

# Alternatives in the Midst of Ruination

## Capitalism, Heterogeneity, Fractures

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**ABSTRACT** This article claims that capitalism is not a homogeneous logic but a heterogeneous regime, deployed in multiple practices, forms of knowledge, techniques, and temporalities that have become embodied, created spaces and participate in different forms of life. Subsequently, within the ruination capitalism has produced, it is possible for political and economic reconfigurations to arise. What is at stake here are possibilities for critical agency today, particularly in contexts ruined by forms of intensive exploitation, contexts where a collective desire to be different seems to have spent itself but can in fact emerge in new ways.

**KEYWORDS** capitalism, ruination, critical agency, emancipation, heterogeneity

For most of the world, capitalism operates as a normative order that governs the horizon of *possibility*, and, hence, decides on the potency of bodies: the capacities that may arise, the type of agency suitable to the times, that which can be, and that which is no longer viable.<sup>1</sup> One of the most visible effects of this closure is a marked sense of impotence: impotence in view of the promises of progress that leave many behind and constantly differ from the projected better state of things; impotence in view of an already captive future bound by debts that subjects never finish paying;<sup>2</sup> impotence produced through the narratives that impose market regulations and flows as that *which is*. Thus, for those who never get rich, capitalism involves an experience of helplessness and inevitability,<sup>3</sup> a loss of faith that the “state of the world” might actually change, *a dispossession of the future*.<sup>4</sup> This is perhaps one of the greatest forms of damage caused by capitalism: the elimination of the desire to transform the world by convincing us that there are no alternatives.<sup>5</sup>

The manner in which capitalism assumes itself as an axiomatic, consensual sensorium that imposes itself as *what is*, as what *there is*, confining subjects to a closed horizon of necessity, even as it operates on the basis of deterritorialization,

as in global and multicultural capitalism, and urges its subjects to innovate constantly, has been emphasized by authors as diverse as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Jacques Rancière, and Mark Fisher.<sup>6</sup> According to their readings, this requirement to produce the new never really questions the axioms of accumulation, large-scale expansion, and productivity, but rather cancels those forms of life that seek to escape from or present alternatives to some of those imperatives, by demeaning them as senseless, anachronistic, out of place, and incapable of lasting. Therefore, we need to confront this axiomatic logic if we want to create alternatives and affirm the desire for transformation already activated within existing popular movements.

In this article, I argue that the opening up of the horizon of possibility is already occurring through a number of emancipatory practices that have emerged in the midst of processes of ruination resulting from capitalism.<sup>7</sup> This is evinced, for example, in popular movements that are critical of neoliberalism arising in “peri-capitalist” parts of the Global South.<sup>8</sup> Here, forms of production are emerging that counteract the drive for extensive exploitation—territorial and corporeal—and the unquestioned drive for accumulation. In emphasizing the disruptive effects of these practices, on the one hand, I draw on Deleuze and Guattari, and a number of (post)colonial approaches.<sup>9</sup> These perspectives allow me to propose a relational understanding of the social world, indebted to the philosophical vitalism of Spinoza and Nietzsche. Such an understanding, as I will argue later, assumes that life is made up of diverse arrangements of relations between bodies, spaces, material practices, and technologies, which affect each other and amid which the heterogeneity, indeterminacy, and conflict of the social world are produced.

On the other hand, I distance myself from the influential view of leftist critical theory, prominent in authors such as Slavoj Žižek, Franco Berardi, and Mark Fisher, for whom localized disruptions do not really create alternatives.<sup>10</sup> In their view, these disruptions would be constantly appropriated by the logic of capital, assumed to be totalizing and homogeneous. Consequently, this perspective conceives of a bloc opposition to capitalism, leading to a global rupture with it through the formation of a new political subject, driven by the need to create new economic-political organization. But, according to the reading I elaborate in this essay, this global opposition is always deferred and defeated because capitalism is not a homogeneous logic that can be observed from a distance or a discrete and graspable object, but rather a heterogeneous regime deployed through multiple practices, forms of knowledge, techniques, and temporalities that have in turn become embodied, created spaces, and infiltrated different forms of life.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is necessary to think of alternatives on the basis of these materializations—the ruined bodies, spaces, and relations that capitalism has been creating—taking into account the dissident subjects and struggles that have been emerging amid the ruins. For reasons that will

appear, critical theory should be attentive to these alternatives that emerge from the ruined.

First, I highlight some of the dead ends entailed by a totalizing view of capitalism, such as the one assumed by Mark Fisher, who has offered an aesthetic-affective reading of some of the effects of current capitalism. Although Fisher imagines and suggests a way out of the situation he diagnoses in his popular book *Capitalist Realism*, the manner in which he does so leaves us trapped in the political impotence he is trying to confront. Second, I explain why it is important to perceive capitalism as a heterogeneous regime, as this affects the way we come up with alternatives to its mandates. Finally, I explore a site that illustrates how alternatives can emerge *in the midst* of what has been ruined and leave open some questions that, in my view, continue to pose challenges for critical theory today.

However, by proposing such a line of thought, I do not want to suggest that there are only two kinds of critical theory: one that is totalizing and produces political impotence and another that insists on heterogeneity and generates potentials. There are certainly very different types of critical theories and intervals between them. What interests me is not to reduce the pathways critical approaches can take but to confront visions that produce this reductive effect. What encourages me is to prevent certain theoretical approaches from ignoring or denying people's local experimentations, through which they try to change or alter suffocating living conditions, to avoid contracting the multiple ways in which these emancipatory experiences can occur and be acknowledged.

### **Capitalist Realism and Its Dead Ends**

It is no surprise that Fisher capitalizes the word "Capital" in his book. He insists that capitalism is largely a unitary and homogeneous system that has, of course, varied in some key ways but that fundamentally operates as a capture mechanism that formats and translates everything into its own terms, absorbing and shaping every aspect of subjects' lives: their dreams, desires, worries, and expectations. This mechanism can also function as "an abstract parasite, an insatiable vampire and zombiemaker; but the living flesh it converts into dead labor is ours, and the zombies it makes are us."<sup>12</sup> The contrasts established by this mode of analysis are evident: capitalism injects life with death and transforms us into the living dead. Moreover, we have assimilated capitalism's logic of necessity and its conviction that it is the only viable economic-political system to such an extent that it would seem impossible for us to imagine coherent alternatives to it; it would further seem that every alternative operates within the very same horizon it wishes to displace, thus implicitly reinforcing it as a limit. In this sense, Fisher believes that contemporary capitalism devours any experience that sees itself as an alternative.<sup>13</sup> As Jean Baudrillard says, we end up trapped by "participatory subjugations," in which spectacle has

been integrated into life.<sup>14</sup> We would, consciously or unconsciously, become part of what Berardi calls “semiocapitalism” — that is, the mode of production in which the accumulation of capital is essentially achieved through the production and accumulation of signs, which act upon attention, imagination, and the social psyche.<sup>15</sup> Given this connection between the aesthetic-affective and the economic, we cannot really be alternative or transgressive, as we would only end up reproducing and masking “our own complicity in planetary networks of oppression.”<sup>16</sup> In our time, hope seems subordinated to the reproduction of the same. Meanwhile, the exacerbated exploitation of everything and unchecked accumulation deplete the planet and the psyche of subjects, who feel impotent and exhausted. As in the dystopian film *Children of Men* (2006) by filmmaker Alfonso Cuarón, to which Fisher refers, we might feel as if the end is approaching even as authoritarian measures, controls, and regulations multiply to attempt to halt or contain chaos.

