist as networks and flows”, this may also open up the possibility for social assembly and collaboration, and not only within the economic sphere (144).
In this new configuration of labor, other contemporary thinkers have asked precisely what these potentials are in the context of postindustrial globalization. While Lazzarato argued that immaterial labor creates spaces of “communication” between producers and consumers, Hardt and Negri stress the affective and corporeal relations established in this process: “The labor involved in all immaterial production, we should emphasize remains material – it involves our bodies and brains as all labor does. What is immaterial is its product…It might be better to understand the new hegemonic form of ‘biopolitical labor’, that is, labor that creates not only material goods but also relationships and ultimately social life itself” (109, italics in the original). Likewise, Vasilis Tsianos and Dimitri Papadopoulos emphasize the productive and revolutionary capabilities of embodied and living work: “The third capitalism (pre-industrialism, industrialism, post-Fordism) is not cognitive, it’s embodied: the regime of embodied capitalism”. What characterizes the new configuration of capitalism since the seventies, for Tsianos and Papadopoulos, is sociability (“productivity is not the result of pure exchange of information and knowledge based interaction, but of the creation of an indeterminate excess in informal, affective, world making connections”) affectivity (“the making of bodies capable of work”), and materiality (“Productivity in embodied capitalism is not the outcome of the ‘cooperation between brains’ but of the cooperation between human bodies, machines and things”) (2006). In this new regime of work, physical connection and cooperation creates spaces of sociability which, for these philosophers, becomes a realm for political action.

More recently, a new current of thought has focused on the utopian imagining of life without work or, more precisely, the possibility that life only exists after or outside of work. For theorists like Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, there is a radical opposition between life and work: “We continue to work long hours, commuting further, to perform tasks that feel increasingly
meaningless. Our jobs have become more insecure, our pay has stagnated, and our debt has become
overwhelming…And each day, we return to work as normal: exhausted, anxious, stressed and
frustrated” (2). On the one hand, the “postwork” society envisioned by Srnicek and Williams
means the shortening of the work week, the investment on automation to replace most unskilled
labor, a universal basic income (UBI) that would redistribute wealth and eliminate the need for
perpetual work, and the destabilization of the Protestant work ethic that has equated work to
personal fulfilment. On the other, there is the reivindication of the positively utopian nature of
these demands, as Kathi Weeks argues:

By allowing rather than evading the charge of utopianism that may be levied against such
demands, we can begin to recognize their potential as tools of utopian thinking and
practice. Conceiving such demands as modes of expression that function to elicit utopian
praxis…allows us to reconsider the nature and function of political demands by
highlighting their performative effects: how they serve to produce the modes of critical
consciousness that they seem merely to presuppose, to elicit the political desires that they
appear simply to reflect, and to mobilize and organize the collective agency of which they
might seem to be only an artifact (225).

For Weeks, Srnicek, and Williams, life is the opposite of work because the latter is always and
inevitably a form of oppression and control. This is why, according to these thinkers, labor
movements have always sought to curb the time and energy dedicated to work and why it is
necessary to “demystify” and “demoralize” the role of work in society. A postwork world implies,
writes Weeks, the possibility of conceiving creativity and fulfilment beyond work, of experiencing
the pleasure of work in other facets of life (12). To “get a life”, according to Weeks, is a political
provocation because it resists and posits alternatives to “those forces that would reduce, contain, or appropriate it” – that is, the obligation to work (233).

This brief recounting of some theories of work means neither to be extensive nor demonstrate some kind of “evolution” of the ideas of and about work. Instead, it shows how intricately linked work is to notions of emancipation, solidarity, social assembly, utopian thinking – and to life itself. Conversely, the anti-work demonstration and the refusal to work has always been a strategy of the Left and a way to challenge capitalist modernity (Jäger 2018). To either idealize or outright reject work, however, or to try to determine whether work creates life or impedes it, is a tall order and beyond my purpose. More useful, in my opinion, is to understand the political implications of work, or rather to see how work was used, as an idea and as an activity, to create sociabilities, to imagine community, and to frame solidarity in a specific historical context. In sixties and seventies Peru, as I have argued, the peasant and the factory worker became symbols of the socioeconomic transformation of the country and the modernization of the state, and their images synonymous with revolution. This idealization of work was not only a tool of the state but also a weapon of the Left: committed intellectuals relied on the representation and identification with the working class as a way to attain support and create, in their view, more authentic and popular forms of cultural production. Work, therefore, may be understood here as a strategy for framing solidarity – in a way, for conceiving an alternative to Heraud’s choice of writing poetry or taking up arms.

ii. Reframing artistic solidarity

As briefly outlined earlier, the military state deployed a cultural policy meant to lionize the figure of the worker, depicting the factory laborer and the peasant as a vital element in the construction of a modern, revolutionary nation. But rather than just represent the worker, the state,
in line with its tenets of social participation, sought to make the working and popular masses into active political subjects, with equal access to artistic production. This meant, on the one hand, the creation or enhancement of “popular” cultural programs, whose main goal was to attract the masses. The Teatro Nacional Popular, under the direction of renowned playwright and director Alonso Alegría, for instance, aimed to make classic theater available to all sectors of society, especially to those who would not have been previously exposed to Golden Age drama, or the works of Shakespeare or Beckett (Slawson 90). Simultaneously, folkloric arts were given centrality as the more authentically Peruvian (and thus revolutionary) forms of cultural creation. This double approach, however, raised questions as to what was considered “art” and what “artisanship” in the context of the revolutionary regime. Therefore, while many traditional intellectuals, like Alegría, believed that the democratization of culture meant making high culture accessible to lower classes, more radical artists argued that revolutionary creation needed to come from the masses themselves. This issue came to a head in 1976, when the government awarded the Premio Nacional de Cultura to Joaquín López Antay, a maker of retablos, or Andean nativity scenes, from Ayacucho. For many of the country’s most prestigious artists, that the country’s highest cultural honor was given to an artisan was preposterous, and the event gave way to a long and ardent debate over what counted as art and who could be considered an artist. Many radical artists and intellectuals came out in defense of López Antay, arguing that there was no difference between artist and artisan, since what actually mattered was the popular experience of “art work”, created with and for the masses.

The debate over Lopez Antay’s award brought to the fore questions about traditional versus high, national versus cosmopolitan art, which in turn revealed central preoccupations in the cultural arena of these decades. Rather than return to these issues, however, for my purposes I want to

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5 In De ultramodernidades y sus contemporáeos (2017), Luis Rebaza Soraluz argues that intellectuals like Arguedas, Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, and Jorge Eduardo Eielson sought to frame themselves as national as well as cosmopolitan
focus on the notion of art-as-work, which went beyond the traditional versus cosmopolitan art debate to conceive a popular and revolutionary artistic experience. In a 1976 interview for the leftist weekly *Marka*, painter Leslie Lee discussed the creation of the Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores en las Artes Plásticas (SUTAP), which had broken with the Asociación Peruana de Artistas Plásticos (ASPAP) after the latter rejected the award to López Antay. Because “todo artesano es un artista”, Lee argued that there was no difference between the work of some renowned painter and someone like the retablo maker, since every artist “trabaja con la cabeza y con las manos”. Referring to the work of the SUTAP, Lee says:

> Lo que queremos lograr es consolidar un frente que reúna a todos los artistas…y a los trabajadores. Lo que se pretende es situarnos clasista y políticamente para iniciar un diálogo enriquecedor que posibilitaría un verdadero cambio en la mentalidad del artista. Queremos lograr una verdadera identificación del artista con la clase obrera y el campesinado, aprender de las luchas sindicales y populares y llegar a ocupar la trinchera que nos corresponde en la construcción del socialismo. Entre los objetivos inmediatos del Sindicato está el de obtener el seguro social para todos los trabajadores plásticos, algo que a la ASPAP nunca le interesó lograr a pesar de la presión de las bases (33).

These statements point to how for a certain sector of committed artists in the seventies work and art, or manual and intellectual labor, were seen as sides to the same coin. Lee’s words are rich with interpretations about the relationship between art and masses, and how artists sought to position themselves as cultural producers whose labor was no different than any other kind of worker. For example, the goal of the artist is to achieve a change in “mentality”, to learn and “identify” with the struggle of manual urban and rural workers. On the one hand, therefore, the point of an

artists, whose production could both reflect the innovations of the European Modernism and make Peruvian reality a valid subject of cultural creation.
organization like the SUTAP, and the goal of artistic commitment in general, is to eliminate the barriers between artists and workers, to bring them all together in a process of collaboration and community. But on the other, the materiality of this collaboration is not clear: solidarity seems to function at the level of mentalities, or as a form of identification with the masses. In all, radical artists saw artistic creation as a form of manual work, and therefore understood themselves as part of a broader process of liberation and revolution.

This identification of art as work, or the intersection between artistic creation and manual labor was not new to the sixties and seventies. In his study about radical art in revolutionary Mexico, John Lear examines how the emergence of the worker’s prominence led artists to rethink solidarity by both representing this subject and fashioning themselves as one. During the Revolution, mestizo middle-class artists encountered, for the first time, a rural and urban worker who was participating, leading strikes, and taking up arms. Therefore, artists like muralist Diego Rivera, illustrator José Guadalupe Posada and print-maker Xavier Guerrero all represented scenes of workers, whether laboring shirtless in the mines or reading Marxist texts. At the same time, during the twenties many of these artists defined themselves as “intellectual workers” who would dress like peasants or factory workers, organized in labor unions, and shared many of the same political goals than the working masses (3-6). By the thirties and forties, the years of Cardenismo, organizations of artists and workers had expanded greatly, being at the center of Mexico’s political arena and constructing a national consensus around the image of the empowered worker (312). It is not surprising, then, that a similar concatenation between art and work was occurring in Peru in the sixties and seventies, with a regime like the RGAF, often compared to the nationalist rule of Cárdenas in Mexico. The exaltation of the figure of the worker by the RGAF, as discussed earlier,
created more possibilities for contact between artists and the Peruvian working masses, like in the case of revolutionary Mexico.

However, these decades in Peru and Latin America also saw the emergence of a discourse of “anti-intellectualism” that underscored the tensions between the revolutionary discourse and the revolutionary practices of committed cultural producers – or, in other words, the debates and dilemmas of intellectuals caught between the pen and the rifle. After all, argues Gilman, the notion of revolutionary commitment was not easy to define: if the Latin American writer was increasingly a public intellectual with a voice and a platform to share his political ideals and rouse others to action, then mere art was insufficient in a revolutionary process. Anti-intellectualist discourse refers to the vilification of the figure of the traditional intellectual who speaks but does not act; it emerges from within the intellectual circles themselves, and which denigrates all symbolic forms of resistance and artistic labor that does not undertake direct political action (164-6). This, of course, is the route that someone like Javier Heraud took: his death represents the ultimate acceptance of the anti-intellectualist discourse, the recognition that the written word holds no potential as revolutionary activity. Yet Gilman briefly considers another form of anti-intellectualist discourse that does not necessarily go through the literal choice between writing and taking up arms. The progressive nature of the late sixties, she writes, gave manual work increased visibility and representation, exalting its potential for real societal changes – something which intellectual work in itself could not do (186). At this point, Gilman does not go into more detail regarding what the relationship between manual and intellectual work would have been like for the writers of the sixties and seventies. And yet, following Lear’s analysis about revolutionary Mexico and reading Lee’s words about the SUTAP and the work of committed radical artists, we may ask how, in the
sixties and seventies, the representation of work and the identification with workers became a form of the anti-intellectualist discourse as a way to rethink intellectual solidarity.

Like in twenties and thirties Mexico, committed cultural producers in the sixties and seventies turned to the notion and experience of work, a politically charged arena, as a space of solidarity beyond the letter. Significant here was the popularization of the writings of Antonio Gramsci, who theorized on what a revolutionary intellectual should look like. “Non-intellectuals do not exist”, he wrote, arguing that every human being has the intellectual capability even if he or she does not fulfil the function of one in society: “There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: homo faber cannot be separated from homo sapiens” (9). Working and thinking, argued Gramsci, were inseparable, and the issue in the creation of a revolutionary intellectual was finding a “balance” between the two:

The problem in creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists therefore in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of a general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world (9).

As Julia Bryan-Wilson explains, the thought of Gramsci and other contemporary Marxist thinkers like Herbert Marcuse (who saw the union of art and work the ultimate purpose of revolution) rekindled questions about how art works, what are the material conditions through which it emerges and how it produces meanings, representations and social relations, in the same way as any other form of creation. The term “art worker”, as used in the sixties and seventies, writes Bryan-Wilson, served to move away from a conception of art as unproductive or functionless, and
directly “into the larger arena of political activity” (31). As a form of skilled labor tied to market economies, the radical American artists from the Vietnam War era Bryan-Wilson examines sought to define their creations as art and work, as both intellectual and manual creative production.

My question is how this relationship between art and work, or this concatenation between intellectual and manual production took place in sixties and seventies Peru, and how this allowed artists to approach the constituent power of the desborde popular. This may look different from how Lear, Bryan-Wilson and Gilman might conceptualize these same ideas, because the first two are dealing exclusively with visual artists, and given that the latter considers the issue solely at the level of the discourse of committed intellectuals (and their anti-intellectual propositions). I choose the term “cultural work” over “art work”, first, to encompass creative production beyond the realm of visual arts and mark a distinction with the theoretical and methodological approaches of Lear and Bryan-Wilson. But more importantly, and read through Raymond Williams’s understanding of the term, cultural production was for the Peruvian artists considered in these pages a form of life and a way of embodying intellectual solidarity. Williams writes that culture may be understood “as a constitutive social process, creating specific and different ‘ways of life’…deepened by the emphasis on a material social process” (19). Likewise, in all the cases I examine throughout these pages, cultural production – and artistic creation as a form of work – was seen as part of life, as a living process of solidarity that did not just occur at the level of intellectual discourse but also physically and affectively. While to speak of art work refers to the solidarity of radical artists in a politically charged arena, cultural work might also consider how for these artists their creation was an extension of life.

At the same time, and perhaps because it was so closely linked to the production of life, cultural work was also embedded in issues of class, race, and gender. Because it was an activity
everyone partook in, work was a horizontal experience that permitted a solidarity across class and racial differences. Of course, this did not mean that the intellectual worked the same amount or in the same way as a peasant or a factory worker: instead, it implied that distinct subjects could conceive of a space shared by their condition as workers, all relying on physical and mental aptitudes. This meant that someone like filmmaker Nora de Izcue could fashion herself a cultural worker and thus establish a bond with Saturnino Huillca, a worker of the land for whom the camera had not previously been a tool available to him. It also meant that the young poets of the Hora Zero movement, either their parents or themselves provincial immigrants, could be “poetic workers” who participated within a literary genre seemingly confined to a lettered and cultural elite. Nevertheless, this identification as workers could, and often did, reflect the very class and racial differences it sought to curtail. Manuel Scorza, the novelist and later politician who worked with peasant unions in the late fifties, wrote the organism’s official pronouncements in the vosotros form, establishing a strangely colonial and vertical linguistic relationship with the peasant and indigenous subjects he sought to represent and defend. As it will become clear throughout the four chapters, the allusion to class and racial horizontality was a discourse that, in reality, often came across paradoxes and contradictions.

In terms of gender, the notion of cultural work was not too different than how Gilman describes as the predominantly male Latin American “intellectual family”: the very notion of a public intellectual was associated to ideals of masculinity and virility. The writers of the boom, writes Diana Sorensen, “established social relationships among themselves that were organized around the dominant fictions of masculinity and, therefore, of the patriarchal order…[this] offered its members a phallocratic embrace made possible by feelings of identification, affection, and rivalry” (149-50). Likewise, María Rosa Olivera Williams argues that this male sociability of
collaboration and competition lead to an internal race to become “the literary ‘male gang’s’ leader” (280). Work is also gendered, not only because certain kinds of work are considered typically male or female, but also because work relationships are dominated by gender codes (regarding authority, communication and care) and as such (re)produce gender identities and hierarchies (Weeks 9-10).

The radical and committed Peruvian artists were also using gendered codes to frame their revolutionary stance, relying on hyper-masculinity and virility to demonstrate their solidarity and their militancy. This was the case of the Hora Zero poetic workers, who full of male vigor (“testículos”) disparaged their enemies as dramatic, effeminate bourgeois (“histéricos insustanciales”). At the same time, it is revealing that for many of these male cultural workers the women around them (partners, sisters, mothers) were often their “support network” who performed jobs such as typing and transcribing: throughout his letters, Arguedas describes in passing the role of Sybila, his wife, and Vilma, his niece, as an essential part of his ethnographic team in their capacity as copy editors. A clear example of how this configuration could be, and was, disrupted, is by studying the work of Izcue, the first woman to do film professionally in Peru, who referred to herself as a film worker. While Izcue became an established figure of Peruvian cinema, other women, such as Mari Carmen Herrera, producer of the film collective Liberación sin rodeos, have been almost forgotten in film history.

This relationship between revolution, work and masculinity is not incidental. Abel Sierra Madero has discussed the use of the ideology of work as a mechanism for instilling a revolutionary virility (and thus “rectify”) homosexuals and any considered weak or effeminate. These became broader characteristics used to mark distinctions between the strong and virile men of the revolution, and those softened by imperialist fashions (like rock and roll’s) and intellectualist pretensions – in other words, counterrevolutionaries. To “fix” these tendencies, men were sent to
labor camps, or Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAP), “donde el trabajo pasa a formar parte del discurso masculino de la guerra contra el imperialismo…La metáfora de la fragua – proveniente de la industria del acero y del hierro – fue ampliamente utilizada por los líderes de la revolución para recrear la masculinidad revolucionaria y los procesos de control social” (316).

Work, in this way, was imbued with an industrial discourse, in turn representative of a revolutionary masculinity: the creation of a modern Cuba depended on the creation of a “new man” who was, above all, molded by the toils of physical labor. This was also applicable, Sierra writes, to the Cuban intellectuals, as the very term “intellectual” was replaced by that of “cultural worker”, where artists had to demonstrate their capacity for physical and industrial work to be recognized as virile revolutionaries and to rid themselves of the effeminate characteristics of western, bourgeois intellectuals (317).

In this way, to conceive of art, or cultural production more broadly, as a form of work, has several implications. First, it relates to a form of creation where intellectual and artist aligns him or herself directly with the working masses, representing work but also often identifying as a worker. This is conceived as a form of solidarity, a way of breaking down the barriers between manual and cognitive labor, an attempt at creating a horizontal cultural experience where art is no longer an object of contemplation but a space of community and collaboration. To do so, it asserts the importance of contact between intellectuals and the constituent power of the desborde popular, in a relation where both subjects teach and inform one another, eliminating distinctions between producer and consumer or creator and spectator. In other words, it imagines work as a form of life, fertile and productive instead of linked to a vital sacrifice. On the other hand, however, cultural work reveals the idealism of imagining work as horizontal and beyond distinctions of class, race and gender. In fact, the more these artists framed themselves as workers, or sought to represent
their voices, the more evident it became that work differentiated and hierarchized. While Arguedas imagined in his final novel a community of workers suffering the modernization of the nation (and of the literary profession), he sought a bright home with a big garden where he could enjoy some leisure time and heal his deteriorating body. Conversely, if Saturnino Huillca, the peasant leader turned film actor, went into the film industry looking for some kind of monetary retribution, it is highly unlikely he ever received any. Therefore, cultural work should be studied as a complex, sometimes contradictory discourse of intellectual solidarity (or perhaps anti-intellectualism), which created new spaces for the contact and collaboration between artists and working masses, and which ultimately revealed the idealism inherent in its conceptualizations. This does not invalidate it, but rather demonstrates how committed intellectuals and artists in sixties and seventies Peru attempted to generate novel ways to respond to the dramatic socioeconomic transformations in the country, even if such ways were ultimately overly idealistic.

In chapter 1, I return to the figure of Arguedas, an intellectual entrenched within the debates between literary and political compromise. Most of the early literary criticism on Arguedas, especially those texts that defined his position in the field (Angel Rama, Antonio Cornejo Polar, Martín Lienhard, Carmen María Pinilla), has focused on his ability to represent, even *embody* the paradoxes of the Peruvian social and cultural reality. Arguedas is often read as an “interpreter” of Andean society, and his figure and literary work has served as the basis for established concepts in literary criticism such as transculturation and heterogeneity. For my own purposes, I go back to Arguedas the embattled committed writer of the sixties, as he tried to define the value and the role of his literary production in the context of the *desborde popular*. To do so, I examine an area of his production less studied (or given less centrality): his representation of the work of the indigenous, the migrant and his own, as a way of establishing what I call a “community of workers”
between himself and the working masses. I argue that while in his embattled and criticized *Todas las sangres* (1964) Arguedas conceives indigenous work as a site of resistance to the encroachment of global capitalism, in his unfinished *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1971) he attempts to become one with the machine of work that transforms the fishing town of Chimbote. This results in a contradictory movement in which he looks to approach the *desborde popular* and, simultaneously, increasingly reiterates his position as a privileged, mestizo man of letters. In this process, work and life are interconnected, as work (for the workers of Chimbote and for himself) both creates (modernity and literature) and destroys the bodies of those who form part of its machinery. Looking beyond the two novels, in this chapter I also examine many other forms of Arguedas’s production, from poetry to the letters and reports he wrote to family and friends in his final months and years. If Arguedas begins a new cycle in Peruvian cultural production (as he himself had hoped he would), it may be one that stresses the need of contact between intellectuals and working masses – and demonstrates the difficulty of achieving the complete identification of the artist and the worker.

Out of the four cases I examine, Arguedas’s is unique because he was the only not linked directly to the popular mobilizations of these decades and the emergence of the leftist fronts in the seventies. His suicide in November 1969 also limited the amount of contact he had with the RGAF, although he did live long enough to form an (early) opinion of the regime. This is not unimportant, and his letter to the government, published as “El ejército peruano” in the weekly *Oiga*, opens up this chapter. His ambivalent relation to political formations in general, in any case, always made him an outlier in relation to many of his contemporaries, who sought to frame their political commitment through direct party affiliations. However, not only was Arguedas probably the most well-known and accomplished cultural worker of the sixties (as Moraña argues), but he was also
perhaps the intellectual who most fervently dedicated himself to understand the transformation of Peru in these decades and the potentials of the *desborde popular*. Because writing was such a vital aspect of his life, and because writing was a double mechanism that both kept him alive and destroyed him, as he himself argued, he who embodies the drives and challenges of cultural work. In fact, while every following chapter focuses more closely on each of the vectors I have chosen (the need for money, gender dynamics, the role of technology), all are already present and articulated, in some way or another, in my reading of Arguedas. By employing the concept of the *machine* as an assemblage of different impulses, flows, individual and collective drives, I look to study how Arguedas works alongside the *desborde popular*. While revolution here does not entail taking to the streets, it does involve a rethinking of intellectual solidarity.

In chapter 2, I examine the case of Manuel Scorza, a writer and cultural impresario who tried to bring together his radical commitment and his desire for money and literary fame. Hired to write the memos and manifestoes of the Movimiento Comunal del Perú in the early sixties because of his “capacity as a poet”, Scorza used his experience working directly for and with the mobilizing masses of the *desborde popular* as material for his best-selling, five-chronicle series *La guerra silenciosa*, published between 1970 and 1979. While most criticism on Scorza has focused on his representation of the perpetual war between the indigenous and the Peruvian state, here I consider how through his *pentalogía* Scorza creates a narrative of indigenous commitment and solidarity that culminates in his own person. “Work done for others”, I argue, is the slogan and driving force of his literary performance: he conceives his literary work as an extension of the centuries of indigenous resistance against colonialism and imperialism. However, Scorza never hides his craving of financial retribution for his literary work, going as far as to try to charge for interviews and incurring debts to other intellectuals. Therefore, the case of Scorza might be read
as an attempt to resolve the incongruities between literary and political work. For my purposes, I examine not only Scorza’s chronicles but also his public persona through newspaper clippings as well as some of the many anecdotes told about him. Rather than incidental, these anecdotes, taken together, reveal a side of Scorza rarely examined in criticism about his work: the continuing presence and role of money in the configuration of his literary and cultural work.

In chapter 3, I analyze the performative poetic work of the Hora Zero collective, an avant-garde movement that sought to destabilize the Peruvian cultural establishment and assert a radical and new kind of poetry. The Hora Zero poets, all male during the group’s beginning in 1970, identified themselves as “workers of poetry”, whose dedication to their art was not a hobby or a way to attain an academic position but rather a way of life, a process of pure creation that would only be achieved through “orgies of work”. Relying on a scandalous and exhibitionist language, Hora Zero relied on the hyper-masculinization of its members and the emasculation of its enemies, namely the Peruvian lettered circles. While Hora Zero is often studied through its poetry, particularly through the literary innovations of its creators (in colloquial language and everyday situations), in my reading the movement must also be analyzed in its cultural and social practices, linguistic and performative. In this chapter, I rely, other than on poetry, on their manifestoes and particularly on their testimonies about how they lived and how they performed. Through a poetics of not just the written word but also of the voice and body, these poets participated actively in the political environment of their time, most significantly joining with the emerging left wing coalitions of the late seventies and becoming their opening acts, spewing vitriolic insults against the RGAF and exhortations in favor of the parties. Finally, in Hora Zero, counterculture and revolution came together with an exaggerated virility and a macho attitude as a way to define and alternative and scandalous an experience of poetic work.
In chapter 4, I turn to the film workers of the seventies, considering how cinema became an arena of contestation between the RGAF, committed intellectuals and the *desborde popular*. Responding to a 1973 Law Decree meant to revolutionize film production in Peru, radical artists and critics formed film unions to demand more participation within the industry. Many of these artists, furthermore, inspired by the recent developments of New Latin American Cinema, wanted to create productions that gave a voice, and visibilized, the marginalized subjects of the country.

One of these was Nora de Izcue, whose 1973 *Runan Caycu* was originally financed, and then censored, by SINAMOS. Izcue’s work was revolutionary because her archival research and edition turned a film meant to support the state into a weapon against it. Her protagonist was peasant activist Saturnino Huillca, an indigenous illiterate man who, in contact with the machinery of filmography, became a veritable film worker himself. In this chapter, I examine how through Izcue’s film (and through the collaboration between artist and indigenous worker), Huillca’s face became a symbol in opposition to the face of the RGAF: the serigraph of Tupac Amaru, an 18th-century caudillo whose visage became the logo of the revolutionary state. Perhaps one of the more “exemplary” cases of collaborative cultural work between intellectuals and *desborde popular*, on Izcue’s hands and through the technological accomplishments of her team, Huillca became a different kind of worker than what he had been until that point in his life.
366
OPORTUNIDADES
PARA SER PERUANO
La Revolución hace posible una nueva vida. Convierte cada día en una promesa y en una posibilidad. 1972 consta de 366 promesas y 366 posibilidades. Son 8,784 horas de trabajo, construyendo una nueva sociedad, en la cual tu serás lo más importante. En este año se reforzaran los cambios estructurales y la participación popular. En este año seguiremos transfiriéndote el poder y cerrando el paso a nuestros enemigos.

EN 1972 SEREMOS MAS PERUANOS Y MAS REVOLUCIONARIOS QUE NUNCA.

SISTEMA NACIONAL DE APOYO A LA MOVILIZACION SOCIAL (SINAMOS)

Fig. 1. *Textual* 4 (1972).
Chapter 1
Communities of work in José María Arguedas

A few months before his suicide on November 1969, José María Arguedas wrote an open letter to Juan Velasco Alvarado, published in the Oiga weekly under the title “El ejército peruano”. In it, he shows measured optimism for the military regime, praising its leader for taking a decided stance against colonialism, something the left, caught in its internal differences, could never do. But Arguedas also warns Velasco and his officials to always follow the people, for it is them who will lead the revolution: “En cambio, si por algún error de usted y de los oficiales del ejército, se apartaran de la juventud y del pueblo y los convirtieran en enemigos suyos, entonces se desencadenaría para la patria el más grande de los ‘escarmientos’…Y, entonces, no sería imposible que, por primera vez, el pueblo liberara ese término ‘escarmiento’ de la resonancia tétrica que tiene y lo convirtiera en otro término más definitivo y triunfal”. Though it is impossible to know what position Arguedas would have taken with regards to the regime had he lived, the letter demonstrates that he sees the people as an unstoppable force that will not be contained by the state. More than an assessment of the military government, therefore, it constitutes his reaffirmation of constituent power and its revolutionary potential. Despite its title, “El ejército peruano” looks beyond the army as the center of the revolution and instead focuses on the potential of constituent power to lead it. In this way, Arguedas manifests his commitment to the people, and his belief that the revolution resided in the masses and not the sovereignty of the state.

Earlier in the letter, Arguedas writes that he learned about the military coup while working in Chimbote, the port where he was conducting field research. A few years before, he had received a grant from the Universidad Agraria, which allowed him to take time off from teaching and dedicate himself full time to the study of Andean traditions and myths, a project he had been
carrying out throughout his intellectual career. Yet he quickly became more interested in comprehending the radical processes of capitalist development that Peru’s coastal cities had been experiencing over the last few years: Chimbote, in particular, had transformed from a small fishing town into a massive industrial complex and one of the largest exporters of fishmeal in the world. Starting in the late fifties and especially by the sixties, Arguedas had become ever more concerned with the modernization processes of Peruvian society and with the economic impact of the development of industry and the country’s insertion into global capital networks. In particular, he grew more conscious of the desborde popular brought about by these transformations: the politicization of the Andean highlands and the massive migrations into Lima and other coastal cities. Arguedas’s literary projects during this time brought him into close contact with it, as he tried to represent its forces, but also to come into direct contact with it and understand its potentials. His novels from the sixties, Todas las sangres (1964) and El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo (1971) approach this “drama de modernización” through the representation of capital, labor systems and organizations, money and transactions (Portugal 305). But more importantly, they focus on how these economic transformations alter the very ways in which people live and work, how they form communities and whether this holds the possibility for a social and political emancipation. During the sixties, Arguedas’s literary production parallels the flows of capital as he attempts to think forms of local organization and resistance. Within this context, Arguedas also comes to question his own role in this process of modernization: what the intellectual – the man of letters, the cultural worker – can do to reveal, and foment, this change. In the sixties, his last decade, Arguedas turns to the notion of work – that of the desborde popular and his – as a conflictive experience of community and emancipation.
In this chapter, I examine the relationship between *desborde popular* and intellectual labor through Arguedas’s cultural production during the sixties. I argue, first, that against the incorporeity of global capital Arguedas conceives alternative forms of community based on local organization, physical contact and embodied work. Second, that to do so Arguedas reaches out to the *desborde popular* from his self-assigned position in the margins of the lettered city, in a literary process where tradition and modernity, artistic work and political commitment, become intertwined and reveal the tensions and contradictions inherent to the intellectual’s function in sixties Peru. Ultimately, work and life become part of a simultaneously creative and destructive process that looks to comprehend the *desborde popular* as well as the role of the intellectual in relation to its constituent potential.

I consider these issues by examining his last two literary projects: *Todas las sangres* and his research and writing project in Chimbote, which resulted in the unfinished and posthumous *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*. For the latter, rather than focus exclusively on the novel, I look at the larger process behind it: a decade-long project that underwent decisive transformations in intention and form, and which at all times was a grueling and emotionally taxing job for its author because of the lack of funding and his incapacity to work. In doing so, I look to move away from interpreting *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* as having two distinct parts, one a work of fiction (the chapters of the novel) and one on fact or testimony (the Diaries). Ladislao Landa Vásquez argues that this dichotomy is false, and both are fiction (152-3). Going further still, by looking at *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* as a process we can understand the more specific discourses operating throughout the Chimbote project, and which can also be observed in the paratextual corpus that Arguedas produced simultaneously, such as letters and reports. Throughout these documents, the theme of work, and communities of work, emerges as Arguedas’s foremost
preoccupation as he attempts to understand the *desborde popular* – and situate himself vis-à-vis constituent power.

I divide this chapter into three sections. In the first, I examine the relationship between work and community in the case of *Todas las sangres*. Here, indigenous work, characterized as “ant-work”, represents a physical and affective form of labor organization, as opposed to global capital’s encroaching and speculative machine-like organization. In the second, I examine Arguedas’s intellectual work, a conflictual (and highly performative) process where tradition, modernity, social commitment and writing come together. This issue came to a heed after the publication of *Todas las sangres*, especially with a Round Table about the novel in 1965, where committed social scientists and literary critics alike denounced Arguedas’s defense of a supposedly irrational and ahistorical understanding of Andean society and his “blindness” to the mobilization and politicization of the Peruvian masses, or the *desborde popular*. In the third section, I analyze the Chimbote project, where work becomes an embodied experience, thus creating a community of bodies at work where writer and the masses come together. Here, I focus on the representation of work in the novel *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* and in its broader writing process, where the author’s preoccupation with his labor, family, home finances and personal health parallel the rapid and dramatic modernization of the country. These two forms of communities of work, intellectual and physical, mark Arguedas’s attempt at grasping the transformation of Peruvian societies in the sixties and understanding his own role as a writer within it.

Perhaps more than any other writer and intellectual figure in the Latin American literary canon, cultural criticism has tasked José María Arguedas with the enormous, if not outright impossible task of representing a divided, fragmented and contradictory national identity. In particular, Ángel Rama’s *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (1982) cemented
Arguedas’s position as the hero and icon of Latin American cultural studies by making the Peruvian author the basis for the notion of literary transculturation. As José Alberto Portugal has argued, however, most early criticism on Arguedas (including Rama) took as its starting point the author’s own reading of his work, to the point that it became a reaffirmation of the authorial voice: “el desarrollo de esa crítica arguedista está marcado por la contigüidad de sus postulados básicos con las formulaciones hechas por el propio Arguedas sobre su obra, a tal punto que, en cierto sentido, funciona como glosa de estas” (35). According to Portugal, after the 1965 Round Table, which challenged the integrity, coherence and practical use of Arguedas’s literature, both the author and receptive literary critics doubled down on their defensive stance. The texts of Cornejo Polar (Los universos narrativos de José María Arguedas, 1973); Rowe (Mito e ideología en la obra de José María Arguedas, 1979); Lienhard (Zorros y danzantes en la última novela de Arguedas: cultura popular andina y forma novelesca, 1982) and Escobar (Arguedas, o la utopía de la lengua, 1984) are examples of this attempt to portray Arguedas’s work as a complete and coherent literary project. In fact, not only was there consensus between how Arguedas interpreted his own work and how critics read his literature: Arguedas even altered his own interpretations to “fit” what these critics wanted to see in it. Therefore, to think Arguedas’s cultural production must

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6 Despite its importance for Latin American cultural studies, Rama’s use of the notion of transculturation has been criticized for imagining a harmonious, yet unrealistic and ultimately colonial, amalgamation of Western and autochthonous epistemologies. Alberto Moreiras, for instance, argues that transculturation is a weapon of hegemonic discourse to try to coopt the radical difference of the Other into official cultural discourse and Western subjectivity. Moreiras rejects the harmonizing concept of transculturation in favor of Antonio Cornejo Polar’s heterogeneity, which stresses the gap between two radically different epistemologies. See The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies (2001). Patricia D’Allemand contends that Rama’s notion of transculturation reifies the state’s conception of “national culture”, and thus never breaks with the liberal notion of national unity. As with Moreiras, for D’Allemand this would imply the integration of popular, regional culture into a new hegemonic model. See Hacia una crítica cultural latinoamericana (2001).

7 Portugal describes the case of César Lévano’s reading of Los ríos profundos. Lévano reads into the final scene of this novel, the uprising of the colonos, a possibility of political insurrection not bound by the mythical but demonstrative of an actual armed revolt in the socialist vein. Arguedas responds to this interpretation by adapting his own, connecting the events of the novel to Hugo Blanco’s land takeover in La Convención. Arguedas claims that Lévano’s reading “revealed” the hidden meaning of his novel (89-100). This becomes more evident in a 1969 letter to Blanco himself, where Arguedas compares the plight of the wretched peasants at the end of Los ríos profundos to
not assume a linear progression where the author’s capacity to understand and represent the
complexities and contradictions of Peruvian society became clearer and more profound as time
progressed.

My question is not so much how Arguedas represents Peruvian modernity or Andean
culture through his texts, but rather how he positions himself, as an intellectual and cultural worker,
vis-à-vis the *desborde popular* in the sixties. For this reading, I rely on the dispositive of the
machine: in *A Thousand Machines*, Gerald Raunig undoes the dichotomy man-machine, which
saw these as necessarily opposed to one another (or one subordinate to the other), arguing that both
are connected to the other in a perpetual “relationship between the streams and ruptures of
assemblages, in which organic, technical and social machines are concatenated” (29). For Raunig,
the machine is a “non-identitary concept for fleeing stratification and identification, for inventing
new forms of the concatenation of singularities” (34). In Arguedas, the machine may stand in for
industrialization, for the engines, motors and drills used in mining and fishmeal factories, and
which require skilled and unskilled labor to operate efficiently. Following Raunig, rather than man
and machine being two opposed entities, these will come together to create new connections and
new forms of community not based on a single kind of identity. But the machine may also stand
in for the work of the intellectual and the tensions this may bring, and which I have explored in
the Introduction: between tradition and modernity, between writing as commitment and as
commodity, and between individual and collective. The machine represents Arguedas’s move

the peasant leader’s successes. Arguedas even refers back to Lévano, saying that “Los críticos de literatura, los muy
ilustrados, no pudieron descubrir al principio la intención final de la novela, la que puse en su meollo, en el medio
mismo de su corazón. Felizmente uno, uno solo, lo descubrió y lo proclamó, muy claramente” (*Amaru* 11, 13). This
would further demonstrate how Arguedas appropriated the “forced exegeses” of critics (especially those like Lévano,
who espoused a more radical leftist commitment) to conceive his production as more in line with the contemporary
situation in the Andes result of the *desborde popular*. Likewise, Erik Pozo (2014) suggests that Arguedas, in an effort
to convince the radical leftist intellectuals who challenged the lack of commitment in his writings, argued that the
revolutionary content was present but implicit (268).
towards the desborde popular: it signifies the process through which he imagines a community of work and also what sets him apart from the masses, marking him ultimately as an intellectual who is constantly at tension in his site of enunciation. The machine represents an escape from the resolution given by identity (what the notion of transculturation would mean, for instance) and towards connections in constant tension.

My use of the notion of the machine both borrows and departs from Jon Beasley-Murray’s approach in his article “Arguedasmachine: Modernity and Affect in the Andes” (2008). Beasley-Murray argues that all of Arguedas’s writing, even as early as the thirties, are marked by an “affective flow that drives Peruvian modernity”, and which Arguedas tries to “engineer” or control through his literary production. I agree with many of Beasley-Murray’s readings, in particular his interpretation of El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, where writing is no longer tied to realism but is rather “intensely physical”, a contradictory movement that both puts off and leads to death (117-8). Yet Beasley-Murray does not consider how Arguedas’s actual, physical presence in Chimbote affects this machine. Although the characters of the novel “coexist uneasily, precariously shoulder to shoulder in the shared spaced of a city that has sprung up from almost nowhere around this dislocated pole of economic expansion” (117, my emphasis), we may also ask where Arguedas himself is. And he is among these characters, bringing his own (deteriorating) body into contact with the subjects and machines of Chimbote. Unlike them, however, not precariously but as an intellectual who despite financial troubles continues to speak from a privileged position. The machine operates, as Beasley-Murray states, “in the space and slippage between depression and happiness, sorrow and joy” (119). But, following Raunig, it also creates connections between individualities and collectivities: this is what Arguedas does by bringing his work into contact with the work of the desborde popular. While Beasley-Murray sees the affective
flows of the Arguedasmachine operating since the thirties, in my reading the constituent power of the *desborde popular* makes Arguedas’s final production radically different than what came before.

I. Machines and network systems in *Todas las sangres*

On July 10, 1966, in response to the attacks he suffered by the Lima intellectuals in the Round Table about *Todas las sangres* a year earlier, Arguedas published the poem “Llamado a algunos doctores”, originally written in Quechua, in the newspaper *El Comercio*. In the poem, nature emerges as foil to the scientific rigor of the “doctors” or intellectuals who, despite their scientific language and tools, are incapable of understanding the sights, sounds and smells of the Andean land. The poetic subject becomes an extension of this nature, and speaks to the doctors from the zenith of the sacred mountains: “Es el mediodía; estoy junto a las montañas sagradas”. These, meanwhile, attempt to reach the top in a “helicopter” or “machine”, but the modern instruments cannot capture the original and autochthonous voice, nor replicate what nature’s will and force have created: “Pon en marcha tu helicóptero y sube aquí, si puedes”. And then: “Ninguna máquina difícil hizo lo que sé, lo que sufro, lo que gozar del mundo gozo. Sobrée la tierra, desde la nieve que rompe los huesos hasta el fuego de las quebradas, delante del cielo, con su voluntad y con mis fuerzas hicimos todo eso”. At the end, however, rather than push the doctors away, the poetic subject invites them to join in, asking them to abandon their machines and face death together. In a pleading and benevolent tone, the poetic voice calls out to the intellectuals: “¿Trabajaré siglos de años y meses para que…quien no conozco me corte la cabeza con una máquina pequeña? / No hermanito mío. No ayudes a afilar esa máquina contra mi…” (in Molinié 104). In “Llamado a algunos doctores”, therefore, the machine becomes not only the enemy of nature, but also a corrupting power that turns the intellectuals against their own country. It is a
weapon of death that beheads a worker who has laboriously been toiling for centuries in benefit of his native land.

While in the poem the machine represents the weapon of a dangerous intellectual modernity, in Todas las sangres it embodies the encroaching power of industrial modernity and transnational capital, and its attempts to undo all forms of local governance and organization. Here, the machine is the Wisther-Bozart multinational mining company, which, from its simultaneously ubiquitous and unplaceable position, looks to invest in, and thus control, the developing mining regions in the Peruvian Andes. As it expands throughout the globe, the company represents what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri understand as the transition from imperialism, “with its centralized and bounded form of power based in nation-states”, to “empire”, or a network model that has no center and thus can be everywhere at once (59). Against the machinery of global capital, Arguedas pits a form of local organization based on collective and collaborative indigenous work, also based on a network system. “It takes a network to fight a network”, Hardt and Negri argue (58, italics in the original). In my reading, Todas las sangres pits the network of indigenous work against the machine-network of transnational capital. This confrontation represents the conflict between two models of modernity: the latter, which Arguedas sees as foreign and pernicious, versus the former, a national and more legitimate model for Peruvian development.

i. The immateriality of global capital

Published in 1964, Todas las sangres reflects Arguedas’s attempts to understand the rapid socioeconomic transformation of the country during these years, and its effects on Andean societies (Portugal 315). The novel takes place in the fictive town of San Pedro de Lahuaymarca, where the gamonales (wealthy landowners and authorities of the community) Fermín and Bruno Aragón de Peralta struggle against one another to implement their own models of economic
modernity. While the latter is a traditional colonial master who controls the land and its inhabitants through feudalistic and paternalistic models of agrarian organization, the former is a mining entrepreneur who seeks to transform the town’s indigenous population into “gente de empresa” to eradicate their ancient beliefs and turn them into modern, capitalist subjects (1970a, 75). Both are nationalists, concerned with controlling their own land and labor capital, and both oppose the omnipresent, speculating power of the Wisther-Bozart multinational, which tries to buy out all forms of local governance in sites potentially loaded with gold. The novel unfolds in the political and economic conflicts between these actors, as well as among the indigenous subjects who work and live in the area. Peasant leader Rendón Willka, a Lima-educated foreman, is hired first by Fermín and later by Bruno, who both look to utilize his organizing abilities to channel the potential of indigenous work towards the mines. The masses ultimately rise against their masters in a “yawar mayu” (river of blood), an Andean metaphor for insurrection. Willka, seen as a politically ambiguous subject, accused of being a communist and spreading revolutionary ideas among the peasantry, is captured and shot by the army, which defends the multinational’s interests. Todas las sangres, therefore, attempts to represent the incredible complexity Peru’s economic transformation, and the effects this has on the social structures of Andean society.