According to Fisher’s reading, our present time is also producing the impoverishment of sensate experience, a flattening of everything, an incapacity to produce anything new, which, he says, is analogous to the sterility that befalls living beings in Cuarón’s movie. This is so because capitalism seems to have the capacity to absorb everything that is alternative and unconventional into its system of equivalences, since any object, being, or entity can be reduced to monetary value.<sup>17</sup> This equalizing logic is something we all suffer. It creates a cynicism that is partly conformist and partly the result of forms of hyperesthesia and desensitization produced by capitalism’s colonization of everything.

Fisher grasps a tendency that is quite visible in a dominant form in contemporary capitalism and neoliberalism more broadly:<sup>18</sup> the manner in which they neutralize social conflicts and their economic and political relational character by individualizing and psychologizing them. Furthermore, the neoliberal emphasis on the self-government and self-responsibility of subjects, linked to certain ideals of success and consumption, brings about not only numerous mechanisms of internal surveillance and self-evaluation but also continuing *affects* of blame and dissatisfaction with oneself, in view of the multiple “failures” afforded by a world of constant competition, of never-ending reports and revisions that exacerbate anxiety, in a context of increasingly sought-after and ever-vanishing possibilities of promotion, as well as unending indebtedness. Subjects, therefore, often feel frustrated, even psychologically broken, but they are told that only they themselves and their psychological makeup are to blame for that collapse.<sup>19</sup> Thus, social antagonism is understood as personal conflicts; exhaustion arising from the precarization of labor is called a lack of personal motivation; social stagnation is demeaned as an absence of entrepreneurship and resilience; frustration at a lack of opportunity is recast as affective incapacity; trauma caused by systematic violences appears as something that requires therapy, and marginality

as an anomaly that can be gradually corrected through social integration programs. As often pointed out, this psychologization constitutes one of the dominant forms of subjectivization by the neoliberal logics of capitalism, which aim mainly at conceiving subjects as sovereign “individual enterprises” who need to be empowered by means of diverse technologies of the self: self-care, self-help, and self-improvement.<sup>20</sup> These are technologies centered on a nonrelational ideal of autonomy that denies the codependence of subjects and, hence, a relationality of life, which I will elaborate later. But, according to Fisher, in every expression of our desires we get trapped in these forms of subjectivization and so suffer the effects of anxiety, guilt, and exhaustion.

However, this diagnosis does not intend to leave us without solutions. In fact, the last part of *Capitalist Realism* provides a series of guidelines regarding what we should do in order to find alternatives. On the one hand, we can go on with our critical task, which, like Fisher’s, is aimed at unmasking the “consensual confabulations” of capitalism.<sup>21</sup> This might involve understanding the real causes of our sadness, according to the peculiar Lacanian interpretation of Spinoza provided by Fisher;<sup>22</sup> rationing those desires for consumption and production that capitalism has increased excessively in order to subject us;<sup>23</sup> and politicizing the mental illnesses that capitalism has depoliticized, a point on which I agree with Fisher. But that politicization, in his view, would require the formation of a new political subject capable of recognizing structural dominations and their “single systemic cause: Capital” in order to promote a general transformation of the world.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, we can keep trying to unmask the fact that nothing is as it claims to be, that capitalist strategies are incoherent and unsustainable, by showing that they lose sight of the Real, the Lacanian Real, which, according to Fisher, can attack and counteract capitalism’s abstract realism.<sup>25</sup> Widespread mental illness and environmental catastrophe are most emphatically evidence of the destructive effects of capitalism on the earth. According to Fisher, they call for a radical transformation, which would be an “invocation” of that indomitable Real.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has been read along these same lines by Franco Berardi, who echoes Baudrillard and Žižek, as well as Fisher: “There is no political solution to the axiomatics of capital, since no language can say that which lies outside of language, and it is not possible to destroy the system, since each linguistic process develops within an axiomatics that renders extra-systemic enunciations unviable. As Baudrillard suspected, the only way out is death. Life would only be possible again after death.”<sup>27</sup> Since capitalism is conceived as a totalizing system that gradually produces the depletion and death of everything, a radical solution would be its complete standstill and collapse, a suspension that renders inoperative its manic productivism and logic of constant competition. Hence, the virus that has caused the world economy to collapse seemed to be such an opportunity: an unforeseen suspension of the

urge to grow, a moment of deflation that might halt the movement of labor and of the extractivism of capitalism. Thus, Berardi expected the virus to pave “the way for a revolution without a subject, a purely implosive revolution based on passivity and surrender.”<sup>28</sup> Although he was aware that capitalism would adapt to the “new biopolitical dynamics of the 21st century,” Berardi believed in the possibility that it might not survive “the collapse deriving from epidemics, given that an extra-systemic factor came into play.” And while “we might emerge in a condition of extreme solitude and aggressiveness,” we might also make an unforeseen “mental leap” toward a new horizon of equality.<sup>29</sup> Žižek also expected the COVID-19 pandemic to deal a fatal blow to the global capitalist system.<sup>30</sup> He hoped that—as in Hölderlin’s famous verse—salvation would grow where danger lies.

Perhaps the relation between that which threatens life and that which gives rise to life is inevitable. And we undoubtedly need important transformations to practices that have damaged and ruined the world. However, I do not believe the expected transformation arises from catastrophe, as if salvation can emerge only from the greatest destruction. COVID-19 has killed many people, especially due to a lack of resources, to inequality in care distribution in times of precarity. And there are many who have died due to poverty, to violence unleashed by the crisis (for example in forms of police repression of social unrest), to other illnesses that could not be treated in places with deficient healthcare systems and minimal social investment. The thinker who seeks a radical alteration in catastrophe, from the safety and distance of his unthreatened position, can expect the best to emerge from disaster, while those most shaken by it evidently cannot.

What is more, thinkers of catastrophe seem to feel a certain *jouissance* in impending disaster, because it promises the liberation from capitalism they long for, a radical rupture that could open up a genuinely new horizon but is always postponed, deferred.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, in the light of this promise of radical rupture, every alteration produced in the world seems capable of being integrated into the capitalist totality and ultimately nontransgressive. In my view, however, this skeptical position ends up devaluing the efforts of collective subjects who are already producing important alterations in their lives: bodies organized in egalitarian movements that confront forms of dispossession and subjection (for example, anti-neoliberal struggles); organizations that link environmental damages to the forms of exploitation suffered by humans and nonhumans and demand practices that are more sustainable for ecosystems (for example, Indigenous and peasant movements in Latin America); associations that counter the damages sustained in creating forms of life that somehow escape the mandates of productivity (for example, urban collectives that develop labor processes like communitarian architecture) and lives that simply refuse to be erased and persist through dissident forms of survival (such as the artisanal miners I will consider here).

In any case, there are also great differences between forms of resistance that create political *antagonisms*, *flights* that merely deflect without any explicit confrontation, and *frictions* that arise from unstable negotiations incapable of persisting. These experiences nevertheless unite collective subjects concerned about change at the local, national, or even global levels. However, considering them all ineffective in displacing capitalism reinforces the feeling of impotence by reiterating that these practices can be captured by the machinery of capital.<sup>32</sup> It is essential to question the locus of enunciation of the radical critic that minimizes such alternatives: apparently, he speaks with the voice of disenchanting knowledge, with a capacity to recognize the machinery and its effects better than the majority of subjects who “do not know what they want” since they are trapped by ideological *dispositifs*.<sup>33</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, on the basis of Rancière’s thought, this critical *dispositif* does not confront;<sup>34</sup> rather, it reproduces the effects of capitalism on the inequality it claims to question. The totalizing critic ends up installing a boundary between those with capacity and those without, and between those who can see and do more, that is, the few enlightened by a specific form of critique, and those who do not know what they want because they are entangled in the very matrix that devours their desires.

By contrast, the critical agency I describe here is the emancipatory movement through which bodies affirm and display capacities that have been denied to them, rather than a movement of illumination in which it becomes possible to see what could not be seen, or the possibility of escaping from a global form of capture. What I now wish to highlight is that these capacities are shaped and appear *amid* the very relations of power and domination that have damaged bodies and their forms of life.

### **Fracturing Totalizing Readings: Cracks in the Midst of Ruination**

Challenges to power and domination can emerge *amid them* for several reasons: (1) First, it is important to underscore the heterogeneity and indeterminacy of the social field. In recognizing this heterogeneity, I assume a relational ontology inspired by philosophical vitalism. From this perspective, the social world is understood as made up of multiple relations (emerging in the interactions between bodies, things, and technologies), connected in arrangements, compositions, or assemblages also traversed by heterogeneity.<sup>35</sup> In alluding to these assemblages of interactions, I also highlight their affectivity, assuming, like Spinoza, that affect indicates the effect that one body produces on another body. This is something that contemporary affect theory—in its dwelling on the games of relations that circulate in spaces, atmospheres, and ways of experiencing temporality—has been interested in. It emphasizes that these relations are produced in social spaces that are never

closed and never wholly determined.<sup>36</sup> Thus, it seems to me fundamental to recognize the forms of power that affective relations produce, and the performative—and materializing—character of the discourses and practices that engender and intensify them. But it is also essential to emphasize their *virtual* dimension, that is, the capacity for transformation that can unfold from the unpredictable connections that emerge among given relations.

(2) In this sense, the forms of domination operate within “a heterogeneous combination of elements and arrangements” so that “the ways of adhering to or distancing oneself from them are also heterogeneous combinations of affects and forms of consciousness.”<sup>37</sup> (3) And given this heterogeneity, forms of domination not only fail to saturate the field of action completely, but also turn out to have “little control over what they thought they were controlling.”<sup>38</sup> (4) That is why their boundaries can be crossed, pierced here and there, in unforeseeable ways, through fractures, alterations, deviations, or even resistances. This heterogeneity is what also allows discrepancies to emerge: the *excessive* and undetermined that can appear amid social codifications; the openings, displacements, and conflicts that can arise in the midst of social assemblages; and the manner in which some of their relations can be torsioned to give rise to other possibilities. Therefore, I insist that dislocations and reconfigurations are possible within those heterogeneous assemblages, because any transformation, big or small, entails a large- or small-scale recomposition of the relations that are in play, as well as forms of experimentation with the boundaries and *dispositifs* they put into place.

According to this understanding of the social world, capitalism is not a unitary conversion mechanism but a regime composed of different assemblages, driven, of course, by demands that are assumed as axiomatic, such as the need for accumulation and the concentration of wealth, but are deployed in heterogeneous spatial and temporal conditions. Timothy Mitchell has insisted on this heterogeneity of capitalism in his works, particularly when exploring various phenomena and materials such as malaria, sugar cane, nationalism, and war, and the way they have interacted to generate the economic-political rationality of the modern Egyptian state. Although this author does not explicitly subscribe to affect theory, he assumes a relational approach by dwelling on the arrangements between the human and the nonhuman that have produced the technologies of capitalism “from the mixture.”<sup>39</sup> Capitalism “has no singular logic, no essence,” but instead works amid bodies, desires, energies, and various materials that exceed it and are, at the same time, vital to it. This heterogeneity “makes possible the logic of capital, and thus ensures both its powers and its failures.”<sup>40</sup>

Such heterogeneity is evident when one observes that the current configurations of capitalism allow for the articulation of Fordist and post-Fordist



“pericapitalist,” neoliberal, and welfare practices. This capitalist mediation among different value systems, which favors dominant corporations, is a widely known experience in the Global South, characterized by continuous forms of translation, conflicts, and violence between practices of peasant agriculture, mining, and artisanal fishing, and capitalist values and business entrepreneurs aligned with global dynamics of large-scale extraction, exchange, and financial speculation. In fact, Anna Tsing’s notion of pericapitalism refers to sites of capitalist accumulation that are “simultaneously inside and outside capitalism.”<sup>41</sup> It invites us to analyze capitalism through its gaps and its ambiguities, thus confronting the rigid oppositions between capitalist and noncapitalist economies without losing sight of these distinctions.<sup>42</sup> Hence the alignments and disparities between “pericapitalist” zones, crossed by lingering “colonial durabilities” (of patronage, cronyism, corporeal violence, and territorial dispossession), disciplinary techniques on bodies, times, and spaces in work environments, and diffuse control mechanisms characterized by subtle regulations of desire, the decentralization of work, and the flexibilization and cybernation of the labor environment, which are related to what is globally known as post-Fordism.<sup>43</sup> In fact, “the concentration of wealth is possible because value produced in unplanned patches is appropriated for capital.”<sup>44</sup> In these marginal territories, multinational companies foster or turn a blind eye to the conditions of violence and exploitation in which diverse products are obtained. Think, for example, of raw materials (like gold, coal, oil, sugar, palm) often extracted from places in which necropolitical *dispositifs* are imposed,<sup>45</sup> and of how those materials end up as global consumer goods such as cell phones, cars, or clothing, whose conditions of production are ignored or abstracted in spaces of “prosperity.” But, as Marx observed, and as Tsing echoes, the mechanism of “salvage is not an ornament on ordinary capitalist processes; it is a feature of how capitalism works.”<sup>46</sup> And it is one of the marks of its heterogeneity and of the capacity for expansion that the former makes possible. In the midst of this heterogeneity, capacities arise that nurture the drive toward accumulation. However, there are also tensions that can divert, obliquely betray, or emphatically contest such a drive. By focusing on these sites of tension and on their complex assemblages, particularly on “precarious living in scenes that both use and refuse capitalist governance,” we can observe how “such assemblages tell us of what’s left, despite capitalist damage.”<sup>47</sup> And, I would add, not just *despite* the damage but *in midst of it*. In order to reflect on that which is *left*, that which remains within the damaged, I resort to the idea of *ruination*.<sup>48</sup> Let us dwell then for a moment on this notion and on the displacement it entails with respect to “ruin.”