The main antagonist in the novel is the Wisther-Bozart, which Fermín likens to a machine: “la maquinaria que convierte en ventosas de pulpos a quienes descubrimos riquezas en el Perú y que aspiramos que beneficien al país más que al extranjero” (1970a, 185). By turning Fermín and similar entrepreneurs into extensions of a machinery that adheres onto local resources, the company expands around the globe, breaking down all national projects of modernity and all forms of nationalism. Cabrejos, engineer and spokesperson for the Wisther-Bozart (and mole planted to disrupt Fermín’s own national mining enterprise) makes this clear: “Yo no soy patriota…Todos
nosotros, para actuar como lo hacemos, debemos despojarnos de ese elemental sentimiento. Ustedes en mayor grado que yo, no pueden tener más patria que la empresa que es internacional, en todas partes” (1970b, 119). For Cabrejos, the only form of acceptable loyalty is to the company, and thus to global capital. In a way, and following Hardt and Negri, the Wisther-Bozart constitutes an apparatus of empire, as it exists beyond the nation-state and responds exclusively to the networks of transnational investment. Another point evidenced by Cabrejos, and once again going back to Hardt and Negri’s definition of empire, is that the mining corporation is “en todas partes”, omnipresent and ubiquitous. When talking about it, peasants describe it as being everywhere (“¿Dónde está la Wisther? Bebiendo whisky en todo el mundo” [1970b, 54]) and simultaneously nowhere at all (“La Wisther, ¡adónde estará!” [1970b, 54]). The company’s director, the Czar, is likewise a shadowy and disembodied figure who does not belong anywhere and yet looks to control everything. Fermín complains: “Es cierto que los millonarios se despegan de la vida verdadera; ¿esos fantasmas de los consorcios, en qué creen? El ‘Zar’ es un monumento de carne sin nombre, gobernado por un par de ojos que te miran como a un guiñapo de carne…una masa informe que, descarnada de la tierra y sin creer en el cielo, no tiene más camino que el de prensar a la humanidad para chuparle el jugo” [1970b, 127]). And later: “[the Czar] No tiene un lugar fijo ni en el cielo ni en la tierra” (1970b, 144). Here, the Wisther-Bozart and the Czar are body-less entities, yet characterized by a pair of eyes that locates its victims, and a mouth that tears them apart. They reveal – and the same will occur in El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, with the magnate Braschi – what Portugal describes as the “ubicuidad e inubicabilidad del capital financiero” (327). In its rejection of nationalism (an “elemental sentimiento”) and its ubiquity, the Wisther-Bozart stands for the power of empire, which ensnares local economies and turns them into nodes of its network system.
In doing so, the multinational dismisses all forms of local economic organization, since it considers them backwards and thus pernicious to its global enterprise. In particular, the Wisther-Bozart disregards the indigenous population, which it sees as an abject mass that must be simply exploited by the machinery of empire, since it lacks any real value beyond as a replaceable form of capital. Cabrejos sees the peasants as no more than slave labor: “A los indios los ponemos en vereda fácilmente. ¡Esclavos por siglos, no tienen olfato, ni coraje! Orines en vez de sangre. ¡Y eso, señores, es capital! El Perú caminará bien y con poca pólvora mientras tengamos indios” (1970a, 80). And yet, contradictorily, he recognizes that they may not be subdued so easily, as “Son, efectivamente, los indios quienes pueden crearnos dificultades” (1970b, 117). The president of the corporation echoes these sentiments, saying that it is precisely because the indigenous subject is barely human that he is not afraid to die for his country. “Son los indígenas empecinados”, he declares, “quienes pueden provocar algunas dificultades [for the economic takeover of the region], porque no aprecian sus vidas como los vecinos; están acostumbrados a morir con humildad y la convicción del poco valer de sus vidas les compele a cometer, a veces, imprudencias” (1970n, 115). For both the president and the engineer, the indigenous populations are no more than a deterrence that must be kept in check, lest they be wont to commit “imprudencias” – like revolt. The way to keep these populations under control, as seen above in Cabrejos’s statement, is to maintain them slaves, as they have been for centuries.

ii. Indigenous work as local resistance

However, this idea of work as slavery that Cabrejos and the Wisther-Bozart imagine as constitutive of the indigenous is far from the actual conditions of Andean labor organization and its creative and productive potential according to Arguedas. Irina A. Feldman (2014) has examined the relationship between work and community in Todas las sangres, arguing that the models of
indigenous labor organization in the novel resist transnational capital’s attempt to create individuals malleable to its expansionist designs. “In this sense”, she writes, “the transnational capital does not want a community of any sort, and especially it is afraid of the essentialized communities: the nation and the ayllu” (78). According to Feldman, the ayllu, the traditional Andean community, and its labor organization, or faena, create forms of collective existence: “Work, the substance of existence, is the very source of their happiness, and neither Indians nor their leaders want to try avoid working” (59-60). Rendón, therefore, explains that this kind of work is not imposed slave work but rather willing and celebratory: “De otro modo ha de ser el trabajo…No ha de ser mita, padrecito Adrián…Yo alegre entrare, mozos de Lahuaymarca también” (1970a, 109). A kind of labor, argues Beasley-Murray, “permeated by affect” (124). This is what Cabrejos ultimately gets wrong about indigenous work, since what he sees as exploitation they understand as a form of community-building, productive competition and, ultimately, as life itself. Or even death: Feldman argues that Andean work, in Arguedas’s conceptualization, is a ritualized experience that encompasses both the living and the dead. After death, “positively experienced work continues to occupy center stage”; work in the afterlife “underpins the Quechua conception of work not as martyrdom or sacrifice, as it is for the non-Indian workers but the substance of life itself” (57-8).

Furthermore, and going back to network systems in resistance to empire, indigenous work in Todas las sangres may be read as a form of “swarm intelligence”. Hardt and Negri define this as another network-form of organization, “collective and distributed techniques of problem solving without…the provision of a global model” (91). Hardt and Negri claim that insect metaphors are also abundant in Rimbaud’s poems about the Paris Commune: “The Communards defending their revolutionary Paris against the government forces attacking from Versailles roam about the city
like ants in Rimbaud’s poetry and their barricades bustle with activity like anthills” (92). Indigenous labor organization in *Todas las sangres* is repeatedly described in these terms throughout the novel, as Rendón, the gamonales and the union leaders all compare it to the work of ants. Leading the peasants into the mine, the foreman says: “Están trabajando en faena, mejor que la hormiga…No hay fatiga, patrón; no hay rabia; en lo oscuro están trabajando, según el mando del Señor…Con nadie hablan” (1970a, 132). In Rendón’s description, the *faena*’s “ant-work” is the opposite of the *mita*, the Incan and colonial forced labor system. While the slave work of the *mita* exhausts and creates discontent, the *faena* is carried out “tirelessly” and without provoking ire. Likewise, Bruno asserts that indigenous work is a positive, even happy activity: “¡Feliz! Son más felices que yo. ¡Los habrás visto trabajar! ¡Que maldito obrero trabaja así, hormigueando!” (1970a, 127). And Antenor, one of the union organizers who wants to enlist the peasants to their political struggle, sees the indigenous form of work as a kind of festival: “La mina parece ahora una plaza de mercado”. “¡Una feria!” replies another union worker (1970a, 120). Ant-work, a collective, collaborative and affective process, stands in opposition to the alienated and distant model of economic organization imposed by the Wisther-Bozart. While the multinational is perpetually outside, everywhere and nowhere, imposing its empire, indigenous work is local and present. For Arguedas, a Peruvian modernity must necessarily model itself after the latter.

*Todas las sangres*, therefore, might be read as a confrontation between two network systems, one machinic and one organic, and in this way puts forward a comparison similar to the one Arguedas will make in “Llamado a algunos doctores”. This struggle leads, ultimately, to a final showdown between the Wisther-Bozart and the town of Lahuaymarca, as the commoners rebel and burn down the town church and kill the engineer Cabrejos. The company, with support from the state, sends bulldozers to take land by force and subdue the protest. The company’s work
machines advance through the farm lands, becoming weapons of war: “Las orugas se desplazaron lentamente, trepidando con la máxima fuerza. El ruido sordo, de fuego contenido, de los dos motores, empezó a caldear la pampa; el eucalipto gigante de los Braños se balanceaba algo con el viento; sonaba profundamente como un río lejano”. The “monster” machines tear down hacienda walls, without stopping: “El monstruo no podía detenerse ni retroceder ya…El monstruo se desquició, algunos trozos de acero volaron; se formó una nube de polvo que cubrió la casa y la figura del eucalipto que, muy cerca, alcanzaba el cielo con sus ramas más altas” (1070b, 228-9).

This scene shows the antagonism between the bulldozer machines and nature, exemplified here through the eucalyptus tree that swings amid the battle and which, ultimately, is torn down. At the end of the novel, Rendón is captured and put to death, under suspicion of having led the rebels. At this moment, he clamors that the machine of death cannot put out the fire of the community, who will continue to grow as flowers do: “¡Capitán! ¡Señor capitán!...Los fusiles no van a apagar el sol, ni secar los ríos, ni menos quitar la vida a todos los indios. Siga fusilando. Nosotros no tenemos armas de fábrica, que no valen. Nuestro corazón está de fuego…El pisonay llora; derramará sus flores por la eternidad de la eternidad, creciendo…El fusil de fábrica es sordo, es como palo; no entiende. Somos hombres que ya hemos de vivir eternamente” (1970b, 259). Despite his death, Rendón’s message remains a premonition: an underground river, the yawar mayu, is heard around town, auguring a future, and final, insurrection.

II. Arguedas’s writing machine: intellectual self-fashioning and social commitment

This distinction between nature and machine reappears some time later in “Llamado a algunos doctores”. Because Arguedas suffers at the hands of the machinic “doctors” who refuse to understand his close connection to nature, but ultimately calls out to them to put their differences aside and join him in fighting for a better Peru, the poem has been read as another example of
Arguedas’s defense of recognition, communication and acceptance of the Other (Molinié 2007; Alvarez 2016). While this may be accurate, in fact this distinction that Arguedas/the poetic subject formulates and “resolves” by accepting and reaching out to the doctors is far more complicated. A closer look at the representation and role of the machine in the poem actually reveals that this is not only the enemy that attacks nature, but also an element that flows from the poetic subject itself. Therefore, it occupies an ambiguous and contradictory position, for while it is a mechanism of death, it is also an extension of the writer himself. Towards the end of the poem, after the poetic subject has denounced the “máquina pequeña” the doctors use to behead him, it expresses that the machine actually emerges from itself. In the following stanza: “No hermanito mío. No ayudes a afilar esa máquina contra mí; acércate, déjate que te conozca; mira detenidamente mi rostro, mis venas; el viento que va de mi tierra a la tuya es el mismo; el mismo viento respiramos; la tierra en que tus máquinas, tus libros y tus flores cuentas, baja de la mía, mejorada, amansada” (in Molinié 104, my emphasis). This section is significant because it undoes the dichotomy machine-nature that has seemingly operated throughout the poem. In fact, the machine is born out of the poetic subject’s own soil (“tierra”), the organic component that makes up nature (“flores”) and machinery alike.

The poetic subject in “Llamado a algunos doctores” understands that the machine emerges from itself: while it may plead the doctors not to attack with their sharp tools, it knows that these, ultimately, are also an extension of it. Therefore, there is no opposition between the natural and the machinic that the poetic subject resolves, because there is no antithetical difference between nature and machine. There is no One and Other who are different. Instead, the poetic voice points to the understanding that it all forms part of a – contradictory, irresoluble – whole: nature, machine, and writing. In my reading, the machine’s paradoxical situation – as extraneous and simultaneously
local, foreign yet organic – may also stand in for Arguedas’s work as a writer. As described earlier, the machine does not represent an identity that reconciles differences; rather, it is an assemblage of differences that coexist in perpetual tension. Likewise, Arguedas is constantly negotiating between his position as a man of letters who employs the tools of intellectual modernity, and the Andean worldview he wants to understand and relay to his public (other mestizo intellectuals). This is what I call Arguedas’s writing machine: the contradictory and irresoluble process of trying to reach and convey the Other through the work of writing and the impossibility of actually doing so. Through writing, Arguedas sought to preserve and demonstrate the importance of indigenous thought and social organization (namely through collaborative and communal work), but by writing from and for the literary institution he also distanced himself from the Andean worldview. As the sixties progressed, and Arguedas was drawn ever closer to the desborde popular, he saw the necessity to not only represent but also try and engage the Other through direct and continuous contact. This accentuates the paradoxical nature of the writing machine, for the closer Arguedas gets to the desborde popular the more his distance becomes evident.

In fact, Arguedas did not just look to convey an Other but to actually frame himself as one. That is, there is an undeniably performative aspect to this negotiation, where Arguedas wanted to be seen as a “pure” writer, free from the shackles of literary professionalization, who could thus embody an Other – or some kind of idealized version of it. As Carmen María Pinilla points out, he identified with and as an indigenous subject, who could thus legitimately speak from this position: “asume en su propia persona al indio; ya no solo se identifica con el indio sino que intenta dar la imagen de serlo. Siendo mestizo, asume al indio en la autoproyección” (61). Therefore, Arguedas constructed an image of himself, writes Antonio Cornejo Polar, as a “naïve” and “spontaneous” writer, “libre de excesivas preocupaciones técnicas y al margen de una sostenida reflexión teórico-
crítica acerca de la literatura” (1994, 14). Imagining himself at the margin of the literary establishment, he privileged his own intuitions as a more “genuine” form of artistic creation than sociological tools. According to Erik Pozo, intuition stands in opposition to modern anthropology’s supposed rationality and objectivity, and states that “la intuición arguediana, antes que una presunción, es un dispositivo de intelección, un mecanismo que permite entender e interpretar el mundo” (270). Intuition, therefore, was characteristic of the work of the “bad anthropologist” Arguedas claimed himself to be, despite his degree and decades of experience of field research. This distinction between himself as an amateur writer against the professionalization of literature culminated in a polemic between him and Argentine novelist Julio Cortázar. When in 1967 Cortázar called out the telluric pretensions of certain Latin American writers who dangerously celebrated the value of an “original” race and culture over the common interests of universal solidarity, Arguedas retorted by challenging the “professional” writers and intellectuals who wrote because it was their job, and not out of love for their country and people. For Arguedas, the polemic allowed him to defend, and reaffirm, his own position at the margins of the lettered city and his ability to speak on behalf, and from, an autochthonous culture. Portugal calls this his “humildad arguediana, esa práctica autoderogatoria que el novelista termina profesando, como si aceptara el desplazamiento de su práctica literaria (y con ella su práctica intelectual) hacia los márgenes del mundo académico-intelectual de su tiempo” (59). Naiveté, humility, and purity were some of the characteristics Arguedas performed and assigned his literary work.

However, as Mabel Moraña argues, the polemic also reaffirmed the literary institution and the authority of the written word: “Lo cierto es que, por un lado, la institucionalidad literaria los abarca a todos, aunque dentro del amplio campo de la producción literaria pudieran distinguirse
proyectos bien diferenciados y sistemas ético-estético-ideológicos distintos y hasta contrapuestos” (2010, 154). That is, the debate reinforced the position of the intellectual, and the novel more specifically, to speak about and for the Other, to mediate marginalized subjects from the site of power granted by the institution of the letter. After all, the polemic circulated in highly specialized circles and media: the Cuban magazine *Casa de las Américas*, the US-based *Life en español*, the Peruvian newspaper *El Comercio* and the academic and cosmopolitan magazine *Amaru*. Therefore, Arguedas paradoxically relied and utilized the authoritative discourse and spaces of the written word to assert his position simultaneously within and outside the lettered city. In this way, his intellectual and cultural work resembles the machine in “Llamado a algunos doctores”: as much as he might perform as the representative of an original and autochthonous culture, result of intuition and “bad anthropology”, Arguedas never rejected neither the tools nor the platforms provided to him by the literary establishment and the scientific profession. Like the poetic subject in the poem, though he saw the machines as harmful, he nevertheless knew they were also part of his own craft.

Arguedas wrote “Llamado a algunos doctores” in the aftermath of an event that had a drastic impact on his life and his conception of his own cultural work. On June 23, 1965, the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos held a Round Table to discuss Arguedas’s *Todas las sangres*. The event brought together social scientists (Jorge Bravo Bresani, Henri Favre, José Matos Mar, Aníbal Quijano) and literary critics (José Miguel Oviedo, Sebastián Salazar Bondy and Alberto Escobar) to discuss the novel and to determine its “value” for both disciplines. While the proposed structure

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8 This event followed other similar debates and round tables taking place the same year, such as the Primera Mesa redonda sobre Literatura y Sociología, Henri Favre’s presentation on his sociological findings in the Huancavelica region, and the Primer Encuentro de Narradores Peruanos, held a week before the *Todas las sangres* Round Table. All of the participants in the June 23 discussion had either attended or formed part of some or all of these previous meetings, where the general themes included the relationship between literature and sociology, as well as the role of the committed writer (see *Casa de la Cultura del Perú* 1969; Pinilla 1994).
for the discussion called for a balanced analysis from both perspectives, it quickly turned into a direct attack on the novel and its author (present as well). Both literary critics and social scientists, reaffirming their Marxist training and perspectives, agreed that *Todas las sangres* held no practical use because it failed to adequately portray the Andean social reality. For everyone present, the novel was contradictory and insufficient because “no es un testimonio válido para la sociología” and “su testimonio es en todo caso parcial, tubular o incompleto” (*Mesa redonda* 30). The sociologist Favre, for example, challenged its actual impact: “hoy tengo dudas sobre la acción positiva que pueda tener la novela, el impacto positivo de la novela. A mi parecer tendría, mejor decir que tendría un impacto más bien negativo” (*Mesa redonda* 39). For Salazar Bondy, the novel was caught in a “double vision” between a rational and a magical perspective that ended up favoring the latter as a solution to the very real problems of colonialism and peasant insurrection (*Mesa redonda* 23). In the end, they accused Arguedas in two main ways: of being ahistorical and advocating an understanding of Andean reality that was irrational and useless for revolutionary struggle, and of missing out on the actual power of the desborde popular mobilizing throughout the Andes and beyond. The Round Table had a lasting impact on Arguedas’s emotional and physical health, as he wrote later that evening: “Creo que hoy mi vida ha dejado por entero de tener razón de ser…Me voy o me iré a la tierra en que nací y procuraré morir allí de inmediato” (*Mesa redonda* 67). What was particularly difficult for Arguedas, in this context, was that the attacks did not come from the right or from any terrain ideologically opposed to him, but instead from the very heart of the socially progressive left (Portugal 39)⁹.

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⁹ For Portugal, this reveals a fundamental crisis within both the literary field and the social science discipline. The latter, in particular, was undergoing a search for meaning not just in Peru but also globally, because the developing field housed many distinctive – and sometimes opposing – methodological approaches and theories of practice (45).
The first argument against the novel during the Round Table, as exemplified by Salazar Bondy’s reading, was that in falling to a “double vision” Arguedas idealized the Andean world as magical, pure and virginal. Thus, it opposed modernization and, therefore, the development of socialism in Peru. Despite Arguedas’s arguments to the contrary during the debate\textsuperscript{10}, he does seem to create this division. And yet, as stated above, in his vision there is a concatenation, albeit complicated and tense, between tradition and modernity, between nature and machine, and between the performance of a pure indigenous subject and Western intellectual knowledge. Arguedas did not envision, as Mario Vargas Llosa claimed, an “archaic utopia” that conceives national modernity through a supposedly uncontaminated indigenous society and culture. Arguedas was not against the industrialization and capitalist development of Peru. On the contrary, he was a firm believer that Andean society needed to modernize, even going as far, in the forties and fifties, and under the banner of developmentalism and academic anthropology, to suggest that de-indigenization was necessary for the progress of the nation\textsuperscript{11}. By the sixties, this had given way to a more complex and less institutional approach to indigenous culture, where Andean society would not need to sacrifice itself in order to attain a modern Peruvian nation. In fact, in it lay the potential for imagining a uniquely Peruvian modernity, instead of trying to adapt a western model

\textsuperscript{10} One of the main accusations against Arguedas came through the representation of Rendón Willka. According to Oviedo, it was “strange” that the character of Willka could have been educated in Lima and still remained “ uncontaminated”, and even more so that he would go and work for a \textit{gamonal} like Bruno. Yet Arguedas did not see this as a contradiction in his novel. For him, Willka embodied the coexistence of the traditional and the modern, the rational and the magical: “en Rendón Willka hay una integración…de este mundo racionamente comprendido y de lo que él es capaz de tener todavía, también dentro de sí mismo, esta concepción indígena del mundo…Entonces él siente la belleza de la luz sobre el cuerpo del potro, con ojos y una sensibilidad completamente indígena, virginal. Pero por otro lado le dice al potro: ¡tú vas a desaparecer, tú no vales nada, una máquina puede trabajar cien veces más que tú!” (\textit{Mesa redonda} 27).

\textsuperscript{11} Rebaza Soraluz (2017) further explains this by examining Arguedas’s writings on Incan architecture in the forties. Here, Arguedas argued that “moradas nobles, moradas ejemplares” ought to be built on top of the ancient Incan structures as to make the latter part of a process of national modernization. This, writes Rebaza, might seem contradictory given Arguedas’s description of the sacred walls of the Coricancha palace at the beginning of \textit{Los ríos profundos}, but which nevertheless is explained by this push towards modernity in forties’ academic circles (2018, 226).
to local realities. Therefore, Arguedas did not reject technological advances, nor did he see them as anathema to this Andean modernity. As Javier Garcíá Liendo argues, “El trabajo de Arguedas con la tecnología es una práctica optimista. En lugar de rechazar, incentiva el encuentro entre la cultura andina tradicional y la mercantilización e industrialización” (146). In particular – and this will be relevant in the writing process of *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* – Arguedas relies on technologies such as recording devices for his different cultural projects. A contemporary poem to “Llamado a algunos doctores”, the 1965 “Jet” is celebration of industrial advances. That it was published originally in Quechua, furthermore, exemplifies that Arguedas did not see technology, or machines in general, and Andean culture as necessarily opposed.

The second argument against Arguedas during the Round Table, related but perhaps more damning, was that in favoring a magical resolution the author of *Todas las sangres* demonstrated a lack of theoretical and experiential understanding of the current situation in the Andes. That is, Arguedas did not represent or reflect on the actual peasant mobilization taking place in the Andean region, or what would later be defined as product of the desborde popular. Arguedas, of course, was not unaware of the situation in the Andes. Around November 1969, before his suicide he exchanged correspondence with Hugo Blanco, the peasant leader who has organized the land takeovers in the Andean provinces of La Convención and Lares and who was then imprisoned at El Frontón. In the letter, he praises Blanco and his followers, comparing them to the “piojosos, diariamente flagelados” peasants of his novel *Los ríos profundos*, who rise against their oppressors. “Ayer recibí tu carta”, he writes, “pasé la noche entera, andando primero, luego inquietándome con la fuerza de la alegría y la revolución” (“Correspondencia” 13-4). Yet despite his ideological commitment to the Left, Arguedas was not an avowed socialist, nor did he belong to any singular party or defend specific forms of political organization. In fact, he saw all kinds of political
affiliation as potentially dangerous because they tended to overlook local conditions and the reality on the ground – and in this way replicated what multinationals like the Wisther-Bozart were doing. As the letters to Blanco demonstrate, his commitment instead favored the potential of literature to represent and directly intervene in social and political life. In fact, Arguedas equates himself to Blanco, for they both carry out the same kind of liberating work, the latter as a political organizer, the former from the realm of art: “Yo, hermano, solo sé bien llorar lágrimas de fuego; pero con ese fuego he purificado algo la cabeza y el corazón de Lima, la gran ciudad que negaba, que no conocía bien a su padre y a su madre; le abrí un poco los ojos; los propios ojos de los hombres de nuestro pueblo les limpié para que nos vean mejor. Y en los pueblos que llaman extranjeros creo que levanté nuestra imagen verdadera, su valer, su muy valer verdadero…Esas cosas, hermano a quien esperaron los más escarnecidos de nuestras gentes, esas cosas hemos hecho; tú lo uno y yo lo otro” (“Correspondencia” 14). Arguedas, therefore, connects himself to the desborde popular as its representative and voice, as he who shows its force to Lima and beyond through the power of the written word. The revolutionary “fire” that guides Blanco also belongs to Arguedas.

12 Arguedas was wary of both the Peruvian Communist Party and the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA). Regarding the place of these (and party politics more generally) in his fiction Feldman writes: “While the programs and rhetorics of both parties announced a possibility of effective opposition to the traditionally powerful pole and parties aligned with it, the historical reality of interaction between the two parties of the left showed that their fights only weakened the oppositional potential. The critique of the disputes between the leftist activists appears in El Sexto, Todas las sangres, and The Foxes. Particularly, El Sexto reads like a treatise on the ills of party politics, and the condemnation of their practices is echoed in the other two novels. In El Sexto, the cultural aspect, Arguedas’s ‘way of seeing the world’ acquires the power to propose another kind of political sphere. His fictions widen the sphere of the political by separating it from party politics” (119). However, Arguedas did collaborate with certain political parties in their cultural ventures and social programs. For example, he was receptive to the center-left Acción Popular, briefly serving as Director of the Casa de la Cultura (1963-4) during the first government of Fernando Belaunde Terry. He also participated in meetings and publications of the Movimiento Social Progresista (Pinilla 124-6). According to Portugal, Arguedas’s links to these parties had to do with their support of indigenous communities, since the New Left, caught within universalist theories and revolutionary programs, could not conceive modernity from the Andes: “El discurso de la izquierda revolucionaria, entonces, no ‘escucha’ a su interlocutor. La nueva izquierda inicia muy pronto el proceso de mesianización de su propia praxis revolucionaria…el planteamiento radical (revolucionario) podría haber sido visto por Arguedas como un proyecto potencialmente tan devastador como el de la modernización a ultranza, que también se impulsaba desde los sectores más radicales de la tecnoburocracia internacional” (344, italics in the original).
There is, in the letters to Blanco, a certain kind of illuminism linked to the capacity of literature. Arguedas claims he has “opened eyes” and revealed “true images” through his “tears of fire”. He was, after all, a close follower of José Carlos Mariátegui, and saw in the Marxist thinker’s *Amauta* a “guiding light” through which to understand the social reality of the country. Without Mariátegui’s *Amauta*, Arguedas had declared, “no sería nada”, as this magazine provided, in his eyes, “la posibilidad teórica de que en el mundo puedan, alguna vez, por obra del hombre mismo, desaparecer todas las injusticias sociales”. *Amauta* “nos da un instrumento teórico, una luz indispensable para juzgar estas vivencias y hacer de ellas un material bueno para la literatura” (in Escajadillo 259). His own work, therefore, fulfilled Mariátegui’s hope for a true *indígena* literature, which would show Andean society and culture to the rest of the country. Furthermore, Mariátegui had argued that the ayllu, the Andean form of community and labor organization, was a model for Peruvian modernity, even calling it a form for a proto-communist society (Rénique 362). As described in the section above, in *Todas las sangres* Arguedas envisioned indigenous work (the ant-like, celebratory organization of work) as a local form of resistance against global capital and as the building block for a national modernity. In other words, work was a form of revolutionary organization. Arguedas, therefore, was not only aware of the *desborde popular*: he also saw himself as a mediator in its struggle, someone who could apply theoretical knowledge to social reality and thus channel the revolutionary potential of the Andean organization into a liberationist cause. As heir to Mariátegui and brother to Blanco, Arguedas understands himself as a political, and revolutionary, subject.

The Round Table has often been read as a problem of recognition or misunderstanding. Shortly after Arguedas’s suicide, and ever since, cultural criticism arrived at a consensus, defending the author by arguing that there was a “truth” present in his writing that went beyond
social reality, and which revealed a mythical rather than empirical character the social scientists simply could not understand. Yet the event was first and foremost an indictment of Arguedas’s cultural and intellectual work, an attack on both his theoretical bases and his experience and research on Andean culture and society. Arguedas’s writing machine, that complex assemblage between nature and industry, tradition and modernity, intuition and theory, art and political commitment, was outside of orthodox forms of intellectual labor. All the texts and polemics that followed the debate – “Llamado a algunos doctores”, the Cortázar polemic, the letters to Blanco – demonstrate how Arguedas tried to position himself simultaneously within and outside the literary system, an uncomfortable space where he could be both a true indigenous subject and a lettered mediator capable of speaking the language of the lettered elite. These connections – this machinery –, which had become more pronounced as the sixties went on, reach a culminating point with the research and writing project of *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*. Here, Arguedas retakes the issue of work to think through notions of community and Peruvian modernity. Like *Todas las sangres*, work is a form of resistance against foreign capital. Unlike the 1964 novel, the latter project sees work not only as a model of organization but, more importantly, as a shared embodied experience that includes both the masses and the intellectual himself. In this way, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* is a refusal to declare an end to the history of the Peruvian nation and an affirmation of the possibility of a new one.

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13 For example, historian Alberto Flores Galindo wrote that these academics “did not hear the millenarian resonances that fill [the novel’s] pages, the hope for social revolution. Concepts and categories insulated sociologists from reality” (205). That is, a mythical or millenarian reality that Arguedas’s literature could reveal. Dorián Espezúa Salmón, in a comprehensive analysis of the Round Table, aims to “reflexionar sobre si es pertinente o no tomar una novela como un documento que permite el conocimiento de la realidad peruana” (18). He concludes that Arguedas’s fiction represents not an empirical but a mythical reality: “Pero estamos frente a un realismo especial, es decir, frente a un realismo mágico que mezcla elementos verosímites reales y verosímites culturales. Por cierto, en la narrativa de Arguedas se da una confluencia de lo mágico con lo racional o de lo mítico con lo real de manera que lo real maravilloso permite naturalizar la cosmovisión andina e integrarla naturalmente a la cosmovisión occidental” (309). In both cases, Flores Galindo and Espezúa Salmón contend that Arguedas captured through his literature something much more essential than what sociology could. Christian Fernández’s approach to the Round Table summarizes how literary criticism has read the event: by rejecting its grounds for discussion and reinvindicating Arguedas’s position as a witness in anticolonial struggle, even if he was not able to defend himself. Fernández writes: “De manera que podemos decir que en 1965 los críticos literarios y sociales se equivocaron rotundamente en la interpretación de la novela y la ideología de Arguedas, pero también Arguedas se equivocó en no poder responder y articular un discurso crítico” (315).
arriba y el zorro de abajo is an attempt at engaging the desborde popular, at documenting it through direct and continuous contact, at recognizing the potential of constituent power in the creation of alternative forms of community and, ultimately, at rethinking the possibility for a mestizo intellectual to share in this community.

III. Bodies, machines and writing in El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo

i. Arguedas’s anthropological formation

Although the artistic process he will employ during his last few years of life, the result of which is El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, will be radically original, ethnography was always a vital aspect of Arguedas’s intellectual discourse and practice. According to Moraña, Arguedas “should be considered neither a literary author who did some anthropology nor an anthropologist who produced some literary texts”, but rather a cultural worker, “a producer whose labor consists in processing cultural materials, preserving their legacy, and disseminating their messages” through different kinds of texts (2016, 132-4, italics in the original). In fact, sections of his novels that describe Andean traditions and practices were often written as ethnographical studies first and then incorporated into the literary texts¹⁴. By the time he signed up for the doctoral program in ethnology at San Marcos University, in the fifties, Arguedas had already demonstrated that he was thinking Andean culture beyond disciplinary frameworks and boundaries. His 1939 bachelor’s thesis, “La canción popular mestiza, su valor poético y sus posibilidades”, shows how he conceived literature, language and music as part of a same register. Though never published in its entirety, the arguments and findings were later printed as articles and essays in different publications. This

¹⁴ This is the case, for example, with the first two chapters of his 1941 novel Yawar Fiesta, which originally formed part of his fieldwork in the community of Puquio (Ayacucho). See for example, Ricardo Melgar Bao & Hiromi Hosoya, “Literatura y etnicidad: un replanteamiento antropológico. El Yawar Fiesta de José María Arguedas” (1986). The same is evident in the chapter on the zumbayllu in Los ríos profundos, originally part of the article “Acerca del intenso significado de dos voces quechuas” (Pozo 277-8).
reveals that, as early as the forties Arguedas positioned himself not only as a writer but also an ethnographer, preoccupied especially with notions of orality, music, their ritualistic contexts, and the formation of Andean and mestizo cultures as part of the broader Peruvian reality (Rebaza Soraluz 214-5).

Devoted to documenting and transmitting indigenous traditions, and conceiving them as integral parts of Peruvian modernity, Arguedas came to face the indigenista postures upon which San Marcos’s Instituto de Etnología y Arqueología was founded. Although the Institute, created in 1946 under the leadership of Luis Valcárcel, dedicated itself to the study of indigenous culture and fomented regulations for the wellbeing of its populations, it nevertheless did so within the context of development theory. Both indigenismo and development theory had at their core a dehistoricized image of Andean culture and saw the indigenous as a sign of national underdevelopment that needed to be assimilated into Western modernity (Cortez 73). Especially representative here is the case of a 1952 Cornell project in the Vicos Hacienda in northern Peru, where US anthropologists seeking to “liberate” Andean peasants deployed modern organizational and production techniques. The Vicos project served as model for other similar ventures aimed at generating an “objective” knowledge of indigenous society in order to integrate it into the nation: “The goal of indigenous acculturation to the national economy, national society, or national culture is reiterated throughout this and all the works of the fifties. The nation…functions here as the constant by which indigenous lack may be accounted for and indigenous progress measured” (Archibald 7, italics in the original). As he progressed with his doctoral studies and encountered the theories and methods of modern anthropology, Arguedas began favoring the acculturation of indigenous subjects and their reintegration into Peruvian society through a process of mestizaje, even supporting the Vicos project. The fifties were his period of greatest anthropological
production, yet also the least studied, given his support of indigenista and developmental narratives of progress. However, as Erik Pozo has argued, “Arguedas se estaba comportando…como un buen antropólogo de su tiempo. En efecto, la teoría académicamente correcta de entonces era la de encontrar y refrendar cambios culturales; el destino manifiesto de las sociedades rurales era la extinción a causa del influjo de la modernización y esto debía ser lo más saludable para el aciago contexto indio” (274; see also Rebaza Soraluz 225-6). This Arguedas, therefore, saw in mestizaje a way out of indigenous backwardness15.

The June 1965 Round Table occurred in this context, with Arguedas having recently finished his doctoral dissertation but also beginning to move away from the rigorous scientific method of modern anthropology. The debate struck at Arguedas’s understanding of how to empirically approach and write about Peruvian society, for it challenged his legitimacy not only as a novelist but also as an ethnographer. In the aftermath of the debate, he was left to conceive another way of writing and thinking the relationship between literature and life, and art as a form of approaching Peruvian social reality. This final artistic project resulted in the incomplete, contradictory and agonic El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, published in 1971, two years after Arguedas’s death. More than as novel, I approach it here as a process, a long-term venture that had its origins in the forties and fifties, and which in the sixties gained momentum, underwent major changes (including genre, methodology and title) and was cut short by the author’s suicide in 1969. The formal project, in the mid-sixties, began as an inquiry into the Andean myths in the region, especially as a result of Arguedas’s previous work translating the manuscript Hombres y

15 Arguedas was one of the first to theorize the category of the mestizo subject, long neglected in favor of the supposedly more essential pair indio/criollo. Against this binary classification, which saw in the former the unadulterated representative of Andean society, and the latter as the white city dweller, heir of Western modernity, Arguedas’s evolving notion of mestizaje “is less a homogenizing identity than a deeply contradictory one. Situated between an ever more aggressive West and a native Andean culture, the mestizo attempts to incorporate the former without sacrificing his own cultural roots” (Archibald 16). Arguedas finds in the mestizo the historical actor of his ethnographical investigation in the communities of Puquio and the Valley of Mantaro (Cortez 85).
dioses de Huarochirí from Quechua into Spanish. However, as he wrote in a letter to anthropologist and friend John Murra, he had almost immediately turned to the problem of urbanization and modernization in the region: “Esta es la segunda vez que me encuentro en Chimbote. Vine con el objeto de explorar en la inmensa colonia ancashina la difusión del mito de Adaneva y a tratar de encontrar otros materiales semejantes. Pero quedé fascinado por la ciudad. Es una Lima de laboratorio. Grabé algunas entrevistas y me desvié por entero a la etnología” (in Arredondo 280). Between July and December 1966, the title of the incipient novel had also changed, from Harina mundo to Pez grande. And, by the time an excerpt was published in Amaru 6, 1968, it bore its final title, El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo.

The novel chronicles both a fishing port’s social transformation as it becomes an industrial complex, and a writer’s own anxieties about his role and function in relation to the nation and people he has devoted his life to understand and represent. It is a chronicle of failure and madness, of depression and the search for meaning, of the mixture between Andean mythology and industrial modernity in a space inhabited by indigenous, whites and blacks, anglers, priests and madmen, prostitutes, thieves and foreigners – and, among them, a mestizo writer who cannot come to terms with what he is experiencing. “Me enardece pero no entiendo a fondo lo que está pasando en Chimbote”, Arguedas writes in the Diaries about his incomprehension, “Esa es la ciudad que menos entiendo y más me entusiasma” (79; 82). Literary criticism has read El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo as proof of Peru’s social transformation during the fifties and sixties, a novel that

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16 The Huarochirí Manuscript is a 16th-century anonymous document about the lifestyle and religious beliefs of the people of Huarochirí. According to Laura León Llerena, Arguedas’s translation, not literal but poetic and literary, represents “un desafío a la traducción literal, dejando al descubierto lo insostenible de la idea del encuentro no problemático de culturas y lenguas con estructuras simbólicas, sociales y políticas distintas y no necesariamente reconciliables. En ese sentido también se puede afirmar que la práctica de traducción que asume Arguedas —del quechua al español y viceversa— no es literal, no es ‘científica’, sino política: por un lado, es una práctica que elabora diversos modelos para transitar entre culturas y para problematizar el concepto mismo de cultura y, por otro lado, es un acto de reivindicación y de reterritorialización” (86).
embodies the country’s (contradictory) multicultural reality. Cornejo Polar writes: “[Es] la reproducción más fidedigna de innumerables contradicciones que ni la realidad ni el pensamiento de Arguedas lograron nunca resolver” (1997, 301). For Martin Lienhard, it captures the plural language created when distinct cultures and worldviews are forced to coexist in a violent manner. Here, the novel presents a “desenfreno estilístico inaudito”, for “La gama de registros lingüísticos que aparecen…no tiene antecedentes” (329). For both, El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo imagines the destruction of one universe in order to conceive another, a utopian horizon upon which to project a new Peruvian society, and the narrative capable to expressing it.

In my reading, El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo articulates a notion of community based not on a plural identity (either social, cultural, ethnic or linguistic), but rather as a union of bodies at work. Here, it shares some similarities with Todas las sangres, namely that its community of physical work stands in opposition to the incorporeity and rootlessness of global capitalism. Like the Czar in the 1964 novel, El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo presents the figure of Braschi, the fishmeal magnate who owns most of the production in the area and is responsible for the industrialization of the town17. Braschi is a larger-than-life figure, who from the background (he never appears throughout the novel) controls not only the commerce, but the lives and fortunes of the workers themselves. Unlike the Czar, a shadowy and unknowable authority, Braschi is a former local fisherman who was able to amass wealth and bring Chimbote under his oversight. His rags-to-riches story represents the ultimate expression of social progress and advancement made possible by capitalism. He has become literally a father to the town: “Oigan: Braschi ha hecho crecer este puerto; lo ha empreñado a la mar, ustedes son hijos de Braschi” (55). From his position

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17 The character of Braschi is based on the real-life figure of Luis Banchero Rossi, who during the sixties and until his assassination in 1972 became one of the richest people in Peru through the fishmeal business. On Banchero Rossi and the explosion of the fishmeal industry, see Guillermo Thorndike’s fictionalized account El caso Banchero (1980).
outside Chimbote, he still commands the respect and fear of the fishermen. When Chaucato, a former associate and fishing boat owner mocks him and challenges his authority, others warn him that Braschi can find him anywhere: “Braschi te quiere joder, Braschi t’encuentra fácil, a cualquier hora…¡No, mierda! Te hace encontrar con cualquier negro o blanco, o yugoeslavo o indio…Tú estás a la mano de Braschi. ¿Dónde lo vas a encontrar tú a él? Él no tiene casa, no tiene familia. Vive en un club. No se sabe cuándo está en Lima, en la Europa, detrás de la cortina de fierro” (187). Braschi thus appears as an omnipresent and all-knowing character who no longer has any local ties – no home and no family – and whose business takes him around the world, unimpeded even by the political divisions caused by the Iron Curtain and the Cold War.

Against this immateriality of global capital, and Braschi’s capitalist phantasmagoria, in El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo Arguedas conceives a very material and physical community of work. But here, instead of an ant-network opposing a machinic system like in Todas las sangres, there emerges a community of subjects who work with machines. On the one hand, the workers of the desborde popular who operate the industrial machinery of Chimbote, and whose bodies are transformed as they become one with the machine. This transformation can result in either the creation of a new subject, or in its destruction. On the other hand there is Arguedas himself, who travels to Chimbote in his attempt to come closer to the desborde popular to understand, represent and more importantly engage it. In my reading, Arguedas becomes part of this community as another worker, as a writer whose labor transforms him by both allowing him to keep living and, simultaneously, destroying his mind and body. And yet, he can never remove himself from his privileged position as a man of letters whose mental and physical work is nevertheless far removed from his object of study. Therefore, much of his concerns will deal with personal and family economies, financial advances and, most significantly in my reading, the need for a comfortable
house to finish writing. In *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, Arguedas conceives a shared embodied and affective experience of community based on work, one that both intellectual and desborde popular might form part of. This reveals both his attempt at imagining alternative designs for intellectual solidarity, as well as the distances inherent between himself and the working masses of Chimbote.

ii. Embodied work

In *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, work is a vital and embodied practice, a ubiquitous experience that encompasses intellectual and Other alike in Chimbote. As a vital process, work creates and destroys life: industry and machine become corporeal, and the human body is also inscribed within the machine. To conceptualize this relationship between subject and machine, I turn to Roberto Esposito’s *Persons and Things: From the Body's Point of View* (2015). Esposito, following in the line of thinkers of the body such as Michel Foucault, Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben, argues that classical philosophy has divided persons and things into a Cartesian logic, making them opposites and mutually exclusive. For Esposito, this division appears to follow common sense, as a human being is what an object is not, and vice versa. Yet what exists in the gap between person and thing, alive and not-alive, is the body: “the human body has thus become the flow channel and the operator, certainly a delicate one, of a relation that is less and less reducible to a binary logic” (4). In this liminal space, the body becomes a site of struggle where both person and machine are transformed and are no longer separate realms: “From this point of view [the body’s], technology is not necessarily opposed to nature; in fact, as far as our species is concerned, technology is the fruit of our nature. Every movement of our body and every sound of our voice is technological. Human nature, it has been said, has displayed an originary technicity that we are free to adopt and even called on to develop” (118). For *El zorro de arriba y el zorro*
de abajo, the implication here is that subject and machine reconnect in the arena of the body during moments of work, or as a result of their work. I read this as the emergence of an embodied or vital form of work, which brings together person and thing in the creation of a collective body.

This occurs, for instance, when Diego, an assistant of Braschi, visits the Nautilus Fishing factory to check on production. Diego, a mestizo from Lima, arrives at the office of manager Ángel Rincón Jaramillo, charged with inspecting the political situation of the port, as well as the conditions of the labor force working at the industrial plant. Wearing a levita, a formal military-style frock coat, he plays the role of a lettered or semi-lettered intermediary, who brings a political and technical discourse backed by the company’s official documents. As such, he is capable of “measuring” the working capacity of the employees, mostly indigenous men recently arrived from provinces and living in shanty towns: he asks, for example, what level of education they have, and whether they know how to read. As don Ángel leads Diego through the plant, examining the machinery and the workers, the industrial factory (and Chimbote more generally) is described in corporeal, bodily terms. “De noche, estas máquinas, nuestros muelles y las bolicheras tragan anchoveta y defecan oro; eso es vida, ¿no?”, says don Ángel to Diego (117, my emphasis). And, advancing the crucial scene that will follow shortly, body and machine begin to resemble one another, creating a common and collective experience that involves all of them. When they see a pink cloud of smoke rising from nearby factories, Diego tells Ángel: “Ese humo parece, sin embargo, como que saliera del pecho de usted, don Ángel. Del pecho de todos nosotros. Es rosado, se eleva contra todo, como si tuviera sangrecita en su incierta forma” (114, my emphasis). The boundaries between subject and machine begin to collapse, as both affect and copy one another.

Diego and Ángel cut through the factory’s innards, where enormous wells, presses and cylinders process the anchovy catch into fishmeal. Once again, the machines “eat” and “breathe”
as they transform the organic material into the export product: “los dos tornillos brillaban comiéndose el aire”. Diego, contemplating a giant metal screw or “worm”, comments: “Parece que comiera aire en una sepultura vacía”, and “Alguien lo dirige y él come aire; el aire que le dan para comer, ¿no es cierto?” (120). They arrive at the center of the factory, where in an open gallery eight gargantuan cylinders gyrate. In front of them, Diego begins to copy their movements, spinning around himself and emanating a metallic breath:

    El visitante quedó detenido a pocos pasos de haber entrado. Respiraba no con su pecho sino con el de las ocho máquinas; el ambiente estaba muy iluminado. Don Diego se puso a girar con los brazos extendidos; de su nariz empezó a salir una especie de vaho algo azulado; el brillo de sus zapatos peludos reflejaba todas las luces y compresiones que había en ese interior. Una alegría musical…cayendo a la arena en cascadas más poderosas y felices que las cataratas de los ríos y las torreneras andinas…una alegría así giraba en el cuerpo del visitante, giraba en silencio… (122).

Diego, the mestizo assistant, resembles the machines; his body reflects the lights (“todas las luces”) and sounds (“una alegría musical”) that make up the factory, becoming part of it through his performance. As Beasley-Murray points out in his analysis of the scene, “We see in and with Don Diego a series of becomings: becoming animal, becoming mythic, becoming human, becoming molecular. These becomings are all machined within the factory environment” (2008, 116)\(^\text{18}\). In

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\(^{18}\) According to Beasley-Murray, this scene marks a kind of “techno-indigenism”, defined by the affective potential that emerges from the symbiosis of man and machine through the ritual of the dance. Giancarlo Stagnaro, in his analysis of the multiple critical readings of the don Diego dancing scene, sees in Beasley-Murray’s interpretation the emergence of a “cyborg” or “post-human” entity which (in addition to auguring man’s dependence on machines in contemporary society) reveals Diego’s ability to penetrate the center of capitalist expansion, seduce and transform it from within, thus creating a hybrid Andean-modern subject that in turn would reflect Arguedas’s own idea for Peruvian society (180). Beasley-Murray and Stagnaro’s readings point to the place and function of Diego’s body during the performance. In doing so, they move away from classical interpretations that saw the dance mostly in terms of orality and verbal transmission, or as the successful concatenation of Western and Andean narrative traditions (Lienhard 1990; Cruz-Leal 1999).
this becoming, furthermore, the work space and time (the work of the machines and that of the laborers operating them) creates a body, half man-half machine that exudes happiness, light and music.

Diego’s performance does not remain an individual process, as seen in the earlier scene with the vapor rising out of everyone. Seeing him dance, Ángel and the laborers feel the impact of his movements: “don Ángel, y los muchos obreros que estaban sentados allí, tomando caldo de anchoveta, apoyados en los muros de la galería, sintieron que la fuerza del mundo, tan centrada en la danza y en esas ocho máquinas, les alcanzaba, los hacía transparentes” (122). Then, the workers stand and begin to clap, as the vapor emanating from Diego reaches and pierces everyone: “Don Ángel vio que los obreros palmeaban todos, ya de pie. Palmearon apenas el vaho su hubo apagado, y el cuerpo de don Ángel, desde ese momento cambió algo de su música que ya no era oída hacia afuera sino hacia dentro, del aire hacia el interior del cuerpo” (123). Ángel and the workers are thus affected by Diego’s dance, as the music that emanates from the latter also occupies their bodies. To complete this ritual or collective performance, Ángel asks Diego if he wants some of the anchovy soup the employees are drinking. Diego agrees and drinks, and in this way closes the cycle by consuming the same product (anchovies) that the steel cylinders are processing. This scene brings to mind Esposito’s affirmation that, “Not only are objects intermingled with human elements, solidified and made interchangeable for others, people are in turn traversed by information, codes, and flows arising from the continuous use of technical objects” (136). During the moment of rest, commiseration and consumption that follows, amid the work of the machines, Diego speaks out: “Es la alegría, don Ángel. La alegría”. To which one of the workers replies: “Cuando hay trabajito, don” (123). This space and time of work, therefore, becomes a scenario of happiness as the workers are brought together by the union between bodies and machines. That
Diego, the only physical manifestation of Braschi in the novel, undergoes this transformation shows a real, physical community emerging out of (and against) the immateriality and incorporeity of global capital.