Reading Marx’s reflections on the alienation and commodification produced by capitalism, Tsing invites us to think on how the accumulation of capital has been possible since the time of colonial empires because life, in all of its

relational materiality, has been converted into exchangeable goods, and, more recently, into “resources for investment.” This conversion entails uprooting them from their life worlds and the multiple entanglements that constitute them.<sup>49</sup> Recalling Marx, Tsing calls this process “alienation.” The objective of this process is unlimited growth, because “there is no limit on how many assets investors want.” Thus, “alienation makes possible accumulation,” and capitalism becomes “a translation machine for producing capital from all kinds of livelihoods, human and not human.”<sup>50</sup> And that which can no longer bear that appropriating translation, that which is depleted, is abandoned. Thus, the goal of conquering every dimension of life through these extensive processes of alienation produces ever more depleted, devastated, and ruined territories. But even if capitalism aims to operate as a translation machine, it is inevitably permeated by the life it appropriates and that seems to resist that absolute alienation. In fact, Tsing believes that organic life can reemerge among the ruins, and human beings are called on to seek living arrangements in order to inhabit those ruins. This, of course, gives rise to numerous paradoxes, such as that of Tsing’s “matsutake”: a mushroom that grows wild in forests ruined by human activity in the Global North and that helps nurture trees in the devastated forests where it grows. At the same time, it is the most expensive mushroom in the world, a form of life that has emerged from ruins and reenters the flows of capital. This might suggest, once again, the impossibility of escaping the market, that horizon into which everything tends to be reinscribed. However, learning to live among debris does not imply that we have to keep reproducing the system that generates the damage. By assuming the ruined as “the material sedimentation of destruction,”<sup>51</sup> one can begin to pierce it, overturning it from within, in the interplay of constituted relations, albeit not always successfully.

Walter Benjamin grasped this very well when he deromanticized the figure of ruins and saw in them a structure of decomposition that could simultaneously show the “fragility of capitalist culture” and the traces of violence it produced.<sup>52</sup> Ruins affirm the inscription of violence in the materiality of things, their arbitrariness and contingency within heterogeneous sedimentations that are themselves vulnerable and residual.<sup>53</sup> Ruins are thus a figure of what remains; it condenses a temporal heterogeneity and preserves the marks of violence, while also inscribing the traces of that which was ruined, as remains that persist with a certain vitality. This emphasis on *what is left* is precisely what Ann Stoler has dealt with in her reflections on “ruination,” rather than on ruins as the debris of damage. This distinction between ruins and ruination allows me to emphasize the ambivalent and active character that may reside in *what* is ruined: ruination as the site of damage amid which (and not just despite) vital alternatives, apart from forces that have produced the damage, may arise. In this sense, when speaking of ruination, the focus is not on inert remains, as in the case of ruins, but on the processes that produce

the debris of damage, on the “active forces of destruction,” on their bodily and psychic effects and their eventual “vital refiguration.”<sup>54</sup> If life occurs in relationality, what allows us to create relationships in which new capacities and potentialities can be deployed is vital.<sup>55</sup> In fact, ruination refers to the “deeply saturated” and often scarcely visible forms “in which colonialisms leave their mark.”<sup>56</sup> This mark has to do especially with “the lives of those whose sensibilities have been marked by the ruins in which they live,” amid countless “foreclosed possibilities” produced by imperial formations, with their structures of “vulnerability, damage, and refusal.”<sup>57</sup> These structures have marked and brutally subjected colonized bodies, while conditioning their interactions with others and with their environments, in seemingly endless cycles of violence. Nevertheless, living *amid* these processes of ruination and the debris they leave behind can also enable new capacities, expressions of potentiality committed to the persistence of minoritarian forms of life, or, as I prefer to call them, *affirmative affectivities*. And, once again, I highlight this “amid” in order to reflect on it in all of its ambivalence and relationality, that is, on “the *connective tissue* that continues to bind human potentials to degraded environments, and degraded personhoods to the material refuse of imperial projects—to the spaces redefined, to the soils turned toxic, to the relations severed between people and people, and between people and things.”<sup>58</sup> This connective tissue, in which so many subjections and degradations of bodies, the environment, and ecosystems have assembled, offers a space of relations in which new capacities can appear. Let us consider the following for a moment: potentiality is the indeterminate excess that occurs in the midst of social assemblages and their multiple sensorial, historically conditioned layers. In this sense, “potentiality is a thing immanent to fragments of sensory experience and dreams of presence. A layer, or layering to the ordinary.”<sup>59</sup> This excess can unfold in new relationships produced between bodies, technologies, substances, and capacities that can emerge there. Thus, we create new relations on the basis of preexisting ones. These newly created potentialities can serve to fulfill adaptive purposes, confirm a state of affairs, or reinforce it. However, if these emerging powers can counteract subjection, deviate, and suggest other possibilities of existence, then potentiality becomes emancipatory. In this case, potentiality is equally able to confront forms of subjection without losing sight of the webs of relationships in which it takes place.

In fact, this web of relations emphasizes the way in which history is also inscribed in bodies, shaping *affects* in them. Nietzsche has elaborated on this when he conceives of affects as a result of such inscription and has dwelled on bodies ruined by morals as bodies that can nevertheless become, through experimentation and affective reversals of what had damaged them, as shown in *The Genealogy of Morals*. In this sense, perhaps, he has suggested that humanity has become “the experimental material, the tremendous surplus of failures: a field of ruins.”<sup>60</sup>

Again, when I speak of affects, I am referring to historical forces produced in the social world, which cross, precede, and shape subjects. Affects are intensified relationally and temporally, in corporeal marks that subjects often lose sight of and come to naturalize, and even in forms of fetishism that conceal their conditions of emergence.<sup>61</sup> Such forces are produced in the circulation among bodies, in their relations with one another, with environments, discourses, things, and technologies, and they accumulate and sediment as an effect of this heterogeneous dissemination. Although they are always the effect of assemblages of the social world, affects always preserve an uncontrollable, unforeseeable, excessive potential given their indeterminacy.

In the case of ruination, what we have are affective manifestations expressed in embodied, sedimented signs, “visible and visceral senses,” reactivated and reappropriated in places of “despair.”<sup>62</sup> This is so because what has been ruined can store excessive force. Potentialities have emerged amid exploitations, violences, and subjections, and they have sought to create other places, flights, and points of resistance in the midst of the most painful materializations. This is why the corporeal effects of ruination are heterogeneous, as I have suggested; they make it possible to see the force of subjection, but they can also open up unexpected forms of dislocation, due to the conflicts and gaps that can emerge in such heterogeneity. In order to illustrate this, I shall dwell on a *scene*, that is, an experience that makes visible the moments of change in a web of meaning and the frameworks of intelligibility that support it.<sup>63</sup> I have reconstructed it via the work carried out by Colombian anthropologist Pablo Jaramillo on miners in Marmato (Caldas, Colombia). I connect Jaramillo’s ethnographic approach with my arguments thus far, while evincing other resonances and emphases to situate my ideas better in relation to complex affective assemblages.<sup>64</sup> In fact, I will argue that the practices deployed by the miners of Marmato show how problematic it is to assume, as Berardi and Fisher do, that contemporary capitalism produces, everywhere, the complete fusion between the psychic-affective and the economic.

### **Affirmative Affects amid Leftovers**

Marmato is linked to the nation’s history. During the Colonial period, the Spaniards used the native population to exploit and pillage the mines, and after decimating the natives, brought in slaves from Africa in order to continue looting the gold and silver they sent to the metropolis. During the war of independence and the establishment of the republic, Marmato contributed with its wealth to the creation of what Colombia is today.<sup>65</sup>

The above quotation partly summarizes the complex history of violence and damages inherent to this region, as well as the diverse assemblages that have produced

it and that it has, in turn, supported. Marmato is a very old gold-mining zone in Colombia, whose history dates back to the colonial period. Since then, the gold extraction transpiring there has required the exploitation of racialized subjects such as the Indigenous population and the enslaved Black people brought from Africa. Such exploitation of territory and bodies contributed to the entrenchment of capitalism since the sixteenth century, and to a later financing of the project of Colombian nation-building marked by countless violences that have not ceased to damage the territories and the subjects marginalized by colonial structures. In fact, any photograph of Marmato shows the traces of what mining has done to the mountains. The town itself appears as a field of ruins.

In the early 2000s, a large-scale Canadian mining company acquired all of Marmato's mining titles in order to transform it into a great open-pit mine that would obliterate the city and the preexisting mining practices of its inhabitants.<sup>66</sup> In fact, a law issued in 2001 criminalized extraction by small miners, stating that it was a risky activity that was unacceptable according to safety standards promoted by the multinational mining company. These corporate interventions were rejected by traditional miners, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities not necessarily linked to mining, and grassroots organizations who created the Civic Committee for the Defense of Marmato.<sup>67</sup> According to these groups, "the sale of mines to the mining company meant 'selling the past, the present, and the future.'"<sup>68</sup> Their objective was, thus, not only the defense of the territory, their right to traditional mining, and the control of natural resources,<sup>69</sup> but also the affirmation of their understanding of the region as a "space of life"—that is, a space in which "the continuity of social and natural life"<sup>70</sup> is at stake—as well as the persistence of affective relations between the human and nonhuman that have made possible the survival of forms of subsistence and sociality.<sup>71</sup> What I have called affirmative affects emerge there in the form of a resistance that deploys territory, forms of production, and the capacities of its inhabitants against certain projects typical of financial capitalism, while existing within it.

This affective dimension of traditional mining and its emergence amid complex processes of ruination can be seen clearly in Jaramillo's ethnographic work. In particular, he focuses on "guachería": artisanal mining practices by those who became unemployed when the multinational corporation bought up most of the mines in the area and closed them down. These people, without mining titles or formal work—these dispossessed bodies—enter the closed mines to extract gold from waste (mud, sand, debris, and toxic gas) left behind from the exploitation of the mining properties.<sup>72</sup> Without the expensive technology required to mine the rock, they survive on what is left over from the extraction, appropriating waste that is the remainder of privatized property. According to Jaramillo's reading, *guachería* requires a myriad of relational activities in which bodies are constantly put at risk

but manage to survive using local resources, situated in all their most immediate relations. For example, these miners manage to avoid falling to the bottom of the mine by paying close attention to the sound of explosions, picks and shovels, and the voices of other miners.<sup>73</sup> In descending into multinationals' mines—which sets off constant explosions and highly toxic gases that make it impossible to breathe—they have to be patient and prudent enough to know when to enter the mine following an explosion: “There is a time to extract and a time to wait.” They often carry debris out of the mines, and it sometimes rolls and falls, meaning that they have to know how to dodge it. It is said that these stones are “scavenged” (they are neither sold nor bought), and nobody claims ownership over them. In fact, this state of affairs is considered, according to Jaramillo's conversations, a sign of “generosity and solidarity,” qualities attributed to Marmato itself. The *guacheros* have also refused to work for the mining company because they do not want to have a boss, earn a low wage, miss out on good fortune, and have their time restricted.<sup>74</sup>

These small-scale miners fiercely oppose the corporation's establishment in their territories. In particular, they challenge the state regulations on risk, safety, and life, regulations that depend on a language of stability and are transparent only to global agencies' codes and registers, despite being subject to the interests of capital. These artisanal miners also oppose the understanding of the future entailed by these forms of risk control, according to which they are identified as subjects of the past who no longer have any chance of enduring. However, they persist and, on the contrary, identify death with the horizon of stability sold to them by the multinational. In this way, they resist the “temporal dispossession” brought upon them by global agencies and contest the obsolescence of their practices.<sup>75</sup> And, at the same time, “they achieve a sense of vital production and reproduction,” by engaging with leftovers in relational, corporeal, and affective practices that manifest their capacities amid “the cycles of extractive and financial capitalism, and local violence,” and extremely precarious conditions.<sup>76</sup>

Engaging with leftovers, local communities create practices of “future making and resilience, in the face of the imminent annihilation of their ways of life.”<sup>77</sup> For example, Jaramillo shows how local miners develop a variety of corporeal, perceptive, and affective sensitivities toward the place, the sounds of the earth, poisonous and nonpoisonous smells, the atmosphere. And all of this entails building new forms of relation between the masculine bodies that work there and all the non-human conditions that have an impact on their activity: “The act of caring among men entails teaching and learning to wait, involving affects such as patience and prudence.”<sup>78</sup> The mine can even be experienced as an “intimate space”:<sup>79</sup> the miners cool down together when it gets too hot in the mine, exchange information regarding the smells and the degree of danger, sometimes share a joint, wait to reenter the mine together, and share goals, while exposing themselves to death

in their daily engagement with the hazardous materials that also allow them to survive.<sup>80</sup> In this way, miners manage not only to obtain productive material from what appears to be merely residual or waste but also, paradoxically, to survive on the basis of deathly substances.

Moreover, some of the residual materials with which these miners work come from neighboring zones where legal and illegal gold mining is linked to violence by paramilitary groups.<sup>81</sup> It is as if these bodies were experimenting with a politics of death, recuperating life from there through an “economy of residues.” Affirming life amid such *dispositifs* of violence can become a sort of resistance. In fact, given what has been said, this resistance can be seen in several aspects: on the one hand, the *guacheros* oppose being dispossessed by occupying a place that has been legally decreed not to belong to them, even though their forms of survival and their history are connected to it. They resist the multinational’s logic of ownership by claiming their ownership via “ancestral culture,” rather than as rational economic subjects, who are able to take possession according to the securitarian standards of extensive extraction. They also resist the privatization of everything, claiming the use of the residue, of what is left over once the multinational has taken what it wants. They oppose the idea of risk sold to them by the multinational decreeing their activity as unviable and unsustainable, identifying instead the overall loss of the territory and the disappearance of the mining culture of Marmato as a risk. They give life to forms of socialization of resources that do not merely tend toward accumulation and expansion. They resist all forms of dissuasion—sometimes brutally violent—with which attempts have been made to displace the mountain’s inhabitants. They do so not only by remaining and continuing their activity but also by obtaining resources to persist from the very mines sometimes guarded by death squads. Through these different strategies, they counteract forms of resignation imposed by the closed temporality of capitalism, even if they are practices that also somehow fuel it, and they counteract forms of territorial and temporal dispossession. Their persistence is not merely a form of bodily adaptation to survival in adverse conditions, but an indocile persistence that questions forms of domination that are experienced as devastating.