The result, or product, of this encounter is a literal excess, a remainder that can be both productive – creative, valuable – and destructive – a harbinger of death. Thus, when don Ángel shows Diego the factory, he points to the oil that is left over from the fishmeal process: “Mire, don Diego, cómo gotea aceite de las centrífugas a los tubos; los tubos son de cristal. Se ve gotear el aceite. Ese aceite es oro que chorrea las veinticuatro horas del día, sin parar, sin parar nunca. De ese aceite se hacen cosméticos, pintura, manteca, lubricantes finísimos, don Diego” (122). However, while this process can produce unending “gold” to be used in manufacturing, it can also create a mortal kind of residue. This occurs when, elsewhere in Chimbote, don Esteban de la Cruz, recently arrived in the port town from the mines of Cocalón, begins coughing up the carbon he had breathed in while working his last job. Because Esteban’s body is slowly decaying, a fellow miner, also dying from the same illness, suggests spitting the black phlegm congealing within his lungs onto a piece of newspaper every time he has a coughing fit. By eliminating the carbon, the friend tells him, his lungs will slowly recover, and he will heal. Esteban follows the instructions, collecting the black spit in the newspapers, so that he can measure when he has expelled the five ounces that should be enough:

…don Esteban se puso a toser. Se dio cuenta de que era un acceso bravo y sacó de debajo de su camisa, a la altura del pecho, una hoja entera de periódico… Se arrodilló, extendió el periódico sobre la basura en pudrición y las moscas azules que danzaban sobre ella; se arrodilló calmadamente, empezó a toser y arrojó un esputo casi completamente negro. En la superficie de la flema el polvo de carbón intensificaba a la luz su aciago color, parecía
como aprisionado, se movía, pretendía desprenderse de la flema en que estaba fundido. Don Esteban tocía casi a ritmo. No podía blasfemar. Cuando en la hoja de periódico fueron laquiados muchos escupitajos, los ijares de don Esteban se habían hundido como los de los perros próximos a morir de hambre… (132).

If in the previous scene Diego copies the movements of the machine, creating a union through his performance, here the mine inscribes itself deep within the body of Esteban, in a destructive process that slowly begins to take over his organs. Like the oil that drips down the machines in the factory, the black sputum congeals upon the newspaper. Upon the sheets, it becomes what Julia Kristeva would define as the “abject”: a “jettisoned object,” a “discharge, a convulsion, a crying out” that is both a product of the body and radically opposed to it. It is the Other that inhabits us, and against which we define ourselves (2-3). Here, the abject is not only a byproduct of the body, but also represents the transformation of the indigenous subject in contact with modernity19. If in Todas las sangres the indigenous masses entered the mines in order to retrieve minerals and advance the national industrialization process, here the mine has entered Esteban, transforming his insides into a mine of carbon itself: “Yo solo tengo pecho; pulmón casi no hay. Pulmón está atracado de polvo carbón” (136).

The use of the newspaper is not accidental. If, following Benedict Anderson, the newspaper once served as a tool in the construction of an “imagined community”, based on a supposedly shared and simultaneous time through the circulation of print capitalism, it has now been reduced to a receptacle for the abject. In my reading, this alludes to Arguedas’s realization (especially after the Round Table) that the space of the letter may no longer be sufficient for conceiving community,

19 The abject, since it can stand in for a social Other, be it a minority, a criminal or a madman, is a frequent character in Arguedas’s fiction. Regarding the representation and function of the abject, especially in Los ríos profundos, see Amy Fass Emery, The Anthropological Imagination in Latin American Literature (1996); and Karen Spira, “Towards an Aesthetic of the Abject: Reimagining the Sensory Body in Arguedas’s Los ríos profundos” (2014).
or for generating a unifying, collective experience. In particular, it seems unable to grasp the social and economic transformations occurring over the last decade in the country. The imagined community of print culture, therefore, gives way to a very physical community, one of the body, where the desborde popular of migrant workers and the machines of Chimbote come together to create a new vital experience. In both scenes, this encounter coalesces into a half organic, half mineral excess or byproduct that drips or oozes. This remainder (oil in the first, black phlegm in the second) replaces the authority of the letter, Braschi’s and the newspaper’s. In its place, it posits another kind of community, that of an embodied regime of work that transforms the town’s inhabitants. In the first case, this regime brings happiness, while in the second it entails death: in both, the body becomes a “battlefield” upon which the forces of modernity, the mythical experience, the social transformation of Peru, and the emancipatory potential of the desborde popular clash “in a relentless struggle” (Esposito 117).

In Todas las sangres, Arguedas envisioned an organic network to oppose a machinic network. In El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, on the contrary, the port town emerges as a territory characterized by a regime of embodied, living work. Tsianos and Papadopoulos (2006) define living work as “an excess of sociability of human bodies”, bodies which can “transform their state of existence through affecting others and being affected by others, not through mere linguistic or verbal communication” (eipcp.com). It is through this “embodied realization” that this community emerges as foil to the immaterial and phantasmagoric global capital. For while Braschi controls the economic production of the port, and the lives of those inhabiting it, under the banner of capital development, the workers create a different kind of bond through their bodies. In El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo linguistic communication through an “español quechuizante” may be possible, as Lienhard argues, but Diego does not only communicate with the workers
through words: more significantly, he does so through the lights, sounds and breaths that emanate from his machinic body and reach everyone around. If a community emerges here, it is that which unites bodies and machines in a creative, and at the same time destructive, impulse. By pointing to the incapacity of the written word to conceive community, Arguedas seems to reflect on the failure of the novel to approach the country’s social transformation, and thus reimagine what his own role would be in this process.

iii. Writing at home

While the ethnographical fiction chapters, or “hervores”, deal directly with the desborde popular, through the Diaries Arguedas inscribes his own labor within this community of work. In the Diaries, which take place in the calmness of the home, in the domestic spaces in Peru and Chile where he retreats to in his effort to finish his last project, Arguedas questions the role of the intellectual caught between social commitment and the literary market. In these pages he includes, for example, his final response to Cortázar in the polemic discussed earlier. However, and lest we approach the Diaries as the site of “truth” versus the “fiction” of the “hervores”, I understand both as part of the broader process that is El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo. Therefore, in this section I consider not only the Diaries but also the larger paratextual apparatus Arguedas created during these last years, and which would also include letters to family, friends and colleagues, as well as the ethnographical documents produced to inform the literary project. I read this corpus through the recurring theme of the house, and other aspects related to domesticity such as the family, the home economy, and the need for vacation time from work. These reveal what I earlier described as Arguedas’s writing machine: his attempt to engage the desborde popular’s constituent power, to approach the masses through direct contact and by employing documental technologies, while at the same time reaffirming his position as an intellectual. This writing machine, which
brings him closer yet distances him from the *desborde popular*, simultaneously keeps Arguedas alive and destroys him, both thwarting and contributing to his emotional and physical deterioration. As such, the research and writing project of Chimbote brings Arguedas to form part of the community of work he witnesses and fictionalizes, and the creative and destructive process that emerges from the contact between subject and machine.

In a way, the Chimbote artistic project was for Arguedas an extension of his lifelong experience as a mestizo intellectual, with a fixed income that allowed him to enjoy some quiet time off. Although he first traveled to Chimbote in the mid-sixties, because of the research project mentioned earlier, Arguedas was very familiar with the general area since at least the early forties. Starting in 1943, and through the forties and fifties, he had vacationed in the nearby fishing town of Supe. In several letters to friends and colleagues, including the Spanish editor Carlos Barral, he describes how over the last two decades the area had experienced a “verdadera revolución”, growing from a small fishing village into one of the largest fishmeal manufacturers in the world. For Arguedas Supe had been a family beach, a place where an ascending middle-class (including himself) could vacation and rent homes. He writes: “Tenía una maravillosa playa y cuando llegué, ya solían pasar el verano en ese lugar algunas pocas familias de clase media baja. Alquilé una casa bastante grande en quince soles mensuales”. By 1960, he writes to Barral, this quaint town has become a monstrous urban dwelling, where “una sola habitación, sin luz y con piso de barro, costaba 400 soles”. This transformation corresponds to the migration flows of the *desborde popular* to the coastal cities, which brought a “true revolution” where “esa silenciosa y paradisíaca caleta” became “un inmenso surtidor de humo pestilente” that is “acaso más difícil de narrar” (Arredondo 276-7). The letter to Barral demonstrates how Arguedas approaches Chimbote and the *desborde popular* from his own surprise at being unable to afford the same kind of lifestyle he
could in decades prior. In this way, Arguedas reaffirms his position as a Lima intellectual, who, despite his self-fashioning as an indio, cannot but reveal his privileged social class and the gap between himself and the migrant masses. The home will, simultaneously if contradictorily, allow him to reach out to the desborde popular as well as mark his difference in class and position.

During the writing period of *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, Arguedas transited to and from many domestic spaces. In Chaclacayo, near Lima, he lived with his second wife Sybila Arredondo and her kids, in a quiet community a few hours away from Chimbote by car. From here, he constantly traveled to Santiago, Chile, to see his psychotherapist Lola Hoffman, and stayed at a foster family’s home. In the Second Diary, talking about the best place where he can continue with the novel, he writes: “Así, aunque no duerma, aunque ese ferrocarril de las 4,30am. que pasa, sin perdonar un solo día, a diez metros de la casita que tengo alquilada en Los Ángeles de Chaclacayo me siga comiendo el sueño, yo sigo. Bueno, ¿y si no puedo? Me tendré, pues, que ir, a Santiago, a mi casa de la mamá Angelita” (82). In the Third Diary, he goes back to the house in Chile, talking about the therapeutic power it has on its body: “La casa del Nelson y de la Nena, su mujer, es la más informal y libre que he conocido…En esa casa de Nelson, como en la de Pedro (Lastra), intrínsecamente normada, mi cuerpo se movía con una libertad nunca antes conocida en estas ciudades; todo estaba a mi disposición, especialmente el aire que respiramos” (177). And in a letter to Luis Alberto Ratto, colleague at the Agraria, he also makes mention of having to find a home to write in, after he has had to vacate his home in Chile: “Mañana salgo hacia Lunahuaná por una semana…Hay hotelito en Lunahuaná donde yo me alojaba entre los años 1929-30…” (Arredondo 293). The writing process of *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* is marked by this movement from home to home, as he looks for a quiet place to work. There seems to be in

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20 For an account and analysis of Arguedas’s Chile connection, see Juan Escobar Albornoz, *Donde encontré la resurrección: José María Arguedas en Chile (1953-1969)* (2016).
Arguedas a disposition to separating the home as a place of rest and thinking and the worksite. This is one of the main ways in which he distinguishes himself from the “professional” writers of his time, such as the Cortázar and the Nerudas. For example, in the First Diary he says he writes not “for oficio” but rather “por amor, por goce y por necesidad”, bringing up an anecdote about Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes to make his point: “La última vez que vi a Carlos Fuentes, lo encontré escribiendo como un albañil que trabaja a destajo. Tenía que entregar la novela a plazo fijo. Almorzamos rápido, en su casa. Él tenía que volver a la máquina” (18). The jab circles back to this separation of home and work, as he describes Fuentes as a construction worker or mason (“albañil”) who builds a novel the way he would a house, with a set deadline (and presumably a set price). And, once again, he brings back his allusion to the machine, surely a reference to the typewriter, but also a symbol of automated work. Arguedas’s criticism, therefore, is not against literature as work but literature as commodity.

Contradictorily enough, however, Arguedas needs to be physically close to Chimbote so he can travel there and carry out his field research. During his stay in the Chaclacayo house, he and his wife Sybila drive hours to the port town, where they meet and interview workers, fishermen and union members. Many of the people Arguedas met appear as characters in the text, with their real names and real stories. Such are the cases of Esteban, el Loco Moncada and the fisherman Chaucato, with whom Arguedas would have developed actual relationships. Once in Chimbote, they stay at friends’ homes, or at the house of Vilma, José María’s niece21. A rarely discussed element of Arguedas’s writing of El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo is the team who

21 For more on Arguedas’s Chaclacayo home, his relationship to Sybila and her children, the friends who frequented them, and the writer’s final two years, see Alfredo Pita’s memory Días de sol y silencio (2011). In the section “El viaje a Chimbote”, Pita, who also helped Arguedas transcribe chapters of El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, chronicles one of these research trips to the port town, and comments on some of the syndical leaders who were helping the writer and his wife gather information (117-23).
accompanied him and all those he relied on during the preparation process. In fact, and as evidenced in the many letters he sent out throughout these years, this final artistic process was anything but individual: it included his wife, other family members, friends and colleagues who collected and transcribed the field notes, or who provided him with the contacts Arguedas needed.

In a 1966 letter, his niece Vilma, who lives in Chimbote, writes and offers to help him with the recollection of material: “Yo estoy dispuesta a ayudarte en lo que me sea posible y estoy coleccionando informes sobre la vida de algunos pescadores que han venido a esta oficina. Además ya le hablé a Miguel sobre la posibilidad de que tú te pongas en contacto con alguno de ellos, que él conoce, cuando vengas” (Arredondo 275). Especially significant is Sybila, in charge of transcribing the manuscripts. In a 1967 letter to anthropologist John Murra he describes his hard work in company of her: “Sybila estuvo conmigo y los chicos, ocho días. Trabajamos fuerte”. And then: “Sybila debe estar copiando la entrevista. Te la enviaré” (“Dossier” 379-81). In this way, family and friends became part of Arguedas’s documentary machine in Chimbote, as they were often the ones in charge of operating the recording technologies he used or preparing the hundreds of documents being continuously produced during the visits. Sybila and Vilma, in particular, seem to fulfil the role of secretary, completing tasks Arguedas sees as necessary but, ultimately, complementary to his own intellectual production.

The writing machine, deployed in and outside the home, and which requires an ample number of workers to operate, needs fuel as much as Chimbote’s factories need anchovies. This

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22 In a 1967 report to the Universidad Agraria about his findings in Chimbote, he states that he has compiled reports on the origin and occupation of 6405 people. More detailed information includes interviews to fishermen, syndical leaders, informal venders, prostitutes, and others (“Dossier” 385-6). Some of the photographs that Arguedas took during his visits to Chimbote were later published in the magazine Visión del Perú 5 (June 1970) alongside fragments of the unpublished novel as part of a commemorative issue to the writer. The images, which Arguedas also captioned, show different sites, such as markets, fishmeal deposits, and the shantytown dwellings of the port’s inhabitants. In any case, the novel’s paratextual component can be only scarcely reconstructed from these publications.

23 This same representation of the family, and especially women, as a support or ancillary network to the work of the men will be further examined in Chapter 3.
“fuel”, and another of Arguedas’s main concerns during his final writing process, is money, both to fund his travels and research, and to keep his household afloat. Initially given a scholarship by the Education Department and the Universidad Agraria to conduct research on folkloric traditions, Arguedas gets the support the university’s deans to turn this money towards his Chimbote project. However, unable to write fast enough during his sabbatical from the Agraria he depletes his funds and is constantly pressed for both money and time. In the 1967 letter to Murra he writes: “Ya no estaré constantemente angustiado ante la posibilidad de que me quede sin empleo, pero, por otro lado, no tendré fondos para investigación. De los 250.000 del año pasado quedan unos 120.000, que emplearemos este año en comprar unos muebles indispensables y en financiar mi permanencia unos cinco meses en la sierra…” (“Dossier” 380). And in another, to his editor Gonzalo Losada in 1969, he goes over his accounts: “He sacado mis cuentas cuidadosamente y sabe usted don Gonzalo cuánto ya me viene costando mantenerte completamente libre para escribir esta novela? Diez meses de sueldo – hasta Julio – son doscientos mil soles…a esto hay que agregar los dos mil escudos que usted me envió la vez pasada...” (“Dossier” 414)24. Money (and its lack thereof) becomes directly related to his home economy, as he is constantly asking Sybila to make ends meet, to sell her property and their car. In a September 1969 letter, he writes: “Sybila cambió el carro por unos dólares que obtuvo de una venta de un terrenito que tenía en Santiago, ella, más que yo, quedó aterrada de tener que invertir la muy pequeña reserva que ya tenemos en una solución algo costosa para quedarme en Santiago un mes o un mes y medio más hasta concluir la

24 In fact, one of Arguedas’s main preoccupations while writing the novel is where it will be published – and this is related, once again, to the issue of money. In a letter to his psychologist Marcelo Viñar, Arguedas writes that Siglo XXI and Seix Barral had offered him monetary advances. While Arguedas decides to stick with Losada because he had already published with him, in another letter to Fernando Vidal, director of Editorial Sudamericana he admits he finds this publisher appealing: “Reconozco desde ahora que su editorial parece disponer de un sistema de distribución más vasto y active que Losada” (in Arredondo 283-4). These letters reveal, once again, that Arguedas’s project is very much within the literary establishment (these being the most important publishers in Latin America), despite his appeals to literary ingenuity and naiveté.
nullela” (“Dossier” 420). Once again, for Arguedas the problem in running out of funds is that it compromises their family economy, and especially that related to land and property (“muebles indispensables”, “terrenito”). The agony of writing El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo circles back to the issue of the home: being unable to keep a summerhouse in Chimbote, needing a quiet space to rest while simultaneously being close enough to the field, having to sell off land to keep feeding a project that drains him physically and monetarily.

In my reading, the house, which both fosters and impedes work, is representative of the creative and destructive nature of Arguedas’s final project. In the house, writing becomes therapeutic and at the same time physically harmful, simultaneously mending and destroying Arguedas’s broken body and soul. As the plot of the Diaries progresses, writing, which at first serves Arguedas as a healing mechanism after his first suicide attempt in 1966, becomes a somatic, painful experience. In the First Diary, he writes that “se me ha dicho hasta la saciedad que sí logro escribir recuperaré la sanidad…Voy a tratar, pues, de mezclar, si puedo, este tema que es el único cuya esencia vivo y siento como para poder transmitirlo a un lector” (8). In the Second Diary, however, he writes: “Alla voy, pues, a como dé lugar, a escribir el capítulo III, con este feroz dolor en la nuca, con este malestar que los insomnios y la fatiga producen” (82). By the Third Diary, he is barely able to write, “Porque este atroz dolor a la nuca me ha vuelto desencadenado” (179). In this way, writing becomes for Arguedas a physical process, as the work of writing grants him life and also destroys it. Once again, and to go back to Esposito, Arguedas’s body becomes a battlefield

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25 Physical ailments are a constant in Arguedas’s life, and his health and body are continuously present throughout his correspondence to colleagues and family. Germán Garrido Klinge, one of his physicians, describes Arguedas’s health in 1957, writing that his lack of sleep and gastrointestinal problems were psychosomatic: “El cuadro era de una persona de ansiedad y de primera intención se le dijo que no tenía nada orgánico, que se trataba de un cuadro de distenia neurovegetativa con síntomas fundamentalmente digestivos y que no eran sino manifestaciones psicosómáticas del estado de tensión que tenía por sus preocupaciones…Se le explicó que posiblemente fuera migrañoso aunque sin tener el cuadro florido de las jaquecas, que se manifiesta en personas tensas y de temperamento nervioso y que dan manifestaciones digestivas. Todo fue comprendido por Arguedas perfectamente y fue recuperándose al tener una explicación de la causa de sus síntomas que pensaba eran expresión de una dolencia grave” (in Pinilla 1997, 175).
between life and death drives: “The body is a battlefield on which the forces of human beings clash against each other in relentless struggle: at stake is the very definition of what we are, but also of what we can become” (117). Ultimately, Arguedas’s body can no longer tolerate this inner battle, and he is unable to maintain this precarious (in)stability between life and work, opting for suicide. In these final moments, the concatenation of life (and death), work, and the home reaches its ultimate point: he writes that he chooses suicide because “para algunos el retiro a la casa, es peor que la muerte” (253). And yet, he chooses to commit suicide at “home” itself: at the Universidad Agraria, “Mi Casa de tosas las edades es esta: La UNIVERSIDAD” (252). In the very last lines of his suicide note, he bids farewell and asks forgiveness for taking his life at home: “Dispensadme que haya elegido esta Casa para pasar, algo desagraderablemente, a la cesantía” (254). If work is life, suicide, then, is conceived here as a form of retirement, as the impossibility to work. The home – the place he so looked for in his last few years, which both allowed him and kept him from working, that healed and destroyed him – is the only apt place to say goodbye.

*El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* begins and ends at the home. From these homes – the vacation house in Chimbote, the quaint Chaclacayo and Santiago houses, the Universidad Agraria, home of the mind – he both tries to reach out and grasp the *desborde popular*, and understands that he is unable to do so. More than a place, the home is a notion that embodies the contradictions at the heart of Arguedas’s intellectual process, the writing machine he deploys in order to approach the constituent power of the *desborde popular*. What remains, ultimately, is less so the novel *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* and more so the process *El zorro de arriba y el*

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26 Arguedas’s use of the Castilian variation of Spanish (“Dispensadme”) is curious, especially because he does not use it at any point before these final moments. We may argue that for Arguedas this form of the language incites solemnity and, therefore, must be used at this time – in comparison with the “español quechuisante” that he uses in his novels, which for the likes of Rama demonstrates his narrative transculturation. This same issue will be discussed in Chapter 2, as Manuel Scorza will use Castilian Spanish in the memos he writes as secretary of the Movimiento Comunal del Perú. In both cases, this would support my argument that, despite their commitment to the masses, these intellectuals nevertheless needed to reaffirm their position by ascribing to a more “prestigious” variant of the language.
zorro de abajo by which Arguedas attempted to think through the contradictions inherent to intellectual work, and the debates and dilemmas at the center of literary practice. What matters is the writing machine, the way of deploying his body, that of his family and friends, the technologies he relied on, the actual, physical and continuous contact between himself and the desborde popular. Arguedas may fail to understand and represent Chimbote: he does, however, conceive an alternative regime of relationship between man of letters and the masses that does not resolve contradictions but rather demonstrates them. This may be his ultimate answer to the Round Table: a work of art is not a ready-made weapon in revolutionary struggle, but it could lead to the search of new and alternative models of community. With the desborde popular in Chimbote Arguedas establishes a new community where work and life form part of the same process, which culminates in death. It is, therefore, a community of death, or what Esposito would refer to as communitas.

IV. Conclusion

The emergence of the desborde popular as a constituent force that challenged the Peruvian state and transformed economic organizations and social structures, also affected how writers and artists understood their function in society. According to Moraña, Arguedas was a “cultural worker”, as opposed to a letrado, the intellectual subject who “represents a form of power/knowledge legitimated by its establishment in the privileged systems of highly stratified and exclusive societies”. On the contrary, Arguedas’s creative model “destabilizes the liberal notion of intellectuality understood as a form of participation bequeathed by Occidentalism” (2016, 133). Precisely for this reason, Arguedas always sought to come closer to the Other, not just to write about it but to engage its cultural productions and imagine them as a constitutive element of a possible Peruvian modernity. Yet the desborde popular disrupted the limits between the official and deep Peru, which he and his literary project were supposed to bridge. This culminated in the
1965 Round Table about *Todas las sangres*, which ended up questioning what Arguedas’s novel (and perhaps literature in general) could do. The left, which accused Arguedas of not representing the *desborde popular* accordingly, was also unable to grasp and understand its constituent potential. It was perhaps because they sought answers in the novel – answers they perhaps would have found some time earlier, but which now were insufficient. The result, for Arguedas, was turn towards an ethnographical and literary project that would bring him closer to the migrant masses through an experimental and experiential process. And yet, rather than clarifying a society under tremendous transformation, this created a fundamentally paradoxical situation where the work of writing both kept Arguedas alive and at the same time destroyed him. This is what I have called Arguedas’s writing machine: the need to simultaneously reach (even perform as) an Other, and the impossibility of actually doing so. This does not rest from Arguedas’s findings and conceptualizations about the complexities of Peruvian society. Furthermore, as I have argued in this chapter, Arguedas conceives the possibility for alternative communities not based on a single national identity but through collective experiences of shared work.

Arguedas’s final decade also signals to the limitations and end of certain forms of literature dealing with the *desborde popular*. It is difficult to continue to speak about *indigenista* literature, not only because it was by then being considered anti-modern, in comparison the *boom* and the new Latin American novel, but also because its role as a social document was no longer clear. But more generally, any attempt to speak *about* the masses during this period would ultimately have fallen back on the issue of the veracity or accuracy of its representation. *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* makes clear, however, that representation, and reivindication through representation, is impossible. What remains is the process that Arguedas undertakes, the actual work that the writing project does, and which brings the writer to the community. This process
does not guarantee equality: on the contrary, it marks distinctions, revealing a continuous back and forth between social commitment and the need for innovative artistic production, between revolutionary solidarity and the desire to benefit, at least symbolically, from belonging to a cosmopolitan literary circle. If Arguedas begins a new cycle (as he augured towards the end of the Last Diary), it may be one of a more physical and experiential kind of literary and cultural production, where the work of the artist approaches the work of the peasant or the factory worker. This kind of cultural work will continue throughout the seventies across artistic fields, whether literary, visual or theatric. In all these cases, cultural production will become not just the creation of specific objects of art but rather processes of artistic work that will involve the bodies, as much as the minds, of their creators – and also of participants. Like Arguedas in Chimbote, cultural work will require physical presence. And this presence generates new possibilities for thinking the relationship between tradition and modernity, art and revolution, and the potential of the *desborde popular*. 
Chapter 2

“El trabajo que hacemos por los demás”: Crónica, community and the performance of solidarity in Manuel Scorza

Manuel Scorza’s Garabombo el invisible, the second volume (or “canto”) of his five-book crónica La guerra silenciosa, opens with the following dedication to his children: “A Mañuco y a Ana María, para que leyendo esta historia comprendan que el mejor trabajo es el trabajo que hacemos por los demás”. This notion of “the work done for others”, I will argue, forms the basis for the conception of community-as-obligation that runs throughout La guerra silenciosa, and which, at the same time, frames Scorza’s own representation and performance as a committed writer and intellectual during the 1960s and 1970s. In this chapter, I examine Scorza’s self-fashioning as a cultural worker through his use of the crónica: straddling fiction and non-fiction writing, this genre allowed Scorza to ground his literary production on the work he carried out as spokesperson for the peasant unions during the land takeovers of the fifties – that is, as an active participant of the desborde popular. Towards the end of his life, this commitment reemerged as a political career, when he ran (unsuccessfully) for the vice-presidency of the country. Throughout, Scorza imagined his own work as a writer an extension of the centuries-long anti-colonial struggle of indigenous communities against capitalism and the state. This characterization of his persona and his work, however, was also meant to be financially successful: La guerra silenciosa was a literary product that worked very well within the market economies of the boom, perhaps because it combined a magical realist aesthetic with direct social denunciation. In this sense, Scorza sought ways to reconcile his aesthetic and political commitment, to craft his own brand of committed cultural work as a means to both demonstrate his solidarity with the desborde popular and turn a profit.
My approach to *La guerra silenciosa*, therefore, will focus less on how Scorza sees, imagines or describes Andean society, its colonial struggle or its cosmology, than on how he inscribes himself into its conflict. That is, my question here is how the crónicas reveal his performance and self-figuration as a committed cultural worker. This also has to do with the fact that, as many of his biographers and critics of his work attest, Scorza himself contributed to and fostered a confusing, often contradictory and chaotic understanding of his own persona. In particular, and here we may draw some comparisons to Arguedas, Scorza always sought to emphasize his indigenous and provincial roots (his family came from Cajamarca, in the northern Andes) rather than admit he was a mestizo whose parents were living in Lima before his birth (Gras 2003, 21). Therefore, my point here is not to arrive at any “real” Scorza, or to comb through the different versions about his life that he either spread or started in the hope of uncovering any truth about the author, but rather to see this ambiguity as a constitutive aspect of his performance, where fact and fiction, life and art were always intertwined. What emerges in this ambiguity is a simultaneous impulse towards revolution and financial gain, towards the creation of an artistic work at the same time committed and commodifiable. The many memories and anecdotes told about Scorza come time and again to this tension, and thus serve as an important corpus of information about his work. While in Arguedas’s intellectual and artistic performance money and prestige were the antithesis of a truly committed and popular creation, in Scorza not only are these reconcilable but perhaps two sides of the same coin.

I divide this chapter into three sections. In the first, I examine the role of the crónica during the middle of the 20th century as a new genre of committed writing. Here, I go back to some characterizations of the genre, not to arrive at concrete definitions but to differentiate Scorza’s work from these. In particular, I focus on two aspects: the role of the crónica in revealing the
underside of official or state history, and the function of the narrator or narrative voice(s) as a way of fostering a collective literary creation. The genre, I argue, serves as a literary technique that brings the writer closer to manifestations of constituent power, in the case of Peru understood here as the *desborde popular*. But also, and while the crónica was often conceived as an outside to the market economy, for Scorza the genre served as another venture into the industry. In the second section, I analyze excerpts from *La guerra silenciosa* (1970-1979) and offer a reading through Michel Foucault’s concept of infinite war, and through Mauricio Lazzarato and Roberto Esposito’s different conceptualizations on the notion of debt. I contend that the five-book series pivots around the relationship between debt and community: financial debt serves as a way of instituting a permanent state of capitalist subjection, while the obligation to “work for others” allows for sites of collective resistance and for the creation of community beyond the limits imposed by the government and its conception of progress. In the final section, I focus on Scorza’s role as a cultural impresario, in particular in relation to cultural prestige and his desire of money as trigger for his cultural projects. After examining his last novel *La danza inmóvil*, and through the perspective of Alejandra Laera’s “fictions of work”, I conclude that Scorza’s irreverent treatment of both literature and the revolutionary narrative result in a defetishization of the written text, and instead create a “spectacular” kind of writer. In my reading, this results in Scorza’s outsider position within the Peruvian literary establishment.

Throughout this chapter runs the notion and experience of money and, as I will argue, its significance for Scorza’s figuration as a cultural worker. I lean here on Laera’s conceptualization of this topic, specifically to relationship she establishes between money and life (in her particular analysis, to contemporary Argentine literature). In her 2013 *Ficciones del dinero*, Laera argued that money, in certain Argentine novels written during periods of economic crises, serves as the
motor of the narratives’ plots. That is, not only how money is represented, but, in a more allegorical sense, how the circulation of money becomes reconfigured in literature, or how it may serve as an origin story or metaphor for literature or society. In a 2017 article “Dinero y vida”, Laera goes beyond this kind of allegorical reading to conceive a more material and temporal approach to money. Focusing on the lives of writers Ricardo Piglia and Alan Pauls and their actual relationship to money (or its lack thereof), this critic argues that money “sirve para contar…el transcurso de la vida, de la historia, de la trayectoria”. Money, she writes, is directly tied to the temporalities of the writer, and thus serves to reveal spaces of production often not considered in more traditional literary studies: “El dinero, recuperando toda su materialidad económica a expensas de su potencia alegórica, sirve para contar el tiempo y hablar entonces de esas zonas de la vida que las historias políticas y culturales tendieron a dejar en las sombras” (2017, 77). Along these lines, I argue that Scorza’s life and production may also be read through the experience of money: as the motor that drives his production, and as a parallel vector to his life, money becomes, for Scorza, a vital element that defines his cultural work.

I. The crónica genre

   i. Theorizations and historical background

   The genre of the crónica in Latin America can be traced back to the relaciones de Indias written by the Spanish upon their arrival to the continent in the late 15th and 16th centuries. The crónica, in this way, was since its first iterations a way of narrating – and thus understanding – a reality foreign to the cronista, or writer, by way of giving a first-hand testimony that is often autobiographic in nature (Salas Andrade 106). According to Susana Rotker, the modern crónica, however, has two specific antecedents: the cuadro de costumbres (stories of manners and mores), “tableaux vivants generalmente anclados en el pasado”, and the mid-19th-century French
The crónica gains a different, specific importance in Latin America with the aesthetic and material transformations brought about by the rapid modernization of the continent towards the end of the 19th century, and its incorporation into global economic patterns. These transformations were exemplified by “un inagotable deseo por la novedad”, and took place mostly in the largest cities of the continent such as Mexico and Buenos Aires (Rotker 31). On the one hand, this resulted in the artistic developments associated with literature of modernismo. On the other, and of more significance for our purposes, it also represented a radical break on what literature’s function was in itself. If literature had been the site, “donde se proyectaban los modelos de comportamiento, las normas necesarias para la invención de la ciudadanía, los límites y las fronteras simbólicas, el mapa imaginario, en fin, de los estados en vías de consolidación” (Ramos 49), economic modernization meant that its role – and that of the writer – was shifting. It would no longer be tied to state or nation building, but would allow for the articulation of alternative, even marginal knowledges, “hacia la turbulencia, hacia la irregularidad” (53): that is, it could now be conceived as an autonomous site of enunciation.

In this context, which Julio Ramos describes as a division of intellectual labor, the crónica becomes a heterogeneous space from which to conceive the writer’s new role in a modernizing society, and is directly tied to an emerging market economy of writing. The genre, he states, “surge como una crónica de la vida moderna, producida para un lector ‘culto’, deseoso de la modernidad extranjera” (178). The crónica in this sense became a kind of “laboratory” for the writer’s style,
“el espacio de difusión y contagio de una sensibilidad y una forma de entender lo literario que tiene que ver con la belleza, con la selección consciente del lenguaje…con la mixtura de lo extranjero y lo propio, de los estilos, de los géneros, de las artes” (Rotker 96). However, as Ramos points out while discussing José Martí’s crónicas, the genre was still tied to a writing market centered around the newspaper: by 1887, as many as twenty newspapers published the Cuban’s writings. For Martí, while the crónica did not have the same legitimacy as poetry, to write for a newspaper was still closer to the instruments of his trade (pen and paper) than bureaucratic or commercial occupations (178). And, as Rotker states, his choice of the crónica “está muy lejos del torremarfilismo y de la marginación lujosa de la sociedad” (114). The Latin American crónica in the late 19th century, and through the first decades of the 20th, can be thought of as a site of literary autonomy and resistance bound to the market; a site, therefore, that reflects the changing nature of the writer’s work in a modernizing society.

The mid-20th century crónica reveals the influence of non-fiction literature and New Journalism, both of which blur the line between “real” and “fictional” narratives, and denotes a political and social commitment. In the sixties, American authors such as Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer began producing a new kind of text, where real events are narrated through the codes of fiction. Capote described his In Cold Blood (1964) as a “journalistic novel”, while Wolfe and others criticized traditional journalism’s search for truth and objectivity that could never be truly achieved. In Latin America, this journalistic approach to the novel and aesthetic reworking of journalism, which sought to undo the supposed divide between fiction and real life, occurred even earlier. In Operación Masacre (1957), Argentine journalist and writer Rodolfo Walsh narrates the assassination of civilians supposedly involved in a Peronist revolt in June 9,
1956. Walsh’s text raises similar questions with regards to the heterogeneous nature of the genre and what Ricardo Piglia calls its “pulsión hacia la verdad” (197):

Tenemos, entonces, el hecho y la ficción. ¿Qué es un hecho verdadero? ¿Qué entendemos por un acontecimiento? ¿Qué verdad hay en la ficcionalización de un acontecimiento histórico y real? Toda esta discusión está muy ligada a la aparición de la novela de no ficción como aquella forma que garantiza que lo narrado ha sucedido tal cual se cuenta, aun cuando las estrategias que se usen para contarlo reproduzcan los modos y los modelos de la narración ficcional (200, my emphasis).

Therefore, for Piglia Operación Masacre – and non-fiction– represents an answer to the debates between social and aesthetic compromise. Unlike social realism, then, Walsh’s crónica “levantaba la verdad cruda de los hechos, el documento, la denuncia directa y a la vez cuestionaba, en la circulación inmediata de sus investigaciones, el formato libro y de hecho el mercado literario” (173). That is, in its immediacy and its form of circulation, the crónica becomes a site opposite to the literary market inasmuch as it does away with the book that circulates in a literary market. Instead, for Piglia the crónica as a genre establishes a different relationship between the profession of writing and its readership.

This leads me to the two most significant characteristics of the crónica I wish to underscore, and which result from its interstitial and heterogeneous nature as a form of writing that straddles both fact and fiction without being completely subjected to either one. First, that the crónica, in both form and content, positions itself against homogenizing narratives put forward by the state or other, official media: the crónica, “es un discurso sin límites precisos que tiene la intención de evitar un cierre, una narrativa concluyente;” and that one of its functions “consiste en oponerse al sentido homogeneizador y superficial que sobre la sociedad delinean los medios” (Salazar 2005;
my emphasis). The crónica, which avoids or rejects totalizing narratives, can be understood as a processual genre, a form of non-linear writing that in its very form presents a site of autonomy and resistance to official or totalizing history. Second, the genre must also be understood as a collective and participatory process, where the cronista (chronicler) directly engages, in one way or another, with the community he or she is writing about. This was already present, as shown in Chapter 1, in the work of Arguedas, in his use of documentalism as an alternative way to approach Peruvian reality. In Arguedas, as in the cronistas, writing is experiential, based on contact with the subjects depicted on the text but also the readers that encounter, through the experience of the narrator, these same subjects. Susana Reguillo argues that in this kind of writing, “El acontecimiento, el personaje, la historia narrada, pierden su dimensión singular y se transforman en memoria colectiva, en testimonio de lo compartible, de lo que se une en la miseria, en el dolor, en la fiesta, en el gozo” (45, my emphasis). The crónica, then, emerges as a shared space, a collective site where writer, protagonist and reader participate in its construction. Furthermore, Reguillo suggests that this sort of literary participation challenges a traditional understanding of “authorship”, since it aspires at blurring the distance between narrator and his or her object (45). Following Nancy Salas Andrade, we could add that the writer-reader relationship is affected, since the cronista experiences reality as any of his or her readers, “suffering” and “living” it as part of a larger collective (57). For both these critics, the crónica functions as a collective and shared genre, because in its very form it fashions alternative kinds of writing, reading, and experiencing. What is significant here, therefore, is not just its role in denouncing the state or state narrative, but doing so from a site that rejects any attempt at essentializing its form. The most revolutionary aspect of the crónica, I draw from these theorizations, is its indefinite form, and thus its continuous existence outside state logic and official history.
In the context of Peru in the sixties and seventies, the crónica also occupies the space between writer and *desborde popular*, or the political mobilization of rural and urban masses against the state and the country’s oligarchic economic structure. The crónica genre as a tool for political denunciation and the vindication of marginal populations in Peru has its origins in the 17th-century work of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala’s *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615), which both retells the history of the Incas and the Andean peoples before the arrival of the Spanish, and calls attention to the latter’s poor management of the colonies and their native inhabitants. In the 1960s, a group of young and up-and-coming writers, all socially committed and many actively involved in leftist organizations and parties, came together to form the literary group Narración.27 While their most significant work as individual writers would not appear until the eighties, in the late sixties and throughout the seventies Narración published three issues of their literary journal and a series of crónicas about peasant uprisings. Through these, the writers of Narración sought to move beyond their middle-class background and learn from marginalized populations: “Nosotros, los de la revista ‘Narración’, pertenecemos, por nacimiento, a la capa media urbana; pero, a lo largo de nuestra vida, con nuestra conciencia, con nuestra obra creadora, con nuestra actitud vital, hemos escogido la causa del pueblo... Por eso nuestra misión es aprender del pueblo, para poder escribir, sin equivocarnos, sobre la realidad nacional” (*Narración* 1, 3). The group publishes its first crónica, also titled *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1971), about the violent shutdown of a June 1969 peasant revolt in Ayacucho, against the RGAF’s agrarian reform. Emphasizing the immediate presence of its writers-chroniclers in the area during the conflict, “Los sucesos de Huanta y Ayacucho” looks to “reestablish the verdad histórica, narrando veraz y objetivamente al

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27 These included Miguel Gutiérrez, Oswaldo Reynoso, Roberto Reyes Tarazona, Gregorio Martínez, Antonio Gálvez Ronceros, Juan Morillo Ganoza, Augusto Higa and Hildebrando Pérez Huarancca, as well as others who participated sporadically. Pérez Huarancca was later associated to Shining Path, and died as a militant in its ranks.
pueblo peruano lo realmente acontecido”, through a crónica “minuciosa” that offers the actual versions of those present (1). Subsequent crónica deal with similar strikes in other regions, revealing the struggles of peasant communities against the state’s land reforms and layoffs caused by competing mining corporations – similar in many ways to Scorza’s own crónicas in *La guerra.*

All of Narración’s documental crónicas follow similar structures, with a chronology of events and testimonies of strikers and the families of those killed.

Going back to the earlier theorization of the genre, this kind of documentalist work reveals an underside to official history, or the state’s retelling of the events. In the crónica about Ayacucho, for example, the writers denounce not only the government’s official communiques, but also the collusion of mainstream journalism: “como se recordará también, diarios y revistas acogieron la versión oficial y condenaron la lucha de los pueblos de Huanta y Ayacucho” (1). On the one hand, this is done in the name of realism – a realism that both contributes to people’s struggle against imperialism (of which, for the writers of Narración, the military regime forms part of) and allows for literary experimentation. On the other, documentalism “también cumple un objetivo en relación con el público a quien va dirigido el texto. Así, el testimonio y la crónica son los géneros que Narración trabaja con la finalidad deliberadamente política de corresponder a un público popular nunca antes abordado” (Rondinel Pineda 46).

This points to the second argument I made above about the crónica genre, and its role in the formulation of a collective and shared space of literary production and political denunciation. The crónica serves as a way in which writers (from a middle-class, urban setting) can enter into direct contact with the desborde, for them to participate within their struggles over land and working rights, and for these populations to occupy a space within a radical lettered community. As Miguel Gutiérrez, novelist and director of *Narración,* writes, the preparation of the crónicas included collecting documentary materials from all sides
involved, traveling to the areas in conflict, carrying out and recording interviews, all the while aided by translators (65). Once completed, the crónicas were published as supplements to the actual journal *Narración*, which also included short stories by the group’s members, often-negative book reviews (in a section titled “Opiniones comprometidas”) and articles about socialist theory, many in translation. Although Narración only ever published a few numbers of its magazine and supplement, their crónicas form part of a larger – and varied – group of texts that mixed literary creation and social commitment, political theory and participatory documentalist techniques. These stand in opposition to the literature of the *boom*, as most of these kinds of work circulated relatively little, and only locally, in artisanal or even precarious media (the *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno* crónicas were published in newspaper format, and were only a few pages in length, though with photographs and some well-designed prints). After all, the crónica emerges not only against the state but also against the market, opposing the “totality” aimed at by the writers of the *boom* through their novels (Rondinel Pineda 49; Valenzuela 94).28

What is significant here, then, is the crónica’s ambivalent relationship to the literary market – and to money. As stated earlier, the emergence of the crónica as a genre marked the professionalization of the writer, whose texts could now circulate widely and without the book industry. Juan Poblete has called this a “coup de marché”, or market coup, which installed the market as a site that regulated the production of literature (85). But, at the same time (and as alluded

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28 The reading of the *boom* as a patriarchal family or brotherhood, however, could also be applied to the Narración group. As Gutiérrez points out, not only were there women involved in the production of the publication, they formed a vital part of the planning and distribution of the crónicas to peasant organizations. However, “para decirlo en forma algo brutal: las mujeres, por lo menos al comienzo, fueron consideradas como integrantes de segunda categoría, indispensables e incluso excelentes como fuerzas de apoyo y trabajo” (61, my emphasis). This characterization is reminiscent of how Arguedas seemed to characterize the role Sybila Arredondo within his literary project, and, as I will show in the following chapter, how the Hora Zero poets understood the function of their mothers, sisters and wives. Gutiérrez’s wife, Vilma Aguilar Fajardo, diagrammed *Narración* and distributed the issues. She later became a member of Shining Path and was jailed in the Canto Grande prison in Lima (where she shared a room with Arredondo, also a Shining Path militant).
to by Piglia, as well), the committed crónica writers of the sixties, in their struggle against
capitalism, also conceived their production as beyond a market. In the specific context of the boom,
against the market economy in which authors like Mario Vargas Llosa and Gabriel García Márquez
participated. Perhaps because of this ambiguous relationship that the crónica generated between
intellectual solidarity and presence, the work of the writer and money, Scorza chose to market his
texts as representatives of this genre.

ii. Scorza’s presence in the peasant mobilizations

Known until then as a poet and cultural impresario rather than a prose writer, Manuel
Scorza wrote and published the five books that make up La guerra between 1970 and 1979. He
marketed the series, through an introductory note at the beginning of the first, Redoble por Rancas,
not as novels but as the “crónica exasperantemente real de una lucha solitaria”: the author, he states,
is a witness, not a novelist. This “solitary struggle” is the fight between peasant communities in
the Central Andes and state-backed American mining corporations, from 1950 to 1962. This time
period, as I have argued earlier, was characterized by the increasing politicization of the peasant
masses, and their mobilization to take back land arable land that had been taken from them. The
governments of Manuel Odría (1948-1956) and Manuel Prado (1956-1962) had moved violently
against these populations, considering their struggle against capitalist investment as detrimental to
the process of national modernization. In 1961, Scorza joined the Movimiento Comunal del Perú
(MCP). As Political Secretary of this peasant federation, he was in charge of organizing rallies or
signing up commoners to their cause. More importantly, he collaborated by writing the
association’s official communiques, which would later be included in the last book of the series,
La tumba del relámpago. As biographer Juan González Soto describes, during this time Scorza
observed and participated with the peasant communities, while, once back in Lima, he edited and
published the manifestoes in which he decried the abuses of the mining companies and the
gamonales (86). Like in the case of Arguedas and the writers of Narración, this back and forth
between the desk and the peasant communities characterizes La guerra. Scorza insists his main
role in the cooperative is to watch and listen (“lo que hago fundamentalmente es mirar y oir”),
presenting himself as a constant witness whose principal job is to serve as a liaison between the
peasant struggle and lettered culture.

Much of the literary criticism on La guerra silenciosa has come from both hermeneutic
and sociological approaches to form and content. Interpretations about the series often focus on its
representation of Andean mythos and cosmologies, or on its use of the epic or ballad genres29. On
the other hand, sociological readings tend to analyze Scorza’s use of the novelized chronicle, or
“cronivela”, as a mixed genre that combines fact and fiction, and realism with magical realism.
Ultimately, the purpose of these readings is to resolve the tensions between literary criticism and
social sciences that were made evident in the 1965 debate around Arguedas’s Todas las sangres,
and that I describe in detail in Chapter 1. This mixed genre has been described as such: “Una
cronivela puede leerse tanto como un documento histórico desde el punto de vista de lo narrado o
como una novela desde el punto de vista del discurso. Es útil tanto para científicos sociales como
para críticos literarios puesto que es mixta en su composición” (Espezúa Salmón 64). And: “Para
representar lo real [Scorza] se enfrenta a un proceso de problematización, recurre a la crónica pero
la deja de lado porque considera que con ese discurso no logra expresar lo real… Por ello recurre

29 The more recent approach to how Scorza deconstructs national symbols throughout La guerra silenciosa, and his search for an alternative, Andean counter-narrative is Adriana Churampi’s Heraldos del Pachakuti (2014). Other, older texts within this tradition include Roland Forgues’s La estrategia mítica de Manuel Scorza (1991) and Marta Lucia Nesta’s El ciclo de La guerra silenciosa: La narrativa de Manuel Scorza como hermenéutica de la historia (1990). In several articles, Dunia Gras has studied Scorza’s cultural ventures, especially his Populibros and Festivales de libros series. Her Manuel Scorza: la construcción de un mundo posible (2003) is perhaps the most comprehensive study on Scorza, as it examines the author both as a cultural businessman and through a close reading of his poetry and novels.
a los símbolos poéticos” (Mamani Macedo 96). The cronivela, from these approaches, both
documents reality and transgresses it, and is not bound by the limits of social sciences in their
recourse to truth. From this perspective, La Guerra silenciosa’s revolutionary potential,
furthermore, lies in that it is “useful” for literary critics and social scientists in their search for truth
and objectivity.

These readings pivot around how the genre can (or cannot) approach and represent reality.
In doing so, they continue to reaffirm both the terms of the social science-literature debate, and
Scorza’s own interpretations about his work. He often claimed that his work was truthful, or
realistic, as in an interview with Argentine magazine Ficción y realidad: “Yo no hice a Chacón
líder de ninguna revuelta imaginada. Fue la realidad la que lo esculpió como figura en Redoble por
Rancas” (Zappietro 85-88). Furthermore, Scorza asserted that there is nothing “magical realist”
about the book, because all the seemingly supernatural events he narrates actually occurred. From
a perspective of cultural work, however, the issue is not one of representation, but of artistic
commitment in a revolutionary context. The crónica allows Scorza to position himself within the
peasants’ organic struggle for land, as witness but also as participant. In another interview,
published in the Argentine magazine Crisis, he reaffirmed that he had “suffered” as much as the
peasants: “En los Andes centrales en 1960 yo vi el relámpago que pudo cambiar la historia del
Perú y vi, sufri, su apagamiento” (“Manuel Scorza” 1974, my emphasis). Therefore, the most
pertinent question La guerra silenciosa raises is how its author positions himself between desborde
popular and the lettered city. We already saw this with Arguedas’s back and forth between his
home and Chimbote as a way to approach and understand the socioeconomic transformation of the
fishing town. In my reading, Scorza does it in two ways: first, through the use of a documentary
apparatus that includes official communiques, newspaper articles, his own writings for the MCP,
as well as his actual, physical presence in the conflict; and second, though this will be in many ways outside of his immediate control, the after and extra-literary life of La guerra silenciosa. That is, the actual effects it has in political events that came after its publication, and which affect the way the text is reedited and marketed. This, in my reading, demonstrates how La guerra silenciosa serves Scorza as both a political tool and as commodity that can benefit from the boom economy.

Scorza intervenes and creates the archive, both real and fictitious, through which he narrates the peasant struggle in Cerro de Pasco. Thus, the narrative voice constantly refers to the differing and often contradictory versions about the events, told by historians, scholars and witnesses. The narrator seems to sort through a documentary material, establishing connections and choosing the most appropriate order of events. Like a chronicler combing through an archive, the narrator, telling how Rancas’s despotic authorities got together after they had poisoned and killed a group of protesters, states: “Y aquí las versiones se contradicen. Ciertos cronistas sostienen que las entrevistas no duraron horas, sino días, y que en vez de celebrar un cónclave, las autoridades viajaron a las lindañas de la hacienda. Para desmentir a los testigos que juran que vieron salir a las autoridades abrazadas y entre risas, los historiadores exhiben una prueba irrefutable: esa noche – ¿era noche, era día? – las autoridades confirmaron que Espíritu Félix y sus catorce compañeros habían sido fulminados por un “infarto colectivo” (117, my emphases). Here, the narrator brings up the presumably “official” sources of the story he is retelling. Historians and chroniclers (understood here as the archons of official history) side with the town’s authorities, reinforcing, with their privileged discourse, that the death of the protesters was accidental. They also refute witness’s versions, placing historical discourse over the experiential account of those present. History, for the narrator, presents an intentionally muddled version of events, meant to
hide and conceal the authorities’ abuses: “Y aquí se confunden las versiones. Ciertos cronistas afirman… Otros memorialistas discrepan… pero todos coinciden en…” (87); “Las tinieblas cubren ese periodo…” (88); “Y aquí se enzarzan los escolásticos…” (185).

The committed chronicler’s role here, Scorza seems to affirm, is to provide a counter-history that challenges and fills in the gaps left by official history and scholarly discourse. In terms of Foucault, a counter-history would refer to the discourse “of those who find themselves… in darkness and silence” but who through a “disruptive speech, an appeal”, emerge from the shadows to tell their side of the story (2003, 70). Their counter-history, therefore, would tell of the “race struggle” in which they have been continuously undermined and oppressed. Theirs is, Foucault would say, “the history of dark servitude and forfeiture” that challenges an assumed, official and state history (2003, 73). To tell this alternative and critical narrative, other, “real” voices and documents are needed: this is where Scorza, the peasantry’s mediator, comes in. In a 1971 interview he says that, “Por un azar fui testigo de sucesivas masacres… Asistiendo a estos sucesos tropecé con hombres de un coraje, de una magia y una grandeza tan extraordinarias que un día comprendí que este sector popular, que era el más despreciado de Perú, era en realidad el único noble y epopéyico que existía en un país podrido”. Therefore, to tell their story, “lo hice desde el punto de vista de ellos” (in Marco and Gracia, 765). But Scorza does not just look to tell their story: he tells his own, by including documents that he himself wrote as active participant of this struggle. The last canto, La tumba del relámpago, includes Scorza’s own writings as secretary for the MCP. In one of these, originally published in the Lima newspaper Expreso in 1961, he calls on students and workers to abandon partisan politics and join the MCP directly in the peasant struggle, to form part of their popular struggle for justice: “¡Nadie salvará a los comuneros! ¡Los comuneros se salvarán a sí mismos!” (176). With this exhortation, the MCP and Scorza reject traditional,
electoral politics in favor of direct organization. This is clearly in line with Hugo Blanco and his call for “Tierra o Muerte”, while criticizing organizations like the ELN and the MIR, which, as I pointed out in the Introduction, received little support from the peasant communities they were supposedly fighting for. Scorza, therefore, envisions his participation as directly linked to the peasant struggle, and not only as partisan political commitment. He strives to transcend his position as a traditional intellectual from a lettered, mestizo class, and work alongside the peasants, as another member who suffers along with them.

The second way in which *La guerra silenciosa* becomes strategic for Scorza’s representation of his commitment is in the extra-literary life that the series went on to live, and which would be incorporated into subsequent versions of the books themselves. The afterlife of the series is also directly tied to RGAF politics, especially given that the military regime’s agrarian reform sought to fix many of the problems documented in Scorza’s work. For example, the series’ third canto, *El jinete insomne*, includes two postscripts, newspaper articles (from *El Comercio* and *Extra*) about commoners’ demands for their land. In both, the first from 1974 and the second from 1977, the peasants protest that the RGAF’s Agrarian Tribunal and its land reforms either mishandle the reality of the situation, or entirely miss the point that the lands originally belonged to the peasants. Scorza begins the Postcriptum section with a note that the land struggle, “269 años después de iniciada la queja que historia este libro” (212), only continues under the military regime. In this way, Scorza frames his texts as part of a longer history, which continues to develop after the books’ publication and only reinforces its denouncements. However, the most significant way in which *La guerra silenciosa*, and especially *Redoble por Rancas* lives beyond its text is with its influence in the release of Héctor Chacón, the book’s protagonist, from prison. Chacón, or El Nictálope (or, “the one who sees in the dark”), as he is nicknamed in *Redoble por Rancas*, had
been imprisoned since 1960 for allegedly killing two of his town’s authorities. On July 28, 1971, Chacón is granted a political pardon by Velasco and subsequently released. In a report published in the newspaper *Oiga*, Scorza returns to Peru from Paris to advocate for Chacón’s release, standing behind him as the peasant leader speaks to the press. The interview to Scorza reveals many aspects of his own intellectual performance. For example, he tells journalist Federico García Hurtado that *Redoble por Rancas* is “excesivamente político y excesivamente comprometido”. Describing himself an “espectador doloroso y callado”, Scorza challenges those who call him a “master of publicity” by rebutting that, “No hay que olvidar que mi libro fue comenzado a escribir en el lugar mismo de las masacres campesinas, y cuando estábamos un grupo de peruanos frente a las ametralladoras y no frente a los flashes de los fotógrafos” (“El regreso” 40-2). In this way, Scorza positions himself against committed writers who, in their “exquisite cosmopolitanism”, avoid taking direct aim at the authorities in charge of peasant massacres. He returns time and again to the fact that, even though his work is not a direct reflection of the truth, he constructed it based on interviews with peasants and with Chacón himself (while in prison), and that he employs many of the real names of those involved. His representation of himself as a doleful and, again, suffering witness who puts his life in danger in defense of the oppressed peasantry, and who then silently stands behind Chacón, further construes his persona as a committed writer devoted to his “work for others”. That he must defend himself against the charge of being a master of self-promotion, however, demonstrates that his image was under constant scrutiny.

Chacón’s release from prison further serves Scorza to claim that his literary work bridges the gap between art and life, as he demonstrates how his kind of intellectual commitment (one of presence and solidary labor) has real, tangible effects. This will affect the text itself, as in 1983 Scorza adds an epilogue to *Redoble por Rancas*, where he reflects on the afterlife of this first book.
Here, he states that, “Indiferente a la voluntad del autor, la realidad de la que nacieron estas novelas sigue (y quizás seguirá) escribiendo capítulos que nunca figuraron en ‘La guerra silenciosa’” (236-7). Among other events, he refers specifically to the death of Pepita Montenegro (wife of judge Montenegro, main antagonist of the series), killed during the civil war because of her role in the suppression of the peasant strikes. In its later editions, the epilogue transforms *La guerra silenciosa*, from a witness’ denouncement to an active literary machine that transgresses, and can continue to transgress, the written word. In my reading, through the inclusion of this epilogue, as well as his role in the release of Chacón, Scorza frames *La guerra silenciosa* as an aesthetic and political process, rather than just a text, which documents a very specific moment of history but which continues to have further implications in the “long and silent war” between Peru’s forgotten majority and the state and traditional elites that support it. *La guerra silenciosa*, then, does not end in the books themselves, as it carries a life of its own that can continue to produce effects. Life and literature coexist, for Scorza, as proof of his artistic solidarity.

As this demonstrates, and to go back to a point made earlier, the crónica is a hybrid genre that resists essentialization, and that continues to have a life beyond its author’s original intention. Therefore, rather than establishing the exact parameters or characteristics of the genre, here I have tried to show that the framing his work as a crónica serves Scorza to create a committed work of literature. This commitment, as he stated, has brought him face to face with machine guns, instead of the cameras. It also, and to this I will come back in the final section of this chapter, is a strategy within the literary market. *La guerra silenciosa* also fits within Scorza’s own ambiguous and contradictory persona, inasmuch as it straddles fact and fiction, and spouses both the solemnity of revolutionary commitment and the personal desire for aggrandizement, myth and profit. The chronicle series is, I argue, an extension of Scorza’s “work for others”: work understood here as
physical presence, collective practice, and suffering activity that links his cultural labor and his social commitment. This is how he repays his “debt” to those populations oppressed, for centuries, by many of those who share in his privileged position. As I will show in the following section, to work, or to do for others, without expecting anything in return – that is, how his own intellectual commitment – will also the motor that drives *La guerra silenciosa*.

II. Infinite war and infinite debt in *La guerra silenciosa*

i. War and community in *Redoble por Rancas*

In this section, I read Scorza’s *La guerra silenciosa* (*Redoble por Rancas* [1970], *Garabombo el invisible* [1972], *El jinete insomne* [1977], *Cantar de Agapito Robles* [1977] and *La tumba del relámpago* [1979]) through Foucault’s concept of infinite war, as developed in his lecture series at the College de France, and published as *Society Must Be Defended* (2003), and the notions of debt and community present in Mauricio Lazzarato’s *The Making of the Indebted Man* (2007) and Roberto Esposito’s *Communitas* (2010). I argue that the conflict between the peasant masses, the Peruvian state and international capital that Scorza witnesses, documents and fictionalizes, but that also stands in for a centuries-long war or “conflict of races”, pivots around a narrative of a debt – or rather two debts: what the peasants owe local authorities, *gamonales* and corporations (money and physical labor), and what they owe each other (namely, an obligation towards one another in claiming and fighting for their rights). The repeated and ultimate failure of the peasant fights results in what Esposito calls a “community of death”; Scorza’s novelistic series, then, presents itself as a crónica of an indigenous community created through mutual obligation, even in the face of certain defeat.

*La guerra silenciosa*, from its title, is a narrative about war. According to Foucault, power relationships and the exercise of political power should be analyzed “first and foremost in terms
of conflict, confrontation, and war”. The deployment of political power cannot be understood merely as state repression, but rather as the continuation of war by other means. Here, Foucault inverts Carl von Clausewitz’s aphorism (war is the continuation of politics by other means) and concludes that when “political power puts an end to war and establishes or attempts to establish the reign of peace in civil society…[its role] is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals…Politics, in other words, sanctions and reproduces the disequilibrium of forces manifested in war” (2003, 15-16). For Foucault, this history of war, permanent during times of peace in the laws, economies and institutions created, is primarily a war between races: here, race implies not a biological divide but a wide and stable “historico-political divide,” since “two races exist whenever one writes the history of two groups which do not, at least to begin with, have the same language or, in many cases, the same religion. The two groups form a unity and a single polity only as a result of wars, invasions, victories, and defeats, or in other words, acts of violence” (2003, 77). History, then, is ultimately produced as a double discourse, that of the victors and that of the losers, those “who have no glory…and who now find themselves…in darkness and silence” (2003, 70).

Literary indigenismo, as a whole, can certainly be read as a testimony or fictionalization of this permanent state of war between races. After all, major works in the genre (for example Ciro Alegría’s El mundo es ancho y ajeno, or Arguedas’s Los ríos profundos) culminate with peasant insurrections, and the emergence of the indigenous as a political subject by taking up arms30. Scorza’s cronivela, however, differs from these, as it has been mentioned above, because war is at

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30 In the introduction to his edition of Los ríos profundos, Ricardo González Vigil traces a parallel between the maturity of Ernesto, the young protagonist, and the Andean population, both of which “come of age” at the end of the novel: the boy by learning about indigenous culture, and the peasant community by taking up arms against its oppressors. After they retaliate against the local rulers and invade their lands, the peasants become adult subjects (107-8).
the center of La guerra silenciosa in both content and form: its explicit theme is the function of (permanent) war in the power relationships between peasants and landowners, and it was written as a literary testimony of a specific confrontation within this longer war. This results in the double temporality present in the series, and often recognized by the criticism on Scorza’s work. La guerra, throughout its five volumes, oscillates between two narratives, one that centers on the larger confrontation between peasant communities and the forces that exploit and control them, and another mostly focused on the personal struggle of a heroic individual (Héctor Chacón, Garabombo, Raymundo Herrera, Agapito Robles and Genaro Ledesma). As the narrative progresses through the cronivelas, both permanent and specific war become intertwined, resulting in a temporal confusion for both reader and the characters themselves.

Whereas the notion of debt can be observed more clearly in the later volumes of the series, the notion of war will be explored here in the first, Redoble por Rancas. The plot revolves around two separate, but ultimately related confrontations: Héctor Chacón’s (el Nictálope) personal battle against Judge Montenegro, a dark and omnipresent figure that despotically oversees the town of Yanacocha, and the conflict pitting the comuneros of the province of Rancas against the Cerro de Pasco Corporation and its Fence, which encloses the town killing livestock and interrupting daily life. Following Foucault, in Redoble por Rancas the notion of war can be observed in the forms of domination imposed by both Montenegro and the American mining corporation, which normalize a state of war even during supposed periods of peace, upholding the interests of the ruling class and of capitalist expansion over those of the Andean populations. In the first case, the Judge, who stands in and serves as a larger metaphor for the rule of law in Peru, establishes a system of control and domination over the people of Yanacocha (and the Andes in general, as his rule and tactics transcend the town) through a series of stories and myths about his own persona. In the novel’s
opening scene, Montenegro accidentally drops a coin in the town square; in Scorza’s characteristic hyperbolic style, Yanacocha’s inhabitants fearfully steer away from the coin, believing they will be punished for robbing the judge: “el último lameculos de la provincia sabía que apoderarse de esa moneda, teóricamente equivalente a cinco galletas de soda o a un puñado de duraznos, significaría algo peor que un carcelazo” (16). The coin, which symbolizes the power exercised by the judge, alters the very way in which space is organized around the town square, and how the residents move around it. When one night a drunk picks up the coin in a demonstration of bravado, the town holds its collective breath until he returns it to its exact place the following morning. The coin, furthermore, falls on its head, showing the Peruvian coat of arms depicting “el árbol de la quina, la llama y el cuerno de la abundancia del escudo de la República y en el reverso se exhibía la caución moral del Banco de la Reserva del Perú” (18). The authority of the judge, by extension of the coin, is legitimized by his connection to the Peruvian state and its national narrative as well as its economic organization. In other words, the permanence of war is reaffirmed through national symbols and the economy; the judge’s coin establishes a form of control over the town’s population that functions beyond physical violence (or actual war) and that instead becomes materialized in national symbols and is accepted as common sense and natural. To go back to Foucault, the state of permanent war functions through the laws and institutions (here, the judicial system and the financial framework of the nation) that regulate the Andean society during a time of supposed peace.

The Cerro de Pasco mining corporation brings (actual) war back to Rancas. The Fence, erected by the corporation to delimit the company’s zones of operation, redistributes the community’s spaces of work, “infecting” the province (39). The commoners organize to fight back by, for example, setting hungry hogs loose in the company’s fields to spoil and lay waste to the
grass meant for its livestock. At the end, the company calls for support from the military, who sends Commander Guillermo Bodenaco, known as “the Butcher” or “the Reliable”, to quell the insurrection and punish the commoners. At this point, as Commander Bodenaco stands on the same spot, at the entrance of Rancas, where General Simón Bolívar had stood before the 1824 battle of Junín, one of the last two battles for Peruvian independence, he reminisces about the armed conflicts Peru has won and lost in its history. What follows is a catalogue of wars, as the narrator-chronicler distinguishes between official conflicts and the never declared war between the republican nation and its indigenous populations:

Ocho guerras perdidas en el extranjero; pero, en cambio, cuántas guerras ganadas contra los propios peruanos. La no declarada guerra contra el indio Atusparia la ganamos: mil muertos. No figuran en los textos. Constan, en cambio, los sesenta muertos del conflicto de 1866 con España. El 3ro de Infantería ganó solito, en 1924, la guerra contra los indios de Huancané: cuatro mil muertos. Esos esqueletos fundaron la riqueza de Huancané: la isla de Taquile y la isla del Sol se sumergieron medio metro bajo el peso de los cadáveres… (217-8).

These lines can also be read through Foucault’s notion of “war of races”. The official wars, and thus the national heroes, are those fought against the nation’s enemies, whether they be foreign powers or agents that oppose the modernization of the country – in Redoble por Rancas, Peru’s own native peoples. What emerges, therefore, are two histories: those who, following Foucault, share the “glory” of war, and those confined to “darkness and silence”. In the scene above, this can be seen by how the sixty killed in the conflict against Spain in 1866 do figure in official history, because they are heroes who defended the republic. The thousand indigenous killed during Atusparia rebellion in 1885, however, because they opposed the Peruvian republic, do not appear
in history textbooks—and are thus erased from republican history. Furthermore, the chronicler states that this was a war “we” won (“la ganamos”), making clear that the “we” in this case is the country. Atusparia and his followers, therefore, do not form part of the Peruvian nation, just as the commoners of Rancas and their struggle against the mining corporation do not either.

This distinction in the war of races is based on the question of whose death counts, since the indigenous are discredited precisely because their deaths are of no importance to the nation. The end of RR, therefore, looks for a space of community that flows not through war or the civil society institutions that mark its permanence, but that is framed precisely around death. In the book’s final scene, after Commander Bodenaco orders his troops to fire upon the population of Rancas, the dead, in a moment reminiscent of Juan Rulfo’s *Pedro Páramo*, convene to retell the story of the massacre. “Semanas después, en sus tumbas, sosegados los sollozos, acostumbrados a la húmeda oscuridad, don Alfonso Rivera le contó el resto. Porque los enteraron tan cerca que Fortunato escuchó los suspiros de don Alfonso y consiguió abrir un agujero en el barro con una ramita” (230). Forgotten by official history, in this community after death the commoners tell their side of the story, narrating their moments of deaths while recognizing friends and family in the underworld. Each death is retold, and in doing so, the telling of the war becomes their own: “Usted cayó, don Alfonso. Los guardias avanzaron regando muerte. Las balas suenan como maíz tostándose. Así suenan. Avanzaban; de rato en rato, se detenían y mojaban los techos con gasolina. Las casas ardían. Vi caer a Vicentina Suárez. La gente se enfureció. Respondió con piedras. Cayó don Mateo Gallo”. And then: “Vi caer al muchachito y sentí una quemazón en la sangre, saqué mi hondá y le solté una pedrada en la cara a uno de los guardias. Me disparó su metralleta. Caí de espaldas con la barriga abierta” (232). Following Jean-Luc Nancy, we can define this as a “community of death”, where “community is not a project or fusion, or in some general way a
productive or operative project”. Instead, “Community is revealed in the death of others; hence it is always revealed to others. Community is what takes place always through others and for others” (15). What creates this form of community is not so much their fantastic, after-life convention (“Community does not weave a superior, immortal, or transmortal life between subjects”, says Nancy), but instead how the commoners, seeing their neighbors and friends killed, throw themselves into the enemy, facing certain death. Therefore, and following Nancy, the “death of others” creates a community of sacrifice for others. This community of sacrifice, furthermore, exists beyond the limits of state and official history, for which the peasants’ voices will not register; only the chronicle (the counter-history) can give a space to this community of death.

_La guerra silenciosa_, therefore, frames community as an obligation, as the practice of giving without expecting anything in return, and coalescing as a community of death, outside of official history: community-as-debt, in Esposito’s terms. Instead of thinking community as a shared identity, or through a common and public bond between individual subjects, Esposito approaches community from an etymological perspective. Formed from the Latin _munus_ (obligation), community “isn’t having, but on the contrary, is a _debt_, a pledge, a gift that is to be given, and therefore will establish a lack. The subjects of community are united by an ‘obligation’, in the sense that we say ‘I owe you something’, but not ‘you owe me something’” (6). No longer based on what is shared (nation, identity), for Esposito, Nancy and similar thinkers, community becomes a space of “doing for others” – which in turn brings us back to Scorza’s epigraph at the beginning of _Garabombo el invisible_. The massacre in Rancas at the end of _Redoble por Rancas_ creates, precisely, this obligation: throughout the rest of the series, it will remain a (not so distant) point of reference and remembrance, for which other towns, peasant communities, and the title protagonists will fight for. The debt to the sacrifice of Rancas, however, is not the only one present
throughout *La guerra silenciosa*. As I will show in what follows, the series tells the story of the journey of two debts: one economic, of control and oppression, and another that, like in the example discussed above, will form the basis for the possibility of community.

ii. **A journey of debt**

Debt, according to Lazzarato, is “the archetype of social relations” (33). In *The Making of the Indebted Man*, the Italian philosopher traces an intellectual history of debt, from Nietzsche to Marx and Arendt, emphasizing the synchronic and diachronic nature of debt: on the one hand, it forms the basis for the production of subjectivity and social life; on the other, it is specifically characteristic of a neoliberal economy. For Lazzarato, debt is the basis for social relations because it imposes upon the debtor a “promise of payment” towards the creditor. The task of a society, says Lazzarato, is “to engender a person capable of promising…Making a person capable of keeping a promise means constructing a memory for him, endowing him with interiority, a conscience, which provide a bulwark against forgetting. It is within the domain of debt obligations that memory, subjectivity, and conscience begin to be produced” (40). Because debt creates subjectivities, Lazzarato, and following Deleuze and Guattari, argues for a “non-economistic interpretation of the economy”, by which he refers to, “on the one hand, that economic production is inseparable from the production and control of subjectivity and its forms of existence, [and] on the other hand, that money, before fulfilling the economic functions of measure, means of exchange, payment and accumulation, manifests the power to command and distribute the places and tasks assigned to the governed” (72). This means that debt is no longer only about money, but that it can transform the social fabric of a community by imposing mechanisms of control and regulation. It does so, argues Lazzarato, by disturbing time itself, both individual and collective: “The debt economy is an economy of time and subjectivation in a specific sense…In this way, debt appropriates not only
the present labor time of wage-earners and of the population in general, it also preempts non-chronological time, each person’s future as well as the future of society as a whole. The principal explanation for the strange sensation of living in a society without time, without possibility, without foreseeable rupture, is debt” (46-7).

In *El jinete insomne*, this “infinite debt” regulates and distorts time, creating an endless obligation or “promise of payment” between local authorities and the peasant communities. Judge Montenegro and his wife Pepita establish a debt system by requiring their subjects to host parties and celebrations for the community, which they can only do by taking out “guajes”, or loans at a hundred percent interest. According to the Montenegros, the parties are held for the good of the community (in reality, they only serve to satisfy Pepita’s fixation for them), celebrating both religious festivals and the dates of military victories: “Inútil añadir, se celebraban todas las efemérides: la victoriosa carga de Junín, la batalla de Ayacucho, la solitaria resistencia de Arica, la epopeya de Angamos…el Día del Indio cariñosamente recordado por el general Mariano Prado con el restablecimiento del tributo que abrogaron San Martín y Bolívar, cuyos nacimientos y cuyas defunciones también se festejaron” (137). In this way, official history (the history of the “real” military confrontations, and of the national heroes) in turn enables infinite debt, as the peasant communities become, quite literally, indebted to the great national narratives. The debt, however, ceases to be purely economic, as Lazzarato describes, because after a while it is no longer tied to monetary values or an actual possibility of payment. Instead, the debts extend into time, outliving its original debtors and creating a community forever grounded on its obligation. “Los hombres son mortales y las deudas inmortales”, says the narrator, and stressing how debt imbues the household and becomes hereditary, “La viuda y los hijos arrastran las deudas” (137; 140). The people in the community lose track of their debts, their origin, amounts and charges, as these
extend further into the future: “Uno de los Lucas que pretendía tener una libreta con los pagos, aseguraba que la deuda se extinguiría en 1990” (141). The Montenegros then further accelerate time by foregoing calendars and establishing their own schedule of celebrations, while the commoners accrue debt: “El tiempo se salió de sus márgenes, fluyó demencial…” (149). Montenegro, “ha cancelado el calendario vigente en el mundo y valido de su capricho…nos impone fechas nuevas. Muchos años han transcurrido en los últimos meses” (94).

Time, then, ceases to run its normal course, becoming instead an accumulation of debt and obligation, which in turn distorts life itself: “en nuestra provincial el tiempo se ha vuelto loco, la semilla no crece, la gente no muere…El tiempo se ha parado” (83). This debt-time has direct and real (if “magical”) effects on the peasant community, as the Chaupihuaramanga River stops running (becoming a lake) and the clocks across the community get ill and die long and painful deaths. So, “Quizás una cuarentena hubiera menguado los estragos pero nadie reparó que las bruscas lentitudes y sorpresivas aceleraciones de los cinco relojes de Yanacocha eran altibajos de la fiebre” (38). Most importantly, debt-time affects the circulation of news and the flow of information into the community, as letters can no longer be delivered “on time”. A school teacher writes to the authorities: “Muchos años han transcurrido en los últimos meses, a tal punto que yo mismo, que rechazo esta trapacería, no sé en qué mes ni en qué año fechar esta carta” (94). The crónica itself becomes disjointed and out of order, as the narrator no longer retells the events “as they happened”, but is instead caught in the same debt-time as his protagonists. Going back to Lazzarato, debt transforms time, creating a non-chronological order of events that affects the future of individuals and societies. In Yanacocha, the commoners (and after a while everyone, including the authorities themselves), become entrapped into a new form of life, uncommunicated with other towns, and therefore further erased from national consciousness. Infinite war and infinite debt run parallel in
La guerra silenciosa, as they both serve to perpetuate the marginalization and annihilation of peasants, their communities, and their ways of life.

As discussed earlier, however, debt as obligation as can also be read as the basis of community; for Esposito, this resides in a doing for others without expecting anything in return. This can be observed by comparing two journeys, simultaneously narrated through El jinete insomne, marked by debt: the Engineer, hired to lay out the city plans for the peasants of Yanacocha, and Raymundo Herrera, the “insomniac rider” who transgresses time boundaries as he looks to recover and bring to safety the document, signed in 1705 by the King of Spain, that certifies the peasants’ rightful ownership of the land. The peasants hire a renowned Engineer to trace out the foundations of their new community, as laid out in the plan recovered by Herrera. He quickly lays out his price: four thousand soles, an amount entirely beyond the peasants’ capacity. What follows are several attempts, by the Engineer, to draw out money and favors from the peasants, even as they try to put together the money owed for his services. Everything then becomes transaction, since to pay for his work the peasants must give him a bard, their ponchos, and more money. He refuses, however, to pay his assistant his salary, offering instead to serve as his bank: “-Me adeuda quince meses, patrón.” “-¿Para qué quieres dinero? Mejor te guardo tus ahorros. En mis bolsillos estarán más seguros que en un banco” (135). The Engineer, like the authorities, demands payment, and then foregoes on paying back his own debt.

Herrera stands in contrast to the Engineer. Traveling back and forth between their present time and the early nineteenth century, when the establishment of the Peruvian republic did way with all royal edicts of land ownership, he promises never to sleep until the document and corresponding land are recovered. He clamors: “El hecho es que estoy parado sobre el suelo de todas las generaciones, detrás de esta queja. El maíz, los hombres, los ríos, las edades, brotan,
crecen, se exaltan, mueren, desaparecen. Lo único que permanece es nuestra queja… ¿Alguien habrá dispuesto a recordar, a no dormir mientras no se absuelva nuestra queja?” (155). Herrera takes this complaint – over land, but also about citizenship and nationhood – as he sacrifices his own health to bring justice to his community. Sleep then becomes representative of his obligation to others; by giving up sleep, he gives without expecting anything in return, unlike the Engineer: “¡Mientras no acabe de levantar el plano, mientras nuestra queja siga con los ojos abiertos, yo tampoco los cerraré!” (172). He ultimately fulfils his mission, bringing his people to the land that belongs to them (the Engineer having jumped ship and disappeared by now), and dies, though not before reminding them that the only left thing for them to do is fight back against their oppressors. Upon his death, brought about by the toils of years (or a century and a half) of traveling, and his obligation to his people paid, Raymundo Herrera exclaims: “He cumplido, señores” (204). His death, much like the death of the commoners of Rancas, establishes a new sense of community based on sacrifice and death for others. In the following canto, Cantar de Agapito Robles, both the title character and Tupac Katari, an eighteenth-century peasant leader, will travel thousands of leagues over two hundred years to bring justice to their cause.

In my reading, therefore, La guerra silenciosa presents a narrative about obligation and sacrifice. The journeys of this silent war are journeys of debt, understood both as a way of maintaining a people oppressed, and as a form of creating community through sacrifice. While the first kind of debt anchors a community into place by disrupting time and eliminating any kind of communication with the outside world, the latter bends through time and space as its protagonists mobilize for retribution and justice. Against the firmness and rigidity of territory (made evident through the fence in Redoble por Rancas that traps the community, the immovable river, the destruction of communication networks), La guerra silenciosa establishes resistance as fluidity,
as a back and forth between different times and places. As I have mentioned above, Scorza positions himself within this system, as a continuation of the sacrifice and obligation of Herrera, Robles, and the others: he places his life in danger for the peasant revolt, literally standing in front of rifles (as he says in the interview cited before, and as described in the last canto, La tumba del relámpago). All of this while going back and forth between the desk, where he writes the manifestoes of the MCP, and the actual communities where he talks and shares in with the commoners’ complaints. In this way, he himself becomes an actor in the silent war, not just a witness; he becomes an extension of his own work, an author whose political commitment flows not only with his representation of the struggle but through his participation in it. If Herrera’s last words are “He cumplido”, I have kept my promise, Scorza, standing behind a freed Chacón in 1971, also seems to stress that his literary work has fulfilled its obligation in the popular struggle for land and justice. Figure 1, a photograph published in the Oiga article, shows this precise moment.

![Figure 1](image1.jpg)

**Fig. 2. Oiga (July 30, 1971).**

And yet, lest we take Scorza entirely at his words, we must remember his site of enunciation and the position he assumed when becoming the “suffering witness” of the peasant struggle. As I have argued in the Introduction, and as it became evident with the case of Arguedas, the
community of work these writers aimed for was necessarily mediated by their own privilege as mestizo subjects. This is even more clear in the case of Scorza, who cannot but disclose his privileged and authoritative status as a lettered intellectual. The exhortation from La tumba del relámpago cited above, directed to urban workers and students to join in the peasant struggle, begins this way: “Vosotros, los hombres que militáis en los partidos actuales del Perú, no estáis a la vanguardia: estáis a la retaguardia del proceso social en el Perú. Nada hay que esperar de vosotros mientras no os unáis a los comuneros y a los campesinos en su lucha por la tierra. Tenéis un solo camino: ¡respaldar al MOVIMENTO COMUNAL DEL PERU o desaparecer en la confusión y el oportunismo!” (176). In another, also from La tumba del relámpago, he calls on the peasants themselves: ¡Acudid al llamado del MOVIMENTO COMUNAL DEL PERU! ¡Ingresad al poderoso Partido de los Comuneros que os asegura Tierra y Justicia!” (193). In both, the use of the vosotros form to call on students, workers, and peasants in particular, results out of place and strangely colonial, especially given the content of the exhortations. This reflects a leftist and socialist use of language already in place (most famously, the slogan for many unions and Marxist associations, “¡Proletarios del mundo, uníos!”). From a political reading of language, the use of the imperative in the peninsular vosotros form, in an organic and revolutionary context, only reinforces the authority of a lettered class able to call on a supposedly more solemn and powerful variation of the language. Therefore, and given that these documents were first published in the Expreso newspaper from Lima before being included in the text, we can argue that these were not only (or so much) aimed at the peasants themselves but also to an urban readership and to other intellectuals. The inclusion of these texts into La tumba del relámpago, in my reading, reveals how Scorza is trying to position himself vis-à-vis his fellow letrados. The issue, then, is not one of realism, but rather that realism (which comes from witnessing, participating in, and suffering the
peasant struggle against the mining corporation) becomes Scorza’s tool, or strategy, for demonstrating his social commitment. In doing so, however, he reveals the distance that remains between the man of letters and the peasant, and establishes a relationship that continues to function through colonial hierarchies.

We must also keep in mind, while speaking about Scorza’s linguistic abilities and decisions, that he did not speak Quechua, and would have required interpreters while carrying out his investigative work. If the chronicle requires presence and communication, there was, from he beginning, a linguistic barrier that complicated Scorza’s work. This is not to essentialize Quechua speakers by saying they were not also able to speak Spanish and talk to Scorza, or to say that verbal communication is the only vehicle for capturing testimony. But the linguistic dimension of La guerra silenciosa and Scorza’s committed cultural work, which certainly would deserve closer analysis, is a wrinkle rarely discussed in interpretations of the series. There is a darkly ironic moment during Chacón’s release, narrated in the Oiga article referred to above, when the peasant leader begins his discourse in Quechua and none of the journalists are able to understand him. “Who here speaks Quechua?”, ask the journalists, turning to Scorza, who has descended from the plane and is solemnly standing behind Chacón, having fulfilled his role in the peasant struggle. “Aparentemente tampoco sabe el idioma”, García Hurtado, the reporter, realizes (39).

III. The allure of money

There is a parallel narrative to his “work done for others” that also runs through Scorza’s cultural production. As I pointed out in the first section, the crónica positioned itself outside of the prestige and symbolic capital of the traditional literary establishment, as it brought its author into direct contact with its subject, both physically and through technologies such as the recorder, the radio and documentary photography. Yet Scorza was perpetually caught between this committed,
revolutionary stance that challenged the traditional space of literature, and a desire to fit within it, to not only make a living but to become rich from it. In Scorza, literature is both revolutionary and serves as commodity, capable of generating monetary profit. This results in that Scorza, and his work, will occupy a strange, even uncomfortable position in Peruvian letters: he will be rejected within national literary circles, both from the literary establishment (Vargas Llosa accused him of being a “huachafo”, tacky or pretentious) and from the radical Left (Narración reviewer Ricardo Raez decries his unfaithfulness to social realism). Scorza himself often asserted that he did not belong to the “Jockey Club” of Peruvian literature, and made tongue-in-cheek lists of the best national authors, without including himself. In my argument, Scorza’s ambiguous persona as both committed and aspiring author, devoted to both revolution and money, results in an irreverent defetishization of literature: writing, and cultural production in general, became in Scorza forms of going beyond the debates between social and aesthetic commitment, or beyond the pen and the rifle. He did not so much “solve” these dilemmas: he did away with them, creating instead a Scorza-worker-of-culture, for whom literature is malleable, circulating, and can serve many purposes.

Earlier, I argued that money was a central aspect running through Scorza’s figuration as a committed cultural worker. Leaning on Alejandra Laera’s analysis of the relationship between money and life, I signaled that the latter was the motor that drove Scorza to create a solidary persona who could transcend the supposed incongruity of aesthetic and political commitment by employing a genre ambiguously situated within the market and against it. Continuing along these lines, we may also look at Laera’s concept of “fictions of work”:

Estas novelas que hablan sobre el trabajo hablan también de sí mismas, de su elaboración o de sus rasgos o de su circulación, de cómo llegar a ser novelas. Así, la representación del
mundo del trabajo y la autorreferencialidad al trabajo de la novela se redimensionan mutuamente. Una suerte de modelo al descubierto el de la realización – el trabajo con la imaginación y con la escritura – de la novela. Lo que se dice: toda una desfechización de la escritura que en el revés se revela como trabajo. Un trabajo más o menos esforzado, pero siempre trabajo (2016, 170-1).

For Laera, and given the transformation of capital in the 1970s, “fictions of work” would refer to works that reveal their own writing and creative processes, where the writer emerges as worker, and the limits between material and intellectual labor collapse. What results is the defetishization of literature, as writing becomes one more form of work, akin to any other.

In the context of committed literature, the boom phenomenon, and the role of the novel in the formulation of Latin American identities, this defetishization of writing results out of place – and Scorza with it. In fact, it is difficult to dissociate the role of money and actual debt from Scorza’s cultural ventures, especially his work as editor and publisher. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, Scorza carried out an important editorial labor, as he sought to bring cheap editions of classic texts to the general public, taking books out of libraries and into the streets. His cultural ventures sought to radically alter the process of book distribution by producing great quantities and at low prices, and by fomenting huge publicity campaigns (Gras 2001, 745). This began in 1956 with the Festivales de Libros, a continent-wide project that he took from Peru to Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Cuba; and most importantly, with the Populibros collection, which between 1963 and 1965 sold over a million copies of sixty-four Peruvian and world literature classics. With the Festivales de Libros, and especially through Populibros, Scorza began his role as go-between lettered culture and the masses. Books were sold in kiosks and in the streets in affluent and not-so-affluent neighborhoods, in schools, military bases and factories, for a
reasonable price (50 soles per series of 5 books each) and in an attractive and colorful format. Distribution was accompanied by a wide-ranging publicity campaign, which included newspaper and magazine ads, book signings, author visits at schools, and large billboards that announced new titles for the collection in open, public spaces (Aguirre 210-1). Scorza claimed that the role of Populibros was to “quitarle el frac al libro” and to put it “en mangas de camisa”: going back to the interview after the freeing of Chacón, when he criticized writers in their “exquisite cosmopolitanism”, here he also seems to frame writing as a working-class activity. This is, of course, as much a reflection of himself as a worker, going back and forth between the writers he was publishing (Vargas Llosa, Miguel Angel Asturias, Alejo Carpentier, among many others) and the popular classes who would become “cultured” thanks to his editorial labor.

Carlos Aguirre has examined the Populibros project from a polemical perspective, contending that while it did create a more democratic access to literature, it nevertheless did so by incurring in editorial negligence that reveals a disdain for cultural production (205). Aguirre goes on to list the shortcuts and careless decisions taken by Scorza with regards to the production of the texts: some titles were misspelled or changed altogether, certain sections cut off entirely, authors frequently had to put up with delays of payment or invalid checks, and the money borrowed for the collection was sometimes put to other uses. While I agree with Aguirre that Populibros conceived itself from a lettered (and perhaps paternalistic) position that did not challenge the authority of the book as the referent of western culture, I would argue that the negligence in edition and Scorza’s emphasis on monetary return defetishize the place and role of the book. The certainly dubious nature of Populibros correspond to that of its editor and promoter, always looking to earn money while positioning himself as an intellectual committed to the politicization of the desborde popular. If certain accounts can be believed, this is the case of La guerra, marketed as crónicas
but that, nevertheless, were written after Spanish editor Carlos Barral had already given its author a monetary advance and the guarantee they would be published. In this version, in 1968 Scorza (with the help of two other writers, including accomplished chronicle writer Guillermo Thorndike) composes *Redoble por Rancas* in record time, is nominated for the Planeta prize, loses, but still manages to have the book published and become so successful it is soon translated into thirty languages.\(^{31}\) Money and prestige finally flow towards its author. The absolute veracity of the details is irrelevant: they harken back (and fit within) this narrative of money and literature that constantly surround Scorza, and his fashioning as committed intellectual. And, while Scorza continuously frames himself as a writer against the *boom*, he nevertheless benefits from the *boom* economy and the success of Latin American literature at a global level.

This intersection between literature, social commitment and money is the subject and driving force behind Scorza’s last novel, *La danza inmóvil* (1983). This final, posthumous novel, can be read along the lines of Laera’s “fictions of work”: a text that reveals its own writing process, of a writer trying to find work by selling his book (or the idea for a book). *La danza inmóvil* is a book within a book: a young writer, living in Paris, pitches several book ideas to the director of a publishing house, who then gives out his opinions for each. Ultimately, the aspiring writer chooses to tell the story of a revolutionary dilemma: through two intertwining narratives, two young revolutionaries debate whether to live out their lives or die fighting for Latin America’s liberation from imperialism. In the first case, Santiago chooses to stay in Paris instead of traveling back to Peru: “Sí: yo quería vivir. Yo quería existir y tener nombre y apellido. Me negaba a seguir siendo una sombra clandestina, a luchar entre sombras contra la sombra” (163). In the second, Nicolas Centenario decides to travel back, being captured and ultimately dying tied to a tree, devoured by

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\(^{31}\) The account, narrated by novelist Rodrigo Nuñez Carvallo, can be found at [http://www.leeporgusto.com/redoble-por-manuel-scorza-a-30-anos-de-su-muerte/16/](http://www.leeporgusto.com/redoble-por-manuel-scorza-a-30-anos-de-su-muerte/16/)
flesh-eating ants. Both choices end up as failures, as Santiago loses out on Marie Claire, his Paris girlfriend, and Nicolas’s revolution dissolves in the Amazonian jungle. On the one hand, La danza inmóvil shows the end of revolution as a generational spirit, as its romanticized ideals ultimately fizzle out. But more importantly, it talks about itself, about its own possibility of circulation, and about its author’s own work in writing and bringing the text to a literary market. As the protagonists of the two narratives debate whether to stay in Paris and chase their respective love interests, the narrator also negotiates how to best sell their story, what changes to make and how to market it, in a context where a literary economy has determined, but also exhausted, certain topics and tropes.

Therefore, the reflection over political commitment becomes, ultimately, a metanarrative in which literature and revolution become commodities, affixed to editorial and commercial markets. La danza inmóvil, I argue, considers how the revolutionary spirit of the sixties and seventies is packaged and sold as literature. In this, what is sold is not only the novel itself, but the writing process behind it, as well as its author’s own political stance and social commitment. The novel thus begins and ends with the narrator/writer at a bar, trying to sell the idea for a manuscript to Vaca Sagrada, director of the publishing house, to (also) be titled La danza inmóvil. In their conversation, what emerges is an evaluation of what topics a Latin American writer can and cannot write about, and whether a revolutionary fiction can still be part of a literary market. “Las encuestas son claras”, Vaca Sagrada asserts, “Hoy el público rechaza las obras literarias contaminadas por la política. En la década del cincuenta se interesó por el arte comprometido. Después se cansó del maniqueísmo y de la demagogia” (238). And later: “Mon ami, yo diría que no sólo el arte político ha dejado de ser actual sino que el pueblo mismo ha pasado de moda…” (239). What matters here is not whether these assertions are true of the real-life literary markets, but instead that within this “fiction of work”, they determine the value of a literary object. Furthermore, the story of Santiago
and Nicolas that the narrator pitches to Vaca Sagrada is only one option, among many, that could work within the literary market. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator offers it as one of a few ideas: “Estoy escribiendo también un relato sobre una vieja condesa francesa”, he states. And then: “Y otra novela…que sí bien es cierto no transcurre en París, alude más a Europa que si sucediera en ella. El personaje central es un genio, un loco que un buen día se autonombra Almirante y…” (23). Ultimately, the Editor decides on the revolutionary tale. But that it could have been another points to how the revolution has become one among several topics, of equal (ir)relevance, that only matters inasmuch as it has a monetary value. Literature, then, becomes just another commodity; as a “fiction of work”, *La danza inmóvil* shows a defetishization of literature and revolution, as both lose their grand narratives and their supposed capacity for the transformation of society and the bringing about of a Latin American modernity.

A similar (and perhaps self-reflecting) moment in the relationship between literature and work occurs when the narrator, to survive in Paris, presents himself for a literary price. Not having written anything with which to compete, Vaca Sagrada urges him to participate with a translation, from Spanish to Spanish, of a handful of Neruda’s poems. With the publisher’s help, the narrator writes, “pergeñe tres traducciones a las cuales agregué, esta vez de mi estro, fragmentos de la única poesía universal que yo verdaderamente admiraba: tangos de Le Pera, Discépolo y Gardel, así como versos del ‘Plebeyo’, ‘Todos vuelven’ y ‘Anita ven’” (141). While he writes, the narrator’s landlady, Juanita, to whom he owed several months’ rent, turns into a doting mother figure, who cooks and cleans for the maestro. He ultimately wins not one but the top three prizes in the competition, earning a hefty sum that allows him to continue living out in Paris. This scene also satirizes the work of literature: writing (or here, translating) becomes one more form of work, no longer tied to genius or to any kind of commitment, but just another way of eking out a living.
the end, the narrator recognizes that for Juanita, “Yo ya no era una deuda: era una inversión, uno de esos bienes que no pueden darse de baja del inventario sin afectar el Activo” (139). The writer then, becomes a “good” to be “invested”, and his work a potential asset that must be kept in hand. In *La danza inmóvil*, literature, just like revolution, is emptied of any emancipatory potential: instead, it is only valuable as a way of earning a living and making a profit, both for the writer and for those who rely, or invest, in it. What is being sold, or kept as asset, is the writer himself, whose process of writing as much as his work becomes profitable.