Thus, in the interstices of global capitalism and its forms of dispossession, they are able to organize a whole affective economy between their bodies and what is left over, an economy that offers possibilities of life in a rather lifeless and unsustainable environment. And they do so through relational practices of survival that emerge from the greatest vulnerability and are defined by the greatest affirmation of codependence among the bodies involved, far from the neoliberal desire of self-realization and sovereign autonomy. This ideal of sovereignty, which denies the codependency of human beings and their need for frameworks of care,<sup>82</sup> has been key, as Brenna Bandhar has shown,<sup>83</sup> to projects of modernization based on

colonial racial markers that justify the territorial dispossession of local cultures. In this sense, such a neoliberal ideal has encouraged destructive forms of appropriation of nature and cultural difference, driven by the desire for self-determination and self-control of a subject obsessed with property. To resist such forms of dispossession requires the creation of relations between bodies, territories, and materials, to subvert the aforementioned regime of subjectivity and its logic of appropriation.

The miners I have been talking about obviously do not completely subvert a model of resource appropriation based on extraction, in the way that anti-extractivist economic practices aim to. But, in any case, the affective relations they establish between the materials and their bodies, and between these and their territory, confront corporate modes of production and territorial possession. Such relations emerge from territorial practices, which oppose a merely extractive vision of the territory, decided from above by economic agents who objectify the place and abstract it from its history. If for the latter, the mountain on which the village of Marmato sits “is a mass of earth to be turned into sand, through their technological power,” the artisanal miners “live on it, experiencing it as the place on which their village is built, and from which they have derived their livelihood for so long, and they also have the impression that the gold there is inexhaustible.”<sup>84</sup> In fact, they see gold as a “living entity”: both “as a material good, which has guaranteed the long historical existence of the people,” and as “a spiritual entity with the capacity to sanction human attitudes that can impede the proper functioning of social relations.”<sup>85</sup> Hence, from this consideration of the world expressed in testimonies from several miners, gold—understood as a living entity—does not appear to those who are envious, excessively ambitious, or who do not socialize the resources they obtain among the inhabitants of the village, by hiring people to work, paying well, or inviting fellow miners for drinks. And as I have suggested, there is also a sociality at play in the process of gold extraction, which requires one to perceive the mine not as a hole filled with a valuable substance to be extracted and circulated, but as a “place full of meaning”:<sup>86</sup> a place made up of countless materials that the miners can distinguish, that they see in relation to others, and whose different productive uses they also discern.

Thus, in affective relation with the residues of ruination, miners manage to create “collaborative survival,”<sup>87</sup> in which the encounter between other human and nonhuman beings allows for the persistence of life at a pace different from that of global development. This is why a certain *relational autonomy*, as Kathleen Millar calls it,<sup>88</sup> can be seen within that codependence: a nonsubjection to the rhythm, time, and regulations of standardized formal labor or to the top-down supervision by bosses and foremen. In fact, it is the affirmation of forms of care and codependence between bodies and materials that extends their present into the future. These experiences of codependence and relative independence also shape other



relations with time, in sustaining temporal crossings between the past of given traditions, a dislocated present, and projections of generations yet to come.

In this manner, these experimental practices deployed by the artisanal miners of Marmato also resist the fusion between the psychic-affective and the economic diagnosed by Berardi and Fisher. It may be that these miners want to generate wealth in their own fashion and expand their possibilities of consumption, since new technologies are not foreign to them. Some of them—although not many—have smartphones, and they are evidently exposed to the figures and signs of spectacle.<sup>89</sup> However, their imagination and affectivity are not limited by this, and they are able to develop relations among bodies that cannot be reduced to mere consumption and appropriation aimed at feeding the accumulation of big capital. Moreover, as we have seen above, their own capacities are not appropriated by the mere drive to accumulation but rather aim at partially countering its mandates through affirmative, dissident affects. This case not only makes it possible to displace a web of meaning common to totalizing left critical theory approaches. The scene is also significant, in my view, because it allows us to conceive of a certain politics of survival in the midst of processes of ruination.

### **Reinhabiting the Future: Politics of Survival and Challenges Ahead**

To conclude, I would like to offer some reflections on what is at stake in a politics of survival such as that arising from the Marmato experience. First of all, this scene shows how the struggle for survival under the difficult conditions of ruination does not necessarily involve reacting to damage or accepting it, as might be expected of ruined bodies, but, in certain cases, countering it and creating vital alternatives on that basis. In fact, different forms of *experimentation* can be seen here: from the practices of corporeal, affective, and temporal composition occurring between the bodies of the miners and the material they reutilize, to the recomposition entailed by the creation of a collective space of resistance, like the civic committee for the defense of Marmato. The case of Marmato not only shows that political claims can arise from such a corporeal and affective experience in a ruined territory but also expresses the potentiality of bodies in the most adverse conditions. Therefore, the politics of survival produced here is also a politics of desire, of potentiality displayed in the creation of supportive activities between the human and the nonhuman, lingering at the edge of the unfeasible. Survival here does not mean resigning oneself to merely enduring, but rather, affirming the desire to persist by creating new relations, to resist being carried away by the global engine of progress. This is what I have spoken of as affirmative affects.

In fact, the case of Marmato suggests that desire—as elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari, Spinoza, and Nietzsche—is produced in assemblages of relations

that can be disarticulated and reconfigured. It is for this very reason that the expression of potentiality entails a vulnerability to the world that shapes it and in which it appears. Hence, such desire is not phallogentric or supremacist; rather, it assumes itself as vulnerable, dependent, and coexistent, arising only in the exposure that throws it out of itself, sometimes at the edge of the uninhabitable, as in the case of the miners of Marmato. Therefore, to relate vitally to the world is at the same time to acknowledge the fragility of life, in given situations, and the manner in which vital networks are mutually affected by contagion and circulation, forces which make it possible to transform nonvital affects into vital affects, and vice versa:

If survival always involves others, it is also necessarily subject to the indeterminacy of self-and-other transformations. We change through our collaborations both within and across species. The important stuff for life on earth happens in those transformations, not in the decision trees of self-contained individuals. Rather than seeing only the expansion-and-conquest strategies of relentless individuals, we must look for histories that develop through contamination. Thus, how might a gathering become a “happening”?<sup>90</sup>

This mutual contamination of the organic and the inorganic, the human and the nonhuman, and the affects shaped in the desire to persist is something that both neoliberal and liberal views fail to see, since they have enshrined as an ideal the autonomous-sovereign subject, capable of achieving self-determination. Disenchanted critical theorists that reduce the ruined to dead matter and a zombie-like existence also fail to see this, and perhaps in this way, they reinforce the alienation of the living they pretend to contest. Evidently, the sovereign subject is an ideal that has contributed to reiterating “forms of expansion and conquest,” by those who aspire to control and appropriate everything that exceeds themselves, subjecting it in ways that have been very destructive for vital networks. The latter, however, can leave us paralyzed in the face of this accumulated damage and the intended capture of desire.<sup>91</sup> In fact, from the standpoint of totalizing left critical theory approaches, all of the material, corporeal, and affective wealth that can emerge from practices within capitalism is lost, since it can be read as a reconversion of the logic of capital. This thinking minimizes the flights, the possibilities of dislocation, and the intervals that can emerge within the heterogeneous; what is more, it denies the intelligence and potentiality of bodies, which should be affirmed even in the most adverse conditions. Nonetheless, the traditional miners of Marmato know those networks in their own bodies and manage to break away from some of these subjections, although their lives continue to be limited by them.