As with much of his life, Scorza’s death also seems to be subject to speculation. On November 28, 1983, fourteen years to the day of Arguedas’s suicide, the Avianca flight on which he traveled to the Primer Encuentro Hispanoamericano de la Cultura in Bogotá, crashed near Barajas airport in Madrid. When Scorza’s body was found, he seems to have been holding something in his hands, though here versions differ: in one, told by writer Rodrigo Nuñez Carvallo, it was the latest manuscript of *La danza inmóvil*; in another, by poet Rodolfo Hinostroza, it was a bag with twenty thousand dollars (164). Which version is true, if either, matters little: that cash and the novel become interchangeable results (morbidly) ironic for a writer who was “más parecido a un hombre de negocios con grado académico que a un poeta comunista salido de las canteras del APRA” (Espino Relucé 42), and who once claimed to charge a thousand dollars per interview (Andradi 260). To the end, the fictions of work and money that Scorza put forward in his writing and cultural labor were closer to life itself than to fiction. As Laera points out, in the defetishization of literature there is the danger of the fetishization of the author: no longer a modern kind of author who emits judgement in the public sphere, the resulting author no longer hides his labor but spectacularizes it. Writing no longer determines the value of a writer, but rather the other way around (2016, 172). Scorza is, perhaps, this kind of spectacular author, where literature and
revolution become irreverent, and their grand narratives obsolete. Standing behind the freed Chacón, regardless of his capability to understand what the peasant activist is saying, he knows he has played his role in telling the counter-history of the indigenous struggle – and turned in a profit.

IV. Conclusion

Scorza, as I have pointed out, was not well liked by his fellow Peruvian intellectuals. Tomás Escajadillo called it so in 1978: “en el Perú, en muchos sectores culturales y específicamente literarios, existe un prejuicio en contra de Manuel Scorza. Y esta antipatía ha estado presente en la crítica literaria, sea en forma de evaluaciones negativas de la narrativa de este autor, sea en la forma más habitual de un silencio en torno a su obra” (184). The “rescue” of Scorza and his production came, after his death, either from critics who defended his commitment to denouncing the oppression of the indigenous populations, or from those who saw in La guerra silenciosa an ambitious, but failed, attempt at bringing together indigenous and western modernities. For Antonio Cornejo Polar, the series “representa…el esfuerzo orgánico más consistente para problematizar la historia reciente de esa quiebra que todavía define las naciones andinas” (1984, 557). And, for Mabel Moraña, the works’s use of fantasy, “deviene, en este sentido, una representación compensatoria de la realidad, mediante la cual se presenta a la comunidad indígena en lucha con sus limitaciones, aunque sujeta, al mismo tiempo, inescrupulosamente, a ellas…No hay un desmontaje ideológico de la cosmovisión dominante, sino más bien la transposición de esta a distintos niveles de representación en los que la novela actúa, tal como Scorza señalara, como una máquina de soñar” (1983, 192). These readings, as many others do, take as departure point how the series read, or present, the Andean cosmologies they take as object. Both conclude that representation is impossible, and that La guerra silenciosa reveals an unbroachable gap between two epistemologies.
In my interpretation, I have tried moving beyond the issue of representation by considering instead the textual and non-textual strategies that Scorza deploys in his effort to stand as both a committed and prestigious author. Reading not just his written work, but his public appearances and editorial ventures as part of a broader form of cultural work, and by productively employing the ambiguous nature of his life and character, Scorza stands as a challenge to the traditional Peruvian literary establishment. His devotion to money, his editorial carelessness and his debts, were not supposed to match with the image of a solemn and committed writer: literature and revolution were far too serious topics to be toyed with. And yet Scorza never abated in his social commitment. Populibros was a massive and successful attempt at distributing lettered culture in a society that so rarely had had access to it. *La guerra silenciosa* remains unique in that its author did live out the events he narrates, and that he was an active participant in the peasant struggles he chronicles. He spectacularized himself, and in doing so revealed the work behind the writing process, demystifying it while mythologizing himself, living out a veritable “fiction of work”.

As I argued in the previous chapter, Arguedas faced a personal and professional crisis when both the literary establishment and the social sciences failed to read his latest novel as more than an incomplete documentation of reality. He turned this into *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, a performative work that revealed its own writing process, and that embodied its author’s final attempts at understanding a social situation that overflowed the limits of literature – the *desborde popular*. Scorza faces this emerging constituent power, not just to understand it but to work within it and for it. To both realize his political commitment and to later turn it into a form of capital, symbolic and physical. In the process, Scorza does not resolve the debates and dilemmas of committed literature: he demonstrates the possibility of living despite them.
Chapter 3
RUPTURA TOTAL SIEMPRE: Hora Zero’s performative poetic work

In 1970, a group of six male students from the working-class Federico Villarreal University, without any previous published work or enough money to cover the printing costs, borrowed a mimeograph from the nearby La Cantuta University and, after two months of arduous labor, put out five hundred copies of their first poetic manifesto. Through their “Palabras urgentes” these young, poor and migrant poets took aim at the Peruvian poetic establishment, the “escritores fracasados”, “histéricos insustanciales” and “masa de irresponsables” who comfortably benefitted from their positions in Lima’s cultural institutions and universities. In a sweeping move, Hora Zero announced total rupture with its literary predecessors, proposing in its stead poetry as revolutionary, collective and living creation. A few months later, as the poets traveled to other regions of the country, they founded affiliate movements. In the Amazonian province of Pucallpa, Hora Zero Oriente denounced the centralism, paternalism and colonialism of the Casas de la Cultura del Peru, describing them as “catacumbas que sólo se dedican a recatar fósiles”. In the north of the country, Hora Zero-Chiclayo-70 followed suit, as did Hora Zero Chimbote in the fishing port Arguedas had worked in. Yet never a cohesive, singular national movement, over the next decade and into the early eighties Hora Zero emerged intermittently, disappearing for years and coalescing again, transforming both their aesthetic and political identity as certain members left and others rose to prominence. After all, Hora Zero was more than a group of poets: it was a behavior or sensation of rupture, disconformity and iconoclasm deployed not only in written verse but also through the artists’ own bodies and attitudes. As a cultural affirmation from the margins, Hora Zero was the poetic and performative action through which members of the desborde popular, recently arrived
migrants to Lima, sought to simultaneously challenge, and inscribe themselves within, a national artistic environment.

Literary criticism has read Hora Zero in terms of the democratization of poetry or its representation of marginalized voices through colloquial language. An important question since Hora Zero first burst into the scene was how truly revolutionary or innovative it was, whether its poetic creation actually lived up to its theoretical ideals. Instead, in this chapter I examine how this loose collective of artists proposed a reconfiguration of what the poet’s work – and the work of poetry – could be, as a way of redefining the relationship between aesthetics and politics in the context of the urban migration caused by the desborde popular. The horazerianos saw themselves as workers of poetry, where poetry was a form of living rather than a profession. In my reading, for Hora Zero poetic work was not only achieved through the act of writing: it was also an affective and performative process that relied on exhibitionism, theatrics, and morally ambiguous language techniques. In this way, discourses and practices dealing with honor, defamation and scandal – all grounded upon idealized notions of virility and masculinity – served Hora Zero as strategies to demean the Peruvian literary establishment while also securing its place within it. In this way, Hora Zero was a reticular, often uneven and certainly contradictory poetic experience in the liminal space between the lettered city and the desborde popular, between solemn revolutionary commitment and a ludic, spectacular brand of collective artistic work.

Throughout this chapter, I cite either directly from the manifestos or from later reprints in anthologies and collections of documents (Mora 2009; Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 2010; Ybarra and De los Dolores 2016). Because manifestos are collective documents, most are signed by “Movimiento Hora Zero”, though in some cases the listed authors are Jorge Pimentel and Juan Ramírez Ruiz, the early leaders of the Lima movement. In any case, if the citations are not taken from an anthology but from a primary source, throughout this chapter the author should be understood as the collective “Movimiento Hora Zero”. The parenthetical citation reflects the year of publication of the manifesto. In some of these cases, the manifestos have uneven numbering or were not numbered at all, in which case I start counting on the cover page.
I divide this chapter into three sections. In the first, I contextualize the emergence of Hora Zero within the broader Latin American countercultural movements of the sixties and seventies, focusing on the ideals of solidarity and youth counterculture that permeated their production. Afterwards, I consider the conditions of Hora Zero’s emergence and how it was anthologized by literary criticism and examine the theme of work in both their poetic production and their manifestos. In the second section I analyze the performative nature of Hora Zero’s poetic work, and examine the affective ideas of honor and scandal present in its manifestos and other pronouncements. I focus on how notions of parrhesia, cultural guerrilla warfare and “orgies of work”, as well as the practice of the poetic “duel” served the members of Hora Zero to legitimize their marginal position vis-à-vis the traditional Peruvian and Latin American lettered elite. This poetic performance, furthermore, reveals the problematic of gender in Hora Zero, as it reaffirms the masculine ideal of the revolutionary poet through heteronormative and homosocial relationships. In the third section, I examine how Hora Zero evolved throughout the seventies, and I focus especially how art and politics became intermingled as the poets worked for both the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces and leftwing political parties. By participating within the state or party politics, they were able to reach out to the desborde popular, bringing their committed and spectacular brand of poetry to the masses. Throughout this chapter, I want to stress the tensions inherent to this artistic experience: never a cohesive group or constitutive of a singular identity (much less a national identity), Hora Zero’s revolutionary commitment manifested itself through the contradictions between individual and collective production, Marxism-Leninism and youthful rebelliousness, and between poetry as text and poetry as performance. A product of the desborde popular and the massive migrations to Lima, Hora Zero channeled its constituent power, pushing against the boundaries of state and lettered power.
I. Latin American and Peruvian contexts of Hora Zero

   i. Solidarity and youth counterculture in the neo avant-garde

   Despite being (at least initially) of a strictly nationalist identity, with its iconoclasm, anti-imperialism, and revolutionary Third-Worldism Hora Zero fit within the broader Latin American (and global) avant-garde scene of the sixties and seventies. Like the historical avant-gardes of the twenties and thirties, these later practices sought to reconnect life and art. Unlike them, however, and as Hal Foster argues in *The Return of the Real* (1996), these neo- or post-avant-gardes challenge not the conventionality of art but rather its institutions, producing “new aesthetic experiences, cognitive connections, and political interventions” (14)\(^33\). Neither “a nihilistic attack at once abstract and anarchistic” (20), writes Foster, sixties and seventies neo avant-garde practice is “contradictory, mobile, and otherwise diabolical” (16). Yet these neo avant-gardes were not merely “diabolical” in how they contested the authority of the institution of art, what constituted art and what did not. Specifically, to bring art and life together meant, in the sixties and seventies, the possibility of using art as an actual weapon in revolutionary struggle. This intersection between art and revolution was the result, argues Fabiana Serviddio (2012), of a direct challenge against notions of artistic autonomy and “art for art’s sake”: these discourses and practices generated “un cuestionamiento de los discursos que concibieron el arte moderno dentro de un sistema evolutivo fundado en el concepto de autonomía de la dimensión estética” (109). More specifically, this

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\(^{33}\) Foster’s *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* is a response, or reworking, of Peter Burger’s claims in his classic *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974). Burger argues that early twentieth-century avant-gardes challenged the bourgeois art sphere by stressing the social significance of artistic production, but that later movements, in their efforts to replicate or challenge their forebears, ultimately reestablish the autonomy of art and reinforce the artistic institution. While for Burger avant-garde art ends in the thirties, for Foster the avant-garde project is only realized for the first time during the sixties. However, and as Longoni and Mestman (2008) argue through Raymond Williams’s notion of “emergence”, it is impossible to know at the outset what direction these practices will take: “Preferimos aproximarnos a este proceso en términos de ‘lo emergente’ que propone Williams, que sugiere la dificultad de anticipar la direccionalidad que va a adoptar una manifestación cultural nueva. Mientras es emergente, no permite vislumbrar si se constituirá en alternativa u oposicional frente a los cánones hegemónicos, o si derivará en una forma renovada de lo dominante” (25).
reconciliation between life and art entailed a move away from art as object (as a text or a painting, for example) to art as process, concerned less with the end product as commodity and more so with the value and experience of production itself.

As artists and intellectuals shared in the revolutionary spirit and aesthetic sensibility of the era, these forms of artistic experience began to flourish globally. In Europe, artists and theorists like Guy Debord “increasingly broke with the classical forms of art, trading the closed art space for the tendentially open surroundings of urban space”, leading to the creation of situations, understood more as artistic processes or experiences rather than concrete and finished works of art (Raunig 171). The role of the Situationist International, which emerged out of Debord’s theorizations, sought to do away with the limits between actor and audience, bringing them together in the lived experience of artistic creation. Throughout the sixties, situations and happenings constantly hovered in the line between aesthetic and political manifestation; by the time of the events of May 1968 in Paris, the Situationist International gradually turned into a political agitation movement, painting graffiti and handing out flyers, and calling for the mobilization of workers and the occupation of factories. The Latin American neo avant-garde experience was simultaneous, as here too the sixties and seventies were characterized by innovations that stressed the dematerialization of the art object and the performative happenings as a way of going beyond the space of the letter and the image. These undertakings aimed at reaching large publics and fostering participation: often, artistic collectives established direct relationships with labor unions and neighborhood organizations, and created political art to be used in demonstrations and strikes.34

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34 Fernando Rosenberg argues in The Avant-Garde and Geopolitics in Latin America (2006) that the Latin American historical avant-garde movements of the twenties and thirties did not merely “follow” the trends set by European artists, but rather articulated their own discourses and practices through different preoccupations and schema (specifically, through reflections about Latin America’s peripheral geopolitical location). We could argue, likewise,
These political-aesthetic experiences, and the productions that derived from them, ranged from the very solemn to the ludic and irreverent, as they could serve as destabilizing weapons either by condemning or ridiculing the state, society, or cultural institutions. Regarding the Argentine case, Ana Longoni describes how many artists and collectives acted as “un selecto grupo de choque que ‘hace avanzar’ las condiciones para la revolución (política y/o artística)”, or as avant-gardes both political and artistic (n.d., 3). This was best exemplified with “Tucumán Arde” in 1968: a group of artists from Buenos Aires and Rosario came together to denounce, through installations in both cities, the closing of sugar plantations in the region, and the subsequent lay off of its workers. The Tucumán Arde project (which included site visits to the area, interviews with the workers affected and their families, photographs of the foreclosed plantations, press conferences, and the actual installations, with collages, painted slogans, posters, statistics and projected films) sought to include both people from the region and outside observers in the experience. It was, therefore, “una obra procesual, temporal y espacialmente discontinua”, which “hace hincapié en la recepción del mensaje y en el rol del espectador, antes que en el objeto” (Longoni and Mestman, 209-11). In this way, revolutionary art and revolutionary politics come together, as Tucumán Arde follows the line of conceptualist and non-objective art, while demonstrating solidarity with the communities of Tucumán and the workers’ labor unions.

Defiance and denunciation could also play out through countercultural attitudes. The neo avant-gardes were closely tied to youth culture as a site of radical and total rupture with its predecessors, both artistic and political. Vania Markarián (2017) notes: “in this general context of change and desire to break with the prevailing order that the profound transformations in the behavior and practices of large youth sectors occurred globally, often in open defiance of dominant
values – in other words, the development of what has been termed ‘counterculture’”. According to Markarián, this referred to “any behaviors, styles, and opinions that certain youth sectors, always relatively small in numbers, have adopted to rebel against the world of their elders and mark a generational identity” (21). Throughout Latin America (and the world), musical, theatrical and literary expressions of youth counterculture emerged during the sixties, and especially around the global events of 1968. These were overtly critical, often in satiric and irreverent manners, of previous artistic generations, even those (perhaps especially so) committed and left-leaning intellectuals. After all, youth counterculture and commitment had less to do with a defined political affiliation to specific parties or ideologies than with broader sensibilities of discontent, rupture and renovation.

In Uruguay, for example, this was the case with Los Huevos del Plata (or HDP, which in turn plays with the abbreviation for “hijos de puta”), a magazine and literary project put together by Clemente Padín and a collective of young poets and writers. The magazine rejected the 1945 Generation (that of Angel Rama and the journal Marcha, Uruguay’s most iconic and influential periodical), which considered itself the country’s “critical conscience”, and instead celebrated young artists and rock music (125). In doing so, according to Markarián, the hacheientos, as they called themselves, “moved deftly in the debates within Uruguay’s Left, [and] their revolutionary commitment seeped into their literary obsessions, without necessarily having to clarify exactly which side they were on” (130). HDP sought a more direct engagement with the social and political struggles of its time, for which in 1969, with their last issue, they “suggested the decision to take up arms, this time effectively” (133). While in many ways this replicates the words/action dilemmas that I have discussed previously, and which was of vital concern to the previous generation of committed intellectuals, HDP’s successors looked to combine “formal innovation,
aesthetic provocation, and political protest”. This new avant-garde project, *Ovum10*, was a move to a more visual and performative language, “in the belief that the written word had lost its convening power” (134). Less ideological, and more so irreverent and performative, the writers associated with *Ovum10* called for the transformative, rather than descriptive, power of artistic creation: “Los poetas (y artistas) no han hecho otra cosa que interpretar la realidad poética de diversas maneras, cuando lo preciso es transformarla” (*Ovum10* 1, 5, emphases in the original). This magazine, therefore, includes, in addition to its programmatical texts and editorials, visual poetry, photography, comics, and announcements for exhibits and gatherings.

Argentina’s Tucumán Arde and Uruguay’s *HDP* and *Ovum10* are examples of how the sixties and seventies avant-gardes combined writing, visual culture and performance in order to create art forms that questioned and transgressed the traditional functions of art and that generated sites on which artist and public could interact. While different in tone and target – the former a more solemn condemnation of the state, the latter a ludic denunciation of official culture – both emerged as anti-establishments projects where the end product was less imperative than the experience produced on both artists and the intended public. These experiences, as shown above, employed the notions of solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized, as well as youth counterculture, as ways of generating collective and shared experiences. They were revolutionary in that they both denounced repression and they aimed at creating communities of bodies and senses, even if small and ephemeral. In this vein, as process rather than object, and as experience rather than a corpus of texts, in this chapter I will focus on the performative aspect of Hora Zero’s production.

Most literary criticism, as I will describe below, has focused on the literary value of Hora Zero. In fact, the poets were almost immediately accepted as part of the Peruvian poetic tradition
by Lima’s literary institution, despite their parricidal and anti-establishment nature. In my reading, this was so because it provided the opportunity to imagine a national poetic tradition. Because most of the Hora Zero poets had been born in provinces other than Lima, and belonged to lower social strata, their inclusion into the literary canon was a way of conceiving the whole country as unified through a shared poetic (and thus prestigious, lettered) language. Their colloquial and everyday language (their most celebrated “contribution” to national letters) allow for a more comprehensive representation of voices from all over the country. And yet, as art critic Juan Acha argued regarding avant-garde art more generally, this may also reveal the issue of reabsorption of dissident or revolutionary artistic production into constituted power. For Acha, the problem was that avant-garde, revolutionary art, since it needed to operate from within the rules and values of the cultural establishment, ran the risk of giving itself over to it. And the establishment was able to take from it what was permissible, while rejecting, or downplaying, its true revolutionary characteristics. In “Arte y Política” (1975), he wrote: “But creations arise from the subversive imagination, which is born of utopia, and are directed at it in order then to be reabsorbed by the constituted power, to lose its subversive (unsociable) effects and to end up in the historical-artistic pantheon. The work then turns into a sociable and socializable entity” (Barriendos 188-9).

Before examining what I call Hora Zero’s performative poetic work, I want to briefly argue, and by way of giving a general overview of the literature on this poetic movement, that literary criticism has mostly downplayed this aspect of its revolutionary discourse. Lima’s cultural institutions attempted to coopt Hora Zero’s revolutionary potential by retaining the “value” of its written poetry, and putting aside its more scandalous and ludic discourses, or at least downplaying them as merely anecdotal.
ii. **Poetry and work**

The founding members of Hora Zero, among them its leaders Jorge Pimentel and Juan Ramírez Ruiz, were students of education at the Federico Villarreal University, near downtown Lima. The Villarreal had been founded in 1963, less than a decade earlier, under the supervision of APRA leader Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre and management of other prominent aprista intellectuals such as Luis Alberto Sánchez. From its beginning, and in accordance with its ideological origins in the populist doctrine of aprismo, the Villarreal presented itself as a working-class university for Lima’s growing immigrant population. That Hora Zero has its roots at the Villarreal is significant because the university was a new academic project that corresponded to the rise of the *desborde popular*. Jesús Cabel writes, “Era la primera vez que desde otra universidad se hacía un planteamiento y llamado tan radical como juvenil, además de estar comprobado que ninguno de estos jóvenes tuvo como profesores a ninguno de los poetas peruanos, los mismos que en su mayoría eran miembros del cuerpo docente de San Marcos” (76). Despite their origin in an aprista university, the *horazerianos*, from their stronghold in the education department (the Villarreal did not have a humanities program yet), affirmed their Marxist-Leninist stance, their commitment to socialist struggle and their class solidarity. Soon they branched out, and began attracting new members: this continuous expansion (as well as desertions) would remain a constant throughout the group’s existence. The university classroom was only the starting point for these poets who, originally from other parts of the country, traveled back and forth from their provinces and Lima. This flow, characteristic of Hora Zero, gave rise to affiliate “branches” in other parts of Peru, like Chiclayo, Pucallpa and Chimbote. For these, anti-centralism became a unifying flag, as they denounced the capital’s official cultural institutions for attempting to regulate what a national art could be. Often, and this is a topic to be explored further, these established connections with
local writers and their literary traditions, creating regional intellectual networks. In all, Hora Zero, as an emerging national movement, did not have any kind of institutional guidance or support, and functioned entirely outside the cultural establishment.

The general themes that characterize Hora Zero’s poetic production are marginality, youth and an affirmation that poetry can be produced from the streets, poor neighborhoods and about everyday life. There is a marked anti-establishment aesthetic, both in the ideas and the tone of this poetry that emerges from the desborde popular itself, from the masses of migrants beginning to populate poor neighborhoods and look for new lives in the cities. Andrea Cobas Carral notes the following characteristics of Hora Zero poetry: “experimentación lingüística, interdiscursividad, fusión en el poema de lo marginal y de la oralidad cotidiana, subversiones genéricas, apelación a la experiencia como motor poético, integración de lo diverso a través de la construcción de una nueva subjetividad y la renuncia a la artificiosidad lírica para lograr para lograr en el poema la representación de la ‘hora presente’” (81). The subject of youth and everyday life is present in a poem like Pimentel’s “1944-1968”: “Para qué veinticuatro años de una vida/ Seguramente para discutir, amar en los parques,/ comer en tu casa, caminar por las calles, llegar siempre tarde/ a los trabajos, no llegar nunca a tu paraje” (1970a, 29). In Ramírez Ruiz’s “Julio Polar” we can observe the use of colloquial language to describe everyday life: “Y todo era/ [una perfecta cagada/ lo de fuera y lo de adentro, todo una perfecta cagada” (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 280). The theme of alienation from society and racism against provincial immigrants is evident in José Cerna’s “Señal de indentidad”: “¿Soy un lago/ o no?/ Esa pregunta/pero la del policía/ es/ ¿Eres o no universitario?” (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 285). The life of the immigrant, the hardships of building a home in Lima’s shantytowns is also reflected in Jorge Nájar’s “Para levantar una casa en esta ciudadela”: “Para levantar una gran casa en esta ciudadela/ nadie puede saber como
construir su morada/ con veinticinco centavos” (1970b, 4). Ultimately, these poets aim to create a new subjectivity, a new form of artistic persona born out of the streets, vagrancy and a vague amorality. That is, a subject opposed to Lima’s traditional poet, with a stable position at a university and whose verses will be published in newspapers or the carefully curated editions of publishers like La Rama Florida. Adopting and transgressing religious and sacred language, Oscar Málaga writes in “Salmo de Gloria”: “Gloria a mi nacido para cafichar, reír, joder,/ morirme de miedo, colocar bombas,/ tener mujeres, hijos, padres, enemigos,/ saludar amigos, ir a bares, drogarme” (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 259).

This young, poor and marginal subject becomes the agent of revolutionary change. In “Introducción a los días aciagos de la resistencia”, Nájar imagines a future in which he and others will take up arms, despite the hardships that will inevitably come: “Los días aciagos de la resistencia,/ viviremos. Claro está que un árbol/ no es un fusil, que negro pan/ no es rico potaje/ pero estamos preparados/ para estos simples detalles...” (Movimiento Hora Zero 1970a, 21). Carlos Moreno, in “Despertar”, also conjures the collective struggle against imperialism and the fight for a God-given justice: “Plusvalías que el capital envilecen,/ soportamos al amparo de leyes mancilladas;/ es hora de tomar la justicia por derecho humano/ y cristalizar libertades por Dios otorgadas” (Movimiento Hora Zero 1970b, 19). The poets constantly allude to Che Guevara as part of their revolutionary solidarity, as in the case of Pimentel’s “El continente más grande”, introduction to his 1970 collection Kenacort y Valium 10. He writes: “Un llamado a todos los Ches/ a unirse como un llamado que se ha estado esperando, como la señal de la respuesta de todos los Ches” (Ybarra and De los Dolores 70).

While their parricidal and countercultural behavior attracted the immediate attention of the literary establishment, their poetic voices quickly earned them a place within the national lettered
tradition. Between 1972 and 1973, José Miguel Oviedo, director of the newly revamped Instituto Nacional de Cultura prepared and published an anthology of some of the “novísimos”, which included, in addition to selected work, documents, letters and interviews to the authors. In *Estos 13*, Oviedo never disregards Hora Zero, nor does he decry it as mere youthful rebelliousness. Instead of marginalizing these poets, he grants them a space within national letters; anthologizing them is a process of canonization, where the countercultural movement becomes part of the literary establishment it had rejected. In doing so, however, *Estos 13* also delimits what Hora Zero can and cannot be, and articulates the questions that will determine how the poetic movement will continue to be read in the future. Oviedo seems to ask: what is revolutionary about these poets’ origin and artistic production? Or yet: what is redeemable about them? What do they “add” to a national poetry?36

The answer is twofold. First, their importance lies in their social origin: “Creo que uno de los aspectos más interesantes y significativos que está detrás de la poesía peruana última, es el hecho de que sus nuevos autores pertenezcan…a una capa proletarizada, de extracción obrera o artesanal, que proviene del interior del país” (1973, 11). While the previous generation of poets had been mostly from Lima, the seventies generation decentralizes poetry: “Entre los del 70, los limeños están en franca minoría…no solo se encontrará poetas provenientes de zonas bien

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35 Modesta Suárez finds Oviedo’s desire to anthologize Hora Zero curious and paradoxical, given his role within the RGAF and the movement’s anti-establishment attitude: “Estos 13 est en ce sens un livre particulier, en raison de la présence d’un prologue très polémique mais aussi parce qu’il est le premier ouvrage à légitimer Hora Zero et à offrir un cadre littéraire a la polémique créée par et autour du groupe. Et ce n’est pas le moindre des paradoxes qu’un groupe, considère par beaucoup comme anti-officialisé, se retrouve conforté par Oviedo qui n’est ni autre, à l’époque, que l’ancien directeur de l’Instituto Nacional de Cultura, personnage influent du monde de la culture dans le gouvernement de Velasco Alvarado” (106).

36 *Estos 13* is not in itself an anthology about Hora Zero, but about the newest poets of the 70s Generation. Along with the poets associated with the Hora Zero movement, Oviedo’s compilation also included a selection of poems by Abelardo Sánchez León, José Watanabe and Antonio Cillóniz. Two other poets, José Rosas Ribeyro and Tulio Mora belonged to the contemporary Estación Reunida group but would become associated to Hora Zero during the movement’s second iteration in the late seventies. However, given the predominance of the movement in the prologue, selection and included documents, it is evident that *Estos 13* is conceived in relation to Hora Zero’s iconoclastic nature.
dispersas y oscuras de la sierra, sino aun de la región selvática (Iquitos, Pucallpa, Chachapoyas)". These “proletarios y provincianos, estos jóvenes incorporan a la literatura de la metrópoli un rasgo que casi había desaparecido en los últimos 30 años: el espíritu regionalista, esa esperanza de articular las formas de cultura local en un solo proyecto de alcanza nacional” (1973, 12, my emphasis). In other words, in representing poets from all over the country, these movements create the possibility for a project of national unity: a singular, unified idea of a nation through poetry. This project, furthermore, is based on their capability as poets, and with the language of poetry: “han revelado ser buenos y hasta excelentes poetas, lo que, al fin de cuentas, es lo más importante y lo que basta para apreciarlos” (1973, 21). They are good poets in that they combine their youthful experience with what they have learned from their predecessors: from Nicanor Parra and Ernesto Cardenal to Ezra Pound, Charles Olson, William Carlos Williams and the American beat poets. And, ironically, Oviedo points out that their understanding of poetic rhythm and visual imagination comes from the influence of poets they had most disparaged in their manifestos, such as Antonio Cisneros (1973, 23). Therefore, for Oviedo Hora Zero is a continuation (not a true break) of the Peruvian poetic tradition; now, however, perhaps for the first time, it is truly national, as it includes voices from all over the country. In this way, Estos 13 coopts these poets for a national project launched from the literary institution itself, based on the inherent qualities and values of a poetic language that can found in every region of the country – and globally in the world republic of letters. Poetry, in Oviedo’s account, emerges as a site of national consensus, which demonstrates that everyone has access to it given “la riquísima movilidad social peruana” (1973, 14).

In my reading, much of the criticism about Hora Zero since has followed similar precepts, focusing on the value of the poets’ verse, or stressing how they allowed a multiplicity of voices to be represented in the Peruvian literary canon. They emphasize the collective nature of the
movement, and celebrate their irruption as form of the democratization of poetry. That is, the
determining factor remains the quality and uniqueness of their written verse. For example, for
Nuria Vilanova, “while Hora Zero produced some effective poetry the quality of its work was
uneven and the movement failed to produce a poet of the stature of [Antonio] Cisneros or the major
figures of earlier generations…Their concern to cultivate a colloquial language and tone
sometimes led them to become prosaic and overly-explicit… ” (1999, 62). Carlos Orihuela,
likewise, points out that “su aporte más importante es, sin duda, el haber incorporado en la poética
conversacional una buena proporción de elementos provenientes de los dialectos marginales, con
los cuales muchos de sus integrantes se encontraban vitalmente involucrados” (80). Meanwhile,
Cabel, while recognizing the value of Hora Zero’s social origins, criticizes their “sentido de caer
en el facilismo de una actividad política antes que en la creación literaria” (81). In particular, and
although he never accuses the horazerianos directly, he denounces any poet or intellectual who
had taken up a role in the RGAF, either in cultural institutions or as members of SINAMOS (64-5);
many of the movement’s poets, as I will discuss in the last section, made their livings working
for the state. These critical approaches ultimately stress Hora Zero’s importance in expanding the
linguistic range of Peruvian poetry, opening up poetic language to provincial, colloquial and
lumpen voices. This in itself would be sufficient to validate the movement. And yet, it diverts little

While I borrow from these analyses, especially to understand the material conditions in
which the collective developed, I approach Hora Zero from the notion and function of work.
Specifically, of performative and exhibitionist work, a technique of the movement’s cultural
production which has been elided in literary criticism, and which to me constitutes the most
significant aspect of their avant-garde action. As I described in the Introduction, since the sixties
the production of art was read in terms of physical work and processual labor, instead of the creation of concrete, finalized objects meant for contemplation and consumption. To define themselves as workers, then, implied an understanding of art as directly tied to material and social reality; in this way, art workers manifested their own solidarity with the working classes. It was another form of what Claudia Gilman defines as “anti-intellectualism”, or the artists’ rejection of the, according to them, anachronistic and apolitical stance of the traditional intellectual caste. To work, therefore, meant for these committed artists to find spaces in which they could come closer to those they supported; instead of representing them in their artistic production, working meant reframing the notion of what art was, and how and where it was to be produced. Ana Longoni, for example, describes how in the Primer Encuentro de Plástica Latinoamericana (La Habana, 1972), several artists sought to represent themselves as workers: “La reivindicación del artista como trabajador se volvió literal cuando los artistas participantes en el Encuentro empuñaron carretillas y otras herramientas en obras de construcción o cosecharon granos en el campo” (2014, 191). And yet, as Julia Bryan-Wilson argues, this appropriation must also be read critically, as there are inherent and unresolvable class tensions between these artists, many of them middle-class, from actual, hard-hat laborers – and, in our case, peasants and other sorts of precarious workers (7). Artistic precariousness, therefore, must be read as a strategy for the political positioning of these artists in their attempts at imagining and performing their social commitment, and working through the breach between art and life, and not necessarily as an actual condition of themselves or their work.

Hora Zero’s use of poetic work is somewhat different from the cases Longoni and Bryan-Wilson describe, because it is not so much that they perform as workers, but rather that they understand poetry to be work. And, although poetic work is necessarily linked to class
consciousness and revolutionary solidarity, it is never put forward in strictly class terms. For Hora Zero work was a constant theme in their poetry, from the need to find work to survive to the rejection of menial work in favor of poetic work. In every case, work is directly linked to life itself.

In “Epílogo”, Oscar Málaga stresses the need to work to maintain his family: “Solo quiero, querido lector, que vuelva mi mujer/ Cuando ella venga posiblemente me busque un trabajo/ Para que sea un poco más feliz” (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 268). In “El lamento del sargento de Aguas Verdes”, Pimentel narrates an old man’s search for meaning and redemption, whose only talent to offer is his poetry: “Veintiocho años he buscado trabajo, jefe/…/ y me ofrecí de empleado, en realidad me vengo ofreciendo desde hace mucho tiempo, per visto/ mi historial, afuera de nuevo, sobre la vía al trago/ a recitar poemitas de enamorado colegial a ser/ el payaso de las mesas a hacer reír a los parroquianos/ con mis poemitas de colegial enamorado/…) toda mi vida ansiando un trabajo digno” (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 273). And in his “La Mujer que me ama y la amo Pilar Prieto”, a stern voice challenges the narrative voice, who clamors out his revolutionary commitment to both Che Guevara and his lover: “¡Oye, que haces ahí/ que no vas a trabajar!” (Ybarra and De los Dolores 84). Work, therefore, becomes ubiquitous for these poets, who either embrace it as a necessary aspect of life, or reject it in favor of a poetic lifestyle. In all cases, however, it becomes part of their identity, as they cannot escape this facet of life and must answer to it in some regard.

The relationship between work and poetry is most clearly evidenced in their manifestos. In “Destruir para construir”, they write: “Necesitamos hombres vivos, hombres de trabajo, necesitamos creadores, porque nuestro proceso de ruptura necesita de ellos”. This is why they call out to young creators to own their poetic labor: POETA dilo fuerte y claramente: YO SOY POETA, TRABAJO EN LA POESIA” (Ybarra and De los Dolores 27-8). Poetic work (cultural work, more
broadly) involves physical commitment and obligation to writing, and challenges poetic creation to be a form of living instead of a way of pleasing the market. In Marxist terms, if under capitalism workers are alienated from their work, poetry reconciles work and life. Therefore, in “Poesía integral” Juan Ramírez Ruiz puts forward that “un auténtico escritor que trabaje en la poesía deberá escribir con toda su vida…Y mucho cuidado con el baboso humor burgués y con el frívolo desplazamiento del gusto de la cretina clientela del arte” (Mora 2009, 542, my emphases). For Hora Zero, poetry-as-life and poetry-as-work defeat alienation by creating life and by bringing subjects together: “Lo que esperamos es una comunidad vital” (Ybarra and De los Dolores 28).

The horazerianos are not the factory workers of Arguedas’s Chimbote, nor are they the peasants of Scorza’s Rancas. That is, they are not blue-collar workers, and this in itself already sets them apart from the desborde popular, as much as they may come from it. For the most part, they will work in the realm of print, whether in newspapers and libraries, or hold menial bureaucratic positions, often associated with the state in the early years of the RGAF. They constitute an intermediate space between precariousness and the middle class, where their work is essentially that of the letter in some respect. Therefore, they are not proletariat poets, nor do they draw on the anarchist traditions of the twenties and thirties. This being said, my question here is how poetry works, or rather what are the conditions that characterize Hora Zero’s understanding of poetry as work. That is, how, in their terms, poetry destabilizes, how it creates community, and how it reconciles life and work. I argue that it does so by becoming a performative activity, at both

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37 The version of “Poesía integral” included in Rodolfo Ybarra and Zachary de los Dolores’s anthology Hora Zero: óperas primas (2016) includes the subtitle “Notas acerca de una hipótesis de trabajo”, and it is probably an earlier version or draft of the manifesto later published as the epilogue of Ramírez Ruiz’s collection Un par de vueltas por la realidad (1971).

38 See Víctor Mazzi’s Poesía proletaria del Perú (1930-1976) (1976) and Jesús Cabel’s chapter on the Grupo Intelectual Primero de Mayo in Una fiesta prohibida: Apuntes para una interpretación de la nueva poesía peruana 60-80 (1986). This latter group was heir to the traditions of anarchist poetry from the 1920s and 1930s and given their more firm and orthodox Marxist grounding they formally rejected Hora Zero.
discursive and physical levels. For Hora Zero, poetic work – not just the poems but also manifestos and other public pronouncements, as well as actual behaviors and practices – is meant to scandalize, to generate affects and thus to involve others in the destruction of the literary establishment and the foundation of a new regime of art. In this way, work ceases to be alienating and emerges as a creative and destructive category, an embodied, performative and collective revolutionary experience that both draws from and tries to reach out to the migrant masses of the desborde popular.

II. Scandal and masculinity in Hora Zero’s poetic performative work

Hora Zero, from its first manifesto, “Palabras urgentes”, used scandal as both a disruptive and constructive strategy. It was disruptive in that it poked fun, and outright attacked, the Peruvian and Latin American literary institution. In doing so, it was also constructive, as it sought to affirm its revolutionary and committed stance from the margins of society, culture, and even morality. I understand scandal as a form of what Reinaldo Laddaga, following Andrew J. Webber, describes as the “exhibitionism” inherent in avant-garde production. For Laddaga, this breakdown can lead to a whole new relationship between artist and public, where the former could emerge “como aparición espectacular y atónita, abierta y opaca, exclamatoria y muda, se expone como si fuera una atracción” (143, italics in the original). The avant-garde event, that occurs when art and public space converge, writes Laddaga, is a kind of “attraction” akin to that of a fair or cabaret: “Por eso la vanguardia tiende a un cierto teatro, sólo que un teatro que tiene en su centro la producción corporal, producción que gravita hacia lo carnavalesco o lo excrementicio” (145). Scandal, then, is performative, a strategy for generating attraction, and a form of theater or spectacle that occurs in a public space. Sandal is also affective: it looks to generate specific emotions in its public, whether laughter, anger, or surprise. Through these emotions, it challenges official culture and at
the same time proposes new forms of revolutionary sociability. A sociability, however, that in the case of Hora Zero will be almost entirely heteronormative: not only because almost all of its members were male, but also because masculinity and idealized, hyperbolic notions of virility and strength were at the center of its discourse and practices. In this section, I analyze four instances in which Hora Zero sought to generate scandal to provoke its audience and affirm its social commitment: through the use of the literary insult, the notion of “cultural guerrilla” and the practice of the literary duel. Finally, I will examine the notion of “orgies of work”, Hora Zero’s thesis for poetic production, as the result of this intersection between work, collectivity, scandal and masculine sociability.

i. 

**Insult and virility in the poetic manifesto**

Hora Zero’s manifestos present scathing critiques against Peru’s literary establishment in favor of a truly revolutionary and committed poetic creation. They propose a living form of poetry as a way to eliminate barriers between art and masses, and thus contribute to the struggle of socialism. The 1970 *Hora Zero. Materiales para una nueva época*, contains, along with the selection of poems, a dedication and its first programmatical manifesto, “Palabras urgentes”\(^{39}\). The manifesto, signed by Pimentel and Ramírez Ruiz, the figureheads and leaders of the movement, reads: “La poesía en el Perú después de Vallejo sólo ha sido un hábil remedo, trasplante de otras literaturas. Sin embargo es necesario decir que en muchos casos los viejos poetas acompañaron la danza de los monigotes ocasionales, escribiendo literatura de toda laya para el consumo de una espantosa clientela de cretinos” (1970a, 8). According to Teresa Ebert, the manifesto is a polemical

\(^{39}\) The poets who sign this first number are: Mario Luna (Chimbote), Jorge Nájar (Pucallpa), Julio Polar (Callao) and José Carlos Rodríguez (Iquitos), as well as Pimentel (Lima) and Ramírez Ruiz (Chiclayo). The dedication reads: “A CARLOS MARX A ERNESTO GUEVARA EZRA POUND JEAN PAUL SARTRE Y CESAR ABRAHAM VALLEJO. A TODOS LOS OBREROS Y CAMPESINOS A TODOS LOS POLITICOS LITERATOS CRITICOS REVOLUCIONARIOS ESCRITORES HONESTOS DEL PERU Y EL MUNDO. A LOS NOVISIMOS POETAS DEL PERU, AMERICA Y EL MUNDO” (5).
weapon, it is “writing in struggle” (553). It “puts in question the existing economic and social arrangements and intervenes in the alienated forms of knowledges and practices that have, by the agency of power, become familiar and commonsensical and thus assumed the shape of natural modes of knowing and acting in the world” (554). Hora Zero’s interventions, however, take place not at the level of “theory”, as Ebert describes, but through the practice of insult and defamation. While the insult is a well-established literary practice among authors of similar social standing\(^{40}\), there is a parrhesic element in Hora Zero’s manifestos. Michel Foucault describes parrhesia as a “mode of action” that puts forward some form of truth in a direct and clear language: the parrhesiast “expresses his own opinion, thought and conviction. He must put his name to his words; this is the price of his frankness”. He does so “as clearly and directly as possible, without any disguise or rhetorical embellishment…The parrhesiast leaves nothing to interpretation” (2011, 16).

The Hora Zero poets, as parrhesiasts, see their denunciations as their “duty, obligation, responsibility, and task to speak” (2011, 18)\(^{41}\). In my reading, therefore, the Hora Zero manifesto is a parrhesic weapon to challenge assumed modes of knowledge: through insult and direct and concise attack, it transgresses the limits of rhetoric or the accepted language of the literary institution of its time. In parrhesic fashion, “Palabras urgentes” puts forward a “truth” that “needs to be told”: phrases like “debemos decir” and “y ya es necesario que alguien lo diga” (which appears twice, once in all caps) add urgency to their denouncement of Peruvian letters’ reactionary

\(^{40}\) In his essay “Los frutos amargos de la dulce ira” (2011), Argentine writer Patricio Pron reflects on the practice of the literary insult as a strategy used by emergent writers to establish themselves vis-à-vis the literary establishment. Pron writes: “una de las razones para establecer la importancia de la diatriba para la historia de la literatura puede hallarse en el hecho de que el insulto manifiesta el estado de cosas del momento en que es formulado y señala los límites de lo que puede ser dicho (y de quiénes pueden hacerlo) en literatura” (39).

\(^{41}\) An interesting connection to be further explored is the relationship between parrhesia and aprismo. While they were not apriista militants, and at least Pimentel openly opposed the party (see “Contra los muertos que no comprenden que el final ha llegado” in Kenacort y Valium 10 [1970]), the horazerianos did have an aprista connection through their enrollment at the Federico Villarreal University. In fact, one of the most famous Peruvian polemicists and parrhesiasts, Alberto Hidalgo, had been a member of APRA.
The defamatory and direct language through which “Palabras urgentes” criticizes the cronyism and favoritism perpetrated by the institution, furthermore, is meant to scandalize its readers. Poets are mentioned (and demeaned) by name: while Rodolfo Hinostroza and Carlos Henderson, marginally relevant, are “tuertos entre ciegos”, Francisco Bendezá’s lyrical poetry is “estúpida”, and Mirko Lauer and Antonio Cisneros’s intellectualism is “helado y estéril” (1970a, 8-9). I will come back to this notion of poetic “sterility” further below.

Through these weapons (truth-telling, insult and defamation) Hora Zero displaced and rejected the very grounds upon which the Peruvian literary institution defined itself. That is, the confrontation between so-called “pure” poetry and “committed” poetry, ultimately a debate about the autonomy of art. On the one hand, there were those concerned with literary value over class struggle, or whose verse was not overtly political (like Martín Adán, Jorge Eduardo Eielson, Javier Sologuren and Emilio Adolfo Westphalen); on the other, those who explicitly talked about revolution and did not shy away from manifesting their socialist leanings (such as Manuel Scorza, Gonzalo Rose, Pablo Guevara, and Alejandro Romualdo). Critics also contributed to reinforcing these supposed differences, even referring to them as “antagonist currents”. In doing so, they differentiated between the more cosmopolitan, Europeanized poetry of the former, and the more properly “national” of the latter (Lergo Martín 314). These divergences, however, were only superficial, as these poets circulated between these traditions, and most belonged to middle or

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42 The same can be observed in another manifesto, “El punto sobre la I” (1971), which relies on the same parrhesic techniques of truth-telling and clarity: “Y nuestra función es aclarar, decir diez, cien, mil veces la verdad por encima de las deformaciones; volver y volver a aclarar, a decir la verdad hasta que se entienda que el enemigo lucha por una causa bastarda e históricamente desplazada” (Ybarra and De los Dolores 48). Likewise in “Nosotros tenemos la razón”: “Nuestra actitud no es por vanidad ni figuración. Sino por la necesidad que tenemos de manifestarnos y esclarecer la realidad” (Ybarra and De los Dolores 54).

43 In 1959, this division ultimately led to an important polemic, when literary critic José Miguel Oviedo openly denounced Romualdo’s Edició extraordinaria, accusing the poet for employing an overtly political and combative language and tone as a way of looking for the support of some political party. Poets and critics took sides in the dispute, writing editorials and responding to polls in such ways that cemented the divisions between socially committed and pure poetic production (Lergo Martín 317-20).
ascending classes. They all, furthermore, held bureaucratic positions at cultural institutions, or chairs in Lima’s foremost universities (either San Marcos or the Católica). In other words, despite their thematic and political differences, they were united by a similar class background, and their verse validated by the same cultural establishment. In this context, Hora Zero’s scandal-driven manifestos brought poetry to a different plane, one where these debates and dilemmas, and the divisions within the literary institution, ceased to matter. After all, according to the horazerianos, both were puppets (“monigotes”) selling commodified literature to the same mass of cretins.

The attacks, however, went to yet another level. Socially committed writers are “una ruma de histéricos insustanciales” (8, my emphasis) and every previous generation is characterized by “su cobardía y reverenda flojera…Sólo se hizo el leve intento de escribir poesía efectista a consecuencia de masturbaciones mentales, de lucubraciones, gritos histéricos o cosquillas para contentar a los burgueses al momento de la digestión” (1970a, 9, my emphasis). The use of hysteria is relevant here, as it introduces a gendered discourse to the manifesto’s tone. After all, Freud had “diagnosed” and pathologized hysteria as a female neurosis in the late 19th century, result of woman’s recognition of her own “lack” or “castration” (Didi-Huberman 80; Devereux 24). A psychological rather than physical ailment that then expressed itself through convulsions and screams of pain – or “gritos histéricos”. “Palabras urgentes”, therefore, marks this distinction between a neurotic, hysterical writing – and, in this way, feminine – and Hora Zero’s virile creation. This is why, against “sterile”, purely “masturbatory” poetry, the horazerianos are full of male vigor: “tenemos los testículos y la lucidez que no tuvieron los viejos” (1970a, 10, my emphasis).

44 Many even lived very close to each other, and often frequented the same spaces for intellectual discussion. During a time, Oviedo, Eielson, Westphalen, poet Blanca Varela, her husband, painter Fernando de Szyszlo, philosopher Augusto Salazar Bondy, and his brother, essayist, poet and playwright Sebastián Salazar Bondy, were among Lima’s most renowned intellectuals who lived in the same middle-class neighborhood in Lima, Santa Beatriz. A popular gathering place to discuss literature, culture and politics was the peña Pancho Fierro, which they all frequented. See Oviedo 2014; Rebaza Soraluz, Luis. La construcción de un artista peruano contemporáneo (2000).
And in a 1971 manifesto, “Entrada”, they likewise describe their creative potential as “flujo vital”: “Estos poemas inauguran fluencias, flujos de una vida absoluta” (Ybarra and De los Dolores 44-5). In this way, the Hora Zero manifesto emerges as a display of revolutionary masculinity and virility. Scandalous language and defamation serve to feminize previous poetic generations and, simultaneously, introduce the horazeriano poet as the “New Man”, the modern revolutionary subject. Against the feminine spectacle of hysteria (a bourgeois condition, the poets affirm), Hora Zero construes a male-centered spectacle, a demonstration of the vitality and strength needed for revolutionary struggle. In this way, they were akin to virile guerrilla fighters.

ii. Cultural guerrilla warfare

Estos 13 was meant to be Estos 14. The one glaring absence in Oviedo’s anthology was one of Hora Zero’s founders and its most vocal and polemical figure, Jorge Pimentel. He had collaborated with Oviedo during the preparation of the anthology, providing him with materials and the names of the other poets, who all sent in poems and responses to a questionnaire about their poetic labor. According to Oviedo, Pimentel pulled out for “personal reasons”; in the poet’s own version, however, he did so because the editor vetoed his answers to the questionnaire. Pimentel’s text, published for the first time in Tulio Mora’s anthology Los broches mayores del sonido, gives an insight to another aspect of Hora Zero’s concatenation of poetry and revolution: the notion of “cultural guerrilla”. In my argument, this formulation serves to refine Hora Zero’s understanding of revolutionary commitment, both by attacking the Latin American cultural establishment and by reaffirming the virility of horazeriano poetic production.

Pimentel does not cite anyone when he calls for the creation of a cultural guerrilla, but by 1972, when this text was composed, the term had been in circulation for a few years. Naturally, the notion has at its basis the language and discourse of actual guerrilla warfare, theorized by Mao
Zedong and Che Guevara, both of whom are often referred to and saluted in Hora Zero’s texts. As for its cultural significance, the term had been in use since at least 1968, when the Argentine artist Julio Le Parc argued that the relationship between artist and society needed to be reevaluated: no longer could artists serve as “unconscious accomplices” of the establishment, but should instead aim to be the driving force for the revolutionary transformation of society. Their attitude should be one of reflection and contestation, organizing as “una especie de guerrilla cultural contra el estado actual de las cosas, subrayar las contradicciones, crear situaciones donde la gente reencuentre su capacidad de producir cambios” (Steffen and Herzog 2013). Likewise, in 1970 Acha described the artist’s role in a revolutionary society in terms of guerrilla activity. He argued that, in Peru in the early seventies, there were some (though perhaps too few) artists who were following this call, “to the point that today we have reached a state of cultural guerrilla warfare…This encourages young artists to posit the need for a cultural revolution as an indispensable complement to and guideline for socioeconomic changes, as a reaction against the imperialist and outmoded cultural impositions…” (Barriendos 171). That is, for Acha avant-garde art needed to follow in the precepts of political revolutionary struggle. Brazilian art critic Frederico Morais was more explicit still: “Today, the artist is a kind of guerrilla fighter. Art is ambush. Acting unpredictably when and where he is least expected, the artist creates – in an unusual way, since today anything can be transformed into a weapon for war or an instrument for art – a permanent state of tension, a constant state of expectation. Today everything can be turned into art, even the most banal of everyday events” (Barriendos 228). Revolutionary artistic practice and political action came together through the notion of cultural guerrilla. No longer were these separate spheres, as they had been under the distinction between “pure” and “social” poetry: cultural guerrilla meant that one could not be thought of without the other. More than the creation
of specific, concrete works of art (meant to be admired and owned), the notion referred to artistic situations, characterized by their unpredictability, ephemeral nature and capacity for symbolic violence. For the likes of Le Parc, Acha and Morais, this alluded, specifically, to happenings and other forms of embodied practices that brought the art work outside of the gallery or the university classroom and into the streets, into contact with spectators who were also part of the cultural guerrilla warfare.

The notion of cultural guerrilla warfare, therefore, reconceptualized the role of the artist and the spaces in which art was to be produced. This is also the case for Pimentel, who in his unpublished 1972 questionnaire replies that the role of the new Peruvian poet is to “atender o profundizar la guerrilla cultural” (Mora 2009, 441). For Pimentel, this constitutes an area of poetic practice related to, but not the same, as political and cultural commitment. That is, while in the political arena the poet must study Marxism, and in the cultural arena study art and literature, to be a guerrillero cultural is a function on its own: “El guerrillero cultural da caminos, orienta, da vías de comunicación, dinamita teorías, fusila libros, prepara emboscadas, reta, se bate a duelos y su vida está al servicio del pueblo”. Like in the case of Morais, Pimentel’s own language refers back to guerrilla tactics and maneuvers to be used during combat: he presents himself as a scout who understands the territory well and can “ambush”, “dynamite” and “execute” according to the needs of the masses – a cultural guerrilla, therefore, acting not for its own purposes but in solidarity with the oppressed. This is why Pimentel later contends that cultural militancy goes beyond personal desire, where it can become a collective and shared experience, a space of commonality.

45 Or not so symbolic, as Longoni attests in her study of some Argentine neo-avant-gardes that, in the late sixties and throughout the seventies, actually resorted to violence in the creation of their situations and happenings. In the case of Itinerario ’68, “la violencia política no aparece como alusión, denuncia o referencia, sino como materialidad, ejecución, acción. En su curso se entremezclan los usos de la violencia (contra el material, contra el público) que son inherentes a la historia de la vanguardia artística con las nuevas formas de ‘violencia política’” (n.d., 12). In this way, cultural guerrilla could in fact be used as a tactic of actual guerrilla warfare.
in which anyone can participate in: “la poesía sale a la calle, se vuelca a ella buscando libertad, luz, contacto humano, franqueza, honestidad, dejando de lado el cuarto del poeta. Ahora el cuarto del poeta es la calle y todos sus habitantes, haciéndose a la vez común a todos, derribando fetichismos” (Mora 2009, 441).

In the next section I will examine how Hora Zero brought poetic performance into contact with the desborde popular. Here, I want to argue that for Pimentel and Hora Zero the notion of cultural guerrilla warfare served as a way of taking a revolutionary stance vis-à-vis the literary establishment. This is why the main “enemies” in this guerrilla activity, to be blown up and executed, are books and theories: the same texts and ideas the manifestos took aim at, and through the same kind of insulting, virulent language. This is evident in Hora Zero Oriente’s 1970 Materiales para una nueva época and its collective memorandum to Pablo Neruda – and his “gorro de cuasi guerrillero” (1970b, 28, my emphasis). Employing the same defamatory language, the poets of Pucallpa accuse him of being a pseudo revolutionary, for whom this letter denouncing the collective struggle of the Third World “pasará a tu repertorio de esos chistes que te cuentas entre bares y salones dorados, con esa tu cara de raro animal antártico” (27). The poets “invite” Neruda to bring his message of liberation and Latin Americanism to the Amazonian region, but warning him “que aquí no existe una Casa de la Cultura y las gentes no tienen cien soles para escucharte hablar” (28). Once again, the horazerianos denounce the commodification of culture, as the marginalized peoples Neruda is supposed to speak for and save through his poetry cannot afford the entry fee to his recitals. If he were to take up their invitation, Neruda would not be able to relax and smoke his pipe, as Pucallpa is not his comfortable house in Isla Negra in Chile, but a dangerous region where he could be kidnapped “para cambiarte por pan, pan para los niños” (28). The poets challenge the telluric pretensions of Neruda’s poetry, as could not survive the Amazon, “un río
inmenso donde puedes ahogarte" (28). In fact, Neruda would only be good if traded for bread to actually feed the poor Amazonian children46.

Through the notion of cultural guerrilla warfare, therefore, the horazerianos both affirmed the popular and collective nature of their poetic work while challenging vague or fake revolutionary compromise. Like the manifestos, this notion also imagines the revolutionary poet, and his vital community, in masculine terms: after all, there are explicit connotations of virility and strength in the imaginary of guerrilla activity (as a form of war) and in the figure of the ideal guerrillero47. To call Neruda a “cuasi-guerrillero” is akin to calling him half a man, in opposition to the horazeriano poet with “testículos” and full of male vigor. In this way, the use of the term cultural guerrilla also becomes part of their performance: of revolutionary commitment and of virility at the same time.

iii. Poetic duels

Hora Zero’s performativity was not exclusively discursive, and “el guerrillero cultural…se bate a duelos” was not only a turn of phrase. One of Pimentel’s most irreverent and rebellious poetic acts occurred in 1972, when he challenged the internationally renowned poet Antonio Cisneros. A debate played out between the two shortly after the publication of “Palabras urgentes”, through letters published across newspapers and magazines. After Cisneros openly criticized Hora Zero’s grandiloquent pretensions, Pimentel sent an open letter inviting Cisneros to set a time and date to settle their dispute through a duel of honor: “el mejor modo de dilucidar este entredicho, es un duelo poético: no es necesario hacer literatura sobre un tipo u otro de poesía, sino enfrentar directamente a ambas, para que público y las nuevas generaciones de poetas puedan sacar

46 Another direct attack on Neruda can be found in the manifesto “Nosotros tenemos la razón”; “Su obra no motiva. Contenta y desvía. Atonta y embrutece y anestesia. Escandalosamente engañosa” (Ybarra and De los Dolores 54).
47 Mallón (2003) and Dietrich Ortega (2014) trace the relationship between the figure of the ideal guerrillero and masculinity.
conclusiones exactas” (in Oviedo 142). In a later exchange, Pimentel continued: “¿Acepta o no el enfrentamiento directo, poesía con poesía? No en una apacible lectura de poemas, sino en un vehemente y definitivo estallido de poesía” (143). Cisneros accepted, and the event took place at the Instituto Nacional de Cultura (INC). Pimentel describes it as a “theatrical representation”, as an actual duel that ceased to be written poetry and became a radical, irreverent and contentious act:

Entonces decidí hacer una representación teatral. Hablé con mi amigo Alberto Colán, horazeriano, que vivía atrás del Poder Judicial, le hicimos un polo que decía “La CIA”. Y le pusimos encima un saco y le compré una pistola de fogueo. Le dije: cuando lea tal verso, te levantas, te sacas el abrigo y me matas, huevón, delante del público…En la oscuridad de la platea se podía adivinar la voz de varios sociólogos, antropólogos, poetas, Chabuca Granda, mil gentes. Yo estaba leyendo un largo poema que nunca he publicado y que tengo botado por ahí. De pronto se levanta Colán, se saca el abrigo y dispara, una, dos, tres veces. Nadie se lo esperaba, por supuesto. Yo me reventé un tomate que tenía en el bolsillo de la camisa y entre alaridos me dejé caer, arrastrándome por el suelo. Seguidamente, me levanté y acabé de leer el poema. Fue una aclamación total, absoluta…Al final me encontré con Chabuca Granda, quien me felicitó por mi performance… (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 108-9).

While the details are impossible to know, and Cisneros’s own version of the events differs, what matters here is the recourse to the duel, an anachronistic performative and theatrical practice, as a revolutionary poetic action. There are several implicits, many of them contradictory, to the

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48 Another horazeriano, Eloy Jáuregui, describes the events similarly: “Toño y Jorge leyeron cerca de una hora, sin mirarse una sola vez. Eran como boxeadores. Jorge tenía hasta un pata que le hacía masajes en la espalda de cuando en cuando. Al principio iba ganando Cisneros, pero Pimentel poco a poco le fue volteando el partido. Cuando estaba por finalizar la contienda con un triunfo por puntos de Pimentel, se levantó Alberto Colán, le disparó, y Pimentel ganó ahora sí por OK. Salió en hombros: Cisneros se retiró por la puerta falsa” (Poesía en rock 107). Here, the duel is likened to a boxing match, traditionally also a display of male strength.
notion of duel and its use in this context: the practice of the duel, since the sixteenth century, is essentially a ritualized confrontation over honor between two subjects of the same social class, namely the aristocracy. Only equals can fight in a duel, and only if an equal refuses the duel does it become a “social sentence of death” (Frevert 11). The duel is also extra-legal, and thus outside the state, because although this may sanction or forbid it, its legitimacy ultimately rests upon the social norms of the aristocratic class (LaVaque Manty 5). By challenging Cisneros to a duel Pimentel was thus appealing to an aristocratic Western tradition, transgressing his own social origin in the desborde popular by talking up to Cisneros as his – social and poetic – equal. If, following Ute Frevert, by dueling ordinary subjects in the nineteenth century challenged traditional and state-granted notions of citizenship, Pimentel likewise used this practice to affirm another model of belonging, based on personal honor, irreverence and revolution. Of course, there seem to be natural contradictions to this use of the duel, since it apparently validates an elitist, individualist practice in a context of supposed popular and collective revolutionary attitude. Pimentel’s self-aggrandizing call on this practice may appear as a way to take distance from the lower classes, as the duel holds little connection to the notion of work or the general public (Frevert 140). Furthermore, the ritualistic nature of the duel seems antithetical to the idea of cultural guerrilla warfare, unpredictable and surreptitious as it needs to be.

And yet, we could also read this as creative appropriation, a way of ridiculing a member of Lima’s poetic elite through the exhibitionism and irreverent theatricality of an outdated practice. To perform a poetic action in this ritualized, formal and spectacular practice reconfigures the relationship between the traditional institution of poetry and the desborde popular, as it imagines that a young, poor and barely educated subject can set the stage for a confrontation of literary abilities. More importantly, and as I will show in the next section, it previews the way in which
poetic action, for Hora Zero, became an embodied and performative practice as much as textual. Aiming for an “explosion” of poetry, the duel sought to create a loud and ephemeral event in an institutional venue such as the INC. In this way, Hora Zero conceived poetic work as spectacular, destabilizing the solemnity of the literary establishment and its traditional debates through an anachronistic event that straddled elitism and populism, commitment and derision, and the legitimacy of poetic language and the role of the body.

Finally, the duel is significant because it is, above all, a demonstration of masculinity and a form of male sociability. Frevert calls dueling an “unmistakable totem of manliness”: In the late nineteenth century, “As long as men continued to fight duels, they remained true men who did their sex proud and demonstrated that, in the world that was conceived on the dualism of the sexes, they were on the right side, namely, the side embodying power and authority” (173-4). There is a great deal of macho bravado in Pimentel’s description of the duel: deadly wounds, endurance, and the admiration of a famous and successful female icon in Chabuca Granda. All this, naturally, in the context of revolution, with Pimentel representing the guerrilla fighter who is shot down by the CIA but ultimately ends up glorious in the struggle against the US and imperialism. Therefore, the duel emerges as yet another form of Hora Zero’s performance of virility, where the revolutionary work of the New Man defeats the hysteric and sterile poetry of the traditional literary institution. This is, once again, a spectacle of masculinity: Pimentel’s “alaridos” as he falls to the ground, only to stand back up and continue reciting, stand in contrast to the “gritos histéricos” of Cisneros and his peers.

iv. Orgies of work

In “Palabras urgentes”, Hora Zero characterized their poetic work through the notion of “orgies of work”, opposed to bourgeois, intellectual and sterile poetry:
Frente a esto nosotros proponemos una poesía viviente…No queremos que se pierda nada de lo vivo. Proponemos una poesía “fresca” que se enfrente con nosotros.

Y además para la labor poética proponemos orgías de trabajo. No se puede hacer poesía en este tiempo sin poseer una nueva responsabilidad frente a la creación, porque el estudio es inevitable, intenso y serio. Creemos también que el acto creador exige una inmolación de todos los días, porque definitivamente ha terminado la poesía como ocupación o jobi de días domingos y feriados, o el libro para completar el currículo. Definitivamente terminaron también los poetas místicos, bohemios, inocentones, engreídos, locos o cojudos.

A todos ellos les decimos que el poeta defeca y tiene que comer para vivir (1970a, 9).

“Orgies of work” is Hora Zero’s programmatical concept and methodology, and it continues to appear – though it is never elaborated on – in later manifestos. In “Destuir para construir”, the poets call to “PROMOVER la responsabilidad, el estudio, la investigación, LAS ORGIAS DE TRABAJO” (Ybarra and De los Dolores 27); in Materiales para una nueva época, the Pucallpa horazerianos propose the “Eliminación de cargos individuales burocráticos para dar paso a la labor colectiva, A LAS ORGIAS DE TRABAJO” (1970b, 11); and in the 1977 “Nuevas respuestas”, “la tesis de ‘Orgías de trabajo’” will be necessary to bring poetry to new terrains (7).

In a cultural sense, the orgy can be understood as a “collective act focusing on excess – be it of sex, of food or of language – and of confusion: mingling of bodies…” (Frappier-Mazur 1, italics in the original). Regarding its imaginary in literature and philosophy, the orgy has been presented as both symbolic of the decay of civilization and as a form of liberation from societal norms and values. Through distinct imaginaries, from the Roman to the tribal, the orgy is carnivalesque, and thus transgressive, and it allows for the expulsion of feelings and bottled-up
tensions (Frank 49). To conceive writing as an orgy also implies that poetry becomes a site of
pleasure in itself, no longer tied to a (re)productive function, but the act itself of the release of a
libidinal and creative force (we can think back on the image of “flujo vital”, cited above) – not end
result but revolutionary process. In the context of the sixties, furthermore, the most immediate
point of reference for Hora Zero might have been the general spirit of sexual liberation, and even
the Beats use of this notion to imagine an alternative form of community. After all, an orgy is
necessarily collective, and it entails the blurring of the lines of the individual subject as it comes
into contact with many others. The end of the individual might point to “the possibility for feelings
of intense communal belonging” (Frank 51). In Hora Zero’s use, “orgies of work” resembles other
contemporary artists’ solidarity with physical laborers: after all, they constantly see themselves as
allies of the proletariat struggle.

Regarding the trope of the orgy in its perhaps most well-known exponent, the Marquis de
Sade, Lucienne Frappier-Mazur describes it as an aristocratic practice held behind closed doors,
and where power relations are exacerbated – and through which social and moral norms are
distorted and violently transgressed (2-3). Like the duel, another aristocratic practice, here the
notion of the orgy is also transgressed, going from an elitist and private event to a popular and
revolutionary form of liberation. To call it an orgy of work means to conceive work as collective
and excessive, as well as physical and libidinal. Again, the use of the concept seems to point to the
end to alienation, to thinking work (and the work of poetry) as a lived and embodied experience.

It also points to the possibility of imagining an alternative community, one based on the meeting
of bodies that work on poetry, individuals whose full-time occupation (and not “la poesía como
ocupación o jobí de días domingo y feriados”) is poetic work. What is significant here is that, by
definition, the end goal of an orgy is not (re)production, but rather pleasure for its own sake. That
is, work here is not tied to the production of the text ("el libro para completar el currículo"), which can in turn be commodified (and become dead labor), but rather exists for itself. Beyond just a way to express commitment to the masses, orgies of work emerges as a novel concept that reframes work as a libidinal and pleasurable – and in this way, transgressive – activity and experience.

As with the concepts studied above, these orgies of work are ultimately also masculine, and form homosocial collectives and communities. This is not to say there were no women in Hora Zero: there were several female artists associated to the group, and more if we consider that the movement grew to include plastic and visual artists, as well as musicians. But male sociability and camaraderie were undeniably more entrenched in both the imaginary and actual practices of the group. For example, in “Julio Polar” Ramírez Ruiz writes the literary bildungsroman of a fellow horazeriano, and in turn Hora Zero’s: “[solo o con otros amigos/ fuman o conversamos o escucha o fumamos entre sus/ [libros que tanto aumentaron/ en tanto publicaba varios poemas en una revista peruana./ Y a mí me consta, yo lo sé” (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 281). In “Epístola a Juan Ojeda” Javier Dávila writes to another poet who spent time with him in Pucallpa: “Ahora andarás por Lima, Juan Ojeda, hermano/ camarada de América, yerba buena, aquí te espera/ todavía mi enorme Amazonía” (1970b, 14). And in “Razón de silencio”, Manuel Aguirre imagines a group of young men walking through different cities, violently taking possession of them by raping their authority figures, and then installing a new, quasi-anarchic regime of youth and love: “Cómo no recordar con júbilo la entrada triunfal/ en Tel Aviv cuando fornicamos a medio ejército israelí/ inundando las principales calles con nuestra/ juventud y exceso de amor y nuestro aniquilante/ desorden mental” (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 291). These three poems demonstrate the themes of literary sociability, solidarity, revolutionary commitment and youth counterculture, some of the same tropes that characterize their manifestos and other public
documents. By appealing to another male poet, or by portraying a sexually explicit display of male vigor, all these poems allude to, or aim to create, a homosocial poetic environment.

This was not merely discursive, however. In 1971, soon after Hora Zero was founded, many of the poets associated with the movement left their homes (and school) to go live together in a collective *horazeriano* home. The subject of the home for Hora Zero becomes significant in this context, because renting out a space together, which would serve as both base of operations as well as living quarters, once again stresses the link between work and life. The home became a place for meetings, recitals, and for welcoming poets from Hora Zero provincial affiliates who traveled to Lima, whether visiting or moving permanently. In this way, it was simultaneously a private and public space, a shared precarious space where (mostly) male poets lived and transited, and where a masculine sociability developed. Pimentel’s testimony on home living is extensive but worth considering at length:

Conseguimos la casa del jirón Huancavelica debido a que éramos tantos poetas en Hora Zero que no podíamos hacer reuniones en una casa familiar: no entrabamos todos en una sala. Un amigo nuestro, Tito Hurtado, periodista horazeriano que trabajaba en Expreso, solventó la mensualidad de la casa de Huancavelica, en un acto solidario y generoso. Era un espacio viejo, antiguo, en un segundo piso, inmenso, con un montón de cuartos. Y nos mudamos todos para allá. Ahí los que querían llevaban su cama, y los que no, dormían en sleepings. Implantamos una organización de rigidez militar. Acumulábamos provisiones en un almacén: comprábamos café, tallarines, latas de atún, todo lo que pudiera cocinarse

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49 In a condescending tone, Oviedo describes these living arrangements as representative of what he calls Hora Zero’s “culture of poverty: “He averiguado cómo viven o vivían: algunos se han establecido como clanes, donde todo es colectivo: el dinero que se consigue se usa para comprar víveres, útiles indispensables; se camina en el límite mismo de lo que la norma social considera legítimo; cuando no se puede se la viola, o se sobrevive a salto de mata en hoteluchos, pensiones pobres, departamentos prestados, casas donde sólo se va a dormir, etc.” (20).
rápidamente. Y también cigarros, ron, trago en general...También alojábamos a mucha gente que venía de provincias, o que estaba de tránsito para irse a Europa. José Diez, de Chiclayo, fue uno de ellos, y solo llevaba su pasta Kolynos, un cepillo de dientes y un jabón... Todos cocinábamos para todos, José Diez, Manuel Morales y yo íbamos al mercado, bien cerca de la casa. Y mientras Manuel Morales le hacía chistes a las vendedoras de pescado, mamita que bien estás, así, con lisura, y José Diez también le contaba chistes pícaros a las vendedoras, nos regalaban cabezas de tramboy, jurel más barato, con su yapa, en vez de darnos dos tomates nos daban ocho. Y se acostumbraron a nosotros. Nos venían venir y nos gritaban: ¡Ahí vienen los poetas! ¡Pendejos! ¡Oe, trabaja! (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 123-4).

The themes of solidarity, collectivity, masculinity and work are immediately apparent in these lines. The Huancavelica home emerges as a shared space, not so much a site of youth discontent and rebelliousness but a necessity of the poets’ creative work: they rent it out because they can no longer work (produce poetry) in their living rooms. Poetic work, then, dictates living conditions, and in turn creates practices of domesticity, such as going shopping for food and cooking as a group and for everyone. In their shared home, Hora Zero becomes a kind of extended family that receives members and integrates them into their form of living. Yet there is a degree of choice implicit in Pimentel’s lines: those who wanted to move in (by bringing their beds) could do so, and those who preferred a temporary arrangement (sleeping bags) were also welcomed. Finally, and as mentioned earlier, the house creates a space for masculine convivencia, and the fish vendors in the market nearby are represented as groupies or treated as sex objects. In Pimentel’s account, of course, this is not depicted as harassment: their abilities with language (dirty jokes, catcalls) grant the poets special treatment from these women. The very fact that Pimentel would
include the fish market scene in his testimony evidences his desire to “show off” his wooing skills, and his use of language as a way of getting what he wants. The reference to the “picardía” of the group further makes this clear.

One final characteristic of Hora Zero’s poetic work may be pointed out, especially as it reaffirms the notion of masculinity present in “orgies of work” I have been discussing. This has to do with the collective aspect of their production, and with the sense of independence and male-centrality present throughout their representations of themselves. In one testimony, Eloy Jáuregui points out that Hora Zero also involved the poets’ family members and friends: “ser horazeriano involucraba a nuestras esposas, padres y madres y hasta a nuestros hijos…La labor de nuestras hermanas. Cada vez que había un recital o cualquier marcha de protesta, ellas mismas elaboraban las banderolas y eran el soporte de infraestructura que necesitábamos” (Mora 2009, 464). In Chapter One, I discussed the role of Sybila Arredondo as Arguedas’s assistant in the production of *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*. As I discussed, the relationship between Arguedas and Arredondo, with the former as the intellectual and the latter as the secretary, reinforces a gendered distribution of labor. In Jáuregui’s comment we can observe a similar division, as the sisters are portrayed only as support (“soporte de infraestructura”) for the masculine, virile creators. Therefore, in Hora Zero we find ideas of collective work (family work and orgies of work) that simultaneously reaffirm traditional gender roles and exalt the creative power of a group of male writers.

III. Working for the Revolution

Throughout the 1970s, Hora Zero brought their performative poetic work to the streets. Open recitals in bars, parking lots, and the houses these poets shared became commonplace and continuous, and the poets often handed out pamphlets and manifestos to passersby on the streets.
of Lima. The recitals were announced with handmade posters, often cardboard painted over with colored markers (Mora 2009, 455). During these early years, the *horazerianos* grew in number and style, as plastic artists, filmmakers and musicians shuffled in and out of their gatherings and recitals. By 1973, however, internal differences fractured the Pimentel-Ramírez Ruiz partnership that had originally created Hora Zero, leading in turn to the disappearance of the movement for a few years. One of the tensions inherent to Hora Zero from the very beginning was whether to movement would follow a more cerebral, rigorous approach to literary creation, or a performative and spectacular kind of poetic activity. These represented the two possible lines of consolidation for the movement, as espoused by Ramírez Ruiz and Pimentel, respectively. Pimentel’s travel to Europe in the mid-seventies essentially placed the group under the leadership of Ramírez Ruiz, and for some years the group devoted itself to more formal and structural analysis and production. When Pimentel came back, in 1977, Hora Zero was relaunched with him at the helm, while Ramírez Ruiz mostly left. In this iteration, however, and given the political climate, the movement would undertake direct partisan activity. This new Hora Zero provides another arena through which to explore the relationship between art and politics, especially as poetry became a tool for political mobilization. In this section, I turn to the later Hora Zero, which lasted from 1977 to the early 1980s, and whose existence is directly tied to the rise of the Left and the end of the RGAF. Once again, I approach this from the theme of work: I contend that performative poetic work became the tool through which Hora Zero reconciled their artistic creation and their revolutionary

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50 We can highlight the film group “Liberación sin rodeos”, a collective that with limited resources was able to bring together whole neighborhoods to watch and comment films. Hora Zero poet Enrique Verástegui wrote the script for their film *Cimarrones*, which was screened in the collective’s house in Santa Beatriz, Lima (*Poesía en rock* 150). As Jáuregui comments, “Los jóvenes cineastas habían involucrado a todo el vecindario en el hecho de hacer cine y no había tarde en que la exhibición de películas de toda calaña convirtiese aquella casa en una suerte de cine de barrio” (Mora 464). The group was led by Carlos Ferrand, Raúl Gallegos, Pedro Neyra, Marcela Robles, Nene Herrera, Francis Lay y Margarita Benavides. I go into more detail about this collective in the following chapter.
activity. Still relying on scandal and insult, this Hora Zero also employed theatricality and exhibitionism to seek a creative and productive form of political action.

Often disregarded in studies about Hora Zero is their actual involvement in the revolutionary politics of the seventies. Yet the horazarianos were active participants in the RGAF during the Velasco years, raucous opponents of Francisco Morales Bermúdez during the Second Phase of the military regime, and an important part of the rise of the Left towards the end of the decade. Although in their manifestos and pronouncements the horazarianos came out as hardliners and rigorous Marxists, in truth most of them had little to no academic or ideological training; their stance, though militant and solidary, was in great measure part of their defiant attitude and spirit of dissent: politics was always subordinated to poetic creation and action. In fact, Hora Zero was considered less politically inclined than contemporaneous groups, such as Estación Reunida, many of whose members were active militants in organizations like the ELN. Tulio Mora even suggests that their poetry magazine was the cultural façade of the ELN (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen46). The members of Hora Zero, on the other hand, never trained or joined guerrilla drills. As Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen argue, although all the horazarianos were committed to the socialist revolution, most of them “sabían poco o nada del asunto y no demostraron ningún interés en volverse verdaderos teóricos marxistas” (36). This allowed the movement to remain malleable to the political situation of the country; without one singular, orthodox ideological stance, Hora Zero did not find itself caught in the rigid division between artistic and military commitment.

This is why, unlike the more radical members of the Narración group, the horazarianos participated in the cultural and social programs of the RGAF. This was also a site of contention between the poets: while some argued that, in order to be counter-cultural, they had to reject all forms of institutionalism, including the state, for others the state and its platforms could be used
in order to expand the movement (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 122). In fact, Hora Zero became attracted to Velasco and his attempt at a revolution, as many other intellectuals of the time (and as discussed in the Introduction). Jáuregui writes that “No he conocido a ningún presidente al que la gente haya querido tanto. Todos los intelectuales empezaron a trabajar para Velasco, más o menos a partir de la Declaración de los 100, donde gente como Blanca Varela o [Mario] Vargas Llosa se adherían al proyecto Reformista de la Revolución Peruana” (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 128). Therefore, while Pimentel had once written, “Los CHES somos esa juventud marginada por todo régimen transformador y superficial”, referring directly to the RGAF, he soon took up a position within the government. Many other poets, including Ramírez Ruiz and Enrique Verástegui also worked in the RGAF’s newspapers and cultural publications, working as journalists or editors. Others, like Manuel Morales and Tulio Mora worked for SINAMOS, the state body charged with promoting citizen organization. In 1974, as part of a research team for the state-sponsored magazine Participación, Mora traveled to Iquitos and Pucallpa, in the Amazonian region, to collect testimonial and photographic material for a special number of the publication focusing on indigenous rights.

This collaboration, however, was not something they were willing to freely admit during the seventies. Rather, in the 1977 “Nuevas respuestas” they claim that this work was ultimately born out of necessity: “En esta coyuntura, los miembros de HZ, individual y no como Movimiento, trabajaron en diferentes instituciones que se crearon a propósito de ciertas reformas. Esta intervención no tuvo carácter incondicional, porque todos trabajaron como simples

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51 This document, signed in 1970, reads: “La salud de la patria y la defensa de su soberanía, amenazados por la conjura de la oligarquía nacional y el imperialismo, exigen de los escritores, artistas, intelectuales y periodistas una declaración tajante de apoyo combatiente para quienes enrumban al país por nuevas sendas” (in Cabel 287-8). See note 4 in the Introduction for more detail.

52 This investigation took place in the context of the 1974 Ley de Comunidades Nativas y de promoción agropecuaria de las regiones de la Selva y Ceja de Selva. This Velasco mandate recognized Amazonian indigenous communities as citizens of Peru and granted them land. See Mora’s “Amazonia entrevistada”, in Participación 5, 1974: 62-77.
trabajadores...como un obrero que trabaja en una fábrica que no es suya” (2, underline in the original). The poets excuse themselves by claiming that this work had not been carried out as members of Hora Zero, but as individuals who needed to work to make a living. That is, they seem to argue that Hora Zero, and thus poetry, did not collaborate with the state. In fact, and going back to a point made earlier, that they were never blue-collar workers, here they compare themselves to the factory worker who works in, but does not own, the company. In any case, the involvement of Hora Zero in the RGAF’s First Phase demonstrates how the relationship between some of these artists and the state had become symbiotic: the state needed these organic intellectuals in order to reach the masses of the desborde popular through their program of popular participation; the horazerianos, meanwhile, used the state as a platform from which to reach a greater public, as well as a form of earning a living.

The late seventies, the more repressive Second Phase of the RGAF, and the rise of the Left brought a new form of political organization for the poetic movement. About the Morales Bermúdez regime, they write in “Nuevas respuestas”: “HZ considera así mismo que el actual gobierno dictatorial de Morales Bermúdez surge como una tendencia aún más antinacional, antisocialista y, por consiguiente, más servil al imperialismo yanqui” (3). This leads the horazerianos to actually be employed by the emerging left-wing political parties, especially those vying for seats in the recently announced Constituent Assembly (elections for which were held in 1978. This was also a result of the poets being let go from their positions at SINAMOS and other state organizations, which perhaps implies that they were seen as too radical or problematic to be a part of a more conservative administration. Losing their means of income made Hora Zero’s 1977 iteration a far more political and radical organization, when the Left actively hired their poetic abilities. The most important political association here was the Frente Obrero, Campesino,
Estudiantil y Popular (FOCEP), led by Genaro Ledesma and Manuel Scorza, and which sought to bring together the increasingly radicalized masses of students and laid off workers, all affected by the austerity measures set by the military regime. As Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen explain, “Hora Zero no solo apoyó resueltamente en recitales de campaña al FOCEP e invocó a votar por su lista en documentos donde se presentaba como Hora Zero-FOCEP, sino que en sus manifiestos tomó como propios los posteriores logros del Frente” (152-3). Hora Zero became a more openly political association, as its members composed and gave out poetic manifestos that also called to protests and supported the general strikes that paralyzed the country in 1977 and 1978. As laid-off workers themselves, the poets not only sympathized, but formed part of the masses the FOCEP sought to represent and mobilize.

But even here, Hora Zero’s employment was not entirely dogmatic. Poetry became a way to attract the masses to vote for these left-wing organizations: some of Hora Zero’s largest recitals came through their work for the FOCEP and other political groups. Jáuregui remembers how they become akin to rock stars, where they worked as “opening acts” to the political demonstrations, and poetry became a populous act meant to bring the masses together: “Allá, en una de las barriadas de Villa María del Triunfo el estrado estaba tatuado de banderolas y rústicos afiches chillones como para una fiesta chicha: ‘El pueblo unido jamás será vencido’. ‘Izquierda Unida. Hasta la muerte’. ‘Abajo la dictadura. Gobierno Popular’. Las marchas y cánticos se alzaban hasta los cerros desde enormes cajas de parlantes” (Mora 467).

In another testimony, he describes their function at a large political rally:

Íbamos como teloneros de los candidatos que iban a discurrserar, y como para calentar el ambiente cada uno recitaba el poema más inflamado que tenía, y ahí el que más gritaba, el que más mandaba a la mierda al gobierno militar, ese era el que tenía más pegada. Jorge
[Pimentel] se reveló en esas artes como un campeón. Era un conchesumadre, hacía juegos de palabras y la gente paraba la oreja…Luego entraban los zampoñeros, y al final daban sus discursos los políticos y se armaba la cojudez, la efervescencia y las proclamas. Nos fue tan bien con nuestra experiencia con el FOCEP que otros partidos y alianzas de izquierdas comenzaron a invitarnos a telonear sus mitines… (166-7, my emphasis).

We can read Jáuregui’s description of Pimentel in many of the same terms I described in the previous section, and which make Hora Zero’s poetic action performative and scandalous. Their actions were parrhesic, as they insulted the military regime directly (“mandaba a la mierda”), and generated affect among the crowds (“se armaba la cojudez, la efervescencia y las proclamas”). Here, political militancy and poetic work come together, becoming massive gatherings where literature and politics leave the gallery, the townhall or the party office, and become spectacular acts that serve as demonstration of resistance against an autocratic state. Ultimately, they become swords for hire,

Throughout the seventies, therefore, Hora Zero’s understanding of poetic work underwent transformations, though maintaining its reliance on performance and coarse language as a way of generating affect. In the manifestos from the early seventies, work was seen as an inherent condition of life, and the production of poetry became akin to any other form of manual labor. The concept of orgies of work meant, for these poets, to live out poetic creation, to generate collective – and male-centered – experiences to truly achieve revolutionary creations. Yet they also needed actual employments, and in many cases they had the skills required for state and bureaucratic jobs. With the RGAF’s Second Phase, as they were fired from their positions in newspapers or institutions, the horazerianos were often hired as performers, opening acts to Left-wing political
parties. In this way, their participation within the revolutionary politics of the seventies, both state and left-wing, was not only in discourse but also in practice.

IV. Conclusion

Hora Zero and the Left became so intertwined that the demise of the latter in the early to mid-1980s also marked the definitive end of the poetic movement. By then, many of their members had left to focus on their own individual artistic work, or become associated to other groups or projects. Despite the victories of the FOCEP in elections for the assembly, the fracturing of the coalition (because of internal differences and the death of Scorza in 1983) and the emergence of more pressing national problems (namely Shining Path) all led to the splintering of Hora Zero. Or, as Jáuregui describes it, “Luego nos apitucamos, ya pasada la euforia electoral. El recital que dimos en el Wifala, por ejemplo, fue mucho menos popular y multitudinario que lo que habíamos hecho antes: asistió un centenar de personas, se cobró entrada y encima tenías que llevar tu trago. Así no vale” (Torres Rotondo and Yrigoyen 168). “Apitucarse” (to become bourgeois) points to how Hora Zero (and perhaps this is the case with avant-gardes in general) was reinserted into official culture, as the poets grew older, looked for more stable jobs, and as the notion of revolution began to take on different connotations. In any case, the spirit of the movement lived on through many of the connections they had made, both with the younger generation of poets and with other similar associations in other countries, in Latin America and Europe. The more famous link is perhaps

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53 This is the case with the poets of the so-called 80s generation, which included groups such as Kloaka and La Sagrada Familia, and poets like Roger Santiváñez, Mariela Dreyfus and Dalmacia Ruiz Rosas, who got their start with Hora Zero and also became known for their poetic performances and decadent artistic lifestyles. In 1978, Enrique Verástegui, Carmen Ollé and other poets affiliated to Hora Zero launched Hora Zero International in Paris, along with other poets from Latin America, Europe and Africa. Their 1978 manifesto, “Mensaje desde allá”, re-affirms their revolutionary commitment and solidarity with the working class and the socialist struggle, as well as with anti-colonial movements. Poetry as life continues to be a marked theme, and the poetic language of the document resonates with references to the body and, once again, to work. They write: “El poeta es un <<horrible trabajador>>. Trabaja en una lluvia de lágrimas, de sangre, de humillación, de golpes” (Mora 569). The manifesto ends with a demonstration of solidarity to Chile with the slogan “VENCEREMOS”.

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with Roberto Bolaño’s infrarrealist movement in Mexico City, as the Chilean author both drew inspiration from Hora Zero and poked fun at many of the horazerianos in his 1998 novel Los detectives salvajes\(^5^4\).

Mora concludes that Hora Zero marks the realization of José Carlos Mariátegui’s search for an authentic – and revolutionary – national literature. Given the diversity of the poets and their voices, “el vaticinio de Mariátegui…se cumplió con HZ porque este movimiento expresa poéticamente el largo proceso de democratización social, cultural, étnica…que a estas alturas ya muestra signos de una concreción irreversible” (51). We could agree with Mora that no other poetic movement before – or since – Hora Zero circulated so widely throughout the country, and brought visibilization to areas so far removed from the lettered city. But what is significant in Mora’s assessment is the genealogy he traces between Mariátegui and Hora Zero. As Jorge Coronado (2009) has argued, however, Mariátegui’s Amauta was caught between the problem of theory and praxis, since it failed to reach the masses as he had intended. In fact, Mariátegui’s project was ultimately bound to the stronghold of the letter – and only by mostly abandoning his literary modernity in favor of direct political action and indoctrination was he briefly able to reach workers and peasants. Hora Zero, however, transited between aesthetics and politics in a whole different manner. That is, because despite their hardline political stance as Marxists-Leninists committed to class struggle and the revolution of the proletariat, their poetic work was, above all, scandalous, theatrical and exhibitionist. Following in the discourse of the sixties and seventies neo avant-gardes, favoring a direct and defamatory parrhesic language, and quite literally out-performing the

\(^5^4\) Bolaño’s critical and commercial success certainly points to a renewed interest in Hora Zero. In fact, Mora’s Los broches mayores del sonido treats the infrarrealist as a continuation of Hora Zero, including their manifestos, poetry, and photographs of their members as part of the anthology. Los broches, therefore, can be read as an attempt to both assert the Latin American reach of Hora Zero, and to imagine a genealogy where Hora Zero’s poetic attitude and innovation leads directly to an author with a well-established position in the world republic of letters. Likewise, his anthology Hora Zero/Infrarrealismo: La última vanguardia (2016) treats both movements as part of the same literary current based on “la sintaxis callejera” (11).
literary establishment, Hora Zero reconfigured the notion of what constituted as poetic work. No longer an occasional activity, a reflection of the market, or an academic profession, for Hora Zero poetry became directly associated with the body and the voice, with forms of attacking and asserting a position through practices meant to generate affective responses from its audience. In this sense, with its parrhesic language and its exhibitionism, Hora Zero is actually rather distinct from any of Mariátegui’s models for aesthetic or political revolution, never far removed from the letter as a pedagogic and proselytizing weapon.

Finally, we may call attention to the idea of Hora Zero as the democratization of Peruvian letters. First, because even if the movement did grant more visibility to young, poor urban and rural artists, these were mostly men, who fomented – and celebrated – male sociability and excessive displays of virility. As I argued in the second section, all the ways in which Hora Zero asserted their presence vis-à-vis the literary establishment reaffirmed their masculinity, whether by relying on a male-centered practice such as the duel of honor, or comparing their guerrilla fighter dexterity against the hysteria of bourgeois poets. Moreover, even a cursory glance through the early manifestos from the seventies confirms that they never once refer to a female author, in either positive or negative terms. Like war, a masculine matter, poetry is a duel between men. Second, and as I pointed out at different points throughout the chapter, they were not blue-collar workers, but instead depended greatly on their abilities with language and print culture for employment. While they expressed solidarity with the proletariat, and certainly had emerged from the desborde popular, theirs was still a contest within, and for, the lettered city. This does not rest value to their voices, nor does it minimize the ways in which they challenged and transformed Peru’s literary establishment. Rather, it points to the fact that the desborde popular was not homogeneous, not democratic, and certainly not above machismo and class divisions.
By analyzing the notions of work inherent to Hora Zero’s production we can examine how an artistic movement that originated in, and paralleled the growth of the *desborde popular* throughout Peru sought to both reach the masses and simultaneously set itself apart from it. Hora Zero did not do away with the power of the letter, nor did it renounce literature as a weapon in revolutionary struggle. However, it did destabilize what the letter could do once it became an embodied, noisy, and performative experience. By *working* on poetry, Hora Zero sought to reconcile life and art, and managed to both demonstrate its commitment and scandalize, to both create collective experiences and be exclusionary. Poetic work, in this way, becomes an affective and shared experienced – even if such experience does not undo all hierarchy or invite everyone to partake in.
Chapter 4

The worker onscreen: Nora de Izcue and Saturnino Huillca’s *Runan Caycu*

In a June 1975 issue of the left-wing weekly *Marka*, Hora Zero poet and cultural editor José Rosas Ribeyro published an interview with the newly formed Cinematógrafo film collective. In the interview, “Solo una revolución garantiza un cine revolucionario”, the young critics argue that cinema must fulfill an ideological and political role in the creation of a revolutionary society, raising awareness of the plight of workers across the Third World. Unable to produce actual films because of financial constraints for equipment and personnel, the Cinematógrafo collective engaged in theoretical discussions through their eponymous publication, and through their dialogue with newly formed film workers’ unions. In 1974, these unions had organized as avenues for filmmakers, producers, camera personnel, and distribution and exhibition agents to defend and promote their interests. In particular, they took aim at Law Decree 19327, a government regulation meant to sponsor a national cinema – but which, ultimately, had become a restricting machine for many film workers. Accusing the military regime’s attempt as reactionary, Cinematógrafo argued for a takeover of the film industry by the cultural workers, as to provide more freedom to creators and more adequate, revolutionary content to the films. As part of their syndical work, the members of Cinematógrafo carried strikes, published editorials, and projected political films and held discussions in *barriadas* and poor neighborhoods. Throughout the mid-seventies, Cinematógrafo and the film workers’ unions led important debates about the need and value of committed filmmaking, as well as the relationship between state cultural policy and the work of autonomous organizations55.