Undoubtedly, it is desirable to find less saturated places and practices that are less subjected to the conditions of precarization that they challenge. Nevertheless, critics can neither dictate nor foresee such practices; they arise gradually, unexpectedly, and in an organized fashion, from actors that affirm their capacity in places afflicted by despair. For now, I believe that the considerations set forth here place new demands on contemporary critical theory: on the one hand, it is important to break with the forms of blame that totalizing left critics end up suggesting when they assume that capitalism's inescapability condemns all actors to being its accomplices. It is essential to break with this thinking, because it ends up reproducing the mechanisms of blame generated by certain dynamics of self-accountability in global capitalism. On the other hand, it is crucial to abandon the totalizing radicalism of the philosopher of catastrophe, who, as Bruno Latour rightly thought,<sup>92</sup> is the counterpart of the capitalist who is convinced of the axiomatics of the system. Rather, it seems more productive to embrace efforts to reinhabit the future, resist its dispossession, and make the world a more habitable place for most living beings. It is fundamental to focus on the potentialities that can emerge in the midst of power relations, as well as their tensions and ambivalences, in order to address the manner in which they can become sites of conflict, reversal, and alteration. Additionally, we should pay attention to the reassemblages that are already countering ruination and reflect on how to extend them by creating common projects, exposed to the conflict that inevitably crosses their paths.<sup>93</sup>

Clearly, struggling to survive is not the same as struggling to make sure that survival translates into a dignified life, with everything this might entail. But the most ambitious transformation that we can imagine and carry out in order to counter the damages wrought by capitalism and create more egalitarian, sustainable, and supportive living conditions for bodies has to begin with acknowledging that diverse expressions of a politics of survival may be arising in many unseen parts of the world.

By "a politics of survival," I hope it is clear that I am obviously not referring to the mere capacity to persist in difficult contexts through adjustment to or conformity with a particular situation. What I refer to instead is a perseverance that, when deployed, questions the conditions of dispossession and damage that processes of ruination impose on certain bodies. I have also shown how, on the basis of this persistence, individuals not only resist territorial and temporal dispossession but also organize this resistance politically with other actors, as in the creation of the civic committee in Marmato.

Perhaps this politics of survival will elicit from critical theory an ethics of attention, focusing on fractured and damaged everyday life, with the patience to see there what calls for persisting despite widespread ruination. This would be an ethics open to the ambivalence of the ruined, which embraces the codependence

of living beings, their interactions, and their unforeseeable excesses, because the future is at stake in this excess. And something we need today, more than ever, is feeling that opening which is yet to come and allowing ourselves to be affected by it, affirming the virtual in what remains.

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#### Notes

1. Rancière, “Skopje.”
2. Zambrana, *Colonial Debts*.
3. Latour, “On Some of the Affects of Capitalism.”
4. When I speak of “dispossession” in this article, I do not refer merely to a negative logic of capture or extraction of capacities and rights. Dispossession operates through forms of domination and power, which are *productive*, which generate experiences and forms of subjectivity. Nonetheless, the idea of dispossession does highlight the fact that the effects of these productive forms of subjection are to depotentiate and close off capacities, in this case, of intervention and alterations to come for certain bodies. Therefore, it is the dispossession of the commonality of territories (see Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*), of their common uses, of common goods, but also of the collective practices that allow the latter to appear. It is on this common, popular power that different peasant, Afro-descendant, and Indigenous struggles in Latin America have insisted. As Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou have argued, such common power is displayed in the exposure of subjects to their interdependence and vulnerability (*Dispossession*, 3–5).
5. When I use the idea of “alternative,” I do not intend to “subordinate what it designates to the ‘mainstream’” nor to identify “the deviant” or to limit the emergence of difference (Gibson-Graham, *End of Capitalism*, xxiii). I refer to different and incommensurable corporeal efforts to contest and alter what is suffered as wrong or damaged in a given status quo.
6. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*; Rancière, *En quel temps vivons-nous*; Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*.

7. As I have argued elsewhere, I understand an emancipatory movement to be an affective displacement that pushes one to “seek another way of life,” one that is more egalitarian, on the basis of the affirmation of the power of bodies to reconfigure themselves and to contest their conditions of existence (Quintana, *Politics of Bodies*, 3).
8. Tsing, *Mushroom*.
9. Stoler, *Imperial Debris*; see also Stoler, *Duress*. The notion of (post)coloniality (with the parenthesis), introduced by Ann Laura Stoler, marks a tension between the displacement and the persistence of colonial structures today, as a result of the conflict of history, and acknowledges the link between said structures and the emergence and consolidation of capitalism. In her view, this tension is not recognized by most postcolonial approaches (without the parenthesis).
10. Žižek, *Ticklish Subject*; Berardi, *La fabbrica dell'infelicità*; Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*. See also Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*; Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody*.
11. As we will see in the next section, while in this article I contend that capitalism is heterogeneous, I also argue that this heterogeneity is formed within a regime of meaning and experience, which assumes itself as what it is, as what there is, as unconditioned. That is why I speak of a regime of sense in order to indicate a certain mode of producing what counts as experience, as part of a field of perception and intelligibility (see Foucault, “Truth and Power”). However, I am evoking too the boundaries that delimit an order of intelligibility, the forms of power they produce and depend on, the codifications that govern them, and the *excesses* that arise among the latter.
12. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 15.
13. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 10–13.
14. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 12.
15. Berardi, *La fabbrica dell'infelicità*. See also Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody*.
16. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 15.
17. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 4.
18. Without losing sight of the complexity of the issue, I would characterize neoliberalism as a type of state and at the same time as a rationality with visible effects of subjectivation. (On neoliberalism as a type of state, see Springer, “Neoliberalism as Discourse”; Peck and Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space.” On neoliberalism as a rationality, see Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*; Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*; Dardot and Laval, *New Way of the World*; Brown, *Undoing the Demos*.) It is a state that is increasingly fused with the power of large corporate interests, which is characterized by subordinating legal frameworks and public programs to interventions that benefit the objectives of big capital. At the same time, social rights are dismantled or the possibility of the emergence of institutions to guarantee them is closed off. In tandem with this, the role of the state is reduced to providing security conditions for the investments of big capital, and to promoting public policing policies focused on order, and the control of variables that affect economic growth and financial stability. In this state configuration, there is a governmental logic at work, which is marked by converting “every human need and every desire into a profitable undertaking,” from the extension of the market model to all dimensions of life (Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 22, 28).
19. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 36–42.
20. See Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*; Rose, *Governing the Soul*; Rimke, “Governing Citizens”; Illouz, *Cold Intimacies*.
21. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 66.

22. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 77.
23. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 80.
24. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 77.
25. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 16–18.
26. For Fisher, following Jacques Lacan, “the Real is an unrepresentable X, a traumatic void that can only be glimpsed in the fractures and inconsistencies in the field of apparent reality. So one strategy against capitalist realism could involve invoking the Real(s) underlying the reality that capitalism presents to us. Environmental catastrophe is one such Real” (*Capitalist Realism*, 18).
27. Berardi, “Chronicles of the Psycho-deflation.”
28. Berardi, “Chronicles of the Psycho-deflation.”
29. Berardi, “Chronicles of the Psycho-deflation.”
30. “My modest opinion is much more radical: the coronavirus epidemic is a kind of ‘Five Point Palm Exploding Heart Technique’ attack on the global capitalist system—a signal that we cannot go on the way we were up until now, that a radical change is needed. Sad fact, we need a catastrophe” (Žižek, “Coronavirus”).
31. It is important to recall that the Lacanian notion of *jouissance* refers to “a place beyond the economy of pleasure and pain,” in which “pleasure and agony become indistinguishable” (Mazzarella, “Brand(ish)ing the Name,” 13). This paradoxical place depends on the structure of desire, which, for Lacan, is organized around lack, since *jouissance* is precisely “the lack that escapes the Other,” the Real that escapes symbolization (Böhm and Batta, “Just Doing It,” 352).
32. Surely, those who assume capitalism as a totalizing entity will consider that these reflections produced under an immanent critical approach condemn us to persist within the same questioned horizon. But what I am suggesting is that if we can collaborate with the changes that are already taking place in the world, and amplify, intensify, and extend them, we can increasingly transform the assemblages of capitalism we inhabit and produce, not an “outside” of capitalism, but a substantial reconfiguration that could question its drive for limitless accumulation, and counteract its effects of exploitation and inequality. Instead, every time we treat capitalism as a totality, escaping from it becomes beyond our control, we feel more powerless, and our incapacity is reiterated. On this point, I agree with Bruno Latour. See Latour, “On Some of the Affects of Capitalism.”
33. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 76.
34. Quintana, *Politics of Bodies*.
35. I use the notion of assemblage (*agencement*) in Deleuze and Guattari’s sense, and not in reference to the different successive elaborations of the idea of assemblage in the work of Bruno Latour and the theory of Manuel DeLanda (See DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*). I am thus referring to contingent yet determined intersections of practices and things that can also be aligned along axes of territorialization and deterritorialization. See Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 504–5.
36. Hence, I am interested in the ambivalence and heterogeneity of phenomena suggested by some affective approaches (Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*; Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*) but that have not been taken into account in other perspectives that deal with affects only in terms of liberating, ontological excess (Massumi, *Parables of the Virtual*).
37. Rancière, *Dissenting Words*, 19.
38. Rancière, *Method of Equality*, 61.
39. Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 52.

40. Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 303.
41. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 63.
42. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 296.
43. Stoler, *Duress*.
44. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 5.
45. By necropolitics, in a broad sense, I refer to a power that seeks to preserve itself through the systematic destruction of the subjects who oppose it or refuse to be integrated, in the sense that several Latin American approaches have since appropriated and elaborated, borrowed from Mbembe's famous reflections in Africa. See Valencia Triana, *Capitalismo Gore*.
46. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 63.
47. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 134. It is evident that capitalism has been producing great damage all over the world. In fact, living conditions for the most part are increasingly precarious in the Global South and are rapidly worsening in the Global North, where marginalization zones are on the rise. These forms of exhausting bodies also extend to territories, now reduced to spaces of intervention and large-scale economic exploitation, with devastating effects on the environment and close-knit human and nonhuman relations. The damage wrought by capitalism, however, is not limited to the practices of extraction, exploitation, and appropriation that date back to colonial times and has led to the rise of a world market (see Wallerstein, *Essential Wallerstein*). It has also involved the formation of capacities, desires, and forms of agency, driven by the urge for ever increasing productivity, which has taken on different shape throughout the history of capitalism (de Beistegui, *Government of Desire*).
48. Stoler, *Imperial Debris*; see also Stoler, *Duress*.
49. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 5.
50. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 133.
51. Gordillo, *Rubble*, 20.
52. Stoler, *Imperial Debris*, ix.
53. Stoler, *Duress*, 347.
54. Stoler, *Duress*, 194.
55. I therefore subscribe to Stoler's idea of ruination. But I am interested in exploring its dimension of vitality: how it has to do with affective potentialities that can occur in the midst of the ruined, in the sense that I will clarify below.
56. Stoler, *Imperial Debris*, x.
57. Stoler, *Imperial Debris*, x; Stoler, *Duress*, 347.
58. Stoler, *Imperial Debris*, 7–8.
59. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 21.
60. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 380. In fact, Nietzsche is an important reference for Stoler (see *Duress*), and for other authors who have worked on processes of ruination, such as Gordillo (see *Rubble*), for several reasons. These include the genealogical method at stake in these works, their interest in detecting layers of affective, heterogeneous senses that discontinuously constitute experience; the relational-affective approach that this methodology implies; its attention to forms of domination and their effects of damage and ruination; the way in which this approach dislocates metaphysical thought and thinks that this damage is contingent and reversible as long as its grey character, its mixed conformation, is assumed, an aspect that is of particular interest as regards my reading. Finally, these views share a criterion of vitality, understood as the capacity to establish relationships without losing sight of the dimension of negativity, in particular, the marks of violence inscribed in these relationships (Gordillo, *Rubble*, 16).

61. Ahmed, "Affective Economies."
62. Stoler, *Duress*, 350.
63. Rancière, *Method of Equality*, 67.
64. Pablo Jaramillo's reading of this experience emphasizes the affective relationality of the human and the nonhuman in the activities of artisanal miners and how this relationality contributes to counteracting forms of dispossession of the future, which the logics of financial capitalism impose on these people. Using this reading, I insist on the agency of the miners, on the affirmative affects they deploy, and on the forms of resistance that are produced through their practices of persistence.
65. Communiqué of the Marmato Civic Committee, quoted in Martínez-Torres, "De conflicto," 243–44. All translations of passages from this source were done by Tiziana Laudato.
66. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 51.
67. Martínez-Torres, "De conflicto," 237–38.
68. Martínez-Torres, "De conflicto," 243.
69. Martínez-Torres, "De conflicto," 245.
70. Martínez-Torres, "De conflicto," 243.
71. Ortiz, "Apuntes teórico-conceptuales," 93. All translations of passages from this source were done by Tiziana Laudato.
72. González, *Brujería*, 159. All translations of passages from this source were done by Tiziana Laudato.
73. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 57.
74. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 60.
75. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 52.
76. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 49.
77. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 52.
78. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 58.
79. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 59.
80. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 59–60.
81. Jaramillo, "Mining Leftovers," 67.
82. Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*.
83. Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property*.
84. González, *Brujería*, 155.
85. González, *Brujería*, 170.
86. González, *Brujería*, 174–75.
87. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 29.
88. Millar, "Precarious Present."
89. I was able to confirm this in several conversations on this case with Jaramillo, who has carried out fieldwork in Marmato for over five years.
90. Tsing, *Mushroom*, 29.
91. Although I cannot expand on this point here, the conception of desire I am embracing distances itself from the Lacanian notion adopted by Fisher and other critics of ideologies, who tend to think that desire operates in the logic of lack. I concur with Deleuze and Guattari that this configuration of desire cannot be considered structural, as Fisher thinks; rather, it has been produced amidst the social assemblages of capitalism.
92. Latour, "On Some of the Affects of Capitalism."
93. Quintana, Jaramillo, and Caicedo, "What's Up with Methodology?"



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