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55 *Marka* 5, June 1975, 30-2; “Interview with Pancho Adrianzén: Radical Film in Peru today”
Within this atmosphere, Peruvian filmmaking became both a way for committed artists to approach the *desborde popular* and a tool of the state to generate consensus around its revolutionary brand. Although the Peruvian indigenous populations had been represented in film before, this was the first time they were conceived as political subjects who demanded their own rights through cinema. In this chapter, I explore the collaborative relation between Lima filmmaker Nora de Izcue and Quechua-speaking peasant and union leader Saturnino Huillca, who would go on to become an Andean movie star by portraying himself in a number of documentaries and feature films. While certain interpretations see him solely as an indigenous political leader and others as a sort of Andean millenarian figure, in my reading Huillca represents the promising and difficult relationship between manual and artistic worker. Therefore, if the committed film critics of Cinematógrafo and the film unions were trying to bring a political conscience to the working masses, Huillca, an illiterate peasant turned actor, demonstrates how they could become the protagonists of their own stories – although necessarily mediated by the filmmakers and by the state. I argue, first, that by becoming an actor Huillca goes from being a manual laborer who works in the fields to a film worker whose main tools become his skills as an orator and his own face. Second, that, through Izcue’s film montage, Huillca’s face emerges as a counter-image to the face-logo of the military state: the stylized portrait of 18\(^{\text{th}}\)-century insurrectionist Tupac Amaru, which the RGAF used as its official signature. Both celebrated and censored by the RGAF and considered a symbol of peasant liberation by the radical left, Huillca’s trajectory as manual and film worker shows, ultimately, the possibilities as well as the limitations of the networks of solidarity between committed artists and the working masses of the *desborde popular*.

Although Huillca starred in four different films throughout the seventies, all of which will be mentioned below, in this chapter I focus mostly on the experience of Izcue’s 1973 documentary
Runan Caycu (“I am a man”), where Huillca tells the story of his life struggle. Runan Caycu, being the first Peruvian documentary entirely narrated by and starring an indigenous subject, achieved what many committed filmmakers had been aiming for: to incorporate the working rural masses as active participants in their cultural processes. In fact, by eliminating all commentary, Runan Caycu went beyond what much contemporary Latin American direct and militant cinema was doing. I divide this chapter into two sections. In order to understand the context of production (and the significance) of Runan Caycu, in the first part I examine how the RGAF’s film laws both promoted and impeded the development of a Peruvian national cinema, which lead film workers to organize in unions, as briefly shown above. In this context, I also focus on how workers became subjects of Third Cinema and New Latin American Cinema, and the repercussions this had on Peruvian cinematography. This first section, therefore, considers cinematic work as an arena where film workers sought to approach the work of the desborde popular. In the second section, I first analyze Huillca’s testimony Huillca: habla un campesino peruano, to examine the representation of the peasant leader as a worker of the land, alienated from the fruits of his labor. Then, I turn to Runan Caycu to explore Huillca’s work as a film actor. In this latter section, and drawing on the concept of “faciality” developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, among other contemporary theorists, I contend that Huillca’s new tool of work, his own face, becomes both his gateway to stardom as well as a site of dissent for the military government’s top-down revolutionary program.

In the conclusion, I briefly consider the outcome of some of the other film projects carried out with the Peruvian peasant communities in the seventies. In particular, I examine how money became a controversial and frustrating issue for artists and workers alike involved in the production of these films.
I. **A revolution in Peruvian cinema**

i. **Film workers versus the state**

In 1971, Velasco was approached by film director Armando Robles Godoy and the Sociedad de Cinematografía Peruana, then under his leadership, about the need to procure state assistance for the development of a severely limited national film industry\(^{56}\). Velasco admitted he knew next to nothing about cinema, but, as part of his larger nationalist cultural agenda, agreed with and allowed Robles Godoy to assist in the development of legislation that could foment film production and distribution. The result was the 1972 Law Decree 19327, which established that, in order to receive state funds, a film production had to be filmed almost in its entirety in Peruvian territory, in Spanish, Quechua, Aymara or another indigenous language, be based on a screenplay by a Peruvian author or scriptwriter, and be directed by a Peruvian national. The law also impacted the exhibition and distribution sector, as it established that a nationally financed and produced short must precede all foreign feature films shown in theaters. In order to foment this development, short films were to be exonerated from 25% of all taxes and charges, and, by law, all 300 movie theaters across the country had to show these 20-minute-or-less productions. This led to a dramatic increase in the production of shorts, as filmmakers could create and experiment with a lesser monetary risked attached (Middents 29-31; Bedoya 187-9). As part of Decree 19327, a new organism, the Commission for the Promotion of Cinema (COPROCI) was established within the Department of Communication to oversee and vet all films being produced, in order to determine their adherence to these regulations.

\(^{56}\) As an example, in June 1972, before Law Decree 19327 starting showing results, out of the 57 films shown across the country, 23 were produced in the United States and none came from Peru. See Neira, “El poder de informar”, *Participación* 2, February 1973, pp. 57.
The promise of the new film legislation soon revealed its shortcomings and contradictions. On the one hand, though the production of shorts surged, these were often of poor quality and more geared towards making money than providing actual, meaningful content. This resulted in the creation of a small industry of shorts that neither pushed national cinema forward nor presented any innovative form or content (Middents 31; Izcue 1976). On the other, the COPROCI quickly turned into a repressive machine that censored any films that presented any political or ideological commentary that went beyond the state’s own interpretation of revolution. This was the case, for example, with two early documentaries by filmmaker Federico García Hurtado that criticized the role of the military in the peasant confrontations during the agrarian reform, as well as with Izcue’s Runan Caycu, which I will discuss further below (Mayer 101-2). In a 1983 interview, Cinematógrafo film critic Francisco Adrianzén denounced the law and the state’s handling of the national film industry, arguing that it was “the government’s game to demobilize film people, stifle their politicization, and stop them from even beginning to make films with progressive content. Films are now technically very professional, yet they have no analysis of reality, representation or contradictions” (Alexander 27-30, my emphasis).

Adrianzén’s comment on the professionalization of film at a technical level points to the widespread concern of film workers during the seventies: Peruvian film was becoming an industry neither national-popular nor revolutionary but merely a bad attempt at imitating Hollywood. Or worse, because it served as a mechanism of propaganda for a state that commanded a monopoly over the definition of revolution. As film historian Ricardo Bedoya argues, the RGAF saw film production as a source of income that employed a broad workforce and thus represented a growing state-developed and regulated industry whose economic success mirrored that of the military’s revolution (201). However, the growth of the industry did not entail better working conditions for
most film workers. According to Izcue, these film workers (whom she classifies in four categories: those employed by large private companies, small collectives and the state, plus temporary laborers) all suffered, to varying degrees, from low wages, no benefits, discrimination, and lacked job stability, and the new film law did nothing to amend these. Almost immediately after Decree 19327 was passed, therefore, film workers began to unionize to demand freedom of expression, the actual nationalization (as opposed to statization) of film, their inclusion in future film-related legislation, representation and participation within the media, and a complete autonomy in the production and exhibition of their material. In July 1974, the Sindicato de Trabajadores en la Industria Cinematográfica (SITEIC), which brought together filmmakers, camera and sound personnel, scriptwriters, lighting and lab technicians, and others, first convened to draft their demands. Soon after, the Federación de Trabajadores Cinematográficos del Perú (FETCINE), which grouped distribution workers, the Asociación de Trabajadores de la Cultura Cinematográfica (ATCC) for film critics and professors, and the Sindicato de Actores del Perú (SAP) joined the SITEIC to form the coalition Frente de Defensa de la Cinematografía Nacional (Izcue 1976). These unions and coalitions quickly became very vocal and active in the public sphere. Calling Decree 19327 the “Robles Law”, Fernando Espinoza, secretary-general of the SITEIC, decried the state regulation because it supported the needs of reactionary filmmakers such as Robles Godoy and served as a tool of state propaganda, instead of the film workers looking to create actual revolutionary productions57. Within the year of their founding, these unions had organized rallies and strikes that brought together the different sectors of the film industry (filmmakers, critics, actors and technicians) in their protest against the state.

57 Marka 3, “Tres posiciones”, 32. Although Robles Godoy was criticized for his role in the creation of Law Decree 19327, he was also victim of state censorship. His film Expropiación (1977) was also prohibited by the military state because it contained scenes of conflicts between peasants and the army (Bedoya 200).
ii. **Representing workers through film**

At the same time, there was the issue of the content of the films being produced. The members of Cinematógrafo criticized the COPROCI for bullying and censoring actual political filmmaking and for promoting “un cine anodino, patrioterò, que encubre las contradicciones reales que se dan en la sociedad”, and which served solely to create income\(^{58}\). What these critics and the film workers were demanding, against the bureaucratization and commercialization of the film industry, was the possibility to produce and distribute cinema that took a stance against imperialism by reflecting the actual problems that affected rural and urban communities throughout the country. By the early seventies in Peru, there was relatively little film production that depicted the revolutionary struggle of peasants and working masses or, more specifically, the experience of the *desborde popular*. In particular, there had been little representation of the indigenous subject, as the Peruvian cinematic industry, even in its Golden Age with Amauta Films in the thirties, had focused almost entirely on middle-class urban life. Not until the fifties did the Andes become film scenarios, and even then the documentaries and shorts produced approached the region through bucolic, ethnological interpretations. The Cusco School of the fifties, led by filmmakers like Manuel Chambi, had focused mostly on folkloric traditions such as religious festivals and dances, favoring a purely lyrical approach over any kind of political denunciation or criticism of indigenous oppression (Bedoya 146-7). Similarly, the Cusco group’s feature films of the sixties, even those filmed in Quechua and with peasant masses as part of the cast, such as Luis Figueroa’s *Kukulí* (1960) and Eulogio Nishiyama and César Villanueva’s *Jarawi* (1966), were

\(^{58}\) Marka 5, “Solo una revolución garantiza un cine revolucionario”, 31. The group denounces that, through Decree 19327, an investment of 400 soles for a short could generate a return of 1.5 million, further proving that the industry had become a means to produce revenue.
idealized and overly sentimentalized interpretations of Andean myths. In other words, these documentaries and films followed in the vein of traditional indigenismo, where indigenous subjects were either objects of ethnological study or, conversely, remnants of an ancestral culture still governed by myths and an alternative cosmology, instead of political subjects.

For the committed film workers, little of this dealt with the important socioeconomic changes that had been taking place in Peru since the mid-fifties, especially considering the emergence of the desborde popular. Instead, they were looking to the ideals and innovations of New Latin American Cinema emerging since the mid-fifties and throughout the sixties and seventies. Rather than a singular or unified movement, a New Latin American Cinema meant the possibility of creating an anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist and revolutionary experience of film production, exhibition and socialization that would help bring about the liberation of the region (Chanan 2014, 16). Central to the idea and practice of New Latin American Cinema was the notion of Third Cinema, put forward by the Argentine Cine Liberación group in 1969. In their manifesto “Towards a Third Cinema” Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino called for the creation of a Third Cinema, opposed to First (industrial and commercial) and Second (auteur, bourgeois) Cinema. A Third Cinema, later also conceptualized as a “militant cinema” or “guerrilla cinema”, was made possible by technical developments such as lightweight and handheld cameras that allowed filmmakers to take to the streets and come into direct contact with the masses (Chanan 1997, 14).

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59 Jarawi is based on Arguedas’s 1954 novel Diamantes y pedernales. Nishiyama and Villanueva paid Arguedas 20,000 soles for the rights to make a film following the plot of the novel, under the company Kero Films. Per the contract, Arguedas held the right to supervise production and scripts. The film, however, did not fulfill the novelist’s expectations (Pinilla 2007, 330-1).

60 The term Third Cinema also referred, less directly, to the specific geopolitical configuration known as the Third World. In 1955, at Bandung, Indonesia, delegates from Asian and African republics came together to form a coalition of non-aligned countries in the Cold War, in opposition to the First (the United States and Western Europe) and Second (the Soviet Union) Worlds. While no Latin American nation was present at Bandung, the spirit of Third World solidarity later coalesced as the Tricontinental alliance, established in Havana in 1966. Regarding the notion of “guerrilla filmmaking” or “guerrilla cinema”, we may think back to Hora Zero’s Jorge Pimentel, who also conceptualized his poetic activity as “guerrilla warfare” and which likewise meant “prowling” through the streets,
Through these innovations this committed model of filmmaking meant “on the one hand, the necessary involvement and integration of the cinema group with specific political organizations; on the other, the instrumentalization of film in the process of liberation” (Mestman 2011, 29).

In particular, these Latin American committed filmmakers in the sixties and seventies were concerned with the representation of workers and of work as a political experience, as recent articles by Mariano Mestman and Julio Ramos have pointed out. This meant, argues Mestman, getting closer to “working class subjects and settings” and incorporating their marginalized voices into their productions (2013, 307). In Argentina, for example, this was the case with Solanas and Getino’s *La hora de los hornos* (1968), which denounces the colonial legacy of Latin America and calls for revolution. Divided into three parts and running over four hours, the political documentary presents the testimony of workers and scenes of strikes and the occupation of factories. Likewise, Gerardo Vallejo’s *El camino hacia la muerte del viejo Reales* (1971) depicts a family of sugar planters in Tucumán and the daily exploitation that leads them to political militancy (Mestman 2013, 310-2). In the same vein, we may consider the work of Cuban filmmaker Nicolás Guillén Landrián, whose *Taller de línea y 18* (1971) examines the experiences of a group of workers in a bus factory, who both produce the machines and organize syndical meetings (Fornet 132). Two other Cuban films, such as Sara Gómez’s *Sobre horas extras y trabajo voluntario* (1973) and Octavio Cortázar’s *Acerca de un personaje que unos llaman Lázaro y otros Babalú Ayé* (1968), examine how the state disposes workers’ bodies and time to make them productive subjects for the revolution (Ramos 147). Colombian filmmaker Marta Rodríguez’s *Los chircales* (1971) follows a family of poor brick makers for five years, documenting both the degrading living conditions as well as brief moments of leisure and rest (Bedoya Ortiz 206). And in the Andean

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leaving the poet’s room behind. In the case of guerrilla cinema, we may think of this same process as leaving the film studio behind.
region, perhaps the most well-known filmmaker who represented peasant work was the Bolivian Jorge Sanjinés, whose revolutionary cinema brought him also into direct contact with the peasant masses. Relying on amateur actors, having workers play themselves, and shooting scenes only once to underscore the unprofessional, spontaneous nature of his films, Sanjinés sought to have the masses be the protagonists of their own history. *El coraje del pueblo* (1971), for example, relies on first-hand testimonies to reconstruct the massacre of rioting miners in Potosí, and was filmed with indigenous, amateur actors (Sanjinés 67; Vilanova 2013, 96). In all these films, workers emerge as political subjects and active participants of the revolution against (or within) the state.

It was precisely the subject of work as political, militant experience that was absent from much contemporary Peruvian cinema and that committed filmmakers advocated. In *Kukulí*, for instance, peasant work is represented solely as celebration, a “feast of work” for drinking and dancing where the workers never speak. However, by the early seventies a number of new films turned workers into the protagonists of their own stories, relying on their testimonies. In 1974, *Kukulí* director Luis Figueroa filmed *El cargador*, a documentary about Gregorio Condori Mamani, a poor peasant from Cusco who worked carrying heavy loads on his back for wealthy patrons. The 8-minute short shows scenes of Condori struggling to pick up bed frames and large potato sacks and balance them on his back, meanwhile telling the dangers of the job and its high death rate. These scenes are complemented by brief moments of rest, when Condori stops to look at expensive shoes on a storefront, or sits on the ground to recover his strength. Dwarfed by the loads he carries, he walks entirely unnoticed by the bustling city around him, and only the eye of the camera (and through it, the eyes of the viewer) lingers on the man. The sole narrative voice in *El cargador* is
Condori’s, who tells his own story while a voiceover translates his words into Spanish. \(^{61}\) *Sin título*, an unfinished production by film collective “Liberación sin rodeos”, led by filmmaker Carlos Ferrand, also follows the life of an old cargador. In the margins of the film industry, since they were critical of the RGAF, Liberación sin rodeos produced a number of short documentary films that likewise show the living conditions of other sectors of Peruvian society (including poor working Andean children and Amazonian communities), taking direct aim at the military’s shortcomings (Sheen). Given the difficulties of distributing a film without state financing, however, most of the work of Liberación sin rodeos was seldom exhibited and barely known until recently. \(^{62}\)

The experiences of Figueroa and Liberación sin rodeos in Peru, as well as of the other filmmakers across Latin America, point to a growing need to use film as a weapon in revolutionary struggle, a tool of denunciation and a call to justice. They also reveal the intersection between the work of the filmmaker and the work of the *desborde popular*, as committed artists sought to employ the innovations of Third Cinema and New Latin American Cinema (including the use of lightweight cameras, the hiring of non-professionals, and the elimination of narrative commentary) to both represent marginalized populations and make them participants of the works being produced. Finally, they demonstrate how film workers had to negotiate with the state to obtain funding and visibilization; lack of official support likely meant that their films had little chance of distributed or produced in the first place. Film in the seventies Peru, in this way, emerged as a contentious cultural arena, where the RGAF sought to mobilize its own revolutionary discourse,

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\(^{61}\) Condori Mamani and Asunta Quispe Huamán, his wife, later published a testimony about their struggle. Recorded by anthropologists Ricardo Valderrama Fernández and Carmen Escalante Gutiérrez, *La autobiografía de Gregorio Condori Mamani* was published in 1977 in a bilingual Spanish-Quechua edition.

\(^{62}\) The collective’s last production, *Cimarrones* (mid-seventies) was a collaboration with Hora Zero poet Enrique Verástegui. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the *horazerianos* established close connections with Liberación sin rodeos, often attending the film showings they offered in the streets and poor neighborhoods. Only in August 2018 was the work of the collective recognized and the films shown as part of the 22 Festival de Film de Lima. [http://desistfilm.com/poesia-y-politica-carlos-ferrand-y-el-grupo-liberacion-sin-rodeos/](http://desistfilm.com/poesia-y-politica-carlos-ferrand-y-el-grupo-liberacion-sin-rodeos/)
where film workers vied for representation and autonomy, and where the desborde popular saw an opportunity to have its voice heard – and its image recorded. The case of Saturnino Huillca would demonstrate the difficult and often strained relationships between all these political and cultural actors.

II. Runan Caycu: the work of the peasant-actor

i. The testimony of an alienated worker

Manuel Scorza’s final chronicle, La tumba del relámpago (1979), ends with the defeat, in the mid-sixties, of Andean peasants and their allies in their attempt to take back the land that belonged to them and which the Peruvian government had granted to North American multinationals. Among those taken prisoner by the army is peasant leader Saturnino Huillca from Cusco, accused of conspiring with Moscow and Cuba to impose Marxist rule in Peru (265). Though only mentioned in passing, a secondary character in a text where Scorza himself is a protagonist, Saturnino Huillca became not only one of the most well-known and revered indigenous insurrectionists in Peru, but also went on to become a face of Andean liberation in the struggle against imperialism and coloniality. Through the early sixties, he traveled through the Andean region, organizing local assemblies and founding the Federación Departamental de Campesinos de Cusco to fight the forced labor and tax systems imposed by the gamonales, or landowners. And in the seventies, the poor and illiterate Huillca briefly became a “superstar” of the Andean public sphere, sharing his life story through a written testimonio (winner of the 1974 Casa de las Americas prize in the newly created category of testimony) and acting in four cinematic works, ranging from documentaries to feature films, including Sanjinès’s 1974 Jatun Auk’a. Huillca was also a fervent supporter of the RGAF, and firmly opposed those who saw it as a reactionary or bourgeois regime. As a result, the military state celebrated the figure of the peasant
leader, running interviews and images of Huillca in its official publications, often reiterating his backing of the regime. Therefore, he embodied the tensions between a reform-oriented, yet authoritarian regime, and the radical artists and activists that looked beyond the state. But more importantly, and given his celebrity status, possessing a stentorian voice and a supposed ancestral Andean knowledge, Huillca went from being a worker of the land to a worker of the media.

In 1963, during his campaign against the gamonales and the army and judicial system that protected them, Huillca met the young journalist and historian Hugo Neira, sent by the Lima newspaper Expreso to cover the peasant uprisings (Seguí 62-3). The life of Huillca enthralled Neira, who after the 1968 military coup went on to work for SINAMOS, the official organization in charge of organizing urban and rural working masses and promoting their participation within state-led social and economic programs. As Media Director for SINAMOS, Neira saw Huillca’s story as an example of, first, the strength and resilience of the indigenous people in their centuries-long struggle against colonial domination. Second, as a way of legitimizing the RGAF because through its land reforms it had ended the system of gamonalismo and gained the support of the peasant populations, Huillca included. After all, as president of the Cooperativa de Ninamarca and later as Secretary of Defense of the Confederación Departamental de Campesinos de Cusco, Huillca rallied in favor of the state, speaking to masses gathered in town squares or through the radio. In 1972, therefore, Neira brought Huillca to his SINAMOS office where, alongside filmmaker Nora de Izcue and translators Teófilo Cárdenas and Nicolás Sayru Tupac, he

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63 Huillca is certainly not the first indigenous subject to attain media celebrity. In the fifties, the Peruvian soprano Yma Sumac was enormously popular in the US and Europe as a representative of Andean cultural legacy, and starred in Jerry Hopper’s 1954 The Secret of the Incas. Often disregarded in Peru as a sellout, intellectuals such as Arguedas criticized her for being a product of the Hollywood culture industry. In Argentina, singer and writer Atahualpa Yupanqui starred in Román Viñoly Barreto’s Horizontes de piedra (1956), for which he also wrote the script, and Lucas Demare’s Zafra (1959), both of which form part of the indigenista tradition in film (Orquera 147). The difference between these and Huillca, of course, is that both Yma Sumac and Yupanqui already had established roles in the media as musicians before their foray into cinema.
interviewed and recorded the testimony of the old peasant leader. The manuscript would later serve Izcue as the primary source for her documentary film *Runan Caycu*.

In my reading, *Huillca: Habla un campesino peruano* is a testimony about the alienation caused by capitalism, where work drains the worker and thus separates him from that which he produces. In “Estranged labor”, Marx wrote:

For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own… The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the more the worker lacks objects. Whatever the product of his labor is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself. The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien” (29, italics in the original).

In this way, the land, once something sacred and bountiful for those who worked it, becomes a source of pain and death for Huillca, syphoning all his energy and vitality. Since birth, Huillca is forced to complete unpaid labor for the hacienda owners to whom he belongs, so much that already the first chapter “Infancia”, is less so about any kind of childhood and more about his becoming a worker. It begins: “Mi padre me dejó muy pequeño. Quedé al amparo de mi madre. Desde esa edad me desempeñaba trabajando en la hacienda. Trabajaba bien”; and a little later: “Poco a poco fui creciendo, entrando en uso de razón. Entonces me daban el trabajo de pastear” (13-4). Being
born and growing up are conceived directly in relation to work, as “becoming a thinking subject” is equated with getting the responsibility of being a shepherd in the hacienda. The land, and that which it produces, become entirely alien to him, as the work demands his vital resources but gives nothing in return.

This is, therefore, the account of a collective subject whose entire life, from birth, is determined by forced unpaid work, which demands he relinquish his time and body (his resources of labor) for the benefit of capitalist production. Time and the body are intricately linked in Huillca’s account, because the weeks and months spent on working the land of the hacienda owner (“trabajábamos semanas y semanas”) meant that the peasants could not work on the land they received as “compensation” for their labor – and thus faced starvation. Unable to produce their own food, they were often too weak to continue working, but were forced to do so: “Ahora estoy viendo todo esto con mucho resentimiento contra los hacendados. Porque ellos nos han hecho trabajar sin compasión. Porque ellos no consideraban si tenía fuerza. Si estaba alimentado o no. Lo importante para ellos era que yo trabajara aún en esa situación” (16). As Huillca travels through the land looking to unionize the workers, he finds starving peasants and their families, whose time and energy is consumed by feeding the hacendados: “El campesino pone todas sus fuerzas, realiza los trabajos y con este esfuerzo, con este sacrificio, el patrón vive gordo…En cambio la gente que para él trabaja, todos unos esqueletos flacos” (61-2). Or, conversely, by waiting for the justice system to take up their legal demands: “Los juicios se prolongaban años y años. Todo el tiempo los campesinos estaban desnudos, vendían sus ganaditos. El dinerito que conseguían trabajando era para sostener el juicio. El juicio jamás terminaba” (81). Squalid and naked, the bodies of the peasants are drained as their lifetimes are consumed by the capitalist system that maintains their oppression.
From working the land, Huillca turns to syndical work when he learns that new labor laws restrict workhours and establish salary rates for peasants. At first the regulations are effective, as they grant the workers time off to care for their own land, and thus reap actual benefits from their labor. Huillca states: “En esa oportunidad conseguimos trabajar las ocho horas de trabajo, más la propina de un sol. En aquel tiempo todos los trabajos se realizaban gratis y no nos pagaban un centavo. Desde ese día pudimos trabajar solamente ocho horas… Se prohibió el que tuviéramos que hacer otros trabajos extras. Se prohibió” (30). However, soon the hacienda owners walk back on the laws, forcing the peasants to either work for free or leave the land. Huillca, therefore, takes his demands on the road, founding a peasant union in the town of Chhuru, and then traveling on foot to different provinces in order to gain support from the masses and sign up the workers to the union. This second kind of work can also be read in terms of the distribution of time and the sacrifice of the body, as once again Huillca continuously points out the physical and emotional toil this labor puts him through. “En aquel entonces caminábamos por espacio de nueve días” (22), he says, referring to the time he and his fellow organizers had to walk to arrive at the different towns. “Tan es así que saliendo de mi casa, de mi pueblo, me encaminé por espacio de ocho días enteros…En Cha’anpa terminé en ocho días”, he tells later (161). During these missions, he is often captured by the police and put in jail for extended periods of time and even moved around different prisons. “De Urcos me enviaron al Cusco. Me tuvieron ocho días preso” (38). As soon as he gets out, however, he is back on his feet: “Como quiera que estaba en toda la plenitud de mi juventud pude llegar corriendo, esa era mi modalidad de andar” (35). During these long days moving around the region and being imprisoned, he is constantly subject to physical abuse.

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64 In his brief introduction to the text, Neira argues that Huillca’s position of syndicate leader, originally an urban and proletarian category of workers’ organization, is new and revolutionary for a rural social environment (8).

65 In 1964, Huillca was jailed in the Sepa, the same Amazonian prison where Héctor Chacón, the peasant leader and protagonist of Scorza’s Redoble por Rancas, was being kept at the same time.
“Corrales [a hacienda owner] me pateó, me dio golpes en la cara hasta que me sacó bastante sangre de la nariz, me bañó en sangre”, he tells; and then: “Los guardias también me patearon. Me dieron sopapos en la cara y después me encerraron en el calabozo” (25-6). Kicked and punched around, accused of being a communist agitator bent of robbing the landowners, Huillca often focuses on the damage inflicted upon his face: “Después de haberme maltratado destrozándome la cara, y con el cuerpo magullado, me encerraron en el calabozo sin pronunciar una sola sílaba. Por los golpes que me dieron tenía toda la cara amoratada” (38).

If forced work on the hacienda represents alienating labor, which drains Huillca’s resources and separates him from his object of production, the sacrifices of union work give him actual results. Not only does his struggle bring visibility to the cause and some initial gains; Huillca also finds himself recompensed by the military coup in 1968 and the agrarian reforms the revolutionary state imposed on the region. The new government, says Huillca, allows him and the peasants to work for themselves and not for the landowners, validating their struggle and sacrifices. And yet, Huillca admits there is an imbalance between his peasant and syndical work, because his dedication to the union cause has forced him to leave his land, and family, abandoned for long stretches of time. This is the case especially after the establishment of the RGAF, when he goes to work as leader of cooperatives and peasant federations allied with the state, which requires him to continue traveling, looking now to garner support for the regime’s reforms. “Dejando incluso mis obligaciones, dejando mi trabajo, me encamino con ellos [his fellow organizers] para prestarles cualquier ayuda” (47). And, at the end of the testimony, his wife chastises him for leaving for so

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66 Alternatively, it is difficult to not read Huillca’s characterization of himself as a Christ-like figure who walks from province to province, risking his own physical wellbeing, to evangelize the peasants to the union cause. In one section, he describes how we would approach peasants at religious feasts and ask them to spread information about the syndicate: “Allí conversé con los campesinos...Les conté que de crearse el Sindicato sería en favor de nosotros. Comuniquen. Vengan todos. Comuniquen a los que no saben” (77).
long and foregoing his responsibilities during the harvest: “Mientras tú estás ocupado en esos menesteres la chacra no se trabaja en su debido tiempo. Y se queda sin trabajar y las cosas que tienes que hacer se quedan sin hacer” (171). As his time and energy are split between two forms of work, Huillca is unable to reconcile peasant and syndical leader, ultimately recognizing the weight of age and his exhaustion. His final call to the compañeros is one of solidarity and collective work in the face of struggle.

At the same time, and especially towards the end of the testimony, when Huillca is older and his body unable to take on as much physical labor as before, there begins to emerge an aspirational discourse in his narrative. As his political fight fights slows down (but never ends entirely), Huillca turns his attention to bettering the education system in the community. Taking a decided step towards the alphabetization of the youth, Huillca states that only by learning how to read the children will be able to move up socially and economically. “En cualquier circunstancia”, he says, “la educación sirve. Cuando los hombres saben leer y escribir pueden desempeñarse en cualquier trabajo…De los hijos del campesino, que sean abogados, ingenieros” (170). While the revolutionary tone does not abate, in old age Huillca grows ever more concerned with the idea that the only way to truly move forward, to end the plight of the peasant for the future generations is to become learned individuals. A school is necessary, he asserts, “para que ellos [the children] se eduquen bien allí, para que sus ojos se abran más y para que se desaten sus lenguajes” (169). The discourse here grows decidedly more about self-improvement, even illuminist, as he sees education, and in particular improvement with language, as a weapon against colonialism and oppression. The next battle for the local cooperatives and assemblies, he seems to suggest, is one for a better educational infrastructure.
Huillca: Habla un campesino peruano, therefore, is a testimony of an alienated peasant who finds in syndical work the possibility of achieving actual sustenance and progress for him and his people. Huillca’s time and body, for most of his young life regulated by landowners, are put to use for a political cause, sacrificed so that other workers could have legal forms of organization and mobilization. An exploited worker at first, he gains control over his own resources achieving at the end some degree of autonomy and better living conditions. This transition of work also leads Huillca to, in a way, discover an element of his body that was not a part of his peasant labor: his voice. That is, as a union worker and leader, Huillca begins to recognize the impact of his voice on the peasants as a way of rousing and conducting the masses. In a few but poignant moments of the account, Huillca calls attention to the role of his own voice as a tool or technology of his syndical labor: “Yo soy campesino del Cusco y sé perfectamente que en las provincias escuchan mi voz, escuchan lo que hablo” (63). His voice has reach, Huillca knows, because his words are transmitted through radios across the region: “Siempre estoy hablando y ahora con más valentía. Hablo en las radios y ellos escuchan” (48). And then: “Y así los que me conocían decían: ‘¡Ah, este ha sido! Por las emisoras dijiste la palabra. La hemos escuchado, estamos enterados’. Cuando dirijo la palabra en cualquier sitio acuden las gentes” (53). Huillca, then, becomes a worker of the voice, no longer only a manual laborer whose body is drained by the arduous work on the fields, but a force of attraction and mobilization. In town squares, assemblies and congresses, thousands will gather to hear Huillca speak – and many more will access his words through rural and community radio programming.

ii. Filming Runan Caycu

The testimony Huillca: habla un campesino peruano, formed part of a Neira’s larger project to visibilize Saturnino Huillca’s struggle. As Media Director for SINAMOS and editor in
its main publication, the magazine *Participación*, Neira was interested in how mass media might serve the interests a society in transition such as Peru’s, and the revolutionary potential of radio, television and cinema. In “El poder de informar”, a wide-ranging study about the state of mass communication in Peru during the military revolution, he argued that the new government needed to move quickly to create a sound industrial and technological infrastructure that would aid in the social and economic development of the country. Mass media, he wrote, could equally serve as a tool to educate the masses or as a weapon of bourgeois distraction and control (1973a, 70-1). Therefore, Neira believed that testimony was not confined to the written text, but rather could be recorded and transmitted through a transmedial approach. This latter had the added benefit of wider reception, both because it could be mass produced and because film, in particular, could bear witness not only to the words of a speaker but also their voice and their face. Being so, while the written testimony was published in Spanish, a film version would include the subject’s own spoken words and likeness, which are nevertheless absent from the textual medium. A testimonial film would also reach wider audiences, especially those who could understand Huillca without the need for a translator. Neira’s transmedial approach included the photographs of Huillca that accompanied a feature article about the peasant leader in an issue of *Participación* (Figures 3, 4 & 5) and, more significantly, the original plan to film a documentary under the direction of his collaborator, filmmaker Nora de Izcue.

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67. The debate regarding the role of the culture industries was ongoing in Peruvian intellectual circles during these years, in part because of the state’s communication laws and the increase in mass media (in particular television) available to the population. For example, a special number of *Textual* (December 1973) is devoted entirely to the issue, with articles about mass communication, publicity and propaganda, the language of television, and the ideological content of children’s cartoons. Ariel Dorfman, who had recently published *Para leer al pato Donald* (1972), also contributes to this number. Other numbers of *Textual* also discuss the role of the television and radio industries in the revolutionary process of the RGAF.
Izcue was the first woman to dedicate herself professionally to film in Peru (Izcue 2016). In 1967, she joined Robles Godoy’s Taller de Cine in Lima, and became part of the production team in some of his films from the early seventies. During the same time, and commissioned by SINAMOS’s Media Department, she carried out investigations about public opinion on different mass media, specifically concerning the reception of radio and television (Cavalcanti 2014; Neira 1973, 51). In 1972, and under the auspices of the newly installed Law Decree 19327, Neira invited Izcue to direct a documentary about Huillca, providing her with resources (equipment and some funding, both through SINAMOS). Despite this initial support, however, she often found herself with a tight budget, which delayed the completion of the project. Born and raised into Lima’s middle class, the experience of Runan Caycu was novel for her, as it was the first time she was discovering that “other” Peru. “Lo que me guió a hacer Runan Caycu fue ese espíritu de lucha de Saturnino. Al hombre andino yo no lo había visto y no mucha gente o conoce o hace ver esa parte altiva, fuerte, de luchador que tiene el hombre andino”, she tells in an interview (Izcue 2014). Izcue carried out preliminary work for the production at the Biblioteca Nacional, searching for images and newspaper clippings about the years of the peasant struggle that would later be included as part of the montage of the documentary. After many months of archival work and interviews with
Huillca, Izcue traveled to Cuba, where she completed the postproduction process with the help of editors and photography specialists of the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) (Seguí 63-5).

*Runan Caycu* was shot on 35mm and runs 35 minutes. The script is derived directly from *Huillca: habla un campesino peruano*; except for the first scene, which I will discuss in detail later, the indigenous activist either reads through his own words or the translator reads from the published text. The documentary can be roughly divided into three sections: the first, which corresponds to the first chapters of the written testimony, shows scenes of peasants living and working in the haciendas, contrasting the conditions of the workers with the rich houses of the landowners. The second is the photomontage, composed mostly of stills of newspaper articles, photography and caricatures, which documents the peasants’ organization and insurrection, the ineptitude of Fernando Belaunde’s government to carry out a sound agrarian reform, and the brutal retaliation of the military in defense of the gamonales. By zooming in and out of headlines and other visual material, the camerawork directs the viewer’s attention to the violent events taking place, and their often misinformed coverage in official media. This section also shows actual newsreel footage of interviews with peasants, syndical leaders and Lima politicians, giving a look at all the participants in the struggle of power. This section ends with images of newspaper clippings about the 1968 coup and with Velasco’s promise to end the rule of the gamonales. The third section goes back to Huillca’s voice and testimony, focusing on his support for the new regime and his desire to collaborate with its revolution. The documentary concludes with the

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68 The ICAIC, founded in 1959 by filmmakers Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Santiago Alvarez and Alfredo Guevara, took its influence from contemporary currents in cinema, such as Italian Neorealism, Brazil’s Cinema Novo and the French New Wave. The Cuban institute played a vital role in the production and distribution of New Latin American Cinema, because it fomented the militant role of film in the liberation processes of Third World countries. Particularly important was the documentary film, especially through the work of Alvarez, and its montage of image and sound to show and demand justice for abuses being committed around the world (Alvarez Pitaluga 93). Some of the specialists who helped Izcue on the production process of *Runan Caycu* were part of Alvarez’s team (Seguí 64).
names of the production team and an acknowledgements list, and with the symbol of SINAMOS, the face-logo of Tupac Amaru. Throughout Runan Caycu, sound plays a key role, alternating Huillca’s voice in Quechua (and the voiceover in Spanish) with Andean singing and music and other sound effects, including ominous drum beatings to accompany the images of the peasant mobilization and a comedic track á la Three Stooges to ridicule Belaunde’s failures.

Izcue’s documentary shows the influence of New Latin American Cinema in the sixties and seventies, as discussed earlier, in its combative language and representation of an indigenous worker who, despite having appeared in film before, had never been conceived as a political subject. And not only in representation but in the actual participation of marginalized populations, who would now be the protagonists of their own stories, using the medium of film to communicate their struggle to viewers who, under the theories of Third and militant cinema, would be roused to action. Unlike much of the documentary work carried out by other Latin American filmmakers, Runan Caycu stands out because there is no narrative voice that explains the events presented, as all content is contextualized through the images, interviews and the testimony of Huillca. Despite being one of the first documents that presented the voice of workers, La hora de los hornos, explains Mestman, nevertheless does so through voice-overs or off-screen commentaries, which necessarily subordinate the former. In many cases, these commentaries use the workers’ testimonies to suggest the inability of some of their insurgent methods, and calling for more organized forms of resistance that would require the direction of political leaders (2013, 309-10).

The lack of commentary by an expert or intellectual gives Runan Caycu the feel of a more unmediated document than contemporary films. Without an explanatory, authorial voice, the words of Huillca and the images that accompany them are as unfiltered as the film medium permits. This is not to say, of course, that Runan Caycu is an entirely organic production or that it could
accomplish its mission of the raising awareness of its intended public. As Isabel Seguí argues, Izcuel’s (and Neira, SINAMOS, and the ICAIC’s) presence is felt in the professional editing and montage work, creating a multidirectional process of legitimation between the film workers and the peasant leader (70). The result, therefore, is a complex document that combines the innovations of revolutionary filmmaking with the contingencies of the Peruvian situation, and the strategies and negotiations Izcue and other committed film workers had to take in order to create their productions.

To Izcue’s surprise, and almost certainly to Huillca’s as well, Runan Caycu was censored by SINAMOS and forbidden to play in any Peruvian theater (Izcue 2014). The reason was that the film denounced the abuses committed by the army during the military dictatorships of the early sixties and the Belaunde government. The montage in the second section of the documentary depicted images of the violent repression carried out by the armed forces who were defending the gamonales and the international corporations (also evidenced in Arguedas’s Todas las sangres and Scorza’s La guerra silenciosa). The photographs and newspaper reports used in the montage showed soldiers brutalizing peasants and the bodies of the dead strewn across the fields. Despite the Velasco regime’s land reforms and nationalist agenda, there was no investigation or prosecution of the military personnel who carried out the massacres. The documentary, despite its star actor’s defense of the regime, was never shown in Peruvian theaters except, as Seguí states, in the semi-clandestine networks of film clubs and unions (65-6). Runan Caycu, therefore, remains an example of the contradictions of the RGAF, of the promise of its economic, social and cultural program and the authoritarianism it nevertheless exerted by attempting to rein in all forms of revolution – and especially by trying to direct the constituent power of the desborde popular under its terms. But the documentary may also be read as another facet of Huillca’s political work: the
peasant who became an activist who then became a film star, employing his time and body in a way drastically different than how he had before. If the voice, transported through the radio, had become the weapon of activism, the face – once bruised and battered by security officers – now became this worker’s tool. A face, furthermore, that bears witness for itself, no longer bound to a textual instrument like the book, but unleashed through the technology of cinematography.

iii. The facial politics of Runan Caycu

*Runan Caycu* opens with a close-up of Huillca’s face, who looking directly at the camera gives a two-minute monologue about his struggle as peasant farmer and as a political activist. Stern-faced throughout, the speech mixes an aspirational discourse of social progress through education and property ownership with a radical call to arms against to wipe out the oppressors. The following are the Spanish subtitles to Huillca’s Quechua:

> Yo soy Saturnino Huillca Quispe, dirigente campesino legítimo. Por luchar por nuestras tierras estuvimos en las cárcceles, fuimos desalojados por los cerros con mi mujer y mis hijos. Por eso ni aprendimos a leer, ni tuvimos casa. Yo campesino, me declaré enemigo de los propietarios. Hermanos todos, ahora recuperaremos nuestras tierras. Hermanos campesinos, dirigentes como yo, despertémonos y terminemos de una vez con nuestra lucha. A muchos les llegó la muerte, olvidémonoslo y triunfemos, caminemos recto y recibiremos. Ya no hay una ley que nos castigue. Con nuestra lucha y sufrimientos esta tierra será nuestra. Hermanos, conozcamos ahora una mejor vida, aprenderemos a expresarnos mejor porque por culpa de nuestros enemigos los gamonales, los ricos, por culpa de los ladrones de nuestro esfuerzo, no podíamos. Esos del imperialism yanqui que se vayan, hermanos, porque no queremos verlos más. Botemos a nuestros enemigos. Barrámoslos para siempre (0:00:05-0:02:00).
The image is striking, both in visual and historical levels. The frame of the shot is so close to Huillca’s face that at no point do we see it in its entirety, the top of the head being completely cut off. The camera, probably a smaller and lightweight device, shakes slightly, likely due to the buffeting winds that can be heard in the background. At one point, as shown in Figure 6, the close-up is such that it barely frames Huillca’s face from the lips to the brow. At this distance, we see the face in all its geography, with scars and wrinkles product of the cold and rough terrain where he lives, and perhaps even the result of the many beatings he suffered at the hands of police forces. Speaking at the viewer assuredly, Huillca’s face is also striking because it breaks with any previous representation of an indigenous subject in film. Figueroa’s cargador, for example, never once looks directly at the camera, nor does he speak so authoritatively. His body language, and the camera following him around, have the effect of framing the worker as a defeated, crushed individual. Huillca, on the other hand, is larger than the screen itself. Had it been shown in theaters, as it was meant to be, the close-up of Huillca’s face would have entirely filled the spectators’ gaze. After all, in the close-up, writes Mary Anne Doane, the face is bigger than life (94). Especially considering that a Lima audience would probably never have been stared and talked down at directly by a peasant subject.

Fig. 6. Runan Caycu. YouTube.
An analysis of this scene would require a reflection about the face and its representation on film through the close-up technique. The face, argues Noa Steimatsky, is ubiquitous since the mother’s is the first thing one sees at birth; the face “sustains the gaze; it compels our attention and animates our responsiveness, our recognition. Absorptive and projective, its unique conjunction of centered unity and complexity is matched by a commanding visibility in the face’s superior position in the body…The face is naked: it expresses, it is open, it opens. But it is also a mask: the Latin, persona, could suggest that the face is where the person begins” (6, italics in the original). Because of its universality, and because it stands at the verge between one person and another, either the most primordial sign of familiarity or strangeness, the face has been read as the site of ethics and empathy towards the Other. Emmanuel Levinas, for example, writes that the face of another, inherently different than our own and to which nothing legal bounds us, elicits a sense of responsibility that transcends any material condition. In the face-to-face, writes Levinas, “The Other becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question” (83). From film theory, Béla Balázs argued in the 1920s that the representation of the face in cinema through the close-up made subjects’ emotions palpable to the viewers. And, more recently, Carl Platinga analyzes scenes of the face in film to argue these may generate moments of empathy for the spectator (Stadler 318-9). Here, empathy through the emotion of the face may be related to Levinas’s ethics founded on the responsibility towards the face of the Other.

Regardless of what might be learned from an analysis of the reception of the film (difficult to begin with, given that it never reached a wide public and those who did see it were most likely knowledgeable of and already allies to Huillca’s cause), an analysis of Huillca’s face solely through the notion of empathy can prove insufficient for Runan Caycu. This is because this
approach assumes the universality of the face, which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is not universal but socially produced, the result of a particular assemblage of power that gives meaning and legitimizes some over others. That is, the face is created by what they call an “abstract machine of faciality” that determines who the face belongs to, and therefore who that individual is: “The machine constitutes a facial unit, an elementary face in biunivocal relation with another: it is a man or a woman, a rich person or a poor one, an adult or a child, a leader or a subject” (2014, 177).

The face, therefore, is not the unmediated entry point to a person but always already constructed from the outside. This process, that of facialization, posits an “original” face against which all other faces are read: the face of Christ, and through Christ, the White Man. They write: “It is not even that of the white man; it is White Man himself, with his broad white cheeks and the black hole of his eyes. The face is Christ. The face is the typical European…Not a universal, but facies totius universi. Jesus Christ superstar: he invented the facialization of the entire body and spread it everywhere” (2014, 176). Building on this approach to the face not as a given but as a site of the display of power, Jenny Edkins argues that the face “does not arise from a necessary or innate importance” but rather from “a certain assemblage of power, a certain politics” (3-4). The face, therefore, is political insofar as it reveals a contestation between assemblages with power and those that lack it. For Edkins, and for Deleuze and Guattari, the point is precisely to “dismantle” the face, to reveal the dynamics that create its assemblage of power to find, potentially, an alternative.

In revolutionary discourse, we must also keep in mind that the face has a concrete referent: the face of Ernesto Che Guevara, and specifically Alberto Korda’s famous “Guerrillero Heroico”. Taken at a memorial for a Belgian ship that had capsized on Cuban shores while carrying a large supply of weapons, the original photograph shows a long-haired and bearded Guevara facing into the distance, wearing a black beret with a star on it. Later stylized and used by magazines and
official institutions to sell an image of commitment to the revolution – but also, as David Kunzle writes, as a Christ-like figure, a “Chesucristo” who both inspired peace and embodied the sacrifice necessary for achieving it (100-1). If, as I will explain below, the face of Tupac Amaru was used as the symbol of the RGAF, the visionary “Guerrillero Heroico” went on to become a symbol of Third World Liberation, the emancipation of the poor and oppressed, and an allegory of a world to come. A search for the facial politics of this image, therefore, turns out a universal site of dissidence and struggle (conveniently later turned into a commodity), an Ur-face against which, not unlike Christ’s in Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization, fixes the meaning of revolution. The face of this “Che superstar” paints a horizon for the revolutionary subject: male, young, white, sacrificial.

We may also ask, then, what is the “facial politics” of Runan Caycu, what assemblages of power are being formed and contested through Huillca’s face, and whether it may dismantle the icons of the RGAF’s revolution. First, I would argue that the close-up of Huillca’s racialized face introduces another facet of the peasant leader’s work: first a worker of the land and then a political worker, now he has become a worker of the screen. And not just an actor but a film star; after all the close-up as a film technique is an entry point to fame or, as Doane writes, the “vehicle of the star” (90). Yet the close-up has been, traditionally, reserved for actors and actresses, and in particular for stardom either in Hollywood or auteur films (what Solanas and Getino would call First and Second Cinemas). Studies on the close-up have, effectively, focused on these actors and films, whether in relation to the unconscious (Benjamin), scale (Doane) or affect (Deleuze), and Steimatsky’s analysis about the face on art and film does not move beyond Western production. Runan Caycu, therefore, presents the face of an indigenous worker who, through the close-up, goes on to occupy the same space, utilize the same vehicle, as a Hollywood star. Of course, we cannot
compare, on material conditions, Huillca to a Hollywood actor of fame and money. Huillca does not become rich and, as I will discuss below, the peasant actors in many of the Peruvian films from the seventies received little to no remuneration for their work. But it does create a different assemblage, a different political and cultural formation were an illiterate peasant and a racialized face can employ the same film technique as a Hollywood actress. Not only, then, does the close-up frame a subject who was not typically on the other side of the camera; the subject, momentarily, becomes another kind of worker, an immaterial worker whose face, not his back, is his primary tool. In this configuration, Runan Caycu emerges as the site for the concatenation of manual and affective work, a unique conflagration between the constituent power of the desborde popular and a technique of film stardom.

Second, in my reading the peasant leader’s image also stands in opposition to the face of Tupac Amaru, who served as the RGAF’s official logo. In 1780, Tupac Amaru led an armed rebellion against the Spanish colonial empire from his base in Cusco, winning important battles and forcing the viceroy in Lima to mobilize his army to stop the caudillo. After gaining considerable ground and expanding as far south as Upper Peru (modern-day Bolivia), Tupac Amaru was captured and sentenced to death in what became one of the most easily recognized scenes in Peruvian history and lore: drawn and quartered by four horses, dismembered and his limbs sent to different provinces as a lesson to future rebels. Although historians later corrected some key facts about the caudillo (he was not indigenous but mestizo and his goal was never to topple the crown or reinstate the Inca), he nevertheless became a symbol of Andean resistance and liberation against colonialism, even before being appropriated by the RGAF. Venerated by progressive and conservative intellectual figures at the same time, Tupac Amaru was a rare site of consensus across the Peruvian political and cultural spectrum. And, in particular, the Andean
leader was, in the sixties, brought to the stature of the heroes of Third Worldism such as Che Guevara: dark-skinned, valiant, virile, and eternal (Walker 59). Velasco and the military thus took the image (and the symbolism behind it) of Tupac Amaru and made it the official icon of the revolutionary regime, projecting unto itself the same qualities as the caudillo. Tupac Amaru had fought against the oppressive Spanish regime; two centuries later, the RGAF stood on his shoulders in its fight against imperialism.

From the beginning, the military regime employed the imagery of Tupac Amaru for everything it could define as revolutionary. Plazas and streets were renamed for the caudillo, and monuments to the hero were commissioned (Mayer 82). Velasco even changed the name of the Pizarro Room in the presidential palace to the Tupac Amaru Room, and hanged his picture on the wall. But in particular, it was Tupac Amaru’s face that became almost a stand-in for the regime. As shown in Figure 7, the cover of an Oiga weekly from 1969, the larger-than-life image of the caudillo’s head, in a pop-art style used for all state propaganda, looms large and imposing above the president who contemplates it, fist raised defiantly.69 Most importantly, in 1971 the RGAF commissioned artist Jesús Ruiz Durand to create a stylized image of Tupac Amaru’s face that could serve as the logo of the state. The image (Figure 8) followed a simple design, with the stern-faced caudillo at the center while his long hair and hat formed the letters T and A; the A could also double as an upside-down V, for Velasco. The face-logo of Tupac Amaru became a stamp for the regime, appearing everywhere from state-sponsored cultural journals and newspapers to the end credits of SINAMOS produced films, Runan Caycu included. Widely reproduced and immediately

69 The pop-art style, developed by artist Jesús Ruiz Durand, became the trademark imagery of the propaganda posters of the RGAF. Using bright colors and slogans that urged the working population to join the state’s revolution, these posters form an invaluable corpus of the state’s tactics for reaching and engaging peasants and urban workers. In 1983, art historian Gustavo Buntinx uses the term “pop achorado” (defiant, threatening) to refer to Ruiz Durand’s style, where peasant subjects were represented as hardworking and rebellious through the stylized techniques of pop art (Sánchez Flores 15).
recognizable, the face-logo became a symbol of the state’s presence and approval – and thus, control. Sometimes, the image appeared on publications, accompanied by a dialog box that could contain some slogan about the revolution, an exhortation to the masses, or a clarification of some policy. Often, as art historian Christabelle Roca Rey argues, the face-logo and the message appear as dogmatic entities that teach and discipline the population (82).

Fig. 7. Oiga (October 1970)  
Fig. 8

While the Tupac Amaru face-logo became an assemblage that represented the revolutionary authority of the state, Huillca’s face in Runan Caycu became a menace – hence the censorship. If, according to Doane, the close-up is “a lurking danger, a potential semiotic threat to the unity and coherency” of film discourse, here Huillca presented an alternative face, and an alternative authority, to the military regime. That is because his face and message challenge the state’s monopoly over the notions of participation, mobilization and revolution, taking control of the narrative of the peasant insurgency and making it an organic struggle not bound by the measures of the RGAF. In fact, Huillca is openly critical of the military that, in the early sixties, supported the gamonales and the multinationals. After they had taken a hacienda from the landowners, Huillca states, “Los hacendados trataron de impedirlo, fue entonces que vinieron los
comuneros de Pampa Cala. Ahí fue cuando la Guardia Civil empezó a disparar y a matarnos. De Charape murió un hombre, de Pampa Cala diecisiete…Los cadáveres fueron cargados en un carro plataforma de tren, como si fueran cuartos de carne, amontonados unos sobre otros” (00:21:40-00:22:05). While Huillca speaks, photographs of military trucks and personnel evidence the peasant leader’s description. As stated earlier, Huillca then changes his tone and celebrates the RGAF’s reforms, for it demonstrates that his fight and sacrifice has given result. However, here Huillca also seems wary of giving too much credit or authority to the state. He says: “¿Quién va a hacer la revolución? Nosotros mismos tenemos que hacerla. ¿Acaso el gobierno solo la va a hacer? ¡No, no es verdad! Nunca” (00:27:00-00:27:13). Huillca’s discourse, though supportive of the government, never becomes dependent on the military state; rather, it reaffirms the autonomy of the peasant struggle by denouncing the past crimes committed by the army and urging the communities to continue organizing and mobilizing for their rights. After all, in Huillca: Habla un campesino peruano, he had declared: “También las autoridades deben desaparecer…que los hijos de los campesinos sean las autoridades” (145).

Huillca’s position, therefore, is not one of subjection to the state but a reassertion of the validity of the peasant struggle, before the military coup and after. This is perhaps more dangerous than if Huillca opposed or denounced the RGAF, since the government and its ideologues painted all those who disagreed with it as reactionary and counterrevolutionaries. But if Huillca was a revolutionary (and the government certainly saw Huillca as a significant ally), then his criticism of the authoritarianism of the military and affirmation that the peasant fight continued held more validity. This is why the RGAF prohibited the distribution and exhibition of Runan Caycu: because Huillca’s image and voice held an authority that the state was not willing not give up. The state’s censoring of the film, furthermore, confirms Huillca’s characterization of the repressive nature of
the RGAF, and its need to keep maintain control over all forms of revolutionary activity that did not emerge from itself. In my reading, therefore, Huillca’s face and close-up may be read as an alternative assemblage to the Tupac Amaru face-logo and the consent around the state. Censored, *Runan Caycu* offers the visage of a subject forbidden to speak by the same mechanism that in the past massacred those who had rebelled. Against the stylized face of a historical symbol of resistance, Huillca’s emerges as the living potential for a constant revolution, a line of flight away from the authority of the state. In this way, I read Huillca’s face in *Runan Caycu* as an example of what Deleuze and Guattari call *tête chercheuses* (“probe-heads” in Massumi’s translation, but perhaps also “searching heads”), which “dismantle the strata in their wake, break through the walls of significance, pour out of the holes of subjectivity, fell trees in favor of veritable rhizomes, and steer the flow down veritable lines of positive deterritorialization or creative flight” (190). If the face-logo of Tupac Amaru is the official face of the state, Huillca’s, the face not of a hero but of a worker, might be that which “probes” or “searches” for an alternative revolution to the state’s.

The significance of *Runan Caycu* lies, however, not in its “revealing” Huillca’s face but rather in its construction of it. After all, there is nothing necessarily inherent in Huillca’s face that makes it a danger to the state and, in a different context, that same face might have been used to draw support towards the RGAF and its policies. *Runan Caycu* demonstrates the collaboration between two kinds of workers: the film workers looking to find avenues of production outside of the RGAF (Izcue found it through the ICAIC in Cuba), and the peasant workers looking for expanded visibility for their cause. Huillca’s face in the documentary certainly creates other formations of power, in which a peasant becomes a film star and a revolutionary figure that contests the consensus of the state. But it does so through the assemblage that Izcue’s documentary film creates, in contact with the camera, supported by Izcue’s photomontage and archival research,
and framed by a professional production team. Conversely, Izcue finds in Huillca her star actor, and in his story the material to create a revolutionary weapon of New Latin American Cinema. If, years earlier, Arguedas had sought to come into contact to the desborde popular to understand and represent its potential, in the experience of Runan Caycu Izcue and Huillca created a site of artistic and political solidarity. And this solidarity created, through Huillca’s face, an alternative assemblage of power to that of the military state.

iv. Depoliticizing Huillca?

The June 1973 edition of Participación, official publication of SINAMOS, ran an article titled “Huillka: reportaje al lider [sic] campesino cuzqueño”. This piece, the feature article of the issue (a photograph of Huillca speaking at a rally appears on the cover) contains an interview to the peasant leader and is bookmarked by two editorial notes that briefly introduce the figure of Huillca and stress that he supports the RGAF. Interestingly, although the piece was published in 1973 and Neira was part of the editorial committee and most likely its author (some of the text is taken directly from Huillca: Habla un campesino peruano), there is no mention of Runan Caycu or its censorship. While the exact date of the documentary’s release is not clear (again, because it was never exhibited commercially), it is difficult to imagine why Neira, who contacted Izcue in the first place, would not state that a film about its star actor was in the works. After all, the film was a vital element in the project about Huillca that also included the written testimonio. A possible reason may be that the article came out after the official censoring and thus needed to pave over the film’s supposed anti-revolutionary stance. This may be the case because if Runan Caycu was censored for openly criticizing the military, the article in Participación holds no mention to the army. In fact, Huillca denounces every other agent of repression against the peasants, including the political parties (APRA and Belaunde’s Acción Popular), the guerrilla movements (Luis de la
Puente Uceda’s MIR) and the local strongmen (the gamonales and the prefectures). But the glaring omission of the military’s role in the peasant struggle might reveal that the article wanted to paint a safer version of Huillca compared to that of the film. In other words, this is the state’s way of stamping its face-logo on the testimony of the peasant leader.

In this context, the introductory note to the piece is significant for two interconnected reasons. First, because it paints Huillca as a subject of a “transitional” period between an old and a revolutionary new nation, much like a peasant in Cárdenas’s Mexico or a fellah in Nasser’s Egypt. To bolster the nationalist agendas, Cárdenas and Nasser had created idealized and romanticized images of the indigenous, traditional working classes of their respective countries. The indigenous subjects of thirties Mexico and the rural workers of Egypt that these nationalist models created, of course, were not a danger to the sovereignty of their states, and they served to reinforce a bucolic golden age rather than advance their actual needs. This is important because of the second point the introduction makes, when it describes Huillca as a quasi-prophetic subject of ancestral knowledge. For the editor of the article, Huillca fulfills the promise of the indigenista revolution promised by Luis E. Valcárcel, the Peruvian anthropologist whose *Tempestad en los Andes* (1927) depicted the indigenous as an ancient people whose destiny was to rise in a mythical insurrection against the oppression of colonialism.\(^70\) The editor writes: “El renacimiento indianista que profetizara Valcárcel en los años veinte, tiene aquí su encarnamiento. Que nadie se asombre que en países de tan compleja y sorprendente historia como la nuestra, la profecía halle su lugar, en el

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70 Valcárcel was one of the two most important sources for J.C. Mariátegui’s own formulation about indigenous insurrection (the other being sociologist Hildebrando Castro Pozo). The author of *Tempestad en los Andes* provided Mariátegui with the Andean myths, the “íntima verdad indígena” that became, for the Marxist thinker, fundamental for theorizing a Peruvian socialism founded on the ancient Inca civilization. Regarding this influence on Mariátegui, José Luis Rénique writes: “Consciente de todas esas fuerzas de carácter cósmico, de lo que se trataba era de canalizar hacia la revolución el acumulado furor del milenario indio. La tarea solo podía lograrse abrazando la idea socialista, apropiándose – para hundirlo en la realidad andina – del más modern horizonte ideológico producido en Europa. Y en esa perspectiva, la confluencia Castro Pozo-Valcárcel representaba un aporte fundamental” (2015, 364-5).
vasto universo de las llamadas ciencias humanas, sobrepasándolas y resolviéndolas por los caminos de la adivinación y el conocimiento intuitivos” (15). Here, then, Huillca is characterized through tropes of indigenista literature of the twenties and thirties; words like “profecía” and “adivinación” paint the peasant leader as a magical and lyrical subject, outside of the rational world of science and history.

Of course, this statement must be read in context. The seventies marked the first time in Peruvian history that indigenous culture was being reivindicated as a site of national pride and as holding political potential (both as a result of the RGAF and the “discovery” of José Carlos Mariátegui’s brand of Peruvian socialism). The emerging Peruvian Left needed a way in which to think beyond orthodox Marxism and to generate a national brand of socialism; the political potential of indigenous myth, therefore, served this goal. And yet, if the author of this introduction is in fact Neira, a statement such as the one above is confounding. The editor of Huillca: Habla un campesino peruano, after all, was a committed materialist who saw Huillca exclusively as a rational political leader (Seguí 78). And the testimonio itself at no point reveals any kind of prophetic side to Huillca, nor does the peasant leader ever call on mythical or ancestral forces to aid on his struggle. In fact, Huillca’s understanding of the political and socioeconomic processes that have led to the exploitation of the peasants is incredibly detailed, as is his analysis of the effects of colonialism on the Andean populations. So is, as I have noted, the aspirational strand that at times accompanies the political discourse, and which aims for the Andean youth to climb socially by studying, learning to write and obtaining high-paying and prestigious jobs. The comparison to Valcárcel’s mythical Indian, therefore, seems not only stilted but completely outside of what Huillca himself was attempting to create through his fight. The rest of the article, Huillca’s
account, provides no evidence to this brief but significant characterization of the revolutionary worker.

Beyond questions regarding the text’s authorship, however, what is important here is that the introduction to the article does match how Huillca was portrayed in the films he starred in after *Runan Caycu* – and which were not censored by the state. In particular, I am referring to Federico García Hurtado’s *Kuntur Wachana* (“Where the condors nest”, 1977), a fictionalized reconstruction of the peasant mobilization of the late fifties in the Cusco region. The film, financed by the Federación Agraria Revolucionaria Túpac Amaru del Cusco (FARTAC) and the Cooperativa Agraria No.1 “José Zúñiga Letona”, is a heroic tale of solidarity between the indigenous masses and left wing rural intellectuals in their fight against the gamonales in the context of the RGAF land reforms (Mayer 85). It centers on both the peasants (who portray themselves) and the worried landowners (professional actors) who attempt to curb the insurrection through different means; the military coup puts an end to the colonial latifundio system and returns the land to its workers. Here, Huillca plays the archetypical role of the wise old sage who advises the peasants in their struggle against the gamonales, serving as a spiritual guide more than as a political organizer. Although he only appears briefly halfway through the film, Huillca’s arrival to the community marks the beginning of the conflict, as it brings the peasants to unionize and launch their struggle and the landowners to progressively escalate their repression.

Operating in the background during the first half, Huillca is variously described as a rabble-rouser, a sharp speaker (“hablaba muy bien”, says one peasant), or a demon whose arrival will bring drought to the land. Then, peasant Mariano Quispe is jailed for having hidden Huillca in his house; after he is released, he becomes an organizer himself, going from town to town spreading the word about the need to fight against the gamonales. Hiding in the mountains after being chased
out by the guards, Quispe meets with Huillca, calling on the latter’s wisdom to learn from him the meaning of life and death. Huillca replies that death had arrived with the Spaniards, who banished the great condors who nested atop the mountains. “Un día los cóndores volverán”, he continues, “haciendo sonar sus grandes alas, ese día también nosotros nos levantaremos del centro de la tierra. Nada en verdad nace o muere, todo transcurre como un río. Lo verdaderamente importante no es el nacimiento o la muerte sino la calidad de los días que vivimos…La verdadera vida es la lucha, la búsqueda de un día verdadero. Un día volverán los cóndores, hermano” (00:40:13-00:41:07).

When Quispe is poisoned and dies, the film cuts to the second part, which takes place after the coup, and Huillca’s role is over (Figure 9).

Fig. 9. Kuntur Wachana. YouTube.

Kuntur Wachana’s Huillca is certainly different from Runan Caycu’s, as the combative figure of the documentary is, in García Hurtado’s film, a soft-spoken mentor to the younger peasant leaders. Here, Huillca never looks at the camera directly, is shown mostly in profile or at a distance, and his words are accompanied by shots of the towering mountains and the flowing rivers underneath. This is not to say, of course, that both sides of Huillca could not have coexisted, or that there was not a lyrical or spiritual element to his political discourse. In fact, García Hurtado
has said that the peasant leader himself inspired many of his own lines, and the filmmaker wrote
down and recorded his words for Huillca to memorize and act out in the film. Whether because of
how Huillca presented himself, or because of the filmmaker’s own sensibilities, García Hurtado
did see his star actor as a kind of shaman or prophet who held ancestral beliefs and guided the
peasants through his mystical knowledge (Seguí 78; Mayer 88-9). The point here, however, is not
that Kuntur Wachana represents Huillca correctly or incorrectly but that the film, and the peasant
leader’s role, follow what the filmmaker thought was the more appropriate use for his figure.
Whatever the reason behind it, Kuntur Wachana was not censored, unlike García Hurtado’s earlier
documentaries about the land takeovers, mentioned above. On the one hand, we may call attention
to the fact that the army does not appear at any moment during the first half of the film, and only
shows up in the latter part, after the coup, to defend the peasants against the gamonales. On the
other, we may also point to Huillca’s role, less politically charged, less militant and certainly mum
on all forms of repression except that of the conquering Spaniards. Instead, he prophetically speaks
about the return of the condors, in a kind of Andean utopia similar to the myth of the Inkarri or
Arguedas’s yawar mayu, or river of blood (discussed in Chapter 1). This matches exactly with the
introductory note to the Participación piece, as it positions Huillca firmly within Valcárcel’s and
the indigenista current of the twenties and thirties. Therefore, we can understand why SINAMOS
and the RGAF did not censor Kuntur Wachana: once his combative spirit was removed and
replaced with a millenarian wisdom that supported the military regime, Huillca became the perfect
vehicle to legitimize the state. Given that Kuntur Wachana came out in the late seventies, when
the Morales Bermúdez regime was under heavy fire from all sectors of civil society, García
Hurtado’s film – and its star actor – may be read as an operation for returning credibility to a
faltering ideal of revolution.
III. Conclusion

*Kuntur Wachana* might be Huillca’s most artistic performance, the height of his acting career. After all, García Hurtado asked him to memorize lines, to improvise, and to play a stylized version of himself. In doing so, Seguí argues, he displays all his creativity and performs the role of the mystic and guide convincingly (78). And yet here, his best professional performance, he ceases to be a menace to the state: his face, we might say, becomes the face of Tupac Amaru, an idealized revolutionary icon meant to discipline and create consensus. Therefore, we may wonder if the work of the actor does not ultimately come to a head against the work of the activist, just as the work of the activist impeded the work of the peasant. If Huillca’s search when he set out from his home and family was to break free from the alienation of work, we could ask if he found in his acting career the more just and rewarding work experience he had been looking for. But we do not know from Huillca himself: although we have a detailed testimony about his work on the land and as a political organizer, his role as an indigenous movie star does not seem to have generated the same interest among committed intellectuals and no one asked him to tell his story about his experiences in front of the camera. Perhaps Huillca saw film work as an extension of his militant activity, a useful medium to extend his voice (beyond just the reach of the radio) and present his image as a means to generate further support for his cause. Or perhaps he did see in film work the possibility to become a recognizable film star, to play a part so far removed from the societal role he had lived his whole life. We may even consider if he did not see in film a way to climb socially. As I discussed briefly earlier, there is an aspirational discourse present in his testimony, and perhaps this was not only rooted in granting education for the youth but also by obtaining the financial capital necessary to move up in society.
After all, it is certainly fair to ask if Huillca, or any of the peasant actors in *Kuntur Wachana* and the other films that required local labor received any kind of monetary compensation. Money is a constant theme in *Huillca: Habla un campesino peruano*, one of the main ways in which the peasant leader understands oppression and injustice, and what sustains the colonial system of domination. “Ellos además tienen su plata,” Huillca says, when calling for the peasants to support the RGAF’s land reforms, “algunos tienen su dinero enterrado, tienen su dinero guardado en los bancos, mucho dinero. Con ese dinero ellos hacen todo” (143). And not just the landowners but all authorities, including the priests, are greedy: “El cura pide que le lleven dinero para él. Cuenta como dinero la suma de cien soles. Pide doscientos, trescientos, cuatrocientos y quinientos, según el valor de la celebración de una misa” (98). Money is also a preoccupation during Huillca’s travels, as he lacks the funds to traverse the region and create unions. “No tengo dinero”, he repeats constantly, “no dispongo de suficiente dinero para llevarles siquiera a mis hijos un pan, un poco de azúcar o alguna golosina” (52). And later: “Nosotros…adolecemos del mal de no tener dinero y si tenemos es una miseria…Para nuestros viajes, de igual manera no disponemos de dinero” (144). And, when he travels to Lima and sees the misery of the shantytowns where the migrants live, he promptly notes they cannot afford to pay for food or to raise a house: “Y el dinero, ¿de dónde lo van a sacar?…Yo no sé ni cuanto pagarán por el agua que consumen. Tampoco sé el precio de los comestibles. Debe ser todo caro” (121-2). At the end of the testimony, as he reflects on the vicissitudes of bringing together his manual and political labor, his most pressing worry is how he will fund any of it: “Y lo peor de las cosas: ¿el dinero para mis gastos de dónde sale?” (172). Despite his political victories and even with the military reforms, financial compensation never seems to arrive, and this, as seen through these examples, is one of his most pressing and constant frustrations throughout the testimony.
It is probably fair to assume Huillca got little if any actual pay for his film work. Anthropologist Enrique Mayer calls the filming and production process of *Kuntur Wachana* an “ugly story” of the RGAF’s agrarian reforms, because the promises the filmmaker made to the peasants who participated did not come to fruition. In order to finance the film, the peasant cooperative José Zúñiga Letona had to borrow money from other cooperatives and banks and its members put forward their own salaries to pay the laboratory costs in Argentina. The film promised extraordinary returns in the investments, including fame for the participants and 60,000 soles per copy sold. However, García Hurtado reported only a return of 412 soles, after paying for equipment and other debts incurred. The investigation that followed further muddled the facts, as the peasants accused the filmmaker of having not only misspent the funds but also gotten rich through its production. The legal suit between the parties lasted years, and underscored the pitfalls that could affect the relationship between the military state, artists and the masses (103–4). The case of *Kuntur Wachana*, of course, need not be representative of smaller projects like Izcue’s *Runan Caycu*, which could have found ways to remunerate Huillca and the others. But considering how strapped for cash Izcue was, and the film’s lack of distribution and exhibition because of the official censorship, we may venture that Huillca did not receive much in terms of monetary retribution. Whether or not he had been promised any, or he was expecting it as a way to solve some of his most pressing issues or progress economically, we do not know.

*Runan Caycu* (and revolutionary film in general) represents, in my reading, many of the opportunities and frustrations of the notion of cultural work put forward by the committed intellectuals of the sixties and seventies. For one, it was a site where the workers and local activists that had been mobilizing the force of the *desborde popular* could make their own voices heard and their images seen. It was a venue through which to reach mass audiences, to denounce repression
and censorship, and to demand an end to colonialism and imperialism. It was also a form through which these manual workers could perform a different role, seemingly so distant, to act in films and become, in a way, movie stars. For the committed artists, film work allowed them to interact with these masses, to create sites of collaborative cultural production that responded to the imperatives of contemporary, militant theories of art. It was a way to test out the declarations made by the innovators of Third Cinema and guerrilla cinema, to finally break down class and racial barriers in the creation of popular and truly revolutionary works of art. And yet film work – cultural work, in general – also revealed the hierarchies between peasants and artists, bringing to the forefront questions regarding money, censorship, and authorship. That is, the collaboration between manual and intellectual labor emerges as a site of tension and negotiation, of promise and unpredictability, and where, as much as artists and intellectuals sought to create horizontal cultural experiences, material conditions often limited what could actually be done. Rather than seeing these as missed opportunities, however, we may understand them as ways of problematizing questions about the relationship between art and politics. In the experience of film and cultural work we find not the utopia but the rather the materiality – muddy, divisive – of revolutionary solidarity.
On November 22, 1968, face painted white and holding up a sign that read “La burguesía quiere del artista un arte que corteje y adule su gusto mediocre – J.C. Mariátegui”, the performing artist Jorge Acuña stepped onto Plaza San Martín, a block away from the presidential palace where the RGAF had taken power less than two months ago, and began his career as a street mime. Acuña was a graduate of a top theater program in Lima and had been the director of the Escuela de Teatro at the Universidad de Huamanga, Ayacucho, when he lost his position and was forced to move back to Lima and work as a taxi driver while doing theater during the evenings. When he took to the plaza, just weeks after the military coup, dozens gathered to watch him mime; over the following months and years, his repertoire and audience grew, as his street show became a multitudinuous event that included full one-man theater plays that criticized authority figures such as the gamonales or corrupt priests. To complement his performance, Acuña would hand out his mimeographed short stories and write verses by César Vallejo or quotes by José Carlos Mariátegui around the plaza. Because his work was informal, lacked a permit and concentrated multitudes, the actor was often the target of smear campaigns in the press and police abuse, spending many nights in prison for disorderly conduct. Quickly, news of Acuña’s political street theater spread throughout the city, and he was invited to perform in schools and unions affiliated with the emerging left wing coalitions. But he always returned to the plaza, where thousands gathered to watch him every day from 3 to 6pm, because it was on the streets, he said, where the felt truly free.

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In many ways, Acuña embodies the characteristics of cultural work I have traced throughout these pages. He was, for one, a committed cultural creator who saw his art as a form to both create spaces of community and transmit a political message against the oppressors. Through popular theatrical pieces, he relayed the ideas behind the writings of Marxist thinkers like Mariátegui, and by sharing his short stories he fomented small and ephemeral moments of collective reading. At the same time, he was very much carrying out this work as a form to survive: having lost his job, he had resorted to informal and menial employment, the same, as I described in the introduction, as the displaced and migrant workers of the desborde popular. “Al llegar a la ciudad lo primero que hago”, he says in a recent video documentary for newspaper El Comercio, “es comprar un periódico y buscar trabajo” (2015). That a theater graduate, teacher and director had to drive a cab and do street performance revealed the tenuousness of work in a rapidly modernizing economy and an overflowing city that could not guarantee formal or long-term employment for all. And, finally, it was the body, the face and the voice (when he was not doing mime) that became Acuña’s tools of work, a way of fomenting an aesthetic and political experience where artist and masses all shared a common knowledge of migration, labor instability, and the need to imagine a more harmonious, just Peruvian society. While across the street the military regime discussed strategies to foster a revolution based on an ideal of patriotic work, in the plaza Acuña gathered hundreds and sometimes thousands of workers in a brief moment of respite and leisure.

At the same time as Acuña was beginning his new occupation as a street mime, at his old Universidad de Huamanga a new spirit of radical politics was beginning to coalesce. A philosophy professor, Abimael Guzmán, was spreading a gospel about a more just society, but one that would come about only by tearing down the existing world and building a new one upon its ruins. A
militant of the Peruvian Communist Party, as this organization began fracturing through the sixties Guzmán (or Presidente Gonzalo) created his own faction in the early seventies, which he called PCP-Shining Path after another phrase by Mariátegui: “el marxismo-leninismo es el sendero luminoso del futuro”. The splintering of the traditional Left, which, as I have described, took place as it attempted to provide alternatives to the military regime, created numerous parties that vied for the support of the peasant and urban masses. To do so, these militants left the universities to devote themselves to the organization and participation within popular social movements. However, the cadres of Guzmán’s organism took the opposite direction, turning back to the university to develop, from its hallways and libraries, an orthodox discourse based on Marxism-Leninism and inspired by the rural successes of China’s Maoist revolution (Degregori 35). In Ayacucho, Shining Path coalesced as an inviolable discourse and ideology, organized in a rigid, top-down hierarchy that glorified its leader and denigrated all forms of grassroots associations and Andean culture. Unlike the other factions of the left, Guzman’s did not back the popular mobilizations of the late seventies that signaled the end for the military regime, when millions of workers took to the streets to demand economic and political reforms. Instead, Shining Path offered an ideal of freedom from oppression and marginalization based on social progress only achievable through obedience. Therefore, the social mobility Shining Path promised its followers – and how it was able to attract so many young students – depended not on any idea of collective or democratic work, but on the unassailable truth of the party, the leader and his texts (Degregori 42-3). Shining Path was, ultimately, a pedagogic experience centered on a radicalized lettered tradition.

After Shining Path declared its war against civil society in 1980, and especially as the eighties rolled on, it became difficult to conceive the discourse of revolution as anything beyond
a fanatical impulse to destroy, raze and burn down. The Left that had emerged, coalesced and fractured throughout the sixties and seventies continued to exist, and had some important victories in the following decade, including its unification as the Izquierda Unida front (also in 1980), which chose the path of electoral legality. Yet it was never able to take a firm stance against the Maoist sect or fully revoke its support, which was one of the main reasons the front became internally discordant and eventually fractured again (Gonzales 2011, 40). With the legal Left defeated or too fragile to articulate a cohesive alternative discourse, revolution became synonymous with an organization that never sought to support and mobilize the masses but rather coerce and subject them. As José Luis Rénique writes, Shining Path was both a “logical outcome” of the political radicalization of the sixties and seventies, as well its negation and its end (2015b, 134). It was a dystopian horror that had emerged out of the utopian discourses of revolution, that had fed on decades (and centuries) of colonial domination and that, when it exploded, affected especially the most vulnerable populations of the country. If there was a democratic potential, a constituent power, within the mobilizing masses of the desborde popular, Shining Path was precisely the opposite: an attempt to create hegemony by canceling out all popular forms of collectivization, organization and revolution.

While in the eighties and after we may still look for forms of cultural work as a means of generating spaces of revolutionary solidarity, perhaps this impulse ended with Shining Path’s dystopian radical politics. On the one hand, while the Maoist sect saw its war as a popular effort, and in some of its propaganda posters painted all kinds of workers gathering under the communist flag, there was no attempt to mask the hierarchical nature of the party. In one of these posters, for example, while the factory workers at the bottom brandish rifles, Guzmán towers above them, dressed in a suit to reassert his status as a professor and intellectual – or, we might say, to affirm a
hierarchy of labor. Holding the flag, he does not form part of the ground forces made up of workers, but rather leads through his intellect and status (Fig. 10). In another, similar piece, Guzmán holds up a book of his teaching and ideology, while at the bottom the peasants fight (and die) in the struggle of the so-called popular war (Fig. 11). Any idea of collective or solidary work becomes impossible in this kind of revolutionary struggle: if for Arguedas and Scorza the text (the anthropological fiction and the chronicle) became a way of imagining a community of shared work, here it is a tool to coerce the masses and demand their obedience. While writing was, for Arguedas, the possibility of holding on to life, for Guzmán, as seen in the second image, it was a catalyst towards death. That the Peruvian state (especially the regime of Alberto Fujimori) retaliated with a similar level of violence only made this more certain, as tens of thousands of Peruvians (especially in poor rural communities) were killed in the crossfire between the armed forces and Shining Path.
On the other hand, and both because of the emergence of Shining Path and broader, global changes in how commitment and intellectual solidarity were conceived, there was significantly less appeal, by the mid-eighties, for artists to identify as workers. According to Fernando Aiziczon, the seventies saw a change from the “heroic militant” tied to the political party and the proletariat struggle to a more critical subject who derided strict partisan affiliation and instead looked to new social movements for legitimacy and the possibility of social change (144). In the case of Peru, this can be observed more clearly in the eighties, with the creation of new social programs (some grassroots, some organized by local governments), including the feminist associations Centro Flora Tristán and Movimiento Manuela Ramos, as well as the popular kitchen Vaso de Leche for children aged 0-6 and gestating mothers. Organizations such as these point to a reframing of social commitment as responding to immediate concerns rather than utopian notions of revolution or party-based politics. This also became evident in the cultural arena, as there was less identification between leftwing political movements and artists, and between the intellectual worker and the manual laborer. In many instances, at least regarding the cases I have studied, there was a turn away from collective or popular creation and towards more individual processes of creation. The Hora Zero poets, as I pointed out towards the end of Chapter 3, and according to the testimony of member Eloy Jáuregui, became increasingly “pitucos” (posh, classy) who dedicated themselves to their own personal poetic labor – abandoning their “orgies of work” and their roles as cultural guerrillas. Filmmakers Nora de Izcue and Federico García Hurtado continued to produce, and became two of the most successful Peruvian cinematographers of the eighties and nineties. However (and this does undermine the quality of their work), these films cannot be thought of as popular and revolutionary in the same lines as Runan Caycu and Kuntur Wachana.
And yet, this does not mean that there was nothing left over from the ideals of solidarity that coalesced in the sixties and seventies. During, and especially after the armed conflict was over in 2000, collaborative forms of artistic and cultural creation have aided in the processes of remembrance and healing. Cynthia Milton writes that there was a “boom” of collective forms of cultural production that sought to bring together those affected by the two decades of violence (12). Ranging from the literary to the performative, the visual to the musical, there are many examples that demonstrate a need to use art as a form to unite subjects and collectives from different races and classes in the same process of reflection and reconstruction. Edilberto Jiménez Quispe’s *Chungui: Violencia y trazos de memoria* (2005) is a collection of testimonies the author collected from men and women affected by the internal conflict in this town in Ayacucho, as well as drawings made by these individuals reflecting their stories. *Chungui* thus combines ethnography and participant observation to allow the people of the town to share their memories, but also their hopes, for rebuilding their society (Jiménez 76-7). Another example is the film work of Ayacucho filmmaker Palito Ortega Matute, which draws from Andean traditions and daily life to create a testimonial cinema about the experiences of the war. Seldom seen beyond the local communities were they were produced, and having little if any funding, these films represent perhaps a continuation of the kind of work Nora de Izcue began in the seventies alongside Saturnino Huillca. And, like Huillca, Ortega’s actors are amateurs and hopefuls with little formal training (Del Pino 158). These kinds of creations pose a different kind of commitment than that seen in the sixties and seventies but that which, perhaps now more than then, present the possibility and the yearning for life.

In a way, the Universidad de Huamanga was the incubator for two different kinds of revolutionary acts. The first, that of a working-class performer who took to the streets and, through
his body, put forth an aesthetic and political experience to amuse and raise awareness among other working-class populations. The second, a university professor who, as an incorporeal presence, directed and manipulated his followers through the authority of his writings. Beginning their production roughly around the same time, Acuña and Guzmán present two emerging forms of political activity in the mid to late sixties. In the eighties, it was this second brand of scorched-earth politics that came to dominate how revolution was perceived, and which altered – and destroyed – the lives of hundreds of thousands, especially as the armed forces often indiscriminately fired upon anyone who might have looked like a terrorist. Throughout these years, however, and until today, Acuña has continued to perform, taking to the streets, telling his story of migration, struggle and work to others that, gathered around Plaza San Martin, understand and identify with him. A cultural worker, Acuña continues to demonstrate the possibility of creating stages of mutual solidarity after decades of internal conflict.

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Throughout these pages, I have examined how the experience of work became central to the conceptualization of intellectual and artistic solidarity in sixties and seventies Peru. The idea that cultural work was the same as any other kind of work was a way to bridge a gap between mental and manual labor and, by doing so, conceive a community beyond class differences. Unlike the great novelists and writers of the era, whose texts looked to “explain” Latin American reality, and the lettered networks who constantly debated on the nature of the committed intellectual, cultural workers sought instead to engage with the masses, to represent and identify with them. They went beyond the choice between the pen and the rifle, between artistic modernity and political action, and generated spaces where, in different ways and to different extents, they could
work with or for the people. If the (paradoxical) resolution for the revolutionary writer was to abandon writing, to stop producing art was never an element of cultural work. Instead, for these cultural workers it was about devising ways in which their artistic production could be revolutionary, to help, in some way or another, bring about direct political change in the country. As I have demonstrated throughout, this meant transforming not only the content but also the form of cultural production: Arguedas made out of the novel an anthropological fiction (or a fictionalized ethnography) to discover the potentials simmering in the modernizing port of Chimbote; Scorza inserted his own syndical labor into his chronicles (or cronivelas) to give them veracity and to reassert his social commitment; the Hora Zero poets made poetry a physical, virile and performative action to make it appealing to the masses; Nora de Izcue, in line with the advances of New Latin American Cinema, created a film-montage that made Saturnino Huillca the anti-face of the state; and Huillca demonstrated that an indigenous subject could play the role of a movie star with his own close-up. All these were novel interventions to their respective artistic fields (narrative, poetry, film), creating cultural processes that, to some degree, involved the masses in their productions. In doing so, they articulated spaces of contact and collaboration that did not require a vital sacrifice, like in the case of the young poet Javier Heraud, for a utopian revolutionary ideal that, in any case, did not have much support from the popular masses.

After all, it was these masses – this desborde popular – that had brought about a radical transformation of the country in the first place. Although Peru had begun industrializing in the twenties, it was in the fifties that the modernization of the country led to significant socioeconomic changes that ended up undoing an oligarchic hegemonic system that had been in place since the colonial era. The decline of the agricultural sectors throughout the country (given the introduction of foreign capital and, with it, the explosion of industries such as mining, manufacturing and
hydrocarbon production) led rural populations to organize and demand land reforms and better working conditions. On the one hand, this culminated in a series of social movements that threatened to overthrow the gamonales, or landowners, in the Andean highlands, and on the other, it meant that increasing numbers of provincial workers were migrating to the cities and creating a new class of urban, informal workers. This process of organization and mobilization both challenged the ruling classes (through land takeovers and strikes) and led to the emergence of a massive new immigrant population in Lima – in this way, mining the barriers that had once separated an “official” from a “deep” Peru. From a political perspective, this resulted in the appearance of new parties and actors who tried to coopt these masses into their respective hegemonic projects. These included the Left, whose internal divisions led to continuous breaks and divisions, and later a new union in Izquierda Unida, and the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces and its plan to modernize the country through a populist, yet hierarchical, revolution from above. Both the Left and the RGAF saw in the image of the worker a symbol for the reconstruction of the nation. However, neither was able to fully rein the masses in, and this culminated in the end of the military regime and the eventual fizzling out of the Left.

The cultural workers were not strangers to this political process. In fact, they all participated within its struggles, taking sides and working for one or the other as they saw necessary and productive for their own artistic processes. One reason was that it was difficult to be socially committed and not have a stance within some faction vying for legitimacy in the political arena. Therefore, the Hora Zero poets sided with the Frente Obrero, Campesino, Estudiantil y Popular (FOCEP) and were poetic “opening acts” to the strikes and rallies the front convoked. Scorza himself ran for the vice-presidency under its flag, though never abandoning his literary project. And the film workers all went on strike along with the teachers and factory workers,
likewise demanding better working conditions and more participation with their industry. These parallels are significant because they demonstrate a new kind of collaboration and identification with the political Left as this was moving to the electoral and legal path, leaving behind the radical, insurgent brand of revolutionary politics. We may, therefore, trace through these cultural workers a move away from the heroic militant described above by Aiziczon, and towards a more strategic form of commitment. However, none of these artistic creators were strict militants, nor did their production stem solely from a desire to transform the country. If they were an integral part of the political arena, it was also because they found in it a source of employment, a way of generating revenue, and the possibility of social advancement. The Hora Zero poets all worked for the military regime, not because they were completely in line with its politics, but often because it was an employer that gave them the chance to have jobs as writers, editors or researchers. And, when the RGAF expropriated the papers, many of these poets went on to work for publications critical of the state. For Scorza, the struggle of the peasant unions was also a way of getting paid, of selling his image as a committed writer. For Huillca, and certainly for many of the participants in García Hurtado’s Kuntur Wachana, acting in films had the potential of paying up – though it likely never did. In summary, the reasons why and ways in which these subjects participated in the political processes of the seventies were varied and tied to different needs. Often, these had to do, quite simply, with making a living.

Therefore, cultural work, in my reading, was never just an expression of solidarity, but also a way of living as an artist and cultural producer in a politically charged environment. In this way, it differs from anti-intellectualist current that saw taking up arms as the real and only way to be a revolutionary, because this meant death. Cultural work, perhaps as any other kind of work, meant surviving, providing for others, and, occasionally, getting rich. This is why I have taken
approaches to cultural work as diverse as the role of money, the issue of gender and the place of technology. These are all foreign to the levels at which Claudia Gilman studies the “debates and dilemmas” of committed writers, because here solidarity is an abstract concept only defined by pronouncements, intellectual rivalries and public appearances. And while these also formed part of it (we may think back on the scandalous horazérianos), there were other, sometimes more quotidian aspects to cultural work. Money was one of these: to reiterate, cultural workers needed to get paid to live and continue to produce, and thus were constantly coming back to the topic. Arguedas, as much as he criticized Carlos Fuentes for producing like a mason with a house contract, is continuously trying to get better book deals and cut costs wherever he can. Despite his self-fashioning as a more “pure” and “spontaneous” kind of intellectual, Arguedas was never unaware of the market in which he circulated. Another is gender: the home and the family are fundamental pillars for all these male creators, who fashion themselves as their protectors and caregivers. Scorza, therefore, assumes the role of mentor when he dedicates his Garabombo el invisible to his children, urging them to work for others – the same way he has lived to serve the marginalized and oppressed. Of course, and this is especially clear in the case of Hora Zero, this reinforced traditional gender roles, were women were confined to being support networks and the men – the virile, masculine creators – the real artists. Finally, I approached the notion of work through the role of technological advances: it was through lightweight cameras that someone like the peasant Huillca became a recognized face in Latin American cinema. In front of the camera, he went from a worker of the land to a worker of the voice and of the body. And it was the advances in cinematography that allowed Izcue to make of Huillca a dissonant figure against the state. While these are only some ways in which we may consider the experience of cultural work, they allow us to see artistic commitment in a much more material – and sometimes not unproblematic – approach.
Finally, cultural work might be a way of tracing intellectual and artistic networks beyond traditional disciplinary lines, as well as past a representational register and a sacralizing approach to certain established figures in the Peruvian cultural canon. When I began this project, I asked how the reform-oriented RGAF had affected or transformed the cultural arena, thinking that such a radically different hegemonic state that celebrated the indigenous subject and allowed progressive intellectuals to participate within national life must have altered how and what art was produced during the seventies. This part of my project is present throughout these pages, but a more comprehensive analysis of the cultural policies and projects put forward from the state and through the intellectuals that supported it (publications, institutions, events) remains to be fully fleshed out. But what I discovered was just how difficult it was to approach these years from a literary perspective, because even though there was significant production, much of it was uneven and rarely responded to the political or socioeconomic situation of the country in the way I thought it would. At the same time, the traditional frameworks of Peruvian literary studies (indigenista writing, urban narrative, the literature of the armed conflict) provided representational models that, although of course situating this production in the historical and social contexts, seemed to me more a way of creating blocks or divisions to facilitate their study, in an almost didactic fashion. To conceptually undo these segmentations and think beyond their representational register was a challenge, but I think it is necessary to continue doing so in order to rethink the parameters through which a national literature has been constructed. I also found that, when studying this era, it was difficult, and actually limiting, to remain within the field of narrative. In fact, it was film, theater, performance and visual arts what dominated the cultural pages of cultural magazines and weeklies. My question became, therefore, what connections and ties could be traced among these different
aspects of cultural production, what conceptual elements were circulating through film and poetic production, for example.

The approach through work allowed me to tie the socioeconomic transformation of the country, the political processes, the concepts of money and technology, even gender dynamics. Work was, after all, an everyday concern for everyone involved: peasants, factory workers, informal vendors, the state, cultural producers. It was a revolutionary currency of the seventies, a promise, a need, and, for many, a lack. Because it was everywhere, it created a sense of horizontality, a belief that some idealized collective and participatory form of work would forge a new modern society or create revolutionary and popular artistic processes. Whether it actually did is impossible to measure: on the one hand, many of the cultural projects examined here did have tangible results, like the expansion of poetry to lower and marginalized classes, or the increased participation of popular subjects in national cinema. On the other, however, many instances replicated or created other forms of discrimination and subjection. The advent of Shining Path brought forth a revolutionary dystopia characterized by intellectual coercion, although processes of collective remembrance and truth-gathering do bear some resemblance, at least in spirit, to what the committed cultural workers of the sixties and seventies were trying to achieve. In all, cultural work remains an attempt at reconceiving solidarity, at making it more about experience, collaboration, speaking alongside the other if never wholly letting him or her speak on their own. It was a kind of physical and affective commitment of presence, a being there, being part of a broader process where all were workers, together in the political transformation of the nation. It was, perhaps, a way of making revolution a part of life, a hopeful search for a new life.
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